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Between the city and the hills: educated youth rethinking the value of education and migration in north India

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January, 2020

Supervision

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Abstract

This thesis examines how young men in north India grappled with the challenges of being educated yet unemployed. It draws on ten months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the north Indian state of Uttarakhand to show the distinct ways that mobile youth sought to produce social, economic and cultural capital. When they completed their degrees, many participants migrated from villages and a small township in the Uttarakhand hills, to a regional city to prepare for employment and to find work. These young men endured prolonged unemployment. Yet despite not finding secure jobs, some of these young men drew on their skills and competencies to create work in the private education sector. Other migrants sought to stand out by performing “rural” identities in urban settings, and “urban” identities in rural ones to consolidate their status. Another set of educated youth chose not to migrate but were trying to configure ways of being productive in rural spaces. Some of these young men “hung out” at a computer shop and developed ways of cultivating “good reputations,” others were attempting to create positive social change in villages by volunteering alongside NGOs and by tutoring young children. By drawing theories of social reproduction into conversation with debates about migration and mobility, this research advances understandings of youth, education and migration in the Global South. I argue that educated young men were attempting to leverage their credentials to realise status and respect without compromising their social affiliations and ties. In a context of widespread unemployment and migration, this is an important strategy for leaving open the possibility of rural and urban futures. The research also shows how young men engaged with derogatory constructions of the Uttarakhand hills. While attending to the significant ways that rural areas have been transformed, I argue that educated youth both invoked and challenged these representations in ways that sometimes consolidated their status.

Declaration

This is to certify that:

- i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of PhD, except where indicated in the preface,
- ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,
- iii) the thesis is fewer than 100, 000 words in length, exclusive of tables, the bibliography and appendices.

Andrew Deuchar

6th of January, 2020

Preface

This thesis was written with publication and two papers have been accepted for publication.

The first publication is a sole authored paper:

Deuchar, A. 2019. Strategically “out of place”: Unemployed Migrants Mobilizing Rural and Urban Identities in North India. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 109(5), 1379-1393. The paper was first published online on the 25th of March 2019.

The second paper is a co-authored paper with my primary supervisor, Dr Jane Dyson. The details are:

Deuchar, A., & Dyson, J. 2019. Between unemployment and enterprise in neoliberal India: Educated youth creating work in the private education sector. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. As of December 2019, the article is yet to appear in print but is viewable online under “accepted articles.”

Andrew is the lead author of this paper and wrote the article. The arguments were developed in collaboration with Jane Dyson, who also helped restructure and revise it after the editor requested major revisions after its initial submission.

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Deuchar, A., & Dyson, J. (2019). Between unemployment and enterprise in neoliberal India: Educated youth creating work in the private education sector. <i>Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers</i> . <i>Accepted, in press</i> .	p.140	Y

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Beyond her role as a supervisor, Jane Dyson has become a close friend and she has been an incredible support to my family. The large amount of support she has given me personally is just a small portion of the support and guidance she gives to other students and staff in the School of Geography. The School is a rewarding and fulfilling place to be a graduate student largely because of the work that Jane does. It is the firm conviction of many that her contribution to the School of Geography is invaluable.

There are many other staff members at the School of Geography and the Australia India Institute who have assisted me during my candidature. My advising committee, Professor Mark Wang and Associate Professor David Bissell, helped ensure I met all the official requirements and generously shared their expertise. Other staff members and students who have given valuable feedback on my work include Trent Brown, Jonathan Balls, Kog Ravindran and Febe De Geest. More generally, the postgraduate cohort at the School of Geography have created a supportive and stimulating environment, and I feel very privileged to be a part of it.

Fieldwork in India was very rewarding but also entailed challenges. Biju Negi offered me accommodation, guidance and helped me establish several contacts in Uttarakhand. Shashi Bhatt offered me invaluable friendship, kindness and home cooked meals. Tashi Nima became a good friend who helped with practical challenges of fieldwork. There were also many

participants without whose generosity, friendship and insight this research would not have been possible. Many of those participants will remain life-long friends.

It has not always been easy for my family to understand my stubborn insistence on doing a doctorate. Perhaps it was difficult for them to comprehend why a disengaged high-school student ended up committing to academic pursuits. But my time at university has been transformative, and my doctorate would not have been possible without my parents' generosity and patience, my sister's intellect and insight, and my brother's encouragement and support.

My parents-in-law have always trusted in me and I will be forever indebted to them. I feel incredibly lucky to have had their love, guidance and understanding as I charted a path which was not altogether familiar.

Finally, my wife Renee has been my most exacting critic and most profound support. Even when my pursuit of this degree meant moving away from her own family and finding a new job, she did so without hesitating. It feels as though thesis is the result of her labour as much as it is mine. Over the last few years she has read countless drafts of my work and listened to my long-winded explanations of it, without ever shying away from telling me when I needed to clarify my ideas. Even prior to commencing my doctorate, it was Renee who first made feel as though I could succeed at university and it was her who showed me how.

Renee and I were fortunate enough to have two children in the last two years, Everleigh and Lenny. The birth of our children has created a sense of joy, beauty and love as it does in all cases, but also a profound sense of grief and loss as it does in few. Renee's strength, encouragement and love throughout that time has been the source of my inspiration.

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Chapter One. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In 2016 I visited a job coaching clinic in Dehradun, where I had organised to interview unemployed college graduates about how they were attempting to find work. To help me understand the strategies of job seekers, the owner of the clinic invited me to join a class which was helping students improve their group discussion skills. Group discussion skills, the owner explained, were an indispensable “set of qualities” that employers in India and abroad were seeking. This sentiment was shared by the young man conducting the class. Dressed in a business shirt and pants, Ankur was a twenty-six year old young man, full of confidence and charm. He stood at the front of the room and was explaining the importance making eye contact with peers and comporting oneself the “correct” way in the workplace:

The very first thing to remember is your body language. Why do we call it language? Because it speaks. Slouching in my chair is saying ‘I don’t want to be here, I am not interested.’ But sitting up straight, focusing, is saying ‘I am the person that you want to employ.’

It was difficult not to be impressed by Ankur’s performance. His persuasive language seemed to command the full attention of his students. All of them were taking notes, the more astute were sitting upright in their chairs.

Yet, Ankur himself had never been formally employed. “This wasn’t my plan,” Ankur said when I asked him how came to be working in this institution, but it “gives enough money to pay for a room.”

Like large numbers of other young men in this part of India, Ankur had migrated to Dehradun five years ago from a small township in the Uttarakhand hills. After completing a college degree in Political Science, he left the township with the intention of getting a government job. But after years of quite intense study, he had not found work. Despite this, he

remained quite optimistic about his prospects. Ankur said that his skills might insulate him from the more adverse consequences of unemployment. Indeed, his abilities were such that several job coaching clinics had offered him intermittent work. Without more secure opportunities, Ankur taught classes a few evenings a week while he continued his attempts to gain government employment.

Three weeks after I met Ankur, he invited me to accompany him back to where he grew up. He grew up in Pauri Town, a small township of about 25 000 people, nestled in the foothills of the Indian Himalayas. Getting there entailed a winding four hour bus ride. On this occasion, Ankur was returning for a few days of rest having just sat a government examination for a job in the Uttarakhand Civil Service. He returned home several times per year and said that he enjoyed catching up with family and friends. Three months earlier he had returned for the wedding of a childhood friend, prior to that he had returned for a reunion with some of his college classmates. Yet given that Ankur had moved to Dehradun with quite big expectations, I wondered whether returning home also entailed challenges. Did his parents question what he had to show for the money they had invested in supporting his life in the city? Did he feel that migrating had been the wrong decision, and would he go to college if he had his time over? Was he ever ridiculed when he returned home?

Answers to these questions seemed to lie in the other direction. The afternoon we arrived in Pauri Town, Ankur's parents had invited some of their extended family members to their home. Ankur's father stood and embraced him when he entered the room, a handful of young children rushed to be by his side. Ankur's parents were eager to hear about his latest effort in the government examination, quickly adding to the others in the room that he has made it to the third round of recruitment on several occasions. His extended family members also took interest in his job prospects, and small children were eager to hear stories about the latest films he had seen at the cinema. His unemployment was immaterial throughout these

exchanges. Ankur's parents were evidently quite proud that their eldest son was an educated man who had spent several years living "outside."

I found it striking that Ankur's family viewed him in this way even though he remained jobless. But I soon learned that some of Ankur's friends were more critical of his prospects. The following morning Ankur introduced me to an old friend of his, named Gaurav, at a small computer shop in the town centre. Ankur and Gaurav were both in good spirits when they saw each other. They had known each other since childhood and said they were "like family." A sense of camaraderie and companionship was distilled into their opening exchange.

"Ankur, brother, every day I expect to open the newspaper and see that you have become a 'big man,'" Gaurav said with a smile on his face.

There was a note of sarcasm in Gaurav's tone and so Ankur did not pass up the opportunity to return a barb of his own.

"Gaurav you are living in the hills only," Ankur replied, "I'm surprised you're even reading the newspaper." The two friends laughed and embraced, and then the three of us sat down and drank *chai*.

Over the next few hours, Gaurav explained a rather different pathway than that Ankur had taken. Gaurav, also aged twenty-six, grew up in Pauri Town and had attended primary and secondary school with Ankur. The two friends recalled being young boys and playing games in the fields on their way home from school. During childhood, Gaurav said, they spent "almost every moment together." But when they reached college their paths diverged. While Ankur had always been intent on migrating, Gaurav was unsure what he wanted to do when he finished his Computer Science degree. He knew too many migrants who had migrated to the city without having found the kinds of jobs to which they aspired. Indeed, large numbers of

educated youth have left Pauri Town in pursuit of further education and work and many have endured prolonged hardship. At this point Gaurav pointed to Ankur and said that:

he thinks that one day you arrive in Dehradun, the next day you have a job. Four of five years now he has been out of a job. There are no jobs there, there are no jobs here also.

But where would you rather live?

Gaurav's reasons for choosing not to migrate were not just related to the prospect of remaining unemployed. He said that he felt a strong connection to the mountains and did not want to leave. It was not just the physical beauty of the natural environment that appealed to Gaurav, but it also served as a familial and spiritual anchoring for him. He said that *pahari log* – or “mountain people” – like himself felt “at peace” in the mountains and that they “belonged” there. His family had lived in the region for multiple generations and he did not want to “go outside.” After pausing for a moment, he added metaphorically that “you cannot see the mountains when you are in the plains.” And so, by the time he finished his degree in 2011, Gaurav decided he would remain in the hills.

Faced with very limited job prospects in the area, Gaurav initially made money by conducting mobile phone repairs. But in 2014 he decided to open a computer shop in the town centre. His “office” consists of a single computer and desk, and an adjoining room contains three additional computers and printing facilities. At his computer shop, which I call Bhandari Infotech, Gaurav regularly assists those who need it with tasks such as filling in online forms, booking travel tickets, translating letters and printing documents. He also sells computers and conducts repairs. The shop has become more successful than he anticipated. Part of the reason for this is that government agencies, banks and private businesses are increasingly offering online services. Very few people in the area have computers of their own and so he has a steady stream of customers throughout the day. Gaurav was quite proud that he had created a way of offering

valuable services to those living in the area. In doing so, Gaurav said that had been able to develop a “good” reputation. One afternoon when I asked Gaurav why people came to him and not one of his competitors, he said “look at me brother, do I look like someone who is going to rip you off?” Gaurav had a strong conviction that people knew he was honest, trustworthy and reliable.

Beyond the services Gaurav offered, his shop had also become a hub where other educated youth regularly come and “hang out.” Most of these men were themselves unemployed, and some of them had been for several years. Some of those who hung out at his shop said that they enjoyed coming there because it was a chance to socialise with other young men who were facing similar challenges. In this sense, it was a site of stability amidst a wider sense of mobility and flux. But it was also a place where they too could occasionally be productive. Whenever the shop became busy, many of Gaurav’s friends would assist customers with whatever they required. At times this was translating and printing documents into English, at other times it was a brief tutorial into navigating the Internet. Gaurav’s shop was a site where educated young men could socialise whilst sometimes managing to develop a positive reputation of their own.

Gaurav was glad that he had managed to carve out a livelihood in Pauri Town. He was glad that others enjoyed spending time there and he was confident that he would never have to leave. And all of this was quite meaningful to Gaurav. In a context of widespread unemployment and significant outmigration, he had been able to leverage his position as an educated person to make a small income and a secure a degree of stability.

1.2 Research Aims and Questions

By analysing the strategies of young men like Ankur and Gaurav, this thesis aims to enhance understandings of how educated migrants and non-migrants grappled with unemployment in the north Indian state of Uttarakhand. It foregrounds the agency of young men to illuminate the strategic ways that they positioned themselves in a context of widespread unemployment and rural-urban mobility. This thesis also aims to examine whether and how the mobility practices of educated youth in Uttarakhand were reconfiguring dominant representations of rural space. To address these main aims, the research was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) Are unemployed young men able to realise social, cultural and economic gain by drawing on their position as educated people; and if so, in what ways?
- 2) Are migrants able to challenge their marginality by moving to an urban setting; and if so, in what ways?
- 3) Are “non-migrants” able to challenge their marginality in spite of not moving away; and if so, in what ways?
- 4) How do educated young men make sense of constructions of rural space, and do they challenge or reproduce those constructions?

To pursue these questions and address the broader aim of the research, this thesis draws on ethnographic material gathered during 10 months of fieldwork. I conducted a multi-sited ethnography and gathered material through interviews and participant observation. The 103 young men in this study were among the first generation in their family to pursue tertiary education. Forty-eight of these youth had migrated to Dehradun, the state capital, while 55 other young men had chosen to remain in Pauri Town and nearby villages. All participants were formally unemployed. Some of these men had been unemployed for up to five years at the time of fieldwork, however most young men had been unemployed for approximately two

years. The main argument of this thesis is that educated youth were attempting to realise social and material gain without compromising their social affiliations and ties. By articulating this strategic positioning, young men were seeking to manage an uncertain present at the same time as they left open the possibility of both rural and urban futures.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into three sections. Section 1.2 situates my analysis in relation to recent debates about youth, education and migration in the Global South. Section 1.3 introduces the context where the study took place, while section 1.4 outlines the structure of this thesis and summarises the main arguments. This provides a backdrop to outline the main theoretical contributions of this thesis, which is the focus of Chapter Two.

1.3 A critical nexus: youth, education and migration

I begin with the stories of Ankur and Gaurav because they illustrate some of the challenges which countless young men in north India – and indeed across the Global South – are compelled to navigate. Global restructuring and the imposition of neoliberal reforms have created a difficult set of social and economic conditions, especially for young people (Honwana, 2012; Jeffrey, 2010; Katz, 2004). Large numbers of youth are pursuing formal education in contexts where there is very limited scope for securing white-collar work (Ghafari, 2016; State of Working India, 2019). Even in contexts where rates of economic growth have been impressive, its benefits have been concentrated in urban centres and have been hoarded by privileged social groups (Corbridge, Harriss & Jeffrey, 2013; Gough & Langevang, 2016; Mains, 2012). These processes have placed youth like Ankur and Gaurav, both the first in their families to earn degrees, in quite an ambiguous position. On the one hand, they are equipped with skills and knowledges that rural economies offer few opportunities to deploy. Yet on the other hand,

urban centres have not generated enough employment opportunities to absorb college graduates.

At stake for these young men are not just jobs but their capacity to realise normative ideals of adulthood. In north India, as elsewhere, entry into paid work is but one of a series of gendered markers which registers young men's "arrival" at adulthood (Jeffrey, 2010; Mains, 2012). Many young men strive to get married, raise children, support their own parents, and their ability to do so hinges upon their financial stability. But the experiences of Ankur and Gaurav offer little evidence of neatly defined transitions from tertiary education to work. If modernist narratives conceptualised "youth" as a linear transition through time, the experiences of these young men outline a rather different temporality (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2003; Ruddick, 2003). Youth for many young men across the Global South has been marked by a sense of prolonged waiting, uncertainty and limbo (Jeffrey, 2010; Johnson-Hanks, 2002; Honwana, 2012). Indeed, Ankur and Gaurav were part of a generation of young men who were not quite able to identify as adults, nor as boys, but as one participant put it, were simply "getting old but not growing up."

Yet Ankur and Gaurav did not regret pursuing tertiary education and they each remained quite hopeful about what the future entailed. Part of the reason for their relative optimism lies in how powerful narratives frame formal education as an intrinsic good. Dominant development discourses enshrine formal education as the most potent means for facilitating national development and for individuals to realise social mobility (Deuchar, 2014b; Sen, 1999). In the Indian context, these discourses have been a central catalyst for enlisting large numbers of young people in education, particularly at the primary level. But these are promises that formal education only seems to partially fulfil (Bajaj, 2010; Jeffrey, 2010). As Jeffrey, Jeffery and Jeffery (2008) argue, formal education has done little to affect structural inequalities and create inclusive growth, but it has afforded some young people novel

opportunities to generate an income. Thus, a formally unemployed young man offers students insights as to how they might find work; another young man creates work by packaging his skills and selling technological services to his peers.

The income these young men were able to yield was only a small part of the story. Arguably more powerful was the cultural politics of what it means to be an educated person at this historical juncture. Studies across the Global South have demonstrated how some educated young people draw upon their credentials to acquire a measure of respect (Jaju, 2018; Jeffrey, 2010; Levinson & Holland, 1999). Jeffrey's (2010) study in north India, for example, showed how college graduates marked boundaries between themselves and others by conducting themselves with an air of distinction and refinement. In doing so, they were drawing on their credentials to reinforce axes of social difference. In a similar vein to the participants in Jeffrey's (2010) study, Ankur and Gaurav considered themselves to be quite unlike "lazy" youth who did not make good use of their time. They signalled this difference by comporting themselves with a sense of educated distinction and by dressing in a neat and tidy manner. They did not make "rude jokes" and were always respectful to their elders. By insisting on their position as "educated people," Ankur and Gaurav were able to acquire status and respect among their family's and peers.

Where the strategies of these two young men diverged was in their mobility practices. For Ankur, moving to the city was much more than the pursuit of employment. It was an opportunity for him to have new experiences and acquire competencies which "non-migrants" could not. Indeed, his time in the city had helped him position himself as urbane and "modern." Such meanings of migration are bound up with enduring representations of the rural and urban found in art, literature, popular cinema and film (Nandy, 2007). The city is often constructed as a site of modernity, hope and possibility, but it is also a place where one can be led astray, isolated, and tempted by worldly desires (Ferguson, 1999; Jacka, 2005; Smith & Gergan,

2015). The rural, by contrast, is commonly constructed a site of “tradition,” hardship and backwardness, as well as one of purity, simplicity and calm (Halfacree, 2006; Woods, 2011). These constructs are especially potent in Uttarakhand where there are acute social and economic divisions between the hills and plains. And such contested meanings of the rural and urban loom large in the lives of young men like Ankur and Gaurav. Ankur’s suggestion that Gaurav might not read the newspaper resonated with a powerful narrative which registers *pahari log* as uneducable. Gaurav’s sarcastic mention of Ankur becoming a “big man” invoked the urban as a site of opportunity, at the same time as it derided him for being too hastily drawn to the “bright lights of the city” (Gupta, 2005, p.752).

And yet, Ankur and Gaurav’s exchange was made possible by a set of conditions which belie these static constructions of rural and urban space. In recent decades, new forms of connectivity among young people, technological advances, and infrastructural improvements have hastened the flow of people, ideas, resources and capital across borders (Appardurai, 1996; Jeffrey, 2017; Sheller & Urry, 2006). These processes have transformed rural economies across the Global South (Gupta, 2005; Kumar, 2016; Berckmoes & White, 2016). They have also opened up new opportunities for rural youth. Some studies have shown how educated youth are returning to rural contexts after a period of migration to configure rural futures (Dyson, 2019a; Mwaura, 2017; Schut, 2019). Other studies have shown how “non-migrants” develop novel strategies for “evading uselessness” (Fioratta, 2015). Still others have shown how mobile young people are able to realise status by regularly crossing rural and urban divides (Gidwani & Siviramakrishnan, 2003, 2004; Jeffrey & Young, 2012; Rai, 2018). These insights offer scope for further unpacking Ankur and Gaurav’s strategies and for highlighting their nuances. Ankur attempted to ridicule Gaurav for not reading the newspaper, but Gaurav boasted the quickest Internet connection in Pauri Town. Ankur was able to realise status as

someone who lived in the city, but only because he regularly returned to the hills. Rigid binaries between the rural and urban were confounded by these young men even as they were affirmed.

This thesis sits at the intersection of debates about youth, education and migration. It charts the ways diverse ways that educated youth grappled with unemployment. Its theoretical contribution is threefold. Firstly, building on the works of Jeffrey et al. (2008) and others (Dyson, 2019b; Jaju, 2018; Jeffrey, 2010; Majumdar & Mooij, 2012), I develop a theoretical framework which straddles the insights of Pierre Bourdieu and Paul Willis. By bringing these theories into conversation, I account for the agency of lower middle class youth and how they were seeking to acquire dominant forms of capital. This represents a departure from some analyses of education in South Asia, which have not always foregrounded the agency of marginalised groups (for example, Fernandes, 2006; Majumdar & Mooij, 2012; Scrase, 1993). Secondly, this thesis builds upon debates about youth and education in the Global South by showing the novel ways youth produce and leverage social, economic and cultural capital in a context of migration (Gidwani & Sivaramakrishnan, 2003, 2004; Dyson, 2019b; Schut, 2019). In a similar vein to other young men, participants performed educated masculinities to mark themselves off from others (Jaju, 2018; Jeffrey et al., 2008). However, I show how migrants and non-migrants did so in ways that would not compromise their potential return to the rural or departure to the city. Finally, this thesis shows how the mobility practices of educated youth in Uttarakhand were reconfiguring dominant representations of rural space (Chakraborty, 2018; Joshi, 2015; Koskimaki, 2016). While attending to the significant ways rural areas have been transformed, I show how educated young men both invoked and challenged these representations in ways that consolidated their status.

1.4 The context

I make this contribution in a context of profound social and economic change. The imposition of structural adjustment policies across India in the 1990s, coincided with acute transformations in Uttarakhand more specifically (Koskimaki, 2011, 2017). Based on recommendations of the central government's Mandal Commission, legislation was proposed by the then Uttar Pradesh Government to reserve twenty-seven percent of posts in educational institutions and government employment for Other Backward Castes (Kumar, 2001). These percentages were devised in accordance with nation-wide demographic averages. But such groups were said to comprise just three percent of the population in the hills districts of what was then Uttar Pradesh (Mawdsley, 1998). Protesters argued that the legislation would further marginalise those living in the hills who were already excluded from secure and well-remunerated work (Kumar, 2001).

An important feature of these demonstrations was how they garnered support by mobilising discourses which identified “insiders” and “outsiders” (Moller, 2000). Indeed, these protests helped to consolidate a strong sense of collective identity among *pahari log* by identifying those from the plains as responsible for their continued exploitation. *Pahari log* argued that the proposed reservation legislation was yet another example of “outsiders” from the plains attempting to undermine their way of life and threatening their social and cultural distinctiveness (Fiol, 2008; Klenk, 2010). By framing the issue in this way, protesters were invoking a broader historical narrative which has its antecedents in the British colonial period, when raw materials were exported from the hills and used for building infrastructural projects elsewhere (Guha, 1989; Rangan, 2000). Appealing to the shared interests of *pahari log* also helped to obscure the diverse caste, ethnic, cultural and religious divisions among those living in the hills. Protesters argued that these exploitative relations would only cease when the hills were government by hill people, for hill people (Kumar, 2001). It was in the wake of these protests that a separate state was created in November 2000.

Although the state was created to serve the interests of those living in the hills districts, many *pahari* youth argue that tensions and divides have been exacerbated since 2000 (Koskimaki, 2017; Tillin, 2013). Rural livelihoods are increasingly difficult to sustain and there have been few sustained and effective approaches to generating employment (Klenk, 2010; Morarji, 2014). Despite significant advances in technology and infrastructure, many parts of the hills remain isolated and livelihoods are difficult to maintain (Dyson, 2019a). Moreover, the Uttarakhand hills continue to be represented in the dominant imaginary as a site of “backwardness” and “hardship” (Galvin, 2013; Mathur, 2015). These processes are having profound effects on the social and economic fabric of the hills (Chakraborty, 2018; Koskimaki, 2016). Rates of outmigration have increased significantly across all hill districts since the early 2000s, particularly among educated young men (Census of India, 2011; Mamgain & Reddy, 2016). The population of the District of Pauri Garhwal, where Ankur and Gaurav grew up, declined from 697 078 to 686 527 in the first decade of the 2000s (Census of India, 2011).

Many migrants have moved to the regional city of Dehradun. Dehradun has a population of just over 700 000 and was made the state capital when Uttarakhand was created. In the early nineteenth century, Dehradun emerged as a centre of trade and industry and has since developed a reputation as a centre of educational excellence (Srivastava, 1996). More recently, it has become a hub of migration and has attracted people from diverse caste, religious, ethnic and social backgrounds (Jakimow, 2017; Thumbe, 2012). Critically, however, rapid urbanisation has placed significant stresses on the city. Alongside pressures on housing and other infrastructure, the educational and employment landscapes have been transformed significantly. Enrolment rates in tertiary education have increased as many state institutions have been undermined (Gupta, 2018). A highly stratified private sector is playing a significant role in educational provision (Deuchar, 2014a; Gupta, 2018). Rates of unemployment among young people in urban centres in Uttarakhand are exceptionally high, at 27.7 percent

(Government of India, 2019). Taken together, the undermining of livelihoods in the hills and the erosion of working opportunities in Dehradun have made for a challenging set of conditions for educated migrants (Suryanarayana & Mamgain, 2019).

This thesis examines how educated young men from the Pauri Garhwal District of Uttarakhand navigate these challenges. But in emphasising to the ways that youth attempt to leverage the value of their educational credentials, there are pertinent themes which are attended to but not emphasised throughout this thesis. A recent set of studies have shown how marriage practices are changing among youth across the Global South (Abeyasekera, 2016; Aengst, 2014; Dyson, 2018). In addition to heightened references to “love marriages” and “choice,” one aspect of these changing practices is that some unemployed youth are increasingly anxious about their marriage prospects (Honwana, 2012). This was a concern for some participants in this study, particularly those nearing thirty years of age. One twenty-eight year old young man said that “if you are not married by the time you are thirty, people will think ‘what is wrong with that man?’” This was a sentiment shared by many young people I interviewed. All participants said that they would like to be married by the time that they are thirty years of age and some of them were unsure whether or not they would be able to do so. These viewpoints are interwoven throughout parts of the analysis. Nevertheless, the emphasis in this study is on how these young men grappled with unemployment. Thus while marriage was a concern for some young men, it is not a central focus of this thesis.

Another theme which is relevant to young people but not emphasised is student politics and violence. There has been an upsurge in violence across north India in recent years. During fieldwork, tensions were rising in Kashmir and there were countless reports of lynch mobs attacking minority groups across north India. Uttarakhand had been relatively sheltered from these forms of violence. But this has changed recently (Gopalakrishnan & Chauhan, 2018). A spate of attacks on Muslims were reported after tensions rose in Kashmir. Rates of violence

against women and other minorities, such as Dalits have also risen across South Asia (Gangoli, 2016). Pursuing degrees also sometimes thrusts youth into close proximity to such violence. Indeed, college campuses are often sites of intense rivalry and conflict among students (Rogers, 2008). Major political parties – most notably the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC) – have student wings which are very active on campuses across north India. These parties are active in Dehradun and there are often violent encounters between rival student parties, especially in the lead up to student elections.

But the young men in this study maintained a considerable distance from such violence. It was not just that they viewed student's political parties as corrupt and self-interested, but in attempting to fashion educated masculinities they sought to remove themselves from what they viewed as strong arm politicking. One young man said it was counterproductive for youth "to march in the street and beat their chests." They argued that student politicians were seeking power and had little regard for civic values. Young men did not condone violence of any kind and emphasised the capacity for educated youth to reconcile their differences through informed debate. Violence for these young men was the failure of diplomacy. And it was for diplomacy that some young men said they had a cogent and subtle skill.

1.5 Argument and structure of thesis

The foregoing discussion provides cause for clarifying the argument and structure of this thesis. There is a widespread crisis of educated unemployment in many parts of the Global South, and the main aim of this research is to analyse the ways young men grappled with it in Uttarakhand. The research pursues four main questions to meet the empirical and theoretical imperatives of this main aim. The first question is concerned with whether and how young men were able to realise social, cultural and economic gain in Uttarakhand by drawing on their position as

educated people. This question aims to investigate why young men continued to invest in education, when they were acutely aware that many educated youth in Uttarakhand could not find work. Taking leads from existing works (Dyson, 2019a; Young & Jeffrey, 2014; Jeffrey, 2010), my analysis unpacks the social and cultural meanings young men attached to education, and analyses how they were sometimes able to realise gain by marking boundaries between themselves and others.

Yet a study about educated unemployment in Dehradun would only be partial without analysing the experiences of migrants. The previous section outlined how the educational and employment landscapes have been transformed in recent decades, partly as a response to increasing numbers of migrants arriving in the city. With this in mind, the second research question investigates the ways that migrants attempted to challenge their marginality by moving to an urban setting. At the same time, thinking about the significance of mobility raises additional questions about educated youth who have not migrated and how they attempt to realise social gain. Thus, the third research question analyses how and whether “non-migrants” were able to realise social, cultural and economic gain without moving away. Finally, there are acute social, cultural and economic divisions between the hills and plains in Uttarakhand, and this study aims to highlight the significance of these for young men. Powerful discourses commonly depict the Uttarkhand hills in derogatory ways and as inferior to urban settings. The final research question offers scope for analysing how youth engage with these meanings as well as for investigating how or whether they attempted to fashion alternative representations of rural space.

To pursue these lines of inquiry, the following chapter offers a critical engagement with debates about social reproduction, education and migration. It details how I engage with the existing literature to develop my arguments and outlines the theoretical contribution that this thesis makes. This is followed by an overview of the methodology. A novel feature of my

research design lies in how I gathered material by regularly accompanying participants as they moved between the city and the Uttarakhand hills. This was crucial to eliciting the significance of rural-urban mobility and how young men attempted to use it in strategic ways. In doing so, my work pairs with recent studies that have used mobile methods to consider the ways young people are changing representations of the hills (Chakraborty, 2018; Galvin, 2013; Joshi, 2015; Koskimaki, 2016). My research design also builds upon works which have challenged representations of rural people as docile, passive or “non-migrants” (Gunter & Raghuram, 2018; Stockdale et al. 2018; Zhang, 2017). After discussing the methods used to gather material, I then introduce the political economy of Uttarakhand in much greater detail.

These three chapters provide a conceptual, methodological and contextual footing for the empirical chapters. This thesis has been written “with publication” and the first two empirical chapters have been accepted in *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* and *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* respectively. In accordance with the University of Melbourne’s guidelines, these appear in the thesis as they do in print. Therefore, they each include subsections which offer a literature review and an outline of the methods and setting. The latter two empirical chapters are written in a more traditional thesis format.

Thematically, the four empirical chapters are organised so that the first two analyse the strategies of migrants, while the latter two analyse the strategies of non-migrants. The first empirical chapter, *Strategically ‘out of place,’* highlights the ways migrants craft their identities and shift their spatial affinities as they move across space. In doing so, it foregrounds the significance of mobility practices for thinking about how youth challenge their marginality. Like Ankur, many participants regularly returned to their villages and homes for social occasions, such as religious festivals and weddings, as well as to help their families with various errands around their homes. But returning home could be a trying experience for young men who moved away but have remained unemployed. I argue that when young men returned

to their homes in Pauri Garhwal they performed identities which emphasised their associations with the city. In spite of not having found work, they were able to realise status as someone who had acquired knowledges and styles by living “outside.” At the same time, when many of these same migrants returned to Dehradun, they performed rural identities which helped them establish a foothold in the city. I argue that by performing their identities in these ways, young men were leaving open the possibility of rural and urban futures.

Yet many migrants had devised additional ways developing positive reputations that did not involve rural-urban mobility. In their preparation for white-collar work, many young men had spent multiple years in coaching clinics and tuition centres in Dehradun acquiring skills to help them find jobs. These skills included modes of communicating, styles of dress and ways of comporting oneself which they considered integral to succeeding in the workplace. But in the absence of such work, devised alternative ways of creating an income. *Between enterprise and unemployment in neoliberal India* shows how educated migrants drew upon the skills and competencies they had gained in coaching clinics and tuition centres to create work for themselves. They did so by designing new services for these institutions, running errands, teaching classes and completing administrative duties. This chapter advances understandings about how unemployed youth leverage the value of their education. The main argument is that young men were creatively interpreting notions of enterprise to make and income and acquire respect. Where studies about enterprise commonly show how youth uphold their value by promoting their own interests, this chapter shows how youth did so by emphasising the positive benefits their work had for others. Although participants made sense of their work in this way, I show how their practices reproduced patriarchal gender norms and class divides.

To address questions about how the social practices of “non-migrants,” the third and fourth empirical chapters analyse the experiences of young men who are educated but who live in Pauri Town and surrounding villages. *Productive hanging out* considers how young men

attempted to articulate a productive presence in Pauri Town. I highlight the ways that young men made sense of spending time at Gaurav's computer shop and how they register it as a site of productivity. For example, I highlight how young men joked with each other and attempt to ridicule those who are "wasting their time." These lively exchanges revealed the importance of being productive for these young men. I also show the more tangible ways that young men attempted to be productive. At intervals when the shop becomes busy, for example, young men often assisted others with tasks such as printing documents, filling out electronic forms and translating letters. These tasks involved using new technologies and drawing upon skills which were inseparable from their education. In these ways, educated young men produced the computer shop as a site where they could register their productivity and demonstrate it to others.

The fourth empirical chapter also examines the experiences of those who had not migrated. But where the first three empirical chapters each deal with young men who have completed their degrees, *Not for money but for change* examines how young men in the final year of their college degrees were reconsidering the value of their education. These students were aware that their prospects of finding well-paid work were slim. But they did not consider their degrees to be worthless. On the contrary, these young men were developing novel ways of using their position as college students to fashion social change in villages and Pauri Town. For example, several young men work alongside Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) which were concerned with cleaning the natural environment, offering health services to the elderly, and dealing with enduring social problems, such as alcoholism. Other young men used their competencies and knowledges to offer tutoring to younger children in their villages and homes. Some analyses of formal education in rural areas have argued that young men become alienated from villages contexts once they have acquired tertiary credentials. Others have argued that young men pursue education so that they can move to urban areas and find well-paid work. But this chapter reconsiders these perspectives. In a context where education is of

limited value for securing work “out there” in the plains, it shows how some youth were starting to value education as a means of fashioning social change in proximity to their homes.

The concluding chapter, Chapter Nine, draws upon the findings of each empirical chapter to demonstrate how educated youth were attempting to realise status and respect, without compromising their social affiliations and ties. By articulating this strategic positioning, young men were attempting to manage an uncertain present and leave open the possibility of rural and urban futures. This chapter unpacks this main argument to establish why the strategies of young men matter for understandings about youth, education and migration. The final section of Chapter Nine offers some ideas for further research before concluding with some final remarks.

Chapter Two. Rethinking social reproduction through the lens of education and migration

2.1 Introduction

A central concern of this thesis is illuminating the ways that educated yet unemployed youth contend their marginality. Accordingly, this chapter provides a critical engagement with the theoretical insights of Pierre Bourdieu (1978, 1984, 1990) to advance understandings of how educated migrants and non-migrants produce capital and leverage status. It also engages with recent debates about education and migration to show how youth develop modes of exclusion in this process, as well as how their strategies contribute to a subtle rewriting of rural and urban space. This chapter is divided into three main sections. The following section elaborates Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction and demonstrates how it has informed debates about educational inequality across the Global South. I argue that Bourdieu offered limited ways of thinking about how educated yet unemployed youth resist their domination and how they partake in the reproduction of inequalities. In line with influential works which highlight the contradictory nature of formal education (Jeffrey, 2010; Jeffrey et al., 2008), my analysis couples Bourdieu's insights with the work of Willis to more fully account for how marginalised youth might reproduce and transform axes of difference. In doing so, I am able to account for the ways that marginalised sought to acquire capitals, as well as the diverse ways they sought to deploy them.

The second section uses this theoretical framework as a lens to reconsider the ways that migrants and "non-migrants" leverage capital. In particular, I emphasise the dynamism of the habitus. Existing debates have usefully shown how migrants produce capitals as they move between destinations, how "non-migrants" fashion alternative visions of progress that do not entail moving away, and how new axes of social difference emerge in these processes. However, I build on studies about rural-urban migration in the Global South by arguing that educated youth attempt to realise status in ways that does not compromise their broader affiliations and ties. My analysis explores how young men are able to realise social gain by

articulating this strategic positioning and considers the implications of their doing so for axes of social difference. I argue that it is precisely because their strategies respect hierarchies and norms that they reproduce – rather than dismantle – social inequalities.

The third section of this chapter considers the significance of young men's strategies for the social reproduction of space more generally. As educated migrants and non-migrants forge ways of producing capital and develop modes of exclusion, they also contribute to a subtle rewriting of rural and urban space. I make this argument by linking debates within geography and anthropology that have unsettled depictions of space as essential, fixed or given (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997; Woods, 2011), with studies in Uttarakhand which have conceptualised young people's rural-urban mobilities as generative processes which reshape space (Dyson, 2019b; Chakraborty, 2018; Galvin, 2013; Joshi, 2015). This creates scope for thinking about whether young men challenge or reproduce depictions of rural space. The concluding section offers a summary of the main arguments and provides a conceptual foundation for the methodological and contextual chapters that then follow.

2.2 Youth, education and the production of capital

The work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984; 1990) has been important for understanding how dominant social groups secure their advantage within schools and across society more generally. To theorise conflict between classes, Bourdieu (1984) coupled Marxist understandings of economic capital with his formulation of social and cultural capital. Bourdieu (1984) conceptualised social capital as networks and contacts that agents can draw upon to realise potential or actual credit. Cultural capital can be seen as a sense of refinement or familiarity with dominant cultural codes and exists in three forms. It is institutionalised in the form of educational credentials; objectified in the materiality of artworks and other cultural artefacts;

as well as embodied through a sense of having the “right” cultural taste and the capacity to decipher those artefacts.

Bourdieu argued that social reproduction occurs as agents exchange capitals in social “fields.” Bourdieu (1984) most commonly referred to fields as institutional settings such as the family, school or workplace, but they can also refer to broader spatial scales, such as the nation-state (Erel, 2010; Kelly & Lusi, 2006). He likened fields to competitive games and argued that those who enter the field with the greatest stocks of capital stand to gain the most. But succeeding in fields is not related to one’s possession of capital alone. Bourdieu argued that as people are socialised they develop a “habitus” – or structured set of dispositions – which signals their familiarity with the expectations of a given set of fields. Having the “correct” habitus for a field means that agents are able to move productively and fluently within it. Those who are socialised into middle class families, for example, will be able to comport themselves in ways which resonate with the expectations in other middle class fields. But without a proper “feel for the game,” agents might struggle to articulate themselves productively and will thus not be able to acquire capital.

Crucially, Bourdieu argued that the power to define the “rules of the game” rested almost exclusively with the middle classes. One of the main theoretical advances this insight offered to existing theories of social reproduction was how it enabled Bourdieu to identify axes of power between the middle and working classes. Previous Marxist accounts which focused more strictly on economic capital were unable to fully account for conflict between classes who did not own the means of production. Scholars such as Wright (1985), for example, could not adequately explain why the middle classes’ access to skilled jobs existed in tension with the working classes’ exclusion from them. For Bourdieu (1984), it was not the middle classes’ possession of certain skills and qualifications which separated them from subordinate classes, but rather, the capacity to define the “rules of the game” such that their own skills were valued

(Nash, 1999). From this perspective, one is not middle class because they have educational credentials; they are middle class because they have the power to exclude from positions of social prestige those who do not.

Critical perspectives of formal education have drawn on Bourdieu's work to challenge the assumption that schooling provides all students equal opportunities to succeed (Jeffrey, 2010; Masquelier, 2019; Thapan, 2014). These works show how many educational settings across the Global South reward those who have a set of capitals and a habitus which coheres with those of dominant social groups. Some of these studies have examined classroom interactions to show how labelling of students as "good," "challenging" or "uneducable," largely corresponds with their class position (Ling, 2015; Majumdar & Mooij, 2012). Others have shown how graduates without adequate social and economic capital are unable to translate their credentials into employment (Bajaj, 2010; Jeffrey et al. 2008; Masquelier, 2019). There is also a potent geographical element to these arguments. Scholars have argued that formal schooling privileges forms of knowledge and ways of being that valorise urban modernity and discredits the livelihoods of rural populations (Kumar, 1989; Schut, 2019; Scrase, 1993). To become a "successful" student in a rural context often means acquiring a habitus which resonates with those of the urban middle classes (Klenk, 2010; Morarji, 2014).

Scholars have also drawn upon Bourdieu's (1984) insights to show how the middle classes have organised the educational landscape around their own interests. In many contexts across the Global South, educational qualifications – and tertiary credentials in particular – have historically been the preserve of dominant social groups (Boyle, 2018; Bajaj, 2010; Deshpande, 2003; Lopes, 2017). But as increasing numbers of youth from marginalised backgrounds have invested in tertiary education, the middle classes have created private institutions and deployed their resources within them (Fernandes, 2006; Fernandes & Heller, 2006; Majumdar & Mooij, 2012). As the middle classes acquire degrees from private

institutions, the prestige associated with degrees from public institutions has largely been undermined. For this reason poorer youth might not be able change their social position by investing in state institutions, while those with credentials from well-reputed private institutions can secure jobs in urban centres (Boyle, 2018; Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007; Sancho, 2016).

These two sets of studies usefully highlight why dominant social groups tend to be the primary beneficiaries of education and show how strategies of middle class politicking reproduce social inequalities. In this sense they foreground the dynamism of middle class agency. Yet the analytical focus of these latter works reveals a conceptual limitation for my purposes. By emphasising the ways that the middle classes adapt and renew their accumulation strategies in changing historical circumstances, it appears as though the working classes can only ever be one step behind “the game.” The working classes might seek upward mobility by attempting to accrue capitals associated with the middle class, but the middle class will then change the rules of the game to ensure working class exclusion. Significantly, Bourdieu (1984) offers no other clearly defined ways in which the working class can alter their class position. For this reason, his work arguably distracts attention away from the more diverse ways marginalised social groups might resist their domination and how inequalities are reproduced and changed in this process.

Jeffrey’s (2010) analysis of educated unemployment in north India attempts to address this limitation by holding the insights of Bourdieu alongside those of Paul Willis (1981). Paul Willis (1981) illuminated how the agency of the working classes lends itself to the reproduction of their own marginality. Willis (1981) argued that schools precipitate oppositional cultures among youth from working class backgrounds which prime them to accept low-paid manual jobs. To make this argument, Willis (1981) brought attention to the interplay between young people’s “penetrations” of dominant culture and the “limitations” those penetrations encounter.

“Penetrations” can be understood as impulses or strategies which substantiate a critique of the conditions of the working class and their position within the social whole (Willis, 1981, p.119). For example, some youth in his study of a school in northern England, made lucid critiques of how working class “lads” were treated and relented the exclusion of their cultural forms from the classroom. Willis (1981) argued that these penetrations have the potential to radically disrupt working class exclusion. But these penetrations meet “limitations” which can be seen as blocks or diversions that “impede the full development and expression of those impulses” (Willis, 1981, p.119).

These limitations often come from the school and are grounded in its institutional authority, such as when youth are disciplined for breaches of its rules. Crucially, however, Willis (1981) argued that “limitations” were not just disciplinary processes that the working class received. At other times, young people themselves produced “limitations” by celebrating aspects of their own marginalisation, such as celebrating manual labour. Many of his participants also produced a culture of machoism and sexism which further excluded them from roles in other economic sectors. Willis (1981) argued that limitations and penetrations constantly interact in the process of social reproduction. When limitations cannot fully impede penetrations, a “partial penetration” of dominant culture occurs (Willis, 1981, p.126). In this way, Willis (1981) accounted for how the agency of working class youth reproduces their class position, as well as the possibility of them changing that positioning. Here the most definitive theoretical contrast between Bourdieu and Willis can be drawn. While both scholars emphasised how marginalisation happens to the working class, in Willis’ (1981) approach, marginalisation is a process that they more actively participate within.

Recent studies across the Global South have paired Bourdieu’s and Willis’ theoretical insights to examine how educated youth from marginalised backgrounds experience education and contend their marginality (Anderson-Levitt, 2011; Dyson, 2010; 2019b; Jeffrey, 2010). In

many of these works, education emerges as a “contradictory resource” (Levinson & Holland, 1996, p.1) which gives some young people the opportunity to realise upward mobility, but more commonly reinforces axes of power. In the Indian context, for example, Jeffrey et al. (2008) study combined the insights of Bourdieu and Willis to theorise how educated youth grapple with long term unemployment. Some of their Jat and Muslim participants realised a degree of status by performing urbane and civilised identities which pitted them against ostensibly savage and uncouth “illiterates.” Other young men drew upon their education to become local level politicians and lobbyists. Despite being excluded from the established middle classes, these sets of men were able to fashion educated masculinities and identities which marked themselves off from other unemployed youth (see also Dyson, 2019b; Jeffrey, 2010). Jaju’s (2018) analysis of Madrasa education in Kolkata also shows how some educated yet unemployed Muslim youth are able to realise gain by redefining what it means to be educated. A set of reforms were passed in the mid-2000s by the West Bengal Government which mandated that degrees conferred by Madrasas be recognised by government institutions. Despite the prospect of long term unemployment, those who have graduated after the reforms are able to mark themselves off from pre-reform graduates by positioning themselves as “employable people.”

The strategies of educated migrants in this study encourage a theoretical framework which couples the insights of Bourdieu and Willis in a similar manner. For example, Willis (1981) emphasised how the “lads” in school forge their class position by resisting a clearly defined institutional authority. But in this study, most participants were actively seeking to acquire capitals and a habitus which largely coheres with that of dominant social groups. Bourdieu’s (1984) emphasis on how dominated classes seek social mobility through upward credentialing seems more potent in this context. Moreover, Willis (1981) focused on how existing class inequalities were reproduced as working class youth came to work alongside

their fathers on the factory shop floor. But something rather different is occurring among my participants. Young people are investing in education to forge livelihoods which are considerably unlike those of the generation who preceded them. In theorising the “newness” of their strategies Willis’ (1981) work only takes us so far. Because even though he held upon the possibility of youth changing their class position, his work ultimately accounted for the reproduction of existing inequalities much more so than the production of new ones.

In a similar vein to the works of Jeffrey et al. (2008), Jaju (2018) and others (Anderson-Levitt, 2011; Dyson, 2019b; Jeffrey, 2010), this thesis shows how educated yet unemployed youth attempt to produce capital and realise privilege. It examines how they develop a range of practices which mark themselves off from others and which accord them status and respect. Yet my work builds on these studies by showing the novel ways that youth leverage their status as educated people in a context of widespread unemployment and outmigration. It emphasises how mobility practices are bound up with the ways youth configure new opportunities as well as how some youth develop modes of producing capital without moving away. I argue that educated migrants and non-migrants attempt to realise social and material gain without compromising their social affiliations and ties. By articulating this strategic positioning, educated young men are attempting to manage an uncertain present and anticipate the prospect of both rural and urban futures. To develop this argument, I turn to recent debates about migration and the production of capital.

2.3 Educated migrants and the production of capital

Many scholars have drawn upon Bourdieu’s conceptual vocabulary to examine the experiences of educated migrants. A feature of recent works has been to draw attention to the contingency of various forms of capital and the malleability of the habitus. In the same way that economic

capital affords differing levels of purchasing power as one moves across borders, so too does the value of one's social and cultural capital vary between contexts. Some studies show how strong social networks in one context may have little traction when one moves elsewhere (Rutten & Verstappen, 2014); similarly, others show how qualifications from a prestigious institution in one setting may not be recognised in other geographical locations (Kelly & Lusi, 2006, p.835-836; Robertson, 2013). These studies also emphasise that capitals are not fixed assets and that migrants develop various strategies to aid their exchange, accumulation and conversion (Brooks & Waters, 2011; Cheng, 2014a; Waters, 2015). For instance, some studies have shown how privileged students acquire capital and prestige by associating themselves with cultural forms of places considered more developed or advanced than their home countries (Cheng, 2014a; Naafs & Skelton, 2017; Viera, 2018). Cheng's (2014a) study of university students in Singapore, for example, suggests that migrants from South-East Asia can sometimes realise status by associating themselves with notions of progress and modernity. Other similar studies have shown how migrants develop a "transnational habitus" to enhance their economic and social prospects of living abroad (Blunt, 2007; Kelly & Lusi, 2006).

Yet other analyses have suggested that skilled migrants are occasionally able to realise gain by mobilising a habitus which does not fully cohere with that which is dominant in their destination (Blatman-Thomas, 2014; Morel, 2018; Ryan, Erel, & D'Angelo, 2015). These latter works attest to the strategic ways migrants seek to "stand out" and novel ways they can produce and acquire capital. The creation and maintenance of migrant community organisations, for example, can largely be read in these terms (D'Angelo, 2015; Erel, 2010). This latter set of studies also shows how some migrants produce new capitals and ways of validating that capital by establishing institutions within the field. Some of the Turkish migrants in Erel's (2010) study, for example, were able to mobilise their cultural resources to gain employment in the social sector when they arrived in Germany and Britain. At the same time, they developed

migrant networks and were able to realise status within them because of the way their labour advanced the interests of the Turkish speaking community.

Scholars have made similar arguments about how educated migrants are sometimes able to configure social and economic opportunities within the Global South. Many of these studies highlight how rural urban migration is often bound up with projects of self-transformation and how educated migrants can realise social gain even when they remain jobless (Crivello, 2011; Esson, 2015; Punch, 2015; Jeffrey & Dyson, 2014). Samantha's Punch's (2015) work in Bolivia, for example, shows how rural-urban migrants can sometimes realise status by comporting and articulating themselves in ways that those who have not moved away cannot. Schut's (2019) study in rural Indonesia shows how educated youth who return to their villages seek to position themselves as vanguards of positive change. Although they could not secure work in the city and remain unemployed, they have developed a series of social projects through which they are able to garner status as productive and respected youth (see also Berckmoes & White, 2016; Mwaura, 2017). In many of these studies, moving from one context to another emerges as a key strategy in which educated young people produce and leverage new forms of capital. In this sense mobility practices can be seen as a kind of resource; or a mode through which unemployed yet educated migrants can access and acquire newfound status and standing.

Some of these analyses also attend to how migrants' practices simultaneously produce new axes of social difference. In contexts where migration is associated with movement through life-stages, for example, those who cannot migrate are often "left behind" (Crivello, 2011; Osella & Osella, 1999; Punch, 2015). To the extent that emerging modes of masculinity for rural young men are associated with moving away (Chea & Huijsmans, 2018; Maycock, 2014; Punch, 2015), those who "remain" are often unable to marry and become breadwinners. Education can also register divisions between those who live within rural contexts (Jeffrey et

al., 2008; Morarji, 2014). While the participants in Schut's (2019) study suggested that their projects were about creating inclusive social change, for example, they were articulating projects which limited space for uneducated youth to join in. In each of these ways, the education-migration nexus arguably serves to constitute new and emerging boundaries between mobile and emplaced young people.

Critically, however, "non-migrants" often resist these processes and fashion alternative visions of progress which do not involve migrating away. An emerging set of studies challenge the characterisation of "non-migrants" as immobile and passive by showing the diversity of their activities, the fluid nature of migration decisions and the ways they support mobile populations (Barcus & Werner, 2016; Stockdale, Theunissen, & Haartsen, 2018; Zhang, 2017). For example, Fioratta's (2015) study in Guinea demonstrates how educated non-migrants strived to gain respect of their families and peers in a context of significant outmigration. They developed small-scale entrepreneurial ventures such as distributing resources such as water or gasoline, selling mobile phone recharge cards, and creating food stalls. While most of these enterprises made very little money, they were crucial for "evading uselessness" and conveying to others that they were responsible people (Fioratta, 2015, p.303; see also Huijsmans, 2018). In a similar vein, Mwaura's (2017) study in rural Kenya examined how college graduates attempted to reconcile their status as educated people with the prospect of working in agriculture. Unlike uneducated and poorer farmers, she argues that educated youth constructed identities which positioned themselves as urbanised, elite, and harbingers of social change (see also Berckmoes & White, 2016). The potency of these identities was in part their mobility; they transcended geographical scales and derived legitimacy from wider ideological spheres (cf. Levinson & Holland, 1996).

The manner in which migrants experience hardship and the ways they contend it has been a feature of recent debates about migration in the South Asian context. Some studies point

to the malleability of the habitus by showing how educated migrants shift their ethnic and class affinities to mitigate hardship in metropolitan centres (McDuie-Ra, 2012; Rogaly & Thieme, 2012; Smith & Gergan, 2015). Other studies show how return migrants forge identities which register their movement through the life-course by drawing on the resources they gained during periods working abroad (Gardner & Osella, 2004; Osella & Osella, 1999, 2003; Rutten & Verstappen, 2014). One of the most pertinent strands of this literature highlights the strategies of circular migrants and how they draw upon various cultural repertoires to navigate rural and urban divides (Gidwani & Sivaramakrishnan, 2003, 2004; Rai, 2018; Rao, 2014; Young & Jeffrey, 2012). Gidwani and Sivaramkrishnan (2003), for example, developed the notion of “rural cosmopolitanism” to highlight how circular migrants develop capacities for repositioning themselves in multiple social contexts. Many of their participants had very limited stocks of capital. But by drawing upon the knowledges and resources they acquired in the city, rural migrants were sometimes able to challenge social hierarchies when they returned home. Taken together, these studies demonstrate how spatial mobility affords some youth knowledge and experiences which they can leverage to assert themselves in various spatial contexts.

Yet, in attending to the ways that migrants contest social hierarchies, some of these works risk overstating the place of resistance in processes of social reproduction. In doing so, their analyses sometimes downplay the strategies of those who are seeking to acquire dominant capitals. With this in mind, other scholars have made rather different arguments about the strategies of return migrants. Instead of strictly trying to contest place-based power relations when they return home, some young people draw upon their experiences of migration to create social and economic opportunities which largely respect village hierarchies and norms (Jeffrey & Dyson, 2014; Koskimaki, 2016, 2017). In a similar vein to Schut’s (2019) work, Dyson’s (2019a) study in a village in Uttarakhand shows how young people reengage with their local

environment after a period of migration. Some of Dyson's (2019a) participants had developed diverse entrepreneurial portfolios, worked closely with other youth and made sense of their work as rendering a service to the village (see also Jeffrey & Dyson, 2014). Koskimaki's (2016) study of youth politicians in Hill Towns in Uttarakhand also shows how return migrants are attempting using their knowledge and experiences of migration to carve out livelihoods as local politicians. Their work involves asserting themselves within localised networks of power rather than identifying against them. Therefore, unlike the focus of Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan (2003), these works attest to how migrants leverage their experiences without overtly challenging hierarchies and norms.

In this thesis, I draw upon debates about migration to advance understandings of how educated migrants and non-migrants leverage their status as educated people. While existing studies usefully foreground the malleability of the habitus, some studies tend to suggest that agents acquire a habitus such that the *either* "stand out" or "fit in." This approach arguably limits scope for thinking about subtle nuances and the dynamism of the habitus. My analysis also holds the insights of Bourdieu and Willis alongside each other to foreground the agency of youth without overstating the extent to which that agency is oriented toward resistance. In doing so, I show how educated migrants and "non-migrants" were seeking to distinguish themselves in various settings without doing so in ways that might compromise their ties across them. Even though their strategies do not generate the kind of enduring stability they desire, I suggest that they amount to much more than a momentary "stay" against social and economic uncertainty. The following section considers how the practices of educated youth were affecting the production of rural and urban space.

2.4 Youth sociality, mobility and the production of rural-urban space

One of the main aims of this thesis is to investigate whether and how the mobility practices of educated youth in Uttarakhand are reconfiguring dominant representations of rural space. Theorising the interconnectivity between social practice and the production of space has emerged as a defining feature of human geography (Cresswell, 2002). Instead of treating space as a passive backdrop for social action, geographers have analysed the ways that agents actively produce it (Cresswell, 2002; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994). In this sense the production of space is an “ongoing project” which is intimately bound up with power relations. The ways that certain places are understood in the dominant imaginary, as well as who can most productively inhabit certain places are inherently political processes (Cresswell, 2002; Massey, 1998).

Geographers in the Global South have drawn on this theoretical perspective to consider how marginalised youth often create and occupy “anchoring points” to claim ownership over public space and assert their rights to inhabit the city. A common theme throughout these works is that young people sometimes carve out “transgressive spaces” wherein they can generate bonds and ties with other young men and acquire a measure of respect (Jeffrey, 2010; Langevang, 2008; Masquelier, 2013, 2019; Weiss, 2009). Masquelier’s (2019) recent study of tea drinking rituals among unemployed youth in Niger, for example, highlights how “gathering circles” at *fadas* provide a temporal ordering for young men who are unable to meet normative expectations of adulthood. Against a backdrop of economic hardship and material constraints, young men gather at *fadas* to “forge new expressions of sociability and new spaces of belonging” (Masquelier, 2019, p.3). Langevang’s (2008) analysis of young men who gather at meeting places or “bases” on the streets in Accra, also shows how they attempt to create ways of socialising which register them as respectable and productive. While the broader community

often consider those spending time at bases as troublesome, young men themselves attempt to reframe hanging out in positive ways and develop social projects to assist others.

In attending to how agents reconfigure urban space for their own social and material ends, these studies pair with debates about the role of migrants in city making (Caglar & Glick Schiller, 2018; Rouse, 1992; Ye, 2016). The emphasis within this latter set of works is how migrants establish themselves in the city, often through attempting to recreate the conditions of a “home community” in a new setting (Li & Chan, 2018; Rogaly & Thieme, 2012). The indigenous women in Becerra et al. (2018) study, for example, maintained their ethnic identities and ties when they migrated to Santiago, by performing ancestral cultural practices. These included celebrating festivals as well as more mundane and everyday acts, such as sharing and cooking particular kinds of cuisine. Other studies show how migrants inhabit, link and transform multiple locations through processes such as translocal householding (Gidwani & Ramamurthy, 2018; Rogaly & Thieme, 2012). Through these kinds of strategies migrants can sometimes articulate a sense of continuity with their homelands at the same time as they change the city itself (Chambers, 2018).

Recent studies across the Global South have also considered how young people attempt to rearticulate dominant understandings of space in rural settings (Chea & Huijsmans, 2018; Langevang & Gough, 2016; Punch, 2015). In line with broader debates in rural geography, these studies invoke the “rural” not as a distinct kind of spatial essence but rather as a social and spatial construct (Halfacree, 1993, 2006; Philo, 1992; Woods, 2011). Therefore even though the “characteristics” of “the rural” cannot be neatly defined, these studies acknowledge that representations of rurality are integral to how people create meaning and make sense of the world (Woods, 2011). The young people in Mwaura’s (2017) study in rural Kenya and Schut’s (2019) study in rural Indonesia, for example, stated quite explicitly that they wanted to challenge dominant notions of rural space which register it as lacking, backward and static.

They emphasised the ways that educated youth could contribute to rural settings and reshape them to grapple with their economic marginality and neglect.

Another important aspect of theorising rurality in this way is that it creates scope for theorising its dynamism. Against a backdrop of acute social and economic change in South Asia, Kumar (2016, p.61) suggests that a “new rurality” is emerging in some agrarian settings. Based on fieldwork in western Uttar Pradesh, Kumar (2016) highlights how a rise in non-farm employment, the introduction of new technologies, growing educational opportunities, emerging infrastructure projects and welfare programmes are changing power structures and reshaping rural space (Jeffrey, 2017; Kumar, 2016, p.61; Tenhunen, 2018). While attending to the difficulties which many people in rural settings face, Kumar (2016) contests the position taken by some scholars that Indian villages are “emptying out” (for example Gupta, 2005). Instead, he argues that mobility and migration are integral to material and cultural exchanges across rural and urban space, which are transforming aspirations and diversifying working opportunities available to different social groups.

In making this argument, Kumar (2016) stresses the dynamism and of rural space and how it is being transformed by villagers as they grapple with the challenges and opportunities that neoliberal reforms and globalisation have entailed. A pertinent emphasis within Kumar’s (2016) work is that the city has been brought closer to the village and the rural closer to the urban in ways that have reconfigured the sociality of each. Youth in particular are creating new modes of connecting rural locales with the city. This is an argument supported by Young and Jeffrey’s (2012) analysis of lower middle class youth in two north Indian states forge economic opportunities through spatial mobility. Some of their participants had become field officers for microloan schemes, which involved visiting villages to dispense loans and collecting repayments on a regular basis. Others became local politicians and mobilised for changes in the educational landscape. Each of these sets of men had acquired a sense of how to navigate

political structures and various cultural codes due to their rural backgrounds and their experiences within urban-based universities. Young and Jeffrey (2012, p.48) argue that their participants’:

sense of being rural and urban gave them a sense of being able to move easily between the two, knowing what kinds of styles and practices to draw on in different settings.

The works of Young and Jeffrey (2012) and Kumar (2016) provide pertinent starting points for my analysis. Most immediately, their analyses tend away from dominant depictions of rural space as “lacking” and encourage instead further analysis of how they are being transformed. They also move away from the tendency of showing how migrants attempt to establish a pre-existing set of conditions in a new location (for example, Becerra et al., 2018; Brøgger, 2019), by highlighting how mobile youth are generating new opportunities which span rural and urban divides.

But similar strategies and processes in other rural contexts will not likely produce a congruent and unified rurality (Woods, 2011, p.11). Indeed, variants of these debates in Uttarakhand have stressed the cultural specificity and distinctiveness of *pahari log*, social inequalities between the hills and plains, and how these affect the experience of mobility and migration (Chakraborty, 2018; Dyson, 2019a; Galvin, 2013; Klenk, 2010; Mathur, 2015). Chakraborty’s (2018) analysis of mobile youth in the Uttarakhand hills, for instance, shows how mobility is central to how they mediate their marginality and how they become “architects of novel socio-spatial transformations” (Chakraborty, 2018, p.90). He argues that *pahari* youth largely eschew ideas about formal education and consider their capacity to navigate between the city and the village key to their success. Joshi (2015) shows how driving shared taxis in Uttarakhand has given some *pahari* young men opportunities to enjoy a different kind of consumer lifestyle, generate an income, use new technologies and establish new forms of

connectivity. In a similar vein to Chakraborty (2018), Joshi (2015) argues that these “interstitial subjects” are not only agents of mobility but also mediators of images, goods and ideas between the hills and plains. Most pertinently, Joshi (2015) suggests that “drivery” has enabled some young men to imagine themselves as being in transit, which disrupts locally salient forms of identity which tend to emphasise a static synergy between the hills as a place and the hills as a people.

At stake in these analyses is much more than dominant tropes of rural youth wanting to become urban. As with other parts of north India, some young people are investing in localised networks of power and prestige (Jeffrey, 2010). For example, Koskimaki (2017) shows how many young political activists in Uttarakhand aspired to remain where one’s “affiliations, familial networks, friends and...language reside” (Koskimaki, 2017, p.145). Instead of trying to become globally mobile, these young men wanted to create development and job opportunities for young people in the region. Jeffrey and Dyson (2014) have shown how some educated young people in a village in Uttarakhand have responded to acute hardship and frustrations by getting involved in small scale political projects. They spent much of their time doing “service,” which included building small infrastructure projects, lobbying politicians for resources and resolving conflicts in their village. In addition to sometimes having quite immediate tangible and material effects on the landscape, Koskimaki (2017, p.148) argues that the knowledge gained and circulated through these kinds of strategies is central to how the region is produced, changed, and “known.”

This thesis builds on these debates by showing how educated youth are forging new connections and meanings which complicate enduring representations of Uttarakhand as culturally bounded and geographically distinct. It does show by examining how youth are carving out spaces within which they sometimes develop a sense of productivity and gain, and by highlighting how their strategies often confound a strict division between the rural and

urban. However, despite the ways educated young men are reconfiguring space, I do not suggest that these processes imply the emergence of a wholly “new rurality.” Enduring representations of Uttarakhand as a site of backwardness, tradition, purity and simplicity continue to dominate popular depictions of the hills districts in the state (Klenk, 2010; Koskimaki, 2016). In this sense young people’s attempt to deconstruct enduring meanings of rurality do not dissolve them. In this context, I argue that the meanings and spaces which educated youth create coexist with depictions of the hills as lacking and backward in a tension which is sometimes productive for young men. Tropes of backwardness and loss, simplicity and honesty, offer a socio-spatial ordering which educated youth can sometimes strategically invoke and define themselves against.

2.5 Conclusions

This thesis aims to enhance understandings of how educated youth in north India grappled with protracted unemployment. It does so by eliciting the social practices of young men, and thinking about how they advance debates about youth, education and migration. To develop my arguments, this chapter has offered a critical engagement with Pierre Bourdieu’s theoretical ideas to account for the agency of educated youth and how they leverage status. Building on the work of Jeffrey et al. (2008) and others (Dyson, 2019a; Jeffrey, 2010), I made a case for linking the insights of Bourdieu and Willis to account for how marginalised social groups contend their marginality. I then analysed debates in critical migration studies to examine how migrants produce and acquire new forms of social, cultural and economic capital as they move between destinations. I emphasised the strategic ways that migrants leverage capital as they move across space and how they might subtly tweak their habitus so as to realise social and material gain. In the chapters that follow, I draw on these insights to show educated youth

articulate a strategic positioning through which they attempt to realise privilege without compromising their social affiliations and ties.

Finally, my theoretical framing of how educated youth produce and leverage capital creates scope for considering how their mobility practices affect the production of rural and urban space. My analysis is informed in part by works about youth sociality in the Global South. It considers how youth creating “anchoring points” amidst a sense of uncertainty and flux. But my study builds on these by orienting the analytical lens away from major urban centres and by underscoring the significance of movement. I make this contribution by drawing studies about how derogatory depictions of rural space are reproduced in Uttarakhand (Klenk, 2010; Mathur, 2014; Morarji, 2014), into conversations with analyses that show how youth are producing new representations of rural space (Chakraborty, 2014; Joshi, 2015). I argue that increased mobility among educated young people was challenging dominant understandings of rural space, and that youth were rearticulating what it meant to be a young person “from the hills.” However, educated young men did not rid themselves of what it means to be “rural” and nor did they fully embrace it. Instead, they strategically engaged with notions such as the rural and urban to realise social gain.

Chapter Three. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Where the previous chapter outlined a theoretical framework for analysing young men's strategies, this chapter discusses the ways that I collected material to do so. The main aim of this research is to enhance understandings of how educated migrants and "non-migrants" grappled with unemployment in Uttarakhand. As outlined in the introduction, four main research questions address this main aim:

- 1) Are unemployed young men able to realise social, cultural and economic gain by drawing on their position as educated people; and if so, in what ways?
- 2) Are migrants able to challenge their marginality by moving to an urban setting; and if so, in what ways?
- 3) Are "non-migrants" able to challenge their marginality in spite of not moving away; and if so, in what ways?
- 4) How do educated young men make sense of constructions of rural space, and do they challenge or reproduce those constructions?

Each of these questions were directly concerned with eliciting young men's social practices. They called for an in depth analysis of the diversity of young men's strategies as well as an analysis of the meanings they attached to those strategies. In addition, these research questions created scope for thinking about how other people, such as participants' family's and peers, understood young men's practices. Taken together, these questions necessitated a mode of gathering material that could generate fine-grained insights into the lives of young men, and that could investigate how various actors made sense of educated young people's social practices.

Ethnographic methods were particularly well suited to this task. One of the starting points of ethnographic research is that a singular truth does not exist "out there" but that agents

imbue social action with meaning (Davies, 2008; Hammersely & Atkinson, 2019). This starting point demands that researchers immerse themselves in a social context to theorise how agents apprehend and conceptualise the social world. Along with immersing oneself in the field for a prolonged period, ethnographers employ a range of methods to gather material. Ethnographers typically gather material through a variety of qualitative methods, such as participant observation and interviews (Shah, 2017). Ethnographic analyses also often draw heavily on secondary sources so as to contextualise and deepen the analyses. Despite the insights this methodological approach can yield, it presents a series of challenges. Among other considerations, researchers must consider where the project will be conducted and why, how participants will be recruited, and how they will conduct themselves when they are in the field (Lichterman, 2017).

Accordingly, this chapter details how I conducted the research and how I grappled with some of the challenges it entailed. It commences with a discussion about how I selected the research sites. The research questions necessitated that I chose sites where there were large numbers of educated yet unemployed youth, and where there was a significant degree of rural-urban mobility among those youth. I then discuss how I recruited participants. After outlining how I sampled participants, I discuss the methods I used to gather material. The main methods I used to conduct the research were interviews and participant observation. I discuss how I used these methods, as well as the benefits and limitations of doing so. I then outline the rationale and conceptual grounding for implementing mobile methods. The penultimate section discusses ethical considerations and my positionality in the field, while the conclusion offers a summary of the chapter.

3.2 Selecting the research sites

3.2.1 Kalinpur, Dehradun

In order to pursue the central aim of this research, I chose Dehradun as the main location of empirical investigation. The following chapter outlines why Dehradun was a suitable city for a study about youth, education and migration. It has emerged as a hub of migration over the last few decades, and educational and employment opportunities have been concentrated in the city. Large numbers of educated youth have migrated from rural locations in Uttarakhand to Dehradun (Mamgain & Reddy, 2016). But within Dehradun, the research design necessitated a location that met a series of criteria. First, the research was seeking to examine the experiences of migrants and so there were practical and analytical reasons for selecting a single neighbourhood where a large number of educated migrants lived. Second, the research design demanded a location where there were numerous job coaching clinics and private tuition centres, and which was also in proximity to potential employment opportunities. Finally, the research sought to investigate whether migrants could challenge their marginality by moving to an urban setting, and so I wanted to select a location close to the centre of the city.

A neighbourhood which I call Kalinpur¹ met each of these criteria. Kalinpur was a predominately middle class suburb favoured by migrants from the Uttarakhand hills. All forty-eight migrants in this study lived in this neighbourhood. My observations suggested that migrants without tertiary qualifications typically lived in poorer areas of the city. Participants lived with friends (usually other migrants) with whom they shared a room rented from a landlord (N=35), with extended family members who were established in Dehradun (N=7), or in student hostels (N=6). One reason Kalinpur attracted migrants was that it was relatively affordable. The rent migrants paid in Kalinpur ranged from nothing in the case of those staying with relatives, to around an average of Rs. 1500 per month for those sharing a room with one

¹ A pseudonym has been used for this neighbourhood to protect the anonymity of those who lived there.

or more migrants. Most participants had a small adjoining area for cooking, and bathrooms were usually shared and located outside of their rooms. Migrants did face some difficulties living in Kalinpur. Their living arrangements were often quite cramped, some migrants' tenure was insecure, and some young men had to find a new place to stay at quite short notice.

Kalinpur was also selected because it was a hub of private educational institutions. There were 47 job coaching clinics and private tuition centres in the neighbourhood in October 2017. The largest of these institutions reported having over 250 students, however, most institutions had fewer than 90 students. The smallest institution opened in July 2017 and had just seventeen students enrolled. The oldest job coaching clinic was established in 1995, however, most of these institutions had been established since 2010. Most private tuition centres in Kalinpur had also been established since 2010, however, private tuition also happens informally and data about this was hard to obtain (Gupta, 2018). The job coaching clinics and private tuition centres in Kalinpur were of varying quality. At one end of the spectrum was a job coaching clinic which consisted of a single room, eight chairs and a single desk. At the other end of the spectrum, was a clinic which had nine relatively new computers, four air-conditioned rooms, printing facilities and textbooks and other educational materials available for purchase. In Kalinpur more generally, there were several shops where one could buy educational materials, such as textbooks and other learning resources. This meant that it was a suitable location for youth to prepare pursue further study and prepare for work, but it also meant that there were opportunities in the area to generate an income through the provision of educational services.

Kalinpur also met the final criteria of being near the centre of Dehradun. The neighbourhood is located just three kilometres south of the city centre. Therefore, it afforded migrants the opportunity to engage in social practices which are typically associated with urban areas, such as going to the shopping mall or the cinema (Lukose, 2009). This was important

because the second research question was concerned in part with whether migrants were able to leverage the social and cultural experience of moving to the city to challenge their marginality. Furthermore, although it was a relatively peaceful neighbourhood, in the evenings it would come to life with large numbers of students making their way on foot to various educational institutions. This meant that there were ample opportunities for migrants to engage with other young people from different social backgrounds. Finally, Kalinpur was also located just two kilometres from the bus stop and taxi stand where migrants could travel at short notice to all other Districts in the state. Taken together, Kalinpur was suitable for my research design because it enabled me to gather insights into how educated migrants were preparing for work and grappling with long term unemployment in the city.

3.2.2 Pauri Town and surrounding villages

I chose to focus on Pauri Town and surrounding villages as the second main field site so that I could gain insights into the specificity of young people's strategies. The cultural and ethnic diversity within the hills, coupled with how geographical distance from regional centres might affect migration strategies, meant that my ethnography might lose its focus if I were to analyse the strategies of youth from multiple hills districts.

Pauri Town was selected for four main reasons. The first criterion was that I needed to select a location from which large numbers of educated youth had migrated. Several regions in the Uttarakhand hills met this criterion. However, the rate of out migration from Pauri Garhwal has been particularly acute over the last few decades, and so there were quite immediate empirical reasons to make it the focus of a study about migration. Second, there is a college in Pauri Town and many of its students are the first in the families to obtain degrees. This meant that sampling participants who met the selection criteria discussed below would be efficient in Pauri Town. Third, Pauri Town is relatively close to Dehradun, and this proximity lent itself to

the kinds of rural-urban mobility practices the research was designed to investigate. Finally, although various locations in the Uttarakhand hills have been the focus of recent ethnographic works (Chakraborty, 2018; Dyson, 2014; Galvin, 2013; Klenk, 2010; Koskimaki, 2017; Mathur, 2015), Pauri Town has received little attention. My research sought to address this by making Pauri Town a site of empirical investigation.

In addition to within Pauri Town itself, I conducted fieldwork in six villages within eight kilometres of Pauri Town. There were two reasons for doing so. First, many young people I met in Pauri Town during my initial investigations were from nearby villages. Their daily routines often involved a kind of interstitial mobility which linked Pauri Town with rural settings. Similarly, many of those who lived in Dehradun regularly returned to villages near Pauri Town. “Following” (Marcus, 1995) participants from the city to their villages enabled me to investigate how they sought to position themselves in rural contexts, as well as to see how their lives in Dehradun contrasted with that in villages. I felt a strong conviction that the research would be enhanced if these kinds of mobilities were included in the research. Second, my concern with educated young men’s migration strategies generated questions about those who had not migrated. In line with other recent studies (Dyson, 2019b; Mwaura, 2017; Schut, 2019), the research aimed to investigate how educated youth in those settings were trying to reconcile their status as educated people with the prospect of rural futures. Pursuing these questions was not possible in the peri-urban context of Pauri Town.

With this in mind, I chose to conduct research in six villages which were in close proximity to Pauri Town. I acknowledge that this proximity might have afforded young people opportunities that are not available to youth in more remote villages settings. However, these locations gave me the opportunity to investigate the practices of educated youth who wished to remain, as well as those who regularly returned. These were key aims of the research. The largest of the six villages had a population of 124 in 2017; the smallest had a population of just

66 at the same time. All of these villages had registered a significant decline in population since 2000, and all had a small number of educated youth who wished to remain living within them. Haproli² is typical of the villages I selected. Its population had declined from 220 in 2000 to 80 in 2017. Most villagers had moved away permanently to large cities, with the people who remained explaining that this was usually because livelihoods in Haproli were too difficult to maintain. Such livelihoods were usually forged through a combination of various manual jobs which men performed outside Haproli, and small scale agriculture performed by women within it. There were many fields nearby which were privately owned by families, within which they grew grains and an assortment of vegetables. These were usually for their own consumption and were sometimes sold to vegetable traders.

Most young men's homes in these villages were made of concrete and consisted of two or three small rooms. This usually included a small room for cooking and one or two additional rooms where family members would sleep. All households had a television and most adult family members had mobile phones. Using concrete as a building material for homes in villages was a trend which participants' families reported started in the late 1990s. More successful families built "modern" homes which marked them off from more "traditional" homes made of stone and timber. This change indexed middle-class aspirations and was ostensibly designed to demonstrate to others that migrants had been able to make money in cities and were sending large remittances home. Building concrete houses has become much more widespread in recent years as building materials are both cheaper to purchase and more easily supplied.

² A pseudonym has been used for this village to protect the anonymity of those who lived there.

Figure One. Map of Uttarakhand



Map Source: Chandra Jayasuriya

3.3 Sampling and recruitment

3.3.1 Primary sample

Having identified locations that were suitable for pursuing the main aims of this thesis, I began searching for participants. This was the focus of the first six weeks of fieldwork. In Dehradun, the selection criteria were being an unemployed man aged 20-30 who had acquired a college degree and was among the first generation in their family to do so. This meant those who had siblings who had degrees could be included, but those whose parents had degrees could not. This latter criterion was included so that my analysis would be illuminating a shift in livelihood practices. Each of the participants also migrated from Pauri Garhwal. In Pauri Town and surrounding villages the selection criteria were slightly different. One of the research questions was designed to illuminate the social practices of “non-migrants.” This question demanded that I recruited participants who did not want to migrate. This presented some challenges because I found that an overwhelming number of college graduates did want to move to cities for white-collar jobs. To address this, I recruited 31 youth who were in the final year of their college degrees and who wanted to remain living in the region when they finished their studies. I acknowledge that this method of purposive sampling may have skewed the research such that youth who wanted to remain living in Pauri Garhwal were over represented. I also acknowledge that many college students who wished to remain in Pauri Garhwal may be compelled to migrate once they graduate. But it nevertheless provided a basis to compare the strategies of migrants and “non-migrants” and thus to think about the significance of movement as young men sought to realise status and respect.

The main way I identified participants was through snowball sampling. I had conducted fieldwork in Dehradun for an earlier research project and I had several contacts in the field who helped me identify suitable participants. This was a particularly amenable way of recruiting

participants in a context where migrants often had strong kinship networks. Migrants also tended to spend their time with many other students who were not migrants but who had similar aspirations. This was valuable for analysing how the experiences and strategies of migrants compared with others, although this was not a key focus of the research. There were limitations to sampling in this way. Most participants belonged to the General Castes, and young men tended to know others of the same caste background. This meant that snowball sampling did not always prove fruitful in getting a broad range of caste backgrounds. But these limitations were overcome during the research. In some coaching clinics, for example, students from lower castes were disproportionately represented. Some of these students participated in the research.

At the end of April 2016, I had a primary sample of 103 young men willing to engage in the research. I aimed for a sample of approximately 100 participants because I felt this was a large enough group to get meaningful insights into the diversity of young men's strategies, and small enough to allow adequate time to conduct at least one interview with each participant. All these young men were among the first generation in their family to pursue tertiary education. Eighty-four of them were General Caste (GCs), fifteen were Scheduled Castes (SCs) and four belonged to Other Backward Castes (OBCs). All participants ethnically identified as Garhwali. All participants were aged between 20 and 30 years of age. The average age was 26. It is difficult to accurately locate the class location of participants. They typically had very few financial resources, although were not considered "poor." They could afford to invest in tertiary education and forego the remuneration that doing so entailed. Most participants' families had historically worked in occupations, such as manual labour and low level service industries, that placed them in the working classes. At the same time, participants had acquired forms of cultural capital (tertiary credentials) which separated them from the working classes. Taking these factors into account, the participants might best be described as lower middle class.

Forty-eight of these youth had migrated to Dehradun, while fifty-five lived in Pauri Town and nearby villages. I had originally planned on having an equal number of participants in both settings. But throughout the process of fieldwork, I sometimes had more difficulty maintaining contact with young men who were in Dehradun. Some of these migrants moved around quite regularly and this meant there were practical difficulties with maintaining contact. In the early phases of the research, I spend a considerable amount of time in Dehradun attempting to maintain in contact with young men who might participate in the research. But this proved quite time consuming and sometimes impinged on other requirements of the research, such as developing relationships with those who had already agreed to participate. Most of those who lived in Pauri Town and surrounding villages, by contrast, were relatively easier for me to locate during fieldwork.

Of the 103 participants, I chose thirteen key informants (see Appendix One). I selected key informants whose strategies were representative of the primary sample and who met the same selection criteria. But what differentiated key informants from other participants was their knowledge of the issues I wanted to investigate and their propensity to share that knowledge; the ways that they reflected on their practice and the detail with which they explained their strategies, and their willingness to participate in the research. These participants formed the “core” of my sample. Nine of these key informants lived in Dehradun, and four lived in Pauri Garhwal. I had originally sought fifteen key informants, which would have represented approximately fifteen percent of the overall sample. However, two key informants moved to New Delhi during the research and were unable to participate. Nevertheless, with thirteen key informants I felt I had sample small enough to a spend significant amount of time with, and large enough to make meaningful comparisons among.

Along with attrition related to participants moving away, selecting key informants sometimes involved additional challenges. On some occasions, a young man who might make

a suitable key informant was unable to participate. Some young men, for example, were too busy studying and I felt that my presence might affect the amount of time they wanted to spend preparing for examinations. On such occasions I sought to maintain contact without impinging too heavily on their daily routines. Other young men expressed a keen desire to participate in the research, but I found it difficult to remain in contact with them after one or two initial interviews. There were several reasons why this could be the case and I accepted that they might have decided not to participate. But key informants in particular, and all participants in general, were more commonly very willing to share their thoughts and insights, as well as commit to the considerable amount of time that research of this kind demands.

Figure Two. Map of District of Pauri Garhwal



3.3.2 Secondary Sample

The research questions guiding this study created space for thinking about how other members in the community understood the practices of educated youth. While I was seeking to comprehend how young men made sense of their own strategies, I was also concerned how other people's viewpoints compared with those of young men. For example, the first research question was concerned with whether youth could realise social, cultural and economic gain by leveraging the position as educated people. But even if young men themselves suggested that they were able to do so, it was vital that I compared this with the viewpoints of others in the community. Indeed, young men often stated that they were able to acquire respect among their peers, but this was often contested by other people in the community. Migrants who regularly returned to Pauri Garhwal, for example, were able to acquire status and respect by performing identities in strategic ways. But this was not conferred upon them in a straight forward manner. Some migrants were ridiculed by "non-migrants" when they returned to Dehradun.

To incorporate these perspectives into the research design, I recruited a secondary sample. I was interested in garnering the viewpoints of various people across locations that might aid in enhancing my understanding of youth, education and migration. Thus, over the course of the fieldwork, I interviewed several teachers and administrative staff at colleges, journalists, politicians and even shop keepers. Staff members in coaching clinics and private tuition centres were also included in the secondary sample. I also interviewed many of the parents, siblings and other family members of the primary sample. Although I was unable to include young women in the primary sample, for reasons discussed below, I was able to

interview the sisters of some key informants. In total, the secondary sample consisted of 48 individuals. Most of these individuals were only interviewed on one occasion. However, others I came to know quite well during the research and consulted on multiple occasions. For example, I met a journalist in Pauri Town who specialised in migration throughout Uttarakhand. He was able to give incisive insights into how migration patterns in the region were changing, their causes and consequences, and had travelled to several villages across the state in the course of his own work. He invited me to accompany him to villages at quite a distance from Pauri Town, which I did on two occasions. Although not directly related to my research questions, this provided useful comparisons with the villages I conducted fieldwork within.

The diversity of the secondary sample was such that I tailored interview questions depending on their profession, their position in the community and/or their relationship to participants. For example, I tended to ask teachers in Pauri Town questions about matters more directly related to education, and the prospects of educated migrants who moved to large cities. Where possible, I also asked these teachers questions about young men in the primary sample. One teacher referred to one of my participants as a particularly gifted student and encouraged me to share his contact details with him. This led to an insightful discussion about what constituted “good” student. Similarly, interviews with participants’ family members were particularly fruitful for gathering insights into the contested ways that migration is understood. For example, many parents of participants who I interviewed in Pauri Garhwal were very proud of their sons who had migrated, even when they were unemployed. Yet at the same time, many of these same respondents were critical of migration when discussing the issue more generally. In these instances, migration was often reported as a “problem to be solved” that was undermining Pauri Garhwal. Teasing out these kinds of responses among the secondary sample

were crucially important for “thickening” the descriptions, and for revealing the tensions and ambiguities embedded within young men’s strategies.

3.4 Interviews

The 103 young men who comprised the primary sample were all interviewed on at least one occasion. Eight-one of these participants were interviewed on more than one occasion. I conducted interviews at a location participant’s choice, which usually included tea stalls, various public spaces such as parks, and in their homes. Interviews lasted an average of about 25 minutes. Some interviews extended well beyond this, while others were much shorter. The main reason for this variation was that despite agreeing to participate, some participants did not seem entirely comfortable with being interviewed, while others were very willing to share their insights. During ten months of ethnographic research, I conducted a total of 276 interviews.

Preliminary interviews were semi-structured and were designed to gather information about how unemployed men were seeking to find work. I had a set of themes which guided these interviews concerning education, employment and migration. These included general information about how long they had been unemployed, what they hoped to do in the future, and how they intended on realising those aspirations. In Dehradun, I often commenced interviews by asking migrants how they came to be living in the city. In Pauri Town and surrounding villages, I often asked participants how they ended up going to college. Asking “how” and not “why” was strategically designed to generate discussion by inviting participants to give an open-ended response (see Becker, 2007). Moreover, asking relatively open-ended questions tended to take the research in directions which I had not always anticipated (Rapley, 2001). It gave the participants the opportunity to discuss issues which were important to them,

and this generated insights which a predetermined set of questions might not be able to. On my second visit to Pauri Town, for example, one participant said that he did not think it was accurate to think about life in the hills as either backward and difficult, or simple and pure. He said that “these days people make their own way” and he suggested to me that it was more important to pay attention to that. This point was perhaps straightforward enough, but it prompted me to think about new ways youth are imagining the hills and how they were active in reconfigurations of place. In turn, this gave me the opportunity to hone my questions in subsequent interviews.

In addition to one-on-one interviews, I conducted 29 group interviews. These were a good opportunity to explore the differences among young men’s strategies. Indeed, group interviews often made for quite a convivial atmosphere and gave me the opportunity to make observations about interactions in the peer group. This is particularly the case in Chapter Seven, where I demonstrate how participants sought to denigrate each other’s practices and decisions through humour. Group interview of this kind enabled me to unpack the conceptual significance of these jokes and the interactions between men in ways that one-on-one interviews cannot. On other occasions I conducted group interviews in coaching clinics and tuition centres. These groups discussions were initially designed to analyse students’ educational strategies and the meanings they attached to attending them. For example, I was able to investigate the kinds of skills young people were seeking to acquire and gather insights into why they considered those skills important. At the same time, these interviews were also excellent opportunities to familiarise myself with the workings of these institutions. Doing so led to new avenues of inquiry that I had not previously considered. For example, I learned that the divisions between students and employees was often quite ambiguous, and many of those working in institutions had previously been students attempting to find government jobs. These initial observations led to further investigations and findings which feature in Chapter Six.

I would not always take notes during these sessions or during semi-structured interviews. Instead, I would write down the contents of interviews at the earliest possible opportunity afterward. There were several reasons for this. In previous research, I have found that writing notes sometimes disrupted the flow of the interview and sometimes limited the willingness of participants to communicate. Some participants seemed to become nervous and did not seem to speak as openly as they did prior to my taking notes. Moreover, sometimes a recording device seemed to jar with the broader context. If, for example, we were sitting in an office in a somewhat formal setting it seemed reasonable. But if we were walking with a group of friends in the evening it seemed to not fit with – and thus changed – that environment. For this reason, recording interviews would be inimical to my attempts at creating and sustaining an environment where participants felt comfortable. This resonated with my broader concern in which I tried to ensure that I was not shaping participants' daily routines in ways that were too "out of the ordinary" (Rapley, 2001).

Despite my attempts to manage these challenges, I often encountered difficulties with conducting interviews. There were many instances when a participant was unable to meet when we had scheduled an interview. Some of these participants cancelled a short notice and others did not attend the interview. Previous research had primed me for these challenges and I accepted them as part of the research process. There were also occasions during interviews when I felt as though a participant was telling me "what I wanted to hear" rather than perhaps a more honest opinion. This was sometimes the case when our discussions turned to the importance of education. Some participants were very critical of their institutions and had quite negative experiences of education. But they continued to uphold education as a fundamental good. In certain senses this seemed contradictory and in previous research I have probed the contradictory ways young people conceptualised formal education (Deuchar, 2014b). In the current research, I tried to manage these issues by making sure I did not ask leading questions,

and by making clear to each participant that their identity would remain private if results were to be published.

Throughout the research, I also conducted walking interviews. In both Dehradun and Pauri Town, I would often accompany participants for walks, particularly in the evenings. These walks usually occurred in small groups, other times they were one-on-one. There was an affective element to these interviews which is not always elicited in other modes of interviewing (Jones et al., 2008). I found that walking with people can foster “sustained engagement” with participants’ worldview (Büscher & Urry, 2009, p.105), and generated additional insights into their attachments to, and understandings of, place (Evans & Jones, 2011). For example, a group of friends who I regularly spent time with in Pauri Town went walking together most evenings. I would sometimes accompany them to various place in town, often to temples and other locations of high altitude which offered a good view of the mountains. It was common for young men to comment on their connections to the hills on these occasions. One young man said that he never wanted to leave the hills because of the environment, he said he could “breathe easily,” and felt as though he “had time” there. But he accepted that he might have to migrate away in the future. He then pointed to a bird flying through the sky and said “we have to be like the birds,” and explained that they moved around a lot but always returned to Pauri.

At other times, I conducted walking interviews with young men as they created work in Dehradun. There was an urgency to their work which I had not initially grasped in initial interviews. Conducting interviews while we walked together helped me gather insights into why being busy was important to them, and how it helped them mark boundaries between themselves and others who they considered “lazy.” Being on the move helped young men distance themselves from accusations of loitering or not making good use of their time. Nevertheless, these same young men would engage in what they called “leisure,” and there was

a running track in a police academy that we would often walk around on such occasions. Interviewing young men whilst walking therefore had both an important spatial element and a temporal one. I was able to elicit how young men sense of going to different places at different times of the day, and how this was important for upholding their reputations as respectable young men. The times and places of leisure were usually quite distinct from the times and places of work.

While I found walking interviews quite productive in general, I did encounter difficulties with conducting them. In Dehradun, there were often practical difficulties with walking interviews. When the streets were particularly busy and there were large numbers of young people moving around, it was sometimes difficult to maintain a clear focus. This did not mean that I could not gather meaningful insights, but it meant that it was not an appropriate way of asking questions about around a given theme. When I wanted interviews to stay on a certain issue, I found conducting sedentary interviews in more private settings, such as a participants' homes, much more productive. Moreover, while walking interviews were especially productive for illuminating young men's perceptions of place, particularly the meanings youth attached to their villages, in some instances this felt like a limitation. Because it seemed as though this method lent itself to discussions of place, much more so than more abstract discussions about job prospects or employment strategies. In this way, walking interviews in villages and Pauri Town might have sometimes skewed participants' responses toward emphasising their attachments to place in ways that other modes of interviewing did not.

3.5 Participant observation

The research questions I designed for this project lent themselves toward participant observation. Participant observation enables researchers to participate in the everyday lives of the social contexts they are studying to gather information in diffuse and unfolding ways (Hammersely & Atkinson, 2019; Shah, 2017). Its effectiveness often hinges upon the researcher's capacity to make and sustain trusting relationships in the field (Madison, 2011). Participant observation was the main way in which I gathered material for this project. I spent many hours with participants, often accompanying them during mundane activities and having informal conversations. I commonly used this research method among the thirteen key informants, with whom I had strong relationships. This method enabled me to gather important insights which were integral to the project. For example, there was sometimes an affective dimension to these processes which I was not always able to elicit during interviews. I was able to witness, for example, a participant's disappointment as he learned that he had not been successful in a government examination. I also witnessed a great deal of determination as the months passed, as young men continued to study quite rigorously for the next examination, despite repeated knock-backs. Where interviews enabled me to understand what young men's practices were and how they made sense of them, participant observation complemented this by giving me the opportunity to analyse how these processes unfolded.

On most occasions, participation observation entailed "participating with" one or more young men during a given activity. This included studying in groups, having lunch together, leisure and other similar activities. This seemed an appropriate research method when I was not primarily concerned with how my presence might shape those activities. But there were some occasions when it was more conducive to the research to observe participants behaviour without joining in. Thus, although all those who were present knew I was conducting research, there were moments when "covert" modes of participant observation seemed more productive (Strudwick, 2019). For example, on some occasions I examined how young men who were

working in job coaching clinics facilitated classes. I was investigating the kinds of skills they said were important to their students, but also how they comported themselves in the process. I was also interested in how they explained the importance of certain soft skills which are considered necessary for white-collar employment. On these occasions, I would sit somewhere in the room and try and make my presence as discreet as possible. This is not to say that this meant my presence had no effect on such environments. The young men teaching classes knew that I was present, and this may have affected how they taught the class. But by observing these kinds of interactions I was attempting to limit the effect that my presence might have.

There was often a mobile element to the participant observation. We would often spend time walking around the streets together in the evening. Some participants would be trying to make an income would often move around the city at quite a fast pace. Other times I accompanied participants for leisurely walks in the evening. In Pauri Town itself I often spent time with young men and went to places which they frequented for leisure. In general, I found walking around while having informal conversations was a productive way of making a relaxed environment where participants seemed comfortable and happy to share their insights. Each of these processes were crucial for this project because they generated insights into how people move around, when they move and why they do so (Torres & Carte, 2013). Indeed, such “inquiries on the move” enabled me to gather insights about the reconfiguration of spaces, people, ideas and information (Büscher et al., 2011, p.13; Jones et al., 2008).

Despite the benefits of participant observation, I encountered two main limitations with it. On the one hand, participant observation necessitated that I spent a lot of time with a small number of participants. This was a fruitful way of garnering insights and developing strong relationships in the field. Yet on the other hand, by spending a lot of time with a small number of people, I occasionally felt as though I needed to gather insights from a broader set of participants. Striking a balance between having an in depth focus at the same time as having a

broad enough one was a key challenge of participant observation. Moreover, on one occasion one participant seemed to resent that I was spending time with other young men. This in turn compromised our relationship. I managed these challenges by ensuring key informants were representative of the main sample, and by being quite mindful of who I was spending time with, when, and where.

The main limitation of this research method was that it was very difficult to spend time with young women. I did not intend to include young women in the primary sample, but I wanted to ensure they were represented in the secondary sample. But I was unable to do so adequately. This was primarily due to patriarchal gender norms which do not condone men and women spending time together for long periods. These difficulties were arguably compounded for a white foreign male researcher. This is a considerable shortcoming because including the insights of women would have strengthened it considerably. However, I was able to get to know some young women quite well, particularly the sisters of key informants who lived with their brothers in Dehradun. Their strategies and viewpoints suggest subtle changes in gender norms and invite further research about how young women are creating new social and economic opportunities. The concluding chapter discusses their viewpoints in slightly greater detail. Yet notwithstanding these exceptions, in general I found it difficult to spend enough time with women in a way which would not jeopardise their reputation in the community and perhaps raise questions about my intentions.

3.6 Language

Using these research methods necessitated that I was competent in Hindi. I had some knowledge of Hindi prior to arriving in Dehradun, which I had started learning in 2012. I built upon that knowledge by spending the first month of fieldwork at Landour Language School in

Mussoorie. I undertook lessons five days per week. On the weekends I would usually travel down to Dehradun to recruit participants and conduct preliminary interviews. By the time I left the school I could write basic Hindi and have basic conversations. At the same time, because many of the youth I conducted research wanted to practice their English with me, and so we often did so.

This changed considerably when I was in Pauri Garhwal. The main language spoken in Pauri Garhwal is Garhwali, however, most people with whom I interacted were fluent in Hindi. There were some occasions when knowing Garhwali would have strengthened the research. There were also doubtless many instances when my Hindi language skills were not strong enough to grasp the nuances and subtleties of participants' responses. This was mainly the case in some villages, however also likely occurred in Dehradun. However, on almost all my visits to villages I was with a young migrant from the primary sample, who spoke English and Hindi, as well as Garhwali. This enabled me to address some of the difficulties that language barriers entailed. In general, my Hindi skills were strong enough to conduct interviews, while the desire of most informants to practice their English meant that we were able to clarify the meanings of words or phrases with which I was not familiar.

3.7 Data coding and analysis

These methods of gathering ethnographic data resulted in a large volume of written material. The data analysis process started while in the field and continued throughout the writing up process. After I conducted and transcribed an initial round of interviews, I read the transcripts several times, summarised them, and manually coded the material. This involved marking the text so that keywords and categories were identified (Basil, 2003, p.146). The first keywords and categories that I chose to code the material against were education, work, migration,

identity and place. The first three of these categories had been anticipated however the latter two were included reflexively as almost all respondents mentioned them during their interviews (Saldana, 2013). I grouped abbreviated responses to my questions about education, work and migration into a table to establish the main themes and to create subcategories. However, respondents' viewpoints about identity and place did not fit neatly within each of these categories but often engaged with each of them. Consequently, I conducted a second round of manual coding to establish connections between categories that I had not previously considered (Basit, 2003). For example, when I asked participants about their educational strategies many young men invoked notions of rural space. Some young men said that "education was a ticket away from the hills," while others said that "it [education] is useless around here [in Pauri]"; still others said that educational credentials were key to creating "positive change in my village." My questioning about education revealed how participants discussed place – and rural settings in particular – in contradictory ways, and this led me to investigate the significance of their doing so.

This initial phase of coding and analysis enabled me to tailor subsequent interviews, particularly those with key informants. For instance, I said during the second round of interviews that I had noticed many informants discuss identity and place in their responses to questions about education in previous interviews. To illuminate this point, I often relayed an anecdote to key informants that one respondent mentioned in the first set of interviews. The respondent said that he did not think he would get a job because of his degree, but getting a degree was useful anyway because it showed "other people that I am not like them." I asked key informants what they thought this young man meant. Key informants offered several detailed interpretations of this anecdote, which in turn provided me with more material to analyse and discuss in interviews that followed. In this way, my initial categories became more complex and key themes began to emerge (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). This enabled me to

dissolve the “artificial” distinction between keywords and to link them in new ways (Becker, 2007).

My analysis of transcripts and the way I refined interviews was complemented by my fieldwork diary and fieldnotes taken during participant observation. Writing fieldnotes was a creative and time-consuming process and it was sometimes difficult to code these notes in clearly defined categories (Corwin & Clemens, 2012). I often reread the fieldnotes alongside interview transcripts to help consolidate the main themes of the research. Exploring the tensions between fieldnotes and transcripts helped me comprehend the social practices of young men. At times, my observations seemed to bolster what an informant had discussed during an interview. But at other times, my observations seemed to contradict an informant's response. A common example of this was that during some interviews informants explained that they attend college to study hard and bolster their job prospects. But the fundamental importance that some informants placed on education in interviews did not seem to resonate with their decision to skip classes that I frequently observed. When I asked key informants about this discrepancy, they often explained that most young men were not serious about their studies, and that even those who do not go to college to learn. One young man joked that “education is important but college is not.” In this way, I was able to generate further insights by creating a dialogue between my fieldnotes and interview questions and responses (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). By the time I left the field, I had generated a large volume of qualitative data that helped me theorise the complexity, subtlety and diversity of young men's strategies and viewpoints.

When I returned from the field I continued with the analysis. At this stage I organised the material into themes which illuminated the main findings. My rereading and classification of all my material resulted in the identification of four main themes which correspond with each empirical chapter of this thesis (Saldana, 2013). Within these four main themes, I also

sought to highlight the practices of different “sets” of youth, the tensions between one or more sets as well as what they shared in common. This involved clearly enumerating how many participants performed a particular strategy, as well as selecting quotations which clearly demonstrate an informant’s argument and perspective (Bisit, 2003). Taken together, this process of coding and analysis enabled me to generate theoretical contributions that were grounded in the material I had obtained. The overarching picture that the analysis presented was that educated young men were grappling with unemployment in strategic ways, attempting to mark themselves off from others while maintaining strong associations with their families and peers.

3.8 A Mobile Ethnography

When I initially designed this research, I planned to gather material among “migrants” in Dehradun and “non-migrants” in Pauri Garhwal. But in certain senses this was a rather static way of designing the research. Indeed, by focusing on the destinations to which migrants “arrive” or “leave behind,” the initial research design implied that migration itself was a process that was made and then complete. But for many migrants this was not the case. As with Ankur, many participants regularly moved between the city and hills, and migration itself was unfolding and continuous. Similarly, “non-migrants” who wanted to remain in Pauri Town and surrounding villages sometimes went to cities such as Dehradun to visit family and friends, to run errands, to celebrate religious festivals and for other social occasions. Moreover, even when they were in Pauri Garhwal they were acutely affected by – and engaged with – the mobility of ideas, resources and capital in those locations. In short, my original research design had largely neglected a focus on mobility, and it was crucial that I changed the research design to account for it.

The conceptual significance of mobility and movement in ethnographic research has been subject to much debate in recent decades. On the one hand, ethnography and ethnographers have always been mobile (Novoa, 2015); the practice of going to the field was itself a rite of passage for ethnographers, and earlier ethnographers arguably experienced considerably displacement than do many mobile ethnographers today (Novoa, 2015, p.98). Yet on the other hand, a feature of much ethnographic work throughout the twentieth century was an intense focus on a single location and an articulation of its changing social and cultural forms (Gupta & Ferguson, 1999). Implicit within this approach was a conceptualisation of geographical space and the lifeworlds of “inhabitants” as bounded (Ferguson, 1999). While researchers readily examined how forms of cultural, social, political and economic exchange were accommodated and resisted, such connectivity was largely treated as abnormal or “external” to a given community (Gupta & Ferguson, 1999).

Instead of focusing intensely on a single site, I ensured that this research was situated within multiple spaces of investigation (Marcus, 1995, p.105). Where the initial research design had been somewhat static in orientation, I included mobile methods to account for movements that were part of everyday life and that were central to the reproduction of social structures (Urry & Sheller, 2006). These conceptual starting points form the basis of multi-sited ethnography (Castells, 2011; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2003; Marcus, 1995). In his seminal article, Marcus (1995) suggested a range of exploratory modes which might productively straddle disciplinary and geographical divides. Perhaps most pertinently, Marcus (1995, p.106) argued that researchers could track connections across sites by “following people,” and by considering how new objects of study emerge as they accompany participants from one spatial context to another. “Moving with” participants can also offer a basis from which to analyse the relations of power that shape the meanings and practices of mobility (Bissell, 2010, 2018; Fincham, McGuinness, & Murray, 2010).

Accordingly, I regularly travelled with participants between the city and the hills to investigate linkages across multiple sites of activity. In total, I made seventeen trips from Pauri Town to Dehradun. On fourteen of these journeys, I accompanied a participant to their home in Pauri Garhwal. The remaining journeys I made alone. These trips entailed both interviews and participant observation. The purpose of gathering material in this way was to enhance understandings of how youth made sense of migrating. This represents a departure from much migration research which is preoccupied with “discovering” the rules or laws of migration, such as discerning “push” or “pull factors”. Instead, the focus is on interrogating how mobility practices contribute to and change a contingent social order (Büscher, Urry, & Witchger, 2011). This methodological and theoretical focus was particularly amenable for theorising the ways that young people positioned themselves as they moved across space. It was also crucial for thinking about how young people’s mobility practices were refashioning representations of rural space.

Young people’s mobilities were one of the factors that governed how much time I spent in Dehradun and Pauri Garhwal. I was ordinarily based in Dehradun and conducted most of the research among migrants who were preparing to find work. I also spent a considerable amount of time at job coaching clinics and private tuition centres in Dehradun. This seemed to be the most efficient, productive and direct way of answering most of the research questions. But when migrants returned home – which was usually for a break after an intense period of study, and to catch up with family and friends – I would often accompany them. I did this because I wanted to investigate how migrants attempted to position themselves when they returned home. These observations form the basis of the arguments made in Chapter Five. These trips often lasted for about three or four days, however the longest trip was two weeks. On several occasions I remained in Pauri Town and stayed with the family of a key informant after that key informant had returned home. This presented me with an important opportunity to spend

time with “non-migrants” and to gather insights into what they thought about migrants’ strategies.

While I found mobile methods quite productive in general, I was mindful that the research could also encourage movements between the city and hills which might not otherwise have occurred. Although ethnographic research cannot obtain “objective” insights, researchers must be mindful of how their presence affects that context and try to minimise such effects (Davies, 2008). For example, young people who lived in Dehradun would often invite me back to their homes in Pauri Garhwal and it was unclear if they were planning to go anyway or if they were doing so because of my presence. To the extent that it was possible, I did not want to base my research on mobilities that would not have happened if I was not there. One way I managed this was by interviewing key informants who had moved to Dehradun about their migration practices. They were able to give me detailed information into how many times they had returned home since migrating to Dehradun and their reasons for doing so. This provided insights into their mobilities prior to the research commencing. It also proved a valuable yardstick for assessing when and why they were returning as I accompanied them, and I was able to gauge whether or not this was a trip that would have been likely to happen anyway. It also a way of gauging how their returns trips – their frequency and reasons for returning – compared with the broader research sample.

3.9 Ethical considerations and positionality

Prior to leaving for the field I had to comply with the University of Melbourne’s ethics requirements. This involved writing a detailed proposal of how I would conduct the research and ensure the well-being of participants (see Appendices for details). All other requirements had been met by the time I commenced fieldwork.

Fieldwork itself was replete with ethical challenges and managing my positionality as a privileged white male was complex (Fetterman, 2010; Madison, 2011). Doing so necessitated that I was reflexive in the field and mindful of how my actions were impacting the lives of participants and the broader communities in which I worked. In a very immediate way, upholding standards of ethical research meant that I needed to ensure I had the informed consent of participants. This meant clearly explaining what the research was about and what I hoped to achieve through conducting it. It also entailed explaining how I would maintain their privacy when results were published. I explained that when my findings were written up, I would use pseudonyms for all participants and the villages and neighbourhoods in which they lived. In addition, I explained that they were able to withdraw from the research at any stage without having to explain why (Taylor, 2002).

One of the main ethical challenges I encountered was thinking about reciprocity and how I might compensate individuals for participating. Ethnographic research involves a prolonged period in the field and participating can often be a time consuming task. If a participant agrees to be part of the research, then it could feasibly take up much of their time for which they should be compensated. This was a particularly acute concern given that I was spending a lot of time with unemployed young men who had few resources. At the same time, I was not able to financially compensate participants and even if I were to it would likely create another set of more complicated ethical dilemmas. It would raise questions, for example, about who I paid, how much, why and when. I attempted to address this issue by conducting the research in a way that did not disrupt participants' daily activities too significantly. For example, many participants spent their mornings studying at home and they considered this crucial to succeeding in government examinations and finding jobs. Unless explicitly invited, I did disrupt young men during this time. I also made clear at the outset that participants would not be financially compensated for their time. I did however pay for tea and snacks, which was

a very small expense, when I conducted interviews in tea stalls. I also bought food in larger quantities, such as rice and lentils, for participants with whom I regularly ate lunch.

There were occasions when participants did ask me for money. Sometimes friendships with informants became strained because of this. One young man, for example, frequently asked me for a loan so that he could take his girlfriend on a short holiday. I was not able to grant him this and explained my reasons for doing so. When he asked about my income, which was significant in the Indian context, I explained how my income compared with that of wage earners in Australia – which was much smaller. The following week he explained that he wanted a loan to care for his elderly grandmother. This put me in a difficult position and when I explained that I was unable to give him the money, he seemed quite frustrated. After that incident I did not feel comfortable requesting his time to participate in the research. He did however call me occasionally and we remained on friendly terms. That experience was not common. Most participants accepted my explanations and some of them even made light of my financial situation. One young man responded “when you are here you are wealthy, but as soon as you return you are just like us.” I took comfort in the fact that this joke was emphasising what we shared, even if it were at my expense.

A more common request was for me to assist young men with visa applications to Australia or other western nations. Young men often perceived moving to western nations as the best way of realising social mobility (Esson, 2015; Mains, 2012). Such requests often continued via email long after I had left the field. The difficulties this presented were compounded by the fact that this was at a time when the Australian Federal Government were tightening their skilled visa restrictions. When it was feasible, I managed this situation by going on to websites of different governments with a given participant and seeing what the skilled visa application process involved. It was sometimes quite challenging when a participant realised that they did not have the financial capacity or requisite skills to successfully complete

such applications. On some occasions this process did inspire some young men to reconsider what forms of employment and training they would pursue in the future, to enhance their prospect of migrating abroad in the longer term.

My marital status also differed sharply from that of participants'. Being married meant that I had achieved one of the milestones which is considered a vital component of adulthood in Dehradun. At times, this was advantageous. I could position myself as adult when it was productive for me to do so. At other times, it made it difficult for me to relate to young men who were unmarried and in their early twenties. Being married sometimes created opportunities which I had not anticipated. My wife, Renee, visited Dehradun for two weeks in 2017 and this enabled me to strengthen my relationships in the field. Key informants were very interested in meeting her. To some extent it gave my research more momentum and generated a series of interactions and questions that might not otherwise have happened. For example, it opened up avenues to discuss participants' own marriage plans to a greater extent than had previously been the case. When Renee and I were together, we were also able to spend time with women in ways that were not possible prior to her arrival. For example, other young women in the neighbourhood introduced themselves to Renee and they were far more open with me when she was around. In these ways, being married, and having Renee visit, generated both opportunities and limitations which I had to manage throughout the research.

There were other aspects of my positionality which I feel aided the research. We were men of similar ages and so I found it relatively easy to establish good connections with participants. I often felt comfortable socialising with young men and different friendship groups regularly accepted me. I was at an age (31-32) where I felt I could spend time with people both several years younger and several years older than me, which was at times advantageous. Moreover, some participants pointed out that we had each been studying in tertiary institutions for many years and were both unemployed. I added to this that upon

completion of my degree there was no certainty regarding job prospects. One young man said I should return to Dehradun when I graduate to join him “doing timepass.” By emphasising that which we had in common, we created an environment which I feel was productive for ethnographic inquiry. At the end of fieldwork, I had developed many strong friendships in the field and had been able to gather fine-grained insights into their lives.

3.10 Conclusions

The main aim of this thesis is to enhance understandings of how educated youth grapple with long term unemployment. The research questions which I designed to pursue this main aim lent themselves to ethnographic research. I wanted to gather in depth insights about young men’s social practice, and crucially, how they made sense of that practice. I also wanted to consider how other members in the community reflected on young men’s strategies. This chapter has outlined how I designed the research so that I could address the research questions and pursue the main aim of this thesis. It commenced with a discussion about how I selected the research sites. This was followed by explaining how I sampled participants and the methods I used to gather material. Participant observation and interviews were the main ways I gathered information across the field sites. I also emphasised the significance of mobile methods for addressing the key themes in this thesis. Finally, I discussed ethical considerations and my positionality in the field and how these affected the research process. The following chapter contextualises the strategies of young men by introducing the setting in greater detail.

Chapter Four. The political economy of Uttarakhand

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contextualises the strategies of participants by offering an overview of social, political and economic transformations in Uttarakhand. It commences with a discussion of the social geography of Uttarakhand, which is divided into three main subsections. The first subsection examines a distinct *pahari* identity was consolidated in the colonial period and how economic challenges precipitated gendered migration practices. The second subsection examines the statehood movement. The third subsection outlines how axes of difference between the hills and the plains affect those living in Uttarakhand today. Following that discussion, I analyse how broader changes across Uttarakhand have manifested in Pauri Town and the Pauri Garhwal District. The penultimate section outlines the social and economic changes which have taken place in Dehradun, with particular emphasis on changes in the educational and employment landscapes. The conclusion of this chapter summarises the social, economic, cultural and political processes which educated youth from (and in) Pauri Garhwal have to navigate.

4.2 The Social Geography of Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand is a relatively small Himalayan state in north India, which was carved out of Uttar Pradesh in November 2000. It borders Himachal Pradesh to the west, Uttar Pradesh to the south, and shares international borders with China (Tibet) in the north and Nepal in the east. Geographic, social and cultural divisions between the hills and plains are a distinctive feature of Uttarakhand. The entire state spans an area of 53 483 square kilometres of which 86 percent is classified as mountainous and fourteen percent as plains (Government of Uttarakhand, 2013-2014). The total population of the state is 10 086 292 of which 71 percent lives in rural areas (Census of India, 2011). Seventy-eight percent of the population are General Caste (GC), 19

percent are Scheduled Caste (SC) and three percent are Scheduled Tribes (ST) (Census of India, 2011). Uttarakhand consists of two main ethnic groups – Garhwali and Kumaoni – which correspond with two administrative subdivisions in the state – the Garhwal subdivision and the Kumaon subdivision. There are thirteen districts across these two divisions and both the District of Dehradun and the District of Pauri Garhwal lie in the Garhwal subdivision.

4.2.1 Social and economic change in the colonial period

The social and economic marginalisation of the hills and the emergence of *pahari* identity is largely rooted in its colonial history. Collective struggles over forest resources first appeared in the historical record shortly after the British defeated the Gurkas in the Anglo-Nepalese War and annexed the region in 1815. Immediately after that time, villagers were largely left to continue prior methods of agriculture and animal husbandry. In the middle of the nineteenth century, however, expanding railway networks throughout India required large quantities of timber for railway sleepers. Deodar growing in the upper reaches of the Garhwal Himalaya were identified by colonial functionaries as ideal for that purpose.

The subsequent introduction and expansion of commercial forestry adversely affected the livelihoods of villagers, who had relied on the access to forests for fuel, fodder and building materials (Bandyopadhyay, 1992). In 1864 the colonial administration established the Forest Department and The Forest Act of 1878 handed absolute control and ownership over all forests in the state to the colonial authority (Baumann, 1998, p.99). Contracts to ensure felling rights that supported British commercial interests were then negotiated (Bandyopadhyay, 1992). These commercial interests were also the initial impetus for the construction of roads and bridges, which sought to make the region more accessible. At the same time, the Forest Department alienated many villagers from their land by banning traditional methods of resource management and dramatically reducing villagers' access to certain tracts of land. This

was particularly the case in the upper reaches of the Himalaya, where valuable stocks of timber were located. The subsequent advance of commercial forestry was of a considerable magnitude. Where the region had previously been considered inaccessible and remote, between 1869 and 1885, 65 million railways sleepers were exported down the Yamuna river alone (Guha, 1989, p.119).

The acute marginalisation of those living in the Uttarakhand hills was such that a previously disparate set of social groups with a plurality of languages, customs and affiliations became more unified (Guha, 1989). In the 1920s and 1930s in particular, large scale collective struggles over forest resources took hold throughout the hills, and discourses identifying “outsiders” as the main source of exploitation and marginality were prevalent (Moller, 2000; Pant, 1922). Those relatively disconnected groups living in the hills found much more political clout by lobbying together around concerns which *pahari log* shared. They resisted the ways that resources were being exploited and demanded access to land. In light of these protests, considerable concessions were won: in 1931, for example, the *Van Panchayat Act* granted ‘community forests’ specific management rights through an elected village leader and committee (Dyson, 2003, p.34).

The economic impacts of the Forest Department are also intimately related to a change in gendered migration practices in the region (Chakraborty, 2018). Migration had long been a feature of the economy in the hills, particularly among men. A diverse set of livelihood strategies such as animal husbandry and herding, for example, included moving to pastures and accessing trading routes across many parts of the hills (Rangan, 2000, p.37). Such practices were common prior to the colonial period and continue in many parts of the hills today (Dyson, 2014). Yet as commercial forestry advanced and access to land was restricted it became increasingly difficult for many villagers to forge a livelihood in these ways (Guha, 1989). Moreover, many traditional ways of making a living were outlawed, such as the use of fire for

forest regeneration. These processes meant that enduring forms of connectivity, productivity and exchange were curtailed. Importantly, villagers' difficulties were not strictly related to colonialism alone. Most landholdings were comparatively small, and many owner-cultivators were not able to produce enough grain to meet the demands of their own consumption (Guha, 1989; Whittaker, 1984). In conjunction with issues such as environmental degradation and population growth, these processes encouraged increasing numbers of men to supplement their livelihoods by earning money elsewhere (Bora, 1996).

Throughout the twentieth century much of this migration was circular in nature (Whittaker, 1984). A common livelihood strategy in the Uttarakhand hills was for men to join the armed forces. The region has had a long history of military involvement since at least the Anglo-Nepal war in the early 1800s. In the early stages of the colonial regime, many men were forcibly removed from their villages and made to join the military (Chakraborty, 2018). This practice was discontinued in the nineteenth century however many men continued to join the armed forces in paid positions. In addition, increasing numbers of men began to migrate to the Indian plains for work in construction as well as in agriculture (Berreman, 1969; Whittaker, 1984). This was particularly common in hills districts from which the plains were relatively accessible, such as Pauri Garhwal, and was more common among the General Castes, who tended to have stronger networks and ties in the plains (Mamgain & Reddy, 2016; Singh, 1995). Bora (1996) reports that most migrants tended to be away from home for between three and nine months at a time. Where possible, men would support their villages by sending remittances home and would return home between stints of wage labour. Women more commonly stayed in their villages, worked in their smallholdings and assumed responsibility for childrearing and domesticity (Chakraborty, 2018).

The economic imperatives which underpinned migration coupled with collective protests throughout the hills consolidated the production of a distinct *pahari* identity.

Throughout the late colonial period emerging constructions of *pahari log* were reproduced and circulated through stories and print media, and were enshrined in music and myths (Fiol, 2008; Linkenbach, 2006; Rangan, 2000). Fiol (2008), for example, argues that in the early twentieth century regional popular music increasingly contrasted the spirituality of the hills with the commercial secularism of the plains. Thus while the region's distinctiveness and importance has long been recognised in prominent Hindu texts, such as the *Mahabharata*, its integration into capitalist social relations and the movement of migrants between the hills and the plains changed the character of that distinctiveness (Koskimaki, 2011). Where sacred texts depicted the hills more strictly as a site of religious significance and pilgrimage, an increasing number of works emphasised the difficulties faced by those living in the region, their struggles and hardships, as well as their triumphs and resilience (Fiol, 2008; Linkenbach, 2006; Moller, 2000). Thus to a greater extent than was previously the case, a *pahari* identity emerged which invoked a romanticized past of autonomy and isolation, and a history of agricultural and village purity interrupted by forces from the 'outside' (Fiol, 2008; Mawdsley, 1999).

4.2.2 The creation of Uttarakhand

The economic, social, political and cultural marginalisation of the hills continued after India gained independence in 1947. The Forest Department – which continued functioning under the Uttar Pradesh state government – consistently implemented policies which favoured the exploitation of the Hill regions (Baumann, 1998; Rangan, 1995). The National Forest Policy of 1952, for example, reinforced the right of the state to manage forests so as to meet “national needs” (Baumann, 1998, p.99). This had counterproductive consequences for many villages (Drew, 2017). A new emphasis on the extraction of resources derived legitimacy from Prime Minister Nehru's vision for an urban and industrial modern India, with a focus on large infrastructure and “nation-building” projects (Drew, 2017). Little attempt was made to set up processing centres for the production of timber products, which would have facilitated a greater

level of industrial development, created employment opportunities, and added value to exports from the hills (Mawdsley, 1998, p.39; Rangan, 2000).

The 1970s and 1980s were a period of vibrant political struggle in the hills. The most famous political movement of this time was the Chipko movement, which received international publicity and recognition for the strategy of “tree hugging” to prevent the felling of forests (Bandyopadhyay, 1992; Rangan, 2000). The exact strategies and motivations of the protesters have been subject to much critical analysis and debate. Among a number of other criticisms, some critics argue that characterisation of the movement as a predominately environmental one overshadowed the economic conditions which underpinned villagers’ marginality as well as their calls for a separate state (Guha, 1989). Indeed, environmental activism appealed to an international audience much more so than a more provincial concern for statehood. In this way, attention to the Chipko agitations at times detracted momentum from the statehood movement (Mawdsley, 1997). However, the move for the statehood had existed since at least the 1930s, when it was mentioned in the Second Round Table Conference of 1930-31 (Galvin, 2013, p.130). Calls for statehood were also made throughout the postcolonial period and these were characterised by their lamentations of ‘internal colonialism’ (Moller, 2000). Notwithstanding these efforts, calls for the creation of a separate state in the decades following national independence only managed to garner support among the urban and educated elite (Guha, 1989; Mawdsley, 1999).

It was not until the mid-1990s that the statehood movement garnered widespread support (Drew, 2017; Kumar, 2001). In 1994, the then Uttar Pradesh government responded to the recommendations of the Central Government’s Mandal Commission and proposed legislation for reservation policies for OBCs in government educational institutions and employment offices. Under the legislation, twenty-seven percent quotas for OBCs were to be added to existing reservation policies of 15 percent for Scheduled Castes, and 7.5 percent for

Scheduled Tribes. If passed, this legislation would mean that 49.5 percent of government posts would be reserved for OBCs, SCs and STs combined. These percentages were devised based upon the demographic averages across India, where higher castes were estimated to comprise just eleven percent of the population but had vastly disproportionate access to government posts (Kumar, 2001). However, the historical development of the hills was such that these higher castes constituted approximately 80 percent of the population and many struggled to make a living (Mawdsley, 1998, p.42). If almost fifty percent of government posts were reserved for OBCs, SCs and STs, then there would be even fewer opportunities for most of the hills' population to secure their livelihoods (Krishna, 2002).

In addition to jarring with the demographic specificity of the hills, this legislation was proposed in the context of widespread unemployment, environmental degradation, and high levels of outmigration from many mountainous districts (Bora, 1996; Kumar, 2001). In this sense it added insult to injury for those in the hills who had long contended their economic and political marginality, and who had long asserted their autonomy against the British administrators and then the Uttar Pradesh Government (Moller, 2000). Significantly, young people arguably stood to lose the most from the Mandal Commission's recommendations (Koskimaki, 2011). Access to good quality educational institutions was already curtailed for youth who did not have adequate resources to access private schooling and colleges. Moreover, educated unemployment among graduates was a growing problem in the hills and further restricting their access to government offices would dash their prospects of finding secure and meaningful work (Chakraborty, 2018; Koskimaki, 2011, 2016).

This legislation was subsequently met with widespread and sometimes violent protest. As with earlier protests, the statehood movement was simultaneously a move for the preservation and maintenance of a distinct self-identity (Moller, 2000). A disparate set of interests were unified by *pahari log* throughout their calls for the statehood (Klenk, 2010).

Some protesters argued that if this legislation was passed, increasing numbers of OBCs would migrate to the hills and alter the cultural and social specificity of the region (Kumar, 2001). A faction of protesters argued the legislation was a plot by Uttar Pradesh's then Chief Minister to infiltrate the hills with his supporters (Moller, 2000). Others pointed to the Hill people's marginal political representation in the National Assembly and Parliament, which had considerably fewer representatives relative to states of similar geographical size and population. Others still pointed toward ongoing environmental concerns in the region (Pathak, 1997). Protesters' diverse interests converged on the belief that the economic, ecological and strategic interests of Uttarakhand would only be met if the region was governed by Hill people, for Hill people (Joshi, 2001; Mawdsley, 1997). It was in the wake of protracted, vibrant and sustained protests that Uttarakhand was created as the 27th state in the Indian federation on the 8th of November 2000.

4.2.3 Social and economic inequalities in Uttarakhand today

Over the last few decades there have been significant investments in infrastructure, communication, and educational institutions in Uttarakhand (Government of Uttarakhand, 2018). These investments have been made by the state and central governments, in conjunction with development agencies such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. A report from the Uttarakhand Rural Roads Development Agency, for example, states that almost 8000 kilometres of roads have been built since 2000, which have connected 933 villages each with more than 250 inhabitants (Government of Uttarakhand, 2017). This has coincided with the rapid expansion of electricity connectivity as well as telecommunications technologies. The Uttarakhand Renewable Energy Development Agency has connected 530 thirty "remote villages" with solar energy systems since 2001 (Government of Uttarakhand, 2019). The expansion of schooling has facilitated impressive rises in literacy rates across the state, increasing from 71 percent in 2001 to 80 percent in 2011 (Census of India, 2011). This

compares with an average literacy rate across India of 74 percent in 2011. There have also been some efforts to generate employment opportunities in the hills. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act (MGNREGA), for example, guarantees a minimum of 100 days paid labour per year to every rural unskilled adult across India. The Act was rolled out across Uttarakhand in three phases between 2006 and 2008 and continues today. Across the state, these changes have combined to reduce poverty and to create economic growth rates which have exceeded the rate of national economic growth each year since 2000. In 2011, for example, the Gross State Domestic Product rate was 10.4 which compared to India's Gross Domestic Product rate in the same year of 8.6 (Uttarakhand Planning Commission, 2012).

Notwithstanding these efforts, there remains a profound gap between the social and economic aims of statehood and the everyday experiences of many people living in the hills (Koskimaki, 2011, 2017). Literacy rates remain lower in rural areas than in urban areas, and there are significant differences between the literacy rate of males and females, of 88 percent and 71 percent respectively (Census of India, 2011). Despite reasonable uptake of MGNREGA, there have been few sustained and effective policies to create widespread and meaningful employment opportunities (Negi et al., 2015). Indeed, there is no major industry in the hills (Uttarakhand Planning Commission, 2012). Household incomes remain much lower in the mountainous regions of the state and recent health indicators also suggest wide disparities between rural and urban areas (Census of India, 2011; Government of India, 2015-2016). In addition, the quality of many roads is quite poor, and the supply of electricity and water is not reliable (Government of India, 2015-2016). Therefore even though rates of economic growth have been impressive in Uttarakhand since 2000, its benefits have been concentrated almost exclusively in large urban centres (Jakimow, 2012; Mamgain & Reddy, 2016; Suryanarayana & Mamgain, 2019).

Some commentators suggest that the concentration of wealth and opportunities in urban areas has brought into sharp relief the limitations of the statehood movement (Koskimaki, 2017; Tillin, 2013). Even in the years immediately following statehood protests continued throughout the hills, with many young people arguing that its advantages had been co-opted by an elite (Koskimaki, 2011, 2017). Tillin (2013) argues that by the time statehood was ceded there was many powerful vested interests at play which stood to gain considerably. Support for the statehood movement among business groups grew in the 1990s, for example, because economic liberalisation meant that there would be lucrative opportunities for rent-seeking and profiteering when state boundaries were redrawn. Tillin (2013) also suggests that support for the statehood movement among the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was a strategic way to consolidate its support base in a changing political climate. As minority castes and their associated political parties came to threaten upper caste dominance throughout the 1990s, the BJP mobilised support for statehood movements in Hindi speaking regions to garner support for its Hindu nationalist agenda (Kumar, 1999; Tillin, 2013). This strategy partially explains recent trends in electoral politics in Uttarakhand. In the early 2000s the Indian National Congress were still the most dominant party in the region. But in the most recent state election in 2017, the BJP won 57 of 70 seats in the Uttarakhand Legislative Assembly.

By the late 2000s, issues related to the “failures of statehood” had entered mainstream discourse (Klenk, 2010). Newspapers articles and television reports highlighting the difficulties faced by those in the hills dominate local media sources. But government and policy responses to issues of exclusion and under-development are often framed in technical rather than political ways (Klenk, 2004; Morarji, 2014). Various attempts have been made to “stem the problem of migration,” for example, without always considering the structural inequalities which underpin economic marginality. Others identify corruption as one of the main causes of inequality (Koskimaki, 2017, p.49). The result of each of these approaches is that remedying enduring

and historic divides between the hills and plains are understood as a set of policy “choices” which can and should readily be made (Klenk, 2010, p.181). Some commentators suggest that this style of debate has led to a situation where political leaders are elected based on who demonstrates the greatest commitment to remedying inequalities rather than who has the most potent ideas about how that might be done (Morarji, 2014, p.149).

Persistent and even deepening inequalities between the hills and plains have acutely affected migration patterns in the region. Where previous migration strategies were predominately circular in nature (Bora, 1996; Whittaker, 1984), the rate of outmigration from many districts in the state has accelerated over the last two decades (Census of India, 2011). All mountainous districts registered heightened levels of outmigration between 2000 and 2011, while Almora and Pauri Garhwal registered an absolute decrease in population size (Census of India, 2011). Thus the rate of outmigration from most Hill districts has increased quite significantly since the creation of Uttarakhand, particularly among educated young people (Joshi, 2018). Despite the differences in migration strategies across various historical periods there are important continuities. Many migrants continue circular migration practices, send remittances to their villages and maintain linkages with their homes (UNESCO, 2013). In some parts of the state, herding practices and other traditional livelihood practices continue (Dyson, 2014). Moreover, migration for education and work remains a highly gendered process, performed mainly by men (Joshi, 2018). Mamgain and Reddy (2016) conducted several surveys to identify migration patterns across ten hills districts in Uttarakhand. Based on their findings from over 118 villages, they reported that 86 percent of migrants were men, almost 90 percent of whom were aged between 15 and 49 (Mamgain & Reddy, 2016, p.8).

Public discourse commonly frames outmigration as the drain of resources from the mountains. From this perspective, the prospect of development is further undermined when there is no “manpower” or human capital in the hills. The erosion and loss which outmigration

results in is commonly depicted in figurative and literal depictions of “ghost” or “empty” villages. Ghost villages are those which have been entirely depopulated. The number of “ghost villages” is growing quite significantly in Uttarakhand, particularly in more isolated regions. A recent report by the Uttarakhand Rural Development and Migration Commission stated that there are 734 villages in the state that are entirely depopulated (Government of Uttarakhand, 2018). Seven hundred of these villages were depopulated between 2011 and 2018 alone. This issue has garnered significant media attention in recent times. Depictions of ghost villages in newspaper reports often intend to symbolise the erosion of *pahari* morals and values and signify the death of a mode of living which has existed for centuries (see for example, Trivedi, 2018). Such imagery emotively describes the “end point” of exploitation in Uttarakhand; it reveals in the present a state with a “glorious” past but with an unpromising future.

Framing the “problem of migration” in this way has had considerable effects upon how interventions are designed and implemented. In 2017, for example, the Government of Uttarakhand created the Rural Development and Migration Commission with the express purpose of “arresting out-migration.” Yet framing the issue as a “problem to be solved” tends to overlook the multiple and contested ways migrants make sense of their strategies. Indeed, the shift from more circular patterns of migration to outmigration has occurred alongside a qualitative shift in the aspirations of many migrants (Mamgain & Reddy, 2016). Where previous generations of migrants sought work in construction and other manual occupations (Bora, 1996), more recent studies have shown how educated youth are moving in search of white-collar work. A renewed set of aspirations among young people are largely consistent with what has been noted across India more generally (Fernandes, 2006; Jeffrey, 2017; Lukose, 2009). Some studies suggest that increasing numbers of Indian youth aspire toward cosmopolitan lifestyles in urban centres (Gilbertson, 2018; Lukose, 2009; Smith & Gergan,

2015). These social and cultural shifts call into question the efficacy of policy interventions in Uttarakhand which frame outmigration more strictly as a response to “distress” or hardship.

Yet this observation should not be taken to mean that educated youth necessarily aspire to be part of the urban middle classes (cf. Jeffrey, 2010; Koskimaki, 2017). A number of recent studies have demonstrated how some educated youth in Uttarakhand are attempting to make a living in the hills, many of whom are return migrants (Chakraborty, 2018; Dyson, 2019a; Jeffrey & Dyson, 2014; Koskimaki, 2017). Jeffrey and Dyson (2014), for example, show how a new generation of educated yet unemployed *pahari* youth endeavour to serve their community. A feature of their service is its generative focus: their participants stress how they can create resources rather than simply focus on how they might distribute existing ones. These are significant strategies in a context which is more commonly defined by what it “lacks” (Mathur, 2015). Koskimaki (2011, 2016) conducted ethnographic fieldwork in various Hill towns across Uttarakhand in the late 2000s. Her work shows how some educated yet unemployed young men are drawing on their educational credentials and knowledge of the region to become local politicians. They are attempting to assert themselves so as to realise status, at the same time as they fight for positive social change and employment opportunities for others in the hills. Taken together, these works highlight the complex attachments and associations young people have in the hills, and how they attempt to reconcile their desire to live in the mountains with a marked lack of opportunities to do so.

These studies also highlight how being *pahari* intersects with other marks of identity such as class, caste and gender (cf. Chakraborty, 2018). A defining feature of the social geography of Uttarakhand today is gender inequality. For *pahari* young men, dominant modes of masculine success are to some extent associated with spatial mobility (Joshi, 2015). In this sense moving from one place to the next can sometimes be a means of acquiring status and respect. But patriarchal social norms constrain the agency and mobility of *pahari* women such

that their pursuit of education and paid work is often discouraged. These social and cultural inequalities are affirmed by some concerning statistics. Gender inequality is reflected in the lower literacy rates among women and girls compared to men and boys, lower levels of educational enrolment and attainment, and an exceptionally low sex ratio (Government of India, 2015-2016). These inequalities are not confined to the hills Districts. The rate of unemployment among job-seeking women with educational credentials in the plains is much higher than that of their male counterparts (Government of India, 2019).

At the same time, there have been significant efforts to address gender inequality (Dyson, 2019b). There have been considerable rises among girls and women in all levels of education, particularly in urban areas. Aside from increases in state education, there have been several attempts to educate women with the express purpose of changing patriarchal norms. Klenk's (2003, 2010) ethnographic study of an ashram in the hills, for example, reveals an emphasis on including women in development projects and spreading Gandhian values. There has also been legislation passed to ensure women play a greater role in electoral politics. The 74th constitutional amendment – or Panchayati Raj – passed in 1992, for example, stipulates that one third of seats in local governing bodies be reserved for women. Despite entrenched gender inequalities, the conditions in Uttarakhand are arguably more conducive to these kinds of interventions than other parts of north India (Jakimow, 2019). Women have a strong history of engagement in politics in the hills, such as the Chipko movement and Anti-Alcohol Movement (Mawdsley, 1998). But these processes are contested. Jakimow (2019) argues that women Municipal Councillors in Dehradun are often treated as “servants” by constituents. This is particularly the case for women of lower caste backgrounds who are maltreated by middle class groups who feel they have been marginalised through electoral politics. Aside from electoral politics, some studies suggest that increased levels of outmigration among men have

increased women's workloads in villages and limited the prospect of young women and girls pursuing further education (Mamgain & Reddy, 2016, p.14).

Caste also intersects with *pahari* identity in significant ways. Even though caste inequalities are less pronounced in some parts of Uttarakhand compared to other regions in north India, dominant castes still enjoy greater power and prestige than subordinate castes in most areas (Berreman, 1969; Dyson, 2014). In villages, their economic dominance is often underpinned by larger landholdings, disproportionate ownership of livestock and other economic assets (Mamgain, 2016). Notions of purity and pollution continue to inform caste practices and rituals in some villages, as manifest, for example, in the spatial separation of castes (Dyson, 2014). Outmigration is also much more common among General Castes, who tend to have higher levels of educational attainment, more money at their disposal, and crucially, stronger networks in the plains (Joshi, 2018). There are also important ethnic differences among those who identify as *pahari*. In addition to a number of indigenous tribes living in the hills, the two main ethnic groups among the Hindu population are Kumoani and Garwhali, who each have quite distinct customs, language and affiliations (Moller, 2000). Thus being an educated *pahari* young man at this historical juncture is to be positioned in a complex web of associations. The ways *pahari* young men navigate these associations and make sense of migrating or otherwise are themes which are interwoven throughout the chapters of this thesis.

4.3 Pauri Town and Pauri Garhwal District

These changes across Uttarakhand generally have manifested differently in various settings across the state. This section contextualises these processes in Pauri Town and Pauri Garhwal District. It commences with a history of the Town and District, before discussing the most

pertinent changes that have occurred over the last few decades. It shows how changing livelihoods have been transformed, and how these are associated with a rise in educational attainment and increasing rates of outmigration.

4.3.1 History of Pauri Town and Pauri Garhwal District

Pauri Town is the district headquarters of the Pauri Garhwal District in Uttarakhand. The town was first identified as a suitable location for a Hill station by the British in 1839. Prior to that time it had been little more than a small village (Bora, 1996). But it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that the administrative functions of Pauri Town were consolidated. In 1960, Chamoli was carved out of what was then Pauri Tehsil and the commissioner's headquarters was established in Pauri Town. This precipitated a moderate period of urbanisation (Singh, 1995) and coincided with a large road building project in the wake of the Indo-China war of 1962 (Mawdsley, 1998). These processes helped consolidate Pauri Town's position as a regional hub of trade, administration, small-scale industry and transportation. The processes have left a significant legacy for Pauri Town today; even though the entire district is classified as mountainous and much of it is quite isolated, Pauri Town itself is relatively well connected to other centres in north India, such as New Delhi, Dehradun and Srinagar (Mamgain & Reddy, 2016).

Agriculture has long been a staple of the economy in the District. However, the structure of agriculture and landholdings in Pauri Garhwal is unlike that in other parts of the north Indian plains, where there tend to be large landowning classes and castes (Srinivas, 1963). As recently as the 1980s, 97 percent of those involved in agriculture in Pauri Garhwal District were owner-cultivators (Whittaker, 1984). Landholdings are typically small and do not provide high yields. In the 1990s, agricultural holdings per cultivator averaged just 1.22-1.62 hectares (Bora, 1996, p.137). In addition to topography of the region, small landholdings were such that

there was very limited scope to implement higher yielding agricultural processes. The Green Revolution, for example, involved a form of seed technology and mechanisation processes which were not considered suitable or feasible in the hills (Krishna, 2002). Consequently, it has not been possible to generate a surplus in grain cultivation across Pauri Garhwal and the deficit has been imported (Whittaker, 1984).

As with other mountainous districts of the state, the difficulties with generating a surplus through agriculture were such that large numbers of men have migrated for work elsewhere (Bora, 1996; Singh, 1995; Whittaker, 1984). This strategy has particular significance in Pauri Garhwal. Some scholars argue that over 40 percent of households receive remittances in the District, which is reported to be higher than any other region in India (Thumbe, 2012). Yet as well as migration to other parts of India, migration to Pauri Town is an important but often overlooked feature of social change in the region. The hastening of policies after national independence which disadvantaged rural areas such as the National Forest Policy of 1952 (Baumann, 1998), occurred at around the same time that the administrative functions of Pauri Town were being consolidated. Singh's (1995) quantitative study of urbanisation trends in the Uttarakhand hills shows how this led to a small but significant number of job opportunities in and around Pauri Town centre. For example, as government offices were established there was an increasing demand for allied jobs in the service sector (Singh, 1995). The demand for housing and infrastructure also meant that there were jobs in construction and trades that were not available to the same extent elsewhere in the District. These industries further demanded a transport industry which could move workers, goods and resources more efficiently (Mamgain, 2004). In summary, these processes meant that it was easier for those living in Pauri Town's proximity to diversify their livelihoods and the town itself became regarded as a hub of connectivity and exchange (Mamgain, 2004).

4.3.2 Changing livelihoods in Pauri Town: 1990s to present

Yet even though the economy of Pauri Town was more diverse than in nearby areas, the scale of industry and size of the township remained relatively small (Mamgain, 2016). In 2011, Pauri Town had a population of just 25 440 (Census of India, 2011). Most of those living in the city were unable to generate and accumulate significant amounts of economic capital, and circular migration remained an important economic strategy (Bora, 1996). Despite these strategies, living standards in the region remained lower than larger urban areas in the state. Since the 1980s, the town has grown in an ad-hoc and sporadic fashion, and infrastructure, electricity and water supply have been unreliable and inadequate (Singh, 1995). There has long been a distinct lack of educational opportunities for children and young people, and healthcare facilities have not been able to meet the needs of the populace (Mamgain & Reddy, 2016).

Against this backdrop, many of those living in Pauri Town have sought to change their livelihood strategies. In particular, increasing numbers of young people are pursuing tertiary education. A crucially important factor in these emerging strategies was the establishment of HNB Garhwal College in the early 1970s. The campus in Pauri Town is affiliated with HNB Garhwal University in Srinagar, which is a central university (University Grants Commission, 2019). When the college was first established it catered for a relatively small and privileged population, particularly the sons of government administrators and local politicians (Singh, 1995). However this began to change in the late 1970s, when the college expanded and began to offer a wider range of courses. But it was not until the late 1990s and early 2000s that rates of enrolment increased more significantly. Many young people have invested in tertiary education in Pauri Town to enhance their job prospects. However a lack of suitable employment opportunities in the region is often cited as the most common reason for outmigration. Mamgain and Reddy's (2016, p.11) field survey of 391 migrants from Pauri Garhwal, for example, suggested that 95 percent of migrants left the region for reasons related to education and employment. This marks a significant shift from the more circular migration

strategies of preceding generations, who migrated for work in seasonal agriculture and manual occupations (Bora, 1996).

The demand for education and its widespread uptake is reflected in considerably high literacy rates in the District. The District has a literacy rate of 82 percent, while the literacy rate of Pauri Town is 92 percent (Census of India, 2011). Yet despite these advances, there remains a lack of broader educational infrastructure in Pauri Town. The quality of primary education is widely reported to be quite poor, while secondary schooling opportunities are rather stratified (Chauhan & Sati, 2016). Government secondary schools do not function effectively; they are often under resourced and there is reportedly a culture of absenteeism in some secondary schools (Chauhan & Sati, 2016). Private schools which have been established since the early 2000s offer education of varying quality (Klenk, 2010). For college students and graduates, there are very limited coaching clinics and tuition centres where one can prepare for government examinations and enhance their job prospects (Mamgain & Reddy, 2016). The few that do exist are not well resourced and do not enjoy a strong reputation. There is a near absence of private sector white-collar employment opportunities in Pauri Town. Moreover, some of the government offices that were established in Pauri Town in the 1960s and 1970s were relocated to Dehradun in the wake of statehood. This is a local variant of a broader concern in the hills about how the regional economy has been undermined since 2000 (see Koskimaki, 2011, 2016).

At the same time, there are some emerging opportunities in Pauri Town for educated youth in particular. The state government is offering an increasing number of short term contract positions in the area. These positions have been created in government departments, such as the Forest Department, and have been made in lieu of more stable and secure jobs. Nevertheless, they are an attractive offering to youth who do not want to migrate. In addition, the tourism industry has also grown quite significantly in recent years (Uttarakhand at a Glance,

2013/2014), and some young men are attempting to make money through homestays and pilgrimages. Alongside more formal modes of employment, the availability of new technologies and forms of communication have given some young people new opportunities to create work. Joshi (2015) argues that the increased mobility of passengers between the plains and the hills, coupled with reasonable transport infrastructure, has generated an increased demand for drivers. For youth in Pauri Town, this is a new class of employment that does not require much training at the same time as it offers a lifestyle and opportunities for spatial mobility which other forms of employment do not (Joshi, 2015). Finally, there has greater scope for educated graduates to use their skills and competencies to generate new forms of work (see Dyson, 2019a). These include drawing upon one's experiences of migration, new technologies, and other resources to create small entrepreneurial activities.

Despite these emerging opportunities in Pauri and across Uttarakhand more generally, most of these jobs do not offer security and do not pay a significant salary. Moreover, patriarchal norms are such that most of these kinds of employment are not considered suitable for young women. At the same time, it is very uncommon for women to move to the plains away from their families to search for work (Gidwani & Ramamurthy, 2018; Mamgain & Reddy, 2016). But the obverse is true of young men. Outmigration among educated men has been a defining feature of social change in the District over the last two decades. Its population declined in the first decade of the 2000s; from 697 078 in 2001 to 686 527 in 2011 (Census of India, 2011). These statistics suggest that migration is not as circular in nature as it used to be. In addition to a large number of "ghost villages," there are 122 villages in Pauri Garhwal with a population of fewer than ten people (Mamgain & Reddy, 2016, p.11). These trends also suggest a strong association with educational attainment and outmigration. Even though higher caste groups tend to have better access to jobs in urban centres, Mamgain and Reddy (2016, p.17) suggest that the most significant determinant for outmigration among young men from

Pauri Garhwal is education. This finding further complicates understandings of migration which frame it as a response to hardship and underscores the significance of studying educated young men's strategies to more fully illuminate these issues.

4.4 Dehradun

Against this backdrop of political and economic change across Uttarakhand in general and Pauri Town in particular, transformations in Dehradun have been acute. Large numbers of young people are moving to the city in pursuit of education and work. Although resources and opportunities have been concentrated in the city, rapid urban growth has given rise to several other social issues. After offering a brief overview of Dehradun's history, this section examines how wider changes in the political economy of Uttarakhand have manifested in the city since the 1990s. It gives particular attention changes within the educational and employment landscapes and the challenges these have entailed for young people. This provides a historical backdrop within which to situate the migration practices of educated young men and to highlight the significance and distinctiveness of their contemporary migration strategies.

4.4.1 History of Dehradun

During the colonial period Dehradun emerged as an important trading centre and supplied raw materials to other parts of the colony and abroad (Singh, 1995). It occupied a strategic geographical position, serving as a gateway to the Himalayas and neighbouring countries such as China and Nepal, as well as larger metropolitan centres in north India. Colonial administrators also favoured the region for its scenic beauty, while its slight elevation meant that it had a cooler climate than places further south in the plains (Singh, 1995). The British administration subsequently established a large number of government offices, social clubs and

hotels in the city (Gupta, 2018, p.26). Industry also developed in the region and it became an important administrative hub.

From the middle of the nineteenth century, Dehradun began to develop a reputation as centre of educational excellence (Srivastava, 1998). Some of the most reputed educational institutions in the country were established in and around the city. St. George's College, established in 1853, and The Woodstock School, established in 1854, for example, catered to the local elite and children of British colonisers (Gupta, 2018, p.30). The Doon School was also established in 1935 and is widely regarded as one of the best boarding schools for boys in the country (Srivastava, 1998).

After achieving national independence in 1947, these institutions sought to create modern citizens by promoting secular and urban values (Morarji, 2014). In addition to institutions more strictly concerned with education, other prestigious institutions created in the area include The Archaeology Survey of India, The Indian Military Academy and The Forest Research Institute. Each of these institutions stills functions today and have served to extend Dehradun's reputation as a leader in research, defence and bureaucracy (Gupta, 2018, p.27).

In the decades following national independence, the city grew steadily and offered a range of job opportunities (Gupta, 2018). The growth of government offices and allied sectors meant that there was a strong demand for constructions workers and other trades (Mamgain, 2004). The service sector also offered a large number of opportunities to migrant populations, as did the agricultural regions on the outskirts of the city (Jakimow, 2012). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, industry further expanded as connectivity with other parts of India improved (Singh, 1995). Coupled with offering economic opportunities, Dehradun also offered comparatively higher living standards than the hills as well as other plains regions in north India. It is also relatively well serviced by hospitals and other healthcare facilities.

4.4.2 Social change in Dehradun: 1990s to present

Over the last few decades, social and economic changes in Dehradun have been profound. Since 2001, the contribution of the service sector to GDSP has increased significantly while the share of agriculture in GDSP has declined. The Uttarakhand Department of Skill Development and Employment identifies software development and start-ups, tourism and hospitality, beauty and wellness, alongside property development and real estate as key drivers of Dehradun's economic growth. Industry has also developed since 2000, particularly in the automobile, renewable energy, telecommunications systems and manufacturing industries.

The concentration of resources in Dehradun has brought about significant urban growth. Since the 1990s in particular, the city has attracted a large number of migrants from diverse religious, ethnic and caste backgrounds. Between 2001 and 2011, the population of the city grew 32.33 percent, much of which is due to migration (Thumbe, 2012). It is the largest urban agglomeration in the state and had a population of 706 124 in 2011 (Census of India, 2011). However, rapid urbanisation has placed significant stresses on Dehradun. The city centre itself is very congested, with increasing pollution and traffic jams (Sati, 2013). More generally, poor investment and planning in transport infrastructure, electricity and water supply have undermined the living standards of many people in Dehradun (World Bank, 2012). For example, there have been increases in urban poverty since 2000 (World Bank, 2012); evidenced in part through the increased number of slums from 75 in 1996 to 113 in 2000 (Sati, 2013, p.13). At the same time, the increased value of land surrounding the city has meant that agriculture is no longer a viable economic pursuit in proximity to Dehradun (Jakimow, 2017). Many previously agricultural workers have subsequently turned to small-scale industry and manual occupations in the city centre in order to secure their livelihoods.

Increasing pressures on infrastructure and resources have had significant effects on livelihoods in Dehradun. Dominant social groups have been able to take advantage of the concentration of wealth and capital in the city (Jakimow, 2012). Economic changes associated with neoliberalism and an oversupply of educated graduates, for example, have made for a favourable economic climate for certain businesses, particularly those in IT (Deuchar, 2014a; Jakimow, 2012). But a poorly regulated and functioning private sector is such that many workers are often quite acutely marginalised (Deuchar, 2014a). Secure employment opportunities have been steadily eroded since the 1990s (Mamgain, 2004; Suryanarayana & Mamgain, 2019). The most recent Labour Force Periodic Survey estimated the unemployment rate in urban areas in Uttarakhand at 27.7 percent for young people (Government of India, 2019). Highlighting the difficulties for the skilled labour force in particular, the report revealed that the unemployment is higher for youth with postgraduate qualifications (26.5 percent) and undergraduate degrees (21.5 percent) than for those with Diplomas (18 percent). These unemployment rates compare with an unemployment rate across all age groups and regions in Uttarakhand of 7.6 percent and 6.1 percent across India (Government of India, 2019).

The rapid influx of migrants to the city in these circumstances has been subject to much public debate in Dehradun in recent times. In addition to the large number of migrants arriving to the city from the Uttarakhand hills, “in-migration” from neighbouring states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar has garnered much attention. Some newspaper reports contribute to a derogatory discourse about migrants from these areas, suggesting that migrants are taking jobs or are making the city a dirtier and less habitable place. A small number of academic studies have highlighted the difficult living conditions which such migrants face. A recent study of 609 migrant households, for example, highlighted that poorer migrants are compelled to live in overcrowded houses with inadequate infrastructure, predominately work in unskilled jobs and have much lower than average rates of literacy (Kandpal et al., 2018). The same study

suggested that nearly 80 percent of children who had migrated work in unskilled occupations. Taken together, these processes have created new and complex tensions in Dehradun between poorer residents from the city whose livelihoods have been compromised, migrant populations from various backgrounds who have diverse experiences living in the city, and dominant social groups who have been able to consolidate their economic standing.

Alongside these social and economic shifts and hardships, broader processes of globalisation have encompassed significant cultural changes in the city. Dehradun has been transformed into a much more cosmopolitan city over the last few decades, evidenced through a large number of branded clothing stores, coffee shops, internet cafes and fast-food restaurants (Jakimow, 2012). As with other parts of India, a significant number of shopping malls have also been established in and around the city. These changes most directly affect the lives of young people and are bound up with a renewed set of aspirations among them (McGuire, 2013). Some scholars argue that shopping malls in the Indian setting index the growth of a consumerist culture and orientation toward neoliberal market values (Lukose, 2009). From this perspective, shopping malls can be read as symbols of modernity which encourage new forms of sociality and interaction among young people. New ways of interacting have also occurred through increased internet access and social media connectivity among young people in north India (Jeffrey, 2017; Joshi, 2015; Koskimaki, 2016). Therefore even as economic processes have had quite negative effects for the working lives of many young people, new social and cultural opportunities have emerged in the city which are relatively accessible and which attract a large number of youth.

4.4.3 A changing educational landscape

One of the most pertinent changes in Dehradun has been the transformation of the tertiary education sector. Increasing numbers of migrants are moving to Dehradun to pursue tertiary

education and acquire degrees. In addition, the deflated value of credentials is such that many youth are staying in tertiary education for longer to gain postgraduate qualifications (Mamgain & Reddy, 2016). There is also a stronger demand for tertiary education among populations from Dehradun itself (Gupta, 2018). There have subsequently been significant increases in enrolment in tertiary education. In 1991, there were just 10 520 students enrolled in higher education in Dehradun (Census of India, 1991). By 2016-2017, that figure was 48 571 (Government of Uttarakhand, 2016-2017). These figures do not capture the large number of students who may have completed their studies but attend private tuition centres and coaching clinics. This increase in enrolments has also been driven by the 2009 Right to Education Act, which coheres with dominant understandings of formal education as the primary way of facilitating development (Deuchar, 2014b). Within this framework, the state must ensure that all citizens are able to access education, and a particular emphasis has been placed on universalising primary schooling (Majumdar & Mooij, 2012).

Yet increased enrolments in tertiary education have coincided with a much greater role of the private sector in educational provision. Since 2000, thirteen new universities have been established in Dehradun, nine of which are private institutions (University Grants Commission, 2019). Even by 2005, the expansion of the private sector was such that the state was no longer the main provider of educational provision throughout India (Chopra & Jeffery, 2005; Majumdar & Mooij, 2012). This has had significant consequences for the accessibility of quality education. In Dehradun, many of these private institutions cater for the elite and they are able to limit the access of subordinate groups by charging quite exorbitant fees. Despite legal provisions for private institutions to reserve places for marginalised groups, there is little evidence of whether or how these reservations are implemented and very few studies which examine their effectiveness (Gupta, 2018). What has been demonstrated is how graduates from elite universities are able to hoard access to well-paid employment upon completing their

degrees. Middle class graduates from private Engineering colleges, for example, have secured employment in multinational companies in Dehradun and larger metropolitan centres throughout India, while some have even found jobs abroad (Deuchar, 2014b, p.149).

But the private education sector is not homogeneous. Debates about middle class politicking and “elite flight” to the private sector sometimes overlook this point (for example, Fernandes, 2006; Majumdar & Mooij, 2012). In Dehradun, a large number of poor quality private colleges and institutions have recently emerged. Many of these institutions were created in a context of relaxed laws which made it easier to obtain the right to grant degrees (Young et al. 2016). Policy changes were made in recognition of how the existing educational infrastructure was struggling to meet the demands of a growing student population. As with other parts of north India, business people and other actors sought to create profit in these circumstances. These conditions partly explain the advent of “fake institutions” (Young et al., 2016). These institutions claim to offer degrees but do not have accreditation to do so from the regulating body. They consequently defraud students by charging them for degrees which they are unable to confer. Similar allegations have been made about institutions in Dehradun, which raises questions about the private sector’s legitimacy and effectiveness (Gupta, 2018). Yet even those private institutions which are able to confer degrees do not necessarily offer good quality education (Deuchar, 2014a; Jakimow, 2012). In the absence of sustained and rigorous scholarship, the benefits – or otherwise – of these institutions remain unclear.

Alongside the proliferation of private colleges and universities, the quality of state institutions has been steadily eroded. In 2012, the Principal of DAV College – the largest college in Dehradun – estimated that there were over 30 000 students enrolled at his institution (Deuchar, 2014b). That particular institution had once been highly reputed and attracted students from across India and even abroad. But it is currently in a state of disrepair. As well as being physically decrepit, classes often do not run when scheduled and students have

reported obtaining degrees without needing to attend (Deuchar, 2014a). Importantly, the ways this institution has been transformed is indicative of changes in state education more generally. In addition to being poorly regulated and having a culture of absenteeism among staff, funding changes have acutely affected the sector. Although education is the largest category of public expenditure on the part of the Uttarakhand government, annual increases of 3-4 percent in investment (World Bank, 2012) do not match the rate of enrolments within education, suggesting per capita disinvestment (Deuchar, 2014b).

In response to the restructuring of degree-conferring institutions, a “shadow education” sector has emerged. As with other parts of India, a vast number of coaching clinics and private tuition centres have opened in Dehradun. Gupta (2018) argues that in Dehradun these institutions have emerged to fill the void between rising educational aspirations on the one hand and the failure of the state education system on the other. Gupta (2018) further contends that the prevalence and number of these institutions is such that should rather be considered a central component of the educational infrastructure in Dehradun, rather than its “shadow.” Indeed, these institutions are ubiquitous throughout the city. Advertisements for them adorn the sides of buildings and lampposts, dominate the pages of newspapers, and the institutions themselves are scattered across the landscape.

These institutions can be divided into two groups. Coaching clinics provide training programmes concerning how to develop job interview skills, how to comport and conduct oneself in the workplace, as well how to develop one’s personality such that they are productive team members (McGuire, 2013). Such skills seek to prime young people for the demands of white collar employment. Students typically attend one or more of these institutions alongside the pursuit of their degrees. Private tuition centres offer guidance in more traditional subject matter, such as Maths and English, as well as how to pass particular government examinations. These institutions are not regulated by the state in any way and cannot confer degrees. But this

does not affect their popularity. In a context where there is acute competition for jobs and formal institutions have been eroded, many young people in Dehradun consider them indispensable to finding suitable employment (Deuchar, 2014a, 2014b; Gupta, 2018). In 2012 I conducted ethnographic research in Dehradun to analyse the educational strategies of young men. Among the 64 participants in that study, a common strategy was for students to enrol in (but not attend) a college or university so as to obtain a degree, but to attend a private tuition centre to learn the requisite skills needed to pass examinations (Deuchar, 2014a, 2014b).

It must be noted that as with the formal education sector, there is a significant hierarchy among these institutions. The main way that the quality of private tuition centres and coaching clinics is evidenced is through their attendees obtaining good results in government exams. Billboards with photographs of successful students alongside their marks are regularly part of the advertisements for these institutions and serve to disseminate a culture of competition among them more generally (Sancho, 2016). Those institutions which regularly achieve good results for their students are able to charge a premium for enrolment fees. They are well resourced, function in a professional manner, and teachers are well respected and have “good” reputations. At the other end of the spectrum are a series of coaching clinics and private tuition centres which do not function as effectively. No formal qualifications are required of teachers in the sector and many institutions are often poorly resourced. Nevertheless, these institutions attract students who wish to enhance their prospect of finding work but cannot afford better options (Deuchar, 2014a).

Despite the difficulties that the restructuring of the educational landscape has entailed for many young people, one of the greatest successes in recent years has been the increased participation of women and girls in education. The Gross Enrolment Rate of women in tertiary education in Uttarakhand exceeds 30 percent, compared with an all India average of 23.5 percent (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2016, p.17). Between 2010 and 2016,

more women enrolled in college degrees than did men in Uttarakhand (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2016, p.136). Educational institutions such as coaching clinics and tuition centres are also sites wherein gender politics are reproduced and challenged (Gilbertson, 2014, 2018). Young women and men interact more freely in these spaces than in areas where their behaviour is more closely observed. They are also sites which promote forms of peer to peer interaction and comportment, such as shaking hands and making eye contact, that do not always cohere with patriarchal expectations (McGuire, 2013). In these ways, the “shadow” education sector plays a significant part in mediating social and cultural change among young people.

4.4.4 Limited employment opportunities

Notwithstanding the time and resources young people invest in preparing for and finding work, there are quite limited job opportunities for college graduates in Dehradun. Secure employment opportunities were eroded in Dehradun throughout the early 1990s and early 2000s (Mamgain, 2004). The effects of this are acutely felt by young people, with the unemployment rate of urban youth across the state at 27.7 percent, which is a 45 year high (Government of India, 2019). Importantly, there are significant gendered differences within these unemployment rates, with the number of job-seeking women being greater than the number of men. The unemployment rate for women with postgraduate degrees, for example, was 50 percent, compared to 18.6 percent for men (Government of India, 2019). Therefore even though economic growth has been concentrated in urban areas and in Dehradun in particular, it has resulted in complex dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within which many educated young people are marginalised. In terms of access to employment, these statistics suggest that gender

inequality has increased over the same period that more women and girls have accessed education.

The situation is compounded for migrants who often have limited networks and contacts in urban centres (Jakimow, 2012). Some studies have shown how educated migrants who arrive in Dehradun often work in lower level service sector jobs such as in hotels, restaurants and lower level administrative positions (Mamgain, 2004; Mamgain & Reddy, 2016). These studies pair with quantitative analyses which highlight the difficulties which poorer migrants finding suitable work (Kandpal et al., 2018). They also resonate with ethnographic works which reveal a considerable disjuncture between the aspirations of educated migrants and opportunities to realise those aspirations (Chakraborty, 2018; Deuchar, 2014b, p.148). Without access to salaried and stable employment, many poorer migrants have been compelled to eke out a living in small scale industry and trades. Indeed, a feature of economic change in Dehradun over the last few decades have been growth in the informal and unregulated sectors (Jakimow, 2017).

The state and federal governments have made efforts to generate more employment across Uttarakhand and in Dehradun in particular. A number of IT Parks designed to boost the economy and provide jobs were built in Dehradun during the early 2000s and 2010s (Jakimow, 2016). This was done with the backing of the state government through the establishment of the State Infrastructure and Industrial Development Corporation of Uttarakhand in 2002. Electronics companies and financial firms, as well as national and international automobile companies have since established posts in these IT and industrial complexes (Gupta, 2018, p.28). There have also been a large number of smaller companies and firms established throughout the city (Deuchar, 2014a, p.153). Alongside these changes, the Uttarakhand Government created the Department of Skill Development and Employment in 2017. It launched a Policy for Skill Development, employment and entrepreneurship in 2018 which

outlines how it intends to increase the employability of workers, increase productivity and competitiveness in the workplace, and reduce the unemployment rate to beneath 4 percent.

Generating employment opportunities has been an important platform in electoral politics. This was particularly the case in the recent state elections of 2017. The state arm of the BJP sought to capitalise on the popularity of the federal BJP by promising to attract investment from private enterprises and foster a favourable business climate. Much of their political campaigning drew upon Prime Minister Modi's mantra of promoting inclusive development at the same time as it advanced a Hindu nationalist agenda (Gopalakrishnan & Chauhan, 2018). This strategy resonated strongly with voters where there was a widespread crisis of unemployment and where allegations of corruption had stifled the Indian National Congress's time in government. At the state elections, the BJP secured a staggering majority of 57 of 70 seats. Shortly after the elections, Trivendra Singh Rawat was sworn in as the new Chief Minister of Uttarakhand. He was favoured as the incumbent given his close ties with Modi as well as his personal involvement in the Uttarakhand statehood movement in the 1990s. The 2017 elections were a decisive victory for the BJP in a context where the winning margin of any political party since 2000 had not exceeded two percent. The Indian National Congress, who had been in power since 2012, managed to win just eleven seats.

Given a paucity of research, it is unclear who the primary beneficiaries of recent attempts to generate employment are. Some research has shown how graduates who are able to find white collar jobs are often compelled to work in unsatisfactory conditions. In earlier research of my own, for example, I showed how some graduates took on such roles with the expectation that they would lead to better opportunities in the long term (Deuchar, 2014a). But better opportunities did not often materialise. Gupta (2018) argues that heightened competition for jobs and increased demand for education has made for a very challenging environment for middle class youth. Moreover, despite positive shifts in terms of attitudes to women in

education and the workplace (Gupta, 2018), there is little evidence across Uttarakhand that these are resulting material gain among them (Jakimow, 2016, 2019). Taken together, social and economic transformations in Dehradun have made a complex and volatile job market where large numbers of educated young people cannot find secure work. The existing evidence suggests that migrants, women, and lower classes and castes are most acutely marginalised (Deuchar, 2014a, 2014b; Jakimow, 2016; Kandpal et al., 2018; Mamgain & Reddy, 2016; Suryanarayana & Mamgain, 2019).

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter has introduced the political economy of Uttarakhand. It commenced with a discussion of the social geography of Uttarakhand. I showed how a distinct *pahari* identity and gendered migration practices emerged in the colonial period, how the continued marginalisation of the hills in the postcolonial era precipitated the creation of Uttarakhand, and how social and economic divides between the hills and plains affect young people today. I then contextualised these broader processes in Pauri Town and Pauri Garhwal more specifically. I showed how increased pressures on rural livelihoods led some people to diversify their economic strategies. Specifically, increasing numbers of educated young people are pursuing tertiary education, which is related to increased rates of outmigration from Pauri Garhwal District (Mamgain & Reddy, 2016). I then examined how Dehradun has been transformed with a particular emphasis on changes which have occurred since the 1990s. Wealth and capital have been concentrated in the city since 2000, but this have not resulted in widespread social and economic opportunities for all young people. Many young people struggle to find meaningful work and rates of educated unemployment are particularly high (Government of India, 2019). Even though attempts have been made to improve the lives of women and girls, gender

inequality remains deeply entrenched across the state. These changes have made for a particularly challenging set of conditions for educated young people from Pauri Town and Pauri Garhwal District.

Chapter Five. Strategically ‘out of place’: unemployed migrants mobilising rural and urban identities in north India

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Abstract

Increasing numbers of young people are migrating across the Global South to pursue tertiary education and find employment. But in north India, as elsewhere, migrants are often unable to realise the kind of social mobility to which they aspire. This article examines the ways educated yet unemployed male migrants perform identities so as to contend their marginality. Through a multi-sited ethnography, during which I accompanied participants to their rural villages as well as the regional city of Dehradun, I argue that young men strategically mobilise identities which register them as ‘out of place’. By drawing together critical migration studies and mobilities literatures, I show how young men perform rural identities in urban areas, and urban identities in rural ones so as to realise status and respect. In a context of widespread unemployment and uncertainty, this is an important strategy through which migrants seek to position themselves as worthy youth with meaningful prospects, at the same time as they leave open the possibility of both rural and urban futures.

Key words: *Migrants, identities, mobilities, young men, India.*

5.1 Introduction

Across many parts of the Global South, increasing numbers of young people are migrating to pursue education and find work. Yet in India, as elsewhere, the rapid expansion of tertiary education has coincided with the contraction of economic opportunity (Jeffrey, 2010). This has created widespread unemployment among educated youth and has eroded pathways from youth to adulthood (Jeffrey, 2010; Mains, 2012). The difficulties this set of conditions have generated are compounded for migrant youths, particularly those from rural social backgrounds (Lukasiewicz, 2011; Brown, 2015). Yet little is known about the experiences of migrants who are neither wealthy nor poor (Rutten & Verstappen, 2014). Accordingly, this article explores how tertiary-educated yet unemployed male migrants forge identities as they navigate the rural-urban interface in north India (Roy, 2005). The main argument is that migrants attempt to distinguish themselves by articulating ‘urban identities’ in rural areas and ‘rural identities’ in urban areas so as to realise status and respect. In this way, young men seek to position themselves as worthy youth with meaningful prospects.

I develop this argument by analysing how young men shift their spatial affinities as they move regularly between the regional city of Dehradun and their villages in the surrounding hills. In this sense migration is not a singular process that is made and then complete, but is rather unfolding and continuous. I unpack the conceptual significance of this movement by bringing critical migration studies into conversation with theoretical insights from the mobilities turn (Brooks & Waters, 2013; Zhang, 2018). This framework enables me to underscore the fluid and ongoing nature of migration itself, as well as to analyse how and to what ends migrants imbue places with meaning. This means not taking for granted normative meanings associated with the rural and urban, but paying attention instead to how migrants reproduce and reconfigure these spaces as they navigate uncertain futures (Koskimaki & Upadhyay, 2017). This theoretical framing also provides scope for exploring the temporalities

of movement. I illuminate the way, for example, that migrants know when to return home and how long to stay in ways that consolidate their status.

Drawing upon material gathered during a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995), I move beyond approaches which conceptualise rural-urban migration as a rite of passage (Crivello, 2011; Punch, 2015), by emphasising the more dynamic and complex meanings youth attach to their movement across space. I also offer a counterpoint to studies which show how migrants endeavour to “fit in” to their surrounds *after* they have moved (Jacka, 2005; Ganguly-Scrase & Dutt, 2016), as well as those which conceptualise migrants’ strategies strictly in terms of contesting place-based hierarchies when they return home (Gidwani & Sivaramakrishnan, 2003). Contributing to emerging debates which foreground the agency of young people (Ansell, 2016; Dyson, 2018; Jeffrey & Dyson, 2018), I argue instead that young men’s mobilities are central to a more strategic positioning through which they seek to distinguish themselves without compromising their social affiliations and ties. Flexibly crafting their identities can therefore be seen as way in which migrants anchor themselves amidst acute uncertainty and change, as well as leave open the possibility of both rural and urban futures.

The remainder of this article is divided into four sections. The following section positions this paper in relation to recent debates about youth, migration and mobility as they pertain to migrants in the Global South. I then outline the methodology before critically discussing the settings in which the study took place. After doing so, I analyse the ways young men perform their identities in the city, before analysing how they do so in their villages. Finally, I outline the key arguments and the theoretical contribution.

5.2 Youth, migration, and mobility

Over the last few decades, geographers have critically engaged with the social and cultural dynamics of migration (Cohen, 2004; Gardner & Osella, 2004; Brown, Scrase, & Ganguly-Scrase 2017). Much of this work has centred on how migrants strategically craft identities to realise social gain (Kuhn, 2004; McDuié-Ra, 2012; Smith & Gergan, 2015). Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan (2004), for example, develop the notion of rural cosmopolitanism to illuminate the ways circular migrants navigate rural and urban divides. They emphasise the ways rural migrants perform identities which “*straddle a political world of difference and deploy technologies of one to some advantage in the other*” (Gidwani & Sivaramakrishnan, 2004, p.238 emphasis in original). Similarly, Jeffrey and MacFarlane (2008) argue that agents across the Global South perform cosmopolitan identities as a “strategic resource”, making use of a diverse “a set of imaginaries and practices that can be used to extend opportunities to consolidate power” across boundaries (Jeffrey & MacFarlane, 2008, p.420). Notwithstanding the creativity and diversity of migrants and their experiences, a corresponding set of works show how binaries and essentialisms continue to shape the lives and imaginations of young people (Cheng, 2014b; Dyson, 2008). Works from parts of Latin America, Asia and Africa, for example, have demonstrated how migrants tactfully engage with notions such as traditional and modern, educated and uneducated as they navigate social change (Osella & Osella, 2006; Mains, 2012; Punch, 2015). A recent and pertinent example is Smith and Gergan’s (2015) study, who show how migrants from north-east India mitigate racism and sexism in New Delhi by performing ethnic and cosmopolitan identities.

While these studies provide important theoretical insights relating to the performativity of migrants’ identities and their cultural versatility, critical migration studies have often suspended a focus on mobility in favour of bracketing off spatial and temporal zones (Cresswell, 2002). In these senses migration studies shares what Sheller and Urry (2006, p.208) consider the “a-mobile” focus across the social sciences; wherein “stability, meaning and

place” are treated as normal, and distinct geographical areas are rigidly defined. This is evident in studies which focus on the sites to which migrants “arrive” or “return”, as well as those which conceptualise migration strictly as a process that has or will occur (Osella & Osella, 2006; Crivello, 2011). One limitation of this approach is that most analyses from across the Global South tend to engage with how migrants perform identities in a single location, without considering how or whether migrants recraft their identities as they move across space. A second limitation is that it does not provide scope for theorising the strategies embedded in *when* migrants move or for how long they stay, but states more simply that they have migrated or intend to. Even studies which focus on circular migration (for example, Gidwani & Sivaramakrishnan 2004), analyse what happens as migrants move between locations without theorising the temporal strategies embedded in their arrivals and returns. The mobilities turn, by contrast, foregrounds the complex interconnections between people and places (Adey, 2009). Seen from this perspective, analysing migration demands attention be paid to “to journeys and their continuous negotiations” (Oswin & Yeoh, 2010, p.170). This does not mean the distinction between migration and mobilities needs to be collapsed. But it means appreciating that migration from one point to another is one scale of mobility among others, and attending to the always on-going, incompleteness of movement. It means taking seriously the charge that when a migrant arrives at a destination they are never strictly still (Adey, 2009).

At stake here is much more than a generalised appeal to the importance of movement (Oswin & Yeoh, 2010). In the first instance, analyses need to consider how mobilities articulate with axes of power such as class, gender, race, and ethnicity (Waters & Leung, 2013). It also means attending not only to the movement of people across boundaries and borders, but how they are entangled with flows of capital, networks and ideas (Hardwick & Mansfield, 2009; Waters, 2012). Perhaps most pertinently, a focus on mobilities demands scholars theorise how movement is bound up with the social production of space (Cresswell, 2002). In relation to

migration studies in particular, there has been a tendency to equate *people* with movement and place with stability (Easthope, 2009). Yet within this approach, space is a ‘passive backdrop’ with fixed and normative meanings, and analyses subsequently consider the ways migrants experience and contest a sense of dislocation in urban centres (Jacka, 2005; Smith, 2017), or how migrants contest place-based hierarchies when they return home (Osella & Osella, 2000; Gidwani & Sivaramakrishnan, 2003). But these approaches do not adequately consider the relationship between different places or how the meanings of space change over time (Becerra et al., 2017; Raghuram, 2013). Centring mobility, by contrast, creates scope for theorising how spaces are themselves mobile (Adey, 2006), thinking about how various locales are interconnected (Skelton & Gough, 2013), as well as how migrants reproduce, challenge, and resist notions such as the rural and urban (Blatman-Thomas, 2017).

In this article, I bring together insights from the critical migration and mobilities literatures to demonstrate how migrants perform geographically marked identities as they move across rural-urban space. I build upon works which highlight the strategic and performative ways migrants navigate social difference by emphasising the spatial contingency of these performances. This study also extends emerging studies which have underscored the importance of young people’s mobilities in the Global South (Young & Jeffrey, 2012; Gough & Langevang, 2016; Koskimaki & Upadhyay, 2017), and shifts the analytical lens away from metropolitan cities in India toward regional areas (Scrase et al., 2015; Koskimaki, 2016). Its unique contribution is to highlight how unemployed migrants strategically position themselves “out of place: across locations. In an attempt to anchor themselves amidst acute uncertainty and change, I show how migrants contest their marginality as rural young people, at the same time as they embrace and reconfigure rurality itself.

5.3 Method and settings

Material for this paper were gathered during two periods of fieldwork from July 2016 to October 2016, as well as from March 2017 to August 2017. The sample consists of 24 male migrants aged 22-30 who grew up in villages and then moved to Dehradun after completing college degrees. Each of them migrated to pursue additional education and to find work yet all remain unemployed. I recruited participants through existing contacts and gathered material through ethnographic methods. These included semi-structured interviews, group interviews, informal conversations as well as through participant observation. In total, I conducted 47 interviews which took place in a location of each participant's choice. Importantly, these methods lend themselves to a considerable degree of fluidity and flexibility on the part of the researcher (Marcus, 1995). This was crucial given that studying migration and mobility demanded I myself was amenable to moving around (Sheller & Urry, 2006). I accompanied participants on the journeys between Dehradun and their villages on several occasions. These journeys – a winding trip into the mountains made by bus or shared taxi – took between four and six hours, depending on traffic which was regularly affected by weather and landslides, and the narrow roads were particularly busy during the seasons in which pilgrims visit various holy sites and temples in the region.

Young men's mobilities between the city and the hills need to be situated in the context of political and economic shifts within India in general, and Uttarakhand in particular. In the early 1990s, India imposed structural adjustment policies which broadly cohered with the principles of neoliberalism (Corbridge & Harriss, 2000). Where the state had previously emphasised state-led development and strong investment in public services, this new approach posited that the free market was the most effective, fair, and efficient way of distributing resources (Corbridge, Harriss, & Jeffrey, 2013). The 1990s thus signalled a fundamental shift in the organisation of Indian society and polity. Despite steady and much lauded increases in

economic growth across India, the combined effects of these policies have affected Uttarakhand quite acutely (Dyson, 2014); rural poverty has increased over the last few decades and agricultural livelihoods are increasingly difficult to sustain (World Bank, 2012).

Yet the contours of social change across Uttarakhand are not reducible to neoliberalism. In the mid-1990s, the then Uttar Pradesh government sought to impose caste reservation policies of twenty-seven percent across the state in light of recommendations in the Mandal Commission. These policies necessitated that posts were reserved for Other Backward Castes in government employment in order to remedy historic inequalities and discrimination (Kumar, 2001). But this was met with unrest in the Uttaranchal region because such populations were said to comprise just three percent of the population. This was grafted onto broader concerns relating to how the hill regions of Uttaranchal were being exploited by the plains (Moller, 2000). Coupled with ongoing issues related to the distinct environmental conditions of the region (Mawdsley, 1998), protesters argued the specificity of their needs would only be addressed if a new state were created. After a period of prolonged and vibrant protest, the state of Uttarakhand was created in November 2000.

Yet many young people in this study and across the region more generally (Koskimaki, 2016, 2017), argue that statehood has failed to deliver what is promised. Young men are incredibly critical of rural neglect and undermining of their villages, while in Dehradun the extent of educated unemployment has been compounded over the last few decades (Deuchar, 2014a). Each of the young men in this study have been unable to find secure work, and were formally unemployed at the time of the research. It is within this context – acutely of hardships in both rural and urban environments – that increasing numbers of educated young men are migrating to Dehradun. Indeed the extent of out-migration is such that the population of Pauri Garwhal – the district within the state where the young men had migrated from – has actually declined slightly between the 2001 and 2011 censuses (Government of India, 2012/2013).

Haproli³ is typical of the villages from which young men hail. Its population had declined from 220 in 2000, to 80 in 2017. Most villagers had moved away permanently to large cities, with the people who remained explaining that this was usually because livelihoods in Haproli were too difficult to maintain. Such livelihoods were usually forged through a combination of various manual jobs which men performed outside Haproli, and small scale agriculture performed by women within it. There were many fields nearby which were privately owned by particular families, within which they grew grains and an assortment of vegetables. These were usually for their own consumption and were sometimes sold to vegetable traders. What was striking during each of my visits was the near absence of men. Save for the elderly and young children, working age men spent most of their time in cities, while women and children (usually girls), would work in the fields and home.

The young men in this study were among those who had moved away. Each of them had moved to Dehradun, a regional city with a population of 850 000. Young men consider Dehradun a suitable site for them to migrate to for several reasons, many of which are thoroughly entangled with gender relations and bread-winning norms. In the first instance, there are a large number of educational institutions and coaching centres which they argue will prime them for employment. There are also emerging (and highly sought after) employment opportunities in Information Technology. Young men said living in Dehradun is not only much more affordable than cities such as New Delhi, but living standards were higher too. They were able to live in Dehradun at relatively little expense, and most of them received financial assistance from their parents to do so. Another important factor in choosing this location was its proximity to home; the relatively short distance from their villages making it easier for them to return home when they need to. Across the sample, migrants returned to their homes an average of six to seven times per year. They did so to pursue social and economic opportunities,

³ A pseudonym has been used for this village to protect the anonymity of those who lived there.

attend religious festivals and weddings, to assist with harvests and to fulfil familial obligations. It was most common for young men's visits to last three to four days and only rarely extended beyond two weeks.

Although the migrants in this study share the dominant ethnic identity in Dehradun (Garhwali), the primary axis around which they said they felt unlike people who are from Dehradun originally, is in their identification as *pahari log*, which translates literally to "mountain people." Although being *pahari* has diverse connotations, in the context of this study, it meant being hardworking, honest and kind, as well as respectful, disciplined and capable. At the same time, it referred to a certain version of rurality quite unlike that which other scholars have described. There is a strong sense of regional specificity in Uttarakhand (Koskimaki, 2017), owing in part to its history of social movements and collective action which culminated in the creation of statehood. As with the young men in Koskimaki's (2017) study, the migrants in this study have a strong sense of pride about belonging to the region. To some extent, therefore, migrants from the Uttarakhand hills are considered "insiders" in Dehradun. This contrasts with the classification of migrants from places like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar as quite emphatically not belonging. Yet they do occasionally experience discrimination related to their rural backgrounds, reflecting ongoing divisions between 'hill people' and 'plains people' within the region (Moller, 2000, p.154). For these reasons migrants' sense of belonging is quite tenuous and fraught. This ambiguity provides a basis for the novel social forms which I highlight below.

It is also important to recognise that young men themselves had contradictory feelings about their villages. On one hand, young men described where they are from as places which are peaceful and clean, places where they learned valuable skills and moral standards which set them apart from others. They draw upon these meanings to assert their superiority over 'inferior' ways of being which are ostensibly characteristic of people from the plains (Moller,

2000, p.155). On the other hand, however, youth said there were clear disadvantages. Migrants said their villages lacked facilities, such as quality education, health care, infrastructure as well as employment opportunities. Building upon recent work which emphasises how mobilities are reconfiguring regional meanings and affiliations in India (Koskimaki & Upadhyay, 2017), I show how the predominately positive way in which migrants viewed their villages, coupled with the seeming necessity of migrating away from them, has led to an ambivalence which is threaded through their identities.

5.4 Educated migrants re-encountering their villages

When young men returned to their villages they sought to craft identities which emphasised that they had established themselves in Dehradun. There were three interdependent ways in which they did this, which worked to mark themselves off as urban without jeopardising their broader identification and ties as *pahari log*. These included (1) cultivating urban styles through wearing fashionable clothes and certain kinds of bodily comportment, (2) circulating anecdotes and stories about their lives in Dehradun, as well as (3) engaging in forms of mentorship.

The styles which young men cultivated were associated with public culture in Dehradun, which were popular when I conducted fieldwork in 2016-2017. Some of these styles were typified most completely in popular depictions of Bollywood ‘tough guys’. Rahul, for example, a confident man in his early twenties, had a muscular physique, invariably dressed in fashionable clothes, and considered himself never short of women’s attention. As with other young men in this study, Rahul never fully realised these idealised images or styles. He could not afford their most celebrated and symbolic component – a motorcycle. But he created his own version of them; he forged an urban style not so much through an abundance of things, so

much as the ‘right’ things and knowledge of how to use them. He always wore the right style of pants, ordinarily chinos, and a smart shirt which was not too smart. Young men like Rahul did not want to be mistaken for businessmen or those who had settled down. They were eager to show that they were old enough to have acquired independence and young enough to keep it.

Another set of migrants performed similar styles yet tended to emphasise they were educated. They would often – although certainly not always – dress in clothes which marked them off from villagers, but would do so in perhaps less ostentatious ways. They would regularly wear a collared shirt and jeans, the casual dress of a white collar employee. These young men did not mean to disassociate themselves with the city as much as they sought to occupy a different position within it. If one set of young men’s styles involved a degree of showmanship and flare, these young men’s identities were predicated upon being well-mannered and polite, respecting village hierarchies and norms, and articulating the ways they felt different from other villagers more discreetly. What marked each of these styles was they were not ‘of’ their villages, these youth lived elsewhere. And while it was true youth did not have to migrate in order to perform them, most non-migrants knew better than to try: if a non-migrant performed one he would likely meet ridicule.

Migrants’ justifications for mobilising identities in these ways were illuminated as I came to know Manish, aged twenty-four, who performed his identity in ways that were typical of other young men in this study. I first interviewed Manish two years after his first visit home. Reflecting on that first visit, he said he felt ashamed and anxious about not having found work. Although his family were aware of the difficulties young men had finding secure employment once they had migrated, expectations were nevertheless high. Manish was the first in his family to earn a degree, and what limited chances there were of changing the family’s prospects rested upon his shoulders. Yet his short visit home did not unfold as he had anticipated:

When I returned I was thinking ‘what am I going to say [to my parents]?’ They were sending me money and I had not found a job, still not. These things are very bad...I thought all this time had been wasted for me. But actually when I returned home everybody wanted to know what my life is like there. My nieces and nephews are listening to my stories, my parents also. They are very proud. So I realised my time was not wasted, people are thinking about me differently, I had learned many things...

In place of his uncertainty, Manish said he came to realise:

The village is a well, the city is an ocean. If you know anything about the ocean, then you know everything about the well.

Manish’s remarks resonated more generally with how migrants suggested they had developed a kind of knowledge denied to those left behind. Twenty-two of the migrants I interviewed suggested that to live in Dehradun was to “learn” and “progress”. Ashish, aged twenty-four, explained “if you choose to stay in your village then you are choosing to fall behind.” Similarly, although Manish had not found employment, he said to move to the city was to “think about the future” and to pursue social and economic opportunities. In this sense migrating can be seen as a way of capturing a slice of modernity, of understanding oneself as “moving forward” and of physically and metaphorically “going somewhere.” But Manish’s remarks also alluded to the additional ways migrants sought to craft their identities.

The second way migrants in this study crafted their identities was by regularly circulating anecdotes which emphasised the opportunities they had at their disposal in Dehradun. These included telling stories to their family and friends about going to the cinema, the shopping mall, and Rahul spoke of seeing Prime Minister Modi at a political event in Dehradun in 2017. Other scholars have demonstrated how stories are central to how people forge identities (Mason, 2004; Easthope, 2009). In some senses these were discursive ways of

giving substance to their urban styles. Even if others chose to dress in a similar fashion, discussing one's knowledge about the city was not something that could be faked. Perhaps what was more significant was how migrants constructed Dehradun as a site of opportunity through these stories. Beyond popular and even stereotypical depictions of what was available in cities, most migrants commonly found meaning in discussing the seemingly mundane. I observed countless conversations which suggested migrants valued being able to attend good coaching clinics, meet new friends, and associate with other young people who had similar aspirations. Rahul proudly remarked that he "meets new people every day," a feat not possible in most village contexts.

Circulating anecdotes of this kind was a strategy which young men reported feeling both compelled and willing to do. They would often be inundated with questions about their latest experiences and opportunities when they returned home. At times this frustrated young men, to some extent they wanted to be left in peace, particularly when conversation turned to their employment prospects. Yet it also gave a basis for young men to demonstrate that quite a lot had happened since their last visit. Twenty-two year old Arjun, who had lived in Dehradun for the last eighteen months, described how he engaged with his family on a recent trip home like this:

Every time I go back home my cousins are asking 'what are you doing?' So I tell them: 'In two months I am taking the examination for the [Uttarakhand Civil Service], so every day I go to coaching classes. In the evening I study with friends, then we go for a walk around the running track. I am still waiting for the results of the central examinations [for government employment] also. Sunday is for enjoyment only'... My youngest cousin asks can he come with me. We all laugh together.

Arjun's comments demonstrated how migrants attempt to convey a sense of achievement, of being busy and moving through time. They also convey how he skilfully grapples with questions about employment. Arjun is both waiting for results for examinations given in the past, as well as working hard to prepare for more opportunities in the future. Finally, they also hint toward ways of spending time such as leisure that are scarcely possible in village contexts ("Sunday is for enjoyment only").

Implicit within young men's anecdotes about their lives in Dehradun were critiques of villages. In the same moment young men register the city as a site of opportunity, their villages are marked by the absence of them. This division also corresponds with different temporalities. Young men consider the city a site of progress and thus movement through time, their villages are ones of cyclical and even stagnant time. Some young men were quite emphatic about these critiques, with one young man, Manoj, stating that villages remain undeveloped because the people living within them are ignorant, they "do not think about the future, they only think about right now". Yet most informants had more ambivalent and contradictory feelings toward their homes. The young men in this study were mindful not to alienate themselves from their homes through the performance of their urban identities. As with the urbanites in Ferguson's (1999, p.84) study, becoming "too urbanised" could be problematic should they need to move home. In this sense there was a balancing act between marking oneself off as urban and continuing to identify as *pahari*. In a similar vein to the circular migrants in Gidwani and Sivaramakrishan's (2004, p.240) study, my informants straddled this conflict by demonstrating they had established lives elsewhere, but had not "abandoned their inherited worlds."

The primary way in which migrants sought to do this was through mentorship. This was the third strategy through which migrants performed their identities. Twenty of the young men in this study said they had engaged in this in some way or another. Sometimes it involved organised tuition of younger children in their villages, yet it more commonly involved advising

and supporting other young people who were planning on migrating about how best to do so. What was important in each of these strategies was that migrants argued they were drawing upon their skills – tertiary education and knowledge about the city – in order to render a service to other villagers.

During interviews I attempted to establish how migrants became involved in mentorship. There was no single manner in which this came about. But a pattern migrants reported across interviews was that it was a role assigned to them as much as it was created of their own making. Migrants argued this was because people knew they had changed from their time ‘outside’, and that younger villagers wanted to change too. Tushar, aged twenty-seven, described this process when I asked him about if he still feels like he belongs in his village:

Tushar: Of course. My village is my home...I love my village *bhai*. But I have been living in Dehradun for almost three years. I have done a lot of study in that time. Actually that is what you see when you come back, everyone here is doing the same things. Probably I have changed. People say to me ‘I want to shift to Dehradun also’, and we talk about how.

Author: Do you feel like you can help them?

Tushar: Yes. Actually that is when I realised what I have learned. I know the best places to study and how to enrol and how to approach people. How to speak to them...And I know if they are honest. But people in my village don’t know these things. They haven’t gone outside. I can teach them.

Young men mentored others for both altruistic and strategic reasons. In particular, while they were aware some villagers were critical of them for moving away, migrants argued it worked to nullify any sense these young men had turned their backs on their homes, or that they had little regard for those left behind. In this sense, migrants argued that they were taking advantage

of the opportunities available in Dehradun, and ensuring villagers benefited from the knowledge and insights they had gained.

5.5 Realising status and respect

By fashioning themselves as migrants who lived in the city, the young men in this study were often able to yield a degree of status when they returned home. At times, this enabled them to reposition themselves within networks of power. All migrants reported that they were taken much more seriously after having lived in the city. Some young men, for instance, said they were consulted about local and village affairs to a much greater extent than before they moved away: Rahul stated “before in [name of village] I was treated almost like a child, now if there is some matter often they will talk with me.” Even more common was the argument that migrants had become more confident and open-minded than those who had not spent time outside. Arvind, aged twenty-six, stated:

When you go outside you see how big the world is...crowds going here or there, all doing different things. If you stay here [in his village] then the village is all you see... You do not change or develop.

Others said living in Dehradun had given them a basis to develop good reputations with their elders. Rohit, also aged twenty-six, substantiated this argument by referring to a phone call he received from a distant relative of his who worked in the legal profession:

[The lawyer] phoned me and said he wanted to send his daughter to Dehradun for study. He wanted to know the best place for her to study and somewhere safe to stay. I knew somebody who is having a spare room. I phoned them straight away and got it organised. When they came to Dehradun I met them at the bus stop. I went with them

to get the room and the next day we went to the tuition centre...Now she is like my sister.

The reason this was significant for Rohit was that father was uneducated and so he felt it was unprecedented for a lawyer to be asking him for advice of this kind. Rohit considered this a sign of his new position in his village, forged through his knowledge about the city, his mentorship, and good reputation as an educated migrant.

Migrants strategically sought to develop and consolidate this status when they returned home by maintaining good contacts. Eight of the young men I interviewed said they tried to visit teachers in the college from which they graduated when they returned home. This would involve organising an appointment with one or more teachers, dressing in business-like clothes, and spending much of the day on college campus. The migrants who did this said they felt proud about being welcomed back and knowing their professors on a personal level. Similarly, Mohan, aged twenty-four, said he was invited to speak at a function of the secondary school he attended when he returned home. He spoke to a large audience of students and their families, and argued that success could only be achieved if one had a positive outlook and a good personality. Mohan told me his speech was very well received and that he became emotional afterward. He said it reminded him of all he had achieved and affirmed his conviction that his choices had been worthwhile.

But not all migrants who performed urban identities were able to realise status or garner respect. Status was something migrants fought for and won, more so than something which was conferred upon them in a straightforward way. Thus while the parents of migrants I interviewed were quite proud of their sons, there was a sense throughout their villages more generally that for migrants who had been living in Dehradun for many years yet had not found employment, their status was losing its shine. This was particularly the case for those

approaching thirty years of age, when pressure to convert one's experience and knowledge into employment increases. Moreover, some youth who had decided not to migrate derided their friends and relatives who had done so. What aggravated these young men was not so much that migrants thought they could become 'big men' in the city, but they thought they were more worthy of those who had not migrated. One young man who had not migrated joked "[my cousin] thinks he will become the next prime minister, but he forgets even Modi *ji* [the current Prime Minister] was a *chai wala* [person who sells tea]." Others argued that it was foolish for all youth to become educated and seek white collar work. From this perspective, prolonged unemployment was evidence of the fact that they should not waste their time with searching for jobs in the city, and should return to their villages and work with their families.

Some migrants tended to agree with these criticisms. All young men said it was proper to have secure employment before they were thirty years old. This reflected gendered expectations and bread winner norms which are salient throughout north India (Jeffrey, 2010). Notwithstanding, those who performed urban identities were quite resolute in their conviction; in their villages there was 'nothing' (cf. Jeffrey & Dyson, 2017), in the city there were prospects. Life in the city had already given them a basis to rearticulate their identities, and there was no telling what may be around the corner for them. Even the most critical of villagers conceded there were opportunities in Dehradun that were simply not available in the hills. And perhaps what was most crucial was that migrants' presence in their villages was a fleeting one. Migrants were mindful of not staying in their villages for too many days so as to give the impression they were busy, that another opportunity was just around the corner, as well as to evade the scrutiny of their peers. All manner of possibilities could be conjured from afar. And it was to realise these opportunities that they would return to Dehradun.

5.6 Village identities in the city

If migrants performed identities in villages which emphasised their association with Dehradun, this was a strategy that was in some ways inverted when they returned there. All the migrants in this study said that at times they tended to emphasise they were from villages in order to establish a foothold in the city. They did this by forging rural identities which creatively drew upon essentialised notions of what it meant to be *pahari* – notions such as honesty, kindness and purity, as well as more negative ones, such as backwardness and ignorance. Young men forged identities which resonated with these notions not by dressing in ways which made them stand out from other youth, so much as behaving in ways which did so. Where other youth were said to be troublesome, the *pahari* migrants in this study emphasised that they were hardworking, simple and modest.

Four of the young men I interviewed said forging identities in this way was not so much a conscious decision as it was more simply about being “who they are.” But most young men presented a more complex and strategic picture. Nine of the young men I interviewed, for example, said that when they first migrated to Dehradun, they sought to be like city folk. They tried to conceal they were from villages and sought to fit in. In this sense they initially responded to the “burden of adjustment” in a similar way to some of the respondents in Smith and Gergan’s (2015, p.130) study. They did this by “doing the things city folk do,” such as “roaming around on weekends,” “joking about all the time,” and generally prioritising fun over hard work. Ramesh, aged twenty-two, said the city was far more hostile than his village and he benefitted from becoming more so himself. In time, however, those who adopted this strategy came to reconsider it. Vikram, for example, said he initially sought to conceal the fact he was from a village, however over time felt this was a flawed strategy:

I tried so hard to be like them, but actually I couldn't. I am different. I do not want to roam here and there. I want to work hard and study hard.

For Vikram, this difference was not indexed by racialized othering, nor was it marked by any open hostility. Vikram suggested there were more subtle differences between village folk like himself and those who were urbanised. Vikram said his hardworking nature was what set him apart most; that this was something deep within him, whereas people who were urbanised were concerned, more superficially, with what was “on the outside” (meaning the way they dressed, and spent their time trying to impress others). Not only did he resist “becoming like them,” but he suggested that there was more to be gained from acknowledging his heritage and harnessing it:

Vikram: The problem is if you become like everybody else then nobody will notice you. What can you do then?

Author: What can you do if you are different?

Vikram: No one can say exactly. But if people know I am hardworking and honest then there will be lots of things I can do.

Vikram had not been able to find formal employment but said he did feel respected in his neighbourhood. He maintained this would put him in good stead for the future. He was confident that if someone hears of an opportunity they will share it with him.

Another eight men said they did not try to conceal they were from villages when they arrived, but were mindful of knowing when it might be advantageous to do so. This strategy confounds deterministic and dualistic notions of identity (Kothari, 2008) even as binaries are invoked. Rakesh, aged twenty-five, said he socialised with new friends when he could, and that

you had to learn to be like them if you wanted to be accepted. But he also said that what characterised his way of being in the city more generally was that he endeavoured to “set a good example” for other young people, and he did this by demonstrating what he had learned in his village. Rakesh said the main way he did this was in how he conducted himself in his day-to-day living (see Dyson, 2010). He lived in a student hostel and shared a room with three other young men and endeavoured to keep his room tidy, would prepare meals for others, and studied as hard as he could.

When I asked Rakesh if he thought this was effective he said he felt it was, but it had not been without difficulties:

Rakesh: When I first came here, doing my work and cleaning, people looked at me and joked. Some actually were grateful, but not most. But when they got to know how I am then they started doing these things also. Maybe after four or five weeks they are copying.

Author: Have you always been that way? I mean working and setting a good example?

Rakesh: Since childhood I’ve been working like this. This is how it was in my village, everybody is doing these things. But it makes me different when I come here...If I set a good example then I will be respected.

In a similar vein to Rakesh, all of the migrants I interviewed said forging good reputations in their neighbourhoods was crucial to being respected locally. They did this by being polite and respectful to people who they saw regularly, and were particularly deferential to their elders. In doing so they were strategically trying to position themselves against broader discourses which locate youth as troublesome and even arrogant. Fourteen of the migrants I interviewed argued that getting to know shopkeepers in particular was crucial in this regard. This was

because shopkeepers tend to engage with all people in a given neighbourhood. Making a concerted effort to forge strong relationships with them was not only a good way of keeping up with local affairs, but also of inserting oneself productively within them. These fourteen young men said regular interactions with people in their neighbourhoods was a chance to earn the respect of their elders by demonstrating they were different. They did this by harnessing essentialised notions of what it means to be *pahari*: if one is polite and deferential, they are sometimes able to put themselves in an advantageous position. Vikram explained as follows:

When I moved to Dehradun I knew my uncle and his family, no one else. But every day I'm going to the shop to buy milk and things. After some time I got to know Aunty [the shopkeeper], we talk about the things, she asks 'what are we doing these days' and these things. You have been to that shop also, you have seen how slow she is! But still I go to her. She knows me, when I walk past her I wave...She speaks to everyone...she would not say bad things about me.

These comments do not cohere strictly with how other scholars have shown migrants settle into their destinations. Analyses have tended to emphasise strategies for creating “symbolic anchors of community” (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997, p.39), such as forging friendship groups (Smith, 2017), sharing particular kinds of cuisine (McDuie-Ra, 2012), as well as place-making through ancestral cultural practices (Becerra et al., 2017). The young men in this study also engaged in similar practices, with many becoming close friends with other migrants. But in a context within which they did not report feeling deeply ostracised, forging good reputations as *pahari log* within their communities served not only as a means of relating to other migrants, but as a way of realising social and material ends more generally.

5.7 A foothold in the city

By performing village identities in Dehradun, migrants were at times able to realise quite tangible benefits. Ajay, aged twenty-seven, moved to Dehradun two years ago to prepare for government examinations. He said he was anxious about moving because he was aware that life in the city would be very different from his childhood in his village. When he arrived in Dehradun, he stayed with a friend while he found more suitable accommodation. One morning, Ajay and his friend Deepak went to a local bus stand and asked some other students where he could find a room. They directed him to a tea stall, the owner of which gave him a phone number of a woman who had a spare room. Ajay and Deepak walked the short distance to her home and introduced themselves. He said to me proudly “At ten o’clock in the morning I didn’t know where I was going to stay, but I had found somewhere to live before eleven!” I asked him what made it easy for him and this is how he replied:

We are not like the other people around here. In the city people cheat and trick. But not us. We are hardworking, simple people. We are village people.

When Ajay asked his landlord about the availability of the room, he said he spoke in Garhwali and told her he had recently arrived from the hills. Ajay said it was these attributes which set him apart from other youth who had previously made enquiries about the room. He said his landlord appreciated he was from a village, and was “not like those from Uttar Pradesh,” which migrants commonly referred to as a site of corruption and other social ills. Nineteen migrants reported that being from a village made it easier to make friends for similar reasons. They were able to position themselves as hardworking and kind, serious about their studies, and they suggested that when other people became aware of this others viewed them positively.

But migrants' capacity to realise social and material gain was contested. While migrants said being from a village put them at an advantage in Dehradun, there were times when their experiences were more negative. This was in part because popular stereotypes about people from villages in Uttarakhand vary between depicting them as backward, uneducated and ignorant, and romanticising their purity, tradition and simplicity (Rangan, 2000, p.39). This being the case, some migrants faced discrimination. Ashish, for example, said he was spat on by a taxi driver when he first arrived in Dehradun because he contested the price of the journey. The driver told him if he did not want to pay city prices, then he should return to the hills. Since then he has sought to conceal the fact he is a migrant.

Yet most migrants in this study engaged with these negative stereotypes in creative ways. In the first instance, they argued these stereotypes were themselves borne of ignorance, circulated by city folk who had never been to their villages. Twenty-six year old Prakash, for example, said:

My classmate jokes about me being from the village, but he has never left Dehradun! I say to him if he came with me he would not want to leave [laughs].

For this reason, most migrants did not feel they deserved to be taken too seriously. Interestingly, however, migrants did not discard them altogether. At other times, they reproduced such stereotypes by offering criticisms of other villagers who were not interested in education.

This was a crucial part of how migrants thought about their villages and sought to strategically position themselves in Dehradun. In general terms, informants suggested that the problem with other villagers is they are uneducated, but otherwise, they argued, they are very productive. The migrants in this study suggested the work ethic and discipline of a villager coupled with a good education makes for quite a formidable combination. Thus migrants

reported that educational credentials were crucial not only because they were taken more seriously by others, but because being educated enabled them to harness positive values such as progress while distancing themselves from notions of backwardness. Therefore migrants did not want to rid themselves of their village roots so much as they wanted to mark themselves off from negative stereotypes about the village. They sought to craft identities which positioned themselves as “from the village but *not like other villagers*.” They were hardworking but not ignorant, honest but not backward, disciplined but not docile.

By strategically positioning themselves in these ways, young men suggested they were different from youth who had grown up in Dehradun. There was a sense that people who had not migrated were studying for the sake of it, whereas it was a much bigger commitment for those who had moved away from their homes. Ravindra, aged twenty-four, studied at a friend’s home each morning with three other youth who grew up in Dehradun. They studied in quite a convivial atmosphere; there was often lively debate, and once a month they ate chicken in order to reward themselves for their hard work. Yet despite all he shared with his friends, Ravindra said being a migrant from the hills meant he was nevertheless different from them:

We all are here and we are studying together because we want the same things [a government job]. But I am more disciplined than them, they are doing it because their parents say they have to. Their parents scold them! But if you are from the village you do not have to be told to work hard [because] you always work hard...My friends are studying just so they can get a job.

In some ways Ravindra’s argument resonated with broader discourses which counterpose the village and the city. If villages are sites of honesty, purity and hard work, the city, by contrast, is one of corruption, cunning and flare (Srivastava, 1996). So a young man who is similarly hardworking but who is from the city, is not able to attach similar meanings to his work ethic

with the same conviction as Ravindra. Yet Ravindra was creatively reinterpreting these discourses, or turning them in on themselves: he was drawing upon idealised notions of what it meant to belong in his village, so as to carve out a space for himself the city.

5.8 Conclusions

In this article, I have foregrounded young people's mobilities to highlight the fluid and ongoing nature of migration itself, the interconnectivity of various locales, as well as how youth tactfully engage with binary notions of the rural and urban. This framework has enabled me to offer a counterpoint to studies which conceptualise rural-urban migration as a rite of passage, as well as those that show how migrants attempt to fit into their surrounds or contest place-based hierarchies upon returning home. Instead, the focus has been on the more strategic, unfolding, and ambivalent ways young men relate to and imagine their homelands (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). In particular, I have demonstrated how tertiary educated yet unemployed migrants perform urban identities in rural areas, and rural identities in urban areas to realise status and respect. By teasing out the conceptual significance of this main argument, I am able to advance three contributions to debates about youth, mobility, and migration which may resonate across geographical contexts.

Firstly, other studies have highlighted how migrants engage with binaries and essentialisms to perform multiple identities (Osella & Osella, 2006; Punch, 2015; Smith & Gergan, 2015). Researchers have tended to emphasise migrants' capacity to negotiate difference or draw upon diverse repertoires to produce counterhegemonic forms (Gidwani & Sivaramakrishnan, 2003; Jeffrey & MacFarlane, 2008). But these studies have not always attended to the spatial contingency of migrants' identities. Moreover, and in spite of theoretical possibilities to the contrary, notions such as rural cosmopolitanism (Gidwani &

Sivaramakrishnan, 2004) have been formulated by focusing predominately upon what rural migrants bring back from the city rather than on what they take to it. I have built upon these studies by showing how migrants skilfully recraft their identities as they move across space. Rather than trying to fit in to or absorb their surrounds (Blatman-Thomas, 2017; cf. Evans, 2018), migrants strategically invite the urban into the rural *and* the rural into the urban. A migrant realises status in his village by identifying with the city, the same migrant establishes himself in Dehradun by identifying with his village. Although their identities are predicated upon a binary between the city and the hills (“village folk are not like those from the city”), their identities are themselves products of increased movement between these locations. Moreover, while their performances speak to the generative possibilities of “being rural” in the city and *vice versa*, such performances reify rural-urban difference rather than collapse it. In these senses, migrants’ mobilities destabilise the distinction between the rural and urban even as it is affirmed.

Secondly, underscoring the ongoing nature of movement has also enabled me to proffer insights into the temporalities of migration and their conceptual significance. Theoretical scope for such an argument is not provided by studies which consider migration a singular process, and has not been probed in debates about circular migration. But in this study timing was crucial to how young men forged their identities and developed their reputations. If migrants return to their villages for too long, family members begin to question their claims that their lives in the city are as full as opportunity as they might like them to believe. At the same time, if they were not to return at all they would forego the opportunity to demonstrate what they had gained and learned from their time outside. By strategically coming and going – and staying for quite particular intervals – migrants demarcate boundaries between themselves and others who are said to be “stuck” in their villages or “moving in circles”. There are therefore temporal dimensions to young men’s positioning as being strategically out of place. In a broader sense,

however, these strategies themselves have temporal limits. As young men approach thirty years of age, there is greater pressure for their comings and goings to materialise into more tangible and secure economic means.

These two conceptual arguments can be drawn together to make a third, concerning how migrants are centrally involved in the social reproduction of space. As migrants come and go they do not confront urban and rural locations as spaces with fixed meanings, but recreate them in subtle and strategic ways (Gidwani & Sivaramakrishan, 2004). Rather than take the region as given, I have responded to Koskimaki and Upadhyas (2017, p.90) recent call for “a reconsideration of how regional identities are reproduced or challenged in response to diverse impulses and interventions.” I have paid particular attention to how young men’s mobilities produce spaces in “embodied and performative ways” (Koskimaki & Upadhyas, 2017, p.94). In doing so I have shown how rural-urban mobilities do not engender a passive extension of their existing marginality, but enable migrants to reappropriate these spaces and assert themselves across them. These observations encourage us to recast migrants’ destinations as interconnected and “malleable spaces” (Blatman-Thomas, 2017, p.25). This does not mean migrants overtly resist place-based hierarchies or that can they transform spaces in unfettered ways. Instead, this process takes quite nuanced forms. While migrants were mindful of distinguishing themselves in their villages and Dehradun, they were also mindful of not doing so in a way that severed their social affiliations and ties. It is by never fully committing to or identifying with either location that young men are able to maintain their associations across them. In a context where their futures seem uncertain and economic opportunities are scarce, positioning oneself out of place is important for leaving open the possibility of rural departure or return, urban arrival or flight – or seemingly most likely – a livelihood spanning rural and urban divides.

Chapter Six. Between unemployment and enterprise in neoliberal India: educated youth creating work in the private education sector

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Abstract

This article draws on ethnographic material to analyse how unemployed youth create work in the private educational sector. It shows how a set of educated young men who moved from rural areas to a north Indian city to find work, are seeking to create jobs after an extended period of unemployment. Having attended coaching clinics and private tuition centres to prepare for white-collar jobs, they draw upon the experience, knowledge and skills they have gained to create work in those same institutions. They do so by running errands and creating services for institutions, as well as undertaking administrative duties and teaching classes. Our main argument is that young men creatively engage with notions of enterprise to make an income and acquire a measure of respect. Studies of enterprise culture and neoliberal subjectivity formation often emphasise how individuals shore up their own value by competing with others and promoting their own interests. But we highlight how youth also maintain their value by making sense of their strategies in terms of assisting other young people. At the same time, however, their practices work to reproduce gender norms and class inequalities.

Keywords: youth, ethnographic research, India, neoliberal subjectivity, work, unemployment

6.1 Introduction

Changes associated with neoliberalism have transformed the social and economic aspirations of young people across the globe (Dolan & Rajak, 2016; Jeffrey, 2017). In the Indian context, neoliberal reforms in the 1990s were accompanied by a set of discourses encouraging job aspirants to embrace values such as autonomy and accountability, personal empowerment and enterprise, initiative and assertiveness (Fernandes, 2006; Gooptu, 2013, 2016; Lukose, 2009). Yet the Indian economy has failed to generate a significant number of white-collar employment opportunities and there is a widespread crisis of educated unemployment (State of Working India, 2019). Surprisingly little is known about how degree holders grapple with poor occupational outcomes and engage with notions of enterprise (Poonam, 2018; Young, Kumar & Jeffrey, 2016). Accordingly, this article shows how educated yet unemployed young men in north India draw upon a range of skills to create work within the private education sector. They do so by running errands and creating services for institutions, as well as undertaking administrative duties and teaching classes. Our main argument is that these young men creatively engage with notions of enterprise to make an income and acquire a measure of respect. We advance theoretical debates about enterprise cultures and neoliberal subjectivity formation (Gooptu, 2013; Scharff, 2016; Van Oort, 2015) by highlighting the importance youth ascribe to assisting others as an aspect of what it means to be enterprising.

We make this contribution in the context of a rapidly expanding education sector in the north Indian city of Dehradun. Structural changes in the Indian economy, coupled with dramatic increases in enrolments, have culminated in a fractured educational landscape in which hundreds of unregulated coaching clinics and tuition centres have opened (Deuchar, 2014a; Kapur & Mehta, 2007; Young et al. 2016). These institutions offer courses ranging from Mathematics tuition to “personality development” classes. Large numbers of students attend them to enhance their job prospects. But these institutions vary greatly in quality and they

cannot confer degrees. Well-reputed institutions can charge a premium for courses which offer tangible benefits to their students, but most institutions are of poor quality and their benefits to students are unclear (Gupta, 2018; Young et al., 2016).

This article draws upon ten months of ethnographic fieldwork to examine how young men create work in the education sector and how they make sense of their practices. In doing so, it makes two significant contributions to debates about enterprise cultures and neoliberal subjectivity formation. First, debates about enterprise cultures in India have focused on how workplace regimes and state-sponsored training programmes encourage people to think of themselves as enterprising subjects (Cross, 2014; Gooptu, 2013; Nambiar, 2013). We build upon these accounts by showing the ways formally unemployed young men engage with notions of enterprise (Jeffrey & Young, 2014). Our participants stress the importance of marketing themselves in new ways and drawing on their skillsets to offer valuable services to educational institutions (Gershon, 2017). They also spend much of their time collecting and producing vital information about the educational landscape and disseminating it in strategic ways. Second, our analysis bolsters the work of other scholars who have demonstrated how marginalised individuals attempt to reconfigure unemployment into a “project of individual self-enterprise” (Newman, 1999; Scharff, 2016; Van Oort, 2015, p.75). A distinctive feature of our study is that young men maintain their value as enterprising youth by emphasising the benefits their work has for others. Yet even while many participants argue that they were helping a wider community, we show how their practices reproduce patriarchal gender norms and class divides.

The following section of this article positions our analysis in relation to recent debates about neoliberalism, work and enterprising subjectivities. After doing so, we locate the context within which the study took place and outline the methodology. The empirical sections are divided into three subsections. In the first subsection we show how youth create work by

drawing on their experience as students, knowledge of the city and networks, as well as through their mastery of soft skills. The second subsection shows how young men made sense of their enterprising practices as assisting others. The final subsection examines how their practices reproduced gendered and class divides. The conclusion highlights how the main arguments advance debates about neoliberal subjectivity formation and offers suggestions for further research.

6.2 Neoliberalism, work and enterprising subjectivities

Neoliberal reforms in many parts of the globe have had profound effects on working-life, particularly for young people. The casualisation of the workforce, new standards of flexibility among workers, and heightened competition for jobs have made it increasingly difficult for youth to secure full-time work (Gershon, 2017; Gough & Langevang, 2016; Jeffrey, 2010, 2017). The combined effects of these changes are such that rates of unemployment among tertiary educated youth are higher than those without degrees in contexts as diverse as India (State of Working India, 2019) and Egypt (Ghafar, 2016); while the capacity to translate tertiary credentials into secure work is becoming increasingly difficult in western contexts such as Australia (Cuervo & Wyn, 2016) and the United States (Gershon, 2017; Van Oort, 2015). In these circumstances, transitions from youth to adult have been undermined, and binaries such as employed/unemployed, studying/working are unable to convey the experiences of many educated young people in contemporary labour markets (Dyson & Jeffrey, 2018; MacFarlane & Silver, 2017; Threadgold, 2018, p.159).

A large number of studies have shown how young people grapple with these processes and navigate the social and economic hardships they entail (Davidson, 2011; Gershon, 2017; Thieme, 2017; Young et al. 2016). A common theme across these studies is how enterprising

subjectivities (Rose, 1996) have emerged in conjunction with the political and economic demands of neoliberalism. Scholars have argued that neoliberal regimes encourage individuals to think about themselves as ‘enterprising subjects’ (Rose, 1996), who value notions such as ambition, autonomy, accountability and self-discipline (Du Gay, 1996; Fleming & Spicer, 2003; Rofel, 1992). A pertinent strand of this literature has shown the new ways young people prepare for employment. In the South Asian context, for example, studies have registered a change in the character of young people’s educational strategies as they seek to enhance their employability (Gilberston, 2018; Sancho, 2015). In addition to acquiring credentials, youth are increasingly attending coaching clinics which aim to inculcate forms of bodily comportment suitable for office conduct. These institutions also offer advice about how to manage personal relationships, develop one’s personality, and ensure one’s mental and physical well-being (Lukose, 2009; McGuire, 2013).

A related set of studies have shown how workplaces seek to orient individuals toward entrepreneurial practices (Halford & Leonard, 2006; Rofel, 1992). Much of this work draws on the Foucauldian notion of governmentality to emphasise how techniques of surveillance and management are deployed to advance commercial interests. In the South Asian context, scholars have placed particular emphasis on how state sponsored training regimes and private corporations promote enterprise cultures (Cross, 2014; Nambiar, 2013; Upadhyya & Vasavi, 2012). Gooptu’s (2013) study examines how security guards in Kolkata endure a rigorous state-sponsored training regime before commencing employment in shopping centres. Gooptu (2013) shows how success within this training program depends upon cultivating “correct” forms of bodily comportment, such as standing up straight, making eye contact when speaking to customers, and ensuring standards of bodily hygiene. Cross (2014) shows the intricate ways that managers of factories encourage workers to assume responsibility for their own self-discipline and enhance their productivity (see also Nambiar, 2013; Upadhyya & Vasavi, 2012).

Our analysis builds on these studies by showing how youth engage with notions of enterprise amidst protracted unemployment (Jeffrey & Young, 2014). To make this contribution we turn to ethnographic studies which highlight how unemployed youth attempt to reframe their social and economic difficulties in positive ways (Gershon, 2017; Lane, 2011; Scharff, 2016). Gill and Scharff (2011, p.6) argue that a defining feature of enterprising subjectivities is the “*internalization of self-responsibilization*” (italics in original). Therefore even when individuals cannot find work, they often rearticulate unemployment as an opportunity to be seized (Van Oort, 2015, p.77). Gershon’s (2017) study of job aspirants in the United States emphasises how individuals endeavour to brand and market themselves to potential employers in order to find work. Job aspirants often fill their time by creating networks from which they might be able to leverage economic value in the future. Similarly, Sharone (2007) argues that job searching has itself become a kind of profession, which involves arduous forms of unpaid labour such as creating resumes, networking, and developing attitudes and forms of conduct demanded by employers (see also Newman, 1999; Orgad, 2009; Van Oort, 2015). Taken together, these studies attest to how precarious job markets and prolonged unemployment do not necessarily encourage individuals to question the value of entrepreneurial practices, but conversely, often compel them to intensify those practices.

These sets of literature have shown how the capacities to become successful entrepreneurial subjects are unevenly distributed (Gill, 2014; Sharone, 2007). Some analyses have shown how young women are unable to participate in entrepreneurial practices. McGuire (2013), for example, argues that young women in India are encouraged to develop forms of behaviour and comportment in coaching clinics which clash with patriarchal norms in society more generally. Even relatively privileged youth are not always able to convert their entrepreneurial skills into secure work. Nisbett (2013) argues that middle class job aspirants in Bangalore are often unable to secure the kinds of work to which they aspire, despite having a

strong grasp of enterprising skills. Others show how un(der)employed individuals reproduce social differences as they attempt to maintain their own entrepreneurial value. Scharff's (2016) study of underemployed musicians in London and Berlin, for example, demonstrates how people engaged in processes of critical othering to affirm their prospects. By thinking about themselves as hardworking and embracing entrepreneurial values, Scharff's (2016, p.119) participants were carving out boundaries between themselves and others who they considered lazy. Our analysis builds upon these accounts by illuminating how young men's strategies reproduce gendered and classed divides. But where many of these studies emphasise how individuals create divides and shore up their own value by competing with others and promoting their own interests (Gershon, 2017; Tyler, 2013; Scharff, 2016), we highlight how youth also maintain their value by making sense of their strategies in terms of assisting other young people.

6.3 Method and setting

This study engages with 31 young men aged 23 to 30 who migrated from the District of Pauri Garhwal in the north Indian state of Uttarakhand, to Dehradun, the state's capital city. All the young men in this study were General Caste and had migrated with the primary aim of gaining government employment after completing college degrees. Some young men had been living in Dehradun for up to five years at the time of fieldwork and all of them were formally unemployed. All young men had attended coaching clinics and tuition centres in order to find work. But without being able to do so, they changed their strategies and sought to create work within those institutions.

Material was gathered as part of a larger research project examining the social and economic strategies of rural male migrants who are the first in their family to pursue tertiary

education. Fieldwork was conducted in two stages from July 2016 to October 2016, as well as from March 2017 to August 2017. We used ethnographic methods to gather material including semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Interviews were conducted with a variety of people in the community, including owners of private institutions, teachers within them as well as students. Fourteen interviews were conducted with young women who were students (N=8) and employees of coaching clinics and tuition centres (N=6). We draw upon their insights at certain points throughout this paper. Yet because the kinds of work we analyse were highly gendered, most of the material presented here was gathered among men. Much of it was gathered whilst accompanying young men as they conducted their work in Dehradun, while “hanging out” with informants was crucial to eliciting the meanings they attached to their work.

The strategies of these young men need to be situated within broader transformations across India. In the early 1990s, the Indian government imposed structural adjustment policies which cohered with the principles of neoliberalism. Where the state pursued a model of state-led development since achieving Independence in 1947, this new framework posited that the market was the most equitable, efficient and fair way of distributing resources (Corbridge et al. 2013). While the economy has grown at impressive rates over the last few decades, growth has been concentrated in sectors such as IT which do not generate widespread employment. Private sector jobs have also been concentrated in metropolitan centres while public sector opportunities have contracted (van Duijne & Nijman, 2019). Increasing numbers of youth are compelled to work in the informal sector. Neoliberal policies have also wrought profound effects on the educational landscape across India (Jeffrey, 2010). They created much greater scope for the private sector to play a key role in terms of educational provision and legitimated government disinvestment in educational institutions. These changes have raised concerns about the equitability and quality of education (Deuchar, 2014a, 2014b).

These changes coincided with regional transformations in Uttarakhand. In the early 1990s, the then Uttar Pradesh government sought to impose policies to reserve 27 percent of posts within state universities and employment for Other Backward Castes. But these castes comprised just three percent of the population in the mountainous region of the state. Coupled with existing reservation policies for Scheduled Tribes, this would have meant that almost 50 percent of posts were reserved for marginalised castes. Yet eighty-five percent of the population identified as GCs and already had limited access to jobs and education (Mawdsley, 1998). After a period of vibrant and prolonged protest, the state of Uttarakhand was carved out of Uttar Pradesh in November 2000. Yet many youth argue the benefits of statehood have been concentrated in Dehradun and protests among students continued throughout the early 2000s (Koskimaki, 2016). The difficulties associated with making a living in rural areas often compel people to migrate elsewhere (Deuchar, 2019). The extent of out migration is such that the population of Pauri Garhwal district declined slightly between the 2001 and 2011 census (Census of India, 2011).

Neoliberal changes and regional transformations have fractured the educational landscape in Dehradun. Historically, Dehradun developed a reputation as a centre of educational excellence through prestigious institutions such as The Doon School and the Forest Research Institute. But since 2000 there has been per capita disinvestment in tertiary education on the part of the state government (Deuchar, 2014b). At the same time, the tertiary education sector continues to expand. According to statistics from 2012-2013, there were 168 572 students enrolled at 129 higher educational institutions across Uttarakhand (Government of Uttarakhand, 2012-2013), serviced by just 1559 teachers. This equates to 1309 students per institution with an average student-teacher ratio of 1:108. In 1991, there were just 10 520 students enrolled in higher education in Dehradun (Census of India, 1991). By 2016-2017, this figure was 48 571 (Government of Uttarakhand, 2016-2017). Positive changes have been made

in enrolment rates among women. The Gross Enrolment Rate of women in tertiary education in Uttarakhand exceeds 30 percent, compared with an all India average of 23.5 percent (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2016, p.17). Between 2010 and 2016, more women enrolled in college degrees than did men (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2016, p.136).

The undermining of state institutions coupled with increasing demand for education is such that private coaching clinics and private tuition centres have proliferated. Tuition centres are not in themselves new, but they have expanded to the extent that they represent a “shadow” education sector (Gupta, 2018; Sancho, 2015). All young men we interviewed as part of the larger research project (N=98) said that they do (or intend) to attend them. Eight young women we interviewed also said these institutions were necessary for finding work. Coaching clinics offer classes in how to develop soft skills and currently valorised personality traits, such as assertiveness, confidence and composure. Private tuition centres offer lessons in a given subject, as well as classes in how to pass a particular government examination. Unlike colleges and universities, coaching clinics and tuition centres cannot confer degrees and are not accountable to a governing body. The more esteemed, reliable and successful institutions offer well-organised courses which boast excellent examination results among their graduates. But most institutions where our participants worked had very limited resources and their benefits to students were unclear.

The coaching clinics and tuition centres where we conducted research were staffed and attended by men and women. But patriarchal gender norms affected the capacity of women to engage in the kinds of economic strategies we analyse in this paper. Female employees were fewer in number and worked in more typically administrative roles inside the confines of an institution. Their roles included paperwork associated with admissions of students, managing internal examinations, as well as handling telephone and email inquiries. Very few women

were observed in teaching roles. Furthermore, almost all the institutions we conducted fieldwork within were owned and operated by men. The kinds of emerging work we analyse therefore need to be understood as gendered strategies which are thoroughly entangled with masculine social norms. But educational institutions do not just reflect patriarchal norms but are spaces wherein youth are reshaping gendered politics (Gilbertson, 2018). Young men and women attended these institutions in roughly equal measure and reported that they offer opportunities to socialise more freely than do other spaces. Not only are they sites beyond the purview of parents and teachers who knew their parents, but women are encouraged to develop forms of bodily comportment – such as making eye contact and shaking hands – which do not always accord with notions of respectable femininity (cf. McGuire, 2013). Young men are also encouraged to develop forms of conduct and demeanour which are significantly unlike the violent (Rogers, 2008), frustrated (Poonam, 2018), or overly pragmatic (Young et al., 2016) masculinities others have described.

Our informants did not have the requisite economic capital to attend elite private colleges or reputed coaching clinics and tuition centres. But they had developed an intimate knowledge of the educational landscape which they drew on in strategic ways. The very processes which have marginalised them have also entailed certain generative possibilities. In some senses our participants might be seen as “gatekeepers” to the private education economy. But their work was defined by its precarity. While they were able to make a small income in the sector, they were not financially secure. Participants reported that the minimum salary which they would need to become independent would be 15 000 Rupees. Our participants’ incomes varied significantly. Some months the most successful young men might earn 10 000 Rupees, others might earn less than 1000 Rupees. All participants reported that there were some months when they did not make an income at all.

6.4 The enterprising practices of young men

6.4.1 Creating work through knowledge, networks and skills

The local educational landscape was marked by inequitable power relations and our informants occupied quite a marginal position within them. Each of our participants had studied at these institutions to prepare for employment but had not been able to get jobs. In these circumstances, young men had developed a range of strategies to generate an income. Our participants created work by drawing upon their experience as students, knowledge of the educational landscape and cultivating networks, as well as through a mastery of soft skills and modes of bodily comportment.

Many participants emphasised how they were able to leverage their experience as students in coaching clinics and tuition centres to make an income. Ashish, for example, migrated to Dehradun two years before Andrew met him in July 2017. He had been studying for examinations and had often made it to the second and third rounds of recruitment but had been unable to get beyond these. These examinations were very competitive and so getting to the third stage signals a strong grasp of the subject matter. It also provided him with valuable insights in terms of knowing what kinds of questions one might expect in examinations, how they might be asked, as well as more practical insights, such as where to go and how to get there on the day of the exam. Consequently, Ashish did not feel as though his time in Dehradun had been wasted, but drew upon his relative success within examinations to create work for himself:

A friend has his own Mathematics centre near the bus stand. He knows I have sat lots of examinations, but actually he does not have the same experience. Maybe once or twice he has sat the examinations, I have sat more than twelve. So he asked me ‘can

you make a practice exam for my students?’ I made the examination, then next month I did it for his next class also.

I thought ‘I do not just have to give these to him, I can give them to others also.’ So I made lots of examinations, printed them, took them here and there. I have been writing examinations and selling them for almost one year.

Ashish emphasised how he drew on his experience to create work as well as how he was able to make money without depending on a particular benefactor. By selling examinations for a much cheaper rate than they were available in textbooks, Ashish provided private institutions what he considers an affordable alternative of equal value and worth.

One informant argued that if workers like themselves did not have suitable experience then they would be unable to work effectively. Having been a student himself for many years, this young man was able to garner valuable information about what a large number of students were looking for:

These days people think ‘if I myself don’t get a job, then I will open a coaching clinic.’ But you see most coaching clinics close after five, six months. They say ‘there is too much competition.’ Actually most close because they think they can just set it up and people will come. They do not know what students want...[but] I know all the things students are wanting. There is a lot of competition, that is true...But actually there are not enough good quality institutions.

In order to leverage their experience in productive ways, young men also needed to stay abreast of the most recent changes in the educational landscape. It was pivotal they knew which tuition centres were producing the best results for their students; what practice examinations most consistently and closely anticipate the content of government exams; and which Youtube videos gave the best advice for job interviews. Gaining and verifying this information entailed

moving around the neighbourhood and city at length, speaking to a range of different people and forming an opinion of one's own. For this reason, young men's work often hinged upon their capacity to navigate the city in a timely and efficient way. Mohan explained as follows:

You have seen all the institutions here...One day one opens, the next day one closes. Examinations are happening all the time...New people are arriving every day. It is impossible that everybody knows everything about this, no one knows. But we need to know as much as we can. That's why we go here and there, speak to this person and that person, ask these things. All the time I'm doing this...every night.

Even when informants were not earning an income, they tended to use their time in ways that would help bolster their networks across the private educational sector. Here there are resonances with how Gershon (2017) discusses the networking techniques of individuals as an ongoing and calculated practice. Their strategies also attest to how unemployment often involves arduous forms of unpaid labour (Sharone, 2007). As Mohan stated above, speaking to "this person and that person" was how young men spent much of their time. On one occasion Andrew accompanied Ashish as he attempted to sell practice examinations to Mathematics tuition centres. This entailed catching auto-rickshaws and buses to various areas across the city, where Ashish said Mathematics institutions were clustered. But we often had to get off the bus at incredibly short notice when Ashish saw an institute of which he was unaware. Scarcely had the bus come to a halt when he would be striding confidently toward the institution, briefcase in hand and rehearsing his sales pitch. Even when he did not manage to sell examinations – which Ashish conceded was most of the time – he had nevertheless introduced himself, and always left a business card and a good impression.

Informants argued that maintaining good contacts was an integral part of ensuring they had enduring opportunities over time. Kapil, aged twenty-four, explained how having strong

networks meant he was able to easily find more work once he was “dismissed” from a coaching clinic where he undertook administrative duties. While he left on quite amicable terms, Kapil emphasised how he drew upon his contacts to align himself with another institution:

One day I went to my coaching clinic and my boss told me there was no more work for me, nothing I could do. I did not argue with him...if he says that’s how it is then what can I say? I shook his hand.

That same afternoon I met with my friends and said what happened. They knew somebody who wanted help enrolling more students. I could do this work. They recommended me, a good recommendation...and we met and I started working.

Kapil’s experiences speak to the precariousness of his position but also how they he was able to mitigate that precariousness. When Andrew asked him why he felt he was able to find more work so readily he said he had developed a very good reputation: “I am reliable...everyone knows I work very hard.” But it was also the case that he had worked quite hard to stay abreast of the most accurate and insightful knowledge about the educational landscape in general. He often met with several of his colleagues after work in the evenings, to discuss the latest developments and events.

In addition to leveraging their experience, knowledge and networks in these ways, most of our informants argued that a mastery of soft skills was indispensable for expanding their job prospects. Whenever they were working they endeavoured to convey a degree of composure and poise. This was most immediately apparent in the way they dressed; a business shirt and pants were almost always the norm, as was closely cropped hair and a pen in the top pocket. In a similar vein to some of the young men in Jeffrey’s (2010) study, informants were fluent in English and developed a set of dispositions which cohered with the demands of white-collar employment.

Our participants often composed themselves in ways that demonstrated to others they were always busy but would never be rushed. On one occasion, for example, Andrew was invited to Amardeep's home, aged twenty-seven, who had been living in Dehradun for nearly five years. After eating a lunch of daal and rice which his sister had prepared – herself a student of a nearby coaching clinic – Amardeep began getting ready for work. The process of getting ready was quite time consuming. Once dressed in his business shirt and pants, he began styling his hair in front of the mirror. Andrew quipped that he needed to hurry otherwise we would be late for our three o'clock meeting. Whilst continuing to comb his hair he said he could not hurry if he wanted to do it properly, and joked that that's why "serious" people are always late for meetings. By arriving shortly after the scheduled start time of the meeting, Amardeep was attempting to be 'successfully late': he had a fine-grained knowledge of how he could tweak the rules of arrival and departure to his advantage.

Developing these soft skills and modes of comportment was crucial to eliciting the respect of others and being able to cultivate a sense of "influence." Mohit, aged twenty-five, for example, referred to himself as a "consultant" and said he specialised in improving enrolment and retention rates at coaching clinics. He spoke about the skills he had learned in coaching clinics and how he utilised them when establishing rapport with students:

When I walk into a room, I do not look down at my feet. I make eye contact with each person. I shake their hand, introduce myself properly. People think 'this man is someone I want to spend more time with.' That is the effect...

Mohit's arguments highlight how soft skills and bodily comportment are important for labouring practices beyond the formal sector. Without such a grasp on these skills, his capacity to create this kind of work would be limited.

In quite immediate ways, our participants' strategies were about shoring up their own value and worth. They were able to generate a small income despite precarious working conditions. They spent much of their time collecting, producing and disseminating information about the educational landscape and disseminating it in strategic ways. Much of what they were trying to do was about marketing themselves to potential employers and promoting their own interests (Davidson, 2011; Gershon, 2017). But a distinct feature of our study was how participants also maintained their value as enterprising youth by making sense of their strategies as assisting others.

6.4.2 Enterprise and assisting others

There was a widespread sense among our participants that the educational landscape was quite dysfunctional. We repeatedly heard stories about institutions which took fees from students but offered very little in return. Some of our participants had themselves been "victims" of such institutions. The brokers and fixers in Jeffrey and Young's (2014) study often sought to make money by taking advantage of these circumstances. Some of their participants were involved in scams, such as running fake institutions (see also Ruud, 2008). At times, some of our participants expressed an interest in becoming 'big men' – implying a degree of corruption and strong-arm politicking (Jeffrey & Young, 2014). But it was much more common for young men to reflect on their negative experience of private institutions and devised practices that might address those problems.

Many young men drew upon their experience in ways they said would benefit others. They argued that having attended coaching clinics helped them tailor services which would enhance current students' experience. Mohit, for example, had been a student for nearly three years before he decided to position himself as a "consultant." He said what separated better

institutions from those of lower quality was that they care more about their students. So he designed a way of engaging students and creating better relationships between students and staff, and negotiated a fee at the institutions where he gave his services. One of Mohit's main services was what he called "consultations." These were group classes for new students where they spoke about what the particular institution offered, and which also gave students the opportunity to express their particular needs:

Some places you come in and pay the fees and that is all they care about, pay the fees. Once they have your money they go quiet. But when new students come and we have a consultation [group meeting], we talk about the services and what they want. We sit in a circle, take the time. Their very first class is with me...everyone will get to know each other.

When they start I sit in on some classes for new students and speak with them afterward. They will say 'I liked this' or 'I didn't like this.' I will always say this straight to the Sir and hopefully it will change...This is very important to coaching clinics. If they do not like it they will just go someplace else.

Mohit explained that he gave follow up phone calls to each student after their first week of classes. He also organised social events for young men and women, particularly after examinations, which he said offers them welcome relief from intense studying. In these ways, Mohit suggested that the value of his work lay with how it enhanced the experience of other young people. He said that students respected him because they knew he was trying to make their learning experience more productive and enjoyable than it might otherwise be.

Informants often argued that they helped students by explaining to them which institutions have affordable and competitive offerings, and which institutions to avoid. Mohan, aged twenty-eight, for example, spent many evenings each week handing out flyers at a bus

stop where he would encourage students to go to a particular coaching clinic. He was a very confident young man and spoke English exceptionally well. He was paid a small fee from the coaching clinic and insisted he would only work for institutions which he personally knew offered good services. He said the practices of young people like himself helped steer students away from corrupt or ineffective institutions:

Before, going back six or seven years, people would go for their studies and no one knew what would happen. It could be a good place, maybe not. It was more like a chance or a lottery [laughs]. But nowadays there is so much information, so many people who are talking about each and every institution. If a place opens and it is not good, then we will say to the students ‘do not go there’. But if it has a good reputation then we might say ‘yes, go’. We advise people in this way...

One of the main reasons young men needed to ensure they had the most up to date information was so they could continue to provide accurate knowledge to students at (and about) private institutions. Just because an institution had helped procure positive results for its students one year, did not mean it would achieve the same results the following one. Moreover, some young men said those institutions with a positive reputation were in a stronger position to take unfair advantage of their students. Young men who made this argument said such processes needed to be mitigated by their ongoing attempts to make the sector more transparent.

A final manner in which young men made sense of their work helping others was by teaching skills to students. Twenty-one participants had taught classes at some stage. Most of these young men argued that doing so would assist large numbers of other young people in their own search for employment. These young men designed specific classes which they said would give “maximum benefits” to job seekers. Ankur, for example, positioned himself as a “communication expert” at a coaching clinic. He was a charismatic young man in his mid-

twenties and organised classes to help equip students with effective communication skills. When Ankur reflected on classes he facilitates, he argued that forms of bodily comportment were quite explicitly central to succeeding in the kinds of work to which his students aspire:

The first class is posture and eye contact only. Why these things? Because this is the first thing people notice. Before you say hello, even before you introduce yourself. How is this person standing, are they confident? What is their persona? Actually many new students haven't thought about this. They might study with a pencil only, but they do not want to look you in the eye...If they are going to succeed, they need to learn all of these things.

It was important to Ankur that other students developed these capacities so that they might find work. But he did not want his students to simply copy these ways of being. Ankur argued all students are better positioned by drawing upon their own "unique personality" and using these skills creatively (Davidson, 2011). He made a point of explaining this to his students. In job interviews, for example, he advised students to include personal anecdotes about themselves, and to demonstrate they had interests and hobbies beyond their studies. This signalled to the interviewee a familiarity with the job search and that one understood the importance of having a well-rounded resume (Gershon, 2017; Gilbertson, 2018; Sancho, 2015).

It was very common for young men to report a sense of responsibility toward other students and to harness their capacities in ways that might improve the educational landscape over time. Our participants said that they felt respected because most students knew they were trying to create a better educational environment. Many of the students Andrew interviewed corroborated this argument. But their strategies were not always perceived how they were intended. Some students we interviewed in the institutions where our informants worked were quite sceptical of the services they provided. One young woman, for example, said she did not

get the impression that students' interests were being promoted and said she sometimes found one of our informants intimidating. Another student identified one of our participants as an extension of a dysfunctional institution rather than an intermediary working on students' behalf. He said that while our informant made money most students were still unable to get jobs. Even though our participants made sense of their work as helping other students, these criticisms beared upon broader issues about the social implications of our participants' labour, and how their practices reproduced gender and class divides.

6.4.3 Reproducing gender and class inequalities

In quite immediate ways, patriarchal social norms meant that young women were unable to perform similar roles. This kind of work involved navigating public space and bartering in ways, for example, that are not considered appropriate for women. One young woman we interviewed said she was responsible for what happened "within the walls" of the tuition centre in which she worked and did not want to work outside of it. Even when women did perform important tasks they tended not to be those that enabled them to gain respect. Most young women we interviewed and observed performed administrative duties, such as paper work and tracking enrolments. Commanding the kind of "influence" which young men referred to, by contrast, was a privilege almost exclusively reserved for men. Therefore unlike young women, our participants were able to consolidate their gendered identities and position themselves as respectable young men through this kind of labour.

Demonstrating one's capacity for navigating public space and having a kind of mastery over it was an important component of young men's masculinities (cf. Lukose, 2005). For example, during one interview, Amardeep detailed an occasion when he had been asked to purchase a large quantity of booklets on behalf of a coaching clinic with which he had an

affiliation. The particular books he needed to purchase were sold in only one bookstore in the city and contained practice examinations, which his teacher, Sandeep, said were the best quality. There was a degree of urgency involved, because Sandeep intended on distributing them amongst his students that evening and suspected they would soon be sold out. Amardeep took on this task and returned to the coaching clinic with the booklets much sooner than was expected. Sandeep was particularly grateful, and paid him twice the sum of money for the task which had previously been agreed. When Andrew asked Sandeep how he managed to complete this job so effectively he simply replied, “we have our ways.” His not telling was itself an attempt to bolster his reputation as a capable young man who could get things done.

Our participants’ practices also reproduced middle class ideals about what constitutes meaningful employment. One of the main ways they sought to acquire the respect of their students, for example, was by demonstrating that they had mastered forms of embodiment and composure required for white-collar work. Their practices also resonated with gendered and paternalistic notions of civility which accord status to roles performed by middle class men (Chowdhry, 2005). It was quite significant for young men who are formally unemployed to be able to garner the respect of their peers. One of our participants, Arjun, stated that:

Everyone knows what you need to do if you want to work in an office only. They see that we can offer these things and they come to our classes. Students ask me questions and I give the answers. Even when the classes have finished they want to know more things...I tell them to come back next week.

By working in these ways, our participants were able to position themselves as successful young men who had prospects and opportunities which other young men did not. They had information and skills which other students considered to be valuable.

It was not only that they developed enterprising aptitudes themselves but they encouraged others to do the same. This served to reify divides between themselves and others. They argued that “good students” were those who were committed to hard work and who dedicated themselves to acquiring the requisite skills. Ankur, for example, derided students who thought they could get ahead by simply copying soft skills in a superficial way. He argued that potential employers do not want to work with “robots” but with people who have “good personalities.” Ankur explained this distinction by invoking an anecdote he uses as an example in his classes. He said he asks his students to “imagine two people going for a job interview, [both of whom] shake your hand and give their answers.” He said these two candidates would likely be the same because they have learned the same things. But he said the most important thing to watch was when they leave the interview because they do not know they are being watched. At this point Ankur stood up and walked around the room:

If one person walks down the street like this [slouching over, dragging their feet], the other person walks like this [upright, chin held high]. In class I ask ‘who would they give the job?’ Everybody gives the same answer...

As Scharff (2016, p.119) argues, “the entrepreneurial subject configures itself through the rejection of that which it is not.” By making eye contact and having a firm handshake, for example, young men said they were seeking to convey to others they were honest and reliable, as opposed to mischievous and lazy. Moreover, if students did not show a willingness to comport themselves in these ways, they were to be blamed for their own predicament. One young man, for instance, said that youth who choose not to go to coaching clinics are “choosing to be unemployed.”

Young men’s busyness and propensity for updating their knowledge and networking helped to bolster these divides. Unlike the large numbers of young men who tended to

congregate in public space for extended periods of time, our informants always seemed to be on the move. In some moments, as in the case of Amardeep above, the success of young men's work meant getting somewhere quickly at very short notice. They stressed the ways that they were always busy and stated explicitly that they had "work" to do. At other moments young men would strategically arrive slightly later than scheduled. In both instances, having somewhere to go was quite potent in a context where many young men complain of an overabundance of free time (Deuchar, 2014a).

Yet although these processes reproduced social differences they do not map onto them in straightforward ways (Tyler, 2013). Our participants valorised forms of white collar labour which they did not have secure access to. Gaurav said there were some months where he did not sell any tests at all; Mohit often had difficulty convincing coaching clinics he could offer something they could not do of their own accord. Even those who said they offered valuable classes were often told by institutions that they were no longer needed. Most participants also argued that this kind of work was only suitable for young men at a certain stage of their lives. All young men agreed that by the time they were thirty years old it would be ideal to be married and have stable employment. But informants expressed different opinions about whether or not their practices would help them realise those ambitions. Most young men said the most productive strategy would be to intensify what they had been doing up until that point. This meant studying for longer periods and working with greater urgency. Yet some thought that approach was futile. This latter set of young men argued that to become independent you need to *know* you have security. One such young man, Tanuj, argued that this kind of work was fun and enjoyable, but he did not consider it a viable path to his independence.

Therefore even as young men's practices reproduced gender and class differences, their position within the divides they were constituting was quite ambiguous. On one hand, their practices worked to mark boundaries between themselves and others, but on the other, they

were unable to secure the kinds of jobs to which they aspired. Nevertheless, they often encouraged each other – as well as their students – to develop their enterprising capacities so that they might find secure work in the future.

6.5 Conclusions

This article has drawn on ethnographic material to analyse how unemployed youth create work in the private educational sector. Participants created work by drawing upon their experience as students, knowledge of the educational landscape and soft skills. These are gendered strategies which young men have devised in precarious social and economic conditions. Our main argument is that informants creatively engage with notions of enterprise to make an income and acquire a measure of respect. We have contributed to debates about enterprise culture and neoliberal subjectivity formation, by highlighting the importance youth ascribe to assisting others as an aspect of what it means to be enterprising and by showing how their practices reproduce gender and class inequalities.

Our informants developed an array of strategies to create work and to reconfigure unemployment into a project of self-enterprise (Van Oort, 2015). Their experience as students gave them fine-grained insights into what current students wanted from educational institutions and how they could be improved. In turn, they were able to leverage their experience to offer new services to those institutions. Our participants also emphasised the importance of acquiring certain soft skills to succeed within the workplace. Without having found secure work of their own, they used their mastery of these skills to teach classes in which they encouraged students to cultivate similar styles of comportment. Finally, they constantly updated their knowledge and networks to ensure they had valuable information to offer to students and institutions,

through which they could leverage economic gain. They collected and produced vital information about the educational landscape and disseminated it in strategic ways.

A distinctive feature of how young men made sense of their entrepreneurial practices was the importance they ascribed to assisting others. Analyses of how un(der)employed individuals maintain their entrepreneurial value have more commonly emphasised how people compete with others and promote their own interests (Gershon, 2017; Gill, 2014; Scharff, 2016). But our informants often argued that their practices were valuable because they were making a more fair and transparent educational terrain for other students. They created services which they thought enhanced the relationship between educational institutions and their students, and often advised students about which courses were worth attending and why. They also conducted classes which aimed to equip students with skills that may help them find work. Therefore even though they were not always able to make a sizeable income of their own, they argued that their work was valuable insofar as it may help others to realise their ambitions.

Yet while young men made sense of their practices in this way, their strategies reproduced inequalities and were threaded through with exclusionary dynamics (Gill & Scharff, 2011; Gooptu, 2013; Tyler, 2013). Opportunities to partake in the kinds of labour they performed were highly gendered. Their practices involved navigating space and bartering in ways that were not considered suitable for women. Moreover, the ways they made sense of their work as “helping others” cohered with breadwinning norms regarding gendered responsibilities for provision. In addition to the gendered dynamics of their labour, they were also reproducing middle class notions of what constitutes meaningful work. At times, for example, young men were marking social and cultural boundaries between themselves and others who did not aspire to white-collar work and who did not share entrepreneurial values. The styles of comportment and modes of dressing they promoted and embodied were also distinctly middle class.

It was not just that the process of their own labour hinged upon gender and class differences but that the content of their work inhibited more progressive social change. Because while they made sense of their practices as helping other people, their practices were concerned with advising students in how to compete effectively in an educational marketplace (Davidson, 2011; McGuire, 2013). This was particularly the case when young men taught classes, wherein they would explicitly encourage others to develop enterprising aptitudes and to embrace neoliberal values. By arguing that successful students and workers were those who have acquired the requisite skills and competencies, they encouraged students to think about their own predicament as a private matter and therefore in ways that depoliticised unemployment (Sharone, 2007; Van Oort, 2015).

Our attention to how unemployed youth creatively engaged with notions of enterprise encourages a critical questioning of whether practices of “self-making” are always aligned with neoliberal values (Sparke, 2017, p.293). Accordingly, further research might usefully examine how young people develop a sense of value in ways that do not strictly cohere with dominant market logics. Such research might pair with emerging debates about the affirmative and transgressive dimensions of informal labour and how marginalised youth attempt to rearticulate what counts as meaningful work (Gough & Langevang, 2016; Monteith & Giesbert, 2017; Thieme, 2017). It might also extend beyond a focus on employment to consider how modes of neoliberal citizenship coexist with other forms of citizenship and their attendant relations of power (Crossnan et al., 2016; Datta, 2018; Sparke, 2017). Comparative ethnographic research may be especially productive for pursuing these lines of inquiry and for illuminating new forms of disenfranchisement and inequality (Horton, 2016; Scharff, 2016). However, such work might also point toward the limits of neoliberalism and the possibility of alternative futures.

Chapter Seven. Productive hanging out: educated “non-migrants” and the social production of new spaces in Pauri Town

7.1 Introduction

On one of my first visits to Pauri Town I was introduced to a man who worked with a non-government organisation (NGO) which was seeking to stem migration from nearby villages. During our conversation, he relayed a story about going to a village where he found an elderly man in tears. The man was the only person who still lived permanently in the village and he explained that his crop had been eaten by wild pigs. “This would not have happened,” the elderly man had said “if my sons did not move away.” Later in the same conversation the man who worked for the NGO went on to explain that the youth who did live in villages did not make good use of their time. He said that “In the evening you see them making jokes, ragging on others and drinking alcohol.” During my fieldwork I heard many variations of these discourses from people I interviewed, and read similar arguments in newspaper articles. Taken together, they attest to the competing ways in which youth and migration are conceptualised. In the first anecdote, the absence of young men is said to contribute to – and even cause – rural decline. Yet in the second argument, young men’s presence in villages is said to undermine their social cohesion. These discourses effectively place youth living in the region in a double bind: migrate away and contribute to the problem, or remain in villages and be the problem.

This chapter explores how young men navigate tensions embedded in discourses about migration in their daily lives. It does so by analysing the practices and viewpoints of a set of educated yet unemployed young men who live in villages near Pauri Town who spent large amounts of time socialising at a computer shop in the town centre. After meeting Gaurav at his shop, which I call Bhandari Infotech, I returned to meet young men who had chosen not to migrate. But this turned out to be a problematic way of thinking about their presence at Bhandari Infotech. This was because thinking about these young men as “non-migrants” obscures important differences between them and elides their agency (Fioratta, 2015; cf. Huijsmans, 2018). This chapter shows how youth engaged in social practices which were

intended to underscore their productivity. Sometimes, for example, they teased one another about their inability to find work – which in turn revealed the importance of being productive among these young men. At other times, they assisted their elders and peers at the computer shop with tasks such as translating documents or with help navigating the Internet. I argue that while hanging out at Bhandari Infotech, young men were distancing themselves from notions of idling and creating masculine youth cultures which sought to situate themselves as “productive non-migrants.”

Other studies have shown the creative ways youth produce social bonds and ties in spaces such as internet cafes (Nisbett, 2009), tea stalls (Jeffrey, 2010; Masquelier, 2013, 2019), shopping malls (Lukose, 2009; McGuire, 2013), and other locations (Langevang, 2008; Mains, 2007; Weiss, 2004, 2009). These studies are relevant for my purposes insofar as they have often foregrounded the importance of friendship and humour for navigating social change. Yet one set of these studies has tended to underscore how middle class youth living in metropolitan centres attempt to access modernity (Lukose, 2009; McGuire, 2013). Nisbett (2009), for example, shows how youth forge middle class lifestyles and construct gendered identities by hanging out at a cybercafé in Bangalore. This chapter differs from such works insofar as it analyses how youth are configuring masculine cultures at a considerable geographical and discursive remove from the new spaces of “modern” India. A second and more pertinent set of studies examines how youth in the midst of protracted unemployment create spaces and bonds to grapple with “temporal lag and spatial marginality” (Gupta, 1996, p.11; Jeffrey, 2010; Mains, 2007, 2014; Weiss, 2009). In her study of unemployed youth in Niger, for example, Masquelier (2013) argues that tea drinking rituals in conversation groups provide a basis for young men to punctuate excess time, and serve to sustain forms of sociality which make waiting purposeful. Jeffrey (2010) argues that a shared sense of limbo among educated yet unemployed youth in north India, presented opportunities for lower middle class youth to

mobilise politically and to fashion novel cultural styles, as well as to acquire new skills and competencies (Jeffrey, 2010, p.4).

I build upon these latter debates by examining the conceptual significance of regularly hanging out at a computer shop in a context of significant levels of outmigration. I argue that by regularly meeting at Bhandari Infotech, young men were contending salient discourses about youth and migration which implied they either have to work in agriculture or move away in order to be productive. Even while they expressed resentment at the lack of suitable employment opportunities in the region, they nevertheless created social spaces in proximity to their villages within which they configured ways of being productive. In this sense there is a latent critique of rural space as characterised by cultural deprivation and loss embedded within young men's social practices. This argument complicates an abiding theme within much migration research, which tends to take for granted ideas about rural space as characterised as lacking or inferior (Crivello, 2011; Mains, 2012; Punch, 2015), without exploring the more dynamic and contested ways spaces are given meaning. But I also analyse the emerging axes of inclusion and exclusion which punctuate young men's sociality. The social production of this computer shop offers young people the opportunity to develop friendships with others who are navigating a similar set of circumstances. Having a fixed meeting place where young men can share their frustrations and anxieties is particularly significant in a context where many young men said that their villages are "emptying out." Yet where others have shown how young people get together in ways that bridge class and caste divides (Jeffrey, 2010; Masquelier, 2013, 2019; Nisbett, 2009), I argue that the young men in this study created social bonds and ties which tended to exclude and subordinate those who were not educated.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into five main sections. The first shows how young men registered Bhandari Infotech as a site of productivity. I do this by showing how jokes and humour were framed by a discursive relation to productivity, as well as analysing

how young men made sense of the time they spent there. The second section shows how young men were productive in more tangible ways. Young men who gathered at Bhandari Infotech used their skills to assist customers but also learned new skills. The third substantive section shows how and why young men tended to hang out Bhandari Infotech rather than other places nearby. I argue that they strategically avoided spaces where uneducated youth are said to congregate. The penultimate section discusses the broader significance of a fixed and regular meeting place in a context of extreme out-migration. In the concluding section I distil the main conceptual arguments and outline how they add to the main themes of this thesis.

7.2 Humour, productivity and friendship

Bhandari Infotech is a small computer shop in the centre of Pauri Town which its owner, Gaurav – introduced at the start of this thesis – opened in 2014. The shop itself consists of two small rooms; the first with a desk and computer which Gaurav calls his “office,” and the other immediately next door which contains three computers and a printer. In many ways the shopfront is indistinguishable from those nearby. It is made out of timber and appears quite old, while two long bench seats running along the shopfront offer customers a place to sit as well as invite young people to come and hang out.

The set of young men who gathered at Bhandari Infotech on a regular basis can usefully be delineated into three subsets. The first and most numerous subset consisted of twelve young men who had completed college degrees but referred to themselves as unemployed. They were preparing for government examinations and came to Bhandari for breaks between their studies. A second set of seven young men worked informally in the local area. Six of these young men had college degrees however they made an income by taking advantage of whatever economic opportunities they could find and create locally. These young men did not do manual work, but

usually made an income through various kinds of brokerage. A third and final set of young men consisted of five college graduates who held various lower level government positions in the area. Four of these young men had contract positions which are increasingly common and often insecure, while one had a coveted and ongoing position within the state education department. I argue that the interactions within and across these sets of young men were productive of masculine youth cultures which sought to create meaning and value amidst acute social and economic uncertainty.

Light hearted humour and jokes were perhaps the most immediate way that playful and productive tensions manifested among these young men. A telling exchange took place shortly after my initial visit between Sandeep and Jaspal, each of whom were twenty-six years old. Sandeep graduated from college with an Engineering degree in 2014 and has been preparing for government examinations since that time. He lived in a village nearby and visited the shop in ways that were typical of the first set of young men, although he was perhaps its most frequent visitor – attending most days of the week and often on more than one occasion in a single day. Jaspal's activities were typical of the second set of young men; he worked informally as a courier distributing goods to people and businesses that arrive by bus each morning from Delhi and Dehradun. On this particular morning, he delivered some spare parts Gaurav had ordered to conduct computer repairs, and then sat with Sandeep and others for a short while outside.

I had not yet met Jaspal and he inquired as to why I was here. When I explained that I was doing research about what it is like to grow up in Pauri Garhwal and live there after completing studies, Jaspal quickly interjected. He motioned to Sandeep and said that it was no use speaking to him because he was “getting old but not growing up.” This aroused some laughter among three other young men who had congregated nearby. Sandeep looked at me and said “see Andrew, you can come back here in ten years’ time and Jaspal will still be here,

still doing the same things.” But Jaspal was not phased: “Okay Sandeep”, he said ironically “as long as you remember us when you become Chief Minister.” This met quite loud laughter from all those who were present, and even Sandeep had to humour him by joining in, effectively conceding defeat in the process. Shortly afterward Jaspal stood to leave, giving a Sandeep a good-natured pat on the back and explaining that he had “work to do.”

In an immediate sense these jokes made for quite a convivial atmosphere. One was always entertained by young men’s wit and humour when hanging out at Bhandari Infotech. This served to corroborate the thrust of existing research which shows how a shared sense of limbo can precipitate a sense of irony, sarcasm and mischief among young men (Jeffrey, 2010, p.102). But such performances also revealed how dynamics of inclusion and exclusion are forged in the process. What Sandeep and Jaspal struggled over in this exchange was the ability to demonstrate their productive capacity. Jaspal’s initial barb at Sandeep was incisive precisely because it ridiculed how he spent his time. To say that Sandeep is “getting old without growing up” is to signal an incongruence between his biological age, and the social and cultural norms that mark one’s successful realisation of adulthood. Sandeep’s response implied that his own productivity was deferred, as though by pursuing education he would be much more productive in the future than Jaspal is in the present. Jaspal did not directly deny Sandeep’s claim, but his ironic retort was intended to underscore the futility of pursuing government examinations and to highlight what he feels are Sandeep’s unrealistic aspirations. Finally, his departing remark appealed to the immediacy and potency of the present: For Jaspal to state “I have work to do,” was to point out that Sandeep, unambiguously, did not.

While young men often teased each other about not being productive, notions of waithood, boredom or timepass were not the primary way in which most young men made sense of their presence at Bhandari Infotech. To be sure, some young men did come to the shop simply to hang out and stated explicitly that they were there for “timepass.” But from my

observations and interviews of those who regularly gathered there, it would be erroneous to describe their social practices as purposeless (cf. Jeffrey, 2010). Rather, hanging out was infused with different and contested meanings, which were crucial to how divisions among them were constituted. Importantly, each set of young men attempted to articulate their strategies as part of a hopeful narrative (Mains, 2017). The third set of young men, those who had government positions of various kinds, would often come to Bhandari Infotech in business clothes – a white collared shirt and black trousers – which clearly marked them off from other youth. To present themselves in this way was to declare that they had a job but were not at work. One young man, Manjeet, had a short term contract position with the state government. He said that he was only hanging out because he could “afford to.” He later explained that he did not mean this only “in the money sense,” but also that he could afford to do so without being ridiculed because others knew he had employment: “I could come and sit here all day, no matter. People know this is part of the job.” Notwithstanding such comments, these young men did not want to be seen as lazy. Whenever I saw Manjeet at the computer shop he would often make explicit that he was “taking a break,” or that he was “relaxing.” He would occasionally use a computer at Bhandari Infotech to send emails, but more commonly sat on the bench seat out the front of the shop and conversed with his friends. This was a discursive and strategic way of punctuating time: to be taking a break now, was to suggest that he would be busy later on.

At other times this set of young men sought to mark themselves off from others at Bhandari Infotech by demonstrating that they were in fact working. There was one particular young man named Akash who would often spend large amounts of time on his mobile phone at Bhandari Infotech, speaking to colleagues in an animated way about matters concerning his job. In an immediate sense this kind of performance could be read as an ostentatious attempt to highlight to those who were unemployed that he was not. Those who regularly witnessed

these displays certainly suggested that was the case. One young man, for example, told me that “he could go to his office to make these calls but it wouldn’t have the same effect,” and later explained that “he [Akash] wants to be seen making calls.” But there were additional layers of meaning to this performance which are not appreciated from within that viewpoint. One on occasion I asked Akash how he managed to spend quite a considerable amount of time at Bhandari Infotech while he was clearly so busy. His reply was quite telling: “This is my office,” he replied in a cool, calm and confident manner. On the one hand this was meant as a joke, alluding to the widespread problem of absenteeism of government employees in the area. But on the other hand it registered Bhandari Infotech as a site of work and productivity. For Akash, hanging out at Bhandari Infotech had shifting meanings: at one moment it was a site to relax, at another it was a place of work. His capacity to shift between these roles without moving was quite potent in a context where so many young men had to migrate for employment.

The second set of young men similarly sought to demonstrate they had economic opportunities which other young men did not. But where the first set of young men more commonly sought to convey a sense of civility and calm, these young men were more frenetic in their comings and goings. The strategies of Anand, aged twenty-five, were typical of this set of men. He had recently started assisting a friend who ran a chicken farm on the outskirts of town. His role was to go into town and coordinate daily deliveries of eggs to tea stalls and the like. He took orders and tried to increase the number of stores to which eggs from this farm would be distributed. Importantly, Anand was adamant that he himself would not deliver them, as he considered this too menial. By ensuring he did not work with his hands, he was able to tell others that he worked “in sales.” This work demanded that he moved around a lot and that he was always on his toes. When I asked him why he came to Bhandari Infotech to hang out he took issue with how I phrased the question:

Hang out? Maybe some people have the time to hang out...I don't have the time. If I get a call then I go straight away. If not then I stop here only. You have seen each day that I am always coming and going...

In these comments, Anand was explicitly distancing himself from notions of idling and instead emphasised his busyness. Another young man from this set of youth said that "I would come here every day for *chai* if I could," but that his working schedule would not allow for it. In an immediate sense these kinds of arguments alluded to how this set of young men's comings and goings hinged upon effective time-management. But they also point toward the heterogeneous character of this space (cf. Langevang, 2008) and how the meanings of Bhandari Infotech as a social space are contested by young men. For some young men it is a site of productivity, where they could work and be seen working. But for Anand, it was a site of worklessness and relaxation, that he was unable to attend as often as he might like to.

Even the first set of young men who came to Bhandari Infotech for breaks between studies did not make sense of their presence strictly in terms of passing time. This set of young men were said to have the most free time, and were most commonly ridiculed by others for simply hanging around and idling (such as how Jaspal ridiculed Sandeep above). But that was not how they made sense of gathering at Bhandari Infotech. They would often come together to talk about what they had studied, share advice about what to expect in examinations, as well share study notes. Sandeep explained that this was one of the most important reasons why they came to Bhandari Infotech:

We come here to see our friends, to drink *chai* and talk with them. Of course we do that. We also talk about things we have to do. In two months there are three of us who are going to Dehradun for tests. So we have lots organise. Not just for the examination itself, what will they ask, what is most important to study? Also how are we getting

there, where is the building (for the examination), who are we staying with? These things...take a lot time to organise...to prepare.

For Sandeep, time spent at Bhandari Infotech was a break from study but can also be seen as a different kind of preparation. It was a place where he and his friends came together and enjoyed the presence of others, but certainly not one which they reported wasting their time. So while it was true that these young men spent some of their time relaxing and joking around, much of it was also spent preparing and making arrangements for examinations in the near future. This served to transform ‘hanging out’ into a goal-oriented practice (cf. Masqueulier, 2013, p.472). Even as these young men struggled to register a progression through time, they devised ways of punctuating and organising time such that they considered themselves to be moving forward. This was potent in a context where migration is often said to be one of the few ways in which young men can realise social mobility and markers which register their arrival at adulthood.

7.3 Helping out when they can

So far I have argued that these three sets of young men sought to demonstrate their productivity in different ways. But the most common and tangible way in which young men were productive at Bhandari Infotech was shared across these sets of young men. Bhandari Infotech had quite a steady stream of customers throughout much of the day and most of the time Gaurav was able assist them himself. If he was moderately busy customers would often sit on the bench seats outside and converse with the young men gathered there while they waited. But on some occasions young men who had the requisite skills and knowledge would assist customers with their inquiries. In these instances, divisions between sets of young men were blurred, as were divisions between those who formally worked at the shop and those who simply helped out when they needed to.

The most common service which people needed assistance was with navigating the internet. Throughout each day I spent at Bhandari Infotech there were multiple examples of this kind of work among young men. Knowing that Gaurav was busy, they would often halt their conversation to respectfully and politely greet people when they came, and would not wait to be asked by Gaurav to help out if they suspected he needed it.

I told Sandeep that I was surprised by this but he said it was characteristic of people “like him.” I asked him to explain what he meant by this:

You have been here many times, you know that here we always respect our guests and elders. If somebody needs help with some matter, then of course we will help, straight away! On the first day you came we didn’t say, ‘what are you doing here’? We said, ‘how can we help you’? It’s the same with them [customers]. Sometimes they will know what to do, what they want. But if not we can help...all the time we help.

Sandeep’s claim that people “like him” regularly help others implies there are other young men unlike him who do not. I discuss in greater detail below how young men made sense of their activities *vis-a-viz* other young men and the spaces they occupied. What is most pertinent here is that Bhandari Infotech was a site where young men could demonstrate the ways they respected local hierarchies and norms by deferring to others – commonly their elders – and rendering them assistance.

Another young man, Rakesh, made a similar point by explaining in detail the tasks he most regularly helped others with. For him, it was less about greeting them in particular ways, as Sandeep emphasised, and more about helping them navigate new technologies:

Most of the time people come here to say they need help with a form. But the level of understanding is very low. If we say to them, ‘which application are you wanting to complete?’, sometimes they do not even know...they don’t understand. Next thing we

talk about what they want and we find out which form they are wanting to fill out. Bus tickets, bank account [forms]. Then we sit at the computer and show them: ‘this is how you open the Internet,’ ‘this is how you find the website,’ ‘this is how you print.’ These things sound simple, for us they are. But actually for some people they are not. You have to understand that it’s new here.

Rakesh’s explanation of how he uses technology to help others offers a contrast with more common understandings of technology as a means of accessing modernity, or transcending space (cf. Nisbett, 2009). Rakesh argued that by coming to the shop people were able to see that there was an “easier way of doing things.” This was pivotal in a context where the shop’s owner, Gaurav, said that when he started the shop many people could not see how it would be economically viable. Moreover, Gaurav himself regularly provided informal computer tuition at no cost to those who requested it, and was adamant that if his shop was to be successful it had to offer services which were pertinent to those living nearby.

Yet even while some of these young men sought assist customers when they came, it must be said that their own computer skills varied quite significantly. Some of the young men seemed to be virtuosos when it came to navigating such technology, yet others were much less familiar with it. For those who did not have particularly strong skills, coming to Bhandari Infotech presented the opportunity to learn them. One such young man, Ramesh, said that no one in his family has a computer, and so visiting Bhandari Infotech is the only time he gets to use one. He said that: “Before I came here I had seen computers at college only, but never had I even sat in front of one! Now I do it most days, I talk online.” Importantly, typing efficiently on a keyboard is a skill which many young people consider necessary for gaining government work and there are coaching clinics with teaching modules which focus strictly on this. Having a grasp upon typing meant they had something of a “head-start” on other young men who were

preparing for white-collar work. In this sense coming to Bhandari Infotech also presented certain learning opportunities.

Even those young men who were more competent with computers said that there was always new things to learn. Rakesh said that more and more forms have an online format, and that he needs to know which ones. But he also said that the hardware was changing too. Gaurav had recently bought a new printer which Rakesh helped him install, and Gaurav was looking to invest in a new computer at a competitive price. During the last few weeks I spent in Pauri Town, Rakesh and Gaurav spent much of their time researching what computer to buy and from where. In these senses Bhandari Infotech was not only a site where young men drew upon their existing knowledge, but one where they updated and renewed it. It was a site of learning and productivity, and not one in which they reported wasting their time.

While some of these young men were in a strong position to assist those who came to the shop, this is not to say that those who received their services necessarily displayed gratitude. On one occasion a young man named Rishubh translated a document from Hindi to English for an older gentleman. The older man read the contents of a handwritten letter while Rishubh typed in on a computer before printing multiple copies of it. But at the completion of the task and argument ensued about what he had in fact written. The older gentleman did not trust that Rishubh had translated the document honestly, and so waited for Gaurav to read it to confirm that he had. When Rishubh was subordinated in this way he declared quite angrily that he would not help out again. At this declaration his friends seized the opportunity to tease him. One of them ironically said that that was perfectly understandable for a man who is as busy as he is. But again it was Jaspal who sought to deliver the decisive blow. He said that perhaps Rishubh had written a marriage proposal to older man's daughter, such was his desperation.

Even though this particular task did not have the desired effect, young men argued that helping out in this way nevertheless helped them develop and maintain positive reputations. They said that older people know that they do not cause trouble, and that they would ask for assistance if they needed it. This was quite important to Gaurav. He said that: “If young men came here and were joking all day, this would not be good for business. These guys...they joke, but they know when to stop...when enough is enough.” The manner in which young men conducted themselves attests to the ways educated “non-migrants” attempt to configure new ways of being productive in a context where opportunities for economic and material gain are scarce. In this way they were engaging with and reproducing a familiar discourse which locates youth as the locus for potential and positive social change (Cole & Durham, 2008). Yet aside from the ways that some young men rendered technological services to others, much of what they did at Bhandari Infotech could be done elsewhere. This raises additional questions about why young men come to the computer shop and do not gather tend to gather at other locations nearby; which in turn reveal further insights into the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion of the masculine youth cultures they are forging.

7.4 Here and not elsewhere

Some of my initial inquiries into why young men chose to come here and not elsewhere were not particularly fruitful. It was very common for young men refer to its proximity to the hills. They said it was important to feel connected to the natural environment and the mountains in particular. Gaurav himself regularly referred to Bhandari Infotech as “a shop with a view” (of the mountains), which he said gave it a spiritual and distinctly *pahari* anchoring. At other times, young men said it was about realising a degree of independence. All of the young men in this

study live with their parents and siblings in close proximity, and so hanging out at Bhandari Infotech meant getting away from their purview.

While each of these perspectives were important in different ways, neither of them explained why they did not hang out to the same extent at other spaces in the local area. A few caveats must be inserted here. The young men in this chapter, particularly the second set of youth who worked informally in Pauri Town, did of course frequent other places. The nature of their work was such that they went to various places at various times of day. Similarly, those who had government contracts also spent time at other places around town to attend meetings and the like. Finally, the third set of young men occasionally went to tea stalls and other friends' homes when they could. For these reasons, the extent to which young men gathered at Bhandari Infotech to the exclusion of other places must not be overstated. Notwithstanding these caveats, however, what was significant was that when each of these young men had "free time" it was at Bhandari Infotech that they tended to spend most of it.

Insights into why they did so were revealed when we discussed why they tended to limit the time they spent in other places in Pauri Town. One evening I asked a group young men who were gathered at Bhandari Infotech whether or not they have spent much time on college since graduating. I asked this question in the context of upcoming student elections where many other young people I knew would regularly attend college to show their support for a hopeful student leader. One young man, Suresh, was quite outspoken on this topic:

I completed my degree almost two years ago. Two years! Since then I have been busy doing different things...working. When I was a student, okay I would go, but now...I am not a student any more.

Like Suresh, another young man, Anoop, joked that if he were to go and hang out at college he would likely meet ridicule: "People would say 'hey *bhai*, what are you doing here? You want

to come to class? Maybe you can write my paper also!’” These young men suggested that hanging out at college was not feasible for young men who had earned their degrees.

However, most young men were less adamant about avoiding college than were Suresh and Anoop; for others, being seen in its proximity or hanging out with friends was not the misdemeanour that Suresh and Anoop suggested it was. But there were important differences between how they made sense of spending their time at college as opposed to Bhandari Infotech. This was made apparent by Rakesh, who explained that he attended college quite regularly:

Two weeks ago I went to [college to] see my old professor, he was my best teacher.

Still I go to see him, these days we sit in his office. Before that I was there also to go to my friend’s graduation.

For Rakesh, going to college quite regularly was appropriate, but it was important he was going there because he had something to do. He was not hanging out, but rather attending an appointment or function. He would spend time in his professor’s office rather than hang around with other young people. This contrasts quite significantly with why he said he came to Bhandari Infotech, which was more often to “see friends,” as well as to assist Gaurav with running the shop when he needed to and could. What Rakesh’s response and those of Suresh and Anoop share, therefore, is a sense that hanging around at college with no particular purpose is not suitable for youth who had completed their degrees. If they were to do so, their capacity to position themselves as productive young people might be curtailed.

Yet even while they did not want to hang out at college, they were keen to maintain reputations as educated youth. This was particularly the case for the third set of young men, who were busy preparing for government examinations. In order to uphold their reputations as educated young men, they would avoid socialising with other youth who they did not think

were serious about finding employment. This demanded that they avoided spending time in spaces where such young men might socialise. On one occasion, I was walking through the two centre with an informant in the evening. We had been at Bhandari Infotech for the last few hours and were returning to his home for a meal. The results of the student elections had just been announced and a large celebration was taking place in the main street. There were over two hundred young men parading down the street, and at the front of the procession the newly elected student leader was being carried on the shoulders of his supporters. I wanted to stop and observe but the young man I was with advised against doing so. He said:

Come on, we have to go... These people are not wanting to bring change. They vote for a leader so now they can have a party, that's all. They say 'vote for us and we will give you alcohol.' How can we progress if this is the mindset of the people? No cars and trucks are coming and going now for the whole day. Taxis cannot even get through. [These people] are doing nothing, they are blocking development.

Most of the time there were not demonstrations of this kind in Pauri Town. But a similar line of reasoning underpinned most young men's attitudes about those who tended to gather in tea stalls and the like on a regular basis. One young man suggested that the actions of young people who hang out in tea stalls are indistinguishable from older generations who are not educated:

Go to the tea stall in the evening, near the vegetable market, anywhere... you will see lots of people there. Young people, they are sitting with drivers, couriers, they are all smoking, talking with each other... just passing time.

This young man's claim that there were others who were "just passing time" was intended to deride youth who were idling and not "serious," at the same time as it registered his own ways of socialising as productive. It also alluded to a common argument wherein people involved in manual and lower level occupations were not able to bring about change. Set against these

ostensibly unproductive occupations, the implication was that there was something decidedly new about hanging out at Bhandari Infotech, and that it was not a hindrance to positive change in the ways that other young men's activities were.

When young men reflected on why it was predominately educated youth who spent time at Bhandari Infotech they ordinarily explained that it was not a site where uneducated people would want to hang out. Sandeep said that uneducated youth "might work in the fields, rest and eat, then come into town in the evening just for leisure." Rakesh argued that there was nothing for uneducated youth to do in Bhandari Infotech so that's why they would not come. Instead, he said they might go to the tea stall or gather near the bus stand. Almost of the young men I interviewed made similar arguments about why uneducated young people might not come to Bhandari Infotech. In an immediate sense this division was surely overstated. There were youth without college degrees who occasionally gathered at the computer shop. Notwithstanding this, however, hanging out at Bhandari Infotech can be seen as an attempt to physically separate themselves from youth without college degrees by avoiding the spaces in which they are said to congregate. This argument represents a departure from analyses which show how a spirit of egalitarian camaraderie characterises cultures of timepass (Jeffrey, 2010). But it also differs from studies which situate young men's sociality as a refuge "against the world 'out there' from which they feel excluded" (Masquelier, 2013, p.473). Because from that perspective, male sociality is conceptualised strictly as a *response* to marginalisation, which shuts down scope for thinking about how young men are themselves partaking in the marginalising. The young men in this study were not simply responding to exclusion, but were forging youth cultures wherein dynamics of inclusion and exclusion mapped onto ideas about what it means to be educated or otherwise.

7.5 Uncertainty, mutuality and ties

Being educated in Pauri Town and having not migrated was a position fraught with uncertainty. Young men regularly reported being unsure what their futures held, at the same time as they resisted migration and critiqued people who migrated in search for opportunities. They regularly spoke about their concerns at Bhandari Infotech, as well as the difficulties they had navigating them. One afternoon Anand arrived looking particularly frustrated, because he had just had an argument with his boss. Anand's boss accused him of stealing three boxes of eggs, which he vehemently denied. Anand explained as follows:

Each day I'm getting up early working hard, taking orders, making sure they are delivered. Today my boss said to me 'There are three boxes of eggs which are missing, you must have taken them.' Why would I take these eggs? Every day I've worked from morning till night for him, and now I don't think I will. What is the point? I don't know what I should do...

In an immediate sense these comments register the difficulties which educated youth living in the area encounter and navigate. Like other men in this study, Anand did not envisage any more suitable opportunities unfolding in the near future, at the same time as he did not see the merit of continuing to work with his current employer. He also emphasised the attributes which he felt made for a good employee – his reliability, honesty and hardworking nature.

But in addition to *what* Anand spoke about, *where* he chose to vent his frustrations and concerns was also significant. One afternoon a few days later, I asked Sandeep why he thought Anand came straight to Bhandari Infotech to talk about the problems he was having with his employer. Sandeep said that Anand “knew” he would find people to speak to here who would understand, and that it was important for young men to know where they could find their friends. In this sense it was an important hub of male bonding where youth could regularly

confide in one another and discuss their anxieties with friends (cf. Weiss, 2009). But Sandeep then relayed an anecdote which conveyed the significance of this argument in the context of high levels of out-migration. In a somewhat melancholy tone, Sandeep explained that:

When we were young children, every day we would play cricket in my village. Before school, after school. We were meant to be helping in the fields but we would always play cricket instead. But these days we cannot play cricket because there is only three of us left. Most people, actually almost everyone in my village has moved away. Delhi, Dehradun, one friend is in Dubai. So now there is not any cricket, but those who are left, we come here. We sit and drink chai...almost every day I'm here.

For Sandeep, coming to Bhandari Infotech was a way of contending the loneliness he experienced in his village. He said that there were only one or two others from his village who regularly gathered at the shop, and so by regularly hanging out there he developed and maintained friendships with other young men in the local area. What was also interesting was how Sandeep spoke about his village as a site of rapid social change. Not only does this go against popular stereotypes about villages being “stuck in time,” but also alludes to the significance of having a fixed meeting place in Pauri Town. Seen in this light, Bhandari Infotech was a social and spatial anchoring point within which they cultivated bonds and ties with other young men who are navigating a similar set of circumstances (cf. Weiss, 2009).

Bonds and ties among young men were further developed and consolidated through humour. Earlier in this chapter I argued that jokes were framed by a discursive relation to productivity, and that the ways they teased one another revealed the importance of being productive among these young men. But such jokes had additional social implications. On the one hand, jokes about their friends' failure to be productive tend to individualise the problem and obscure the broader processes in structures which marginalise these young men. They

frequently ridiculed each other in relation to their ‘choices.’ Yet on the other hand, the sense that widespread unemployment was an individual problem was mediated by the conditions which made these jokes possible. Even when young men had different ideas about how they should spend their time, hanging out at Bhandari Infotech was necessarily a collective experience. And so the argument that their condition was a result of their choices was belied by the fact that youth who had made considerably different choices found themselves in a similar set of circumstances: hanging out at Bhandari Infotech. Indeed, during a visit to the shop at any time of day, one could be reasonably assured of encountering other young men who were grappling with long term un(der)employment and attempting to configure ways of being productive in the process.

In many ways Bhandari Infotech was a dynamic place. This is not only in terms of its newness – shops of this kind did not exist in the area as little as five years ago – but also because how those who gathered there emphasised how they were grappling with changes wrought by globalisation in general and technological change in particular. I showed above how young men were keen to render assistance to others by helping them navigate these changes. But in addition to being dynamic in these ways, it was perhaps equally significant that Bhandari Infotech was a place of fixity for young men. It was Anand’s immediate decision to come and vent his frustrations at Bhandari Infotech. For Sandeep, these were something important about knowing one would encounter young men there with a degree of predictability. In spite of a broader sense of flux and uncertainty, Bhandari Infotech was a place of fixity where young men would meet at quite predictable times; it was a spatial node within which they configured ways of grappling with the acute social and economic difficulties they were having.

7.6 Conclusions

This chapter has examined the social production of a computer shop in rural north India. I have elicited the meanings young men attached to spending time at Bhandari Infotech in order to show how they contend discourses which embedded in discourses about migration. The central argument has been that young men who have chosen not to migrate attempt to produce Bhandari Infotech as a site where they might “productively hang out.” There are three interdependent ways in which this argument can be substantiated, which have important implications for debates about youth, education and migration in the Global South.

First, I have foregrounded the agency of “non-migrants” to demonstrate how they configure ways of being productive. Others have shown how youth develop spaces where youth hang out in order to grapple with social change and protracted un(der)employment (Jeffrey, 2010; Langevang, 2008; Weiss, 2009). In a similar vein to these studies, young men used humour, drew upon new technologies and education (Jeffrey, 2017), and developed their skills as well as learned new ones (Jeffrey, 2010) whilst at Bhandari Infotech. They also assisted their elders and peers when they needed help navigating new technologies. But what was striking about young men’s practices was how notions of productivity were central to how they made sense of their hanging out. Conceptualising hanging out in this way offers a stark contrast to salient discourses about un(der)employed youth in the region, which tend to admonish them for migrating away at the same time as they designate as idle those who do not. Productive hanging can therefore be seen as a way of grappling long term unemployment as others have discussed (Jeffrey, 2010; Masquelier, 2013; Weiss, 2009), as well as a novel way of navigating competing discourses about migration.

Second, while this is a space where young men forge bonds and ties with other youth, they tend to do so in ways which excluded uneducated young people. In South Asia and elsewhere, others have written about how young people develop friendships in internet cafes (Nisbett, 2009; Lukose, 2009) and tea stalls (Jeffrey, 2010; Masquelier, 2013) which at times

bridge class, caste and gender divides. But at this particular computer shop young men's hanging out tended to reinscribe social inequalities. Not only was Bhandari Infotech a decidedly masculine space, but being educated was a precondition for spending large amounts of time at this shop. Young men forged these divisions in subtle ways. They tended to emphasise the ways that they were civilised, as evidenced through their interactions with elders and peers as well as the ways that some of them dressed. Informants also tended to avoid spaces where uneducated youth were said to congregate, and avoided college because they did not consider a suitable space to socialise within given they had completed their degrees. Thus at the same time as young men created a sense of order and stability amidst a wider sense of flux (Weiss, 2009), which I have argued is particularly potent in the context of such significant outmigration, this was not a process that was forged equally by all young men. In this sense, the young men in this chapter were drawing social and cultural divides between themselves and other young people.

Finally, drawing each of these arguments together encourages a conceptualisation of Bhandari as a kind of "territorial appropriation" (cf. Langevang, 2008) which necessitates a rethinking of rural space as characterised by lack. By showing how "non-migrants" productively hang out, this chapter complicates analyses which overdetermine the "mobility imperative" (Crivello, 2011; Farrugia, 2016; Punch, 2015) which rural youth face, and problematizes the thrust of much migration research which elides the agency of non-migrants (Huijsmans, 2018; Mains, 2012). It also serves as a counterweight to analyses in the Indian context more specifically which detail the ways villages are "whithering" (Gupta, 2005) without adequately exploring how youth engage with these processes. This chapter has moved beyond these approaches by examining how young men seek ways of being productive without migrating away.

My argument is not that they were able to create spaces of productivity in unfettered ways, and it is not to deny the acute difficulties that rural youth face in this part of north India and elsewhere (Farrugia, 2016; Jeffrey, 2010). But it is to draw attention to how young men who do not migrate attempt to create meaning in spite of these difficulties. Young men in Pauri Town were at times able to devise creative ways of being productive in a context where it was exceedingly difficult to do so, even as they reworked social inequalities. The following chapter extends this argument by showing the strategies which college students deployed to leverage the value of their credentials in villages in Pauri Garhwal.

Chapter Eight. Not for money but for change: educated youth attempting to create change in Pauri Garhwal

8.1 Introduction

In June 2017, I was walking along a winding road with a college student named Ramesh on the outskirts of Pauri Town. Ramesh was in the final year of a Political Science degree and was considering how he might spend his future. His older brother completed a degree in the same discipline in 2014 and had been working in a hotel in Delhi since that time. For as long as Ramesh could remember, his father had moved around in search of any employment opportunities he could find. But Ramesh was unsure if he wanted to migrate too. One reason for this was his connection to the natural environment and strong sense of belonging in the Hills. When we reached the rise of a small hill, we paused to look at the vista; terraced fields were carved into the mountains and stretched into the distance as far as one could see. Ramesh's mother still worked in the fields and he had spent almost every afternoon helping her when he was a child. While looking down toward his village from which we had walked, Ramesh said "everybody thinks they must go here and there (*idhar-oudhar*) for work (*kaam*), but no one really wants to leave."

As we continued walking toward college, Ramesh explained that his priority was to spend his future in his village. He knew too many migrants who had moved to cities in search of work and returned home with empty hands (*khali hath*); his brother had not found the kind of work to which he aspired, his father did not have much to show for his toil. But he also said if young people were to remain in villages then "we cannot do what we have always done, but will need to change." He argued that educated youth should not work in agriculture but should try and create new ways of helping others in their villages.

The main way Ramesh acted upon this sentiment was by tutoring children in his village. Most evenings between two to fifteen children would sit on the floor of his small family home. Ramesh took on the role of disciplinarian when tutoring, a significant contrast to the more light-

hearted manner with which he usually comported himself. For Ramesh, this was an important task. As well as generating a small income and equipping children with skills which he considers necessary to a productive future, he said that it was a good opportunity to show:

People [in my village] I am a serious person. I am not lazing about or mocking with my friends. I am setting a good example for everyone...When I come home from college I greet everyone, they will ask about my studies. I show my respects to my mother and father. I will eat and have a small rest, then the children will come. I will send them home with homework, but they will just play games.

Tutoring was an opportunity for Ramesh to demonstrate to others that he was a responsible adult, that he valued village social and cultural norms, and that he wanted to promote the well-being of younger generations. On one hand, he knew his tertiary qualifications were unlikely to result in a job and he did not want to migrate to find one. But on the other hand, he said they were indispensable for a productive life in his village. As he said to me when we arrived at college one day: “without education, there is nothing you can do.”

Critical perspectives on formal education offer several insights that bear upon Ramesh’s experiences. A widespread crisis of educated unemployment has been well documented by scholars across South Asia and elsewhere (Jeffrey, 2010; Li, 2010; Mains, 2012; Torres & Schugurensky, 2002). Several studies have shown how the benefits of tertiary education in India tend to accrue to the urban middle class (Gilbertson, 2017; Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007; Majumdar and Mooij, 2012). Corresponding works show that the prospect of securing well-paid and meaningful work for the lower middle class and rural youth appears very small (Fernandes, 2006; Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2008; Jakimow, 2016). Ramesh himself was acutely aware that he would not be able to gain salaried employment in proximity to his home. However, in spite of poor occupational outcomes, studies across India have also shown how

many marginalised young people continue to uphold the value of education as a means of realising status and respect (Deuchar, 2014b; Jaju, 2018; Jeffrey, et al. 2008). These studies show how education provides a basis for some degree holders to mark boundaries between themselves and others and to create a sense of distinction despite remaining jobless.

Yet some of these studies have suggested that notions of educated superiority in rural contexts are such that educated youth do not want to work in villages (Froerer, 2014; Jeffrey et al. 2008; Morarji, 2014). But Ramesh emphasised his connection to the natural environment, his desire to work in his village, and explained how he uses his education to nurture strong ties with those who lived within it. These aspects of Ramesh's experiences pair with emerging debates which show how some youth are attempting to reconcile their status as educated people with the prospect of rural futures (Dyson, 2019a; Jeffrey & Dyson, 2014; Mwaura, 2017; Schut, 2019). These works show the diverse ways educated young people are attempting to reconfigure rural spaces so that they might live productively within them. But some of these studies mask the ways that young people's practices reproduce axes of social difference. Koskimaki's (2017) study of politically engaged young men in Uttarakhand, for example, shows how youth attempt to foster development by attending political rallies and garnering knowledge of the struggles people face in villages. But by tracing the spread of a "masculine development ethos" across the region, Koskimaki (2017) foregrounds the formation of solidarities among young men rather than examining the social and cultural divisions between them.

In this chapter, I draw critical perspectives of education into conversation with debates about educated youth reconfiguring rural space to analyse how some students value tertiary education. The main argument is that youth valued education in Pauri Garhwal as a means of creating social change yet developed strategies which reproduced social inequalities. In doing so, this chapter makes two main contributions to debates about youth and education in the

Global South. First, I show how tertiary education had not alienated young men from where they lived but provided scope for them to support rural spaces in new ways. I make this contribution by examining how young men leveraged their credentials in rural settings and by showing how they were attempting to make changes to their villages. Second, despite wanting to spread the benefits of their education and carve out livelihoods in Pauri Garhwal, I show how educated young men reproduced social inequalities. They developed ways of supporting villages which limited scope for uneducated people to join in, and sometimes reproduced derogatory representations of the Uttarakhand hills.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four main sections. The following section situates tertiary education in the context of changing livelihood strategies in Pauri Town. The second section examines the strategies educated youth deployed to support their villages, neighbourhoods and other spaces in Pauri Garhwal. In doing so, I illuminate how formal education had not alienated youth from rural settings. The third section examines how they were attempting to reconfigure rural space so that they might have rural futures. This entailed fashioning alternative representations of the Pauri Garhwal and creating avenues within it for realising a sense of progress. The fourth section examines how notions of educated distinction were threaded through their strategies and how they sometimes reproduced derogatory depictions of rural settings. The concluding section outlines the theoretical contribution of this chapter and how it relates to the main themes of this thesis.

8.2 Degrees of change

The 31 young men discussed in this chapter were each in the final year of their studies and were aged in their early twenties. These young men were purposively sampled to identify youth who wanted to remain in Pauri Garhwal, because the research was designed in part to examine

whether and how “non-migrants” could challenge their marginality. There were limitations to sampling in this way. Most educated youth who I encountered in Pauri Garhwal did express a desire to migrate when they finished their degrees, and so those who were wishing to stay were over-represented in my sample. Twenty-three of these young men lived in villages in proximity to Pauri Town, while the remaining eight lived on the fringes of Pauri Town itself. Twenty-eight of these young men were General Caste (GC), while the remaining three were Scheduled Castes (SC). Twenty-four youth were studying the Arts while seven were studying Sciences. All participants were among the first generation in their families to go to college. Just over half of the participants had a brother or sister who were either in college or had completed their studies. Most of their fathers had attended secondary school however only three of them had a tenth-class pass.

Rather than pursue schooling, the more common livelihood strategy among their fathers had been to discontinue formal education and commence working in manual occupations at about fifteen years of age. Most of the fathers of these young men moved around on a seasonal basis for agricultural work, others worked in construction in cities such as Delhi and Dehradun. Eight of them had also served in the military. Four of the young men’s fathers who lived closer to Pauri Town were able to make a living without migrating by working in small-scale industry. One student’s father, for example, had built a small tea stall when he migrated to Pauri Town with his own parents in the late 1970s. Although he stopped working in the early 2000s, he continues to collect rent from the shop – which has since been turned into a small gym. Eighteen participants had older brothers who had moved to cities for work, most of whom had wanted to secure government employment. Yet in line with broader trends across Pauri Garhwal, most young men’s brothers worked in lower level service jobs (Mamgain & Reddy, 2016).

This generational shift toward formal education accurately anticipated the growth of the service sector in Uttarakhand. Since the early 2000s, the share of the service sector in economic growth has grown considerably. But a widespread crisis of educated unemployment is such that many young men are excluded from the kinds of jobs to which they aspire (Dyson, 2019a; Koskimaki, 2017). Formal education has not been able to deliver a significant number of jobs to rural youth or to those who migrate in search of them (Mamgain & Reddy, 2016). There were also very few suitable jobs in Pauri Garhwal. But the young men in this chapter did not regret pursuing formal education, nor did they suggest that their degrees were worthless. Instead, they wanted to create change in nearby villages and neighbourhoods. Indeed, they valued their credentials as a means of creating change in proximity to their homes more so than finding jobs in the city.

Material presented in this chapter primarily come from interviews conducted in tea stalls near college campus during 2017. These locations were chosen by participants because they said they were able to discuss their education more openly than if they were on campus itself. During interviews participants detailed the kinds of projects that they worked on and explained their aims and intentions. They also discussed some of the difficulties they were having and their frustrations with living in the area. In addition to these interviews, I often accompanied young men to college and spent time with them and their friends between classes. When their classes came to an end for the day (or whenever they chose to leave), I would often spend a few hours socialising with friendship groups in Pauri Town. We would walk to parks and other sites, such as temples, and would almost always find a roadside stall where we would drink tea and eat snacks. The conversations we had on those occasions proved invaluable for understanding the meanings young men attached to their education. Taken together, these methods enabled me to garner insights into the ways young men had attempted to use their credentials to support their villages and the ways they worked toward change.

8.3 Youth leveraging the value of education in rural settings

A long lineage of studies in South Asia have pointed to how formal education promotes knowledges which are tied to urban middle class lifestyles (Fernandes, 2006; Kumar, 1989; Majumdar & Mooij, 2012; Morarji, 2014; Scrase, 1993). Some of these studies show how “success” is associated with white-collar work and how “development” is treated as synonymous with urban modernity. But the ways that educated youth in this chapter sought to leverage the value of their credentials offers a counterpoint to these narratives. All the participants in this chapter were using their skills and knowledges to support villages and neighbourhoods in Pauri Garhwal District. At times, for example, young people volunteered alongside non-government organisations (NGOs) which were working in villages to combat issues such as alcoholism. At other times, educated youth organised collectively to address a problem which directly affected them. The most common strategy which educated youth deployed in their own villages and homes was tutoring young children. In each of these ways, young men were drawing on their credentials to try and affect social change in the Pauri Garhwal District.

Becoming educated had not alienated young men from rural contexts but had enabled some of them to develop linkages with NGOs which operate in Pauri Garhwal. These NGOs were locally registered and organised, and were usually quite small operations. In an immediate and practical sense, college often served as a site which connected youth with NGOs. Twenty-four young men I interviewed said they had been involved with an NGO at some time during their degree. For example, six participants joined a larger group of volunteers from their college to be part of a program a local medical clinic was organising. The program was concerned with addressing the problem of alcoholism in villages in Pauri Garhwal, which has been an enduring

social problem in the region (Pathak, 2001). Young people were tasked with going to villages within the vicinity of Pauri Town and speaking to villagers about how or whether this issue affects them. The initial stage of this project was concerned with collecting personal stories about how people were affected so that the NGO could present their evidence to local government offices. The students said that this kind of evidence was needed to combat a sense of apathy towards what is a well-documented problem.

Volunteering with NGOs enabled educated young men to use their skills in ways that they said would help marginalised people who lived in villages. The six young men I interviewed about the project to address alcoholism, for example, took pride in the fact that the medical clinic approached the college and that they were considered suitable volunteers. Anant, a twenty-two year-old Sociology student, was one of those involved. He described his involvement like this:

[The medical clinic] came to the college and spoke about what they are doing [an alcohol prevention program]. Straight away I thought it was very important, this is a big problem in our area. I joined with two of my friends also. A couple of days after we went to the clinic to get the surveys. When we got there they were very happy we were going this work.

I interviewed Ashish, a friend of Anant's, about the process of going to villages to complete the survey. He said it was mainly women with whom he spoke and that it was exclusively men who had issues with alcoholism. He reported that people were grateful they were trying to do something about this issue, and Ashish said villagers "needed their help." Far from feeling as though their skills and knowledges are worthless in rural settings, Anant's and Ashish's viewpoints demonstrate how they thought their skills were valued by villagers.

This sentiment was shared by other young men who volunteered alongside NGOs. For example, seven young men worked in a “poor village” from where most men of working age had migrated. One young man said he went to that village and supported the elderly by “talking with them” and “doing odd jobs” they needed assistance with. This occasionally involved working to maintain fields which elderly residents could not do of their own accord. Others volunteered with NGOs which assisted young children in villages with their schoolwork. Some of those who did this said it was an important task because many older people who lived in villages had not completed schooling, and so had only a limited capacity to assist young children with their studies. Still others worked on “environmental issues” and staged clean-ups in Pauri Town a few times per year. Each of these activities speak to how educated young men attempted to offer a valuable contribution to others living in Pauri Garhwal, much more so than a sense of worthlessness or despondency.

Formal education had also given some young people the capacity and confidence to develop NGOs of their own. Four friends set up an NGO which they said was about “helping the poor” and conceived of this as “social work.” They went to two villages near Pauri Town and tried to assist young children with education and elderly people with accessing healthcare. On one occasion, for example, they helped one elderly woman from a village access a hospital in Pauri Town. It was not just physically accessing the hospital that was difficult for this woman. One of the friends explained that the elderly woman had initially been resistant to go to the hospital because she thought that hospitals were “where you go to die.” But the young men convinced her that attending the hospital offered her the best chance of recovery. They were proud of the fact that they had convinced her to go to the hospital and that they were able to assist in getting her there. The significance of being educated in this exchange was it that these young men said that it meant they were listened to more than they might otherwise have

been. But they did not know whether the woman had in fact recovered; because at the time of fieldwork they had stopped this kind of work.

Two brothers, however, were running an NGO at the time of fieldwork. Mayank was in the final year of an Economics degree, and he had set up an NGO with his older brother, Hemu. Hemu lived in New Delhi for three years but had been unable to find secure work. When he returned to Pauri in 2015, the two brothers set up their NGO with the explicit aim of creating “development” (using the English word). Setting up this NGO did not require much economic capital. But it did involve a kind of competence for navigating a complex bureaucratic terrain, and as Hemu said, a “genuine desire for helping people.” Hemu said that it took some time before the NGO began operating because the local government office where they had to register it seemed to want to make it difficult. He said that the government officials wanted to interview the prospective board members even though this was not outlined as a requirement by law. The two brothers suspected this may have been a way of the office leveraging bribes. When I conducted fieldwork, the brothers were unsure if their NGO was formally registered, but they commenced operating anyway.

As an initial project they decided to run a small seminar outlining a program for “waste management” in four villages which they said were polluted. By this they meant that there was a large build-up of household waste which was potentially hazardous. The initial seminar was intended to outline the detrimental impacts of depositing waste in rivers. It was also going to propose a collective strategy for waste disposal that could be organised collectively among villagers. In this way, Hemu and Mayank argued that villagers would be able to dispose of their waste in ways that would not affect the natural environment in adverse ways. If successful, the project would also create a small number of employment opportunities which would be paid for by collecting a small levy from households. But the brothers encountered many difficulties. Some of their initial seminars did not attract a single attendee. Mayank was perplexed at this

and said that some villages were short-sighted. He said that in hindsight “setting up the NGO was the easy part,” and that doing the work was much harder because it requires “commitment to the villagers no matter what.” Hemu, by contrast, said that the brothers needed to think more about why villagers did not attend and to make it easier for them to do so. In spite of these difficulties, their strategies demonstrate how educated youth were attempting to draw on their skills and competencies in ways that might have positive implications for rural settings.

Some educated youth harnessed a sense of confidence to address problems in more immediate ways. In some instances, they had developed capacities to engage productively with people in positions of relative power in Pauri Garhwal. For example, two friends named Ranbeer and Arshad, were having difficulty with the electricity connection in some of their classrooms at college. The lights did not work properly, and so they were compelled to work in classrooms which were not always well lit. This became a problem for them when they had a class in a Chemistry laboratory and needed to work with materials which were potentially dangerous. Ranbeer and Arshad became frustrated and registered a complaint with their teacher. But the following week the problem had not been resolved. They then went to the Principal of the college who said he would investigate the issue. After three weeks the electricity had not been restored and the two friends organised for students in their class to boycott classes in rooms where the electricity was not working. Ranbeer reflected on this with good humour:

...we did not want to cause a disruption. We are serious about our studies, that's why we wanted the lights to work. But when we said we wouldn't go to class until the lights are working, there were lots of people willing to join in (laughs). We went to the quadrangle and said we could not do our work. The Principal met us...he knew we were good students...and then he said he would get the problem fixed.

Ranbeer and Arshad took pride in the fact that the problem was resolved the following day. But they also said it was an example of how educated youth could get things done, at the same time as they did not put anybody offside in the process. As with the young people's strategies in Jeffrey and Dyson's (2018) study, notions of resistance were markedly absent from how Ranbeer and Arshad made sense of their practices. Instead, educated youth emphasised how they could strategically negotiate hierarchies in their college administration.

The most common way educated youth offered a "service" to their villages was tutoring younger children, particularly one's immediate family. Like Ramesh, almost all young men reported having tutored younger children at some stage, with most doing it on a somewhat regular basis. Eight of the 23 young men who lived in villages near Pauri Town also ran more formalised tuition classes, through which they sought to make a small income.

Many of those who ran tuition classes often spoke quite emphatically about how tutoring offers a service to others. For example, one young man named Deepak said that:

Most afternoons I teach four or five children. When they are older, they will also share that knowledge with other people. So very quickly more people in my village will become educated...I care for my village, my elders, the children. All the things I can teach them will be useful in some way...

Similarly, another young man, named Karan, said that:

Education challenges how we think...It's possible to shift our thinking at college. But if we don't not teach the little ones, then the benefits will be only for myself. I don't think like this, it's no use. I think 'how can everybody get some benefit here [in my village]?'

Some young men were much less enthusiastic about tutoring children. One young man, named Manish, said that he was compelled to do it by his father:

My father thinks that when I come home from college that I am doing nothing. All the time he says ‘why are you just sitting here, doing nothing?’ He said that if I want to do something useful then I should teach Prabhu [his younger brother]. But Prabhu does not want to do his studies either. Still I do it so and he learns...

Even though Manish was much less enthusiastic about tutoring than Deepak and Karan, in both instances, there was a conviction that it would provide a positive service to young children in villages. Manish’s father’s admonishment implied that by he would be making himself useful by drawing on his credentials and sharing his knowledge. Moreover, even though young men like Deepak and Karan did not always make the benefits to others clear, their responses show that they did not consider themselves alienated from rural contexts. They had skills which they said could fruitfully be shared with others.

The strategies of the young men in this section offer a counterpoint to the more common argument that educated youth are unable to leverage the value of their credentials in rural settings (Froerer, 2011; Jakimow, 2016; Morarji, 2014). But these studies do not always consider the ways that educated youth respond to these processes. My argument is not to deny the difficulties that educated youth face in Pauri Garhwal. Those who attempted to create positive social change encountered several difficulties. Moreover, many youth conceded that they may have to migrate to the plains in the future. But the insights provided above nevertheless show how educated youth were attempting to deploy their skills to the benefit of villages.

8.4 Changing rural space and wanting rural futures

In many parts of the Global South, neoliberal development has been accompanied by a powerful set of discourses which depict rural space as a site in which youth do not want to be

(Schut, 2019; Li, 2010). Some scholars have argued that these discourses contribute to a discursive erasure of rural space and rural livelihoods (Li, 2010; Lukose, 2009; Morarji, 2014). Other scholars argue that they convey a sense that rural space must be “left behind” if young people want to progress (Mwaura, 2017; Schut, 2019). Indeed, salient discourses depict the Uttarakhand hills as lacking and inferior, or in need of intervention, and many young people have migrated elsewhere (Galvin, 2013; Klenk, 2010; Mathur, 2015). A key feature of these discourses is that rural space is almost always represented as static and unchanging (Woods, 2011). But the participants in this chapter argued otherwise. Young men commonly said that they needed to “fix” problems such as inadequate education and employment opportunities. They also said that they would prefer to remain in their villages if it were feasible to do so. Rural space for these young men was at once dynamic and desirable.

Many young men were attempting to articulate alternative representations of Pauri Garhal and their villages in particular. Specifically, they emphasised their capacity to change rural space. All of the young men in this chapter said that a central concern of theirs was ensuring there were suitable employment opportunities in proximity to their homes, and often explained how they were trying to create them. Mayank, for example, spoke quite emphatically about what he said were promising activities among educated young people:

What we need is work here, jobs...That's why we set up our NGO, another friend is making an organic farm near his village. There are lots of things to do...tourism, homestays in the village...The biggest problem in Pauri, all of the hills, is migration. If there is something to do here then we will not migrate.

While Mayank conceded that there were many difficulties for youth living in villages, he said there were multiple ways that young people could attempt to forge livelihoods within them and across Pauri Garhwal more generally. He also argued that many other youth aspire to rural

futures and only migrate because they are compelled to do so. He said that “*pahari log* lose their way in the city” and that they “are always looking for a reason to come home.” In contrast to what scholars have argued in other parts of South Asia (Ali, 2007; Bal, 2014), these comments offered little evidence of youth feeling constricted in their villages or having an overriding desire to move elsewhere.

Mayank’s perspectives were shared by other young men in this chapter. Rurality for some of these young men was in the midst of a profound period of social change, and there were opportunities for youth to harness that change in positive ways. One young man said that he thinks more jobs will “come to the area” as increasing numbers of young people become educated. He said that:

The next generation will have new ideas from us, and then after that again they will have new ideas. So there will be lots of change from now...people won’t be doing all the same things...

Another young man said that organic agriculture was a growing business in Uttarakhand. Specifically, he said that there is increasing demand for organic produce among middle class consumers in Dehradun and large metropolitan cities. While agriculture has long been organic and many parts of Pauri Garhwal, this participant said that educated youth would be able to serve as a conduit for linking farmers’ produce with a new customer base in the plains. He said that educated youth knew how to engage with these customers in cities like Dehradun and would be able to convince them of the value of such produce. He alluded to how young people could develop a kind of business infrastructure which could potentially mean much greater profits than farmers had been able to procure in the past (cf. Mwaura, 2017). In late 2019, this young man was selling organic produce from Pauri Garhwal in several stores in Dehradun. He lived in a village and send his produce to the city via taxi whenever there was an order. Such

strategies support Kumar's (2016) suggestion that a "new rurality" is emerging in some parts of South Asia. They also resonate with recent studies that show how education, technological advances and new forms of connectivity have some rural youth to configure new social and economic opportunities (Chakraborty, 2018; Joshi, 2015; Mwaura, 2017).

Most young men readily accepted the difficulties they faced as they attempted to create change in their villages. I discuss the frustrations young men were having and their social implications in greater detail below. Yet notwithstanding these viewpoints, most young men were relatively optimistic about what the future entailed. This optimism persisted even though most participants could not generate an income. Here there are resonances with how the rural youth Berckmoes and White's (2016, p.308) study in Burundi "adopted strategies not necessarily as direct solutions to their predicaments but rather as small steps towards the opening up of future possibilities." It was these possibilities that my participants emphasised. For example, Varun, a twenty year-old student who ran tuition classes in his home twice a week, argued that:

Varun: Children come to my house to learn, their parents send them...When they send their children [to my home] they know...I expect them to work hard, I have rules. If they can learn from me, then the future will be different for them.

AD: How will the future be different?

Varun: I don't know...no one can say. But think what will happen if they do not work hard at their studies? They will not get a job, they will work in the fields only. There will be no change.

For Varun, tutoring was a means of spreading the benefits of his own education and drawing on these to affect incremental change in his village. He said that job opportunities might emerge over time and that more people would attempt to create jobs that did not entail working in the

fields. Another young man said that “in the future I will live here with my family. I will work someplace, probably in Pauri Town, and I will not have to leave.”

Even though they did not always explicitly identify what the benefits might be, their strategies had important social implications. Indeed, some of the young people in this chapter had managed to create modes of realising a sense of progress without migrating away (cf. Fioratta, 2015). Twenty-eight participants said that their position as educated youth had changed how they thought they were viewed by others in their villages and neighbourhoods. In this sense they were challenging depictions of the Uttarakhand hills as lacking social opportunities (Mathur, 2015). Contrary to these discourses, Ramesh expanded on how he had gained a sense of respect when we spoke in greater detail about tutoring students. He noted how people viewed him differently in his village:

Not so long ago we were kids in the fields, throwing stones and playing games. After school we would muck around for hours and our parents would scold us...But these days we go to college in the day and return home. Usually my mother will give me some food and some children will be in my home. As soon as I walk in the children stop speaking...it is quiet.

Ramesh’s comments illustrate his own transition from being a child in his village, to being able to command respect of children. He argued that the way children fell silent in his presence was a sign of his newfound status as an educated youth.

These young men were also creating ways of repositioning themselves in social hierarchies. Varun, for example, said that people in his village had started to ask for his opinion concerning local village affairs. He cited an example of being asked to address a dispute about the allocation of funds to build a toilet block in his village. Varun said that if he stayed in his village then eventually he would be a village “leader” – by which he meant being in a position

to make important decisions on other villagers' behalf. Similarly, other young men said that they could affect change in their villages by setting a good example that others might follow. For example, Karan, said that:

When I first went to college, I saw my teacher and he was wearing a collared shirt and nice pants. Straight away I thought 'this is how I want to be.' So over the years you have many teachers and you can learn the things from each and everyone of them...Nowadays my mother tells me that I am the one setting a good example. She says that children see me and they admire me. So that is the effect in that sense. People slowly change their ways over time...

Thus, some young men said that their strategies might contribute to a subtle change to rural space over time. In a similar vein to some of the young men in Jeffrey et al.'s (2008) study, these young men were setting an example so as to "transform the wider atmosphere (*mahaul*) of their home and neighbourhood" (Jeffrey et al., 2008, p.72; Dyson, 2019a).

All of the young men in this chapter were sampled because they reported a desire to live in rural settings. This sampling technique was primarily used to investigate the ways that "non-migrants" sought to challenge their marginality. It also helped me garner insights into how youth engaged with derogatory depictions of rural space. With this in mind, what was striking was how most young men said that they could change their villages in positive ways. They made this argument by alluding to the possibilities of a "new rurality" (Kumar, 2016) in which young people played a vital role. Rural space did not have to be left behind in order to progress. Instead, participants said they could potentially create jobs, acquire a sense of respect and reposition themselves within social hierarchies in Pauri Garhwal. The youth in this chapter did not aspire to futures in large metropolitan centres (cf. Jeffrey, 2010).

In many ways, participants' strategies resonated with those in Koskimaki's (2016) study, who were attempting to foster "development" in various locations across the Uttarakhand hills. Some of Koskimaki's (2016) participants created a sense of collective endeavour by spreading awareness about pressing social issues. But less clear in Koskimaki's (2016) analysis is how these processes contributed to emerging social divisions. Many participants in this chapter disagreed about the viability of their strategies in the longer term. Making a financial contribution to their households was a key concern among all young men. Some young men suggested that without earning enough money, they would have to migrate to the plains. The manner in which they made sense of these difficulties had important social implications.

8.5 Educated superiority

Although young men often emphasised how their strategies would benefit others and noted their capacity to forge positive change, their strategies worked to reinscribe social differences. Indeed, a sense of educated distinction was threaded through how young men made sense of their activities (Jaju, 2018; Jeffrey, 2010; Jeffrey et al., 2008). Even though education had not alienated them from village contexts generally, some participants attempted to consolidate their position as educated people by distancing themselves from forms of manual labour. For example, during one interview, I asked one Engineering student whether he would work in agriculture if he was unable to find a job directly related to his degree. He replied that:

For nearly four years I have been studying...going to college and taking examinations.

I've learned quite a lot in that time. I don't think I would be of any use in the fields...no,

I wouldn't work with my hands (*mai apne hathon se kaam nahin karoonga*).

Another student who was studying Political Science said quite emphatically that:

Ever since I was a kid all I wanted was to work in an office (*daphtar ka kaam*). I've studied too hard now to finally say 'okay, I will work in the fields only.'

For these young men and others I interviewed, education had equipped them with skills and knowledges which did not prime them for forms of manual labour. Respondents did not always say that their skills were superior to those of uneducated people, but their refusal to work with their hands worked to constitute social and cultural boundaries.

Notions of educated distinction were also reproduced in more subtle ways. In their emphasis on creating change in villages, most participants did not explicitly distance themselves from forms of manual labour but said they could use their skills to make sectors such as agriculture more profitable. During one interview, for example, I asked a young man named Rahul if he would consider a future working in the fields. He said that he could not work "all day in the fields" but said he would be able to offer valuable skills to assist those who did. He also said that if he were to work in the fields he would have a bigger interest in making sure that the work of labourers is more adequately remunerated. Importantly, he thought he had the skills to make that happen. He said that:

Most people are growing things, rice, for themselves. If there is any left they will take it to the market...get some small price. If there is more rice, most of the time they would sell to a middleman, he would say 'this is the price' and then they give the rice. But in the market he is selling it for more than double the price! I can say to him [the middleman] we will sell it to you for this much [a bigger price]...

Rahul did not suggest that villages needed to move away from agricultural production entirely but instead suggested that educated people could help farmers get more money for their work. Here there were resonances with how the youth in Mwaura's (2017) study in rural Kenya attempted to reconcile their status as educated people with the prospect of rural futures by

positioning themselves as “businessmen.” While these kinds of responses appeared well-meaning, the reproduced notions of educated superiority by insisting on the skills of educated people, downplaying farmers’ skillsets – which have helped sustain agricultural livelihoods for multiple generations – and obscuring the diversity of their changing practices.

Yet in line with Rahul’s comments, notions of educated superiority were threaded throughout young men’s viewpoints. Some young men said that this was because they were able to situate social issues in a broader context. Mayank, for example, said he first thought about developing an NGO which addresses environmental management through his “exposure” at college. He said that he was able to link local issues with what was going on “outside.” He stated that educated people:

Sit examinations, read books and study for our classes. This broadens the mind. We don’t just think about what is happening in our village only, but we think about what is happening everywhere. Each day I read the newspaper. I can see what is going on and think about the problems.

A similar argument was offered by Anant, who tutored children two days per week in his family home. He said that educated people were better able to recognise the need for change and more forcefully bring it about. He said that when the children he tutored grow up they will be able to see that:

...there is a need to change from the old ways...they’ll have everything they need to know to solve problems, to say to the government ‘this is what we need’ or ‘you have not done this and that.’”

Another young man said that by tutoring children more social cohesion would emerge because educated people “do not quarrel, they think before they act.” These arguments cohered with other young men’s responses, who suggested that educated youth would lead the way and that

others would then follow. During one interview, a Political Science student named Manjeet, for example, stated that:

We love the mountains and we want to prosper here...But nowadays everybody has different skills...Andrew, you would not say to the man working in the fields to speak on the television...

AD: But even if people have different skills, how might that lead to positive change? Couldn't things stay the same?

Manjeet: No! Once we have become educated we can shine a light and say 'this is what we need to do.' People will realise that we can show them a new path...

For many participants, change would occur because educated youth would pave the way for others. In this way, the agency of uneducated people was conceptualised by participants in narrow ways and was considered much less potent than their own.

In a similar vein, some educated young men said that they could bring about change because they were able to make more effective claims upon the state. Six young men, for example, said that corruption persisted in Pauri Garhwal because there was not sufficient number of educated people within it. They argued that educated people were in a stronger position to resist paying bribes and could report corrupt officials to higher authorities. Uneducated people, by contrast, were so to be easily manipulated and were given to make irrational and short-sighted choices. One of these young men described how he thought some villagers were taken advantage of during local political elections:

Every time there is an election we hear from the politicians...that is the only time [we hear from them]. Some politicians come in and they say 'we will fix this, we will fix that.' Most of the time they don't fix anything...nothing changes. The biggest problem

is that if one politician comes through and says ‘if you vote for me I will give everybody a bottle of alcohol.’ then everybody votes for him. That is the mindset.

In line with other studies, a clear sense of “distinction” was woven throughout how these young men made sense of what it meant to be educated (Jaju, 2018; Jeffrey, 2010; Dyson, 2019b). However, a distinct feature of this study was that the “deeply ingrained nature of educated superiority” which punctuated young men’s accounts of educated difference in Jeffrey et al.’s (2004, p.970) study in rural Uttar Pradesh, coexisted with a sense in which educated young men wanted to anchor themselves in the region and nurture ties with others who lived nearby.

8.6 Reproducing derogatory representations of Pauri Garhwal

Notions of educated difference and these depictions of villagers revealed tensions and contradictions in the ways that youth represented spaces in Pauri Garhwal. Even though all participants wanted to remain in Pauri Garhwal, they nevertheless said that there were difficulties with living in the area. As participants explained their frustrations, some of them contributed to a deficit discourse where spaces in the Uttarakhand hills are defined by what they do not have (Mathur, 2015). A typical comment came from Rahul, who, referring to his village, said that: “Most of the time we like this place because there is peace. But sometimes you realise that there is nothing to do, there is nothing here.” Another young man said that “my village is beautiful” but it was hard to live there because “if you need even the smallest thing, some medicine, you have to go outside.” These criticisms were not confined to villages alone. Others pointed toward the “lack” of facilities and good quality institutions in Pauri Town itself, such as hospitals, schools and colleges. These viewpoints paired with countless conversations I had with participants who resented Pauri Town’s relative isolation. Taken together,

participants' viewpoints registered spaces in Pauri Garhwal as inferior to urban places "outside" (Morarji, 2014), and worked to define villages by what they did not have.

A common criticism of Pauri Town was that it lacked good quality institutions and effective governance. Nineteen students said that their classes did not run when they were scheduled, others reported instances of having long waiting times in hospitals and government offices. Participants' most common criticism of government institutions in Pauri Town was corruption. Each participant mentioned corruption during interviews and discussions about what was inhibiting "development." A twenty year old Political Science student named Dinesh, for example, argued that:

Here in each and every [government] office there is corruption. If you go to an office for anything, to fill the forms, to get a driver's licence, you have to pay bribes. Okay, most of the time these bribes might be very small, fifty rupees. But it is every time...

Dinesh and other young men argued that corruption stifled any hope of positive change because money was going "into the pockets" of government workers and out of the hands of those who needed it. Similarly, Ramesh said that because of corruption "everything flows out of the hills," meaning finances, resources and the opportunities they may have entailed. By circulating and sharing these kinds of stories, young men were reproducing powerful narratives which register spaces in the Uttarakhand hills as lacking bureaucratic rigour and oversight (Mathur, 2015), and characterised by a sense of deprivation and loss (Fiol, 2008; Moller, 2000).

Although young men sometimes became quite animated when they were discussing problems in Pauri Town and their villages, they tended to be more introspective when they were discussing what the region lacked for themselves on a more personal level. While youth were sometimes able to acquire a measure of respect through the kinds of practices described in the previous sections, most young men said they would not be able to meet markers of

adulthood. For example, most young men said that they would not be able to become financially independent without migrating to the plains for work. A sense of familial obligation and a desire to “give back” to one’s family was a common theme when we discussed young men’s prospects. This was particularly the case for four young men who were the eldest sons in their family. There was an expectation that they support their parents in old age and that they help their younger siblings gain independence. Anant, for example, tutored children on an informal basis in his village. He enjoyed tutoring but was not sure if it was viable in the longer term. He was considering moving to Dehradun and opening a private tuition centre because he thought that would offer a better chance of making money. Anant stated that:

I want a family and children, to give back to my parents, but here in my village I cannot do that. If I stay here, it will be very hard...

Anant’s friend, Ashish, was also the oldest son in his household. He volunteered with an NGO which sought to do “social work” in villages, such as programs to prevent alcoholism. He was unsure if he would be able to continue to do this work in the future. He said that:

When I was young all I wanted to do was move to the city, I thought about it all the time. Then as I got older I thought ‘actually Pauri Town is where I want to live.’ So I made the decision. That’s why I’m going here and there talking with the people in villages, helping them. I want to stay here. But here there is no work for us, nothing to do. I am thinking that if I want to succeed I should move away...

Despite their attempts at working to create social change, these comments constructed Pauri Town and villages as sites of constraint. In this sense, most young men represented their villages in ways that were sometimes contradictory. On the one hand, young men were quite optimistic about their capacity to create change in their villages and wanted to remain within them. Yet on the other hand, they vented their frustrations at living outside of centres of

employment and productivity. Rural space was at once desirable and limiting for these young men.

Most participants also expressed a desire to engage in social opportunities that were not available in Pauri Town or their villages. While they recognised that they might not find suitable work in the plains, they thought they would certainly have more enjoyable ways to spend their free time. One afternoon, for example, I was conducting a group interview in a tea stall with three friends who were making light of their predicament. One of the young men, Arjun, said “Okay I can migrate, I will not find an office [job], but I can still go to the mall and meet girls.” With this prompt another of the friends, Ajay, told a story about his cousin who lives in Dehradun and who developed a romantic relationship with a young woman in the city. He emphasised how easy it was for this young man to find a “love interest”:

...only three days he had been in Dehradun. His friend said to him ‘come to the cinema’ on Friday. A whole group of them went, girls and guys. He said he spoke to one girl and straight away they became friends. Now he sees her almost every weekend! He says they are going for scooty rides up to Mussoorie [a nearby Hill station], stopping and taking photos.

At this point Arjun interrupted:

But Andrew look at us. We are here, sitting with our friends, watching movies on just our mobile phones [laughs]. I cannot say ‘hey Ajay, do you want to go to the cinema with me?’

Jokes like these were quite common among young men. They revealed the ways that Pauri Town and villages were subordinated to urban places “outside.” In this instance, the city was a site of romantic love and new experiences. The village, by contrast, was a site of homosociality and technological inferiority. In other instances, young men spoke of the cities as sites where

it was possible to work “in an office only” and to “enjoy the A/C [air conditioning].” Indeed, the city offered scope for forms of middle class employment much more so than Pauri Town and villages, the latter of which young men sometimes referred to as a place of hardship and manual labour. Even though these young men did not want to migrate and were actively working toward change, there was a sense that the places they lived within might always lack opportunities that were available elsewhere.

A collection of recent studies has shown how youth in Uttarakhand are mediators of new social and cultural forms (Charakaborty, 2018; Joshi, 2015; Koskimaki, 2017). These studies highlight how a new set of knowledges, skills and mobility practices have enabled some youth to forge new opportunities in the Uttarakhand hills (Dyson, 2019a). These analyses cohere with many aspects of how the young men in this chapter understood their practices. Young men were quite optimistic about their capacity to create change and said that their credentials put them in a strong position to do so.

Yet despite this, young men also understood their villages and homes as sites of struggle and hardship (Koskimaki, 2016, 2017). They sometimes resented the distance of their villages from urban centres and often vented their frustrations at what their villages lacked. The repetition and circulation of these anecdotes is crucial for how spaces within the Uttarakhand hills are reproduced as a site of struggle, hardship and isolation (Koskimaki, 2017; Koskimaki & Upadhyay, 2017). These processes have quite tangible effects on the Uttarakhand hills. Mathur’s (2015) study shows how the discursive production of Gopeshwar as a “remote” location, for example, has accentuated divides between the plains by reaffirming it as a site which should be “escaped” from and “left behind.” This chapter’s findings both support and complicate these insights. Even though young men wanted rural futures and attempted to forge social change, all participants resented the “lack” of good quality institutions and facilities in the proximity to their villages, and were very critical of institutions in Pauri Town.

8.7 Conclusions

This chapter has examined how some youth in Pauri Garhwal were attempting to leverage the value of their education in rural settings. It has also shown how young men reproduced notions of educated superiority and how they reproduced derogatory depiction of spaces within Pauri Garhwal. These young men were in the final year of their studies and were considering how they might spend their futures. Social and economic changes across Pauri Garhwal are such that many youth have migrated and there are very few jobs available in proximity to their homes. But these young men were drawing on their credentials to develop an array of practices which they intended to support their villages. Some young men volunteered with NGOs and engaged in social work, and most participants tutored young children in their villages. In each of these ways young men emphasised that they wanted to foster social change and were highlighting the malleability and dynamism of rural space. Nevertheless, they also reproduced notions of educated superiority and reproduced Pauri Garhwal as a site of backwardness and inferiority. By elaborating these points, this chapter makes two main contributions to debates about youth and education in the Global South.

The first theoretical contribution is to show how tertiary education had not alienated young men from their villages and homes but had provided scope for them to support rural spaces in new ways. Young men devised strategies to support villages including working alongside NGOs, spontaneously creating change and tutoring children in which their educational credentials were central. In making this argument, this chapter unsettles the more common argument that tertiary education promotes knowledges and aspirations which are tied to urban middle-class lifestyles (Morarji, 2014; Lukose, 2009; Scrase, 1993). It also offers a counterpoint to studies that argue that tertiary educated youth are often alienated from village

contexts (Froerer, 2014; Jeffrey et al. 2008; Punch, 2015). Instead, informants used their status as educated people to more fully anchor themselves in the region and to nurture social ties with others who lived nearby (Dyson, 2019a; Jeffrey and Dyson, 2014).

This contribution also bolsters recent debates about how educated young people are reconfiguring rural space across the Global South (Chakraborty, 2018; Jeffrey and Young, 2012; Kumar, 2016; Mwaura, 2017). Instead of thinking about rural spaces as places youth do not want to be (Li, 2010; Schut, 2019), these young men emphasised how they could help reconfigure it so that they might have productive futures (Berckmoes and White, 2016; Mwaura, 2017). These strategies are of added significance in Uttarakhand where constructions of the Hill Districts as “remote” continue to undermine them, and where the state and central governments have made few attempts to foster employment opportunities (Koskimaki, 2017; Mathur, 2015). Participants discussed the difficulties they have had in this process. But in a similar vein to Berckmoes and White’s (2016, p.308) study of youth in rural Burundi, my informants created strategies that might open up future possibilities. In these senses it might be argued that a “new rurality” (Kumar, 2016) was emerging wherein youth were transforming rural economies, developing new skillsets and harnessing opportunities that social and economic changes across India have entailed.

Yet the transformative potential of their strategies was limited. The second contribution of this chapter is to illuminate the ways that young men’s practices reproduced axes of social difference and perpetuated understandings of Pauri Garhwal as a site of “backwardness.” Notions of educated superiority were threaded throughout many of the strategies (Jaju, 2018; Jeffrey et al. 2008; Jeffrey, 2010). Participants regularly emphasised the skillsets of educated people and highlighted their capacity for making change. Yet they tended to position uneducated people as beneficiaries or “recipients” of their interventions and articulated fewer strategies for them to create productive social change of their own accord. Secondly, young

men sometimes vented their frustrations about the hardships of living in the region. Even as they tried to create change in Pauri Garhwal, they tended to reproduce a derogatory narrative whereby the Uttarakhand hills were defined by what they did not have (Klenk, 2010; Mathur, 2015). Young men pointed out that there was a severe lack of facilities such as healthcare and education which were available elsewhere. They considered the institutions that were available in Pauri Town as vastly inferior to those in the plains. They also resented the extent of corruption in the region. Finally, they suggested that few opportunities to realise dominant visions of masculine success. Therefore, at the same time as they emphasised their capacity for creating change, young men said they felt restricted because the hills offered few opportunities for social and economic gain.

The findings in this chapter help develop the main arguments of this thesis, that educated youth were attempting to realise social and material gain without compromising their social affiliations and ties. By articulating this strategic positioning, young men were attempting to leave open the possibility of both rural and urban futures. This chapter develops this argument by showing how educated youth were attempting to create positive changes that they said would benefit others. In this sense, they were attempting to stand out in ways that might earn them respect among their peers. Moreover, even though these youth were intent on remaining within Pauri Garhwal, by insisting on their position and skills as educated people they left open the possibility of moving to the city in the future.

The research also sought to investigate how young people made sense of derogatory depictions of rural space, and whether or not they sought to challenge those depictions. The findings in this chapter suggest that they both challenged and reproduced these representations in quite strategic ways. Indeed, it was arguably because educated young men perceived rural spaces as in need of intervention (Li, 2010), that they were able to position themselves as

harbingers of social change. This is an argument that I develop more fully toward the end of the following chapter.

Chapter Nine. Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

The main aim of this thesis was to examine the ways that educated youth grappled with unemployment. When I set out to investigate the strategies of young men, I was mindful that an analysis of educated unemployment in Dehradun would only be partial without foregrounding the experiences of migrants. I was interested in how rural-urban mobility was bound up with their attempts to realise social and economic gain, and whether young men might be able to use mobility as a kind of resource. Yet focusing on the experiences of migrants generated questions about the strategies of those who “remain.” If movement is indeed central to how youth attempt to realise social mobility, this raises questions about how “non-migrants” make sense of not moving away. These broad starting points formed the main avenues of investigation which the empirical chapters have pursued. In Chapter Five, I showed how migrants attempted to “stand out” as they moved between rural and urban areas so as to realise status and respect. In Chapter Six, I showed how educated youth drew on their skills and competencies to create work in the private education sector. In Chapter Seven, I showed how youth who hung out at Bhandari Infotech developed ways of registering their productivity and demonstrating it to others. And finally, in Chapter Eight, I showed how youth were attempting to draw upon their credentials to create social change in Pauri Garhwal.

This concluding chapter draws these empirical findings together to elaborate the main theoretical contributions of this thesis. The next three sections unpack the main argument to outline how it advances debates about youth, education and migration. After doing so, this chapter discusses some ideas for further research, before concluding with some final remarks.

9.2 Main theoretical contributions

9.2.1 Articulating a strategic positioning: straddling the insights of Bourdieu and Willis

The first theoretical contribution of this thesis is to advance a framework for illuminating the contradictory effects of formal education. Bourdieu's (1984) formulation of various capitals, and his theoretical concepts of the habitus and field provide indispensable starting points for doing so. Each of the empirical chapters have demonstrated how young men drew upon their credentials to generate social, cultural and economic capital. Many young men comported themselves with a sense of educated distinction. Those who created work for themselves, for example, always dressed in a business shirt and pants, which was quite unlike how students and those who worked in manual occupations presented themselves. Youth who remained in villages and Pauri Town similarly sought to distance themselves from work commonly undertaken by uneducated people, such as manual labour. While young men had spent time acquiring knowledges about how to conduct themselves the "correct way" in certain "fields," they were mindful of which "fields" to avoid. Therefore, there were potent spatial dimensions to how young men performed educated masculinities (cf. Chowdhry, 2005). Most participants were very mindful of not spending time in places where uneducated people were said to congregate. They were mindful too of not "lazing about" and often emphasised that they were busy and that they had "work to do."

Yet a main contribution of this thesis is to foreground the agency of marginalised youth and to demonstrate how they generate capitals. Bourdieu tended to downplay the agency of marginalised social groups and distracted attention away from the diverse ways that they contend their hardship. From his perspective, dominant social groups defined the "rules of the game" and subordinate social groups could only ever be one step behind them. Subordinated groups often seek to "acquire" capitals but those will be delegitimised by dominant groups when they do so. This is a perspective borne out in several analyses of the plight of the lower middle classes in India and elsewhere (Boyle, 2018; Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2009; Fernandes, 2006; Lopes, 2017). Other analyses have drawn on Bourdieu's insights to show

how the lower classes and castes are marginalised in educational settings (Majumdar & Mooij, 2012; Scrase, 1993; Thapan, 2014). Indeed, Bourdieu's (1984) emphasis on the dynamism of middle class agency has encouraged a scholarly focus on how advantage is reproduced more so than how it is resisted. But I have shown how educated youth were able to generate and acquire capitals in ways that challenged their marginalisation, at the same time as they reinscribed social differences.

In attending to the agency of marginalised groups, my work takes leads from Willis' (1981) classic study of working class youth at secondary school in the United Kingdom. The youth in his study devised several potentially transgressive strategies for changing their class position. Willis' (1981) termed these transgressive strategies "penetrations" because of the ways they could potentially undermine the legitimacy of dominant culture. The strategies of some of my participants might be read in the same way; such as how the youth who hung out at Bhandari Infotech resisted discourses which denigrate "non-migrants," or how those who were excluded from secure forms of employment used their skills to create work of their own. But a central aspect of Willis' (1981) theoretical contribution was illuminating how working class youths' resistance lent itself to the reproduction of their own marginality. Indeed, his participants developed masculine youth cultures which ultimately primed themselves for blue collar jobs. Yet centring resistance does not fully square with the strategies of youth in this study. This is because young men were often attempting to acquire skills and competencies which registered their membership in the middle class. For this reason, my findings encourage a theory of social reproduction which couples Bourdieu's (1984, 1990) attention to how marginalised groups attempt to acquire dominant capitals, with Willis' (1981) emphasis on the creative ways they might deploy them.

By advancing this theoretical framework, this thesis has demonstrated how educated youth are sometimes able to realise social and material gain despite being excluded from formal

employment. In doing so, my work has built upon a recent set of studies in South Asia that underscore the contradictory effects of formal education (Dyson, 2019b; Froerer, 2014; Jaju, 2018; Jakimow, 2016; Jeffrey, 2010; Jeffrey et al., 2008). A pertinent emphasis within these studies is that youth often reinscribe social inequalities as they perform educated masculinities (Jeffrey et al., 2008). This argument resonates strongly with the strategies of my participants. All the young men in this study argued that becoming educated had equipped them with skills and knowledges that uneducated people did not have. They also forged social and cultural boundaries between themselves and others in strategic ways. But performing educated masculinities was also central to their attempts at managing uncertainty and grounding themselves amidst a wider sense of flux. These findings reveal one of the main reasons youth invested in education despite a widespread crisis of educated unemployment. By insisting on their value as “educated people,” these young men were able to position themselves as worthy youth with meaningful prospects.

9.2.2 Migrants and “non-migrants” producing capital

The second main theoretical contribution of this thesis is to demonstrate the distinctive ways that youth produced and leveraged capital in a context of heightened rural-urban mobility and widespread unemployment. My participants were mindful of distinguishing themselves without compromising their social affiliations and ties to leave open the possibility of rural and urban futures. There were several ways in which youth attempted to maintain strong connections with others. In Chapter Five, I showed how migrants regularly returned home so as to maintain their relationships with those who had not moved away. These young men were also mindful of developing positive reputations in urban settings by making a “good” impression upon key figures in the community. In Chapter Six I showed how young men who

created work in the private education sector made sense of their practices as assisting other young people. They were intent on creating networks in the city which might help them secure more work in the future. Emphasising how their work assisted others was also a prominent theme in Chapters Seven and Eight. Those who hung out at Bhandari Infotech often took pride in how they offered a positive service to others living in Pauri Town; and those who wanted to remain in their villages devised several strategies for promoting social change within them. These strategies were vitally important in a context of outmigration and widespread unemployment. The futures of these young men were uncertain and job opportunities were scarce; and so youth distinguished themselves in ways that left open the possibility of rural and urban futures.

This argument represents a departure from studies which show how migrants are sometimes marginalised in urban settings because they do not have the “right” habitus and capitals (Brown et al., 2005; Jacka, 2005). In contrast to these studies, many migrants strategically shifted their affiliations as they moved between their villages and Dehradun and made an effort to “stand out.” In doing so, they were sometimes able to establish a foothold in the city without compromising the prospect of returning home. Other migrants were able to generate an income by drawing on skills and competencies which were valued in educational settings. They had the “right” knowledge and skillsets to create work but had not become “too urbanised” (Ferguson, 1999). My findings also offer a counterpoint to studies that emphasise how migrants try to develop associations with other migrants when they arrive in their destinations (Becerra et al., 2018; Brøgger, 2019; Li & Chan, 2018). Rather than strictly cultivate a sense of ethnic affiliation among the migrant community, these young men were mindful of developing networks with people from the city to broaden their social and economic prospects.

In these senses, migrants' strategies resonated more closely with studies that show how mobile youth develop novel ways of generating capitals and of aiding their exchange, accumulation and conversion (Brooks & Waters, 2011; Ryan, et al., 2015; Waters, 2015). This theoretical framing creates space for analysing how mobile young men recraft their habitus and create capital, such as how the migrants in this study acquired new competencies when they moved to the city. Yet while some of these studies show how youth attempt to realise gain by acquiring the dominant habitus of "modern" places (Cheng, 2014a; Kelly & Lusis, 2006; Smith & Gergan, 2015), or by insisting on the habitus of their "homeland" (Erel, 2010), my findings suggest a more dynamic habitus that young men sometimes tweaked as they moved across space. The capacity to navigate rural and urban divides was a key strategy of many migrants. At times, for example, migrants emphasised their connections with their villages to develop positive reputations in Dehradun. At other times, the same young men saw value in emphasising their associations with the city to garner status in their villages. In both instances, young men were attempting to "stand out" whilst ensuring they held favour with their peers.

Foregrounding the agency of youth in this way is also useful for unpacking the strategies of "non-migrants." A feature of this study has been to highlight how those who have chosen not to migrate attempt to realise social gain without moving away. The young men who hung out at Bhandari Infotech had developed an array of strategies for assisting their peers and cultivating good reputations. Similarly, those who worked alongside NGOs and tutored in their villages often reflected upon how they felt they were able to garner respect among their peers. These strategies constituted a direct challenge to dominant understandings of "non-migrants" as lazy or troublesome. They also go against the thrust of much migration research, which posits that migration is the most effective way of rural youth to "become somebody" (Crivello, 2011; Punch, 2015). In a broad sense, therefore, my findings contribute to an emerging strand of scholarship which troubles dominant understandings of "non-migrants" as passive or docile

(Barcus & Werner, 2016; Fioratta, 2015; Stockdale et al., 2018; Zhang, 2018). It does so by foregrounding the agency of educated youth in the Global South. In a similar vein to educated youth in other rural contexts (Dyson, 2019a; Mwaura, 2017; Schut, 2019), these young men were trying to reconcile their status as educated people with the prospect of rural futures. At the same time, however, their insistence on their position as “educated people” meant that they might be able to move to the city in the future if they decided to do so.

In attempting to leverage their status as educated people without compromising their affiliations, migrants and non-migrants reinscribed social inequalities. Indeed, all participants had spent considerable time investing in the forms of capital valorised by dominant social groups and therefore had a stake in ensuring the legitimacy of those capitals. In Chapter Five and Chapter Eight, for example, I showed how some young men ensured they maintained strong relationships with teachers in their colleges. In Chapter Six young men garnered respect among students by demonstrating their hold on skillsets which were widely considered necessary for obtaining white collar work. These strategies were explicitly about repositioning themselves in existing social hierarchies rather than dismantling them. Even those who hung out at Bhandari Infotech and those who were seeking to create change in their villages often made quite derogatory critiques of “uneducated people.” In this sense, their strategies were quite unlike the rural-urban migrants in other studies (Gidwani & Sivaramakrishnan, 2003; Rai, 2018; Rao, 2014), who used their competencies to challenge those with authority. Thus, while my participants made sense of their strategies as working toward positive social change, it was precisely because they largely respected existing hierarchies and norms that they reproduced class and gender divides.

9.2.3 Youth fashioning contradictory depictions of rural space

A third contribution of this thesis is to offer insights into the ways that youth actively produce space. Specifically, I argue that young men fashioned alternative and derogatory representations of rural space in ways that enabled them to position themselves as harbingers of social change. This is an argument that complements and builds upon key themes in human geography concerning how axes of power are resisted and reproduced as agents produce space (Cresswell, 2002; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994).

Many of the youth in this study created “anchoring points” to give a temporal ordering to their time and to develop positive reputations. The young men in Chapter Six, for example, helped “produce” coaching clinics within which their skills were valorised and where they could gain recognition from their peers. They also moved around at quite particular intervals and with a sense of purpose. By frequenting educational institutions, those participants were key players in the reproduction of those spaces; and their strategies pair with analyses that underscore the role of migrants in “making the city” (Caglar & Glick Schiller, 2018; Rouse, 1992; Ye, 2016). The ways that nodes of youth sociality anchored young men was most notably the case for those who hung out at Bhandari Infotech. That set of young men frequented the computer shop to develop ties with other young men who were confronting similar challenges, at the same time as they created ways of registering their productivity. In line with other studies from across the Global South (Langevang, 2008; Masquelier, 2013, 2019; Nisbett, 2013; Weiss, 2009), the spaces they produced can be seen as masculine sites where educated youth attempted to manage uncertainty and gain recognition despite remaining jobless.

But my study has emphasised the novelty of these strategies in contexts beyond large metropolitan cities. Indeed, creating spaces where one can register one’s productivity was a potent strategy in a rural setting where there are said to be few social opportunities (Klenk,

2010; Koskimaki, 2016; Mathur, 2015). Therefore by “productive hanging out” in Pauri Town, young men were substantiating a latent critique of dominant understandings of rural space. This critique was interwoven throughout other young men’s strategies. The young men in Chapter Eight, for example, did not aspire to urban futures and wished to remain in their villages. They emphasised how educated people could bring about change in villages and so were stressing the dynamism of rural space. Even those who had migrated from Pauri Garhwal were not intent on denying their rural affiliations, but playfully engaged with what it meant to be *pahari*. They did not consider their association with the Uttarakhand hills as strictly “undesirable” but drew upon in strategic ways. Taken together, these young men were mindful of how they could realise social gain by recrafting understandings of rural space and fashioning constructions of the Uttarakhand hills which emphasised emerging social opportunities.

At first glance, these arguments support Kumar’s (2016) assertion that a “new rurality” is emerging in some parts of South Asia. Kumar (2016) argues that a rise in non-farm employment, the introduction of new technologies, growing educational opportunities, emerging infrastructure projects and welfare programmes are changing power structures and reshaping rural space. My findings also resonate with Young and Jeffrey’s (2012) arguments about how mobile youth create social and economic opportunities by developing competencies for navigating rural and urban divides. Scholars have advanced similar arguments in Uttarakhand more specifically (Chakraborty, 2018; Dyson, 2019a; Dyson & Jeffrey, 2018; Joshi, 2015). These scholars highlight the dynamism of the Uttarakhand hills and illuminate how youth are key players in refashioning what it means to be *pahari*. Joshi (2015), for example, argues that mobile young people are mediators of cultural styles between the hills and plains, and shows how they draw on resources from rural and urban locations to produce novel social forms.

Many aspects of these analyses resonate with my findings. Both migrants and “non-migrants” were able to use new technologies and forms of interconnectivity to their advantage. They also produced novel styles as they moved between rural and urban settings. But other aspects of my findings suggest that these works might sometimes appeal to the “newness” of young people’s strategies too readily. Indeed, even while my participants might be seen as “architects of novel socio-spatial transformations” (Chakraborty, 2018, p.90), they also sometimes reproduced derogatory representations of the Uttarakhand hills. Those who had migrated to Dehradun, for example, often sought to position themselves as fundamentally unlike those who were from villages in Pauri Garhwal but who were not educated. Moreover, most participants occasionally made quite negative remarks about those who lived in rural settings. These negative representations were also reproduced in more subtle ways. Some of those who lived in villages often complained of having nothing to do and resented the difficulties they faced living in the area. Even those who stressed the need the change were reinforcing the notion that rural space was “in need of intervention” (Li, 2010, p.68; Schut, 2019). In doing so, young men indexed their physical and discursive removal from centres of social and economic opportunity, and reproduced dominant understandings of Pauri Garhwal as a site of boredom, backwardness and which was inherently inferior to the plains (Klenk, 2010; Mathur, 2015; Moller, 2000).

The interplay between young men’s alternative representations of the Uttarakhand hills and the ways they reproduced derogatory understandings of them had important social implications. Specifically, the ways that participants both challenged and reproduced dominant depictions of rural space created a tension which was sometimes productive for young men. Their attempts to mark themselves off from others hinged upon the maintenance of discourses which construct rurality in derogatory ways. The educated youth in Chapter Nine, for example, were able to position themselves as an asset to the area because they had skills which previous

generations and other villagers did not. In this sense, their capacity to distinguish themselves as educated people was aided by understandings of rural populations as uneducable and partly responsible for their own predicament (see also Klenk, 2010; Morarji, 2014). It was precisely because the Uttarakhand hills continue to be understood as a site of backwardness and inferiority that educated young men were able to position themselves as the embodiment of progress and modernity (Morarji, 2014). In this sense young men's alternative representations of rural space did not dissolve more enduring representations of the Uttarakhand hills, but enabled them to position themselves as harbingers of social change.

9.3 Ideas for further research

When I set out to design this research I wanted to build upon earlier work which had examined the contradictory effects of formal education in Dehradun. In the course of conducting fieldwork for that earlier project, I realised that the story of educational change in Dehradun would only be partial without examining the plight of migrants. Large numbers of young men I spoke to had migrated "from the hills" and were the first in their families to become educated. Many youth from Dehradun often blamed those from rural settings for undermining the standards of formal education, and did not think migrants had the capacities to succeed in college (see Deuchar, 2014a, 2014b). Even though I was cognisant of the large number of migrants in educational settings, there was not scope within that project to adequately examine their experiences. Having had the opportunity to return to the field and to make migrants the focus of this study, I hope to have demonstrated that these youth were not marginalised because of the skills they did not have. On the contrary, the hardships they encountered were largely structural, and it was their ongoing hard work which enabled them to manage the most acute aspects of those hardships.

Yet in turning my focus to the experience of young men who had migrated, and indeed those who had chosen not to, perhaps the main limitation of this present project is its inadequate attention to the strategies of young women. There were two main reasons why this project focused on young men. Firstly, it is overwhelmingly young men who migrate from Pauri Garhwal to Dehradun in pursuit of further education and work. Migration for work has long been a gendered strategy for making a living in the region and this pattern persists today. When young women migrate, it is more commonly for marriage (Dyson, 2014). In this sense there was an immediate empirical justification for focusing on the strategies of young men. Secondly, in the past I found it quite difficult to establish relationships with young women in ways that would not compromise their reputations. I was unable to interview women in private, for example, and only managed to conduct interviews in the presence of their brothers and sometimes fathers. This clearly affected the questions I could ask and shaped the responses I got to them.

However, during this research project there was some evidence that both of these factors were changing. I got to know several young women who had moved to Dehradun from Pauri Garhwal to pursue education and others who had graduated and were attempting to find paid work. I also knew some young women who were the first in the families to work outside the home, although not all of these women were migrants. These young women were usually the sisters or relatives of key informants, who I saw on a somewhat regular basis. Moreover, in coaching clinics and tuition centres, I was sometimes struck by the willingness of young women to interact with me. I also observed changing gender dynamics in Pauri Garhwal. One morning when I was waiting to meet an administrator for an interview at college, a first year student stopped and introduced herself to me. She shook my hand, maintained eye contact and welcomed me to the institution. This struck me as a very friendly and significant gesture, and

one that might not have been likely a few years ago. Indeed, it was a stark contrast the more deferential demeanour with which many young women had greeted me in years gone by.

Although anecdotal, these experiences might provide compelling starting points for further research. Dominant understandings of migration often conceptualise it as a “project of self-transformation” (Gardner & Osella, 2004, p.3; Smith & Gergan, 2015). But my preliminary observations suggest a different way of thinking about the mobilities of young women. On the one hand, mobilities *to* the city seemed to offer young women greater freedom of expression. Those who had migrated from villages, for example, were not as immediately within the purview of their parents and others. This arguably enabled a greater degree of agency in terms of choosing how they spent their time and who they spend it with. But on the other hand, mobilities *within* the city seemed to reinforce patriarchal gender norms. The young women I knew tended to spend very little time outside the home, and would generally only go out when there was a clearly defined purpose for doing so, such as attending a coaching clinic or private tuition centre, or going to college or attending an appointment. Moreover, the responsibility for almost all domestic chores rested with young women. This was the case even when young women were also the only members of the household earning an income. These insights provide avenues for a subtle gendering of young women’s mobilities and for thinking about how those mobilities both challenge and reinforce patriarchal gender norms.

At the same time, there were spaces within the city where young people seemed to challenge gender norms quite significantly (see Evans, 2018; Patel, 2017; Smith, 2017). Coaching clinics in particular were sites where forms of interaction between young women and men were strongly encouraged, and young women were taught to be assertive and confident. In this context, more conservative notions of femininity and propriety were not only discouraged but were seen as inappropriate for young women who were wanting to succeed in the workplace. These observations suggests that more research is needed to examine the ways

that shifting economic structures are bound up with changing gender norms. This might be a productive way of building on existing research about job coaching clinics and tuition centres in particular, which up until now have overwhelmingly been conceptualised as a site of class reproduction (Gilbertson, 2018; Gupta, 2018; Sancho, 2015, 2016). More generally, it might also be a productive contribution to recent debates about migrant urbanisms, the gendered city, and vital for thinking about how the city might become a more inclusive place (Evans, 2018; Gidwani & Ramamurthy, 2018; MacFarlane & Silver, 2017; Smith, 2017).

9.4 Concluding Remarks

It seems fitting to finish this thesis with a final word about the two young men with which it started, Ankur and Gaurav. When I first met Ankur, he was teaching a class to job seekers about how they might find work. Over the weeks that followed, he often invited me to the classes he was teaching. I remember on one occasion he received an applause from the students in the class when he explained the importance of not giving up their search for work:

Students all over India are trying to get jobs, everyone knows that not everybody will get a good job. But tell me, ‘who are the people who you see working in the ICS (Indian Civil Service)?’ These are the people who never gave up. You can go through ups and downs, and failures will come, but you have to keep trying, that is the most important thing...

There is much that can be made of declarations like this. It resonates quite powerfully with neoliberal discourses which conceal structural inequalities, deny power relations, and burden individuals with responsibility for their own prospects. But perhaps the potency of seemingly rigid declarations like these lies in their malleability.

The last time I spoke with Ankur was in early 2019. He phoned and told me that he had still not obtained a government job and could no longer justifying sitting examinations. He was nearing thirty years of age and said that the time had come for him to change tack. I reminded him of the time he had explained to his students the importance of never giving up, and asked him tongue in cheek if they would applaud him if they knew he had given up his quest for a government job. To this he responded quite sharply:

I have not given up *bhai*, I told them if they want to be successful they to never give up. I won't sit government exams, but I haven't given up on being successful.

In late 2018 Ankur moved to Noida, just outside of New Delhi, for a job in the private sector. He trains students how to engage with clients at a telemarketing company. He told me that even those who could speak English well did not always have the “touch”; they were unable to make a light-hearted joke without it seeming forced or were unable to placate the (not so) occasional vexatious customer. He says that although he works long hours, his job pays reasonably well, and his parents are looking to arrange a marriage for him.

In many ways, Ankur has been quite successful. Most other young men I have had contact with since leaving the field are still living in Dehradun and remain unemployed. The main drawback for Ankur is that he is unable to return home as often as he used to. The journey is much longer, more expensive, and he is unable to find the time with his new job. Ankur said that “nowadays I can return to Pauri once a year only.” He said that his family misses him, that he misses them, and counts down the days until he can next return to the Uttarakhand hills. He has even made plans to return to Pauri Town permanently in the distant future. “If I work hard for ten, fifteen years,” he told me, “then I can return home and enjoy the mountains and breathe the air.”

Ankur's reasons for wanting to visit the mountains reminded me of Gaurav's reasons for wanting to stay there. When I first met Gaurav at Bhandari Infotech, he said that it was peaceful in Pauri Town, that he "had time to think" there, and that he could "breathe easily." What was striking when I spoke to Gaurav recently, in October 2019, was how much had not changed for him. Unlike Ankur, he said that:

You could come here tomorrow and we are still doing the same things. There are people coming and going each day, we are sitting here and drinking *chai*. Come, brother, any time, you will see that we are still doing the same things...

The reason this statement resonated stood out to me was less for its content and more for its form. He did not say this with a note of boredom or resentment, as has been found in many studies of youth in other parts of the Global South, but rather with a note of pride. There was a sense that he was in charge of his own future, that he was able to say with a degree of certainty what he may be doing "any time." This was potent in a context where very few youth could outline the future with the same conviction. There was something quite subversive in Gaurav's tone. He was proud that he had not been enticed by the fruits of modernity, that he had not been drawn to the bright lights of the city; and that he was able to provide for his parents without migrating from his family's home.

Yet one thing that has changed for Gaurav is that he rarely sees Ankur. He said they "don't get to joke anymore" or reminisce about the time they spent together as children. Gaurav said that the last time he saw him was over two years ago. In that time Ankur had returned to Pauri Town once, but Gaurav had been "outside [in the city] doing business" and so they were unable to meet. I mentioned to Gaurav that Ankur said he wants to return home one day in the distant future. Gaurav laughed a little at this. He said with a note of sarcasm that does not know why "these 'big men' want to leave" in the first place. But then he was quiet for a few moments.

Eventually Gaurav said that “whenever he plans to come back, he knows I will still be here.” Gaurav said that he misses Ankur, that he hopes he will return and that there will be a place on the bench seat “waiting for him.” Ankur himself was quite insistent that he will return in the future. And so perhaps after years of studying and working, of moving in rather different directions and of chasing different dreams, the paths of these two childhood friends may converge once again.

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Appendices One

Table of key informants

Name	Age	Caste	Education	Father's occupation	Home	Current residence
Ankur	26	GC	Political Science (Masters)	Small restaurant owner	Pauri Town	Dehradun (private room)
Manish	24	GC	Sociology (Bachelors)	Construction/Agriculture	Village 2	Dehradun (with relatives)
Arjun	22	GC	Political Science (Bachelors)	Courier in Pauri Town	Village 2	Dehradun (student hostel)
Vikram	23	GC	Economics (Bachelors)	Construction	Haproli	Dehradun (private room)
Ashish	25	GC	Physics/Mathematics (Masters)	Small restaurant owner	Pauri Town	Dehradun (private room)
Amardeep	27	GC	Engineering/IT (Masters)	Office clerk	Pauri Town	Dehradun (with relatives)
Mohit	25	GC	Information Technology (Bachelors)	Construction/infantry	Village 4	Dehradun (private room)
Rahul	22	GC	Economics (Bachelors)	Small business owner	Village 3	Dehradun (private room)
Arjun	22	GC	Political Science (Bachelors)	Agriculture/small business owner	Village 4	Dehradun (private room)
Gaurav	26	GC	Computer Science (Bachelors)	Construction/infantry	Pauri Town	Pauri Town (with family)
Jaspal	26	GC	Sociology (Masters)	Courier	Pauri Town	Pauri Town (with family)
Sandeep	26	GC	Engineering/IT (Bachelors)	Agriculture	Village 5	Haproli (with family)
Ramesh	21	GC	Political Science (Bachelors)	Agriculture/construction	Haproli	Haproli (with family)

Appendices Two

Plain Language Statement

Title of Project: Between the city and the hills: educated youth rethinking the value of education and migration in north India

Student Researcher: Andrew Deuchar

Email: adeuchar@student.unimelb.edu.au

Phone: Local phone number to be given upon participant recruitment

Principal Researcher: Dr Jane Dyson

Email: jane.dyson@unimelb.edu.au

Phone: +61 3 8344 0328

Other Researcher: Professor Craig Jeffrey

Email: craig.jeffrey@unimelb.edu.au

Phone: +61 3 9035 8047

Purpose of project: This project aims to explore the experiences of tertiary educated young men of finding work. It is interested in the type of work that young men want to get and the ways that they try to get it. It is also interested in young men's experiences in the workplace. The student researcher receives funds to conduct this research through the Melbourne Research Scholarship which are appropriate for local living expenses in Melbourne, Australia. The information is being gathered as part of the student researcher's PhD.

If you choose to participate, the student researcher will conduct an interview with you. This will take a minimum of 30 minutes but can go for longer if you wish. There may also be the opportunity to be interviewed multiple times but this not a required commitment. The questions asked in the interview will be about your experiences in education, of searching for employment, and about your work experience.

Participation in this project is voluntary, which means you do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you choose to participate but change your mind you can withdraw your consent without having to explain why at any time. If you withdraw your consent after information has been gathered, records of the interview will be destroyed.

Measures are in place to protect your privacy. You will not be photographed, audio- or video recorded at any stage. When results are written about in the research project, your name will be changed and so will the name of the area that the interview took place. This is to protect your identity and privacy. The only reason that the researcher will share information with others that reveals your identity is if you disclose a serious criminal offence. Because a reasonably small number of people are participating in this study, other people you know, such as friends, may know that you are participating in this study, and you are free to discuss it with them if you wish.

The information that you provide during this research will be kept indefinitely. The written notes that are recorded in interviews will be kept in a secure location at the University of Melbourne that only the student research and principal researcher can access. There is a good chance that the information you provide will be used for similar research in the future.

There is a strong likelihood that the results will be published in academic journals and/or book form. The reason for publishing the findings is to spread them widely so that they can be used to inform policies that may address the issues raised in the research. Other researchers can also use the published findings to compare their work and to generate greater knowledge in the field. It is in this way that benefits may be felt by the wider community

Please note: This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Office for Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Fax: +61 3 9347 6739 or Email: HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au. All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

Appendices Three

Consent Form

Interview

Title of Project: Between the city and the hills: educated youth rethinking the value of education and migration in north India.

Student Researcher: Andrew Deuchar (PhD student)

Email: adeuchar@student.unimelb.edu.au

Phone: Local phone number to be given upon participant recruitment

Principal Researcher: Dr Jane Dyson

Email: jane.dyson@unimelb.edu.au

Phone: +61 3 8344 0328

Other Researcher: Professor Craig Jeffrey

Email: craig.jeffrey@unimelb.edu.au

Phone: +61 3 9035 8047

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.
2. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form it will be retained by the researcher.
3. I understand that my participation will involve an *interview and observation* and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.
4. I acknowledge that:
 - (a) the possible effects of participating in the *interview and observation* have been explained to my satisfaction;
 - (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;
 - (c) the project is for the purpose of research;
 - (d) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;
 - (e) I have been informed that with my consent the written records of interviews will be stored at University of Melbourne and will be kept indefinitely;
 - (f) My name and the area in which I live will be referred to as a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research;
 - (g) I have been informed that a copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I agree to this.

I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings

☐ yes ☐ no

(please tick)

Researcher name:

Signature

Date:

Researcher name:

Signature

Date: