The London School of Economics and Political Science

Developing a Social Psychology of Poverty: Social Objects and Dialogical Representations

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

I declare that my thesis consists of 97, 009 words.

Apurv Chauhan

September 2016

ABSTRACT

This thesis develops a social psychological approach to researching poverty. Critiquing the existing models of poverty research in psychological sciences, it conceptualises poverty as a social object whose meanings are generated socially and dialogically. Using the theory of social representations and a dialogical framework informed by G.H. Mead's work on the social Self and the thesis of dialogical mind, it examines both *content* (social representations) and *processes* (dialogicality) of meaning-making on poverty in the Indian public sphere at two levels. First, in a village in Bihar, India, 41 poor and 25 elite participants were interviewed over a period of six months to understand meaning-making in a local community setting. Second, 424 news stories on poverty in two national newspapers were sampled to explore the broader public sphere of India. The research found that poor participants represented poverty in three domains: their present state of being in poverty, their plans to escape poverty, and the social actors responsible for facilitating their escape. Representations in the first two domains allowed poor people to cope with the harsh realities of poverty whereas representations in the third domain allowed coping with their failure in escaping poverty. Elite representations were also organised in three domains: the descriptions of poverty, the reasons why poverty existed, and the possibility of poverty amelioration through improving healthcare and education provisions for the poor. The primary symbolic coping function of the elites' representations was of absolving their Selves from any blame for the existence poverty — this was achieved by ascribing the responsibility for poverty on the Government and the poor people themselves. The newspapers represented poverty in four ambivalent domains as: an objective reality, a threat, a barrier, and as a political opportunity. Symbolic coping in the mass-media involved features of both poor and elite groups' representations. In terms of the *'processes'* through which these representations are generated, the research synthesises how meanings are developed both *in terms of* and *through* the Ego–Alter dialogical interdependence, which is also shown to be the link between the *content* and the *processes* of social representations. On the basis of its findings, this thesis demonstrates that the representation of poverty — and by extension, of all social objects — is necessarily contingent on the realisation of the Ego's relationship with Alters in the social world. In this direction, the role of Social Acts, as conceptualised by Mead, is explored in-depth. Finally, the overall representational field of poverty is presented in terms of its stable thematic core and malleable periphery while demonstrating that the relationship between the core and periphery is dialogically mediated. As a whole, this thesis develops a novel approach to studying social problems like poverty in the discipline. In doing so, it also advances links between the theory of social representations, Mead's work, and the thesis of dialogical mind.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To my Parents

…you taught me the
value of hard work,
commitment, and foresight

To all my Teachers

…you shaped my life
with your tutelage

To Bihar

…there is
no place
like home

PREFACE

पर शिशु का क्या, सीख न पाया अभी जो आँसू पीना
चूस-चूस सूखा स्तन माँ का, सो जाता रो-विलाप नगीना।

The infant hasn't yet learnt to quench its thirst with tears
The breast of the mother has run dry; the infant must wail but sleep.

विवश देखती माँ, आँचल से नन्ही तड़प उड़ जाती
अपना रक्त पिला देती, यदि फटती आज वज्र की छाती।

The mother looks on, helpless and in agony.
With her blood — if she hand any — she would have quenched his thirst.

श्वानो को मिलते दूध वस्त्र, बच्चे भूखे अकुलाते हैं
माँ की गोदी से चिपक ठिठुर, जाड़े की रात बिताते हैं।

Dogs of the rich get milk and clothes, [while] poor children writhe in agony.
Clinging on to their mothers' chest, they shiver through the winter nights.

युवती की लज्जा वसन बेच, जब ब्याज चुकाए जाते हैं
मालिक तब तेल फुलेलो पर, पानी सा द्रव्य बहते हैं।

The honour of young girls is sold to repay financial debts,
That is the money that the elite spend like water on their perfumes.

An elite participant quoted the extract above from Ramdhari Singh Dinkar poem *Krishakon ko aaram nahi* [Peasants have no comfort]. The translation is mine.

That poverty threatens human survival is beyond contention. It simultaneously has economic, social, political, and moral components. Yet, it is a complex problem that needs to be understood in its full manifestation. Different disciplines make different contributions in this regard — for example, economics tries to quantify and explain it (mostly) in causal terms; developmental studies (primarily) try to inform the design and implementation of poverty related policies, etc. This thesis is a social psychological research on poverty in India — specifically, it situates poverty within a sociological vision of social psychology (Farr, 1980; Stryker, 1977) to explore the bi-directionality of the relationship between people and their social worlds.

In order to achieve this goal, this thesis will systematically examine the existing literature on poverty in the discipline and where appropriate, note their limitations — in other words, as indicated by the title, it undertakes the task of '*developing* a social psychology of poverty'. The subheading of the thesis — 'Social Objects & Dialogical Representations' — indicates the present work's approach towards 'developing a social psychology of poverty'. Inherently, this framework is based on a single assertion about poverty that integrates a number of social psychological ideas: poverty is a social object that develops through human interpretation, meaning-making, and communication, which are founded on the social and dialogical nature of human mind (Marková, 2003b; Valsiner & Van der Veer, 2000). Thus, the overall agenda of developing a social psychology of poverty is split between understanding *what* the representations of poverty in India are; and *how* they come in existence. The 'what' question is explored in terms of the theory of social representations (Moscovici, 1976/2008) and the 'how' question is examined using the thesis of dialogicality of human knowledge creation (Marková, 2003b; Valsiner & Van der Veer, 2000). To achieve this, the social constructions of poverty in the Indian public sphere are explored from three vantage points: of poor people, of the elite, and of the mass-media.

The thesis comprises of nine chapters. Its chapters are incremental and are best read sequentially. A brief description of each of the chapters is provided below to guide the reading of this thesis.

1. ON POVERTY: A conceptual examination & critique

This chapter establishes the basis of a sociological social psychology of poverty. It examines poverty as an abstract idea whose conceptualisation is rooted in the social world. Dominant moral philosophy of the world, the socio-political landscape, and the general level of human advancement are factors that shape the concept of poverty. The chapter traces the evolution of the idea of poverty and notes that around the start of the 20th century, the need to identify and count the 'poor' has reified the monetary theory of poverty. The consequences of the monetary reification of poverty are discussed in terms of Holton's (1996) discussion on thematisation and the progress of knowledge. With the goal of demonstrating the thematisation of poverty, the currents trends in psychological research on poverty are discussed and critiqued. This chapter creates grounds for the need for a sociologically guided social psychology of poverty.

2. ON POVERTY AS A SOCIAL OBJECT: Ontological & epistemological considerations

Building on the foundational work achieved in Chapter 1, this chapter engages in a rigorous ontological and epistemological analysis of poverty. Using Gustav Bergmann's method of ontological assays, two critical demonstrations are made: (1) the ontological insufficiency of positivist research on poverty is outlined; and (2) the ontological confusion within the constructivist research on poverty is identified. Subsequently, using Popper's Three World approach, the chapter outlines poverty as a social object and explains the merits of adopting this position. In essence, this chapter outlines potential, commitments, and the scope of a sociologically guided social psychology of poverty.

3. ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS & THEORY: Framing the project

This chapter outlines the research questions of this thesis and develops its theoretical framework. The two broad research questions of this thesis are: (1) As a social object, what meanings of poverty develop in the society? (2) From a social psychological standpoint, how do people develop these meanings? Essentially, the first research question is interested in the 'content' of poverty representations, whereas the second research question explores the 'processes' that generate the content. The theoretical framework of this project is built around the theory of social representations and the thesis of dialogicality. The dialogical approach of this project is based on George Herbert Mead's idea of Social Acts, and the notion of Ego–Alter interdependence and independence. Using the theoretical framework, this thesis identifies three social groups or vantage points for studying different representations of poverty: poor people, elite people, and the mass-media. The chapter also establishes the importance of apprehending the social object of poverty from these vantage points and outlines the strength of a dialogical framework in understanding the development of poverty representations.

4. ON THE FIELD & METHODS: Developing the research strategy & tools

Mediated by the research questions, Chapter 4 is the zone of transition between the ontological, epistemological, and theoretical seeds of the project and the subsequent empirical research based on them. It describes the relevance and context of situating the empirical study of poverty representations in the village of Bholi in Bihar, India, and in two national broadsheet newspapers. It provides a reflexive account of the tools of inquiry and methods of analysis — why they were chosen and how they link with the issues identified in the previous three chapters.

5. ON REPRESENTATIONS *IN* POVERTY: Bholi's poor

Chapter 5 is the first of the three chapters that answer the 'content' question. This chapter analyses poverty representations of people in the village who self-identified as 'poor'. People who considered themselves poor were essentially representing the social object of poverty from the inside. The title of the chapter emphasises their vantage point by noting that these representations are developed '*in*' poverty.

6. ON REPRESENTATIONS *OF* POVERTY: Bholi's elite

This chapter examines the representations of people in Bholi who self-identified as 'not-poor' — for the sake of simplifying references to them; they are referred as the 'elite'. For the elite of Bholi, poverty was a social object external to their own Self, yet it was present in their vicinity — the village had an extremely high prevalence of poverty. Nevertheless, in relation to the poor, their representations of the social object of poverty were from the outside. The title of the chapter captures the vantage point of the elite by noting that their representations are '*of*' poverty.

7. ON NEWSPAPER REPRESENTATIONS *OF* POVERTY: Two national broadsheet newspapers

This chapter explores the representations of poverty in two national newspapers of India. Like the elite, these are representations *of* poverty. Yet, there was a crucial difference between the elite and the newspapers. The elite occupied the same socio-political and geographic locus as the poor people participating in the study and poverty representations in Chapters 5 and 6 were more specific to the particular research context. The newspaper representations of poverty, on the other hand, were broader and referred to numerous villages, towns, and cities across the country. In that sense, this chapter presents the sociogenetic representations of poverty.

8. ON DIALOGICALITY OF POVERTY: Social Acts & Alter(s)

Chapter 8 answers the 'how' questions of this research. Specifically, it examines how representations of poverty develop in terms of Alter(s), in and through, Social Acts. The chapter will analyse and explore how social acts help in the (1) development and communication of representations; (2) convey latent information about the Ego, the Alter, and the phenomenon of poverty; and (3) reveal perspectives of both Ego and the Alter. Through a rigorous analysis of the dialogical exchanges between Egos and Alters, the chapter will demonstrate that both are equally important partners in the development of poverty representations. Finally, the chapter

will also examine the dialogical basis of this project itself, analysing the nature and impact of the researcher's relationship with the participants of the project.

9. DISCUSSION & SUMMARY: How poverty representations develop in terms of the Alter

Chapter 9 summarises the project and presents a comprehensive discussion of the findings of the research, their implications both on the theory of social representations and the understanding of poverty in social psychology. A crucial goal of this chapter is to present an integration of the 'content' and 'process' aspects of social representations as inseparable. The chapter will argue that the process of this research revealed that the '*what*' and '*how*' questions that this project began with, are incomplete without the complementary '*who*' and '*why*' questions. The overall representations of poverty in the Indian public sphere is analysed in terms of the relationship between the stable thematic core and malleable periphery of representations. The chapter demonstrates that dialogical mediations shape the exact nature of poverty representations and the relationship between the core and the periphery. The symbolic coping with poverty that each data group achieved with their representational work is analysed in detail. Research findings from the field are discussed along two crucial themes that integrate a range of empirical findings — general lack of trust, and importance of shared perspectives. Finally, the original contributions of the work are noted and the potential for future inquiries is mapped out.

NOTES ON CONVENTIONS

Unless specified to the contrary, all references to the SP of poverty should be assumed to refer to the sociological tradition of social psychology, as outlined in § 1.1.

The community based research was conducted with participants in two groups. The first group contained participants who self-identified as 'poor' and the second group contained participants that self-identified as 'not-poor'. In the both groups, participants were engaged in a range of professions and had a wide range of monetary and non-monetary assets. The thesis discusses its methodological approach in Chapter 4, however, it must be noted that these two groups will respectively be called 'poor' and 'elite'. This is merely a choice of nomenclature to achieve parsimony in prose and does not purport a definitive indication of socio-economic status or wealth of the participants.

Participants referred to values in Indian currency. The equivalent value in British Pounds is provided. At the time of this fieldwork £1 was roughly worth Rs 100.

Chapters 5–8 follow the following notational convention while presenting extracts from interviews.

1. [text within square brackets] — Author's editorial comment.
2. … — Trailing off of thought/incomplete sentences.
3. […] — Truncated text.
4. *** — Separate quotes from different interviews.

In Chapters 8 and 9, a stylistic convention is used to identify references to Social Acts in the text. Any word in SMALL UPPERCASE typeface should be read as the name of a social act. For example, the word EDUCATION will be a shorthand reference to the 'Social Act of education' whereas in normal typeface it will carry the routine meaning.

CHAPTER 1

ON POVERTY

A conceptual examination and critique

CHAPTER OUTLINE

As brutal and crippling it may be for those it affects, poverty is a difficult concept to nail down. As a topic of scientific study, poverty belongs to a number of disciplines, each approaching it with its own unique perspective. This thesis examines poverty with a sociological social psychological perspective. However, this assertion is in need of a number of qualifications. Fundamentally, what is meant by a sociological social psychological examination of poverty and how will this be different from existing research on poverty? Further, what can sociological social psychology add to the current scholarship on poverty? The present chapter and the next attend to these questions in a sequential fashion. However, this research follows over a century of poverty research in the social sciences and over half a century's work in psychology. This chapter acknowledges what has been achieved, and where appropriate, dutifully critique the gaps in this body of knowledge. Overall, the present chapter thoroughly reviews the concept of poverty, while identifying the limitations of the prevailing research that can be addressed with the development of a sociological social psychology of poverty.

The chapter begins with a distinction between the psychological and sociological versions of social psychology (henceforth, SP). The chapter, then, examines the evolution of the concept of poverty to capture the impact of the prevailing socio-political and moral order of society on the conceptualisation of poverty. Tracing the evolution of the concept, it will be argued that around the start of 20th century, the need to measure poverty led to a reification of the link between poverty and the monetary capacity of people. Finally, the chapter concludes by arguing that scientific research has thematised the concept of poverty with the notion of income — two consequence of thematisation will be identified and their implication on poverty research will be discussed.

1.1. SIDING WITH SOCIOLOGICAL SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

In order to understand the framework as well as the necessity of a sociological SP, it is useful to begin with a question that Serge Moscovici asked: What is social about social psychology? (Moscovici, 1972). The decades of 1960s and 1970s were one of soul-searching in the discipline as evident in landmark publications of the period where struggles to rehabilitate the 'social' led to the identification of three different faces of SP (House, 1977), and subsequent reconciliations between divergent versions of SP (Quin, Robinson, & Balkwell, 1980). This chapter will not discuss these debates in detail — they are well documented by eminent scholars in the discipline (Farr, 1996; Moscovici & Marková, 2006). The chapter will, instead, focus on sketching the distinction between sociological and psychological forms of SP and elaborate on the relevance of sociological SP to the study of poverty.

Both sociological and psychological SP study the individual and it has been routinely claimed that the distinction is moot because the subject matter of *any* SP is "socially engaged forms of cognition, emotion, and behaviour" (Greenwood, 2003, pp. 90–92). The similarities notwithstanding, the distinction between the two forms of SP is not only significant, but necessary, for a number of reasons. To begin with, the distinction comes from the way they apprehend the social engagement of the individual. Stryker (1977) illuminates this in the following passage:

> *For psychological social psychology, the field is defined by its focus on psychological processes of individuals; the task is to understand the impact of social stimuli on individuals. For sociological social psychology, the field is defined by the reciprocity of society and individual; and the fundamental task is the explanation of interaction. (p. 145)*

Fundamentally, the difference does not pertain to acknowledging the immersion of the individual in the social — to a varying degree, both social psychologies do that. The difference primarily exists in terms of the immersion being assumed in psychological SP, whereas sociological SP strives to explore, interrogate, and illuminate the immersion of the individual in its social world. In other words, a psychological SP assumes that the 'cognition, emotion, and behaviour' are socially engaged but nonetheless directs its queries on exploring these through examination of the psychological processes of the individual. It is only nominally social and as Farr (1996, p. 10) notes, theories like Turner's self-categorisation and Tajfel's social identity have resulted more in the "individualisation of the social than to the socialization of the individual". House (1977) highlights another distinction between the two forms of SP by noting that with an overbearing focus on correlational and causal analysis of psychological processes, psychological

SP uproots the individual from his social space and becomes largely agnostic to the dialectic between the person and the society.

On the other hand, sociological SP takes the social engagement of the individual a step further by examining, exploring, and illuminating the very nature and form of these engagements. A further distinction, thus, develops in the assertion of the bi-directionality of the relationship — sociological SP is interested in how the society and the individual mutually influence each other. Much akin to minority influence (Moscovici, Lage, & Naffrechoux, 1969; Moscovici & Nemeth, 1974), sociological SP is sensitive to individuals and minority groups influencing their social worlds. To varying degrees, individuals are bestowed with the capacity to influence both their immediate and broader social worlds. For instance, individuals like Marx and Freud redefined human thought in the broader social world with what Duveen (2000) calls the 'power of ideas'. As opposed to the monist and dualist ontology of psychological SP, sociological SP embraces human engagement with issues like myths, folk-knowledge etc. that are, but products of the human mind (Popper, 1978). What is more, the human mind and the basis of human existence are taken to be a dialectic between the material (brain) and its social context (Valsiner & Van der Veer, 2000 esp. pp. 37-60). As Rob Far puts it, in sociologically oriented SP "not only does the individual exist 'within' society but society 'enters into' the individual and actually constitutes the nature of mind" (1980, p. 188).

In essence, the fundamental distinction between the two forms of SP rests in the subscription of psychological SP to analyses where the social is assumed to exercise an influence on the individual, yet, the latter remains the focus of inquiries. In contrast, sociological SP examines the interface between the individual and the social. The two are regarded as inseparable and exercising influences on one another and inquiries are guided towards illuminating these mutual interactions. Next, sociological SP strives for a contextualised understanding of its problems — the social context is as much a topic of study, as the particular phenomenon of interest. Further still, it not only seeks to understand how individuals are influenced by their present context but considers human knowledge to be socially generated and bearing the influence of its historic evolution.

Guided by these tenets, this thesis develops a sociological study of poverty in SP. The first step in this process is establishing the fundamentally social nature of the concept of poverty. Accordingly, the chapter begins by examining how the concept of poverty has evolved through centuries of socially produced knowledge. Such an examination is crucial to demonstrating the

fundamentally social nature of poverty, which mandates the development of a sociological approach to researching poverty.

In the rest of this thesis, unless specified to the contrary, all references to the SP of poverty should be assumed to refer to the sociological tradition of social psychology, as outlined in this section.

1.2. THE EVOLUTION OF THE IDEA OF POVERTY

This section will illustrate that inherently, poverty is an abstract concept — the present conceptualisations of poverty are products of centuries of evolving social thought. The concept of poverty is linked to the social, political, and moral philosophy of the world and there could hardly ever be a point in history — including the present — where this connection has not been evident. What is meant and understood by 'poverty', along with how those regarded as 'poor' are perceived and treated, has constantly continued to evolve. The journey of the conceptual evolution of poverty can be split in two parts around the start of the 20th century to coincide with the emergence of systematic research on poverty.

1.2.1. Shifts until late 19th Century

Many ancient civilisations — Harrapan, Romans, Greeks — have a documented history of recurrent food shortages, famines, chronic hunger, and undernourishment. Yet such problems were commonplace and tied more to forces of nature, than to the social order (Beaudoin, 2007). Nevertheless, Hanson (1997) identifies several transitions in the conceptual evolution poverty, reflecting corresponding changes in the society.

The first period, according to Hanson was of "medieval piety". During the medieval period, societies were dominated by the religious doctrine and accounts from both European and Asian nations reveal that poverty was regarded as a virtue. All across medieval Europe, following theological ideas, hardships were thought to be reflections of God's will. As a result, far from being stigmatised, the poor were regarded more virtuous than others for being committed to serving the divine decree (Geremek & Kolakowska, 1997). Similarly, accounts from India are replete with virtuous ascetics who happily denounced the worldly pleasures and were content even in destitution and hardships (Eaton, 2015).

The second period — that of "rugged individualism" — appeared in Europe during the 14th century AD, following technological advancements in agriculture (Beaudoin, 2007; see also Hanson, 1997), and a changing social order in the aftermath of the Black Death (Robinson &

Acemoglu, 2012, esp. Chapter 4). The bubonic plague created a shortage of labour throughout Western Europe and led to several peasant uprisings demanding better treatment from the landowning classes. Consequently, while the oppression of the serfdom relatively mellowed, so did the tolerance for the poor and the destitute (Mollat, 1986). The emergence of commercial relationships between different communities in the society also helped in changing the public perception of poverty (Hanson, 1997). Such transformations, while gradual, were fully in place by the 18th and the 19th century when poverty began to be perceived in terms of individual attributes — laziness, alcoholism, and bad-blood, were the ideas increasingly used to define poverty. It was around this time that the distinction between the deserving and the underserving poor also emerged (Waxman, 1979)[1]. The connections between the socio-political climate and the concept of poverty are evident — as the social order gradually shifted towards conflict between people with wealth and people in want, public attitudes on poverty increasingly blamed the poor for their poverty.

The next major turn in the idea of poverty emerged as social theorists in the 19th century interrogated the issue of unequal distribution of wealth in the society. Among many others, Marx propagated the idea that the State was responsible for the working classes and the destitute, and the onus of responsibility for poverty did not rest squarely upon the poor themselves. This shift in perspective, at least partially, led to the Socialist Revolution of 1917 in Russia and the gradual transition of the European political order towards the welfare state models in existence today. According to Hanson (1997) this period fundamentally altered the conceptualisation of poverty — the shift in the social order made poverty a problem that needed solving. In order to solve this problem, the need to 'define' poverty and identify the poor came to the forefront. Not surprisingly, the first planned studies of poverty began to surface around the end of 19th century. These studies laid foundations of the monetary paradigm that guided perspectives and research on poverty for the next century, continuing to the present day.

1.2.2. Late 19th Century – present

In late 19th and early 20th century, the works of Charles Booth and Seebom Rowntree were the first attempts to identify who the poor were and in doing so, they developed an approach to 'measure' poverty. The concept that had hitherto escaped explicit needs for measurement was

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[1] The idea of deservingness roughly refers to whether the poor are worthy of compassion and help or they are responsible for their own plight. In the present day, this distinction can be noticed frequently on media discussions and middle class and elite perspectives on the issue of welfare.

put under the imperative to be functionally defined — poverty, which had been a socially imagined idea, entered into the 'scientific' phase of its evolution.

Booth's study of poverty in London's Tower Hamlets is the earliest coherent examination of poverty. Using indirect observations, Booth (1887) stratified London's East End into eight 'social classes' out of which four represented poverty in different degrees[2]. This was soon followed by Rowntree's work in the city of York, which is regarded as the first '*scientific*' study of poverty (Rowntree, 1901). Rowntree's study is a landmark in the development of the concept of poverty — it was the first attempt to operationalize a 'definition' for poverty. Rowntree took into account the income needed to maintain adequate nutrition, clothes, and shelter. People who failed this income criterion were classified as living in primary poverty. Those living in deplorable conditions despite staying above the income threshold were considered in secondary poverty[3]. The quantification achieved by establishing a threshold income as a proxy for poverty concluded that nearly 10 per cent of York's population was living in primary poverty. Rowntree's work introduced the income-monetary conceptualisation of poverty and brought 'measurement' at the heart of poverty studies[4].

The current monetary theories of poverty show a clear inheritance of Rowntree's legacy. Like Rowentree's primary and secondary poverty, there are two slightly different formulations today: absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty disregards the patterns of wealth in a society and focuses solely on the monetary threshold required to meet the basic needs of life. Estimates by the World Bank, as well as national poverty estimates of most developing countries, lean towards the absolute poverty formulation. The international poverty line used by the World Bank estimates that the most basic survival needs can be fulfilled with $1.25 per capita, per day[5] at purchasing power parity (at 2005 prices, see Ravallion, Chen, & Sangraula, 2009). Similarly,

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[2] It is important to note that the Booth study relied on informants instead of collecting data directly from inhabitants in the Tower Hamlets and hence is not considered to be a systematic study of poverty. Also, Booth's work was not purely income based as he considered several non-income parameters like regularity of employment and living conditions of a person.

[3] Rowntree's conceptualisation of primary poverty was based on an objective calculation of the money needed to purchase sufficient provisions to maintain the minimum nutritional requirements, along with essential clothing and rent. On the other hand, secondary poverty was based on the surveyor's assessment of '*obvious want and squalor*', making it a subjective assessment.

[4] Measurement, here, primarily refers to the efforts to quantify poverty and discern how many poor people existed in a given society.

[5] After revisions in 2015, the international poverty line is currently set at $1.90.

India's first official poverty line was purely calorific–monetary and defined on the basis of the income threshold below which basic calorie requirements were not met (Dandekar & Rath, 1971a, 1971b). The current poverty lines follow the Tendulkar committee reports and take a similar income based approach to measuring poverty (GOI, 2009) [6]. On the other hand, relative poverty takes the social distribution of income into account and poverty threshold is derived in relation to the overall income levels in a society. For instance, the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU) take 60 per cent of the median income as the threshold for identifying poverty (see Foster, 1998). Despite some differences, both absolute and relative *poverty* ideas are monetary in nature. More sophisticated economic theories of poverty acknowledge that poverty is multidimensional in nature where a number of life aspects of individuals are intricately intertwined (Alkire & Foster, 2011; Tsui, 2002). However, despite the emergence of newer theories, the monetary perspective that started with Seebom Rowntree's study in York, dominates the landscape of contemporary poverty research and policy even in the present day (Hagenaars & Vos, 1988; Laderchi, Saith, & Stewart, 2003).

1.2.3. The socialisation of the concept

The short examination reveals that the concept of poverty is linked to the general socio-political and economic philosophy of any given period. The present day focus on monetary theories was predicated by the need to identify, measure, and quantify poverty. In turn, these needs were the result of the imperative to eradicate poverty — an effort that required two things: a standardised definition of poverty; and the identification of the poor so that assistive measures to eradicate poverty could be extended (Beaudoin, 2007). Rowntree's monetary conceptualisation of poverty provided a solution to both the needs.

The elegance of Rowntree's solution was indeed seductive — across the world, the definition, assessment, and alleviation of poverty started to become vested in a monetary conceptualisation. For example, in the United States of America, poverty alleviation imperative led to the landmark legislation of 1964 which acknowledged the multi-faceted nature of poverty (see Cahn & Cahn, 1964). Yet Lindon Johnson's historic 'war on poverty', was tied to an income based conceptualisation of poverty. A similar tale unfolded in the 'developing' world — for e.g., as discussed earlier, poverty assessment in India followed the identification of people falling below

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[6] It is interesting to note here that the first Indian poverty lines were regressive when compared to even Rowntree's method. While Rowntree factored expenses required for basic clothing and rent, the Indian poverty line only took into account calorie requirements.

the income threshold required to meet basic calorific needs. The concept of poverty around the world became increasingly entrenched with income and monetary capacity of people.

At the global stage itself, poverty became the focal agenda of international development during the World Employment Conference organised by the International Labour Organisation in 1976. It was at this conference that the fulfilment of basic needs of survival for everyone was declared as the paramount goal of developmental policy across the world (Jolly, 1976). When the World Bank joined poverty alleviation efforts, it too forwarded a monetary theory of poverty. In 1990, the World Bank's estimation of a global poverty line ($ 1.00 per person per day at purchasing power parity) made poverty assessments a global enterprise[7]. In essence, the 20th century was the period when progressively, the rhetoric on alleviation married the concept of poverty with measurable variables like income and monetary resources.

In the last 50 years or so, the tying of the concept of poverty to income or monetary formulations — whether based on basic needs or on relative prosperity approaches — has been critiqued (see for e.g. Hulme & McKay, 2011; Reddy & Pogge, 2009; Streeten, 1984; Streeten & Burki, 1978). Alternate non-monetary conceptualisations of poverty, like the idea of capabilities (Alkire, 2005; Sen, 1999), poverty as social exclusion (Alcock, 2006; Palmer, North, Carr, & Kenway, 2003), and participatory approaches to poverty assessment (Chambers, 1994; Kadigi, Mdoe, & Ashimogo, 2007) have also emerged during this period. Indeed, as Mistruelli and Heffernan (2010) conclude with a synchronic Saussurian analysis of poverty definitions in public discourse between the 1970s and the 2000s, in the last two decades poverty has become a "highly contested concept". Yet, the monetary paradigm has remained the dominant approach influencing poverty research in most disciplines including psychology (Carr & Sloan, 2003). Perhaps the most fundamental explanation for this goes back to the formulation of the monetary theory in the first place — as compared to its alternatives, monetary conceptualisation of poverty provides an easier solution to the problematic of identifying the poor (see for e.g. Laderchi et al., 2003). As this review has demonstrated, the social imperative of measuring poverty has progressively saturated the concept of poverty with monetary capacity of people. At this point, this thesis asks a crucial question — how has this saturation affected scientific studies of poverty in psychology?

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[7] Despite taking a predominantly monetary approach, the World Bank also contributed to expanding our understanding of the lived experiences of poverty through its series on *Voices of the Poor*. There is a fuller discussion on this research later in the thesis.

1.3. THEMATISATION OF THE CONCEPT

The advance of science is shaped by presuppositions at the nascent stages of an inquiry — the 'private' level of the scientist initiating a study. These presuppositions often remain implicit and therefore, are seldom challenged. Holton (1996) calls them the thematic hypothesis or more simply, the themata of science. These themata form the kernel of scientific concepts and over a sustained period become paradigmatic in nature. They dictate what is understood by a concept, what is accepted as the right method of studying the concept, and even what perspectives would be rejected as 'unscientific'. This section will argue that the thematic hypothesis of income has become paradigmatic in the context of poverty and has introduced several implicit, yet problematic assumptions that debilitate the scope of psychological inquiries on poverty.

Poverty is an abstract idea, a life condition — in short, a social phenomenon — and is therefore immensely difficult to capture in all its complexity. Working with Holton's idea of thematisation in science, the monetary thematisation of psychological research on poverty can be demonstrated to result in two critical consequences: development of false binaries between 'poor' and 'not-poor' people; and the study of poverty becoming synonymous with studies *on* people living in income scarcity.

1.3.1. Development of a false binary

The monetary theory is committed to the idea of poverty lines (PL), which are income thresholds separating people categorised as poor from those who are not. This creates a binary in the society — the theoretical separation between people below and above the PL. This conceptual segregation is pervasive in public discourse, academic research, and policy on poverty (see for e.g., GOI, 2013, 2014). However, the tendency to use 'poor' and 'not-poor' as legitimate categories for psychological research is of primary interest to this discussion. Two arguments can be made to problematise this binary and its use in social science research on poverty:

1.3.1.1. Empty categories

First and foremost, what can be said about the very nature of this categorisation? In the context of poverty, there has been much debate on categorisation of people within the sociological class theory. The idea of social class became widely popular with the Marxist notion of class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, getting further bolstered with contributions from other social theorists — most notably, through Max Weber's inclusion of 'social status' as a fundamental means of social stratification (for an excellent account of class theory, see Dahrendorf, 1959). Subsequently, the place of class as a relevant conceptual

framework for sociological analysis has been critiqued heavily and has even been argued to be irrelevant in modern societies (cf., Hodgetts & Griffin, 2015; see, Pakulski & Waters, 1996). Fundamentally, social-class and poverty lines are means of generating categories in social sciences and a developing opinion questions the relevance of such social categories. Gillespie, Howarth, and Cornish (2012) argue that social categories (i) depend on perspectives adopted, (ii) tend to be historically dynamic, (iii) people tend to move between categories, and (iv) tend to constitute the phenomenon itself. These four arguments throw the objections to the monetary binary between the 'poor' and the 'non poor' in sharp relief.

The first arguments suggests that the monetary theory is one of the many perspectives on poverty — as discussed earlier, numerous other perspectives on poverty exist and within the confines of their own framework, they provide equally compelling conceptualisations of poverty. The issue, then, becomes of the relevance of these categories for research in psychology. As the chapter proceeds, a clear case for their limited relevance will emerge.

The second argument about historic dynamism has already been demonstrated earlier in the chapter. The concept of poverty has remained malleable throughout the course of history — what is understood as 'poverty' has constantly evolved along with the social order. This means that in the present, the monetary theory is most commonly used to define the category 'poor', yet, the category 'poor' has not always carried the same meaning — or for that matter, has not included the same types of people. Its relevance is indeed historic and as such, the category of 'poor' should not be treated with essentialism.

The third argument framing the limitations of the category is perhaps the most straightforward: a person may be 'income-poor' during a phase of unemployment but upon regaining employment will leave the category suddenly. This further underlines the dangers of making essentialist assumptions regarding monetarily defined category of 'poor'. The fourth objection that categories interfere with the phenomena itself will be taken up in much greater detail in §1.3.2.

The examples of an indiscriminate use of poor as a category are plentiful in psychological research on poverty. Take for example a recent research on the cognitive functioning of the poor where the authors conclude "it appears that poverty itself reduces cognitive capacity" (Mani, Mullainathan, Shafir, & Zhao, 2013, p. 976). The study included a laboratory experiment where 'rich' and 'poor' American participants were involved in economic games and their performances were compared. The category 'poor' was defined using a median split on the average household

income, divided by the square root of the household size. It becomes pertinent to question the underlying meaningfulness of this categorisation. The only meaning that can be ascribed to the category 'poor' is, as Gillespie et al. (2012) argue, that the category invented here constituted the phenomena (poverty) fully. Further still, the same research involved field experiments that were argued to provide ecological validity to the study. In the field study, the category 'poor' was generated even more arbitrarily: the authors take pre and post-harvest financial status of Indian sugarcane farmers into account and argue that farmers were more likely to take loans pre-harvest — in essence, the authors regarded taking of pre-harvest loans as 'poverty'. Using categories of 'poor' generated in such a fashion, the research concludes that poverty reduces cognitive capacity. In doing so, instead of acknowledging the transitory nature of categories, such research formulations entrench the categorisation.

The trend of using '*poor*' as an essentialist category can be observed in a plethora of psychological research in India. For instance, research exploring cognitive abilities of the poor (Rath, 1972; Rath, Dash, & Dash, 1979; Sinha, 1977; Sinha & Shukla, 1974; L. B. Tripathi & Misra, 1975, 1976); perception, learning and memory of the poor (Misra, 1982; Misra & Shukla, 1984); personality and motivation of the poor (Mohan & Gill, 1988; Mohan & Nalwa, 1992; Mohan & Verma, 1990) etc. begin by assuming that the being income-poor is a legitimate category for researching these traits. They begin with a monetarily defined poverty; yet, the findings of the research are used to comment on the phenomena of poverty. The degree of extrapolation from empty categories to reflect on the phenomenon itself is quite simply, staggering.

The chapter will continue to interrogate the relevance and utility of such conclusions on poverty in subsequent sections. In the meantime, it is sufficient to underline that the thematisation of poverty with a monetary theory not only generates but also legitimizes the categorical binary of poor and non-poor.[8] This leads to the next thematic assumption in poverty research in psychology — the illusion of homogeneity.

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[8] A limited selection of research studies is picked to reinforce the arguments in the chapter. A systematic review of psychological research on poverty would be an attempt to reinvent the wheel. Several excellent reviews document both the course and nature of engagement psychology has had with poverty—globally (Carr & Sloan, 2003; Lehning & Turner, 2007) as well as in India (Misra & Tripathi, 2004). These review works are in agreement with the points made herein.

1.3.1.2. Illusions of homogeneity

As a direct consequence of thematised use of 'income-poor' as a category, psychological research tends to regard the poor as a homogenous group. The national poverty line of India notes the presence of over 278 million poor people in rural India. Yet, what is common to the lives of all these poor Indians? That they all live on less than the national average income cut off point of 672.8 rupees a month is perhaps the only common thing in their respective lives.[9] Apart from that, there is little similarity between the poverty experiences of a poor person in rural Kerala, rural Himachal Pradesh, rural Bihar, or even among poor people in each of these provinces.[10] Admittedly, the psychological tradition of researching poverty is not interested in examining the lived experiences of poverty; yet, it is hard to overlook the obvious problems in assuming homogeneity amongst poor people as a group. An easy way of highlighting the problematic is using the multidimensional approaches to poverty to show how the experiences of poor people depend on the local contexts (Alkire & Santos, 2011).

The multidimensional perspective considers everyday manifestations of poverty on three broad dimensions: health, education, and standard of living. Each of these dimensions comprise of several indicators — health includes child mortality, and malnutrition; education includes at least 5 years of schooling, and out of school children; living standards include electricity, sanitation, cooking fuel, flooring material, safe drinking water, and assets (ibid). Let us take the example of healthcare as an illustration. Poor people around the world have been noted to have the worst health indicators and health related expenditure is one of the biggest sources of people falling into monetary poverty (Krishna, 2010). In India, the national Government promises free healthcare and medication to everyone and what is more, there are several healthcare policies for the poor specifically (see Reddy et al., 2011 for a discussion on some of these initiatives). Yet, this broad policy framework and the inherent promises can only be realised as a function of the efficiency with which they are delivered locally. In brutally realistic terms, the window of good health for poor people depends upon the efficiency of their local Primary Healthcare Centre (PHC) — neither all PHCs function well, nor are all of them equally defunct. This means that the experience of poor people in two villages — one served by a well-functioning PHC and the

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[9] The number of poor people as well as the income level is based on the official report of the Planning Commission of India (see, GOI, 2012). This is the latest 'official' data available from the Government of India.

[10] Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, and Bihar are provinces in India, located in different corners of the country. These specific provinces are used for illustration as they have radically different developmental, climatic, and geographic profiles.

other not — would differ drastically with the local context being the only determining factor. The significance and richness of such a localised understanding is lost within psychological research where the thematised categorical binary between 'income-poor' and 'non-poor' leads to the inherent assumption of homogeneity of experience.

Further still, such local factors are not just institutional but can also be geographical. For example, Bihar is among the poorest of Indian states and lags far behind Kerala on most developmental indicators. However, continuing the theme of good health, nearly 87 per cent of Bihar's population has access to safe drinking water as compared to only 23.4 per cent of Kerala (Seetharam & Rao, 2009). The reasons are purely geographical — Bihar is blessed with an excellent supply of groundwater and depends on hand pumps, which provide safe drinking water at little cost. In contrast, Kerala has a much poorer water table and depends on government-supplied tap water, a provision that is rare in rural areas (ibid). This means that a poor person in Bihar is more likely to have access to safe drinking water; whereas, in Kerala the poor remain disproportionately disadvantaged. Such environmental aspects are not merely geographical footnotes; instead, they tend to have a far-reaching impact on the lives of poor. If portable water is not readily available, the poor usually have to spend more time, effort, and even money to meet this need. As a result, portable water may become a more central aspect of poverty experiences in Kerala than in Bihar.

In conclusion, the thematisation of monetary poverty tends to create a false illusion of homogeneity among the poor. While there is no dearth of constructivist research that pay insufficient cognisance to the social context, the tendency to homogenise is perhaps the biggest charge that can be levied against psychological research. As examples in the previous segment demonstrate, evidence generated with research *on* a limited number of poor participants is generalised over all poor people through thematised assumptions about the monetary nature of poverty. Far from being homogeneous, the phenomenon of poverty reveals itself in extremely local contexts and differs remarkably between different social contexts. Studies discussed earlier are excellent examples of the tendency to gloss over the specific contexts of poverty and instead make claims about poverty as a phenomenon. The two consequences of using the binary between 'income-poor' and 'not-poor' discussed and critiqued in this segment take us to the doorsteps of the second consequence of thematisation of poverty research with monetary conceptualisation of poverty: what is being studied and found about poverty?

1.3.2. What is being studied and found about poverty?

1.3.2.1. What is being studied?

With the problematic of monetarily thematised use of 'poor' as a research category to which people are assigned, it is inevitable to ask: What is being studied in such instances — the social problem of poverty or individuals who fail to meet the income criterion?

Needless to say, a study of poverty will involve people who will be classified as 'poor' using one or another definition of poverty and this is not necessarily an axiomatic critique. However, this becomes problematic when a poor individual becomes the focus of inquiry and the wider phenomenon of poverty is lost from sight. While similar charges can be made against other sub-disciplines in social sciences, to keep the arguments and the critique coherent, the present section will discuss only psychological research and remain agnostic to others. Once again, instead of systematically reviewing psychological research on poverty (see footnote 7), this review focuses on the problematic of thematisation of monetary poverty and how it has made the research on poverty a case of researching individuals that fail to meet a monetary criterion.

The monetary thematisation posits poverty to be a case of lacking income, and income maps out on individuals and households. Not surprisingly, then, the most pervasive model of psychological research on poverty has been dispositional in nature where the characteristics of the 'income-poor' individuals are the focus of inquiries (Stephenson, 2006). Research within such a tradition ends up treating 'income-poverty' as a research variable. On one hand, studies have used poverty as an independent variable and measured its impact on other variables like happiness (Amato & Zuo, 1992; Graham, 2005); scholastic achievement (Payne & Biddle, 2012) etc. On the other hand, poverty is used as a dependent variable where it is explained as an outcome of manipulations in variables like unemployment and motivation (Feldstein, 1998; Xue & Zhong, 2003). The very idea of imagining poverty as a research variable indicates that the larger phenomenon — poverty as a social problem and a life condition — is long lost in psychological research. Poverty has severe detrimental effects on the individual; however, it is not limited only to the individual — it is a social problem. Poverty does not refer merely to a condition of economic scarcity — it refers to the sum total of deprivations that people and communities experience in their lifetime (cf. Sen, 1999). When treated as a research variable, the larger phenomenon is seldom studied; instead, individuals who fit a pre-defined income criterion remain the objects under the research lens.

1.3.2.2. …and what is being found?

Psychological research on poverty routinely tends to determine the pervasive and universal aspects of poverty, and using poverty as an independent variable, often concludes to having discerned how poverty *impacts* people (see Carr & Sloan, 2003). Yet, the link is not straightforward and it is essential to interrogate this further and ask what do such research tell us about poverty? Continuing with the theme of researching the the impact of poverty on cognitive abilities of the poor, we routinely find them conclude that poverty has detrimental impact on people; yet, such conclusions are logically questionable. Cognitive deficiencies can be argued to emerge as a result of deficient dietary intake that most *poor* people have[11]. However, strictly speaking, insufficient nutrition is not limited only to people living in poverty but can be equally observed among monetarily well-off people (Bellisle, 2004; Brown & Pollitt, 1996). In that spirit, the finding that the income-poor have underdeveloped cognitive abilities reveals nothing novel about poverty but only reiterates a well-established importance of good dietary intake and its impact on cognitive abilities of the individual.

By imposing correlational or causal linkages to poverty, studies conducted on poor people tend to entrench observations that are common even amongst people who are not income-poor. A fine example of this trend is reflected in the highly influential, and controversial, thesis on 'culture of poverty' in sociological anthropology (as outlined by Lewis, 1959, 1961, 1966, 1971). Using his ethnographic observation of poor families, Lewis proposed that poverty produces a 'culture of poverty' that is marked by some 70 odd traits including "a strong feeling of marginality, of helplessness, of dependency, of not belonging" (Lewis, 1971, p. 17). Lewis also proposed that this poverty subculture is not only debilitating to the current generation, but is also passed on to the next generation (see, 1966, especially, pp. 41-45)[12]. Subsequent works have

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[11] Needless to say, there are several other factors beyond dietary deficiency: lack of exposure to education, pre-natal deficiency etc. It is for the sake of argument that only one potential factor is being presented here. The same logical arguments would apply regardless of the number of dimensions selected for the regress.

[12] The presentation of the Lewisian tradition of poverty research here is simplistic and is used only to make a theoretical argument. The culture of poverty thesis is a much more curious mix of left wing ideological theories juxtaposed with a positivist epistemology. In *La Vida,* Lewis notes that culture of poverty tends to grow and flourish in societies with "a cash economy, wage labour, and production for profit", indicating his charge against neoliberal capitalism (1966, p.43). Indeed, Lewis himself has been noted as a 'man of the left' (Harrington, 1984, p.203-204) and the thesis as having Marxist roots (Harvey & Reed, 1996). Culture of poverty has its fair share of critics who have developed a strong opposition to the idea of an intergenerational transfer of culture and subsequent systematic research tends to problematise his stand; however, there are some very useful insights on how poor families adapt to their conditions of living. An early critique of culture of poverty is available in Valentine

questioned this sweeping thesis and it has been demonstrated that a large number of these traits are common to people who are not in the least poor (Valentine, 1968, pp. 117–119). Similarly, little evidence is available for intergenerational transfer of the subculture of poverty (Carmon, 1985). Such illustrations underline the argument that repeated examinations of cognitions, emotions, personality traits etc., of people who are labeled poor using a monetary criterion reveal little about poverty as a phenomenon. The causal linkages, can, in turn, be reduced to some other construct that may be prevalent among people living in poverty but is seldom exclusive to them. This portends a worrying trend in psychological SP where the findings do not tell anything novel about poverty as a social phenomenon and problem — owing to the thematisation of the concept, the manifestations of poverty are mistaken for the phenomenon.

This links back to Gillespie et al.'s (2012) fourth critique of social categories. Categorisation of people on the basis of their income leads to an absolute reification and "which, via the legitimacy of science, naturalizes them" (ibid, p.396) to the point where the categories interfere with the phenomenon itself. In essence, poverty provides excellent illustrations where Gerald Holton's observation regarding the thematisation of science can be seen in the extreme — the proxied measurement of a concept begins to acquire the status of the phenomenon itself. As this review has demonstrated, once the simple operationalisation of poverty using income as a proxy is afforded the status of the phenomenon of poverty, generic conclusions — causal as well as correlational — are easy to draw, as psychological SP tends to do.

1.4. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the concept of poverty from a number of vantage points and identified a range of issues in researching it in the social sciences. First, it was demonstrated that the concept of poverty is linked to the social world and as such, has undergone tremendous evolution. Around the start of the 20th century, the idea of income began dominating the concept of poverty; yet, the monetary perspective is one of the many potential approaches to theorising poverty. Second, it was illustrated that the monetary theory has thematised the concept of poverty resulting in several constraints on the nature and scope of psychological research on poverty. As a result, the measurement of an abstract concept (poverty identified through income) tied to a specific theoretical framework (the monetary approach to poverty) is often mistaken for the phenomenon itself (poverty).

(1968), and several, more recent, efforts have also questioned some of the most basic ideas that underpin the thesis (Carmon, 1985; Coward, Feagin, & Williams, 1974; Harvey & Reed, 1996).

Inherently, this is a metaphysical issue and needs to be tackled head-on to reveal how in following an individualised, variable-*ised*, asocial, and decontextualised approach, psychology has tended to put the cart before the horse. The next chapter addresses the ontological and epistemological issues related to the study of poverty in the social sciences and argues that a sociological SP, on the contrary, must develop a socially informed and context-sensitive approach to studying poverty as a phenomenon and a problem in the social world.

CHAPTER 2

ON POVERTY AS
A SOCIAL OBJECT
Ontological & epistemological considerations

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Building on the critique generated in the previous chapter, this chapter begins by examining the problematic of poverty in an ontological light. Using Bergman's method of ontological assays, it argues that monetary scarcity is only one of the many irreducible constituents in the ontological existence of poverty. Subsequently, the metaphysical weakness of conceptualising poverty in a purely monetary sense and thereby, the redundancy of framing psychological research using monetary arguments, is outlined. The ontological examination duly evaluates the existing research paradigms in both positivist and constructivist traditions.

Having completed the critique of the existing research approaches to poverty, the chapter outlines the ontological and epistemological framework of the present work. Using Karl Popper's ontological pluralism, the tenets of apprehending poverty within sociological SP are established. It is argued that poverty needs to be considered as an abstract idea that attains shape through human meaning making. The chapter demonstrates that within Popperian three world ontology, this reformulation does not trivialise the lived realities of poverty. It instead argues that the social construction of poverty has real consequences in the lives of people and must be regarded with contingent realism.

The chapter then proposes the epistemological framework of this project. It argues that SP, must, regard poverty as a social object. Subsequently, the characteristics of poverty as a social object are outlined, followed by an examination of the conceptual terrain and commitments of this epistemological position.

This chapter lays the foundations of this project and is crucial to identifying its theoretical framework, the research agenda, and methods (Chapter 3 and 4), and the interpretation and implications of the findings of this research (Chapters 5 to 9).

2.1. ON THE ONTOLOGY OF POVERTY

An ontological caricature of poverty deals with the nature and the form of poverty as a reality and by extrapolation, interrogates what can be known about it. The fundamental ontological question is: can poverty be said to exist? The broad choices in answering this question are between the ontological positions of realism and relativism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The monetary theory leans towards realism and assumes that poverty exists in the form of monetary scarcity and its outcomes. From the standpoint of ontological relativism, the answer depends on a number of factors including the beliefs and values of a society — as a result, multiple *versions* of poverty are possible. The ontological split between realism and relativism, put loosely, translates to paradigmatic dictates and distinction between positivism and constructivism (ibid) and how the phenomenon of poverty is researched. Crudely, psychological approaches tend to be positivist as well as relativist while most work in sociological SP tends to be relativist. This chapter examines both paradigmatic positions and points to the prevailing confusion about the ontology of poverty and its impact on research in psychology — it begins with the positivist paradigm in the first instance.

2.1.1. Ontological insufficiency of the positivist paradigm

With the monetary theory, the ontological position on poverty is that of realism. In every society, there are people whose income falls below the threshold that defines poverty — hence, poverty is *whatever* that exists among such individuals. As explained in the previous chapter, the positivist research in psychological SP tends to use the income criterion as a definitive identifier of poverty, which it studies amongst individuals thus identified. However, this involves implicit assumptions about the ontological nature of 'income/money'. The assumptions can be demonstrated using Gustav Bergman's method of ontological assays.

Bergman (1992) regards ontology as *an account* for *everything there is (existents)* in terms of *simples*. For Bergman, ontology seeks the understanding of complex entities that are referred to as existents (α), in terms of entities which cannot be reduced any further — these irreducible entities are called simples (β) and such an analysis is referred to as an assay. In other words, an existent (α), during an assay can yield β, which is a simple; or a set of entities F_1 which contains some simples ($\beta_1, \beta_2, ... \beta_n$) and other entities that upon further assays yield further simples. Assays are relatively easier to conduct with existents that are physical objects: an alloy, brass for example, during an assay will yield the metals copper and zinc with each constituent metal being further reduced to subsequent smaller entities eventually leading to subatomic particles as the

fundamental simples. While difficult, where does a similar assay on the ontology of poverty take us[13]?

Taking poverty as an existent $\alpha_{poverty}$ and subjecting it to an ontological assay, one can begin accounting for its simples. At the risk of over simplification, within the monetary theory, poverty can be assayed in terms of a set of entities F_1 (lack of resources, bad living conditions, lack of access to healthcare, lack of education etc.).[14] These are not simples in Bergman's ontology but it is possible to reduce these further. In a limited, yet logically consistent regression, bad living conditions, poor health, and lack of education can all be seen as resulting from a lack of income. In such an assay, poverty can be reduced to a lack of income/money (β_{money}) as the constitutive simple. Ontologically, then, poverty can be understood to exist as the lack of money. However, such an assay is logically unsound — two fundamental objections can be made to demonstrate the ontological insufficiency of a monetary approach.

2.1.1.1. First objection. The first argument against this assay is that strictly speaking, money is not an ontological simple. Searle's (1995) well known illustration of money in *Construction of Social Reality* demonstrates that in its own right, it cannot exist independently of human conventions. Money has no independent ontological realism. Coins and pieces of paper do not act as money because of an ontologically simple feature they possess but because of the status function that is socially ascribed upon them (ibid). The ontological existence of money itself is founded on the larger commitment to a social universe where goods and services are exchanged using money as the convention of exchange. In other words, the status of money as an ontological simple is vested in an ontological commitment to a particular nature of society. Such commitments create a meta-ontological problem and in this regard, Quine (1948) has suggested that when ontological commitments are demonstrated, there need not be a debate on *whether* something exists as an ontological simple or not. Therefore, there is merit in momentarily overlooking this objection as most modern societies are unquestionably intertwined with the

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[13] The assay will assume the context of a modern society, unlike societies where the concepts of money and income do not exist. There are several contexts where the assay will not apply. For instance, in a hypothetical society where there is no concept of ownership of material objects, money, social hierarchies, political systems, etc. – in a world where humans live in direct exchange with nature without a socio-political and economic code in place – the very concept of poverty may become impossible to discern. In essence, the assay presented here is a narrow view on the modern world and the ontological position of poverty therein.

[14] The list can become endless. It is only indicative for the purposes of developing a discussion.

convention of money. The second argument is far more central in exposing the ontological problem and putting it in sharper relief.

2.1.1.2. Second objection. The second argument against this assay is more destabilising. With ontological commitments, the lack of money can be argued to be a constitutive simple of poverty; however, money is neither a logically *necessary* nor a *sufficient* simple of *poverty*. A few examples can demonstrate this objection better. Let us assume that in an assay, poverty ($\alpha_{poverty}$) reveals a set of entities that includes the lack of access to healthcare (F1). The F1 *can* be reduced to β_{money} in a finite set of instances — a certain individual, Adam, can experience poverty because he did not have money to see a doctor. However, even in such instances, can the lack of money (β_{money}), be said to be *necessarily* linked to the lack of healthcare access in poverty? Similarly, can the lack of money (β_{money}), be argued as the *sufficient* reason for the lack of healthcare in poverty? In other words, is β_{money} a logically necessary and sufficient simple of $\alpha_{poverty}$?

Let us test this hypothesis using extreme case formulations. Adam may lack access to emergency medical treatment and experience poverty (as lack of healthcare access). However, in a number of cases such an experience of poverty may not be due to a lack of money — Adam may well be a rich person but still experience poverty as the lack of emergency medical treatment for a number of non-monetary reasons. For e.g., a well-equipped hospital may not be available in his town, the roads from his village to the hospital in the town may be too bad for ambulances or other emergency vehicles to ply. Thus, the lack of β_{money} is not a *necessary* condition for experiencing poverty. Similarly, despite lacking sufficient monetary resources, John may receive an expensive medical treatment because of his personal friendship with the doctor and as a result, may not experience poverty (as the lack of access to required healthcare). Thus, the absence of β_{money} is not a *sufficient* condition for poverty, just as it presence was not *sufficient* for non-poverty in Adam's case earlier. These illustrations demonstrate that even within the monetary theory of poverty, β_{money} is at best just *one possible* simple and the $\alpha_{poverty}$ may contain several other sub-existents — like social capital — that may not eventually be reduced to monetary simples.

In essence, the ontological existence of poverty even within the monetary theory may not *necessarily* and logically *sufficiently* depend on the lack of money/income. Much less radically, the same thesis can be restated to indicate that in modern societies, in a finite number of cases, poverty does exist in the form of monetary lack. However, it does not necessarily exist in the lack of money and conversely, non-poverty does not necessarily result from monetary

sufficiency. This means that even with Quine's solution of ontological commitment, there are cases where β_{money} will not be the *only* outcome of an ontological assay of $\alpha_{poverty}$.

2.1.2. Ontological confusion within the constructivist paradigm

In the constructivist paradigm, poverty is approached with ontological relativism. Guba and Lincoln (1994) define ontological relativism as a framework where 'realities' and 'beings' are:

"…apprehended in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature (although elements are often shared among many individuals and even across cultures), and dependent on their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions." (pp. 110-111).

The extract is worth citing in full for a number of reasons. First, it asserts that the ontological structure of an object is dependent on human constructions which, in turn, are dependent on the experiences of people. Second, it acknowledges that while these constructions may be shared, an individual can be the level of apprehending these realities. Ontological relativism on poverty has developed rapidly and can be observed in the qualitative research on poverty in sociological literature (for a good review, see Newman & Massengill, 2006). Such research adhere to the relativist ontology outlined in Guba and Lincoln's definition above, insofar as they seek to examine human meaning making on poverty at the level of individuals, groups, and communities. However, much of this research suffers from an ontological–epistemological mismatch which can be best described as an ontological confusion that rests in how these qualitative inquiries are initiated and conducted.

As argued in the previous chapter, most psychological research on poverty begin by identifying poor people — most commonly, this is done using a monetary criterion. When a monetary criterion is used to identify the poor for qualitative research on experiences and social constructions of poverty, the inquiry merely reproduces an ontologically bound simple (β_{money}). More fundamentally, however, this involves a metaphysical mistake. This section synthesizes a number of arguments made so far in the thesis and in order to expose the metaphysical error, it will once again begins with a Bergmannian analysis of ontology of poverty. An assay of poverty existent $\alpha_{poverty}$ can be summed as [β_{money}; $\beta_1…\beta_2…\beta_3…\beta_n$]. One of the simples of $\alpha_{poverty}$ is β_{money} but constructivist research acknowledges the existence of other simples ($\beta_1…\beta_2…\beta_3…\beta_n$). These other *betas* could be a number of constructs like lack of voice, oppression, ostracism etc. What exactly the other *betas* are is irrelevant to this discussion — it is sufficient to note that a constructionist epistemology acknowledges non-monetary simples to $\alpha_{poverty}$.

On the one hand, such qualitative works approach poverty as an ontologically relativist object and explore the constructions made by individuals and groups. On the other hand, they use a monetary criterion to identify poor people who become participants of the study. In doing so, such inquiries import an ontologically realist distinction between the income-poor and the non-poor — a distinction that belongs to a different paradigm altogether. This leads to an epistemological–ontological inconsistency — simultaneously, there is both rejection and acceptance of a realist worldview on poverty. On the one hand, realist interpretations of poverty are rejected in seeking to explore poverty through meaning making of research participants; on the other hand, when these participants are identified using a monetary criterion, the same realist interpretation is embraced.

Returning to Bergman, this means that what most qualitative poverty research actually examine is not the existent $\alpha_{poverty}$, in terms of simples other than β_{money} but $\alpha_{poverty}$ apprehended using manifestations of β_{money}. In other words, when research on poverty begins as research on people identified *as poor* using a monetary criterion, it produces knowledge about only one of its simples and not on the phenomenon *per se* — it reproduces a single *constitutive* element in the ontological existent of poverty. What is more, this specific constitutive element is an unnecessary and flawed assumption within the constructivist paradigm — if it were to be explained away as such. It is flawed because of the circularity involved: a research cannot seek to understand the nature and characteristics of a phenomenon (poverty) while it already assumes knowing it (through identifying the poor using the monetary criterion). Reflections on the other betas (again, whatever they may be), that takes place in qualitative research with such a beginning is always through the looking glass already stained by β_{money} as the criterion for selecting individuals and groups whose constructions are sought.

A discussion on the source of this confusion is beyond the scope of this dissertation but in line with the discussion in the previous chapter, this can be ascribed to a deep founded monetary thematisation of poverty in the social world. At this point, it is important to reiterate that this is not a critique of econometric and quantitative research with the poor in the social sciences — as discussed earlier, owing to their ontological commitment, they are legitimate approaches to apprehending poverty.

The current analysis is critical for a sociological SP perspective on poverty as it identifies a flaw in qualitative inquiries that purport to resist the monetary thematisation of poverty research. The most prominent example of the qualitative movement in poverty research appeared in the

form of Participatory Poverty Assessment research pioneered by the World Bank — the culmination of this approach was in the publication of *poor* people's perspective on poverty in two landmark volumes: *Voices of the poor* (Narayan, Chambers, Shah, & Petesch, 2000; Narayan, Patel, Schafft, Rademacher, & Koch-Schulte, 1999). These volumes analysed poor people's perspective on poverty from 47 different countries and remain the biggest study of this kind. Yet, upon closer scrutiny, the *Voices of the poor* seem to reproduce the same thematised approach to poverty. Take for example the methodology of the study in Tunisia — one of the 47 countries where empirical research was conducted (World Bank, 1995). The identification of the poor for participating in this study was done using a methodology which was based on a monetary poverty line[15]. The poor, thus identified, were then consulted for their perspectives and experiences of poverty. As argued earlier, there is a clear conflict between the epistemology and methodology, and the implicit ontological commitment to a monetary distinction between the *poor* and the *non-poor*. In isolating this critique it is not implied that the qualitative data generated to understand the perspective of poor people are illegitimate. There is no denying that in modern societies β_{money} remains as a key constitutive simple of $\alpha_{poverty}$ and hence, the studies do merit a relative degree of legitimacy. The point of this critique rests elsewhere — ontologically, such research falls short of examining $\alpha_{poverty}$ and instead examines only one of the constituents of the existent — β_{money}.

Further still, other studies in the same *Voices of the poor* project, did not directly use an income criterion to identify the poor. For example, in Vietnam, the identification of the poor for consultations was based on an assessment of their well-being which was proxied by material assets and financial, human, social, and natural capitals (World Bank, 1999). Superficially, these seem to include items that go beyond β_{money} in terms of accessing and researching poverty using other non-monetary ontological simples. Yet, upon closer examination, it appears that monetary aspect still remained at heart of all these other determinants of poverty assessment. Human capital was interpreted as "the quantity and quality of a household's labour force and, importantly, the ratio between the number of active laborers [sic] and consumers in a household" (ibid, p.13). Similarly, social capital was determined with regards to "the opportunity to attend community and social events such as weddings, funerals and feast days, which, in all sites, carries a high economic cost" (ibid, p.14). Clearly, the dimensions that appear to go beyond β_{money} are still reducible and tied to a monetary imagination.

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[15] The said poverty line included a food poverty line and additional allowances for non-food expenditures. See pp. 1-7 of the document referenced.

In conclusion, such thematised approaches to qualitative research on poverty embody an ontological confusion along with a metaphysical mismatch between ontology and epistemology. They also demonstrate the degree and strength of monetary thematisation of poverty and the influence that it exercises on public and scientific imagination. Francis Bacon warned that scientific pursuits are often held hostage by what he famously called *idola mentis* – idols of the mind (see Jardine & Silverthrone, 2003). These idols of the mind are false images that block the development of science and restrict the emergence of new directions. Among the idols of mind, are the idols of theatre — *idola theatri* — that are "the illusions which have made their homes in men's minds from the various dogmas of different philosophies, and even from mistaken rules of demonstration" (Jardine & Silverthrone, 2003, p. 42). From the systematic examination conducted so far in this thesis, it can be asserted with confidence that the scientific pursuit on poverty, especially in the constructivist social sciences, tends to suffer from *idola theatri*. As argued throughout, a large majority of scientific studies share common assumptions about poverty and poor people. The next section engages in a commentary on the broad implications of this for a sociological SP of poverty and begins to map the framework of the present project.

2.1.3. Implications for a Sociological SP of poverty

So far this thesis has traced the concept of poverty and demonstrated its strong links to the general socio-economic, political, and moral discourse of the world. Common trends in psychological research on poverty have been noted and the positivist and constructivist paradigms of poverty research were ontologically reviewed. On the basis of the analysis undertaken so far, this section discusses the overall implications for developing a SP of poverty.

First, on the basis of the ontological examination undertaken in this chapter and the basic tenets of sociological SP identified at the start of the Chapter 1, it can be asserted that a sociological SP of poverty needs to be relativist in its ontology and constructivist in its apprehension of poverty. There are several reasons for this. As it was demonstrated in § 2.1.2, the combination of relativist ontology with a realist apprehension of poverty is a metaphysical error. Further still, as the Bergmannian assay revealed, ontologically, the existent of poverty has a number of other elements that cannot be ultimately reduced to monetary simples. Thus, the task for a SP of poverty is to identify its own core niche in the studying the ontological existent of poverty. Needless to say, with the complexities inherent in the concept, a single study cannot strive to identify and research an exhaustive list of β simples of poverty. However, using the rich conceptual base available, it is possible to develop a unique field of study for poverty in SP.

Second, a sociological SP of poverty need not seek an absolute description of what poverty is. Developing a description of all the simples of poverty would be an impossible task — even if their identification were possible in the first place. Yet, with rigour and purpose, it can illuminate the crevices that psychological SP has consistently missed. With its commitment towards analysing the phenomenon at the interface of the individual and society, and illuminating the bi-directionality of the relationship, sociological SP can rehabilitate poverty to the social domain where it rightfully belongs. Similarly, this approach cannot *measure* poverty but as Moscovici (1988) recommends, it can theorise an approach to apprehend it as a social phenomenon and proceed to describe it. These descriptions of poverty will always be contextual in sociological SP as its goals must include a commitment to illustrating the social dynamics of the phenomenon.

Finally, an honest and reflexive SP needs to avoid the mistakes and fallacies that have, as illustrated, crept into constructivist research on poverty. It need not identify or distinguish poor as a category in the social world — in a constructivist framework, the meanings of being poor are to be found in the constructions of people and a research project must not impose the category on people to begin with. Whilst any effort will end up regarding some people as poor in the society, a commitment to sociological SP demands that the categories are meaningfully populated, carefully used, and developed as a product of the inquiry. Similarly, it should be expected that common experiences of poverty emerge among people; yet, these communalities need not necessarily point towards a pervasive feature of poverty as a phenomenon.

The stand that the project commits to is not an easy one and raises some fundamental questions. The first question may come from ontological dualists accusing the project of adopting a strong form of constructivism and subsequently doubting the very existence of poverty in the social world. Where do the ontological roots of a sociological SP of poverty rest? Secondly, what would the exact field of study of this approach to poverty be — what is the niche area for a SP of poverty? Further still, what exactly would poverty be conceived as, prior to being apprehended empirically? Thirdly, what theoretical choices will scaffold the development of this perspective on poverty and will they meet the Occam's razor of parsimony with respect to the ontological position and the subject field of this research?

2.2. TOWARDS A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF POVERTY

Relativist ontology of poverty raises a number of questions: Will such a SP deny the material existence of poverty and seek to find it only among constructions of individuals and groups? Does it fall short of acknowledging harsh realities of poverty like hunger and illiteracy and instead push the concept purely into the domain of abstraction and socially constructed ideas? In the process, does it reduce poverty to an object whose existence depends only upon the meanings that people ascribe to it? Does it deny poverty of any or all of the objectivity that the monetary perspectives and positivists attach to it? The solution is in adopting an ontological position that can support the weight of these demands — Karl Popper's World 3 provides a viable position.

In his seminal 1978 Tanner lecture, Karl Popper outlined his pluralist ontology that was built around the notion of World 3 objects. Popper (1978) proposes an ontological universe comprising of three interacting sub-universes that he referred to as World 1, World 2, and World 3. According to Popper, World 1 comprises of physical objects that have a tangible presence to human sense organs. They extend in space and time and include things like human body, a piece of rock etc. World 2 comprises of the psychological, emotional, and mental sub-universe that includes things like feelings, thoughts, and perceptions of people. Popper's World 1 corresponds to the ontological position of material monists who reduce concepts to their physical realisation. His World 2 corresponds to the dualists' emphasis that conscious experience is central to human existence and cannot be reduced to physical entities. To this more traditional separation between World 1 and World 2 objects, Popper adds his conceptualisation of a parallel but interacting sub-universe of World 3 objects. These objects are abstractions that are products of human mind. They often find their embodiment in tangible objects in World 1 and World 2. Languages, scientific theories, works of art and fiction are some examples of World 3 objects. Their relevance and separation from objects in the other two worlds can be understood using Popper's example of Shakespeare's works. A particular volume of Shakespeare's works is a physical object and belongs to World 1 — there may be dissimilarities among different physical copies of the book. However, insofar as Shakespeare's works contain a particular sequence of words, sentences, and ideas, all faithful reproductions of it are exactly same. At this level, as a product of human mind, Shakespeare's works are a World 3 object and remain logically distinct from their World 1 manifestations in the form of printed books. Needless to say, the need to separate World 3 objects from World 1 objects is essential to grasp the intangible products of the human mind, without confusing them with their physical manifestations.

This project is founded is this ontology which is relativist, yet, apposite for conceptualising poverty within the spirit of sociological SP that this thesis is committed to.

2.2.1. Poverty as a World 3 object: The ontology of poverty

Regardless of the definition one chooses, the idea of poverty involves abstraction. It is through the contents of thought — often the scientific theory chosen to apprehend poverty — that the abstract idea of poverty is formalised and given shape. For a researcher approaching it with a monetary theory, poverty is living under a certain income threshold (for e.g. Ravallion, Datt, & van De Wall, 1991) and income becomes the identifying trait of this abstract object. Similarly, for someone apprehending poverty using the framework of capabilities, poverty is the sum total of all deprivations that individuals face during their lifetime (for e.g. Alkire, 2007). In essence, what is conceived as poverty is a matter of the content of human thought, making poverty a World 3 object.

However, this does not mean that poverty has only an imagined and constructed existence. With Popperian pluralism, it is easy to formulate poverty as having manifestations in World 1 and World 2 — the realms of tangible physical manifestation and of human feelings respectively. Like most World 3 objects, poverty is "embodied, or physically realized, in one, or in many, World 1 physical objects" (Popper, 1978, p. 145). To some extent, the physical manifestation of poverty are independent of the abstract nature of the object in World 3. For example, malnourishment, lack of proper housing, lack of proper sanitation etc. are conceptually independent of the abstraction and the theory that one subscribes to. Similarly, poverty as a form of human suffering belongs to World 2 — the conscious or sub-conscious experiences of poverty belong to the realm of human feelings. However, human thought processes too belong to World 2 and it is therefore important to distinguish the *process* of thinking from the *content* of thought. The *process* of thinking about poverty, whether amongst people who regard themselves as poor or among people who research poverty, involves reasoning and comprehension. The *outcome* of thinking about poverty — the content of the thoughts involved — is the abstract concept of poverty. This object is a World 3 object.

This pluralism in ontological conception of poverty is at the heart of a sociological SP of poverty that this thesis seeks to develop. With this standpoint, while poverty conceptually exists as an abstract World 3 object, it fundamentally relates to the more tangible World 1 objects and the experiential World 2 objects. Figure 1 illustrates this.
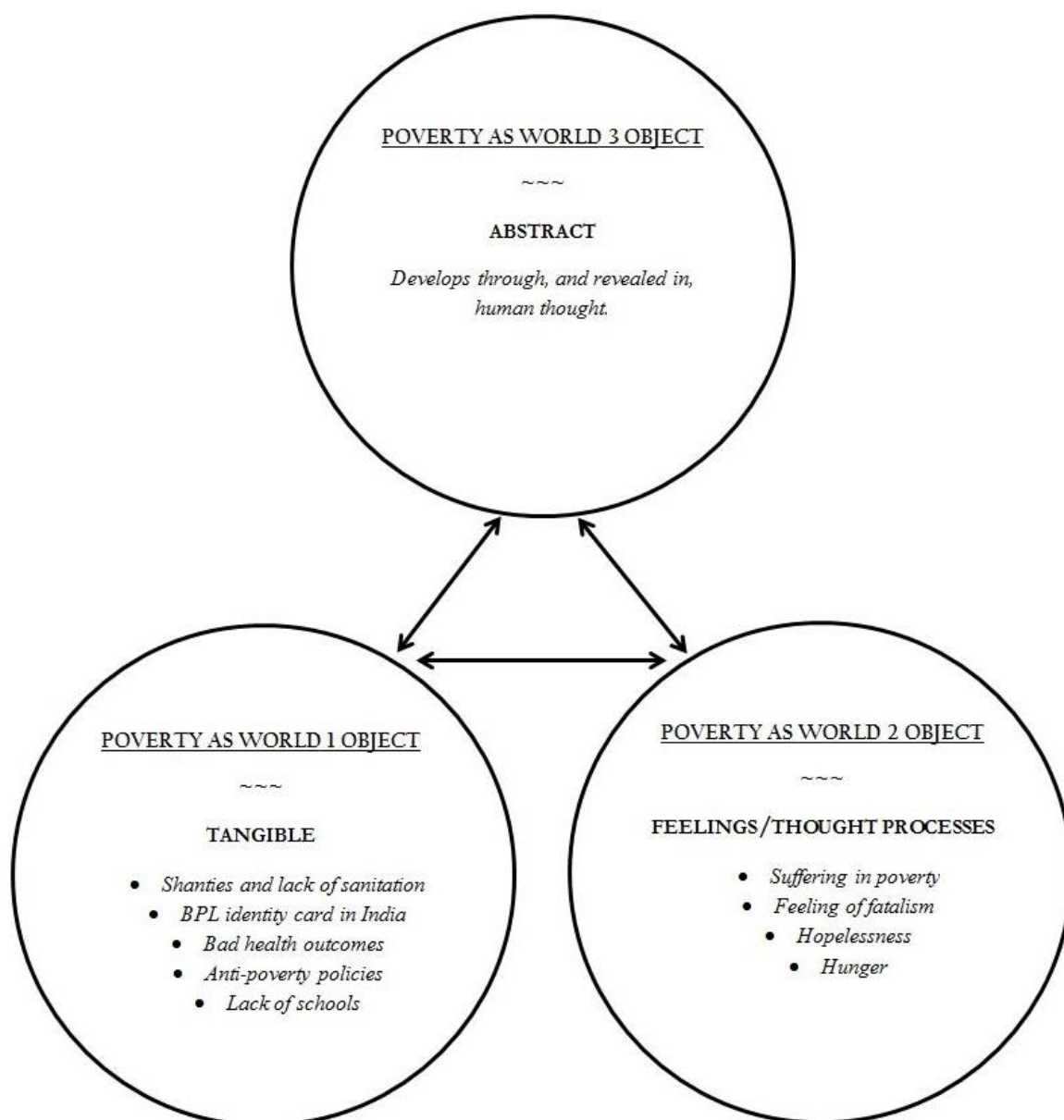
Figure 1: The three Worlds of poverty ontology

As evident, this ontological position is not of denying the tangible aspects of poverty —
World 3 realism is neither denial nor absolution from the real life manifestations of poverty. Yet,
as Popper emphasises, the significance of treating World 3 objects with a sense of contingent
realism is critical insofar as they are the objects that are always grasped by the human mind
before leading to human actions and feelings in World 1 and World 2 respectively.[16] In other
words, the World 2 'process' of human thought and feelings are the agents of World 3 objects to
influence human actions in World 1. Finally, as a World 3 object, poverty is in logical

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[16] In the next chapter, I will reflect of how the Theory of Social Representations adopts a similar
approach to objects in the world.

relationship with other objects in the social world, providing a fertile ground for social psychological investigations. In essence, if as an abstract idea, poverty belongs to Popper's World 3, what is the nature of this object and how can SP apprehend it? In other words, what is the epistemological nature of this object?

2.2.2. Poverty as a social object: The epistemology of poverty

As demonstrated in Chapter 1, an ever-present dialectic exists between the concept of poverty and the general socio-political and moral philosophy of the world. Therefore, this project regards poverty as feature and product of the social world, an aspect of the lives of individuals and communities — in other words, poverty is a 'social object'. Williams (2009, p. 1) notes that while social objects are products of human construction, they "are both brought into being through a causal process and themselves possess causal properties". These social objects populate the social world and as are the foundations of human social life, communication, and meaning making (Harré, 2002). This project's recognition of poverty as a social object is founded on principles, fully developed and outlined in the next three sub-sections. Essentially, this perspective recognises the power of poverty as social object to influence the material and social world (§ 2.2.2.1); makes social construction and social knowledge central to the study of poverty (§ 2.2.2.2); and posits social context in which people develop meanings of poverty integral to the SP of poverty (§ 2.2.2.3).

2.2.2.1. Characterizing poverty within the theoretical framework on social objects

As a social object, poverty shares the three key features that Williams (2009) identifies for all social objects. First, that people socially construct the idea of poverty but once constructed, it has the power to act independently of people. Ironically, nothing illustrates the power of the constructed idea of poverty better than the monetary theory. Chapter 1 critiqued the thematisation of the concept of poverty with income; yet, apprehended in a different light, the monetary theory is a social construction of poverty. Second, as a social object, poverty has a contingent existence — there is no *natural necessity* for this social object to exist. In other words, there is no natural necessity for the idea of poverty to exist. This is easy to understand in light of the ontological examination developed earlier. Poverty can be reduced to a number of independent simples and existents. In that light; the idea of poverty has no natural necessity and its existence is the outcome of social construction and knowledge creation in the society. Finally, the social object of poverty is logically, and at times causally, connected to other social objects. It increases or decreases the probability of existence of certain social as well as physical objects (cf. instruments of change, Popper, 1978). Once again, there are several ways to illustrate this feature

of poverty. Because the social object of poverty exists, other social objects like institutions working on antipoverty policy come into existence[17]. Similarly, poverty leads to the development of concrete and tangible objects in the physical world. The housing scheme for the poor in India – *Indra Awas Yojna* – creates houses which are objects in the physical world. In essence, social objects are not merely abstract entities that are products of human construction — they are linked with causal chains and have effects on the real world.

In addition to the features outlined by Williams (2009), some additional features of the social object of poverty must be noted. As a social object, poverty has an observer relative existence — the observer's position determines its existence and *contents* (Searle, 2006). Unlike observer independent phenomenon like gravity, the observer relativity in constructions of poverty causes people to feel more or less poor, think of more or less severe poverty etc. Similarly, from the vantage point of some individuals and groups, poverty is a desirable social object and serves functions at both societal and individual levels. In a thought provoking commentary, Gans (1972) argued that amongst other things, poverty provides content to political discourse, provides jobs to people working on poverty research (like the author of this thesis) or alleviation.

When conceived as a social object, an extremely important feature of poverty comes to the forefront. Like other social objects, poverty can be brought into legitimate existence by a declarative act — by being declared linguistically as such (Searle, 1995). The Government of India (GOI) through its institutionalised deontic powers declares a subset of the population as poor, thereby legitimising the existence of poverty. This legitimisation is crucial to the manifestation of the abstract object in tangible World 1 outcomes — it makes people eligible for welfare benefits, subsidised food grains, free housing etc. Such claims have a ring of realism but as opposed to naïve realism, this is a claim of ontological contingency (see Williams, 2009). Popper's ontological pluralism too notes such causal powers that abstract ideas and social objects exercise as logically sound arguments for a World 3 realism.

In essence, poverty is a social object that materialises as the content of human thought about it. But how do people give content to the concept of poverty? This content is generated through humans acting as active meaning making agents while they apprehend poverty in their material and social world. In interactions with their material and social world, as well as with one another,

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[17] Institutions are social objects as they involve a group of people working with a collective intentionality. See Quinton (1976) for an excellent discussion.

human societies generate the socially constructed idea of poverty. This brings us to the second consideration in treating poverty as a social object: the role of social construction.

2.2.2.2. Social construction and social knowledge on poverty

As a social object, poverty is a concept, an idea, a phenomenon that people make sense of. Academic understanding of poverty — whether narrow as monetary approaches are, or broad as capability approach is — is *not exactly* the way people and societies make sense of poverty. As argued in Chapter 1, the decontextualized use of 'poor' as a category gives the impression of an objective reality that is independent of the subjects involved. Yet, like most social objects, the idea of poverty is not independent of human interpretation. Poverty is a concept that develops through interpretations of specific physiological states like hunger and malnutrition, and social states like being marginalization. Whether any of these physiological and social states qualify as poverty is a conclusion that is realized by individuals, groups and societies through interpretation, description, explanation, and co-creation of meanings associated with them (Gergen, 1985). Poverty is a drama that is played out in the lives of people and in the social space of communities, and it is in these spaces that the meanings of poverty in everyday lives of people develop and evolve. The reality of poverty as a phenomenon of the social world — as a social object that people make sense of, and attach meanings to — is an exercise in social construction of reality at many different levels.

Societies, communities, and indeed, poor people themselves, are active actors and constructors of their own reality of poverty (Montero, 2002). The poor, often identified on the basis of income, are not merely the gateways of researching the predefined phenomenon of poverty. They must be regarded as active subjects in their social world who exercise agency in making sense of their lives (Ridge, 2009). Interpretations of their material deprivation and the negotiated understanding of poverty that they create is the 'reality of interest' to SP. However, constructions of poverty are not limited only to people living in poverty. The idea of poverty is also developed in, and shaped by, discourses of other social actors and groups. The constructions of a journalist writing for a right wing media outlet are unlikely to be similar to a family living on welfare (Chauhan & Foster, 2014). Indeed, there are several *versions* of poverty that exist in the social world, much akin to the different representations of psychoanalysis in the French society that Moscovici (2008) found in his seminal research.

The differences in constructions of the same social object of poverty by different individuals and groups are critical to structuring the social world (Gillespie, 2008) [18]. The overarching social knowledge on poverty is an aggregate of its constructions in different social groups and contexts. As Berger and Luckmann (1966, p. 56) note, "participation in the social stock of knowledge thus permits the 'location' of the individuals in society and the 'handling' of them in the appropriate manner." Accordingly, the need to successfully navigate the social world presses humans to become aware of different constructions of social objects by different individuals and groups (Cooley, 1926) and like any other reality in the social world, poverty develops in the everyday lives, and social constructions of people. Once again, it must be reaffirmed that in considering poverty as a social object, the tangible consequences of being poor are not denied. There is, merely, a shift in focus towards understanding how people make sense of poverty, including its consequences. It is this everyday reality of poverty that presents itself as reality *'par-excellence'* (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 35, italics in original).

Perhaps this further complicates an already 'heavily contested' concept of poverty. However, acknowledging this complexity is essential for breaking away from the linear notions of causality to advance a socially informed SP of poverty.

2.2.2.3. On the importance of context

The third aspect of considering poverty as a social object is that the social context becomes significant to its construction at two levels: at the larger social level; and at the micro level of interpretations that people make.

2.4.3.3.1. Broader context. The first level is wider in nature and pertains to the larger social context in which social objects are embedded. As cultural norms and practices prevalent in a community, the social context is vital in shaping the meanings and experiences of poverty. An example will better illustrate its importance to the social construction of poverty. Earlier, the role of geographic and environmental factors in shaping the varying experiences of poverty in Kerala and Bihar was highlighted using the example of safe drinking water (see § 1.2.1.2). However, research also documents that access to drinking water in rural Bihar is structured by social

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[18] In line with weak constructionist positions, this project considers poverty to be the same social object and attribute its different conceptualisations as *different constructions* of the same object. While aware of the strong constructionist position that refutes the possibility of a reality independent of the apprehender (for e.g. Potter, 1996) where the representations of the object are taken as the object itself (Wagner, 1996), the present research takes a weak constructionist stance much in the tradition of Searle (1995) where the possibility of an observer independent reality is not denied.

dynamics of caste — 'lower-caste' families are segregated from having access to several wells and hand pumps in the community (Singh, 2004). This means that in the same geographical context, a 'lower-caste' family remains more deprived than an 'upper caste' family. In essence, the local context includes factors like geography and natural resources (Blank, 2005; Milbourne, 2004), the structure of the local economy (Davis & Rylance, 2005; Geddes & Erskine, 1994), acceptance of corruption in the community (Chetwynd, Chetwynd, & Spector, 2003), and the nature of local institutions (Bastiaensen, Herdt, & Vaessen, 2002; Grootaert & Narayan, 2004). A lengthy exploration of each of these factors is not necessary as the fundamental assertion is simplistic — a standard shape or form of poverty does not exist. In other words, poverty varies according to the broader context of the society.

2.4.3.3.2. Context as the scaffolding to acts of interpretation. As a social object, the social construction of poverty is always embedded in the context in which the interpretation as well as knowledge creation on poverty takes place. People pick cues from the social context to interpret their own lives, lives of others, and dynamics of the social world to. Indeed, appreciating local context is paramount for interpreting poverty — devoid of it, one may be erring as a foreigner "who may not recognize me as poor at all, perhaps because the criteria of poverty are quite different in his society — how can I be poor, when I wear shoes and do not seem to be hungry?" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 56).

The context provides the scaffolding for the precipitation of the content of the social object of poverty — what counts as poverty is always contingent on the interpretative context. Searle (1995) sums up the importance of social context with his formulation "X counts as Y in context C"(p. 28). This aphorism crisply illuminates why poverty is a social object dependent on the social context *per se.* Berger and Luckman's example of hunger can help illustrate how the context qualifies interpretations about poverty.

Hunger is perhaps the most disturbing World 1 manifestation of poverty but devoid of context, it cannot be taken as a constitutive feature of poverty. Hunger (X) counts as poverty (Y) when a person cannot manage food in the context of a monetary society (C). In other words, the social context — where money is needed to procure food — makes hunger a part of poverty. The same cannot be said of a devout prosperous Hindu that wilfully fasts during the period of *Navratra* as a religious ritual — his hunger (X) cannot be counted as poverty (Y) in the given context of religious ritual (C). Admittedly, this is a very atomistic argument for poverty's dependence on social context but the same argument applies at a wider level too. Take for example the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) that frames poverty using non-monetary

indicators (Alkire & Santos, 2011). As elaborated in Chapter 1, the index is developed along the three dimensions of health, education, and living standards. While health and education parameters in MPI are socially dependant too, the dimension of living standards demonstrates the context dependence of poverty most easily. Being poor on this dimension includes not having access to electricity, the water source being more than thirty minutes' walk away, having shared toilets, the floor of the house not being pukka, cooking with wood charcoal or dung, and owning less than two of the following items: radio, TV, telephone, bike, motorbike or refrigerator. The MPI indicators reflect the technological advancement and the social context of the present day and, for example, it cannot be applied with any degree of meaning to ascertain poverty anywhere in the world at the start of the 19th century. What counts as poverty in a given society is always on the top of the social context in which meanings are developed and assigned. Poverty tends to unravel in unique forms, is specific to a location and community, and is shaped by the social dynamics of the region (Narayan et al., 2000) — this, in essence, is the power of the social context.

2.3. CHAPTER CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROJECT

This chapter engaged with the metaphysical considerations involved in developing a SP of poverty. In the process, the ontological weakness of researching poverty with a positivist paradigm was identified, as was the metaphysical conflict in certain ways of framing constructivist inquiries. Upon examination, Popper's ontological pluralism regarding three worlds in which objects exist was identified as a suitable ontological position that allows the development of a nuanced perspective on poverty. Operating with Popperian ontology, this chapter developed an epistemology of poverty as a social object and discussed its implications.

This project considers poverty as a social object to develop a sociological SP of poverty. This proposal builds on the well-developed corpus on the sociology of social problems. Herbert Blumer has argued that sociological sciences commit the error of chasing social problems as objective conditions (Blumer, 1971). He noted, "a social problem exists primarily in terms of how it is defined and conceived in the society instead of being an objective condition with a definitive objective make up" (ibid, p. 300). In this research, the proposal of apprehending poverty as a social object is the culmination of the challenge to the objective approaches to studying poverty, first mounted in Chapter 1. The following section presents a summary of the implications of this proposal.

First, the proposal axiomatically means that poverty must be approached without a preconceived notion of its objective makeup. It needs to be understood as an idea in the social world that defines certain states of human existence. As a social object, it does not have a logical necessity of existence; instead, it is developed and brought into existence by human thought. Second, people develop the idea of poverty through interpretations and meaning making. Individuals, groups, and societies are active agents that socially construct the idea of poverty. The definitions of poverty are products of meaning-making, as are the experiences associated with poverty. Accordingly, a study of poverty as a social object must account for the social construction of poverty. Third, in accordance with their own perspectives and motives, different individuals and groups develop different constructions; in turn, these guide the respective actions of people towards poverty. SP must engage with the problematic of different constructions of poverty and observe how these have an impact on the social dynamic of the problem. Fourth, the development of poverty as a social object is guided by the context in which these constructions take place. The context influences the social object in two ways. On the one hand, through institutionalised customs and practices, it leads to the experience of poverty among certain individuals and groups and not among others. On the other hand, every interpretative act in the construction of poverty is sustained by the local context in which it takes place. Exploring, unravelling, and understanding the context is critical to developing a sociologically informed understanding of poverty.

A sociological SP of poverty need not be apologetic for its focus on meaning making and social construction, nor should it be dismissed off as diverting attention away from the harsh realities of poverty. The next chapter outlines the goals of this research and takes up the final task of identifying the theoretical framework that can support an inquiry within the metaphysical framework of the thesis outlined in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3
ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS &THEORY
Framing the project

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter outlines the research questions that guide this project, the theoretical framework that supports them, and the research objectives that build answers to the research questions.

The structure of the chapter is iterative. It begins by outlining the two questions that guide this research: (1) As a social object, what meanings of poverty develop in society? (2) From a social psychological standpoint, how do people develop these meanings? However, the research questions raise several issues that demand further clarification. Drawing on these issues, the chapter draws the theoretical framework of this inquiry.

The theory of social representations, in conjunction with the thesis of human mind's dialogicality, provides the theoretical framework of this project. The chapter does not provide a detailed description of either of the theories — excellent resources on them already exist and are referenced throughout the chapter. Instead, seeking inspiration in Kurt Lewin's famous quote, "[T]here is nothing so practical as a good theory", the theoretical framework is presented with the aim of explicating how it meets the practical requirements of this research.

After outlining the theoretical choices of the project, the chapter returns to the research questions and building on the insights afforded by the theories, the research questions are sharpened to form concrete research objectives. The chapter concludes with the rationale for the studies undertaken in the project.

3.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Chapter 2 engaged with the ontological and epistemological considerations involved in researching poverty. As discussed in Chapter 2, this project conceptualises poverty as a social object that develops through acts of interpretation — this is the minimalistic premise upon which this project predicates. Using the premise, this thesis asks two broad questions as follows:

Research Question 1:   As a social object, what meanings of poverty develop in the society?

Research Question 2:   From a social psychological standpoint, how do people develop these meanings?

While both the research questions stem from the epistemological position outlined in the previous chapter without making any further assumptions, they need further clarification and refinement. Several important issues need to be tackled. First, if poverty is a social object that develops out of the meaning making activities of people, then multiple, observer relative, accounts of poverty must populate the society. In that scenario, how does this project identify a meaningful way of isolating different constructions of poverty? Second, are these constructions independent of one another — what is the nature of relationship between them and how do they interact? Third, what exact processes are at play when constructions of poverty are being generated? In other words, how do people develop social constructions of poverty?

As evident, these issues are theoretical in nature and can be resolved by identifying an appropriate theoretical framework. Theories are critical to the process of research — Parson (1938) provides a succinct account for the correct use of theories in social sciences. He argues that a research project cannot investigate "all the facts which could be known about the phenomenon in question, but only those we think are important" (p.15). Parson further recommended that the clarity about studying specific aspects of a phenomenon be achieved by looking through the lens of theories adopted in the research. Similarly, Silverman (2005) notes that after ontological and epistemological decisions are made, the theoretical framework must be used to sharpen the research questions of the study.

Following Parson and Silverman's arguments, this chapter will situate the research questions of this project within its theoretical framework to make them more specific, while also

addressing issues they raise. More importantly, this exercise will also reveal whether the theoretical framework has sufficient power to guide this inquiry with sufficient depth, rigour, and purpose. Theories are tools for understanding the world and in that regard, they are predicated by the goals of the research, remain rooted in ontological and epistemological commitments, and are also blind to the aspects of the phenomena that they cannot address. This endows theories with their applicability, specificity, and explanatory power, while also putting a constraint on what they can reveal. This makes the relationship between theories and research questions bidirectional. On the one hand, theories make research questions more precise; on the other hand, when theories are put under the demands of the research questions, their limitations and the need for more than one theoretical framework becomes apparent (Lahlou, 2001). Therefore, the task of choosing a theoretical framework is both complex and crucial.

3.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In light of the discussion above, the presentation of this project's theoretical framework begins by listing the demands that would be put on the chosen theories. Broadly, there are four demands on the theoretical framework:

1. Ontological and epistemological consistency with project goals.
2. Ability to explore human meaning making and social construction, while accommodating observer-relativity and multiple constructions of social objects.
3. Cognisance to the social context of meaning making.
4. Ability to illuminate the processes that sustain social construction of objects.

In light of these demands, this project uses Social Representation Theory (henceforth, SRT) in conjunction with the conceptual framework of dialogicality, to provide the necessary theoretical underpinnings. In the following sections, a brief description of both SRT and the dialogical thesis is followed by a discussion on their suitability to the requirements of this research.

3.2.1. Social Representation Theory

SRT is an ontologically relativist and epistemologically constructivist framework that emerged out of Serge Moscovici's (2008/1961) research on the public understanding of psychoanalysis. Moscovici explored how the novel (and even shocking) ideas of psychoanalysis were understood and communicated by different groups in the French society. Social representations (henceforth SR/SRs) emerge from individuals and groups engaged in the processes of interpretation and

communication about objects in the social world. Moscovici's much cited definition reveals a number of fundamental aspects of SRs. SRs are:

> *A system of values, ideas and practices with a twofold function: first, to establish an order which will enable individuals to orientate themselves in their material and social world and to master it; and secondly, to enable communication to take place among the members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world and their individual and group history.* (1976, p. xiii)

As the definition suggests, as consensual ways of thinking, SRs reduce complexities of material and social objects and allow people to communicate on them. The links between Moscovici's theory and Popper's metaphysics are self-evident. As ideas, SRs belong to Popper's World 3 — they are abstractions about 'beings' and 'things' in the world. At the same time, as value systems, SRs belong to World 2 where they involve moral components, influence experiences, and contain value judgements. Further still, as practices, they belong to the World 1 of Popperian ontology and lead to outcomes like discrimination, prejudice, and prosocial behaviour. Although Moscovici himself never drew links with Popper's ontology, he was firm about asserting that SRs are far from being merely products of abstraction and suggested their presence in different aspects of human life. He argued, "social representations are almost tangible entities. They circulate, intersect, and crystallize continuously, through a word, a gesture, or a meeting in our world. They impregnate most of our social relations, the objects we produce or consume, and the communications we exchange" (Moscovici, 1976, p. 40 Gerard Duveen's translation).

Pervading all three Popperian worlds, SRs prescribe, as well as conventionalise, human thinking — they make what is "unfamiliar, or unfamiliarity itself, familiar" (Moscovici, 2000, p. 37; originally published as Moscovici [1984]). SRT postulates that the dual processes of anchoring and objectification support the development of SRs. Anchoring encompasses the tying of the representation with what is already known by emphasising upon either the differences or the similarities; whereas objectification involves marrying the representation with an image that encapsulates the content of representations (Moscovici, 2000). Through these two processes groups and communities make sense of information in the social world and developing consensual SRs, master the complexities of the world.

Essentially, SRT provides a framework for conceptualising the orientation of an individual or a group towards an object — the object can be material or social. The theory takes a relational

perspective and argues that the Ego always develops its knowledge of the said object in relation to the Alter. This is the semiotic triangle of SRs, depicted in Figure 2. The basic representational unit involves at least three components: an individual or group developing the representation (Ego), the topic of meaning making (Object), and at least one other individual or group (Alter) related to the Ego and the Object.
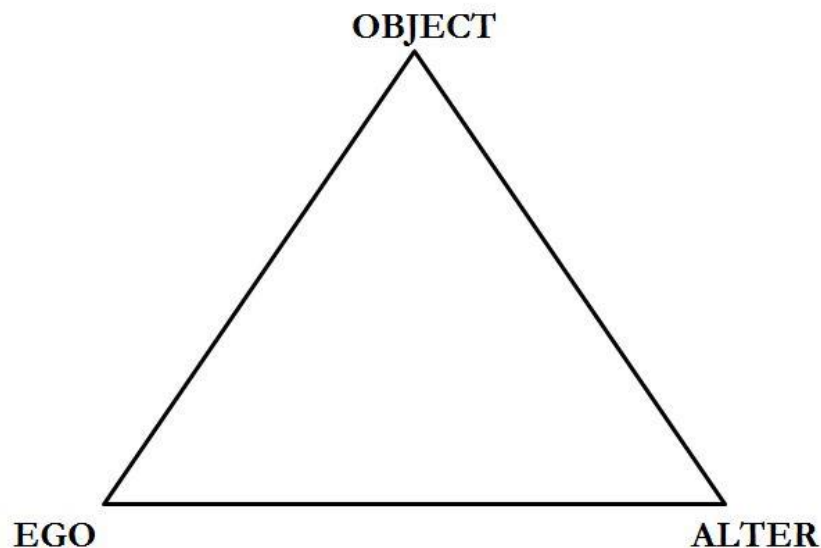
Figure 2: The basic unit of SRs.

Being purposeful, the sketch of the theory provided here is far from comprehensive and does little justice to its conceptual rigour and richness (for a fuller perspective on the theory, see Bauer & Gaskell, 1999, 2008; Howarth, 2006; Wagner et al., 1999). However, it must be asserted that SRT comes with a unique and powerful vision where "how and why people share knowledge and thereby constitute their common reality, of how they transform ideas into practice — in a word [sic], the power of ideas — is the specific problem of social psychology (Moscovici, 1990, p. 164). The vision for SP that SRT represents is congruent to the requirements of the SP of poverty outlined in the previous two chapters. § 3.2.1.1 to § 3.2.1.4 examine the potential of SRT to provide a coherent framework for researching poverty as a social object in this project — these sections discuss project specific issues and how the theory addresses them.

3.2.1.1. Representations tied to groups

The first research question raised issues regarding the different constructions of poverty that must be expected in the society. As also argued in Chapter 2, the observer relativity and the influence of context in the construction of social objects are crucial issues. SRT fully meets these demands as it regards social groups and their context to be central to the development of SRs. The theory conceptualises representations to be products of a social group's engagement with

the object, driven by its ideologies, interests, and other commitments (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005). From its vantage point, members of cohesive groups develop shared representations, and conversely, shared representations can precipitate the development of groups (Lorenzi-Gioldi & Clémence, 2002).

Crucially, SRT also helps the project identify relevant groups whose representations of poverty are of interest. In order to locate relevant social groups for studying the representations of poverty, this project takes inspiration from research on SRs of mental health. The representation of mental health has been studied from several vantage points. On the one hand, studies have examined the perspectives of people dealing with mental health problems (for e.g. Foster, 2003). These studies capture how people with mental health problems make sense of their condition — in other words; these are representations of the object from the inside. On the other hand, the representations of mental health have also been studied from the outside through examining the perspective of lay people (Jodelet, 1991) and mental health practitioners (Morant, 2006). Yet again, mental health representations have also been studied in the mass-media which influence the public understanding of the issue (Foster, 2006, 2010). Thus, the observer relativity of the social object of mental health becomes apparent in comparing how it is represented in the three domains where its representations develop. Following a similar approach, this study will examine three perspectival positions of poverty representations: that of poor people (inside), of the elite and in the mass-media. The relevance of studying these representations will be outlined in detail in § 3.3, yet, it must be noted that SRT provides an elegant solution to the problematic of multiple constructions of the social object.

3.2.1.2. Communication generates and propagates representations

The second research question raised issues about the 'processes' that support the development of representations: how do people generate and propagate representations? SRT postulates that the generation of representations is made possible through communication, which is the fundamental driver of meaning making and social construction.

The production, circulation, and the use of representations are closely tied to communicative practices — as Jovchelovitch (2007, p. 90) argues, "without communication, there is no representation and representational processes are an achievement of communication". Accordingly, Duveen and Lloyd (1990) distinguish three levels of development and circulation of SRs, each supported by communicative actions. First, communication at the broad societal level results in the production, or sociogenesis, of representation. The second ontogenetic level pertains to the socialisation of individuals in a world of representations — interaction and

communication with others impart the individual with the knowledge about the representations of different objects and things in the world. The third communicative level of SRs, microgenesis, involves the evocation of SRs in communicative exchanges and using them to facilitate communication of meaning about the object.

All three levels of representational processes are supported by communicative practices. Naturally, then, communicative practices are key to empirically accessing SRs in research. Bauer and Gaskell (1999) argue that representations can be accessed through examining formal and informal communication, habitual behaviour, and individual cognition and every method is, "more or less linked to language"(p. 174). The sociogenetic level can be apprehended through formal modes of communication like the mass-media, political speeches, and public discourse (Farr, 1993). Similarly, the informal modes of communication reveal the microgenetic and ontogenetic levels of representations (Foster, 2011).

In conclusion, following the framework of SRT, the project examines the constructions of the social object of poverty through analysing communication that generate and propagate them.

3.2.1.3. Context informs meaning making

SRT provides a robust framework for understanding the relationship between social context and the 'content' of SRs. Moscovici's original semiotic representational triangle (Figure 3) has had at least two major revisions to explicitly include the relevance of the context. In the first revision, the construction of the object was proposed to be an evolving project of representation, guided by both the group's history and its espoused future (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999). Figure 3 presents the reformulation of the semiotic triangle, to include the component of time. In this 'toblerone' model, SRs are conceived as a function of Subject—Object—Project—Subject. The model was further revised to make the importance of context more explicit. In the revised 'windrose' model (Bauer & Gaskell, 2008), the medium of communication, time, and intergroup relationships were added as additional features of the context. SRs, in this framework,

were conceived to be a function of subject, object, project, time, medium, and intergroup
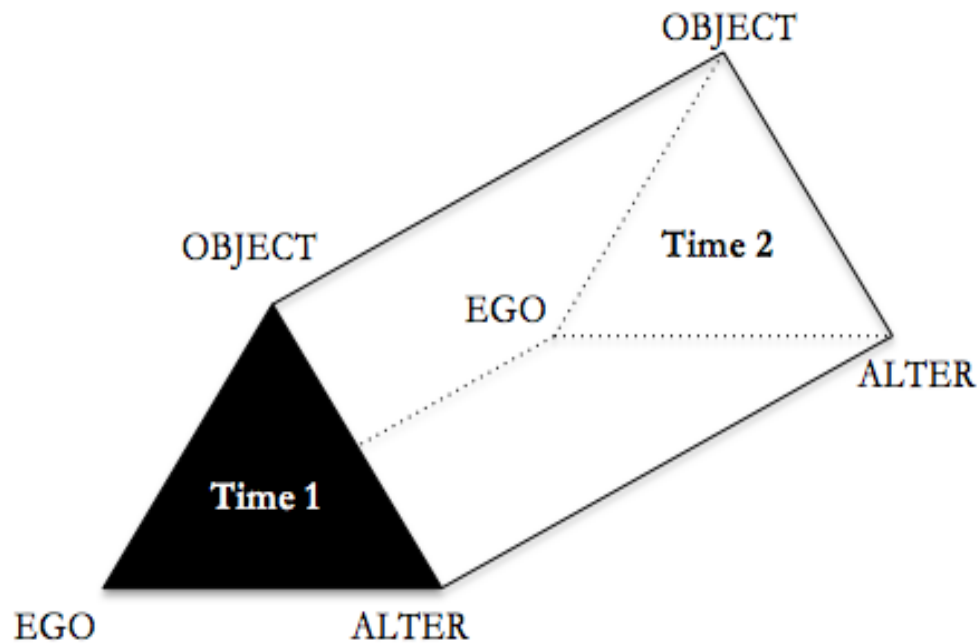
context.

Figure 3. The 'Toblerone' model of SRs.

Adapted from Bauer and Gaskell (1999)

With such well-developed postulates, social context is a core dimension of SRT research and has enabled studies to examine specific groups' construction of objects vis-à-vis a wide range of contextual factors like their history (Liu & Hilton, 2005), relationships with other groups (Howarth, 2002), and social stigma (Joffe, 1995). Thus, working with SRT, the present project can fully acknowledge the role of the social context in the development of meanings.

3.2.1.4. Knowledge in flux

The first research question was made more specific by tying the multiple constructions of poverty in the society to different contexts and groups where they are developed. This raises a further issue: how does knowledge on social objects evolve and what happens when an individual or the group holds incompatible knowledges on the object? SRT conceives knowledge to be in a state of flux and provides two main arguments in this direction. First, the theory is sensitive to the transformation of ideas, including how scientific ideas inform lay representations of social objects. Second, it provides a framework for assimilating the multiplicity of seemingly contradictory belief systems on the object.

SRT provides a robust framework for exploring the transformations in knowledge in the social world — one of the most important contributions of the theory is in creating an understanding of how scientific ideas become a part of lay thinking. Moscovici (1998) argued that scientific knowledge is transformed through representations and discourse before it enters the domain of public knowledge. Research using SRT has revealed that the development of SRs involves society's symbolic coping with scientific ideas to reduce their complexity, making them available for everyday conversations and meaning making. At times, this transformation creatively adds novel ideas to social objects (Washer, 2004; Washer & Joffe, 2006). At other occasions, the transformation allows the specific scientific ideas to inform meaning making in broader domains of everyday life (Selge & Fischer, 2011; Selge, Fischer, & van der Wal, 2011). While poverty can hardly be understood to be a scientific idea, as argued in Chapter 1 and 2, it is commonly understood in terms of the 'science' of measuring consumption patterns. In essence, the thematised notion of poverty mimics a 'scientific' approach and SRT allows the present inquiry to be sensitive to how it influences the lay thinking on poverty.

SRT also provides an elegant solution to the problematic of the multiplicity of world-views held by the same individual or group. For instance, research in Bihar, India revealed that ideas from both traditional supernatural and western psychiatric notions informed lay thinking about mental illness (Wagner, Duveen, Verma, & Themel, 2000). Instead of considering these as indicators of contradiction, SRT regards them to be reflections of the multiple voices (Marková, 2003b), multiple knowledge systems (Jovchelovitch, 2007), and hybrid identities (Gervais & Jovchelovitch, 1998) that are common in modern societies. The theory provides the concept of cognitive polyphasia to account for the hybridity of the modern world where people are aware of the multiple interpretations of the object and draw upon seemingly contradictory ideas depending upon the issue at hand. As Renedo and Jovchelovitch (2007) argue, the concept empowers SRT to link the seeming contradictions in knowledge to the demands of the situation and the social context. Thus, SRT provides a framework to this project for a dynamic account taking of social knowledge on poverty, while exploring the contradictions.

3.2.2. Interdependence & Independence: Social Self & Dialogicality

The most elementary unit of representations involves three things: an individual or a group developing representations (Ego), the object of representations (Object), and a different individual or group (Alter) related both to the Ego and the Object (see Figure 2). Therefore, it can be asserted that the epistemological and theoretical frameworks adopted in this research are contingent on establishing the nature of the relationship between the Ego and the Alter, even as

the two are oriented towards the social object. In other words, the answer to the second research question rests on developing a framework that explicates the relationship between the Ego and the Alter. In this project, their relationship is conceived in terms of their interdependence and independence — or dialogicality.

The thesis develops the notion of dialogicality using ideas stemming from American pragmatism, especially the works of George Herbert Mead, and the European tradition, highlighting the social nature of human mind (Valsiner & Van der Veer, 2000) and the Self's relationship with Others (Marková, 2003b).

3.2.2.1. Mead and the social act

Investigating the concept of the Self in psychology, Rosenberg (1979) considers William James' distinction between the '*I*' and the '*Me*' to be a milestone in the discipline. For James (1890) the '*I*' referred to the Self-as-knower; whereas the '*Me*' referred to the Self-as-known. The extended Self, James argued, included the Self-as-known as a way of relating with others. Thus for James, the '*My*' component — my father, my sister, my enemy — was the part of a person's self.

George Herbert Mead, one of the most important figure in the sociological tradition of social psychology, elaborated upon James' notion. Most contemporary references to Mead tend to gravitate around his conceptualisation of the differences between the '*I*' and the '*Me*' as two distinct but interrelated aspects of the Self. The '*Me*' is the organised attitude of the Alter towards the Ego, whereas the '*I*' is the response of the Ego to the '*Me*' (1934, pp. 192–200). Yet, Mead's recognition of the interdependence between the Ego and the Alter goes deeper than the '*I*'—'*Me*' interdependence. He notes that the emergence of both mind and Self is contingent on interaction with others and sociality.

Perhaps the most underutilised conceptualisation put forward by Mead is of social acts. As with SRT, for Mead the social world preceded human cognition and action in it. Blumer (2004) notes that for Mead, a social act involved an explicit or implicit joint activity between two or more people, most commonly observed in participants engaged in a common task. With this definition, it is easy to appreciate that society is composed of, and sustained by, social acts. Asking for directions, going to the school, buying groceries are some examples of social acts that millions of people participate in every day. The necessity of communicative exchange between the Ego and the Alter is crucial to all of them. Gillespie (2005) notes that during a social act both Ego and Alter can begin to understand the perspective of the other and through self-reflection

add to what was known about the Self. For instance, during a therapy session with a psychoanalyst (a social act), the Ego may come to understand its complexes through the self-reflection initiated by the conversation.

In order to build a framework of the independence and interdependence between the Ego and the Alter, Mead's notion of social-acts provides the fundamental unit of understanding human interactions. In the context of present work, it can be argued that in social acts of different kinds, the Ego gains insights about the Self as well as the Other(s), and about the social object of poverty too.

3.2.2.2. Dialogicality and the Ego–Alter co-constitution

While Mead provides the conceptual architecture for the interdependence between the Ego and the Alter, building on the works of Martin Buber and Mikhail Bakhtin, the idea of dialogicality in the European tradition brings further refinement to the conceptualisation of the relationship. The dialogical proposition is ontological in nature — the Ego and the Alter are not only interdependent but constitute one another. Marková defines dialogicality as the "capacity of the human mind to conceive, create and communicate about social realities in terms of the 'Alter'" (Marková, 2003b, p. xiii). As evident in Marková's definition, the notion of dialogicality assimilates and extends the nature of Ego–Alter relationship from interdependence to co-constitution. The dialogical assertion that thinking and communication — in other words, the social representation — of social reality is done in terms of the Alter, is at the heart of the present project embarking on the second research question: how do people develop meanings of poverty?

3.2.2.2.1. Thinking dialogically. In an early paper, Mead (1910) indicated that in addition to the Self, the only object that psychology must pre-suppose is the existence of other Selves. As humans live in a world populated by other Selves, dialogicality considers human thinking to be founded on a negotiation with Alterity. Alterity is also the pivot on which the door of human thinking swings — distinguishing between what is Self and *not*-Self is the fundamental component of human thought which always strives to make distinctions (Marková, 2003b). Supported by the basic Ego–Alter antinomy, other antinomies pervade human thinking in a range of pairs like good–bad, edible–inedible, light–darkness etc.

The idea of dialogical thought based on antinomies is critical to the themata upon which SRs are developed. Themata in SRs play a role similar to the Holton's (1996) analysis in the context of natural sciences (see § 1.3). Moscovici and Vignaux (2000/1984) note that canonic themata

are the durable and stable frameworks upon which the anchoring and objectification of social representations occur, even as they continue to form the non-negotiable core of SRs (Abric, 1996). In a dialogical universe, as they do with human thought, antinomies often become the basis upon which representations are built (Marková, 2000). Research using SRT has indeed uncovered several thematic ideas based on antinomies. The fundamental antinomy between the Alter and the Ego and has been found as a canonical themata in a number of SRs including those of poverty (Chauhan & Foster, 2014), and mental health (Foster, 2006). In addition, other antimonies like public–private (Radley & Billig, 1996), clean–dirty (Rochira, 2014) near–far (Hodgetts et al., 2010), traditional–modern (Wagner et al., 2000), good-evil (Toepfer, Foster, & Wilz, 2013) etc. have also been found at the heart of other SRs.

3.3.2.2.2. Communicating dialogically. In elementary terms, a dialogue refers to an "interaction between two or more co-present participants using a system of signs" (Marková & Linell, 1996, p. 352). However, if human thinking is dialogical, then the process of communication must involve encountering alternative views of the Alter (Billig, 1996). Returning to the basic antinomy between the Ego and the Alter, it must be asserted that in the social act of communication the Ego and the Alter not only co-constitute each other but also preserve their autonomic positions. Marková (2003) notes that both the Ego and the Alter communicate their own perspectives and acknowledge, accept, or reject other's perspectives, creating harmony, tension, or conflict. In essence, through communication, the Ego and the Alter engage in a dialogical relationship of interdependence and independence.

An important dialogical assertion in the communicative sphere is regarding the presence of voices of the Alter in the discourse of the Ego. As the Alter and the Ego co-constitute each other, the views of the Alter invade the voice of the Ego even when the former is physically absent (Gillespie, 2006). These voices can be direct as in a quote from an Alter, or indirect as in the views of the generalised Other (Aveling & Gillespie, 2008; Aveling, Gillespie, & Cornish, 2014). From a Bakhtinian standpoint, these voices can also be hidden and not explicitly evident in discourse. Sullivan (2011, p. 56) notes that the voice of the Alter is hidden in "a discourse that on the surface appears straightforwardly referential, e.g. denial of wrongdoing, but continually clashes with the anticipations of alternative judgements and evaluations". A dialogical perspective, thus, refines the study of communication in social representations. With its assertion that both thinking and communicating occurs in terms of the Alter, a dialogical approach clarifies how representations of social objects develop.

3.2.3. Representing in terms of the Alter — summing up the theory of the project

In the preceding sections, it was incrementally established that the SRT provides a suitable framework for studying how poverty as a social object is constructed through social representations. The addition of dialogicality provides a valuable refinement to SRT in terms of exploring the nuances of knowledge creation. Dialogicality asserts the inseparability of the Ego and the Alter; yet, the two retain their independence. Further, using the idea of dialogicality between the Ego and the Alter, research can explore the understandings, misunderstandings, and the scope of dialogue between the different representations of poverty held by different groups.

In conclusion, SRT framed within a dialogical worldview, provides flexible yet clearly outlined, scaffolding for researching the social construction of poverty. The review of the project's theoretical framework refined the research questions and satisfactorily addressed the issues raised by them. Using the insights gained from the theories, this chapter will now return to the research questions once again, and elaborating on concrete research objectives, will discuss the relevance of studying representations of poverty in the three data groups identified in § 3.2.1.1.

3.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS REVISITED

With the help of insights gained from outlining the theoretical framework scaffolding this inquiry, the research goals can be translated to specific objectives of the inquiry. At this juncture, it is appropriate to summarise the inputs that were gained from outlining the theoretical commitments of this project.

First, using insights from research on mental health in SRT, three fundamental domains for studying the representations of poverty were identified. Second, the theory sharpened the second research question regarding the processes that contribute to the development of meanings of social objects. SRT postulates that processes of communication lead to the development of representations and in turn, representations can be apprehended through accessing communication on social objects. Similarly, the dialogical position of the project asserts that the representation of the object is done in relation to other individuals and groups. Third, the theory also provided a solution to the multiplicity of poverty world-views in the same individual or group. The concept of cognitive polyphasia suggests that the hybridity of knowledge is a reflection of the complexity of modern society — individuals and groups use different knowledges under different situational demands.

With these theoretical insights, the two research questions of this inquiry become more specific and can be framed in terms of concrete research objectives. These can be stated as below:

RESEARCH QUESTION 1:	**As a social object, what meanings of poverty develop in the society?**

- What are the representations of poverty in the accounts of poor people?
- What are the representations of poverty in the accounts of elite people?
- What are the representations of poverty in the mass-media?

RESEARCH QUESTION 2:	**From a social psychological standpoint, how do people develop these meanings?**

- How does the Ego develop representations of poverty in social acts?
- How do dialogical (Ego–Alter) negotiations shape the representations of poverty?

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 attend to the three respective levels of the first, and Chapter 8 attends both levels of the second research question. The final task of this chapter is to establish the rationale and relevance of these research objectives.

3.3.1. Poor people and their representations of poverty

Poverty is a lived reality for people who live under its clutch and their representations of the object are from the inside. As this thesis has already argued, the knowledge about poverty is often built around *experts'* definitions of the phenomenon. In that sense, poverty presents itself as a classical case where the knowledge of experts subjugates the knowledge of the poor (Jovchelovitch, 2008a). In the real world, however, the poor operate with their own interpretations of their condition. A clear example in this regard comes from Banerjee and Duflo's (2011, p. 36) account of a Moroccan family that prioritized the possession of a television despite facing scarcity of food. While it is easy to disregard such observations as sub-optimal use

of resources on the part of the poor, it is critical to acknowledge that human actions in the social world are driven by SRs. In this light, the first goal of this research is to examine how poor people represent poverty.

The representations of poverty develop under the influence of the local context, environmental as well as social, as argued repeatedly in this thesis. Apprehending the representations of poverty from the inside is crucial to understanding the kind of lives the poor lead, and the way they make life plans and critical decisions in their lives. For instance, a common assumption underlying much of poverty alleviation efforts is that the poor would use their available resources to meet the essential basic needs. However, evidence from studies in several developing nations indicates that even the people in extreme poverty (less than $1.08 per capita, per day) spend a significant share of their income (at times one third of it) on non-essential commodities like alcohol and tobacco (Banerjee & Duflo, 2007). A decontextualised perspective posits such behaviour patterns as one of the key drivers of poverty (e.g., Karnani, 2013); however, understanding the representations of poverty from the inside would unravel the knowledge system that supports such decisions. Crucially, understanding the representational architecture that poor people use in their everyday lives provides a reflexive understanding of the lived realities of poverty (Tripathi, 2010) and moves beyond the previous tradition of psychological research that portrayed such observations as moral or behavioural deficiency amongst the poor.

Efforts have been made in past to understand how the poor of the world make sense of poverty and their lives. As already discussed in Chapter 2, the World Bank commissioned an extensive research project that reached out to poor people in 47 countries to understand their experiences of poverty (Narayan et al., 2000, 1999). While different in its goals and assumptions, this thesis nevertheless advances the agenda of inclusive research with the unique input of social psychological perspectives. It not only looks into the meaning making processes that the poor engage in, but within the rubric of SRT, also explores how these representations are used in everyday situations. Poverty is experienced, and subsequently its meanings realised, in the given social contexts. For example, when being poor entails the experience of not being able to participate and influence things in one's community, poverty is perceived as a state of powerlessness and voicelessness (Narayan et al., 2000). It is through such experiences that people represent their poverty and in turn, these representations define the way poor people imagine their social worlds — the limitations it imposes and the opportunities it affords (Moscovici, 2000). Representing poverty is also an act of symbolically coping with the threat it

brings and orienting oneself towards a response (cf. Joffe & Haarhoff, 2002; Washer, 2004). Thus, the analysis of poor people's representations of poverty will also entail a natural effort to understand their responses to it.

In understanding poor people's SR of poverty, this research makes two related contributions: first, it develops a richer understanding of how the meanings that poor people develop aids their negotiation of poverty; and second, it highlights their interpretations of poverty instead of those imposed by experts.

3.3.2. Elite representations of poverty

The notion of social problems has been much debated with regards to what issues attain the status of 'social problems' and why they are regarded as such (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988; Kitsuse & Spector, 1973; Merton, 1971; Merton & Nisbet, 1961; Spector & Kitsuse, 1973). Poverty is among those few phenomena universally regarded as a problem; yet, as made explicit in Chapter 1, what is *meant and understood* by poverty in the wider society has hardly remained stable.

Past research shows that the people who themselves are not in monetary deprivation consider poverty to be a result of deficiencies in the poor. In his seminal work, Feagin (1972) examined the explanations people gave for poverty and found that they fell in one of the three classes—individualistic; structural, and fatalistic. People in higher income groups preferred an individualistic explanation of poverty, which was tantamount to blaming the poor for their own plight. Following Feagin, the research on lay attributions of poverty has been conducted in several countries including India (Pandey, Sinha, Prakash, & Tripathi, 1982; Singh & Vasudeva, 1977); United Kingdom (Furnham, 1982); United States (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001) etc. While such research is limited by its use of the attributional framework and has been critiqued for reductionist assumptions (see Furnham, 2003), it indicates the general tendency among the financially well-off to blame poverty on the traits and characteristics of the poor. Qualitative works examining how poverty is conceived by the middle class and elite suggests similar trends. In Bangladesh, while poverty was largely considered to be a rampant problem in the country, it was simultaneously considered to be of no direct relevance by the middle class and elite (Hossain, Moore, & Reis, 1999). In India the urban middle class and people in regular employment have been noted to regard poverty primarily in terms of the threat it presents to public health and safety (Gooptu, 1997). Similarly, there is a tendency among the middle class and the elite to separate their own existence from the lives of the poor who live around them by shifting the blame on the poor or on larger institutional processes (Kalati & Manor, 1999).

The representations of poverty amongst the middle class and the elite can also be shaped by functional utility that poverty serves. As noted previously, Gans (1972) has observed that poverty can serve the interests of the elite. In essence, the lived realities of the poor are tied to the public understandings and attitudes and it is therefore imperative to also understand how poverty is constructed and understood by people not in poverty.

3.3.3. Mass-media representations of poverty

Media exercise tremendous influence in the modern society. It has a well-documented role as the source of information shaping the socio-political attention in social issues like poverty (Bullock, Fraser Wyche, & Williams, 2001; Sen, 1999). What is more, when people have no direct experience of issues like poverty, they tend to depend on mass-media for information on such issues (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). The mass-media symbolically re-creates events and phenomena by interpreting and assigning meanings to them. This symbolically re-created reality becomes available for consumption leading to a second level interpretation and re-creation of reality. Through selecting what to report and how to report, the mass-media is a vital agent in the construction of poverty in the public sphere (Adoni & Mane, 1984; Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992).

The presentation of poverty in the mass-media has been extensively researched in Europe and North America. With increasing corporate control over media, it has been argued that the portrayal of politicalized issues like poverty reflect the vested interests of the dominant groups (Bullock et al., 2001). Mantsios (1995) argues that concerns of the working class and problems like poverty rarely receive a detailed consideration in the news. Indeed, in a recent study that examined television, radio, and over 150 British newspapers over a week, it was reported that poverty receives only passing attention in the media (McKendrick, Sinclair, Irwin, Scott, & Dobbie, 2008). The study noted that a majority of media references to poverty were used only to lend an element of drama and sensationalism.

In addition to the limited coverage that poverty receives in the media, past research also indicates several deficiencies in the manner in which media portrays poverty. One of the most pervasive themes is of a stereotypical portrayal of the poor in the western countries. Traditionally the poor have been presented as alcoholics, perpetrators of crime, and wasteful due to addictions (Gilens, 1999); sexually irresponsible (Parisi, 1998); and having socially undesirable traits (Golding & Middleton, 1982; Martindale, 1996). Media has also popularised the myth of welfare dependency by highlighting extreme examples (Clawson & Trice, 2000; de Goede, 1996; Thomas, 1998). Similarly, research has noted that while considering the causes of poverty, media

tends to focus on individual deficiencies of the poor, instead of considering the wider socio-economic factors responsible for it (Iyengar, 1989; Lawrence, Dorfman, Jernigan, & Themba, 1993; Wikler, 2002).

Overall, the role of mass-media in shaping public perceptions of poverty cannot be overstated. Yet, surprisingly, no systematic study has attempted to study how poverty is represented in the Indian mass-media. In this regard, the present work will bridge a significant gap in this body of knowledge.

3.3.4. Dialogicality and representations of poverty

As argued earlier, as a social object, poverty is an abstract idea that gets crystallised through the representational activities of groups and communities. But how do SRs of poverty take shape? Dialogicality between the Ego and the Alter provides a unique way of conceiving the processes of meaning making and representing poverty and this project applies this perspective in a novel methodological way.

The idea of dialogicality goes beyond the mechanistic Alter—Ego comparisons that inform the notion of relative poverty (e.g., Foster, 1998). The dialogical realisation of poverty is fundamentally different from relative poverty because it does not *necessarily* depend on income as a criterion. From a dialogical standpoint, this realisation is achieved by Ego–Alter comparisons on whatever criterion the dialogical partners may deem fit. The Ego may experience poverty by comparing with the clothes of the Alter, the grocery shopping of the Alter, the schools to which Alter's children go etc. Nevertheless, the Ego realises that it is poor only through comparing itself with the Alter, and the same process of comparing may make the Ego realise that the Alter is poor. In context of abstract social objects like poverty that refer to a state of being, the act of representing is possible only through the Ego relating with and reflecting on the Alter. This can be elaborated by continuing the example of living standards discussed in § 2.2.2. The Ego can perceive itself to be poor because it has no access to electricity. What remains concealed in this simplistic assertion is that by default the statement implies Ego's awareness of Alter(s) who do(es) not face this problem. In other words, latent comparisons with the Alter give content to the Ego's representation of poverty. With this vantage point, dialogical conceptualisation of poverty in this project can provide three critical insights on the representations of poverty.

The first insight comes from the axiomatic query of a dialogical approach to poverty: who are the Alters that are chosen for these comparisons? A dialogical perspective on poverty reveals what Alter(s) are most relevant to the Ego's realisation of poverty. The second insight comes

from following Mead's idea of social acts. The research will be able to generate a comprehensive picture of the social context of poverty by revealing the social acts where poverty is either experienced directly or realised cathartically. Finally, this approach will also throw light on how the Ego negotiates the presence of the Alter while constructing the representations of poverty. As argued in § 3.2.2, the Ego may reject or embrace the representations of poverty that the Alter is known, or perceived, to possess. Similarly, the Ego may hold polyphasic knowledge on poverty — revealing the moments of tension and struggle between different representations of poverty, and other social actors.

3.4. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

To sum up, this research explores poverty as a social object. In the process, it poses two research questions: (i) As a social object, what meanings of poverty develop in the society? (ii) From a social psychological standpoint, how do people develop these constructions? Using the theoretical framework, the first research question led to the development of three research objectives: to examine the representation of poverty (i) amongst the poor (ii) the elite, and (iii) in the mass-media. The second research question, also upon the application of the theoretical framework, translated to the objective of examining how Ego–Alter dialogicality and social acts aid the development of poverty representations. In accordance with the postulates of the project's theoretical framework, the realisation of both the research questions must remain connected to the acknowledgement of the social context within which the representational work takes place. Having established the research questions, the theoretical framework, and the research objectives, the next chapter begins the empirical phase of the inquiry.

CHAPTER 4

ON FIELD
& METHODS
Developing the research strategy & tools

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter develops the empirical framework of this project. It examines the social context of the study, the methods used for data collection and the process of analysing them, and the quality indicators of the project. The chapter is divided in four parts.

Part I explores the Indian province of Bihar, and the village (Bholi) where data for this project were collected. The chapter gives greater attention to the village where the study was undertaken. Yet, a comprehensive introduction and analysis of poverty in both India and Bihar is available in the Appendices and is appropriately referenced in the chapter.

Part II identifies the methodological toolkit of the project. It reflexively explores the methodological challenges and how they were overcome in research. Detailed descriptions of the corpus construction strategy for both 'poor' and 'elite' groups, and the mass-media are provided. Subsequently, the projects choice of individual and group interviews to access community representations, and news reports to access media representations of poverty is discussed.

Part III provides a transparent account of the process of analysis, outlining the decisions that guide the analytic procedures. The analytic framework used for studying the SRs of poverty, and their dialogicality is developed with a reflexive account of the process.

Part IV concludes the chapter with an assessment of the project's quality indicators and its methodological limitations.

PART I: THE FIELD

4.1. INDIA AND ITS 'BADLAND' CALLED BIHAR[19]

Data for this study were collected in a village in the Indian province of Bihar. There is seldom any debate on whether India is a poor country or not. However, India presents a paradox. On the one hand, it has one of the fastest growing economies of the world whose Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at purchasing power parity (PPP) has overtaken every single European nation and lags behind only after the USA and China (World Bank, 2014). On the other hand, no other country in the world has more people living under the international poverty line. In the 2013 Human Development Report, India was ranked 136th among the 187 countries on Human Development Index (HDI), behind Botswana, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan (UNDP, 2013). Two years later, in 2015, the country jumped a meagre 6 places to sit at the 130th position in the world (UNDP, 2015). In the meantime, between 2013 and 2015, the country managed to launch a successful probe to the planet Mars, becoming the first Asian nation to achieve it and only the second country in the world to do so[20]. A detailed presentation of the history of poverty in India, the relative depth of its severity, as well its comparison with global poverty patterns is available in Appendix I.

India is divided into 29 provinces (henceforth, States; as referred locally in the country) and seven union territories (UTs). These states and UTs not only differ from one another in terms of languages and cultures but also in terms of their social development and prosperity. States like Kerala perform very well and are comparable to countries like the UK in terms of their HDI scores (0.911 and 0.907 respectively). Yet, the country also has States likes Bihar that perform worse than many Sub-Saharan countries on human development (Mukherjee, Chakraborty, & Sikdar, 2014). The development literature on India uses a tongue-in-cheek acronym, BIMAROU, to refer to the states of Bihar (undivided), Madhya Pradesh (undivided), Rajasthan, Odisha, and

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[19] Several mainstream news agencies frequently applied the metaphor of 'Badlands' as a description of the state of Bihar (Daily News and Analysis, 2005, 2007; The Hindu, 2005; The Outlook, 1998). Presumably this referred to the descent of the state into lawlessness and crime but was paradoxical because despite having its small share of geographically literal Badlands, Bihar is generally rich with vegetation and has a fertile soil. Interestingly, in 2010, reporting on the turn-around in the socio-political landscape of Bihar towards good, the BBC wrote that the state was "beginning to shed its 'Badlands' image" (BBC, 2010a).

[20] In total four space agencies have managed the feat and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is the fourth agency. However, with the exception of NASA, the other two agencies — European Space Agency and Soviet Space Programme — represented a Union of nation states.

Uttar Pradesh[21]. BIMAROU literally means 'the sick one' in Hindi and these 'sick' States are home to half of India's population. The present research was conducted in a village in the state Bihar, which is the first alphabet of the acronym and is generally considered to be the most problematic state of India.

Bihar is a land-locked state in north India, sharing a long international border with Nepal to its north. It is flanked by the state of Jharkhand in the south, West-Bengal in the east, and Uttar Pradesh in the west. Bihar is divided into 38 administrative districts and the capital of the state, Patna, is located on the bank of the Ganges and is among the biggest cities in Eastern India. Appendix II provides a detailed description of the society, economy, polity, and the widespread poverty in Bihar.

4.1.1. Why research Bihar?

Bihar provided an interesting setting for this research for two primary reasons. First, amongst all the Indian states, Bihar had the highest proportion of people living under the official poverty line of the country[22]. At the time of the fieldwork, one in every three persons in Bihar was regarded by the Government as living in poverty. With a population nearly twice the size of the UK, this amounts to an extremely large number of people who are officially recognised as poor. In qualitative terms, the HDI rating of the state reflects the severity of poverty in Bihar. In 2004-05, when the state was arguably in its worst condition, its HDI score was 0.105 — to put things in perspective, if Bihar were a country, it would have been at the absolute bottom of the list well-behind countries like Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, and the bottom placed Niger, each of whom had scored over 0.280 (Dreze & Sen, 2013).

Second, during the time of the research, Bihar was interestingly positioned in terms of its socio-political history. Between 1990 and 2005, the state had descended into a near lawlessness due to the inefficiency of governance — during this period The Economist noted that Bihar "has a claim to be the ancient heart of India. These days it is seen as the armpit. […] It has become the byword for the worst of India" (The Economist, 2004). Surprisingly, during these fifteen years, even as the economy of the state came to a standstill, mass-migration of people continued to other states, and the public institutions became virtually defunct, the same political

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[21] The BIMAROU acronym pre-dates the creation of new states of Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, and Uttarakhand. These new states were originally the part of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh respectively. Thus the acronym must be interpreted to include these new states in the present.

[22] See Appendix I and Appendix II for details on the poverty assessment methodology used in India.

party democratically remained in power — this paradox has been aptly captured by Witsoe (2013) as 'democracy against development'. Change followed the State Assembly elections of 2005, when a different political party came to power. The change in the Government has been linked to a rekindling of economic growth in Bihar, restoration of law and order, and re-energisation of the public institutions (Chakrabarti, 2013; Singh & Stern, 2013). The same government was re-elected in 2010 for a second term and in 2013, when the fieldwork for this project was undertaken, after a long spell of national and international notoriety, Bihar was receiving an all-round praise for its growth and development. In that sense, it was an opportune moment of flux for getting an insight into the perspectives of a rural community in Bihar on the issue of poverty.

4.1.2. A profile of the village Bholi

The village where the fieldwork for the study was undertaken is located in the administrative district of Sitamarhi, bordering with Nepal (see map in Figure 4). The village will not be identified in accordance with the explicit desire of a majority of participants in the study. For the same reason, the exact demographic and socio-economic profile of the village will not be presented as publically available data on the internet can back trace the identity of the village. Throughout this thesis, the village is identified with its pseudonym — Bholi.

Figure 4: Bholi — a village in the district of Sitamarhi

(Source: www.bihar.gov.in)

Bholi is a medium size village of about 350 households. It is located at a distance of 16 kilometres from the district's eponymous main town — Sitamarhi. In terms of connectivity with

Sitamarhi, the village is about seven kilometres off a State Highway — the road leading to Bholi is part dirt and part pitch making vehicular traffic between Bholi and Sitamarhi difficult. There is no system of public transport from the village to the town and at the time of the fieldwork, no one owned a car in the village. Males in the village use bicycles and motorcycle for solo commutes to the town, the movement of women and elderly is severely hampered by the lack of public transport. Most daily use necessities, groceries, and produce are available locally in small shops of the village. Clothes, books, and fuel required a trip to Sitamarhi.

During the process of data collection, both rich and poor participants varyingly estimated that apart from 15 to 20 households, all the others in the village were poor. In total, the village had seven large-land owning families; the remainder of the households were either completely landless or owned small pieces of land unsuitable for any meaningful agriculture. As a result, with the exception of the land-owning households, most families in Bholi were engaged in casual manual labour in the village and neighbouring areas — in this regard, Bholi closely mimics the general profile of Sitamarhi. The 2011 census of India reported that 12.28 per cent of rural households in Sitamarhi had agriculture as their prime source of income, as compared to the Bihar average of 18.24 per cent and the national average of 30.10 per cent. The largest source of employment in the district was casual manual labour, accounting for nearly 80 per cent of the district's rural households' income.[23] Also, like the rest of Bihar, a majority of households in Bholi had family members working as casual migrant labour elsewhere in the country.

The village had three government schools providing primary level education to pupils between the age of 6 and 14. For secondary level education (age 14 to 18), the village was dependent on schools that were at least 10 kilometres away. At the time of the fieldwork, Sitamarhi had over 100 privately run schools teaching the primary levels with tuition fees ranging from Rs 100 to Rs 2000 (£1 to £20) a month. In general, private schools have the reputation of being better in quality than government schools. Due to the cost associated with them, they primarily cater to the middle class and affluent families in Sitamarhi, and a few prosperous families from villages like Bholi. Sitamarhi also has a number of degree colleges providing university level education. In terms of educational attainment, Bholi follows the general profile of the district. In the 2011 census, 54.35 per cent of the rural population in Sitamarhi was found to be completely illiterate without the knowledge of alphabets and less than 2 per cent had received a University education. The participants of the study reported that in Bholi, fewer than

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[23] These figures are from Government of India documents, referenced in Appendix II where the state of Bihar is discussed in detail.

10 people had University education — the details of the participants' educational attainment are provided in Appendix V and VI.

In principle, with regards to healthcare, the government hospitals in the district headquarter of Sitamarhi served the village. However, people in the village had little faith in them and preferred private clinics in Sitamarhi. Sitamarhi has a flourishing private sector in healthcare — over 400 doctors were listed in the telephone directory at the time of research, providing reasonable but expensive medical services. Since the village did not have a PHC, in non-emergency situations, the community was heavily dependent on the numerous unqualified quacks in the village. One of them had a shop in a small hut where in addition to cooking oil, soaps, and other day-to-day items, several prescription medicines including antibiotics were sold. Given the difficulty involved in reaching the town, this 'clinic' was the first port of call for most poor-people in the village. During his time in the village, the researcher witnessed the 'clinic' owner inject people with antibiotics, administering saline drips, and sell a cocktail of antibiotic pills. Interviews conducted in the village also suggested that some quacks undertake invasive surgeries too but the researcher did not observe any such surgery first-hand.

4.1.3. Why confine the research to a single village?

Participants in both 'poor' and 'elite' groups were recruited from Bholi. The decision to recruit all participants from the same village was a methodological choice made in the project. The fundamental argument behind this choice was guided by the status of the village as a cohesive community.

Cohen (2001/1985) argues that a community "is that entity to which one belongs, greater than kinship but more immediate than the abstraction that we call 'society'" and is the place where "one learns and continues to practice how to 'be social'"(p.15). Following Cohen, indeed the village is the primary level of socialisation in the cultural context of rural Bihar. Villages are also an important source of identity in Bihar — the first questions asked to a stranger invariably pertain to their caste and the village to which they belong. Much akin to the extra information people tend to glean out of knowing what part of a city someone lives in (for e.g. Brixton in Howarth, 2002), the village community provides a strong identity in the local context. Further, like any community, the village encapsulated a relational idea — a boundary between one's belonging and the beyond (Cohen, 2001/1985). In Bihar, one's village is treated as their extended family — even to the present day, weddings between families from the same village are extremely rare.

Recruiting both groups of participants from the same village ensured that the participants — within, as well as between the two groups — were in close everyday interaction and interdependence. In a Meadian sense, the village becomes the most meaningful theatre for everyday social acts (see § 3.2.2.1) and is critical in meeting the prescriptions for a sound dialogical analysis. As Marková (2003b, p. 91) notes, a dialogical study must use a research design faithful to "the mutual interdependence of participants and their mutual effect on one another." In Bholi, both poor and financially well-off people depended on one another in a range of ways: wage-labour, borrowing-lending of money and so forth. Similarly, people living in the same village are influenced by similar constraints with regards to public institutions like schools and hospitals — if the government school in the village did not function properly, it affected the entire village. This allows the present project achieve consistency with regards to the earlier discussions on the importance of context (§ 2.2.2.3 and § 3.2.1.3). Keeping a village as the level of analysis allows the research to keep the broader context of knowledge production stable and meaningfully compare the poverty representations of different groups.

The notion of community is complicated, contested, and to some extent abstract (Howarth, 2001). The present research does not attempt to contribute to the scholarship on communities but uses it as the rationale for this methodological decision.

PART II: METHOD

Studies on SRs have amassed an impressive range of methodological tools. As faithfully documented by Breakwell and Canter (1993), virtually every method in social sciences has been used by SRT researchers. Commenting on the methodological diversity, Bauer and Gaskell (1999, p. 163) have observed that without a good rationale, the multiplicity of methods tends to indicate "an absence of conceptual clarity". Their observation throws the need for parsimony in science (Sober, 1981) in a sharper relief — in this project, the challenge of methodological pluralism is met with a commitment to parsimony. The following sections explore the methodological choices and commitments of this project.

4.2. RESEARCHING COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIONS

The fieldwork for this project was conducted during the months of March and August 2013, followed by four short visits to the village in 2014 and 2015 for follow up interviews with certain participants. March was chosen as the ideal time for commencing fieldwork in Bholi as most migrant workers return to their villages for the festival of Holi and stay back for several months

as wheat harvesting provides plentiful local employment. A total of 66 participants (41 were 'poor' and 25 were not) spread over the two groups took part in the study.

4.2.1. Recruiting participants

4.2.1.1. Access to community

Bholi did not come across as a community guarded by gatekeepers (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). After visiting the village every day for over a month, the researcher had established himself as a person that a participant during his interview noted to have "become a part of everyday life of the village". In retrospect, the village was easily accessible to the researcher for several reasons. First, the researcher had a native proficiency in the regional dialect used in Bholi. Also, having spent the first 18 years of his life in Sitamarhi, he had native understanding of the social norms, taboos, and the paradigm of social interactions. For these reasons, participants were keen to speak with the researcher and often encouraged other people to take part in the study. However, as must be expected in all research exercises, the researcher–participant relationship tends is an interesting dialogical situation and will be examined in detail in Chapter 8.

4.2.1.2. Inclusion criteria

A straightforward approach for recruiting poor participants could have been to use Indian Government's categorisation of people as below poverty line (BPL) and above poverty line (APL). However, in line with the critique of importing a monetary categorisation outlined in Chapter 2, this strategy was not suitable for this project. [24] [25]

Instead of using a criterion determined by the researcher — monetary or otherwise — participants were asked to self-identify as 'poor' or 'not-poor'. Following Patton (2002), this sampling strategy can be classified as purposive-criterion sampling, insofar as the participants meet the criterion of 'considering themselves poor' for the first group and 'not considering themselves poor' in the second group. Self-identification has been used previously for recruiting participants while researching topics like LGBT sexualities (for e.g. Cochran & Mays, 1988; Hirst, 2004); however, this strategy was crucial to achieving consistency with the project's commitment to the social construction of poverty and objection to pre-defined categories (see § 2.1.2).

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[24] It must be acknowledged, nevertheless, that as anti-poverty policies and welfare remain tied to the BPL–APL categorisation, there is a potentially sound argument for using this categorisation in research particularly interested in poverty policies and welfare.

[25] The use of monetary categorisation in poverty research was discussed in Chapter 1 § 1.3.

It is crucial to note that throughout this thesis, people self-identifying as 'poor' will be referred to as 'poor' participants and those self-identifying as 'not-poor' are referred to as 'elite' participants. This is merely a choice of nomenclature to achieve parsimony in prose and does not purport a definitive indication of socio-economic status or wealth of the participants.

4.2.1.3. Recruitment strategy

The setting of the research did not allow recruitment of participants using telephones, or public advertisements. Following a purposeful sampling strategy (Barbour, 2001), participants were approached individually for the study. After explaining the nature and purpose of the project and that their participation would be entirely voluntary, informed consent to participate was obtained.

The project followed Patton's (2002) advice regarding maximum variation sampling to enhance diversity in the sample by including participants with different profiles. In line with the goal of the research to identify the consensual SRs of poverty, this strategy helps "identify important common patterns that cut across variations" (Patton, 2002, p. 243). Accordingly, the participants in the poor group were diverse with regards to their education, and the nature of work (see Appendix V). The age range was a natural, unplanned source of variation amongst participants. A total of 41 participants were recruited in the poor group, based on their self-identification.

Villages in Bihar tend to have a very high concentration of poor families with no middle class — prosperous families are few and usually have large land ownerships. Das (1986, as cited in, de Haan, 2011) observes, financially well-off families, not tied to agriculture for their livelihood, have been the first to migrate out of villages in Bihar. In Bholi, the common understanding in the community was that only 15-20 families in the village were not living in poverty. All these families were contacted for participating in the research, out of which, 11 agreed. From these 11 families, a total of 13 people were recruited to the elite group. A further 12 participants living in the district town, but with crucial links to Bholi, were also recruited in the study. These included 4 teachers who were working in government schools in the village and 8 doctors employed at the government hospital that served the village. Following the principle of including theoretically interesting participants in research (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), the decision to include doctors and teachers as key informants was based on the consistent observations made by both poor and elite participants regarding the state of government schools and hospitals. Moreover, their inclusion was also critical for maintaining dialogical symmetry in research as recommended by Marková (2003b). Thus, the total number of participants in the elite group was 25.

4.2.1.4. Saturation

The decision to stop collecting any further data in qualitative research is complicated. Bauer and Aarts (2008) recommend that an ideal way of approaching the problematic is using the concept of theoretical saturation, i.e., continuing to collect data until no additional information is acquired by further collection of data. However, theoretical saturation is a contested concept. Amongst other, Bowen (2008) notes that the idea of saturation is vague and recommends that the claims of saturation be supported by explanation and evidence of its achievement.

The present project takes objection to such prescriptions and asserts that any criterion or 'evidence' of saturation in qualitative research will ultimately refer back to a subjective evaluation made by the researcher. In the present project, after collecting data from 31 poor participants (18 individual and 3 group interviews), saturation in the group became evident for the first time. At this point, the audio recordings were preliminarily assessed for the range of ideas and subsequently, two further group interviews were conducted with poor participants of non-typical profiles, purposefully recruited to test saturation. The first interview was done with three female participants and the second with four young poor participants (mean age=21) holding significant formal education. These additional interviews were carefully assessed for new ideas — no significantly different data emerged. To confirm, a final group interview was conducted with a mixed sex group and a decision was taken to not collect any further data in the group [26].

A similar approach was followed with the elite group to stop collecting any new data. The smaller sample size, while reflecting the size of the population available, should not necessarily indicate an unsaturated corpus. In this regard, Morse (1995) makes important observations. She notes that homogeneous and theoretically generated samples lead to quicker saturation. Both doctors and teachers were highly homogenous groups and gave extremely cohesive accounts. Similarly, amongst the 13 other participants, nine shared the occupation of farming and all thirteen lived in the village. The much smaller population of Elites also meant that unlike the first group, no additional interviews were possible to test saturation.

4.2.1.5. Participant characteristics.

The poor participants in the study were between the age of 18 and 61 (Mean=37.7; SD=11.91)[27]. Out of these, 28 were male and 12 were female. The imbalance between the male

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[26] These were Group Interview numbers 4, 5 and 6 respectively. See Appendix V for further details.

[27] At least 23 participants explicitly said that they did not know their correct age and were making estimations.

and female participants reflects the social norms of Bihar where informal communication between unmarried adult males and women is socially disapproved of, regardless of the latter's marital status (cf Datta & Mishra, 2011). This made the task of recruiting female participants in Bholi particularly challenging. A solution to the problematic was found by approaching women who were considerably older than the researcher (Mean=46.33; SD=10.72) to participate in group interviews (see Appendix V). This allowed the researcher to qualify as a male from a generation below the female participants allowing the male-female dynamic to be perceived in terms of the salubrious mother-child relationship.

29 poor participants (70.73 per cent) had no knowledge of alphabets, four (9.76 per cent) could read a basic text, and eight had completed school education (19.51 per cent). Apart from four male participants in a group interview, and another male in a different group interview, the rest were married and had children. Further details are available in Appendix V.

The 22 male and 3 female participants in the elite group had an age range between 19 and 68 (Mean=45.64; SD=13.20). The 25 participants in this group involved nine farmers, eight doctors, six teachers, and two utility shop owners and all were married and had children. All elite participants were formally educated and 18 (72 per cent) had University level education — a clear evidence of a broader social advantage when compared to participants in the other group. Further details are available in Appendix VI.

4.2.2. Individual and group interviews

With regards to selecting the methods for the study of SRs, De Rosa (1994) argues that it is important to use those methods that provide access to the perspectives of participants instead of the linguistic details. To this end, Farr has noted interviews to be a method "for establishing or discovering that there are perspectives or viewpoints on events other than those of the person initiating the interview" (1982, p. 23). As a method, interviews are of various kinds, yet, a basic methodological decision in all types of interviews is to be made between the degrees to which either the interviewer or the participant exercises control over the production of content (Flick, 2009). SRT has employed both highly structured interviews where the researcher enjoys a much higher control (Goodwin, Kozlova, Nizharadze, & Polyakova, 2004), and unstructured interviews where the participants largely guide the production of data (Wagner, Sen, Permanadeli, & Howarth, 2012).

4.2.2.1. Interviewing approach

As such, there are seldom any pre-defined ideal type of interviews and in order to accommodate the goals of the research and the pragmatic constraints, elements from different interview types need to be incorporated (Hermans, 2004). In its initial stages, the project deployed a semi structured interview guide (see Appendix III). However, right at the outset, the trade-off between the constraints of structure and evocation of detail became apparent. For example, questions like "What is the role of education in helping people?" resulted in participants responding that they did not know enough to answer the question.

In order to overcome this limitation, the original topic guide was abandoned in favour of creating what Hermans (2004, p. 210 italics in original) has called "*a climate for conversation*" where interviews strived for synchronicity with the routine ways of conversation between people in the village. In order to achieve this, a minimalistic topic guide that leaned towards the unstructured end of qualitative interviewing was deployed (see Appendix IV). The researcher approached the participants with a perspective of learner, positioning himself as what Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) have called the 'novice' learner. Such an approach allowed participants greater flexibility in shaping the conversation on poverty in directions most pertinent to them and allowed the generation of thick descriptions. Gaskell (2000) has noted that interviews involve an unusual relationship between the conversant parties — unlike the researcher, participants may not have ever contemplated upon the questions presented to them during the interview. For this reason, a dichotomous distinction between structured and unstructured interviews with the semi-structured interview as a best-of-both-world strategy is problematic. In field settings, these lines are blurred — as Fontana and Frey (2005) note, even unstructured interviews are structured by the setting and the people involved.

4.2.2.2. Mixing of strategies

The interviews used strategies that are generally considered to be a part of narrative interviewing. Narrative interviews focus on encouraging participants to share stories about their own life and/or the social context (Chase, 2003). These interviews derive their approach from the argument that stories about the Self, the Others, and the social world inform how people make sense of the world (Bruner, 1991). Narratives naturally pervade conversations and in that sense, regardless of the style of interview the collected data invariably contains stories (Bruner, 1987). In the present research, participants were encouraged to tell stories, for e.g. about the schools in the village or an experience they had at the government hospital etc. However, a strict narrative style of interview (for e.g., Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000) was not followed and stories

were interrupted for clarifications. Such a purposeful use of narratives during interviews has been used in other SR projects (for e.g. Foster, 2007). As evident in the illustrative transcript from one interview, the invitation to engage in narratives allowed the interview to explore the life world of participants with a greater depth.

The project used both individual and group interviews to collect data from the participants. Gaskell (2000) recommends using both methods in research topics that have the scope for sampling personal experiences as well as common concerns on the issue. Akin to focus group discussions, group interviews provide an opportunity for exploring the debates and consensus on the issue. Yet, they tend to have less structure and imperative of specific questions introduced by the researcher, even as the researcher continues to shape the discussion with his queries and prompts (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1956). This makes group interviews based on participant led discussions an ideal method of inquiry for social representations while also meeting the requirements of a dialogical project as outlined by Marková et al. (2007).

For this project, a total of 35 individual interviews were conducted (18 with poor and 17 with elite participants). Eight group interviews (four with poor and two with elite participants) were conducted with a total of 31 participants (23 poor and eight elite participants). Group interviews included people belonging to a single group — poor or elite. The interviews ranged from around 32 minutes to over two hours with the average length of around 94 minutes. A full disclosure of the purpose of the interviews was made to participants and informed verbal consent was taken from all participants. The strategy of taking verbal consent has been used in settings where participants cannot read or write (for e.g. Tindana, Kass, & Akweongo, 2006) and to achieve consistency in the project, was followed throughout the project will all participants. The researcher provided participants with his telephone contact details if they wanted to get in touch at any point during the research or subsequently.

4.3. RESEARCHING NEWSPAPER REPRESENTATIONS

Despite having a healthy and largely independent media landscape (see Dreze & Sen, 2013; but see Reporters Without Borders, 2016), no systematic study has explored the how poverty is reported in the Indian mass-media.

In order to bridge the gap in this body of knowledge, this project chose newspapers as the medium for studying media representations of poverty in India. The choice of newspapers was crucial considering the rich but unequal media landscape of the country. Less than one-third of the population has access to a TV, and only a little over ten per cent have any internet access

(BBC, 2013). The penetration of electronic media is also limited due the poor availability of electricity, which on per-capita consumption basis is among the lowest in the world (Yep, 2012). Under these conditions, it is not surprising that against the global trend of declining newspaper readership (Franklin, 2009), India shows growth in newspaper readership (Moro & Aikat, 2010) — currently, three amongst the ten most widely circulated newspapers in the world are from India (World Press Trends Database, 2015). Newspapers are cheap in India — the average daily price of broadsheets is less than 5 rupees (5p) and the cost is further lowered by an ingenious recycle programme where old issues are bought back from individual households by the newspaper companies (Dreze & Sen, 2013). In conclusion, the social context of India lends compelling argument in support of using newspapers to understand the symbolic reality of poverty created in the mass-media (Barnett, Hodgetts, Nikora, Chamberlain, & Karapu, 2007).

4.3.1. Selecting newspapers

The two newspapers chosen for this study are The Times of India (henceforth, TOI) and The Hindustan Times (henceforth, HT). Both newspapers have a distinguished history of journalism in the country, dating back to pre-independence days, as noted by Thomas (2006). Both are national dailies and amongst the most widely circulated newspapers in the country. During the sampling period, they had a daily circulation of 2,997,675 and 1,162,557 copies, respectively (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2013).

4.3.2. Corpus construction

For both the newspapers, the dataset of news articles was generated using the Lexis-Nexis Buttersworth Database. The keywords used to search the relevant articles were: POVERTY; POOR FAMILY; POOR PERSON; POOR PEOPLE. While choosing the keywords, a decision was made to not include the word 'POOR' in the search criterion. The common usage of the word 'poor' as an adjective or an adverb — for instance, poor rainfall, poor performance etc. — returned a large volume articles not related to poverty. However, when the word poor was used as a qualifier (*poor* FAMILY; *poor* PERSON; *poor* PEOPLE), the problem was significantly reduced. [28]

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[28] Nevertheless, it needs to be acknowledged that with such a strategy, there must have been a loss of some news articles that would have been of interest to the current study.

The mass-media corpus construction was undertaken with a two-pronged approach. The database was searched with two complementary criteria:

1. Keywords appearing anywhere in the article.
2. Keywords necessarily appearing in the headline of the article.

For the first approach, 30 days were randomly chosen between 15/03/2013 and 31/08/2013[29]. For the second approach, a one year period between 1/10/2012 and 30/09/2013 was selected. This two pronged approach to constructing the newspaper data corpus allowed the inclusion of both major and minor stories on poverty. The first approach cast a wider net and ensured that the minor mentions of poverty were sampled for analysis. The minor mentions of poverty reveal the wider context and debates in which newspapers situate the problem of poverty (McKendrick et al., 2008). The second approach provided a focussed way of accumulating news stories where poverty was more likely to be the major agenda and developed the corpus of broader discussions on poverty (see Kim, Carvalho, & Davis, 2010 on the framing of poverty in the news).

Using these two approaches with the selected keywords, the dataset of a total of 466 news articles was developed. This dataset was subsequently examined for duplicates and 42 articles (17 in HT and 25 in TOI) were dropped from further analysis leaving a final corpus of 424 news articles. Table 1, provides the details of the dataset — further details such as the frequency of news reports in both newspapers, the number of stories on any single day of sampling etc. are available in Appendix VII.

Table 1.Corpus of Newspaper datum

Corpus type	Number of News Reports	
	Times of India	*Hindustan Times*
Headline Hits (one year)	72	42
Anywhere in the article (30 random dates)	249	103
Duplicates	– 25	– 17
Total	296	128
Final Corpus = 424 news articles		

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[29] This period coincides with the duration of fieldwork in Bholi.

PART III: DATA ANALYSIS

This section will develop and elaborate upon the approach adopted to analyse the data collected from participants in the village and the two newspapers. In line with the goals of the project (i) to understand how poverty is represented in different groups, and (ii) to explore how dialogical negotiations shape the representations of poverty, two different approaches to data analysis were adopted. In the first wave, data were systematically analysed using principles of thematic analysis to apprehend the representations of poverty. The second wave of analysis examined a sub-sample of the interviews and news reports with a unique coding framework developed specifically to tease out the dialogical negotiations on poverty. The details of the process of data analysis are provided below.

4.4. FIRST ANALYSIS — UNDERSTANDING POVERTY REPRESENTATIONS

4.4.1. Preparing the data

The newspaper dataset was textual and needed minimal preparation, except checking for duplicate reports. Interviews from Bholi were transcribed by the researcher using the verbatim orthographic convention outlined by Dresing, Pehl and Schmieder (2012). Dresing et al.'s approach focuses on the content of speech without getting lost in the prosodic and non-verbal cues that may have been captured in the recording (see De Rosa, 1994). While some dialogical approaches favour a more detailed transcription (e.g., Sullivan, 2011), the coding framework for examining dialogicality in this project did not impose this need. Also, following Bauer and Aarts' (2008) prescription for homogeneity across data sets, the project favoured comparable levels of textual detail for both newspaper and fieldwork data.

Each interview produced a separate transcript and in total 24 transcripts from interviews with poor participants (18 individual and six group interviews), and 20 from elite participants (18 individual and two group interviews) were prepared. Four documents with newspaper articles (one document for each newspaper and search strategy) formed the newspaper dataset. In order to manage the analysis of a relatively large volume of data, qualitative software NVivo was used.

4.4.2. Analytic framework

In line with the theoretical position of the project and the research questions, separate coding frameworks informed by the principles of thematic analysis were developed for each of the three data groups: poor people, elite people, and news reports. While the analysis of each dataset was

independent, consistency in the procedures of thematic analysis was maintained across the three datasets.

Boyatzis (1998, p. 6) explains thematic analysis as a way of "seeing and making sense of seemingly unrelated material" in qualitative research. The choice of thematic analysis follows the goals of the research and the commitment to explicating the unique context in which the representations were produced. An important consideration was the lack of prior research on poverty representations in India. To begin with, only a few studies have investigated the SRs of poverty in the public sphere (Chauhan & Foster, 2014; Galli & Fasanelli, 1994; Rubi, 2004). More so, following Green (2006), this project did not seek inspiration in their findings on account of their varied epistemological positions and research contexts.

Therefore, the project adopted a data driven thematic analysis, as Boyatzis (1998) recommends should be, in researching topics with sparse prior research findings. However, a data driven approach to thematic analysis must not be presumed to be entirely inductive as is the case with grounded theory (for e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 2008). It must be asserted that deduction becomes a part of analysis *a priori* through the project's interest in some specific aspects of the phenomena. In the present project, at the very least, this comes from its interest in understanding participants' perspectives on healthcare and education in poverty. In that sense, thematic analysis in this research was theory driven in the minimum, yet it was inductive insofar no explicit theoretical expectations guided initial coding procedure. The six step process of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was followed in the project. Table 2 provides the details of each of these steps.

Table 2. Thematic analysis stages

Phase	Description of process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic „map" of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

(Adapted from Braun and Clark [2006])

Step one of the analysis was naturally achieved through the researcher handling all aspects of the research process including conduction and transcription of all interviews (see Bailey, 2008). Similarly, the careful reading of news-articles, to remove duplicate and irrelevant articles, led to a systematic and in-depth familiarity with the newspaper data as well.

In the second step, both newspaper and interview data were coded with a data driven approach similar to that followed in the grounded theory (e.g., Glaser, 1978). Initial coding systematically assigned open codes throughout the dataset — the codes were open insofar as they were not committed to a particular theme at this stage. This step was repeated a second time to consolidate and refine the open coding scheme. Following Boyatzis (1998), no restriction was put on number of codes that could be assigned to a single newspaper article or an interview. An open code was varyingly assigned to single or multiple sentences and paragraphs in the data. However, the smallest unit that was coded was of an idea — the project allowed the idea to be either semantic/explicit or latent/interpretative (on this issue, see Braun & Clarke, 2006 esp pp. 13-15). Open codes occasionally involved in-vivo coding where a segment was encoded using the exact words from that section of the data (see King, 2008). Altogether, the second stage of thematic analysis was data-driven, yet purposive and attentive to the research questions and as Bazeley (2013, p. 125) observes, embodied the exercise of "managing, locating, identifying, sifting, sorting, and querying [the] data". The data from poor people was assigned with 68 open codes, the data from the elite also with 70 open codes, and the newspaper data with 34 open codes. Appendix VIII provides the list of all open codes of the project.

Steps 3 and 4 were iterative in nature as Bauer and Gaskell (2000) have noted them to be. After a thorough review, open codes were coalesced into categories on the basis of similarity to form thematic axes. The organisation of the open codes into categories and themes is also available in Appendix VIII. Following Braun and Clarke (2006), in the present work themes represent "something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p.10). Although all the themes were well supported by the data, no quantifiable criterion of repetition was taken into account. Similarly, it is recognised that the themes did not "spontaneously fall out or emerge" from the data but were reflections of the research questions that guided the analysis (DeSantis &

Ugarriza, 2000, p. 355). In essence, the development of the themes was an exercise of (re)consolidating the data that was fractured in the process of coding, with an explicit intention of developing answers to the research questions guiding the inquiry.

4.4.3. Results of the thematic analysis

Data from poor people revealed seven themes around which representations of poverty were developed in this group. These themes were further categorised in three representational domains. The first domain was of representations about the 'being' in poverty and included ideas about day-to-day life, future plans, work, and the causes of poverty. The second domain was of the representations of escaping poverty. Three primary ideas — social policy, healthcare, and education — informed representations here. The third domain pertained to the representations of social agents that the poor regarded important in their efforts to escape poverty. Government, bureaucracy, and the society were the three primary agents represented in this domain.

Interviews with elite participants also revealed six themes that were organised in three representational domains. The first domain of representation included elite participants' descriptions of poverty. These descriptions were built upon discussions of poverty in the village and the nexus between lack of education and poverty. The second domain was of representations regarding the responsibility of poverty — the elite primarily referred to the Government's failure and deficiencies within the poor as the reason why poverty existed in the village. The third domain was of elite representations regarding the possibility of ameliorating poverty by providing good healthcare and education to the poor.

Five themes capturing the representations of poverty were identified in the news reports. These were organised along four representational domains. The first domain was the representation of poverty as an objective reality. Data indicate that this was primarily developed in terms of the poverty line. The second domain represented poverty as a barrier and referring to the problems and challenges faced by the poor, highlighted the limited success of government policies. The third domain represented poverty as a threat to the well-being and safety of other people in the society. In this regard, news stories linked poverty with crime, terrorism, social evils, and diseases. In the fourth domain representation of poverty as an opportunity for party politics was developed. Tables 3, 4 and 5 provide the details of the themes and subthemes generated by the analysis. The third column in the tables ('Sources') refers to the number of documents (§ 4.4.1) in which the themes and subthemes were present. Similarly, the fourth column ('Coding Instances') refers to the coding frequency of the themes and subtheme in each dataset.

Table 3. Themes in poor participants' data organised by representational domains

Representational Domain	Themes	Sources	Coding Instances
THE BEING IN POVERTY	**THEME 1: ON BEING POOR**	**24**	**281**
	○ Living in poverty	22	95
	○ Work	21	72
	○ Becoming poor	22	83
	○ Thoughts on future	14	31
ESCAPING POVERTY	**THEME 2: SOCIAL POLICY**	**16**	**46**
	○ Welfare benefits don't reach the poor	14	34
	○ Policy changes needed	7	10
	○ Policy as vote bank	2	2
	THEME 3: HEALTH	**22**	**148**
	○ Government hospitals	18	60
	○ Private healthcare and Quacks	18	42
	○ Local beliefs	15	46
	THEME 4: EDUCATION	**24**	**192**
	○ The importance of education	19	76
	○ Contradictions between poverty and education	22	92
	○ Mid-day meal scheme	16	24
SOCIAL ACTORS	**THEME 5: GOVERNMENT**	**18**	**44**
	○ Needs to look after the poor	6	7
	○ Government failure	18	37
	THEME 6: BUREAUCRACY	**16**	**69**
	○ Bribe for everything	10	11
	○ Bribes don't work anymore	3	4
	○ Corrupt public servants	10	22
	○ Institutional inefficiency and mismanagement	14	32
	THEME 7: SOCIETY	**22**	**107**
	○ Place of poor in society	18	66
	○ A general lack of trust	19	41

Table 4. Themes in elite participants' data organised by representational domains

Representational Domain	Themes	Sources (N=16)	Coding Instances
POVERTY DESCRIPTIONS	**THEME 1: POVERTY IN BHOLI**	**13**	**65**
	o Precarious existence in poverty	11	36
	o 'Big fish swallows small fish'	06	18
	o The contradictory necessity of poverty	06	11
	THEME 2: THE NEXUS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND POVERTY	**15**	**40**
	o Education crucial for poor people	07	09
	o Lack of education detrimental for the poor	11	21
	o Poverty makes education difficult	07	10
WHY POVERTY EXISTS	**THEME 3: INDIVIDUAL DEFICIENCY**	**16**	**115**
	o Poor people lack future orientation	10	58
	o Free riders	9	37
	o Poor people cause problems	10	20
	THEME 4: GOVERNMENT FAILURE	**16**	**128**
	o Policy failure	16	53
	o Evil designs of the Government	09	33
	o Corruption	08	29
	o Politics and politicians	07	13
AMELIORATION	**THEME 5: SHORT-CHANGED ON SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION**	**13**	**156**
	o Problems at government schools	11	96
	o Teachers at government schools	12	60
	THEME 6: WITHOUT GOOD HEALTH	**15**	**117**
	o Dysfunctional government facilities	14	55
	o The strain of private treatment	08	25
	o Treating the poor	08	24
	o The role of quacks	07	13

Table 5. Themes in newspapers' data organised by representational domains

Representational Domain	Themes	Sources	Coding Instances
OBJECTIVITY OF POVERTY	**THEME 1: POVERTY IS WHAT THE POVERTY LINE MEASURES**	**4**	**69**
	o Learning about poverty through the poverty line	4	46
	o Where should the poverty line be set?	4	23
POVERTY AS A BARRIER	**THEME 2: PORTRAYING LIVES IN POVERTY**	**4**	**145**
	o The causes of poverty	4	15
	o Problems of the poor	4	54
	o Poverty as a barrier	4	76
	THEME 3: SURMOUNTING THE BARRIER	4	98
	o The potential of policy	4	15
	o 'Reaching for the stars' — overcoming poverty through excellence	4	83
POVERTY AS A THREAT	**THEME 4: THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON SOCIETY**	**4**	**44**
	o Poverty causes inconvenience	4	10
	o Poverty causes anti-social behaviour	4	10
	o Poverty causes social evils	4	24
POVERTY AS AN OPPORTUNITY	**THEME 5: POLITICISING POVERTY**	**4**	**135**
	o Government as the irresponsible Other	4	70
	o The politics on poverty	4	65

4.5. SECOND ANALYSIS — EXAMINING DIALOGICALITY IN POVERTY

This project undertook a second, focused analysis to explore the dialogical nature of poverty representations. The details of the analytic procedure are below.

4.5.1. Preparing the data

In order to manage a close reading and in-depth analysis of dialogicality in the data, six transcripts (25 per cent) from the interviews with poor people, six from elite participants (30 per cent), and twenty news-reports with the keywords in the headline were randomly selected for analysis. All the transcripts and news-reports were uploaded in NVivo for conducting the analysis.

4.5.2. Analytic framework

Dialogical approaches foster a fertile ground for a variety of analytic approaches as Sullivan's (2011) specialist resource on it documents. With varying focus on the Ego–Alter interdependence, independence and co-constitution, dialogicality has been analysed differently in different studies. For example, studies have microanalytically examined semiotics of Ego–Alter dialogue (Leiman, 2012), the psychological functions served by Alters evoked (Puchalska-Wasyl, Chmielnicka-Kuter, & Oleś, 2008), and the identification of different speaking positions of the Ego (Aveling & Gillespie, 2008). The dialogical analysis undertaken in the present project was based on a unique coding framework developed in accordance to the goals of the research. The architecture of the coding framework was built around three theoretically relevant categories where codes were inductively generated.

4.5.2.1. Social Acts

The first coding category was of social acts which are a crucial component of a dialogical perspective on human life in the social world (Mead, 1934). Social acts are the fundamental units of analysing social life and as Blumer (2004) notes, they are cardinal to understanding the lived realities of research participants. In the present project, a social act was coded using two approaches. In the first approach, descriptions in the text where the Ego encounters the Alter(s) and engages with them either verbally or through actions were coded as social acts. In the second approach, participant accounts of one or more Alter(s) engaging with other Alter(s) were also coded as social acts. In essence, participative engagement between the Ego and the Alter(s) or between two or more Alters was key to the coding of social acts.8u

The social acts described by participants revealed the social situations in which the Ego developed content to its representation of objects in the social world, either directly through participation or vicariously through the experience of Alter(s). In the dataset, such descriptions were assigned a code that captured the type of encounter. For example, take following hypothetical statements: (i) "I went to the hospital to see a doctor but no doctors were available." (ii) "Last week John went to the hospital with a bad cough. They refused to see him because there were no doctors!" In the coding scheme followed in this project, both statements were coded as the social act of 'MEDICAL TREATMENT' — importantly, in the first statement, the Ego directly participated in the social act whereas in the second, it did not. As such, the codes were 'labels' that described the social act.

4.5.2.2. Alter(s) present in communication

This coding category follows the fundamental assumption of dialogicality — thinking, communicating, and representing is achieved in relation to the Alter(s) (Hermans, 2008; Marková, 2003b). Coding for the Alter(s) occurring in the data was done in terms of their relationship with the interlocutor (or the Ego). Take the following two illustrative examples where the same person called Smith appears in the text: (i) "I went to see Dr Smith but he refused to take me as a patient." (ii) "I met Dr Smith on the street, he did not even say hello — he lives three doors from me!" Following the coding scheme committed to the social-roles and relationships, in the first instance, the Alter was coded as 'Doctor' and in the second, as 'Neighbour'. Thus, in the coding framework used in the project, the same person was coded as different Alters, depending upon the context of their relationship with the Ego in the particular social situation narrated by interlocutors — as Marková (2003b) notes, the Ego and the Alter are constantly defined by their relationship with one another.

Additionally, as these were roles that different people in the community performed, a distinction was made between instances that did or did not associate specific person with the role. For example, consider the following sentence: "Doctors try to cheat us all the time." In this sentence, the interlocutor refers to the social role of 'Doctor' but unlike the first example, does not identify a specific person. In the data, such general Alter positions were coded as 'Doctor', 'Teacher', and 'Politician' etc.; whereas, when specific individuals were identified, the code assigned reflected that: 'Doctor (specific)', 'Teacher (specific)' etc.

4.5.2.3. Voices

The third coding category was for the voices of the Alter(s). As outlined in § 3.2.2 and §3.3.4, the view-points, opinions, and statements made by other people often find expression in the speech of the interlocutor. Analysing multivoicedness is a crucial part of dialogical analysis and Marková (2003a, 2003b) notes that it reveals the arguments, agreements, and disagreements between the Ego and the Alter. In this regard, Gillespie (2006) also notes that the emergence of these voices from the Alter provide a moment of self-reflection in the Ego.

The coding framework for Voices broadly followed the approach outlined by Aveling, Gillespie and Cornish (2014). Both direct ["Smith said, "I can't take you as a patient.""], and indirect ["They told me that Smith won't greet you."] voices were coded. However, unlike Aveling et al.'s recommendation, the addressivity of these voices was not identified. Addressivity identifies the individuals or the groups towards which an utterance is directed (Bakhtin, 2010). Coding for these instance would have generated a separate layer of Alters — in addition to the ones coded as above. The issue of addressivity was not of interest to this project and therefore coding for Alters towards which the statement may have been addressed was not undertaken.

It is important to note that in the project's coding framework, there was an expected overlap between coding for voices, and Alter(s) and social acts. While voices were coded separately from the Alters, to maintain parsimony, their analysis in Chapter 8 is integrated with that of social acts and Alter(s).

4.5.3. Process of analysis

The process of coding involved both deductive and inductive approaches at *different stages of coding*. The first step in the analysis involved deductively determining whether an extract contained a mention of an Alter, or the voice of the Alter, or the description of a social act. Social acts usually contained the mention of at least one Alter and at times their voice as well. Therefore, wherever appropriate, an extract coded for a social act was simultaneously coded in terms of the Alter(s) present and their voice(s). The second step in the process was entirely data-driven insofar as the coding was not restricted to a finite number of Alters, voices, or social acts — all social acts, Alters, and voices were coded with an appropriate label. An example from the dataset in Figure 5 illustrates the process of dialogical analysis as a whole. The entire block of text contains a participants' description of how he had to sell off all his land to pay for the funeral of his parents — accordingly, the whole segment was coded as a social act with the name

"FUNERAL". As illustrated, the same text also contains different Alters and the voice of one of them.
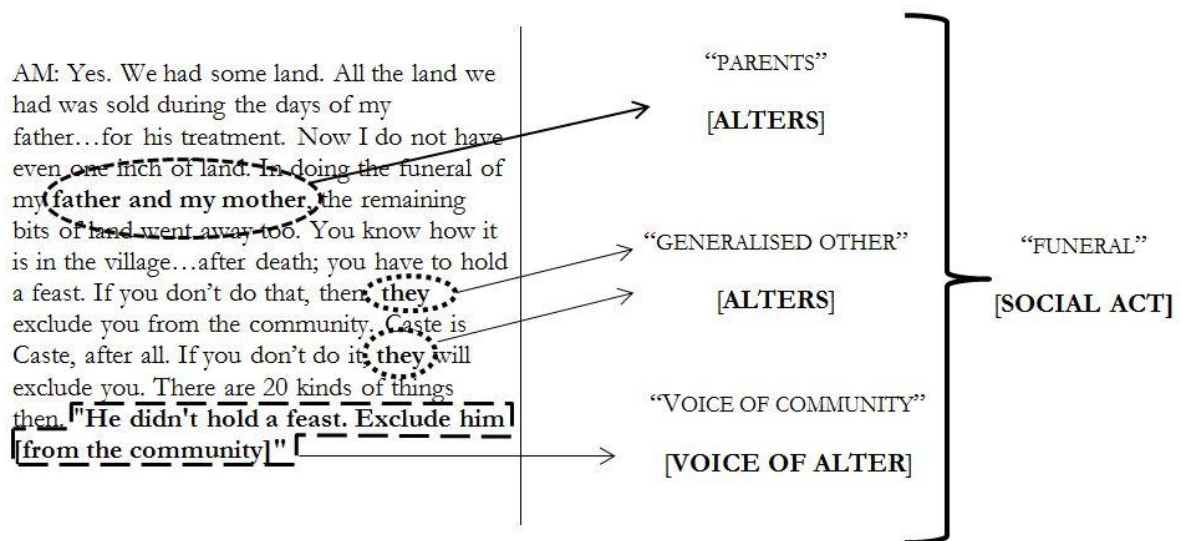
Figure 5. An illustration of dialogical coding framework

4.5.4. Results of the Dialogical Analysis.

Using the coding framework outlined above, references to a total of 32 different types of social acts were discovered in the data. Data from news reports, poor people, and elite people contained references to 16, 17, and 18 social acts respectively. Five social acts — DEBT, EDUCATION, MARRIAGE, POLICY, AND PROVIDING FOR THE FAMILY — were present in all three data sources (poor people, elite people, news reports). Similarly, a further eight social acts were common between accounts of poor and elite participants. The analysis revealed a high coherence in the social acts that poor and elite participants referred to — a total of 13 social acts were common. Table 6 provides the full list of social acts[30]. While the labels used for the social acts are mostly self-explanatory, the definitions and scope of all these social acts is available in Appendix IX.

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[30] The number next to the specific Social Act is the number of instances it occurred in the data. While the frequency of the social acts is not crucial to a dialogical analysis, at the surface it provides information regarding the most common forms of Social Acts where people dialogically developed representations of poverty in terms of the Alter. In this direction, the five most common Social Acts in which poor people represented poverty were Education (38), Work (32), Medical Treatment (30), Migrant Work (22), Policy (20), and Raising a voice (20). Similarly, the elite participants' five most common Social Acts were Education (53), Policy (33), Medical Treatment (31), Salaried Jobs (19), and Bribes and Corruption (14). Similarly, Poverty Assessment (6), Policy (6), Crimes and Suicide (5) were the three most common Social Acts in newspapers.

In the second coding category, a total of 37 different *types* of Alters were identified in the data. In interviews, participant references were overwhelmingly evoked Generalised Others. This can partly be attributed both to the instruction regarding anonymity given at the start of interviews, and participants' own need to not speak ill of specific members of their community. Mentions of specific Alters were largely limited to the members of the interlocutors' families, the founding fathers of the country, and past and present Chief Ministers of Bihar and Prime Ministers of India. The distinction between Generalised and Specific Alters was less relevant in news reports as they tend to identify people by their names to attribute quotes to people. Yet, these specific people are often representatives of a group or class and their voices are presented as such. As with social acts, there was extensive similarity with regards to the Alters that poor and elite participants evoked — 22 Alters were in common amongst data from both groups. Table 6 provides the full details below.

Table 6. Social acts coded in respective data groups

SOCIAL ACTS IN POOR PARTICIPANTS' ACCOUNTS		SOCIAL ACTS IN ELITE PARTICIPANTS' ACCOUNTS		SOCIAL ACTS IN NEWS REPORTS	
Bribes and Corruption	9	Agriculture	8	Poverty Measurement	6
Dealing with Government Offices	12	Alcohol consumption	8	Policy	6
Debt	4	Barter	1	Crime and Suicide	5
Democratic Acts	6	Bribes and Corruption	14	Research on Poverty	4
Education	38	Dealing with Government Offices	5	Poverty Alleviation	3
Funeral	2	Debt	2	Providing for the family	2
Going to school	3	Democratic Acts	7	Political Instability	2
Marriage	4	Education	53	Notable Achievement	2
Medical Treatment	30	Marriage	2	Education	2
Migrant Work	22	Medical Treatment	31	Politics	2
Police encounter	5	Migrant Work	8	Debate and Controversy	1
Policy	20	Policy	33	Becoming Poor	1
Providing for the family	17	Providing for the family	4	Police Encounter	1
Quarrel	3	Raising a voice	6	Debt	1
Raising a voice	20	Rich-Poor Meeting	5	Human Trafficking	1
Rich-Poor Meeting	8	Salaried Jobs	19	Marriage	1
Work	32	Welfare Dependency and Abuse	8		
Bribes and Corruption	9	Work	9		

Table 7. Alters evoked in respective data groups

ALTERS IN ELITE PARTICIPANTS' ACCOUNTS		ALTERS IN POOR PARTICIPANTS' ACCOUNTS		ALTERS IN NEWS REPORTS	
GENERALISED ALTERS					
Community	45	Children	12	Poor People	12
Compounder	1	Community	38	Politician	10
Doctors	21	Compounder	2	Police	6
Educated people	7	Co-workers	2	NGO	5
Farmer	12	Doctors	20	Government	4
Government	45	Educated people	4	Rural	3
Guide	5	Elders	4	Urban	3
Illiterate Foolish People	7	Employer	3	Poor Children	2
Labourers	3	Family	3	Other Countries	2
Landowners	2	Farmers	4	Rich People	2
Local Bureaucrats	9	Government	43	The Planning Commission	1
Middlemen and Touts	6	Illiterate Foolish people	4	Moneylenders	1
Moneylenders	3	Landowner	12		
Politician	9	Local bureaucrats	26		
Not Village	12	Middlemen and Touts	9		
Nurses	1	Politician	9		
Parents	6	Not Village	5		
PDS Dealer	3	Nurses	4		
People in Jobs	4	Parents	4		
Poor children	16	PDS Dealer	2		
Poor people	86	Police	3		
Quack	4	Poor people	121		
Rich people	30	Powerful People	12		
Shop owners	2	Quack	7		
Teachers	19	Rich people	52		
Villagers	3	Shopkeepers	2		
		Teachers	16		
SPECIFIC ALTERS					
B. R Ambedkar (specific)	2	Chief Minister (specific)	8		
Billionaires (specific)	2	Children (specific)	17		
Chief Minister (specific)	8	Doctor (specific)	2		
Children (specific)	1	Family (specific)	14		
Dr Rajendra Prasad (specific)	2	Government Doctor (specific)	1		
Family (specific)	4	Local Bureaucrat (specific)	1		
Jawaharlal Nehru (specific)	1	Parents (specific)	14		
Ram Manohar Lohia (specific)	1	Relatives (specific)	1		
		Spouse (specific)	5		

PART IV: METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS & QUALITY INDICATORS

4.6. METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

As with any research, the scope and breadth of this inquiry is limited in some ways. First, it can be argued that the researcher's native status in the socio-cultural context of Bihar may have limited the observation of issues that a non-native researcher may treat with what Bauer and Gaskell (2000) call the 'surprise value' of research. However, this was an issue of trade-off between maximizing the potential to spot 'surprise issues' by researching communities where the researcher was not native, and maximizing the understanding of the socio-cultural context of research. The present project, while noting the possibility of omissions, made a choice in favour of the latter.

The second limitation of the project pertains to the choice of newspapers selected for this study. Ideally, this research could have also explored poverty representations in local vernacular newspapers. Yet, due to their non-availability in the newspaper databases this was not possible. Alternative means of sampling them through manual search of keywords would have put tremendous demands on the time and monetary budget of the project. However, this is clearly an issue that future inquiries could seek to attend.

The third limitation is that the project presents a 'snapshot' of representations sampled over a finite time period in Bholi. While the researcher made several subsequent trips to the field, these were primary with the intention of clarifying and further probing certain participants on certain issues. As noted earlier, Bihar is a society under tremendous flux — inclusion of a temporal dimension to create a 'Toblerone' type study of poverty representation would have been ideal. Yet, the budget of time did not allow for a subsequent, elaborate data collection.

4.7. INDICATORS OF QUALITY

Traditional psychological research was based on positivistic models of inquiry and followed the tradition of natural sciences where reliability and validity parameters ascertain the quality of research. Needless to say, the same parameters do not apply to this project which is epistemologically constructivist and uses qualitative methods. Yet, without scientific rigour, qualitative research would lose its utility (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Guba and Lincoln (1985) recommend an alternate formulation to conceptualise the parameters of quality and rigour in qualitative research. They argue that 'trustworthiness' of research is a useful criterion of quality and comes from credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

A contemporary development of these indicators of quality is available in Gaskell and Bauer's (2000) discussion on maintaining accountability of the research and the processes of analysis and interpretation. They argue that 'confidence building' is an indicator of quality in qualitative research and comes from triangulation, transparency, corpus construction, and thick description. With these guiding ideas, the analysis embodied in this research has maintained its quality in several ways.

First, the overall credibility of this project comes from a number of measures that were built into this research. Through Chapters 1 to 4, the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological framework was incrementally established and the fundamental premises of the project were explicitly derived. The arguments and assumptions that guide the selection of data sources, the process of corpus construction, and the approach to the analysis of the data were all made explicit. Thus, the project demonstrates a commitment to faithfully communicate the procedural details in depth and maintain transparency in this thesis.

 Second, the empirical decisions made in this thesis were a result of careful deliberation in terms of the research and theoretical goals of the inquiry. As Gaskell and Bauer (2000, pp. 337–339) recommend, the "indication of the method" was purposefully predicated upon achieving a harmonious collaboration between theoretical framework, the research goals, and the setting. Three issues can be highlighted in this regard. First of all, the decision to limit the collection of data from a single village in Bihar allowed the work to achieve credibility and also maintain symmetry with the theoretical scope of the project (see § 4.1). Second, the tools of the research were adapted to the setting, instead of being forcefully implemented. The interview schedule, strategies for creating diversity in sample, enhancing the participation of females were all carefully planned in terms of the research setting (see § 4.2). Similarly, newspapers were preferred instead of TV and internet as the medium for accessing representations of poverty in the mass-media, in conjunction with the prevailing media penetration profile of India.

Third, further with regards to empirical issues, the project adopted triangulation as a measure of confidence in the project. Patton (2002) recommends a combination of methods as a strategy for achieving triangulation in research — triangulation lends itself as an approach to improving the analogous 'reliability' and 'validity' of research findings. In the present project, triangulation was achieved at two different levels. First, two types of interviews — individual and group — were used for corpus construction in the project. Within each of these interview types, a wide range of diversity was achieved through a planned strategy for recruiting participants. Similarly, while creating the corpus of news-articles, a two-pronged strategy was used to sample both

major and minor discussions on poverty (see § 4.3.2). Second, the study also achieved a second level of triangulation by combining the study of participant data with an analysis of news reports. The methodological plurality involving the combination of formal (newspapers) and informal modes of communication (interviews) is an important tool for ensuring the ecological validity of social representation research as noted by Farr (1993).

Fourth, this thesis presents a reflexive account of the entire process of research and acknowledges, wherever appropriate, the active role of the researcher in shaping the data. While the role of the researcher in generating, and subsequently interpreting the data is duly noted, this thesis presents a thick description along with evidence from the data that support them — as Golafshani (2003) observes, this is an effective strategy for making a research trustworthy.

Fifth, in order to achieve a faithful reflexive account to the theoretical commitment to the thesis of dialogicality, the dialogicality between the researcher and the participants is fully examined in Part III of Chapter 8. The relationship of mutual alterity and interdependence between the researcher and the participants (§ 8.6), consequences of the researcher representing the participants and vice-versa (§ 8.7), and the research itself as a dialogical social act (§ 8.8) are reflexively analysed.

In conclusion, while the traditional criteria of reliability and validity do not apply to this project, it nevertheless maintains high standards of quality in line with the analogous prescriptions of accountability, transparency, and trustworthiness.

CHAPTER 5

ON REPRESENTATIONS *IN* POVERTY

Bholi`s poor

CHAPTER OUTLINE

While populated by a range of personal experiences, poor people's representations of poverty can be understood in terms of the movement of SRs between three distinct but related domains: reflections on being in poverty, the desire and possibility of escaping poverty, and reflections on social agents deemed relevant to poverty debates. In other words, participants' representations of poverty are organised in terms of representations of their being (which is poor); their aspirations of becoming (non-poor) through welfare policies, education, and good health; and of the social agents supporting this transition (the Government, the Bureaucracy, and the Society). Thus, the seven themes developed out of the data were coalesced into three representational domains (see Table 3). Following this analytic framework, this chapter is divided in three parts.

Part I analyses representations about the present state or 'being' of poor people. The word 'being' is purposefully used in terms of Heidegger's being in the world – *dasein* – which refers to the person's involvement with the world and the awareness of his Self's relationality (Heidegger, 1996). In the present study, the representations of the being involved participants' reflections about the causes of poverty, living in poverty, and the importance of work in the lives of poor.

Part II analyses participants' symbolic coping with their present state of being with representational activity on social policy, healthcare, and education. Data reveal that poor people represent these as the primary pathways that can support their quest to escape poverty. Through a constant undercurrent in representations of social policy, healthcare, and education, Part II will also reveal that participants believed that their efforts to escape poverty do not achieve fruition.

The perceived thwarting of the transition from being poor to becoming non-poor necessitates further symbolic coping. This is achieved by participants charging the Government, the Bureaucracy, and the society with failure in helping the poor. Part III will throw light on participants' representational work in this direction.

PART 0

The chapter begins with a Part 0, which is crucial to situating the poverty representations from Bholi. It describes the representations of land, which is the focal point of poor people's life in Bholi. Appearing through all three representational domains, representations of land link to participants' representations of their present 'being' and the pathways of becoming 'non-poor'.

5.0. LAND — THE BRIDGE BETWEEN 'BEING' AND 'BECOMING'

Land plays a key role in the lives of people in Bholi and was a key theme in representation of poverty in Bholi. Land ownership was the most widely used criterion in the village's knowledge system to ascertain whether someone was poor or not. Not owning any land or owning less than four *kattha* of land was regularly used as a widely shared representation of poverty in the village.[31]

AC:	*Okay. So what do you think is the cause of poverty in this village? Why are people poor?*
SCT:	*The poor…Well, the poor here do not have any land here. They don't have any land at all! People who have 4 kattha, 5 kattha, a bigha of land, they are all on your side [non-poverty], they aren't on my side [poverty] at all.*

In the socio-economic context of Bholi, land is an important economic asset. Agriculture was the most reliable source of livelihood in Bholi and having a sufficiently large piece of land facilitates cultivation and self-reliance (Ellis & Bahiigwa, 2003; Ellis & Mdoe, 2003). Poor participants often indicated that instead of taking unskilled migrant employment, or leasing out lands from big landowners, they would prefer cultivating their own land.

AC:	*Okay. I want to hear your thoughts on poverty in the village. You said you considered yourself poor. What makes you poor?*
BW:	*Everything. I don't have any land of my own. I depend on the landlord. I take his land and cultivate it. If I had some land, I could have made profits. All my life I have worked on lands of others. I have to give a share of the crops to the landlord and once I give that, I am left with nothing.*

In rural Bihar, the ownership of land — however small — has tremendous importance. It becomes an asset that people can pawn or sell to generate money in times of need. A number of participants recounted selling off their land for financing medical treatments, weddings, funerals etc. In several accounts, the loss of land was represented as the cause of becoming poor.

AM:	*Yes. We became poor after that [father's illness]. We had some land. All the land we had was sold during the days of my father…for his treatment. Now I do not have even one inch*

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[31] *Kattha* (or the anglicised *Cottah*) is a unit of land measurement. There are numerous variations in the measurement of a *kattha* of land but roughly, it is equal to about 650 square feet of land.

of land. In doing the funeral of my father and my mother, the remaining bits of land went away too.

What is more, as an asset that can generate a quick influx of cash, land is central to hopes and aspirations of poor people. Participants hold on to the land they own in order to sell it for the right cause — mostly, to achieve upward social mobility through funding their children's college education, marrying their daughters in financially superior families etc. Interestingly, two participants also suggested that they would sell their land to secure bribes for obtaining government jobs. The representation of corruption in government and bureaucracy, discussed in Part III, is at the heart of this view-point.

DDS:	*But even after you pass the exam [for the job], during the medical [examination] you need money. Where would we get that? This is my compulsion. What else?*
AC:	*What solution are you thinking [of that compulsion]?*
DDS:	*See, if nothing else…I estimate it will cost about one lakh rupees [£1000]. If it has to happen then one lakh rupees [for bribe]. Sir, what else will I do? Sell my land. If nothing else, sell my land. I have four kattha [of land]. I will sell it and get [my brother] a job.*

Poor people in Bholi invest their savings in buying land, which is an effective strategy of building assets in an otherwise resource starved society. What is more, land prices have been on a staggering upward drive in Bihar (Das & Raj, 2014) making it a clever economic choice.

SML:	*If we postpone [our] marriages…say if we don't get married for two years then from what we earn in those two years, we can invest in our [future]. Isn't it? We can buy some land, some livestock. For example, we bought 2 kattha of land recently. My parents did not do anything. I got it from my earnings.*

The centrality of land in representations of poverty in Bholi is consistent with previous research in Indian villages (for e.g. Basu, 2013). In Bholi, the ownership of land reflects the financial status and potential of people — in the present, its ownership distinguishes between poverty and prosperity; whereas for the future, it promises security and agency. Considering its relationship to both the present state of being and the potential for becoming, throughout Parts I and II, land would keep appearing in representations of participants.

PART I: ABOUT THE BEING

5.1. ON BEING POOR

While reflecting about their own poverty and poverty in the village, participants developed a rich and detailed representational field documenting what it meant to be poor. Before commencing the analysis, a crucial observation must be made regarding the semantics of conversation. Most participants referred themselves as 'BPL' (below poverty line). These references were interesting as the assignment of people as 'BPL' is a formal task undertaken by the Government. In order to become eligible for anti-poverty benefits, an individual must be on the official list of 'BPL' people. Despite being poor, many participants were not officially recognised as 'BPL', yet, they continued to call themselves 'BPL'. One example is presented from the data below

> CGM: *People tell me "Why do you want to build a house? You will get Indira Awas. If you make a house, you won't get it." Therefore, somehow I manage in this very shanty. I am in BPL sir.*
> AC: *Are you on the list?*
> CGM: *No Sir. Not on the list.*

Being on the BPL list is the official recognition of poverty in the country and the eligibility criterion for receiving welfare and other antipoverty policies reflects the deontic power exercised by the Government to recognise the existence of poverty in the lives of people (see § 2.2.2.1). In other words, the acknowledgement of poverty is contingent on the appropriate institutional authority recognising its existence.

> KL: *What we want to say to you is that we are on the APL list. We need to be put on the BPL list. We should be given Indira Awas.*
> AC: *You are on the APL list?*
> KL: *That is the thing! The people who put us on it know why they did that!*

Such instances from the data provide evidence for the thematisation of poverty using the idea of the poverty line (see § 1.3). The linking of antipoverty policy has made BPL–APL distinction the natural way of thinking about poverty— further evidence in this direction will be presented in Chapters 6 and 7. For the time being, the chapter will attend to the representations of the being that were developed by the participants using ideas about the causes of poverty, life experiences of being poor, struggles with finding work and employment, and their hopes and expectations for the future.

5.1.1. Becoming poor

5.1.1.1. Health Problems

In agreement with research examining the causes of individuals and families falling into poverty in rural India (Krishna, 2006), health problems and prolonged illnesses emerged as the most common cause of poverty in participant accounts. In principle, the State provides free (or at a nominal cost) healthcare in government hospitals and Primary Healthcare Centres (PHC). Bholi did not have a PHC, leaving people without any immediate medical support.

> SCT: *Healthcare…there is no provision for healthcare in the village. There are many people…in every house, in their day-to-day life, they are ill. Someone broke his leg; someone got a fever; someone has a different problem…they keep happening constantly but we don't even have first aid facility.*

Deficient public health facilities are common in India and as a result have led to the development of a thriving private sector that works on a pay-as-you-go model (Dreze & Sen, 2013). In the private sector, doctors charge Rs 150-500 (£1.5-5.00) per consultation. Medicines are sold at private shops and if the doctor recommends further diagnostic tests, a number of private establishments too provide their services with a pay-as-you-go model. Overall, private healthcare becomes an expensive affair, often leading the poor into debt.

> AC: *So what happens when people need healthcare?*
> RM: *Nothing happens. You live or you die. You are on your own whether you live or die. No one is bothered.*
> <div align="center">***</div>
> MP: *If you don't have the money, you borrow money and spend it [on treatment]. The lending rate is 5 rupees per hundred rupees. If you don't repay, they will thrash you.*

As RM and MP describe, medical needs were a common route for poor people falling in debt. Such debts were incurred not only to pay for the treatment but also for travel and related expenses in cases requiring specialist medical attention available only in bigger cities. What is more, health needs also result in the loss of important assets of the poor — land and livestock.

> AC: *Okay. So what happens when people fall very ill…I mean things more serious than a fever?*
> GM: *Then people run to Patna, [omitted],[omitted]….they run wherever they can afford to go. What can one do? One borrows money from the landlords, from the moneylenders…on interest. If it is very serious problem, people even sell the land they have…they sell their cattle or else they die without treatment. I have seen it with many old people falling ill — people just let them die and do nothing.*

On the one hand poverty makes management of illnesses difficult — the problematic of poor people's dependence on government hospitals will be examined further in § 5.2.2. On the other

hand, the current theme demonstrates that expenditures incurred due to illnesses are a cause of people falling in poverty — as Krishna (2010) notes, Indians with marginal resources and irregular income are often 'one illness away' from poverty. Poor health, thus, appears to be a self-fulfilling prophecy in the lives of the poor.

5.1.1.2. Lack of public infrastructure and income opportunities

The local economy of Bholi is primarily driven by unorganised agrarian and non-agrarian manual labour. The second representation regarding the cause of poverty relates to the lack of public infrastructure to support agriculture and the absence of alternative income opportunities. Despite the village's dependence on agriculture either directly or indirectly, farmers still depended on rains to water their crops. What is more, Bholi is in the flood plains of the river *Kosi* and agriculture keeps bobbing between droughts and inundation by *Kosi* floods every few years. Crop failures caused by natural calamities was frequently noted as a cause of poverty.

> GM: *What else is there, you get a famine and a drought…the people who depend on the land, they depend on the almighty! They depend on him…if it rains only then people can sow seeds. These days people don't even want to get in agriculture. People who have some land, they think, "Why should I get into this and put my money in this gamble. Leave it."*

Most poor participants earned their livelihood from casual labour in the fields of large landowners. The availability of such work followed crop cycles, leaving people with little control over their livelihoods. The shortages of job opportunities that were not tied to favourable weather and crop cycles were highlighted as a cause of unemployment and poverty.

> PM: *If I get regular work, good wages, good food, then [my] poverty will disappear. If I get employed and earn a salary, only then I will get rid of poverty. If I don't have a job, I will remain stuck with poverty.*
>
> ***
>
> CGM: *Poverty…here you have so much poverty because it is a rural area. There is no company [industry] within ten miles of this village. There is nothing else [but agriculture]. Had there been a big company [industry] then even people from the village…they all would have come. No one would have loitered around unemployed.*

Dependence on an agricultural economy that was still dictated by natural cycles of floods and droughts, along with a lack of alternative employment in the region, forces people to leave Bholi for migrant work — often, against their wishes as Jansen (2013) notes. During the fieldwork, the researcher had sustained regular contact with at least 56 families in Bholi who considered themselves poor. All 56 families had at least one male family member who in the past 12 months had left Bholi for far away cities like Delhi for work. While migrant work provided families with an alternative source of income, it was not available to households with no male members. The

following excerpt is from an interview with a participant whose husband had passed away. She was raising two daughters with income generated from selling milk of her livestock.

> *WDW:* *There are people who go to big cities for work. They go away and work there for 4 or 5 years and come back with a lot of savings. But people like us, we have nothing. We have absolutely nothing. The hardship that we have to navigate, no one can help us with that…what else.*

In conclusion, poor participants regarded healthcare expenses and unemployment as the two major causes of poverty. The theme of work was an important component of participants' representations about their being and is discussed at length in § 5.1.3.

5.1.1.3. The person himself

Interestingly, in few instances, people blamed the person for his own poverty. The representation that one's poverty was one's own doing was qualified by two ideas: laziness and alcoholism. In this regard, the next chapter will reveal that elite participants representations were informed more frequently by the idea that the poor were responsible for their own poverty.

> *SCT:* *You go and look for jobs…in the summer sun, you will have to run from one door to another…but my son is not very serious. He is lazy….he is in the wrong company…he is with wrong people. He does not take it seriously at all. I don't know how he is going to run his family.*
>
> ***
>
> *AM:* *There are many poor people who…for instance, now it is the time to harvest wheat…they would scavenge and steal from the fields. They think why should they go and work in the fields, why should they do any of that when they can just steal the grains at night…they think that if they work all day they would get the same amount of wheat as their wages…so they think why should they ever work!*

Poor people working on daily wages almost always got paid in cash at the end of every working day. Those in a habit of consuming alcohol tend to spend some, or most, of the day's earnings on it. Several poor participants represented alcoholism as a cause of poverty.

> *RW:* *There is poverty here because people are alcoholics. People don't want to save. They squander. That is why poverty grips people…even those who earn every day. If they were to save their money, they would have been prosperous. But they are still there [in poverty]…those drunkards, they are still in poverty and misery. If they get alcohol and drink, won't they remain in the clutches of poverty?*

However, this representation was resisted by female participants in a group interview[32]. While they agreed that men spending money on alcohol made meeting household expenses difficult, they also argued that after a long day's work drinking helped people to relax and unwind.

> KL: *Consider that there are 5 people [returning after work]. They are all very tired. So say, they go and drink. How would the kids be provided for? When people are tired, they do drink a little and it they don't drink, they will fall ill. So they go ad have a quarter [a pint]. But then that is because if they earn, we get to eat. If they don't, we fast.*

Finally, a 52-year-old practitioner of homeopathic medicine and a farmer with the largest land holding amongst all participants in the current group, charged poor people with the quintessential representation of welfare dependency. While welfare dependency was a prominent idea amongst the Bholi elite (see § 6.4.2), KR was the only poor participant that suggested it. KR's quote is presented here because of its surprise value. In some ways, his allusion to welfare dependency may stem from the fact that despite considering himself poor, he was an outlier in the group with a significant land ownership and a homeopathic practice.

> KR: *There was an instance Sir, two or three years ago. Every family received one quintal of wheat [from the government] as [flood] relief [ration]. One labourer sat home for a month. Why did he sit at home? He sat at home because [he thought], "If I leave who will collect the benefit?" He used to work in Delhi. So I spoke with him, "My son, why did you not go [to Delhi]?" He said, "Baba, how can I go? If I go, who will get it [ration]? If I go, I won't get it."*

To sum up, participants identified expected issues like health problems, lack of employment, and natural calamities as the causes of poverty. Additionally, six participants also noted that poverty was caused by a lack of education but as the discussion in § 5.2.2 will reveal, education was a complex issue and many also believed that it did not solve the problems of the poor. The unexpected finding about causes of poverty came in instances where participants appeared to blame the poor. Laziness among the poor has been a common in middle class and elite representations on poverty (Dorey, 2010) and follows the trend observed since Joe Feagin's (1972) seminal work on poverty attributions — similar findings have been noted in a range of countries including in India (Nasser, Singhal, & Abouchedid, 2005). As Harper (1996) notes, blaming the poor has become a part of the public discourse on poverty. A recent study with poor people in the UK (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013) found similar trend amongst its participants to blame the poor for their poverty. While the findings from Bholi add to this

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[32] The female participants themselves did not consume alcohol. Alcohol consumption among Indian women is among the lowest in the world. While it is on the rise in the metropolitan centres in the country, in rural Bihar, it is nearly unheard of.

corpus, it is important to exercise caution. While Shildrick and MacDonald interpret the observation as imbibition of the popular discourse on 'undeserving poor', only KR's account in Bholi would fit with this explanation. As it would become clear in Part III of the chapter, poor people tend to absolve themselves of the blame of alcoholism and laziness by ultimately identifying government policies as the real cause of these behaviours.

5.1.2. Living in poverty

The second theme on the 'being' in poverty related to poor people's representations about living a life of poverty. Three thematic ideas developed the representation of living in poverty: starvation and survival, dependence on others, and lack of agency in their lives.

5.1.2.1. Starvation and survival

Extreme poverty linked to starvation has reduced significantly in India in the last 3 decades (Olinto, Beegle, Sobrado, & Uematsu, 2013). Compared to the rest of the country, Bihar has lagged behind, yet, there has been a clear reduction in the severity of extreme poverty (Panagariya & Mukim, 2014). Consistent with these reports, participants represented poverty in Bholi to be more severe in the past when starvation was common among the poor. Interestingly, an older participant appears to be annoyed by the complaints of the current generation.

> *SD:*   *Poor people have much better lives now. During those days it was different. I have seen people starve. Starve really badly. I have seen people look like skeletons wrapped tightly in human skin. They were not ill with some disease….they were just hungry. They would starve. You don't see that these days. People are still poor…they still go hungry but no one goes hungry for 2 months like it used to be back in those days. When I hear these youngsters complain, "We are poor" I feel angry. I want to tell them, "What do you know about poverty? Look at yourself. You are wearing a nice shirt and jeans. You have tobacco in your pocket and you say that you are poor?"*

However, the absence of hunger and starvation did not amount to a radical improvement in nutrition. Several participants still had a marginal existence and managed to get by on the bare minimums. Take for example the following exchange in group interview. Discussing health issues, one participant argued that stomach and digestive problems common in poor families were caused by the amount of chillies in their food. This prompted a retort from UR, who argued that many poor people had little else to spice their food.

> *UR:*   *What do we have [so] that we eat properly? What do you have other than salt and chilies? Here the staple diet is of dry bread, green chilies and salt. This is the diet. And if you cook rice, then you do not cook lentils…there are no lentils. […] There is no money.*

The survival of poor people is also threatened by inadequate housing and insanitary living conditions. To sketch the living condition of the poor in Bholi, situating it along the MPI dimensions (Alkire & Santos, 2011) is once again useful — see § 2.4.3.3.2. In the study, every poor participant lived in a house that did not meet at least two out of the six indicators. Only two participants had access to a toilet, no participant lived in a house where the flooring was not of dirt, sand, or dung, and only five *never* used wood or dung to cook.

> WDW: *The house that you see…that is the house that my husband left for us. It is of Khapra…we live there. When it doesn't rain, we stay there. When it rains, we have to leave the place. All the water drips through. I had thought that I will do something about the house after my daughter's wedding but it was not to be.*

5.1.2.2. Dependence of Others

Research with poor has often found a strong reliance on informal networks in helping people negotiate the challenges of poverty (Tuason, 2010, 2011). A systematic way of understanding these networks and their importance for the poor is in terms of social capital (Narayan, 2002). The concept of social capital is diverse but can be understood as the network of interpersonal and intergroup ties in the society that individuals and groups can draw upon for meeting their needs (Adler & Kwon, 2009). In the present study, participants drew upon all three forms of social capital. People relied on the bonding social capital that existed between friends and close family to borrow bicycles, household appliances etc. The most common use of bonding social capital was for short term monetary loans.

> UYB: *You need to go to [omitted], [omitted], only then one can manage. But even for that, I need to borrow. You need to borrow 500 rupees. "Listen, I need 500 rupees". "Okay, come to my house tomorrow and then I will see."*

Poor people also depended on their networks with people in relatively greater financially security. In cutting across the social class and utilising heterogeneous networks, data suggest that participants also made use of bridging social capital. Usually, this involved depending on the elite for work, taking their help to navigate the red-tape of government offices etc.

> AC: *How did the family survive then?*
> SD: *My mother used to work at the house of the landlord. The landlord's wife loved my mother. My mother was of a very good nature…always respectful, soft spoken and servile. Everyone loved her. So the landlord's wife would give her 2-3 kilos of rice and some potatoes every day. The landlord did not know this. We would all live on that. It was extremely tough.*

Data also provide evidence for poor people using linking social capital. This form of social capital exists between poor people and institutions, and other individuals holding social power over them. Take for example the following extract from group interview where DK suggested

that treatment at the government hospital was dependent on having good relationships with people working there — several poor people in the study mentioned getting a speedy treatment at the district's hospital because of their friendship with the doctors working there.

> CK: *Only Sadar Hospital [omitted]. Only that.*
>
> PTU: *There too, if you go on your own, they will scold you. They would say, "Go away! I won't do anything." They will scold you so much.*
>
> DK: *See, the thing there is that if you have connections, you know people who can recommend you, or you know doctors, then you get good treatment. Else, nothing.*
>
> AC: *So you need connections even for healthcare?*
>
> DK: *Yes. It is in everything. Connections, money, touts, you need all these to get your work done. Else you will never get anything done.*

Further still, the dependence on other people also extended to situations where none of the three forms of social capital was available. In the next extract, being illiterate like most participants in the study, AM was entirely dependent on touts at government offices helping him with the paperwork. At one level, akin to paying for services rendered, this was a purely transactional relationship of dependence on others. However, as it would become clearer in § 5.3.2, the exchange of bribes makes such relationships exploitative, rather than transactional.

> AM: *If I have any kind of need…say I want to get a caste certificate…the touts will say, "Give me Rs 500 (£5.00), I will get it made." I am illiterate—I use my thumb print—so I have to catch Sirji and hope that I would get it made in a cheap rate. But what cheap rate do I get…he would take Rs 500 (£5.00) first and then I would have to keep running after him, day after day.*

While poor people tend to expect help from one another, on several occasions others are caught in their own struggles and do not have resources to spare. Devoid of any tangible source of support, fatalism and reliance on God were common in Bholi.

> AC: *Could you not have borrowed money from friends or relatives?*
>
> SD: *No one was willing to give any money. I tried to borrow money from many people. […] During your times of need, God is the only one you can rely on. Everyone else disappears. And why shouldn't they? They have their own mouths to feed, the mouths of their families to feed. You catch something like TB, it is just your rotten luck.*

In summary, living in poverty is living in need. Data suggest that poor people make use of all three forms of social capital in their constant efforts to cope with poverty. However, as will be discussed in § 5.3.3, petty help aside, there was a much deeper distrust in poor people's representations — with one another, as well as with elite of the village.

5.1.2.3. Oppression and lack of voice

Data indicated high levels of oppression and lack of voice amongst the poor of Bholi. The oppressors came in many forms: large landowners in the village, government officials, local bureaucrats etc. Given the importance of land in Bholi, not surprisingly, many instances of oppression drew upon the loss of land through unlawful means.

> BMP: *I had about 8 decimile of land here. Bihar government took four decimiles for building the road. I had to bribe the bureaucrats with Rs 2000 [£20.00] to get permission to build a house in the remaining land. I made a small house of mud and a thachted roof but that too was snatched by rich people. They put a court case on me. So now how will I fight against people like you? Do I even compare?*

Faced with oppression, poor people were unable to put up any resistance — data revealed many reasons for this. The fear of retribution was a common reason, as was the priority of making ends meet over resisting oppression. Two extracts are presented below.

> PMW: *No one opposes, O rich man. If there was any opposition, it would all have been set right.*
> AC: *Why is that?*
> PMW: *No one is bothered. No one is interested. People think why should I go and argue with the rich. No one wants to become visible as opposing the rich. So that is why it is like this.*
> ***
> AC: *Why don't you ask?*
> BW: *Why do I go and ask? If only I go and ask, it will amount to nothing. You need ten people to be with you when you ask…You need to sit and discuss and resolve to go to the mukhiya…talk to him, ask him, tell him that we need a hospital in the panchayat. But then you need people to stand up and no one is bothered here.*
> BW's son: *Most people go away for earning a livelihood…they are not bothered.*

In conclusion, the representations of oppression and voicelessness are indicative of a perceived lack of agency amongst the poor. Data indicate that a part of this was the result of a lack of a united voice amongst the poor stemming from the general lack of trust with one another and representations about the society in which they lived — § 5.3.3 takes up the issue in greater detail. It would become clearer in § 5.3.2 that the experience of voicelessness also stemmed from the representation of collusion between rich people, bureaucrats, and the Government. In essence, as BW and his son suggested, with the poor preoccupied with the more pressing imperative to make ends meet, the potential for collective action and communal voice waned — the next theme on the significance of work in the lives of the poor will further underline how poor people are primarily guided by the need to find work on a daily basis.

5.1.3. On work: 'turning blood into water'

Ideas about work — usually described as extremely labour intensive, dangerous, infrequent, and necessary for managing meals on a day-to-day basis — were a cornerstone of poor people's representations of poverty. In the whole dataset, participants used the phrase '*kamate-khate*' over a hundred times while talking about poverty. The phrase is a part of the public discourse in Bihar — loosely translating to 'working and eating', its usage is close to the English phrase 'hand to mouth'. In unpacking the meaning of 'working and eating', it becomes evident that poor participants' lives are guided by the sole agenda of survival. Many participants lived the phrase hand to mouth literally — engaged in casual labour, their meals were contingent on finding work on a day to day basis.

> GM: *What can I say; I am an old man now. How many stories do I tell you from all these years that I have lived? What can I tell you, I am very poor. I earn to eat. That is what I have been doing. I am human, I am poor, I have to eat so I earn to manage food. If I get some work, I get some food. When I don't get any work, I don't get any food.*

Perhaps an explanation for the deeply ingrained phrase '*kamate-khate*' can be sought in history of working for food in Bholi (see § 5.1.2.1). Until mid-1990s, it was common for people to work for wages paid in kind — a quantity of paddy or wheat. The following extract from the interview with WAMH captures the experience of living such a life:

> WAMH: *I mean [the landlord] would give two and half kilos of wheat. [My husband] would go early in the morning to their door and stand there that, "Please give, me work, my Lord!." Some days they would say, "We will give you work today." So he would work all day and get some bread to eat. He would not eat it and bring it back for us. So when he would return back with the wheat, I would know that we have something to eat. So I would clean the pot, get some firewood, and light the stove.*

Child labour was another common theme related to work in the lives of the poor. All male participants in the study started working in some form during their adolescence. At one level this deprived them of education; however, at another level, working children manage to generate additional income that not only helps their own survival but also the welfare of the family (Maconachie & Hilson, 2016). Data suggest that poor people represented working children as a necessity for surviving poverty.

> AC: *Do you regret not sending them to schools?*
> SD: *No. Not at all. If they had gone to school, think of how many years they would have had to study before they could even stand a chance of getting a job. I think either I or my children would have starved by then. With me making and selling bamboo baskets, or working in households, could I have managed to support them? Could I have managed to*

> *buy those books and stationery? Impossible! Not possible at any cost. I think what they
> did was best for them and best for us.*

Finally, participants also believed that in order to cope with poverty, they have to take up dangerous jobs and work for very long hours. This representation was aptly summed up by a common phrase in several accounts: "*khoon ko paani banana*". The phrase can be translated as working so hard that one's blood turns into water. The representation regarding the virtue of hard physical labour must be seen as complementing the tendency to hold poor people responsible for their plight if they were not willing to work hard (§ 5.1.1).

> AM: *I had many experiences Sir. I learnt that people who work get paid. If you are willing to
> waste yourself and your health, work like animals...turn your blood into water…then you
> can make some money. If you are not willing to do that, there is no work for you.*

To conclude, on the one hand, being poor means that there are no reserves to fall back upon and finding work becomes crucial — indeed, as the phrase *kamate-khate* indicates, in participant representations eating was contingent on working. On the other hand, the availability of work was few and far between.

Conclusion to Part I

The first part of this chapter analysed participants' representations of their being. These representations were built around the themes of causes of poverty, living in poverty, and the importance of work. Interestingly, with the exception of the specific instances of alcoholism and refusal to hard work, the causes of poverty were represented as beyond the person's control. For instance, when the causes of poverty were attributed to health problems, there was a simultaneous mention of the inefficiency of the public health facilities. Similarly, lack of infrastructure to support agriculture and other employment opportunities were issues beyond the control of the individual. In other words, an undercurrent of lacking agency pervaded poor people's ideas about being poor. The lack of agency also emerged in accounts of living in poverty — the struggle for survival, dependence on others, and inability to resist oppression underline the missing agency. Nevertheless, whether in microscopic daily struggles of finding work or in their long term life, the poor of Bholi were constantly engaged in efforts to realise a better future. Part II analyses their ideas about the espoused movement of their 'being' on the path of 'becoming' not-poor — this is the second domain of their representations.

PART II: THE PATH TO ESCAPING POVERTY

The second domain of poverty representations was informed by the participants' the desire to overcome poverty — their hopes and aspirations of becoming 'not-poor'. Data reveal that the espoused transition from poverty to non-poverty — the journey from being to becoming — was supported by participants' representations of three things: social policy, healthcare, and education. As the discussion of these thematic axes progresses, it would become increasingly clear that while the three were fundamental to poor people's hopes, their representations are imbued with participants' reflexive disappointment and awareness that the prospects of escaping poverty were bleak.

5.2. ESCAPING POVERTY THROUGH SOCIAL POLICY

Since the 1980's, India has achieved significant reduction in both income poverty and multidimensional poverty (Alkire & Seth, 2015). A large part of this improvement can be attributed to antipoverty policies at both national and provincial levels (Chronic Poverty Research Center, 2007). Data suggest that poor people represented the assistance from social policies to be crucial to improving their lives. However, the overall representation of social policies was developed in terms of their shortcomings and the necessity of changes in their plan and implementation.

5.2.1. Welfare benefits don't reach the poor

While discussing social policies, participants focussed on two specific policies: the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and Indira Awas Yojna (IAY). Floated in the year 2005, NREGA promises at least 100 days of paid work to households where adults are available to perform unskilled manual labour whereas IAY provides cash assistance to poor people for building a residential structure. The interest in these policies can be seen in connection with, and as an extension of, poor people's perceptions of what it meant to be poor. As discussed in Part I, lack of regular and stable employment, and concern about living conditions were crucial to participants' representations of living in poverty. Hence, it is not surprising that policies related to employment and housing assistance featured prominently in poor people's plans for coping with poverty. However, the representations of social policies were driven by their failure in helping the poor.

In the extract presented below, DW was talking about NREGA. While DW was mistaken about the number of days of work the act promises, he was clearly of the view that NREGA can

help poor people by providing them an income safety net through guaranteed employment. Importantly, the quote also links with the issue of voicelessness among poor people in Bholi.

> DW: *The problem is that the chairman of this panchayat knows about these things. He knows that the Government has passed an act for 365 days of work on wages. That would help the poor people tremendously. But we don't get it. People who are working, they are working. But we don't get [any work through that policy]. The chairman of the village is responsible for giving work but if I say anything [to you], he will make my life difficult. He will hang me to dry.*

The idea that the benefits of welfare and anti-poverty policy do not reach the poor was common in the village. In a group interview, with a clever wordplay one participant described NREGA as *loot*-REGA which roughly translates to plunder-REGA. Other participants proceeded to suggest that policies were often limited to paper-pushing and the poor never received the benefits.

> KT: *See, we call NREGA loot-REGA. I mean it has only benefitted the touts and people with connections and people who serve the elected representatives. The common masses have no benefits from the policy. The poor people have not received any benefit.*
>
> UM: *Whatever has happened under NREGA in this village has only happened only on paper. It is in the files. In reality…nothing. Where the bureaucrats have got work done under NREGA, you come with me and I will show you how they have plundered the scheme.*

The discussions on welfare and benefits suggest that poor people in the village had an interesting take on the idea of undeserving poor. The concept of 'underserving poor' is common in middle class and elite representations of poverty in the western world (BBC, 2010b; Katz, 1989). Usually, the middle class and elite consider able-bodied poor living on welfare as underserving poor. In this instance, however, people holding the representation were themselves poor and elite masquerading as poor were the objects of this representation. The idea of un-deservingness was nevertheless preserved.

> DDS: *For instance the money that comes for IAY. It is meant for the poor. Many rich people get that. What they do is that if my name is on the list [of beneficiaries], a rich person with connections will go and tell the officer that DDS is rich! He would say, "Sir, you are putting his name? Strike it off." The officer would remove it. I mean that person has a big house, has everything. He will get that money [for IAY] instead of me. Here the big landlords remove our names and get their own names on the list instead. In my place.*

5.2.2. Need to change policies

A minor theme in policy discussion was the participants' suggestions for reformulating policy planning and implementation. In many ways, these suggestions were borne out of the significance that people attached to policies, and their disappointment with the present state of

their administration. Their suggestions ranged from the need for new policies and changes in existing policies to demands for discontinuation of some policies.

> KT: *These policies need to be scrapped. That would be much better. That would be much better if the government invests this money in education, on teachers. And second, the anganwadi scheme that is running needs to stop immediately. They also need to scrap this shiksha mitra scheme.*

One participant presented a very interesting angle on the social policies that also links back to the lack of voice amongst the poor. While it was commonly argued that government schools did not provide quality education, WDW observed that poor people did not demand better quality from them because they were free. Quoting an old proverb from the village, she argued that people become less likely to question quality if something was provided for free.

> WDW: *When the children come back, they ask, "What did you get to eat?" They never ask what you learnt at school today. They only ask about the food.*
> AC: *That is interesting. Why do you think this is the case?*
> WDW: *I think this is because of the Government. The government has started giving everything for free and when things are free you do not have the rights to ask about them. There is a proverb in the village, "When you get a calf donated to you, you don't count its teeth". We do not pay even one rupee for sending our kids to school.*

Essentially, these accounts underline the importance of social policies in people's representations of escaping poverty. The next section takes these ideas a step further and reveals participants' lack of trust in the Government's antipoverty policies.

5.3.3. Policy as 'vote banks'

While participants believed that social policies were important in supporting their plans for a better future, they lacked trust in the Government's antipoverty policy agenda. They believed that in most cases they were poorly planned, implemented with corruption, and usually introduced right before elections to draw the votes of the poor. Later in the chapter, the discussion the policy of school feeding will provide insights into the participants' general perceptions of such policies. The idea that social policies are ploys to garner votes of the poor was also observed in news reports and will be discussed in Chapter 7. The next quote serves as an illustration of this representation.

> KR: *So the Government is making us disabled. Are the policies of the Chief Minister good? Why does he run such policies? […] I told you why. All of them are for the vote bank. So that they get the votes. Their vote bank is strengthened. That the reality [of the poor] gets stronger, who is worried about that? All that they do is for their vote banks.*

To sum up, poor people in Bholi represented the welfare measures of anti-poverty policy to be a crucial support mechanism in their efforts to cope with their deprivation. While anti-poverty policies in India have received significant praise, recent works have noted that poor people in India have not sufficiently benefitted from them (World Bank, 2011). Voices from Bholi resound in agreement.

5.3. ACHIEVING GOOD HEALTH

While good health is important regardless of poverty, the liability of health problems is disproportionate in poverty. Bourdieu (1984, 1986) considers the human body to be a subset of social capital. As a form of social capital, a person's body relates to physical capital through the production of goods and services (Shilling, 1991). In many forms of economic life like sports and fitness industry, the human body is the primary resource of people (Hutson, 2013). A similar observation can be made in context of poor people dependent on manual labour for their livelihood. As discussed earlier in the chapter, (§ 5.1.3), poor people perform extremely labour intensive jobs and in that regard, a healthy body is often their only resource. As also discussed in § 5.1.1.1 an unhealthy body is also responsible for pushing families in poverty (for e.g., Banerjee & Duflo, 2011). It is not surprising, then, that poor people in Bholi consider a healthy body and good health vital to their quest of a better life.

5.3.1. Government hospitals

Government hospitals were a prominent thematic idea in poor people's representations of health; however, their representation was complex. Poor participants relied on government hospitals because of their potential to manage poor people's healthcare needs without causing financial strain. However, data suggest that they rarely fulfilled this promise. Most participants considered the government hospital in their district to be dysfunctional, without the necessary facilities, and often keen on redirecting them either to private clinics or to hospitals in the state capital.

> AM: *The people with money, they go to good doctors and pay them whereas those who are poor, they don't have money to pay for good doctors. So they run to government hospitals. Even after going to the government hospital, the doctors there do not examine you properly.*
>
> ***
>
> DDS: *Look Sir, whoever goes there in an emergency, they will straight tell you that [a bed] is not empty. They will send you to [omitted place name]. While you are on your way to [omitted place name], the story of the person ends. In Bihar, the thing is…for example, I have seen in other places, there is a lot of support. We are people of Bihar.*

The doctors working at government hospitals were objects of strong representational activity. Data indicated a representation amongst the poor that along with being incompetent, government doctors took little interest in treating poor patients.

> *AM:*   *Even after going to the government hospital, the doctors there do not examine you properly. They will do no tests, they will just ask you what the problem is and after asking that, he would recommend only those medicines that have 'special' prices. You don't get those medicines at the hospital, instead you need to buy them from the market…at the hospital they only give you some stupid tablets.*

Interestingly, a number of participants also believed that doctors and other hospital staff illicitly sold the 'original' medicines provided by the Government and instead distributed 'duplicate' medicines. This representation was often used to explain why the medicines provided by government hospitals failed to improve the condition of patients, forcing them to seek expensive private treatment.

> *PP:*   *The doctors and compounders…they are always together in this…they sell the original medicines in the market and they only give duplicate medicines to people. The medicines are never good. Say [omitted], am I wrong? You know [omitted]?*
>
> *AC:*   *Who? [omitted]?*
>
> *PP:*   *Yes, Yes. His son was running very high fever just before Holi. He took him to the hospital…he hired a tempo for 200 rupees and took him. At the hospital, they gave him tablets and said, "Give this tablet for 3 days. Twice daily." But the tablets did not bring his fever down even once. […] They sell away all the good medicines and then the poor people go there are they get all the rejected and expired medicines. This is the story of the poor. We are caned from every direction.*

5.3.2. Private healthcare and quacks

In comparison, participants had greater faith in the skills and the treatments provided by doctors running private practices and pay-as-you-go clinics. The negative representations of government hospitals and doctors was so widely shared that several participants had never been to a government hospital and at great expense, remained patrons of private clinics. The general belief amongst the participants was that private clinics had more competent doctors who provided compassionate treatment.

> *AC:*   *Okay. So you took her to a private hospital?*
>
> *SCT:*   *Yes. At a private clinic.*
>
> *AC:*   *Any particular reason why you took her to a private clinic?*
>
> *SCT:*   *At a government hospital…around here…umm…many people said that at government hospital they don't treat you with all their heart. They take money at private hospitals but they examine you well. That is what everyone says here.*
>
> *AC:*   *Do you have any experience of going to a government hospital?*
>
> *SCT:*   *No. I don't have any experience.*

Interestingly, data indicate that while participants had greater faith in the ability of private medical practitioners, they simultaneously represented them as greedy. Doctors in the private sector were reproached for fleecing the poor by prescribing them unnecessary medicines and running expensive tests. A number of participants explicitly stated that private doctors received a commission for each patient recommended to private diagnostic centres, and a cut on the sale of medicines as well. The following exchange in a group interview provides a good illustration.

> KT: *In [omitted] town whoever has come with a MBBS degree, they become millionaires in one year. Their fees are 500 rupees per patient, the ultrasound is not needed, yet they would recommend it. That is for another 500 rupees.*
>
> UR: *It is 700 for an ultrasound today.*
>
> BR: *Yes, 700 or even 900. Similarly X-Ray and all. 50% or 75% is the doctors' commission. We think that the doctors pay the government to keep all this running.*

However, the perception that private practitioners recommended unnecessary diagnostic tests for personal profit needs to be put in perspective. Partially, the differences between representations of government and private doctors can be understood in terms of the participants' perceptions of 'good treatment'. In a quote presented earlier, AM appears to regard the government doctors as useless on account that they did not run any 'tests'. This was in contrast to private practitioners who prescribe several diagnostic tests and oblige with intravenous injection and saline drips — albeit with great personal profit, it must be noted. Take for example the following narration by SD of a child with a suspected scorpion bite. At the government hospital the suspected bite mark was examined and concluded to be harmless. Not satisfied with the diagnosis and the subsequent treatment, the child was then taken to a private hospital. As the quote illustrates, the invasiveness of the treatment appears to partially be the reason for SD's confidence and satisfaction with the private clinic. In Chapter 6, data from doctors will reveal that they are often requested by patients to prescribe intravenous injections and saline drips.

> SD: *We then went to a private hospital. There the doctor saw us immediately. He said that it was a scorpion bite and that the boy was lucky to not have died on the way to Motihari. He gave him many injections, put him on saline drips. I think he was given 4 or 5 bottles of saline for two days. Later the boy lived. But if we had stayed at the government hospital, he certainly would have died.*

The lack of trust in government hospitals, combined a prohibitively expensive private sector healthcare, has resulted in the growth of quack doctors in villages (Sharma, 2015). In Bihar, they

are so common that a proper noun referring to them — *jhola-chaap doctor*[33] — is well understood and widely used. Often called 'Doctors' and referred as such in direct salutations, the quacks do not have any formal training in medicine and are not licensed healthcare practitioners. In Bholi they charged about one-tenth (about 20p) of the consultation fee of the cheapest qualified medical doctor in the city and undertake a rage of non-invasive and invasive medical procedures, including minor surgeries.

> PM: *So anyone falls ill, I go to [omitted]. He is jhola-chaap but a fine doctor. He said that if she is destined to die, she will die. He also does surgery…if need be, he can open your abdomen…he does that himself…he calls a helper from the town…but he operates for hernia etc.*

The relationship between the quacks and their patrons is of transactional convenience but involves great risks for the patients. Needless to say, the 'operations' performed by these quacks are in extremely hazardous conditions and often without proper surgical equipment. People in Bholi were clearly aware of risks and understood that these 'doctors' have no training or qualifications for the job they do. Their patronage is, but a reflection of negotiated compromise between quality and affordability of healthcare.

> PP: *There are these shops which sell the tablets…or say you get a cold or cough…for that we go to the shop and tell that we have fever, we have a cold and they give you a medicine. So that is what we do. Sometimes there are jhola chaap doctors who can look after small problems. They take 25-30 rupees plus the cost of medicines.*
> AC: *Are these jhola chaap doctors good?*
> PP: *Would they be good? (chuckles) Most of them are like me and you. They have no qualification but they learn things watching the doctors. What do you say [omitted]? They at times kill people too but we don't have a choice.*

5.3.3. Local health beliefs

If the quotes in § 5.3.1 and § 5.3.2 are examined closely, a clear antinomy between government and private doctors is at play — the former do not run diagnostic tests and the latter run a number of them. In the data, it was common for people to associate proper treatment with the administration of injections and saline drips, and diagnostic tests as has been previously noted in research with people holding strong lay beliefs about diseases and illnesses (for e.g., Banerjee & Duflo, 2011).

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[33] *Jhola* is a sling bag made of cloth. Usually, it has no zips, buttons, or fastening mechanism and is used in India for a range of purposes including carrying groceries, books etc. It is conceivable that the term *jhola-chap* is a satire on the 'doctors' without qualifications or licence who usually carry a rustic *jhola*, in contrast to the standard global image of a physician carrying a more sophisticated briefcase.

While the present study did not examine the health beliefs of the community, during interviews the undercurrent of strong and shared representations about health and illnesses came to light. As a striking illustration, a very common belief in the village was that wearing footwear for long duration harms the eyes. Almost every participant in the study believed that wearing flip-flops, or any other footwear made of synthetic material, prevented contact between the body and the ground. It was argued that this trapped heat in the body which rose towards the head, eventually deteriorating the eyesight of the person. An exchange between the researcher and KR, regarding bloodshot eyes of KR's grandson, is presented below.

> KR: *He keeps wearing flip flops all the time. The second thing is…*
> AC: *How do flip-flops lead to that? How…*
> KR: *because he doesn't get any earthing (grounding) from the earth. He sleeps on a bed at night. This is his bed. So when he sleeps at night, he takes off his flip flops, but he sleeps on this. He got no earthing! And all day he has flip flops on his foot. He gets no earthing from the ground. Why would (he) not get heated up? Everyone needs earthing. Electricity too needs earthing. To light up. This is electricity (points to his eyes). You have only a bulb inside. [One] needs earthing. He does not get any.*

Bringing everything together, the data suggest that poor people in Bholi represented good health as a pathway to a better life. The representations of healthcare were shaped by themes of inefficiency in the government sector and exploitation in the private sector. In that sense, the present study adds to the body of evidence that government healthcare in India has failed to gain the trust of patients (Peters & Muraleedharan, 2008). Similarly, the public perception that doctors at government hospitals sell medicines, too, has been previously documented in the Indian state of Maharashtra (Kamat, 1995). Data also suggested that private healthcare was considered to be of better quality, as it is generally believed in all sections of the Indian society (De Costa & Johannson, 2011). However, the cost associated with them lands poor people in debt, or alternatively, sends them in the direction of cheaper quack doctors. It is clear that while poor people consider good healthcare to be of crucial importance, their representations have a persistent undercurrent of disappointment and failure.

5.4. PROGRESSING THROUGH EDUCATION

Education was the third, and perhaps the most important, pathway out of poverty in representations of poor participants. With education, participants had to negotiate an inherent contradiction between the espoused ideal of educating their children and the onus of children contributing to the family income.

5.4.1. The importance of education

Poor people in Bholi unanimously valued education as essential and important. As evident from participant profiles presented in Appendix V, the majority of poor participants were completely illiterate. Data indicate that most of them regretted their lack of education.

> *CGM:* *Education is the best thing. People who are not educated are foolish. They don't know anything. With education, people get to know about things. It has everything but we are illiterate and don't get to know anything. If someone reads something to us, we listen to it. So I consider education as the best thing. I regard it as God.*
> ***
> *AM:* *My mother used to beat me up and send me to school but I would hang around on the way to the school. I used to take my slate and climb on the trees. I would never go to school. I repent that today. Today, I repent that. I am illiterate. I use my thumbprint.*

Education was critical in poor people's aspirations of a better life and their plans for escaping poverty. It appeared as the theme that linked participants' representations of escaping income poverty, improving one's lifestyle, and receiving respect in the community.

> *PMW:* *I mean only if they [children] get an education, they will become clever and get a job. If they cannot read or write and people like you give him an attendant's job in an office, will he be able to do anything? You will ask him to get a certain file from the shelf, how will he do it?*
> ***
> *KT:* *I only want to say one thing. If we have education, then I have what it takes to talk to you. If I don't have education, "Oi, where have you come? What is the matter? Why are you sitting here? Go do your work, you are hassling me." If I have some education, you will let me sit near you, spend time in your company.*

While education was believed to be essential for escaping poverty, achieving it was simultaneously represented as difficult for a number of reasons. In other words, the representational field on education was marked by a number of contradictions that became evident from participant accounts.

5.4.2. The contradictions between poverty and education

The first contradiction came from the paradoxical choice between government and private schools — the former were free but perceived to be of poor quality; while the latter were expensive but better in quality. The government schools in the village provided free primary education, secondary and high school education were available either for free or at very nominal cost. However, the government schools had a strong and uncontested negative representation in the community. Participants believed them to be dysfunctional and suffering from a number of problems including lack of infrastructure and unavailability of teachers.

KT: *You at least need 10, 11, or 12 teachers [at the government school in the village]. But instead you have five or seven. Naturally, the teachers are incapable of handling all the workload. If there are five or seven teachers, three or four classes obviously go without teaching. Isn't it?*

In particular, government schools teachers were objects of extremely negative representations and were critiqued for being irregular, late for school, and not interested in teaching. These observations made by research participants are consistent with previous research noting high rates of teacher absenteeism in Indian government schools (Chaudhury, Hammer, Kremer, Muralidharan, & Rogers, 2006). In extreme cases, it was also argued that the Government had hired illiterate people as teachers — in § 6.6.2 similar beliefs amongst the elite will be discussed.

AM: *Yes they [both schools in the village] are the same. This one has a little bit of teaching but the other one is completely useless. The teacher has not studied beyond second or third grade; they [government] have made them teachers! This is the problem Sir. The poor people in this village are the victims.*

Much like private clinics in the context of healthcare, private schools were represented as providers of better education. The participants' belief about private school education being better is consistent with studies that show private school pupils from low income families outperforming those in government school in a number of developing countries including India (Chudgar & Quin, 2012; Dixon, 2015; Tooley & Dixon, 2003). These schools work on a monthly pay-as-you-go model and charge anything between Rs 100 and 2000 a month (£1.00 to £20.00). However, even at rock bottom monthly fees, they remain out of the reach of most poor parents in Bholi. Having to choose between sending their children to free government schools and expensive private schools, a divergence in parents' perspective on education emerged. Some, like SCT below, were willing to even enter into debt to manage private education. Others, like BW below, found the cost of private education prohibitive, and sharing the belief about the futility of government schools, they pulled their children completely out of schooling.

AC: *You spent a lot of money…in what regard? Can you tell me something about that?*

SCT: *I mean at schools…on books, on tuition, I paid for all that…I paid Rs 400-500 every month for computering [sic]. I kept them at school. I did all that. And to him too — my elder son, I told him, "You study. I will pay. If I don't have money, I will take some money from someone and I will send you to school." But he ignored me and went lackadaisical.*

***

BW: *He quit school because there is no teaching at school. He uselessly goes to school…plays there, gets into fights and comes back. So I told him that it is a waste of time. I have a few cows…if he manages to get grass for them or prepares the fodder, it would be big help for me. That will help the family survive.*

The second contradiction that the poor encountered was between keeping children in schools for potential future gains and the more immediate need for them to participate in income generation. As evident from BW's quote above, many poor children in Bholi were unlikely to stay in schools. As the two quotes below illustrate, at times poor children themselves decide to start working whereas on other occasions, poor parents encourage them to do so.

> WAMH: *I sent them [my children] to school. One of them studied until 5ᵗʰ and then quit. There was poverty so seeing all the misery, he packed his bags and said, "Mother, no matter what you say, I won't go to study."*
>
> ***
>
> BP: *If my daughter completes her education, she will become independent. I would not have any worries. Every parent wants that and I too want that. I will put all my energy into it. If I succeed, then it is great. If not, then, "Come, learn some work somewhere. Go work and earn some money." What poverty has in store will happen.*

The final contradiction in the field of education came from the belief that even if poor people remained in education long enough to acquire qualifications required for jobs, they would not have the money required to pay bribes for securing a job. At the heart of this belief was the representation of corruption among the bureaucracy responsible for appointments in government services. The extract below is from a group interview with four poor participants who had completed 12 years of school education with a school leaving certificate (SLC). All of them were between the age of 21 and 22 and had been trying for a job. The ensuing discussion between them aptly captures the contradiction discussed in this paragraph.

> PY: *In every department, in every matter, without money, nothing happens. There are no jobs without a bribe. Recently, in the selection of shiksha mitra…was that done without bribes? No.*
>
> BB: *They took 5 lakh rupees each [£5000.00]. Where could we have got that kind of money?*
>
> AP: *Where can we give 5 lakh rupees from?*
>
> PY: *People with first class, they did not get the job. People with second class, with 55% marks, they were appointed. What can one do? People with second class, if they have money, they got themselves the job.*

5.4.3. The impact of Midday Meal Scheme.

The third important theme in the representation of education was regarding the policy of school feeding. India runs the world's largest school feeding programme called the Midday meal scheme (MDMS). Under its provisions, a hot lunch is cooked daily at every state funded school for the pupils. The policy intends to advance education amongst the deprived communities by forwarding a two-pronged agenda. First, it intends to provide a well-balanced diet to poor children by addressing dietary and nutritional deficiencies (Afridi, 2010; Dreze & Goyal, 2003;

Khera, 2013). Second, it intends to improve school enrolment, attendance, and absenteeism by making meals an incentive for parents as well as children (Dreze & Vivek, 2002).

However, in Bholi, the MDMS was one of the causes of consensual dissatisfaction with government schools. In line with the arguments made by WDW (see § 5.2.2), the policy appeared to have altered the expectations that parents and children had from schools. Instead of treating schools as institutions primarily responsible for teaching and learning, the introduction of the MDMS deflected their interest more towards the regularity and the quality of meals. This resulted in a strong opposition of the policy in the community.

KR:	*I strongly oppose the Midday Meal Scheme.*
AC:	*You oppose it?*
KR:	*Yes.*
AC:	*Why do you oppose it?*
KR:	*I oppose it because in my house . . . My daughter in law, her perceptions have changed. She would forget books, she would forget the stationery but she would never forget my granddaughter's lunch plate. That she would place in the school bag with her own hands and say, "If you don't carry your plate, how would you eat?" She never says, "If you don't carry books and stationery, how would you study?" But she always says "If you don't carry your plate, how would you eat?" The government has given us plates for slates.*

As a result, many in the community perceived the policy as a planned distraction by the government to keep the poor away from education. Using the data from this project, a paper (Chauhan, 2015) reporting the impact of MDMS on the representations of schools and education in Bholi was published and is available in Appendix X. The paper engages in a fuller discussion of these issues.

To conclude, poor people represented education to be important in their lives and regretted their own lack of education. Education was regarded essential for securing jobs and earning respect in the society. Education, viewed in this light, was represented as a pathway out of poverty. However, the contradictions faced by the poor complicated the representations of education. On the one hand, affordable government schools were perceived as inefficient and of poor quality. On the other hand, private schools provided better education but were out of the reach of the poor. Similarly, the contradiction between the more immediate needs of survival make, and the future potential of education also made the representation of education complex and ambivalent in Bholi.

Conclusion to Part II

Part II of this data chapter discussed the three pathways that have the potential of taking poor people out of poverty. In other words, social policy, good health, and education were represented as the channels of becoming. Pertaining to a wide range of things, all three are unified by their potential to improve the future of poor people, yet, as the analysis suggests, the efforts of the poor on all three fronts are fraught with disappointment. A persistent undercurrent of failure to achieve desirable outcomes in all three fronts is an unfortunate cause of uniting them in the representations of poor participants.

PART III: SOCIAL ACTORS

A closer inspection of the data reveals that in all three domains discussed in Part II, two agents keep recurring in poor people's representations: the Bureaucracy and the Government. On the path of social policy, corruption in bureaucracy and local government skims the welfare benefits. On the path of healthcare, it was primarily the shortcoming of the Government in running well-functioning hospitals. On the path of education, we find representations of a corrupt bureaucracy that needed to be bribed for jobs, and a Government not interested in properly running the schools that poor people rely on. In addition to these two, a third loosely conceptualised agent — the society in which poor people live — was also a part of the representational landscape. Part III of this chapter discusses the representations of the Government, the Bureaucracy, and the Community that inform the overall representations of poverty.

5.5 GOVERNMENT

The Government was the most well outlined agent in participants' representations of poverty. India works with a two tiered government structure — a Central Government responsible for the whole country and the State Governments in charge of the respective provinces. There is little evidence in the data to suggest whether references to 'Government' were directed at the Central or the State Governments. Participants treated Government as an undifferentiated, catch-all term to refer varyingly to political parties, Chief Ministers of the province, Prime Minister of the country, and the Central and provincial governments. The representation of the Government was informed by two interlinked ideas of governmental responsibility and governmental failure.

5.5.1. Government is responsible for the poor

Participants in the study regard the Government to be ultimately responsible for improving the lives of the poor. As discussed in § 5.2, the most promising pathways out of poverty were represented to be through social policy, healthcare and education. In all three domains, the Government was the main agent responsible for managing pathways out of poverty.

> BDTW: *What else can I say? How will the poverty of poor people go away? The poor earns for a day and eats for a day. Will his poverty disappear on its own? If the Government really wants, it can help the poor. They should arrange for education of poor children, think of giving employment to poor people, build houses for poor people. Only then poverty will disappear. Otherwise, in earning and eating, poor people will die.*

Several participants argued that the Government made false promises to the poor. The representation was most prominent in context of education where participants believed that the policy initiatives of giving scholarships, bicycles to girls attending middle school etc. were designed to cover up the fact that schools remain understaffed and unable to provide quality education.

> KT: *Our personal experience is that the government says that they provide books in schools for poor people, they provide meals so that children come to school, or that bicycle scheme, or the school uniform scheme…we believe that all these are just smoke and mirrors for the public. If people are not able to get private education, their children will never be able to read. The kids would only carry a plate to the school for the free meal.*

In the quote above, the connections between the representations of the Government's responsibility towards the poor, with the previously discussed representations of social policies as 'vote banks' are self-evident.

5.5.2. Government failure

In more damning representations, the Government was thought to have failed in its efforts to alleviate poverty and improve the lives of the poor. On the milder end of representations, participants alluded to the perceived Governmental disinterest and inaction. In more extreme versions, several participants alluded to the infra-humanisation of the poor. The next quote presents an illustration where the participant likened poor people to vermin and argued that the lives of the poor did not matter to the Government. Interestingly, in her quote SD draws a clear distinction between Government's treatment of the poor and other groups in the society. The rich-poor binary in the representational field was frequently observed in the data and will be discussed at length later in the thesis.

SD: *As I say, the government does not think of poor people as human beings. Our lives don't matter to the government. We are like vermins. If a minister's son had gone to the hospital, would the doctor still not have woken up? I don't think so! The entire 7 generations of that doctor's family would have stood on one leg to treat then. The government says to these doctors that you are employed to look after us. When we need you to do something you do it. Other times, you live peacefully. You need not move your hands for anything else. This is what the government does.*

It is crucial to note that a large share of the three thematic ideas regarding the causes of poverty in poor people's representations (see § 5.1.1) often carried an undercurrent of a failure on the part of the Government. The responsibility for both dysfunctional public healthcare system (§ 5.1.1.1), and the lack of public infrastructure and employment opportunities (§ 5.1.1.2) can ultimately be traced back to a representation of governmental failure. Interestingly, even when the individual was held responsible for his poverty the ultimate blame was still put on the Government. The issue of poor people wasting their income on alcohol, as discussed in § 5.1.1.3, provides fascinating insight into this representational play. It was argued that the poor end up wasting their money on alcohol *because* the Government had opened licensed liquor shops in and around the village. Thus the representational work posited alcohol shops as a governmental ploy to relieve the poor of their hard earned money. Once again the Ego–Alter antinomy of the social world becomes apparent in the opposition of the interests of the Government and the Community

UYB: *There is a government shop at [omitted], and [omitted]. It sells so much! You go to the shop…starting around this hour; you will see people returning back stumbling. People in the dirt, quarrelling, cussing…they get back home, shout, get into quarrels.*
AC: *So if these shops don't benefit anyone, why are so many of those around?*
UYB: *The government benefits! The government makes all the money. It has so much bad impact on the village. Such terrible impact! Today, I don't drink, my son doesn't drink. But tomorrow, my grandson (will).*

5.6. BUREAUCRACY

Data suggest that poor people represent bureaucrats and all kinds of public institutions — banks, hospitals etc. — as inefficient and find them difficult to negotiate. A common theme amongst poor people in the village related to their electricity bill. About a year prior to the fieldwork of this research, several families were given electricity meters under a subsidised energy policy for the poor. According to participants, the supply of electricity never began. Yet after eight months they received bills for electricity consumption — even people who were not provided with the meter received bills up to £40.

> PM: *With us, we don't have electricity in our house, forget the fields. We don't even have the electric board in place, forget electricity… and people have still received bills for Rs 2000 and 4000!*

Participant representations about policy benefits not reaching the poor were noted earlier in the chapter. The reasons for such representations become apparent in descriptions of their attempts to claim these benefits — a recurring theme in this regard was the bureaucrats' demands of bribes to release funds sanctioned by different policies.

> DW: *You go to the block office [for IAY]. They know that we are poor so they will ask us for money. They will keep the money and tell us, "Your name has been put on the list." They won't put our name but just say that to us and on our names, they will allot the money to someone else.*

Such experiences were not only limited to government offices but also pertain to commercial institutions like banks. It can be argued that a reason behind people preferring to invest in land (see § 5.0) can be ascribed to their experiences with banks where they often had to appease or bribe clerical staff to withdraw their own deposits.

> KT: *For example, the government provides agricultural loans called the KCC loans. I think it is funded by the finance ministry. The banks are told to distribute these agricultural loans. […] They confiscate the papers of your land and then they keep 20-25% of [the loan] as their commission. The manager of the bank keeps that. This is in every department.*

It is important to note that the elite had a greater say and influence in the community and were less prone to paying bribes. The lack of education, agency, and voice (see § 5.1.2.2 and § 5.1.2.3.) work in tandem to make poor people more susceptible to paying bribes. With a corrupt bureaucracy, bribes appear to have become an institutionalised practice in government offices — the following extract is particularly interesting. In the quote, participants fondly remember an ostensibly corrupt bureaucrat — the fondness was a result of the bureaucrat producing results after accepting bribes.

> BP: *Before [omitted] Mr [omitted] was posted here as the Block Development Officer. He used to take [bribes] but he would always be on time with results.*
> ONLOOKER: *Yes. Yes. That is true.*
> BP: *People were very happy with him. He would deliver results.*
> KT: *These days, everyone takes [bribes]…some take more than others.*
> UR: *But even after taking [bribes] they don't do anything.*
> KT: *Even after they take [bribes], one has to run after them for one year, two years, or at least six months.*

Finally, as described in § 5.1.2.3, poor people were aware of their oppression but they also had little faith in the possibility of change. One reasons for this could be attributed to the belief that the government offices, bureaucrats, legislators, and the elite were colluded in corruption.

> KT: *We think that the doctors give a cut from all this to the Government. Because of that, they are allowed to work the way they want. Whether they give it to the District Collector, or the District Magistrate…whether the District Magistrate passes it on directly to the Chief Minister or it passes through the MPs. But it certainly passes upwards!*

5.7. COMMUNITY

The third agent in poor people's lives was the Generalised Other of the community in which they lived. Two predominant ideas informed the representations of the local community: its treatment of the poor, and the general lack of trust in the community.

5.7.1. The place of the poor in the community

Poor people believed that the general society was apathetic to their plight and had little concern for their welfare. Once again, this representation was supported by the dialogical opposition apparent in the accounts of the poor. In the extracts presented below, both AM and UYB suggests that rich people lived in plenty and are well-looked after by the Government. Apathy towards the poor, thus, is constructed as the outcome of its opposite — a healthy relationship between the 'non-poor' and the Government.

> AM: *It doesn't happen because the rich get plenty from the Government and when their appetite gets satiated then why would they bother about us poor? Who will think of the poor?*
>
> ***
>
> UYB: *The Government too is such that they only care for people who are well-off. No one cares about the downtrodden, the fallen.*

The social power afforded by money and wealth was a key idea in participants' representations of their community. Despite having no functional familiarity with the language, one participant used a phrase in English to communicate the idea: "money power [is] vast power", he said. Democratic processes were a key context in which the social power of money was represented in the data. When enquired as to why poor people did not put up a candidate of their own in the local elections, the common response to the probe was that poor people cannot compete against the influence of money — on the contrary, poor people end up selling their votes for monetary incentives.

> UYB: *People do stand in elections but money is such a thing that people turn tides. If the election is tomorrow, you will stuff everyone with money today and buy all the votes.*

> AC: *What if, say, your brother contests the election? He knows all the problems and if he gets elected then he will work on these problems.*
>
> UYB: *So what? He has not got any money! Money buys votes. Poor people contesting elections have no money and they cannot buy the votes. People sell their votes for money!*

Another common representation amongst the poor was that the society treated them with disrespect and suspicion. In addition, as with the Government (see § 5.5.2), the theme of infra-humanisation also appeared in discussions on how the elite in the village treated the poor.

> KT: *Otherwise whether one is rich or poor, one is human. Isn't it? But the people with money in this village don't consider us human.*
>
> BP: *True.*
>
> AC: *What do you mean by that?*
>
> KT: *I mean that if you go to someone's house, the moment you step in their yard they say, "Oi! Oi! Why are you entering?"*
>
> BP: *They start wondering what is it that we have come to steal. "Why is he here?"*
>
> KT: *"Get out of here. Why have you come here?" Then you say that you have come to gather a few basil leaves, or to pluck a few flowers for worship. All the time that you are there, they keep an eye on you. What can you do? These are the outcomes of being poor.*

5.7.2. A general lack of trust

In the previous quote the belief that landowners and elite in the village do not trust the poor is evident. Indeed, lack of trust was one of the strongest affective underpinning of poor people's representations. On the one hand poor participants did not trust the elite of the village — they represented them as keen on fracturing unity amongst the poor. One participant referred to the colonial past of India when the British were commonly thought to be using the strategy of 'divide and rule' amongst the natives (see, for e.g. Christopher, 1988).

> DDS: *If someone who is good at talking and tries to intervene with the rich, they will tell him, "Do one thing — come aside." I am giving an example — this should not happen. They will say, "Come aside. We have put your name in. You need not bother." Now my uncle would go silent and the 50 people who were relying on him are left in lurch. This happens all the time.*
>
> KT: *Divide and rule. The British have taught this to us.*

It may already be evident from quotes presented throughout this chapter, nevertheless it is worth reiterating that representations of government policies, government schools, hospitals, and teachers and doctors were all imbued with distrust. For instance, participants believed that the Government deceives the poor with its policies; doctors sell medicines and pocket the benefits, etc. However, the poor people not only lacked trust in groups heterogeneous to their own but also within the poor community. Participants believed that driven by jealousy, poor people conspire to impede each other's progress. Overall, it can be observed with reasonable confidence that low levels of trust prevailed all through in the village.

SD: *No one is honest here. Rich or poor, no one is honest. If I am poor and you are poor, I will constantly be thinking how I can cheat you of your last rupee. I will not think that you are just as poor as I am and you will need that rupee as much as I would. All I can think of is getting you rid of that rupee. The same if I am rich and you are poor.*

<div align="center">***</div>

KR: *The thing with poor people is that if someone's brother's children are progressing, people get jealous, "My God, what if they become better?" They start plotting out of jealousy. How will poverty disappear?*

Conclusion to Part III

Part III of this chapter completes the arc of representations and meaning making on poverty. Part I revealed that in the worldview of poor people of Bholi, poverty was represented as crippling and restraining in a number of ways. Part II advanced the tale further by illuminating the aspirational world of poor people's representation, providing evidence that they were active agents in their social world who constantly remained engaged in efforts to better their lives. Sadly, Part II also revealed that poor people feel thwarted in their hopes and aspirations. Part III involves the final act of poor people's world view where they seek to understand why they continue to be poor and their efforts to escape poverty do not bear fruit. The quest to understand and complete the representational field led poor people to identify the Government, Bureaucracy, and the society they live in, as the agents who were expected to help them escape their state of being in poverty. However, in their representations, these guardians have failed them. Part III, thus, provides a closure to the representational field of poor people in Bholi.

CHAPTER 6

ON REPRESENTATIONS *OF* POVERTY
Bholi`s elite

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter presents the analysis of elite representations of poverty. As discussed in Chapter 4, doctors and teachers working with Bholi community were purposefully included with elite farmers of Bholi for theoretical reasons. As presented in Table 4, six themes organised in three representational domains capture the pattern of poverty representations in this group.

The first domain was of elite descriptions of poverty and includes the first two thematic axes. This domain was comparable to poor participants' representations about the being, but with two crucial differences. First, there was much lesser discussion on the causes of poverty. Second, the elite considered poverty to be necessary for preserving the status-quo in the society.

The second domain of representations corresponds to participants' views about the reasons for poverty's persisntence. In terms of the classical poverty literature in psychology, this can be understood as the domain of elite attributions on poverty where the themes of 'Individual Deficiency' and 'Government Failure' populate the representational landscape. The elite emphasised on the perceived deficiencies in the character, habits, and behaviour of the poor in explaining poverty. Perceived shortcomings of the Government like bad policy decisions and corruption formed the second axis of elite ideas regarding the responsibility for poverty.

The third domain is of participants' representations about poor people's struggles for healthcare and education, which were believed to be crucial to poverty amelioration. Despite convergence with poor participants' perspectives, the ideas of key informants from the respective fields (doctors and teachers) provide interesting divergence in perspective.

The rest of the chapter follows this scheme in presenting the results of the study and is therefore divided in three parts. Part I covers the elite descriptions of poverty, Part II presents representations of responsibility for poverty, and Part III presents representations of poor people's struggles and challenges.

PART I: DESCRIPTIONS OF POVERTY

6.1. POVERTY IN BHOLI

Before commencing the analysis of elite representations of poverty, it must be noted that the thematisation of poverty using the idea of the PL was clear in this group too. Like poor participants, the BPL–APL categories were the natural way of thinking about poverty amongst the elite. Take for example the extract below: while referring to poor families, a doctor uses the categorisation to illuminate his point.

> RKY: *I have just recommended that if you want to eliminate Kala-Azar, you have to give a house to every BPL family. Kala-Azar is disease of poor people. Even in the poorest among the poor.*

Further evidence in the direction that the PL saturates thinking on poverty in the Indian public sphere will be presented in subsequent chapter before a detailed discussion is undertaken in the final chapter. Moving on, the present theme captures the description of poverty developed by the elite in Bholi. A natural starting point for apprehending the representations of poverty amongst the elite is with their descriptions of poverty in the village. The descriptions of poverty in the community were built around the themes of precarious existence in poverty, exploitation of the poor, and the necessity of poverty.

6.1.1. Precarious existence in poverty

The theme of precarious existence in poverty captures elites ideas about the material and resource constraints faced by the poor. Like Bholi's poor, the elite too believed that in past poverty was relatively more extreme in its severity. Indeed, elite descriptions of the extreme poverty were analogous to poor participants' accounts of starvation, working for food, and dependence on the land-owning families in the village.

> PB: *This is up until 1983…I have seen poverty in this village of the kind where people would eat on a day but starve the next day. They would not even have rice or chapattis. So during those day, the zamindaars of the village…people with big assets…people would go to them and beg for work. In lieu of work, what would they get? 2 kilos of un-chaffed wheat or they would get one maize chapatti.*

Participants argued that such extreme forms of poverty became less common after the poor began taking up migrant work. As noted in the previous chapter, the poor of Bholi continue to rely on unskilled migrant work in metropolitan cities like Delhi, Calcutta, and Bombay. In elite representations, the income generated through migrant work was critical in keeping poor families at a subsistence level.

MKT: *The labour class in the village are alright for now because they run to the cities. All of them. In this village, there isn't a single family except ten or twenty families that I mentioned earlier where people do not go to Delhi or Punjab. They go there and work for Rs 200 or Rs 250 a day. They come back with some money.*

Data from elite participants were in agreement with poor participants' assessment of the widespread prevalence of poverty in the village. They too believed that with the exception of a few families, most people lived in poverty. What is more, like the poor, the phrase 'working and eating' ['*kamate khate*' § 6.1.3] was a symbolic resource that the elite too drew upon to represent the precarious existence of people in poverty.

PB: *See, I don't have a register but in my estimate, in government records 90% of men, women, and children are in below poverty line (BPL) category. This is the biggest neighbourhood of the village and how many did I count you? 5 or 6 people. Only they are APL. [There are] only 5 or 6 families where no one is BPL. […] This village is full of people merely working and eating.*

The doctors participating in the study primarily highlighted the issue of insanitary living conditions of poor people, relating it to many of their health problems. Bholi falls in one of the last few districts in India where cases of black fever are regularly detected. Doctors linked the sub-standard living arrangements of the poor to the continued incidence of the black fever. Similarly, Tuberculosis, Gastrointestinal disorders, and HIV infections were also highlighted as more common amongst the poor due to their poor living conditions and lack of education.

RKY: *Even, if they have, what do you say… Indira Awaas Yojna but still, I'm sorry to say that most of the poor are deprived on this and still they live in mud houses [with] no ventilation, without windows even. Sometimes the height of the ceiling is less than 6 feet and you have to go down to enter into the house. […] [They are] compelled to share the room [with cattle] and [the] cattle passes urine or dung there and as a result, there's moisture and that is the common breeding place of the [black-fever] fly.*

In conclusion, the elite recognised poverty as a common problem in their community that has far reaching impact on the lives of people. As the next section would reveal, some participants went beyond financial and resource deprivation and also captured the social oppression and exploitation of the poor.

6.1.2. 'Big fish swallows the small fish'

The second idea on poverty emerged from the elites' representation of the relational existence of the poor, including their general exploitation in the community. This theme was relatively less prevalent and was observed in four individual and two group interviews. The idea becomes significant because it demonstrates convergence between elite and poor participants' representations of their community (§ 5.7) and the oppression and lack of voice amongst the

poor (§ 5.1.2.3). The name of the theme was derived in-vivo from the interview with PB where he likened poor people in Bholi to small fish that are exploited and persecuted — "swallowed" — by the rich who he likened to the big fish in the pond.

> PB: *The rich people wreaked havoc upon the poor here. The rich people really wreaked havoc upon the poor. […] But I would certainly add here that I always see that it is a world where the big fish lives by swallowing the small fish.*

Poor people's inability to resist persecution is a constituent idea of this notion. As discussed in the previous chapter, a poor participant described Bholi as a community where "money power [was] vast power". The elite too believed that poor people failed in putting a stand against the rich because the latter command more social power because of their financial superiority.

> MAM: *[Poor] People do not oppose because if they complain, you would launch an assault on them. If I am rich and you are poor, you don't have a chance. If you have money, how can someone with no money fight with you? That is the thing because money rules.*

Doctors in the study aside, other elite participants shared poor people's representation of being exploited by private clinics charging exorbitant fees. In the year 2008, the Cational Government provided an annual health cover of up to Rs 30,000 for poor families working in unorganised sector. The beneficiaries were provided with a 'smart-card' that tracked the use of treatments at private clinics — free services ceased at the annual cap of Rs 30,000. In the extreme, participants believed that private clinics fraudulently billed poor people for treatments they did not receive and quickly top-out the free cover available to the poor. Once again, the general lack of trust in the community (§ 5.7.2) becomes evident in representational work.

> NML: *In reality, poor people cannot afford systematic treatment. Our government gives them 30,000 rupees on the smart card. But that 30,000…I think the 30,000 is robbed from them. The poor don't get that money. If they get the common cold and fever and take the card to a doctor in [omitted], they insert it once and all the money disappears.*

Finally, it was also argued that bureaucrats and politicians exploited the lack of agency among the poor. The bureaucracy was believed to be disdainful in its interaction with the poor, regarding them incapable of causing any damage. Similarly, the lack of political will to help the poor was attributed to the perceived belief among politicians that during the elections the poor can be lured with money to cast their votes favourably.

> MS: *If a poor man goes to meet the BDO (Block Development Officer) to tell him that he hasn't received his [welfare] cheque, he gets scolded and scoffed at. The BDO summons his peons and has the man shoved out of the office.*

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> PTB: *The people of Bihar are drowning in hunger. When the elections come them they get some money [from the candidates] so they turn towards them. If they had any education, they would have thought about whom to elect…who they should elect to cure their poverty!*

6.1.3. The contradictory necessity of poverty

The third theme captured an implicit, yet crucial, contradiction in accounts of several elite participants. As discussed previously using Gans (1972) the elite in any society can be argued to benefit from the presence of poverty — in Bholi, among other things, poor people performed undesirable jobs and provided cheap labour in the village. While most participants unequivocally framed poverty as a problem that needed urgent redressal, data from some participants suggested a latent desire to maintain the status quo on poverty. Take for example, the quote from PB, a pensioner with no agricultural interests. He observed that the landowning farmers in the village had a vested interest in the persistence of poverty in the village. The quote captures the obvious difference of social status between the rich and the poor, while also noting that the poor provided cheap agricultural labour in the village — the links with the sentiment of poor participants in § 5.7 are self-evident.

> PB: *Like we say in the local dialect: "Why do I care if someone else's son doesn't go to the school? I have nothing to do with that." But this is a lack within us. We are the ones lacking there. That is an evil thought and an evil intention. We want our own kids to prosper but wish that the kids of others remain left behind. We fear that if the kids of others do well, they would become our equals and would sit in a chair in front of us. Who will work in our fields in the scorching summer sun? But this is tremendously unfortunate and catastrophic. This is exploitation.*

PB's assertion about the vested interests of the elite is supported by subtle, yet firm evidence in the interviews of two other participants who were primarily dependent on agriculture. In the next extract, NML was discussing his problems as a farmer and blamed the Government for them. In the course of critiquing the Government for setting the sale price of the crops unilaterally, NML proceeded to critique NREGA[34] for tinkering with the wage system in the village and creating a shortage of agricultural labour. Subsequently, he outlined his critique of a range of anti-poverty policies that, in his opinion, made poor people less likely to work in his fields on low wages.

> NML: *[…] I produce the crops and you [Government] determine the [selling] rate [of the crop]. The Government also makes policy and determines what the lowest working wage should be. The Government has made the law on 90 days of assured work. They used to give Rs 168 but I hear that now it is Rs 144. Whether they actually give it for 90 days or all the*

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[34] See § 5.2 for poor participants' perspective on NREGA.

money gets plundered by the bureaucrats, the burden is borne by farmers like me. They [agricultural labour] say that the government is giving 168 rupees so I will work in your field for Rs 200. Today, I suffer because of that. There is no one to work in my fields. Everyone is poor here, yet, there is no labour because I personally think that the government gives them money to build their house, [...] every month they get wheat and rice at dirt cheap rates under various schemes. So they come to me for a day, get 200 rupees, buy wheat, buy rice, and use that for a month. Why will they come to me for work on the other 29 days of the month?

The above extract, presented in full, captures a moment of cleavage in NML's otherwise measured discourse on poverty. In this extract, his rhetoric breaks and provides evidence of his latent desire to maintain the *status quo* on poverty. Similarly, MKT was a retired school-teacher engaged in agriculture. Earlier in the chapter, he was quoted for praising migrant work for generating sustainable income for poor families. However, while discussing his problems as a farmer, a tension in his perspective on migrant work became apparent. In the extract presented below, he rues the migration of the poor to cities as this had led to the "dearth of labour in the village".

MKT: *Gradually, the condition of farmers has deteriorated. The strain on agriculture kept on increasing. Because of higher wages, people started moving to the cities. Urbanisation started happening. People from villages started running towards the cities. Calcutta, Delhi, Bombay. There is a dearth of labour in the village.*

Similarly, data also suggest that poverty and poor people were key important resource for doctors participating in this research. One doctor argued that in his private practice financially well-off people were more likely to ask for discounted consultation fees whereas the poor seldom did that. Another doctor went one step further and proceeded to describe poor people as the best 'customers' of doctors in private practice. In financial terms, doctors with established private clinics tend to be the strongest professional group in Bihar. On the basis of the present project's data, it can be argued that the poor contribute to their prosperity.

AC: *So you never found any difference between financially well-to-do and poor people coming to your clinic?*
SKS: *No. In my experience, poor people are better customers. I always felt that the poor people who come to me, they come prepared to pay up. People who do not want to pay, they usually don't turn up. That is my experience.*

In conclusion, such moments of departure from the standard discourse on poverty reflect the dialogical nature of meaning making on poverty — the Ego's relationship with the Alter guides this process. Chapter 8 will develop this observation while developing a systematic dialogical perspective on poverty.

6.2. THE NEXUS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND POVERTY

The second theme in elite representations of the presence of poverty in Bholi pertained to the relationship between education and poverty. Data suggest that elite participants considered poor people to be locked in a vicious cycle — on the one hand, lack of education was deemed responsible for poverty; on the other hand, poverty was believed to make educational attainment difficult.

6.2.1. Lack of education causes poverty and related problems

Elite participants' discussion on the causes of poverty was different from that of the poor. While poor participants considered the lack of land, under-developed public infrastructure, and lack of income opportunities to be the prime drivers of their poverty, elite discussions on the subject were constrained. Data indicate that elite participants considered poor people's lack of education to be the primary cause of both their poverty and a range of other problems including health issues.

> PB: *People kept sliding into poverty. A lot to blame for this is the lack of education in our society. Unless we don't get educated, we would not understand our rights. […] Until we hit at this root cause of all evils…lack of education…that causes all the problems. People do not know their rights.*
>
> <div align="center">***</div>
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> PS: *The connection between health and poverty is that poor people lack education and understanding of things. Because they lack the understanding, their lifestyles are unhealthy. They are unaware as to what is important for good health. For example, they don't understand the importance of bathing, cleaning their nails, drinking clean water. […] It is difficult to understand all of this without education.*

The elite also linked lack of education with low levels of agency amongst the poor. Poverty has been linked with an informational void created by the limited access to mass-media and telecommunication among the poor (Chatman & Pendleton, 1989; Forestier, E., Grace, J., Kenny, 2002). Although there was a good penetration of newspapers in Bholi, because of their illiteracy, the poor people remained marginalized from informational access. The informational role of education was commonly represented in the elite data in terms of the "knowledge about rights".

> MKT: *They don't know anything. What the government provides for them, what they should get, people don't know any of that. If the community is educated, only then it comes to know about its rights and seeks what rightfully belongs to it.*

The lack of education amongst the poor was also represented as the cause of social problems like rapidly increasing population, the growth of alcoholism in the village, and health epidemics

that the community faced — § 6.3.3 will analyse them in detail. Interestingly, akin to Oscar Lewis' culture of poverty thesis discussed earlier, the elite believed that the lack of education perpetuated from one generation to another in poor families. This representation was supported by the assertion that poor parents failed to understand the importance of education. However, as discussed in § 5.4, this was not the case — poor parents unequivocally valued education

> RJ: *See, according to me the biggest cause of poverty is lack of education. Poor parents don't understand the importance of education. Because they are themselves not educated, they don't give any importance to educating their children.*

6.2.2. Poverty makes education difficult

In the representations of the elite, a bi-directional relationship existed between education and poverty. While they believed that lack of education causes poverty and other problems, they also believed that poverty makes the prospects of completing education bleak. Like the poor participants in the previous chapter, the elite deliberated upon the difficulty of sustaining education in poor families.

> PB: *So he has to think of food first and he would certainly say to his sons, "Listen, come my dear…come with me today…come and work in the field with me as a labour during the wheat harvesting season. Let us get some wheat in our wages so that we can stock it up. The go back to school from tomorrow…or after 10 days…whatever." So they have to think of that before they can think of schools.*

Teachers consulted in the research observed poverty as a barrier in education by noting tangible issues like the lack of stationary amongst poor children as the first quote below indicates. It must also be noted that RAT2 hints parental disinterest in education. The second quote captures an interesting strategy amongst teachers to shift the onus for lack of teaching in schools on to the Government by referring to issues like delays in supplying text-books to poor children.

> RAT2: *There are many families where, for instance, I gave them homework. They come back without having done it. Why did they not do it? Because they did not have a notebook. Why did they not have the note-book? Because "Father did not buy one." So due to the lack of means, all this happens. The government gives books but they don't give note-books or stationary.*
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> ***
>
> RY: *Last year none of the poor students got books on time. After much complaining, books arrived in November. In November! The academic session starts in March–April but the poor students got books in November.*

Even if all these problems were removed, formal education requires a sustained investment of time. Like poor participants, the elite too believed that unless schooling were to enhance

employment opportunities, poor people would not have any reasons to invest time in formal education.

> *DA:*   *Second, they will find motivation for schooling if along with education, you build in a guarantee for employment. They think that even if they send their children to school; keep them until the 10th standard, what happens next? If their children don't learn any trade or craft, what will they get out of their education? I am telling you the truth. Even university graduates don't get a job. I know someone who is a graduate and works on Rs 250 a day.*

To conclude, the both elite and poor participants represent the links between education and poverty in similar fashion. As it will be discussed later in this chapter, in both elite and poor accounts, affordable government schools were represented primarily in terms of their dysfunctionality.

Conclusion to Part I

Part I of this chapter revealed the representations of the elite regarding the presence of poverty in the village. There are many similarities with the representations of poor participants and the elite were able to adopt analogous perspectives, especially with regards to the multi-faceted and pervasive impact of poverty on the lives of people. However, there are crucial differences too. While the poor developed detailed accounts of their exploitation and domination by the privileged members of the community, this theme was muted and sparse in elite data. Another conspicuous absence was of the lack of engagement with the causes of poverty. In poor people's representations, through their control over land, exploitative moneylending, and corrupt manipulation of welfare provisions, the elite of the village were partially the *cause* of poverty. The elite, in contrast, did not engage with these issues and primarily regarded the lack of education as the cause of poverty. Interestingly, as the next segment of this chapter would elaborate, the elite located the responsibility of poverty amongst the poor people and the Government.

PART II: RESPONSIBILITY FOR POVERTY

Part II of this chapter presents the two thematic axes that capture elite participants' ideas about the responsibility for poverty: individual deficiency among the poor, and the failure of the Government. In Part I, the ideas of elite participants suggest the presence of a shared worldview with poor people in Bholi. In this part too, a number of similarities exist on the theme of government failure. However, the theme of individual deficiency embodies the critical divergence of perspective between the elite and the poor.

6.3. INDIVIDUAL DEFICIENCY

Elite participants identified three deficiencies amongst the poor, which were represented as the *cause* of poverty. First, they believed that the poor lacked the ability to plan for the future. Second, they considered the poor to be dependent on welfare and not interested in hard-work. Third, they regarded the poor to be responsible for creating problems in the village.

6.3.1. Lack of foresight

The elite believed that the poor people lack the foresight to plan for the future. The elite identified two primary arenas where they believed that poor families demonstrated their shortcoming: management of finances, and investing in education.

An idea shared by several elite participants was that poor people were irresponsible with money. It was argued that the poor do not manage their income wisely — instead of prioritizing expenditure on basic necessities, or creating savings, money was spent on substance abuse. Once more, the lack of education was argued to be responsible for this.

> RJ: *Only 5% of people in the village save from their income. That is all! Only 5% of people in this village make an honest living and of 5 rupees that they earn, will save 3 rupees for the development of their lives. The remaining 95% in this village, we see that they have a lot of income but there is no systematic expenditure of the money.*

As already discussed in Part I, the elite considered the negative relationship between poverty and education to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. However, the lack of foresight to invest time and resources in educating their children was represented as a deficiency amongst poor parents that fueled poverty.

> RY: *Their parents, for example, when the harvest of wheat begins, they won't let their children come to school. The children want to come to school but they stop them. Or when the sowing of paddy begins, or sowing of maize, or potatoes, every time [they stop their children]. What I mean is that whenever they have some work in the house, the parents stop the children. But the kids want to come to the school. The family, the parents, create barriers.*

6.3.2. Free riders

Two related ideas contribute to the next theme in elite representations of deficiency among the poor: first, poor people were considered generally lazy and avoiding hard work, and secondly, they were reproached for developing welfare dependence.

As already evident in the quotes of participants in § 6.1.3, the elite engaged in severe interrogation of poor people's attitude towards work. As past studies indicate, compared to the UK and Europe, more middle class and elite Indians tend to hold protestant work ethic and just world beliefs (Furnham & Rajamanickam, 1992). The present research provides further evidence in this regard as evident in the quote below.

> *PB:*   *Until when can you keep praying and hope that the Lord provides for you? You need to work…only when you work, can you get some food to eat. If you don't do your duties, you will get no food. You have no rights to food if you don't work. Do you think that the Lord will pick up a spade and work on your behalf? You need to gather yourself together and you need to do it on your own.*

The elite also mounted a muted, albeit clear, opposition of antipoverty policies by arguing that poor people avoid hard-work because necessities of life were easily available through welfare. In doing so, the elite presented a paradox — on the one hand, they critique the Government for not doing enough; on the other hand, they blame it for developing welfare dependence.

> *RA:*   *They are not inclined to do hard work. People are dependent on the free stuff that they get from the state. They get a lot of things for free or at negligible cost. Things like groceries, kerosene, they get it for free. So because of these comforts, they thing "We get by with these things, why should we work?"*

Elite participants from several occupational categories narrated incidents that ostensibly portrayed the poor as having a predilection for 'free things'. For instance, doctors working at government hospitals argued that poor people came to the government hospital with the sole intention of obtaining as many free medicines as they can. One doctor went to the extent of suggesting that poor people manipulated their symptoms to receive free medicines.

> *BKS:*   *Quite a few of them, instead of coming to the doctor, go to the medicine distribution counter. They review the counter! [They] find out what medicines are available and being distributed that day. Then they come to us and put their complaints accordingly.*

Similarly, teachers suggested that while poor parents were seldom interested in the functioning of schools, they were extremely keen on receiving their children's monthly scholarships. Similar ideas emerged in context of the MDMS where the elite believed that parents remained satisfied with schools as long as meals were served without disruptions.

> RA: *They don't think that they are sending their children to learn. They think that their children are going to eat. [They think] their kids are going to the school, they are getting their meals. But yes, they would come and demand to know about the scholarship money. They are very particular about that. They are never concerned whether their children were taught or not.*

With such ideas informing the elite representation of the relationship between poor people and social policies, it is not surprising that explicit references to welfare dependence were made by a number of participants. In the quote below, a doctor linked welfare to the development of a 'mentality' of expecting benefits from the state. His argument that even educated people remain caught with the same 'mentality' is the quintessential characteristic of the 'undeserving poor' discourse.

> MA: *I think poverty is a big problem here because this is a flood affected region. The Government has always been giving alms to these people and they still have that mentality. Even if they get literate, get an education… but they cannot get rid of this mentality.*

Finally, as the culmination of ideas related to deficiency among the poor, several participants argued that the only way of negating dependence and encouraging people to work was through terminating the welfare provisions completely. Take for example a large farmer who argued that in order to prevent poor people from sitting idle and 'celebrating life', it was vital that the provisions for free food-grains be stopped.

> AC: *So what needs to be done?*
> MS: *To alleviate poverty? See, by giving charity, you make people idle and lazy. What I mean is that many people are dependent on the 20kg, 25 kg of wheat and rice that they get because they are poor. So that person works for 5 or 10 days and sits idle for rest of the days. They sit idle and celebrate life. How will they develop? I think the first thing that the government needs to do is stop the distribution of free food grains to the poor.*

6.3.3. Poor people cause problems

Research on middle class and elite perceptions of poverty has consistently demonstrated that the elite believe that poor people disturb the order in their societies (Hossain et al., 1999; Kalati & Manor, 1999). The Bholi elite too believe that the poor caused a number of problems in the village — two problems in the community were directly blamed on the poor.

The first problem that the elite attributed to poor people was of alcoholism. Elite participants from the village believed that alcohol consumption was made common in the village by the migrant workers returning from cities. The problem of alcoholism was framed in two ways. On the one hand, the negative impact of alcohol on the individual was highlighted. On the other hand, the issue was framed in terms of its impact on the community — the poor were blamed

for getting inebriated and causing public nuisance. The two extracts below highlight the two different framings of alcohol use amongst the poor in elite accounts.

> MKT: *Even in the village they get a wage of 100 rupees. Out of that, they will spend 20 rupees on spirit and get drunk. They won't buy milk of that money. The reason for this is that the youth today, they go to the big cities, Delhi and Bombay, when they are adolescents. They go there to earn money. The environment there teaches them and then they return to the village and bring the habit with them.*
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> ***
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> RAT: *The consumption of alcohol has increased so much that if you step out of the house in the evening, you keep thinking of getting back inside as soon as possible. Wherever you turn your gaze, drunken people are fighting, cussing one another. All are rickshaw-pullers and labourers. What I wonder is that if they are in so much want, where do they get the money for alcohol?*

In 2016, citing the alcohol consumption as a 'social problem', the state-government imposed a blanket ban on sale, purchase, and consumption of alcohol in Bihar (BBC, 2016). Even before this measure, the consumption of alcohol was considered taboo in the state and people seldom publically admitted to drinking. Indeed, many participants in the study explicitly distanced themselves from alcohol consumption and regarded their abstinence to be the cause of their success in life. In their representations, alcohol consumption appeared to be a habit solely pursued by the poor, which not only led to the decline in the moral order of the community but was also a barrier in the path of progress and poverty alleviation.

> RJ: *But my family progressed. The reason behind it is that we never fell in the wrong company and we never came in contact with alcohol. None of my brothers, none of my nephews.*
>
> ***
>
> NML: *How many rich kids go to the wine shop? No one does. The people who go there are all from labour class. […] They have ruined the moral order of the village.*

The second problem that the elite associated with poverty was related to diseases. Two participants who lived in the village mentioned the detection of HIV and AIDS cases in the village and argued that the disease was brought back to the village by poor people who worked in the cities.

> MKT: *One or two people fell in such bad company in Bombay and Calcutta that they became victims of AIDS. 2 of them. They died. They go to the cities to earn and they bring back such dreaded things to the village.*

The second participant was more assertive in his statement. Instead of speaking only about the village, he extended the argument to the entire district. The district in which the village falls has one of the largest detected cases of HIV and is regarded as a potential epidemic district. The second participant was explicit in stating that the problem of AIDS was driven by the poor and

absolved the rich of any responsibility for the epidemic. Like MKT, he blamed it on returning migrant workers from the cities.

> NML: *The disease of AIDS…now it being detected routinely in the district of [omitted]. Why is that the case? Who brought it here? You and I, we did not bring it here. It is those labourers who brought it to us. Those poor people brought it to us. If he took his wife there, then the wife brought it.*

6.4. GOVERNMENT FAILURE

The second theme in elite participants' representations about responsibility for poverty was the failure of the Government. The charge of governmental failure as built around four ideas: social policy failure, rampant corruption, political interest in poverty, and evil designs against the poor.

6.4.1. Charade of social policy[35]

On the theme of social policy, data from elite participants revealed great similarity to the representations of poor participants discussed in the previous chapter. Like the poor, the elite too argued that the social policies were ill-conceived and did not meet the needs of the poor. The disparity between Government's promises and the reality of their implementation saturated their representations.

> PB: *So I would tell you with all my experience that this is all a façade…a beautiful deception. Nitish Kumar's government or our Prime Minister…they sit on big platforms and preach…they need to have a team, a taskforce to look up all their promises on the ground. But none of this happens.*

The elite highlighted several policy fronts where the Government was perceived to have failed. A common policy demand of the elite was towards the need to develop an industrial sector that would create employment opportunities. The first policy front that appeared in the data was of providing employment and sustainable wages to poor people. The participants attributed the presence of widespread poverty in the community to a failure on the part of the Government in generating employment opportunities for the poor. Like poor participants, the elite too demanded the development of industries that could generate employment in the community.

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[35] Elite participants made a number of observations about government policies on healthcare and education. These ideas would be taken up in § 6.6 and § 6.5 respectively.

> *TCB:*　　　　*The government does not think about the economic condition. How many small or big industries are here? Compare that with other states even our neighbouring state of Jharkhand? How many do they have and how fast they are progressing.*

Like the poor, the participants in this group too were severely critical of educational policies. In particular, the practice of employing contractual teachers at state-run schools was an active subject of representations. Currently in his third term, Nitish Kumar began his first term in the office of the Chief Minister of Bihar in the year 2005. During the very first year of his tenure, the State appointed over 142,000 teachers on contractual basis to teach in the state-run schools (The Indian Express, 2014). The appointment of these teachers was not based on a qualifying exam (as the norm had been in the past) but on an ambiguous criterion of marks scored in a range of eligible degree qualifications. There has been much debate on the ability of the teachers employed in Bihar through this policy (Singh & Stern, 2013), however, it is beyond contention that it provided jobs to a large number of unemployed adults (The Indian Express, 2014). The representation of 'illiterate-teachers' in poor people's accounts (§5.4) was replicated amongst the elite, as evident in the quote below.

> *MKT:*　　　　*What will happen to the future of this community? They [the Government] are cheating the children. Many people are happy and the Government will get votes. Amongst such teachers you will see that they have bribed and procured fake certificates. They cannot write their own names even and you will see that they have 90% marks in the intermediate exams. Such people have been recruited as teachers.*

Interestingly, these ideas were shared by older teachers like RYT who were appointed before the mass recruitment was done during the tenure of Nitish Kumar. As the quote from RYT below illustrates, these teachers went to the extent of suggesting that the policy had not appointed teachers but provided employment to ill-deserving people to sway votes. In other words, the elite shared the representations of poor people that social policies acted as 'vote-banks'.

> *RY:*　　　　*In my opinion, the government is not interested in education. All that it is doing is for the elections, for getting votes. Specially, the current Government, they have not appointed teachers. They have given employment. All the illiterate men and women in villages, they somehow procured certificates and using those certificates, they got themselves the job of a teacher. I am saying this from the bottom of my heart, we don't consider them to be a teacher. They are not teachers.*

Similarly, healthcare policies of the Government were critiqued both by the doctors and other elite participants. Once again, participants believed that the Government hid behind the charade of policy announcements and promises but never demonstrated the political will to make government healthcare functional.

> DD: *Whatever the government does is a charade. That is all that they do. Everything remains on paper. Things remain announced. They just make announcements but on the ground, they don't do anything, This is the plight of government healthcare.*

In essence, the data indicated an all-round dissatisfaction with social policies of successive governments both at the centre and the state. The sense of dissatisfaction cannot be captured any better than in a quote from NML's interview where he parodied Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's famous slogan "*Garibi Hatao*"[36]. Literally, "*Garibi Hatao*" translates to "eradicate poverty" but NML argued that under the veil of eradicating poverty, the Government was engaged in "*Garib Hatao*" or "eradicate poor people".

> NML: *We used to joke that the poverty eradication policies of the government are not eradicating poverty, they are eradicating the poor. The government is not working on "Garibi Hatao", the government is working on "Garib Hatao".*

6.4.2. Corrupt governance through a corrupt bureaucracy

The second charge of failure was developed around the idea of corruption in the governmental machinery. Once again, the representations of the elite matched those of the poor. Most commonly, the ideas of corruption occurred in conjunction with discussions on social policies and participants believed that the presence of corruption made successful implementation of policies an extremely difficult task.

> DA: *The thing is that the government makes policies to solve a problem but in the implementation process corruption comes into play. So there is an argument that none of the policies are implemented properly because of corruption.*

The role of corruption in undermining the delivery of healthcare and educational services to poor stakeholders was raised by several doctors and teachers. For instance, teachers argued that bureaucratic watchdogs responsible for maintaining the quality of teaching in government schools were happy to receive a bribe and turn a blind eye to teacher absenteeism. Indeed, the data indicate that the elite representations of policy failure went hand-in-hand with their representation of corruption in public institutions.

> RA: *If there is a bureaucrat responsible for school inspection and has to report if a certain school is working well or not, what they do is that they don't come for inspection. All they do when they come is take attendance of teachers so that later the teachers who were found absent can bribe him. This makes the whole system corrupt. The teachers who don't want to teach, they know that if something happens, they can give 500 rupees and escape punishment. The bureaucracy just gathers bribes. From top to bottom, it is the same.*

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[36] An initial discussion on this political slogan in available in Paul (1972)

Finally, like the poor, the elite believed bureaucracy in the government offices to be inefficient and corrupt at every level. They argued that an institutionalized framework of corruption existed in the public system, making it impossible for people to put up a resistance against it. The discussion regarding corruption in the Department of Roadways in a group discussion provides an excellent illustration of participants' representation of collusion between bureaucracy and judiciary.

> *MS:*   *The road was built under Prime Minister Rural Roadway Scheme. Now Manmohan Singh [incumbent PM] is not coming to see if it is maintained properly. They have deputed officers at the state level in the Roadway Department. Now the Roadway Department is sitting idle. What can be done? Tell me?*
>
> *AC:*   *Say people from the village go and complaint to the District Magistrate (DM)?*
>
> *MSB:*   *Then the contractor would bribe the DM. Who would listen then? Where would you go? They would hear you out and throw the petition in the rubbish bin. They are corrupt. They have taken bribes.*

6.4.3. Politics and politicians

The final idea in the representation of governmental failure was developed around participants' caricature of the elected representatives who formed the Government. In India, the Members of the Parliament and the Legislative Assembly are colloquially called 'politicians' and the same term is used in the chapter.

Data indicated an exceedingly negative representation of politicians among the elite of Bholi. The legislators at the State Assembly, as well as members of the central parliament, were represented as crooks and criminals who lacked the required knowledge and expertise to tackle social problems like poverty.

> *PB:*   *Who are the leaders here? Who go to the parliament from Bihar? People with 5 murder cases and 10 extortion cases against them. People contest elections from jails and win by a huge margin because their minions move around and scare everyone. They go on and say, "if you don't vote for us, you will face consequences." So that is the kind of people who run this country. What hopes do you have?*
> <div align="center">***</div>
>
> *NML:*   *98% of people in politics are criminals because of which we get to hear about scams of different kinds. So if people in charge of the country, who sit in the parliament and make laws… if they are criminals, characterless, and immoral…if they sit in the parliament with knives and pistols, what will happen to the country? How will they put a thought on poverty? They are illiterates, they won elections because of their pistol.*

Further, participants believed that the politicians who made policies to eradicate poverty were far removed from the ground realities. For example, participants argued that on the one hand the

politicians never used government schools and hospitals and took no interest in their quality, on the other they had no commitment to problems like poverty.

> PB: *Look at all of our legislators and all the politicians of this country. None of their children go to the schools that serve porridge. This need to be looked at. I would like to ask them, know from them, if they would want to send their kids to porridge schools?*
> ***
> DD: *`There is a lack of political will to work on poverty. Only when politicians take care of some of the issues, their principal secretary and the rest of bureaucracy will toe the line. This is what I have been telling you. This is the truth.*

6.4.4. Evil designs of the government

Finally, in extreme cases, the Government was represented to purposefully spin evil designs to harm the poor. In particular, participants believed that the Government wanted to maintain the status quo on poverty by keeping the poor away from education. In this regard, the policy framework on education — especially the MDMS (§ 5.4.3) — was argued to be an illusion purposefully created to distract the poor from education.

> MKT: *The government purposefully introduces such policies that children don't get education. You can count the number of families where children get a good education on one hand. What do I tell you, the government has ruined the syllabus! They have ruined it so that the children don't learn anything.*

In § 6.3.3, the participants' ideas about alcohol consumption amongst the poor were discussed. To extend the idea further, like the poor participants of this research (§ 5.1.1.3), the elite too considered the proliferation of liquor shops to be an evil design of the Government to part the poor with their hard-earned money.

> NML: *How many rich kids go to the wine shop? No one does. The people who go there are all from labour class. The government says to the labour class that their poverty would be eradicated? Instead of eradicating it, they have created the biggest enemy at every nook and corner by opening alcohol shops. They have robbed the poor.*

Similarly, the elite participants' representations of welfare dependence amongst the poor (§ 6.3.2) were also conceived as a strategy of the Government to make poor people dependent and devoid of agency. As evident in the quote below, the elite too used the idea of infra-humanisation to describe poverty in similar ways as the poor (§ 5.5.2 and § 5.7.1)

> NML: *It doesn't consider us villagers and poor peasants more than a dog. What does a dog need? A little bread or a small chunk of meat? If the dog is noisy and barks a lot, give it a piece of meat—it would stay occupied with it. I think the government runs this scheme to create opportunities for corruption and siphoning off the nation's money.*

Conclusion to Part III

The second domain of elite representations of poverty is where participants identified reasons why poverty existed in the village. There is both similarity and difference between elite and poor participants' representations. Like the poor, the elite represented the Government as responsible for poverty. However, the crucial difference between elite and poor representations was in terms of the emphasis that the elite put on the perceived deficiencies in the personality and behaviour of the poor. This resulted in the elite distancing their Self from the problem of poverty. As it will become evident in Chapter 7, this was a point of convergence between elite and newspaper representations of poverty.

PART III: CHALLENGES AND STRUGGLES

The third domain of elite representations on poverty was built around the notion of ameliorating poverty by providing good healthcare and educational options to the poor, and the challenges faced by poor people in these areas. Once again, there were several similarities between the ideas of the elite and the poor on the two issues. At the same time, interviews with teachers and doctors as key informants revealed an interesting divergence of perspective between the users of public institutions and the people responsible for providing the services.

6.5. DISENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS

Elite participants believed that poor people were not sufficiently engaged with schooling and education. As already discussed, poor parents were blamed for lacking the foresight to invest in the education of their children. The elite argued that poor people's disengagement with education was promoted by two issues: scores of problems at government schools, and the quality of teachers who work at schools.

6.5.1. Government school problems

Since the 1980s, a large number of low cost privately run schools have emerged in smaller towns and villages of India (Tooley & Dixon, 2005; Woodhead, Frost, & James, 2013). Participants argued that before such low cost private schools appeared, government schools used to cater to both elite and poor families. However, in recent times, children from middle class and elite families have unreservedly migrated to private schools, leaving only children from poor families at government schools. Indeed, teachers confirmed that government schools were almost entirely populated by children from poor families.

NML: *My personal thinking is that during those days whether rich or poor, servant or landlord, everyone's children went to the same government school in the village. During those days there was a single track of education. There was a single policy. Everyone was taught at the same place.*

<div align="center">***</div>

RAT: *In this school everyone is from poor families. Families that are completely hand to mouth send their children to government schools. People who are even slightly better than that, they don't send [their children] to government schools. In many ways, people have lost their faith.*

The lack of faith in government school system that RAT observed in her quote above was a common idea even amongst the poor participants. Representation of a progressive decline in the quality of teaching and educational activities was a common reason for this. Contrary to expectations of positive self-presentation, teachers participating in the study too shared this belief.

DA: *I am completing 21 years as a teacher here. There has been tremendous deterioration in the quality of teaching at schools. There is no doubt there.*

Additional insights on the decline were available in the data collected from teachers in the study. It was argued that the schools lacked government support and funding to maintain even basic facilities like furniture, blackboards, stationary, and laboratory equipment. Take for example, RJ's quote where he revealed that the scarcity of classrooms resulted in students from four different standards sitting in the same room. While RJ taught students of one year-group, other students had to sit silently. Working at a different school, DA faced the same problem. Essentially, the undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the government runs beneath these assertions.

RJ: *I teach 4 classes together: 5th standard to 8th standard sit I n the same room. It is very difficult. I cannot teach at all. I teach [one year-group] other sit silently and listen. I have to ask others to not flip through their books because if they do their own activity, I would not be able to teach.*

<div align="center">***</div>

DA: *There is a great lack of buildings. You cannot allocate rooms according to classes or sections. For example students in 6th and 7th standards sit in the same room.*

Finally, participants in the study believed that more effort was needed to connect poor people with education. Two issues were repeatedly raised by participants in this regard. First, the elite noted the need to create awareness amongst poor parents about the importance of education. As highlighted previously, there was a strong representation amongst the elite that poor parents did not attach enough importance to education. In this regard, the elite often discussed the importance of 'guides' who could inspire poor parents into valuing education. In Chapter 8

(§8.3.2), a dialogical discussion is presented on the Generalised Alter of 'Guides' to the poor that the elite recurrently referred to.

> *PB:*   *I think we need to initiate things at the level of this village…people who live here. We need a team of 2-4-10 people who would keep an eye on children who do not go to schools, the parents who are disinterested….the team needs to reach out to them and encourage them. Encourage them to send their kids to schools…send them to schools definitely.*

Second, the elite believed that governmental efforts were required to make education relevant for poor families. It was argued that in the prevailing socio-political climate, several shortcuts to education were available to people with financial means. In many ways, the elite reiterated the concerns of poor participants regarding the role of bribes in securing a job, even when the person had completed his education. Interestingly, one participant believed that school education can be made more relevant for poor people by including vocational training so that children from poor families can learn trade skills along with general education. It is not clear from the quote; yet, it can be presumed that the participant did not envisage the need for integrating similar vocational training for children from non-poor backgrounds.

> *BKS:*   *They say, "My landlord, why should I send them to school? If they learn some skills, they will earn a little and help the family. Even if they get educated, is the government giving us any jobs?" They understand this much. They say that people with college education sit unemployed. Therefore the way to keep them at school is to give them some vocational training at school as well.*

6.5.2. Teachers at government schools

Teachers at government schools are the second object of representations in the context of education. Like poor participants, the elite too represented newly appointed contractual teachers as incompetent[37]. The representation was shared even by permanently employed teachers, like DT in the quote below. However, the only contractual teacher in the study (RJT) highlighted the stark differences in pay — the salaries of permanent teachers were eight to ten times that of contractual teachers.

> *DT:*   *All the newly recruited teachers here are illiterate. They cannot teach even the basics properly. All the schools have the same story.*
>
>   ***
>
> *RJT:*   *The old teachers get 40 thousands. When you write your book, please raise this matter. In Bihar, there is such disparity in the pay of teachers. This too is a big factor. There is great disparity. I get 6 thousand rupees [a month]. Can I feed my family in that?*

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[37] See § 6.4.1 for the distinction between permanent and contractual teachers

The issue of pay disparity between permanent and contractual teachers was also raised by other elite participants including the teachers in the former category. Data suggest that the disparity in pay caused friction between permanent and contractual teachers. Being underpaid, the latter often refused to share the load of teaching.

> MKT: *On one hand you give 40 thousand to permanent teachers and on the other hand to other trained graduate teachers who are employed contractually, you give 7 thousand. They both work in the same school and do the same job. Why wouldn't there be dissatisfaction?*
>
> <div align="center">***</div>
>
> DA: *Contract teachers say, "I work as many hours as you permanent teachers with scale pay do. Why do I get one tenth of your salary?" This conflict has started and because of this the school comes to a halt. This too is a big reason. There is so much conflict.*

In many ways, the complaint of contractual teachers like RJT regarding their pay is genuine. For the sake of comparison, an unskilled manual labour from the village would earn more than them if he were to work for more than 25 days in a month[38]. In that light, it is not surprising that many of these contractual teachers find alternative means of employment as another permanent teacher, RY, notes in the quote below — albeit, personally, he does not appear to be sympathetic on the issue. Similarly, another common representation was that teachers (permanent as well as contractual) were not interested in teaching but took tremendous interest in MDMS because it allowed them to generate additional income on the sly.

> RY: *They are greedy about money. They give tuitions, open their own private schools while they are on the payroll as a government school teacher. They open shops and sit there and do their business. They all run after money, wherever it comes from. They ignore the school.*
>
> <div align="center">***</div>
>
> NML: *Teachers have a vested interest in the MDMS. This is because I see in the village that the teachers sell the rice that comes for it. They pocket the money and feed them rice that has vermin in it.*

Data from teachers, however, challenged this idea regarding MDMS. All the teachers in the study argued that the school feeding policy had become the sword of Damocles in their lives. Take for example the quote below where TBB argued that the local bureaucracy asked the teachers to keep MDMS running even at the cost of sacrificing teaching.

> TBB: *We go to meetings where officers come from the district. They tell us, "we don't tell you [the teachers] that you come to schools and teach. We tell you that you go to your schools and get the meals prepared and students fed." Now this is the problem. There [at the meetings] schools principals are never asked to worry about classroom teaching instead they are*

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[38] India operates with six working days in a week.

> *instructed to be attentive to the meals. These are the instructions of officers and people who handle education in this district. What do you expect from us?*

To conclude, data collected from this group contains both convergences and divergences on the issue, both within the group and with the representations of the poor. The diversity within the group comes from the perspective that teachers brought, else, the ideas in the group mirrored that of the poor. A similar trend will be observed on the next theme as well.

6.6. STRUGGLES FOR HEALTH

The second major challenge that the elite related to poverty was of healthcare. The representations of healthcare was developed around three thematic issues: the dysfunctionality of government hospitals, the expensive nature of private clinics, and doctors' perspective on treating the poor.

6.6.1. Dysfunctional state run facilities

State funded hospitals and PHCs were a considerable distance away from Bholi. A common idea amongst the elite was that the community needed an establishment closer to the village to their services more accessible for the poor — especially for families with elders.

> NML: *The guardians of most families are in Delhi, Punjab, or Calcutta in search of bread. Here in the village, all you have are the women and the elderly. They are not capable of walking to the hospital with a patient. So because of the distance, does their problem get solved? No!*

In congruence with their representations amongst the poor, the elite too were of the opinion that even basic healthcare facilities were not available at the state funded hospitals. This representation was not contested by doctors, as evident in the quote below.

> SKS: *At best, they manage to come to our PHC and honestly, then you get to see how much poverty exists all around us…what are the limitations that people have. What services do we manage to provide to them? I don't think there are any fruitful services at the PHC…the PHC where I work, I don't think there is anything there to help these poor people.*

Participants in this group prominently highlighted two issues at government hospitals. First, it was argued that doctors did not pay attention to poor patients, seldom examining them systematically. The second issue related to the medicines dispensed at the government hospitals. Unlike the poor participants, the elite did not believe that their shortage was created by the staff illicitly selling the state supplied ration. Instead, their ideas revolved more around the lack of

constant supply from the Government and stem more from the representation of the charade of policy promises.

> TCB: *The doctor doesn't give more than a minute to the patient. He would pick the stethoscope, put it on the patient once, and start writing the prescription. That is all they do. All they ask is, "What is your problem?" The patients say something and the prescription is written.*
>
> <p style="text-align:center">***</p>
>
> TBB: *The government says it has made arrangements that you go the hospital and you will receive medicines free of cost. The treatment will be free of cost. But all of that is a sham. The doctors write prescriptions and you have to but the medicines from private shops. We see that only one or two medicines are supplied by the government.*

In essence, if the representations of poor people are taken into account (§ 5.3.1), the overall negative representation of the government hospitals in Bholi becomes absolute. However, the doctors argued that the dysfunctionality of public healthcare resulted from the lack of required infrastructure and support from the Government. They gave several illustrations of lacking infrastructure and mismanagement of facilities. Take for example the quote below where the doctor explained that the PHC charged with providing emergency services to a population of over one hundred thousand people did not have even the most essential facilities.

> SKS: *Patients come here in droves. Among them, there are patients who need much more elaborate and extensive treatment but the PHC, there aren't any resources. You know, even the oxygen cylinder does not work. Even the ICU has not got the bare minimum equipment.*

Indeed, data from the doctors provide an alternative perspective on many key ideas in the communal representations of healthcare. For example, several doctors directly addressed the representation of disinterest and lack of concern that was evident in TCB's quote earlier in this section. They argued that the hospitals and PHC were severely understaffed leading to short consultation periods.

> BKS: *We have 3 or 4 doctors and the number of patients is over 400 per day. Suppose someone goes to a private clinic, there a doctor can give 5 minutes, ten minutes to each or whatever time is required by the patient. Here the pressure of work is so much that it is not possible. Because of the situation, the overcrowding, they may not get that much of satisfaction. It is*

Similarly, when probed about the belief that doctors sold the free medicines provided by the Government to private shop owners, doctors acknowledged their awareness of such representations. They also observed the based on such allegations they constantly faced abuse from patients.

SKS: *That is all false. Nothing of that sort happens. They say that to our faces. What can we do? They will say what they want to say. What can we do?*

AC: *Why do you think they feel so?*

SKS: *We get medicines, they are there for a few days but soon the stock that we had received runs out. So the public gives such a reaction.*

In essence, the data collected from the elite seem to carry two different perspectives. On the one hand, the large land owners, teachers, and even doctors tend to share the representations of poor people regarding the dysfunctionality of government healthcare system. On the other hand, doctors appeared to hold a divergent perspective on issues like patient care and the distribution of free medicines that other participants raised. Such divergences in perspective are crucial to this thesis and would be taken up for greater discussion in Chapter 9.

6.6.2. The strain of private treatment

As noted earlier, healthcare in the private sector was expensive but of better quality, the elite noted that the monetary strain of private clinics put them out of the reach of the poor. One participant provided a wonderful insight into the total cost incurred in visiting private clinics by aggregating the expenditure on travel, medicines and consultations. The total expenditure, thus, goes far beyond the consultation fee charged by private practitioners.

PB: *A doctor, at the very minimum, charges Rs 300 (£ 3.00) for a consultation. Can everyone afford to pay that? No. Say for example, someone in my family is ill. The medicine that the doctor prescribes costs Rs 1500 (£15.00) that makes is Rs 1800 (£18.00). In addition, if you go to [omitted], it is some distance away, you will need to have lunch there....plus you need to pay the fare for your journey. So put it all together and you are looking at something in the range of Rs 5,000 (£50.00). Can a poor family manage that kind of money in cash, should an emergency were to present itself suddenly? Not a chance! […] It is true that the government hospitals are useless and the private clinics work much better but they are not meant for poor people.*

While sharing the representation of private clinics as business enterprises, the elite were especially critical of doctors that maintained a private practice despite being employed by the Government. The following exchange between two participants in a group interview illustrates the use of symbolic resources to represent the practice of medicine as a noble profession based on honesty and compassion.

TBB: *There are some doctors in the hospital who will say to the patients I will prescribe you some medicine. You better come to my clinic. My private clinic, come there. That poor fellow will go. He has a problem, he will go to the doctor and receive treatment.*

CCT: *Certain things are a matter of honesty and compassion. The government took you after a competitive exam to serve the people at the hospital and next to the hospital, you open your private clinic? Will you be able to do your job with honesty? If you were honest, you would*

> *prescribe him [patient] the medicine and tell him when you sit [in the OPD] next. You*
> *would not say that there was a need to see you in your [private] clinic or pay you 500*
> *rupees.*

Doctors had an interesting range of perspectives on the same subject. Except PPS, all other doctors in the research were employed by the Government but also maintained their private clinics. While PPS believed that holding a private clinic reduces devotion towards the state health services among doctors deputed at government hospitals, others argued that the two were separate and did not interfere with one another. Interestingly, doctors engaged in private practice openly admitted their clinics to be a kind of business enterprise which intended to make money.

> PPS: *I think that doctors are not 100% devoted to their job.*
> AC: *Why is that?*
> PPS: *There are barriers. The first thing is their private practice. It is a matter of one's*
>   *philosophy. When they go their private practice, they are driven by the desire that, "Oh my!*
>   *All the patients who come to my clinic must be cured. No matter what it takes!" Instead*
>   *of two medicines that are necessary, they will give 5 that are not necessary. That is because*
>   *they have to grow their practice and they make money out of it. They don't have the same*
>   *devotion at government hospitals.*
> <div align="center">***</div>
> SKS: *People should help poor people in whatever way they can. We cannot do that. The reason is*
>   *simple. This has become a kind of indirect business which runs on give-and-take. You*
>   *cannot survive it you don't do it.*

Most doctors avoided talking about their private clinics but SKS spoke at length on the subject. He served as a physician at the government hospital and had a very successful private clinic. His account provided rare honest insights into the proliferation of private clinics all across Indian towns and cities and functional utility of poverty. An extract is presented below:

> SKS: *No. In my experience, poor people are better customers. I always felt that the poor people*
>   *who come to me, they come prepared to pay up. People who do not want to pay, they usually*
>   *don't turn up. That is my experience. […]There is a lot of poverty in these parts. But*
>   *when you talk about my private clinic, I said that I do not have any problem because those*
>   *who are not capable to pay, we do not let them enter…so they either are prepared to pay or*
>   *they are not allowed to enter. They cannot see us in our private clinic. This is a fact. No*
>   *matter how capable or qualified the doctor is, if they say that we treat the poor, it is a lie.*
>   *No. They don't treat the poor, they treat the money…no one treats the poor. Who pays us,*
>   *we treat them. We see at government hospitals, what poverty is and what their paying*
>   *capacity is.*

SKS makes some distressing but crucial observations about the pragmatic stance of private clinics. In his own words, private practitioners "don't treat the poor, they treat the money…no one treats the poor." In this light, it is not surprising that poor participants in the previous chapter, several elite believed that over-prescription was common because doctors received a cut

of profits from medicine shops. The elite used the metaphor of 'sucking blood' to describe the perceived tendency of private clinics to extract maximum money from poor patients.

> PB: *When you go to [omitted], the doctors often tell us that you have been treated wrongly. You were given the wrong medicines and that is why there was no relief. So you have that sort of doctors here. But their only intention is to suck money…the maximum money that they can suck.*

Interestingly, SKS used the same metaphor to argue that the cost of private healthcare should not be seen as 'blood sucking'. In his opinion, private clinics invest a lot of money in setting up the facilities and purchasing specialist equipment. In his opinion, which may well be indicative of the general world-view of private practitioners, the high consultation fees of private clinics are the way to get return on their investment.

> SKS: *Private sector is huge and well maintained…so they tend to be costly. But when the public thinks that their blood gets sucked in the private sector, they are right…but perhaps you should not call it blood sucking. If someone has invested 50 crores, then the person would like some return. Government hospitals work on government subsidies, government of India gives them money. The patient has no expense. […] Comparing government hospital with private healthcare is like comparing a subsidised LPG cylinder and a non-subsidised cylinder. The differences are the same. Isn't it?*

6.6.3. Treating the poor

The final theme on healthcare was based purely on the data from doctors participating in the study. Several doctors believed that treating poor people was difficult because they lacked the basic understanding of disease prevention, leading to a greater number of healthcare complications. The idea that poor health and poverty formed a vicious cycle was common amongst doctors.

> BKS: *Health and poverty are directly related. They both have an impact on one another. If health parameters go down, they cause more of [sic] expenses because poor health extracts money. On the other hand, the poor, since they are devoid of basic amenities, are unaware of the basic things that they should know as far as prevention and cure of diseases is concerned. Because they are ignorant of these things. Another, they cannot afford also [sic], thereby leading to health problems and causing more poverty to them. So both the things are related.*

The doctors argued that there was tremendous scope of raising health awareness amongst the poor. According to them, despite the growing understanding and familiarity with the government healthcare system, many poor families did not know the range of facilities available to them through the system. Additionally, doctors also argued that poor people tend to ignore health issues unless they require urgent attention.

> RKY: *No, they are not avoiding the government system. Actually, still they require more and more awareness. It's…. it's a lack of knowledge; lack of awareness is main reason. They are not avoiding the system. They're… either they are not aware of the system, or if they are aware, they're so reluctant due to lack of knowledge. [They think] "Sab kuch theek hai. Everything is all right." Why don't you go for anti-natal check-up? [They say,] "Everything was right, so what was need of to go to the doctor?"*

Data also revealed that poor people's ideas about health and diseases were influenced by the local health beliefs that they hold. Many diseases like black fever, small pox, jaundice etc. were considered to be the result of divine retribution. Doctors argued that such beliefs often resulted in delays in seeking the opinion of bio-medical doctors.

> RKY: *People say, think that black fever is a curse. It is not but they used to believe that it is and they would go to a shaman. Now with government intervention things have changed but still they don't think that only drugs will cure it. They still seek shamans and street healers.*
>
> ***
>
> PPS: *Ignorance and illiteracy is behind all this. They are poor, they aren't educated, they fall in the trap of superstitions. If they get jaundice, they think it is supernatural. Bad eye of others…They stop eating turmeric in food.*
>
> ***
>
> BKS: *Then are these old and the social taboos and customs. Suppose somebody falls ill, then they will say that this is measles. "No, no, no. No treatment for 7 days. This is the goddess."*

Guided by their local knowledge and social representations of health and illnesses, poor people concurrently sought the help of, faith healers, shamans, and bio-medical doctors. Faith-healers and shamans have been a part of the cultural heritage of communities. Even in the present day, they are popular in villages and rural areas where bio-medical awareness about health was lower.

> BKS: *Actually this, they have learnt it from generations and their ancestors have been doing it. And there has been no system to interfere into that unawareness [sic] The only thing [that is required] is education. Our ancestors also believed in those things. I won't be out of context if I say that my grandfather or even his father or my grandmother; she had a strong belief in shamans.*

Finally, in Chapter 5, the analysis revealed that due to the lack of diagnostic tests, poor participants believed treatment at government hospitals to be less satisfactory. Data from doctors provides further evidence that poor participants' satisfaction with healthcare is dependent on the diagnostic investigations and the modality of treatment. In particular, several doctors revealed that poor people particularly insisted on intravenous injection of medication, which they believed to be the most effective way of treating illnesses.

> *SKS:*   *Well, one thing I always notice among people from villages and lower SES…they often come convinced that they have a severe illness and that they need a complex invasive treatment. This is very common with females. They will come and say 'I have weakness'. I will give her some glucose and other oral solutions. But they keep on asking for IV fluids! They want to force us to give IV fluids. This is very common. They think that administering IV fluids treats all their problems.*

In conclusion, the representation of healthcare amongst the elite was diverse. The diversity was a natural outcome of the inclusion of doctors in the sample. Importantly, the inclusion of doctors provided confirmatory evidence regarding the importance of local health beliefs in determining poor people's satisfaction with medical treatment as initially discussed in the previous chapter (§ 5.3.3). Similarly, it can be noted that the doctors rest the onus of bad health outcomes for the poor on their lack of education, belief in traditional notions of health etc. In sum, once again there is subtle, still firm linking of the plight of the poor with their own deeds.

Conclusion to Part III

The third domain of elite representations was extremely interesting as it presented points of both similarities and departures between elite and poor representations of healthcare and education. Like the poor, the elite considered them important in the lives of the poor. However, a subtle undercurrent of holding the poor responsible for failing to achieve good health and education was evident in the elite accounts. It is worth noting that the inclusion of doctors and teachers in the study not only provided dialogical symmetry but also revealed the divergence in perspectives in representing poverty. As a social object, the representations of poverty are indeed contingent on the vantage point of social actors/groups engaged in the representational work.

CHAPTER 7

ON NEWSPAPER REPRESENTATIONS *OF* POVERTY
Two national broadsheet newspapers

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter analyses the representation of poverty in two national broadsheet newspapers of India — the Times of India and the Hindustan Times. The chapter presents the first systematic analysis of the coverage poverty receives in the Indian mass-media.

The thematic analysis of the data revealed five thematic ideas that capture the media representations of poverty (see Table 5) understood in terms of the four domains of poverty representations: (1) the objectivity of poverty (2) poverty as a barrier (3) poverty as a threat (4) poverty as an opportunity. The chapter is divided into 4 parts following this analytic framework.

The representation of poverty as an objective reality (Part I) was based on the measurement of poverty using the poverty line. Part II analyses the representation of poverty as a barrier based on thematic ideas of the restrains of living in poverty, and the possibility of overcoming it through individual excellence and social policies. Part III explores threat based representations of poverty based on ideas referring to the impact of poverty on the society. Part IV outlines the representation of poverty as an opportunity for party politics.

PART I: OBJECTIVITY OF POVERTY

7.1. POVERTY IS WHAT POVERTY LINE MEASURES

Edward Boring (1923) famously defined intelligence as what intelligence tests measured. While Boring's definition may appear circular, it reflects the inherent problematic of 'measuring' abstract objects. On this front, the analyses of news reports revealed a similar representation of poverty: poverty, primarily, was understood in terms of its measurement. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the official definition of poverty in India depends on an income threshold that becomes the poverty line (henceforth, PL). Reports in both newspapers devoted substantial attention to the PL, which was the central idea in two themes. First, the PL was represented as the sole criteria of ascertaining the prevalence of poverty and the progress made in its amelioration. Second, on the income cut-off point at which the national PL was set was heavily debated.

7.1.1. Learning about poverty through the PL

The regular frequency with which poverty was discussed in both newspapers (see Appendix VII) contradicts the broad speculations that it may be losing its place in public consciousness (Nandy, 2002). Several news stories in both newspapers carried reports of influential people, including the incumbent Prime Minister, acknowledging poverty to be the 'biggest' problem that the country faced. Both newspapers took a narrow monetary perspective on poverty — only one story in *The Hindustan Times* suggested the need to widen the "mainstream thinking" on poverty.

> TOI   *[Prime Minister] Singh, however, advocated perseverance on the part of the West to substantively end the social evils in view of widespread poverty. "Poverty is India's greatest problem. Social evils cannot be dealt with in short time and India is taking steps to raise the level of living by returning to high growth rate and by ensuring that fruits of development are distributed equitably," he said.(12/04/2013)*

> HT   *The arguments between economists Amartya Sen and Jagdish Bhagwati need to be seen in the context of the positive influence it has had on India's mainstream thinking. At the very least, the debate has catapulted poverty and growth into the centre stage of India's current political discourse - a welcome, and progressive departure from the shrillness of the divisive caste-religion discussions usually heard in an election year in India. (27/07/2013)*

However, with the measurement of poverty in the country tied to an income-monetary dimension, newspaper stories on poverty were heavily guided by the concept of the PL. In line with the discussions regarding the abstract nature of the concept of poverty in Chapter 1 (§ 1.2 and § 1.3), the PL is crucial to the realisation of the idea in the real world — after all, how would one know what poverty is if one doesn't know who the poor are? The analysis revealed that the

PL informed discussions on the presence, prevalence, and alleviation of poverty. As the following extracts illustrate, with an overbearing reliance of the PL, the phenomenon of poverty gets reduced to numbers.

> TOI: *In fact, the situation has worsened from the earlier report of 04-05, when 55.1% people lived below the poverty line in the state. Bihar finished second last where 55.3% people live below the poverty line, a marginal improvement over the earlier 55.7%. (06/11/2012)*

> TOI: *The Planning Commission estimates that 16.63 per cent (102.23 lakh) of Gujarat's population was living below the poverty line in 2011-12, as compared to 23 per cent (136.2 lakh) in 2009-10. (25/07/2013)*

The PL was also regarded to be central to the design and implementation of social policies on poverty. Take for example the following report where the Government was reproached for not having a 'definite' PL in its plan document. As the next quote illustrates, a 'definite' poverty line reduces the abstractness inherent in the idea of poverty and streamlines the allocation of welfare.

> HT: *The UPA government's 12th Plan came under attack from Members of the Parliament (MPs), who described the document as "unrealistic", devoid of "ground realities" and without a definite "poverty line". […]"Amazingly, the plan has been decided without any poverty line," an MP said. Another pointed out that the UPA government had junked its own poverty line, and it was giving subsidies without making a clear demarcation in that regard. (22/01/2013)*

The centrality of the PL in representing poverty has another expected consequence. It becomes a definitive marker of discontinuity in the society and a tool for social segregation. A PL separates the society into two distinct, mutually exclusive categories of those who are above poverty line (APL) and those below it (BPL). These categories are absolute by definition — one either earns more that the income threshold, or doesn't. The analysis revealed that in several instances, people living BPL were separately identified from other members of the community, suggesting the influence of the Rich–Poor thema. Take for example the next extract from TOI where BPL patients were separately identified and distinguished from 'general' patients attending a health camp in Nagpur:

> Times: *State health department is organizing a mega health check-up and treatment camp on Friday at rural hospital Kamptee from 9am to 5pm. […] Department will also display information about all the major central and state health schemes at the venue for patients below poverty line (BPL) as well as general patients. (25/03/2013)*

7.1.2. Where should the PL be set?

While the need and effectiveness of a PL was not questioned, there was a lot of debate in both newspapers about the income cut off point at which the all-important line must be set. It is

important to note that in part these debates coincided with the setting up of a new expert committee on poverty assessment methodology. News reports carried opinions of economists, social activists, the chairperson of the country's Planning Commission, and other important figures in the Indian socio-political landscape. Voices of the poor were also brought into the news reports to support the argument that the existing PL was at an unacceptably low level.

> HT: *A poverty line at this level implies a monthly income of Rs 5,000 for a family of five in urban areas, but even those earning substantially more consider themselves short of money. "Kya bachta hai? (What's left?)" grumbles Bhavni Devi, a roadside cigarette vendor in Delhi's Connaught Place who earns about R15,000 a month. (25/07/2013)*

Three reports in HT also noted that the setting of the PL is also influenced by the demands of the party politics. For a very long time, the political landscape of India has been shaped by political parties' claims and promises of helping the poor and alleviating poverty. The following extract presents an example where the newspapers questioned if the incumbent Government had deliberately set the PL at a lower threshold to support its claim of eliminating poverty.

> HT: *Just how many people has the government lifted out of poverty? The answer to that question is critical in a year of elections but clouded by controversy over how the all-important "poverty line" has been fixed. Critics feel the line - a level of income level below which families are considered poor - was set too low, allowing the government to show that millions moved out of poverty on its watch, a handy claim to make with state and national polls looming. (25/07/2013)*

The Indian PL was also compared with those of several other countries to provide evidence that the current criterion needed reformulation. In essence, the centrality of a monetary criterion remained uncontested and all the calls for improvement were directed towards a raising the monetary cut-off point.

> HT: *A comparison shows that India poverty line is abysmally low. For instance, South Africa had three poverty lines - food, middle and upper - and all three were higher than that of India. […]Per capita poverty line of a rural adult Rwandian in Indian terms comes out to be Rs. 892 per month, slightly more than Rs. 816 for a person in rural India. (7/08/2013)*

In conclusion, the data indicate that a strong reliance on the PL generated a representation of poverty as an objective reality, a condition that can be identified accurately using the PL. The newspapers contested the PL, not in terms of its validity as the criterion of assessing poverty, but at the income threshold at which it was set. More so, there was no explicit recognition that even with a PL, income merely acted as a proxy for estimating welfare. The possibility of evaluating poverty using other frameworks like the quality of life, capabilities, and the MPI were not raised in any news reports.

7.1.3. Implications of the PL: The objectification of poverty

Poverty is a complex phenomenon that needs to be made tangible. The association of poverty with monetary insufficiency enables its translation into a tangible concept. As the analysis revealed, the PL plays a key role in this regard by facilitating the identification of people who were poor.

From the standpoint of SRT, the PL plays a very important role in poverty representation. The PL provides the visual image of an imaginary boundary in the society that separates people who are poor from others. The origin of the image is rooted in the need to appreciate and materialise an idea, however through the process of representing it can become the essence of the idea it represents — Moscovici (2000) refers to this transition as the process of objectification. He writes: "when the image linked to a word or idea becomes detached and is let loose in a society, it is accepted as reality, a conventional one, of course, but none the less a reality" (p. 51). Media representations indicate a similar interplay between the idea of poverty and the image of a PL where the latter has become a substitute for the former. Take for example the following news report where a scribe visited a neighbourhood inhabited predominantly by leprosy patients. The report compassionately documents the destitution, squalor, and people's struggles to survive. Three quotes (I, II, III) are presented from the same news story in the TOI to lead the subsequent discussion:

> I: *A walk through the Lepers' Colony at Gobardaha in Palamu, with its recurring images of dirt and squalor pointing at the administration's gross apathy, is disturbing. The area is dotted with more than 20 houses built under the Centre's Indira Awaas Yojana in 1987-88. One would wonder that the residents here have at least a place to stay. However, a close look at their lives and one will be shocked to see the deplorable conditions they have been living in. With leaking roofs, cracks in the wall, paints falling off, the lepers have been forced to live in subhuman condition.*

> II *Chamru begs to survive. He says, "I take an auto for five rupee, which drops me to Daltonganj town. I beg for alms the whole day and am able <u>to make ₹ 50-60 per day</u>. I take an auto back home by the end of the day. Ten rupees is spent on transportation alone. I live on the mercy of others."*

> III *This has forced a majority of the residents to take to begging. There is no water supply to or electricity in the colony in spite of being situated in a main town. <u>Every resident of this colony is below poverty line (BPL), but none of them is listed on the government BPL list.</u> (20/08/2013)*

A systematic unpacking of the three quotes can demonstrate how the PL has led to the objectification of poverty representations. In the third quote, the scribe proclaims that every resident in the community lived below the PL (underlined) and resents their exclusion from the

official list. Two remarks can be made about this assertion. The first is semantic in nature — the scribe did not say that that people in the colony were 'Poor' but instead stated that they were 'BPL'. This suggests that at the semantic level, being poor is synonymous with being below the PL — in other words, the idea of living below the PL substitutes the concept of poverty. The second remark substantiates this claim further. The underlined text in Quote III entails a factual contradiction — the reported income of Chamru (underlined, Quote II) puts him well above the existing PL of India. If the PL itself were the criterion for ascertaining poverty, then, strictly speaking, Chamru was not poor. However, this contradiction suggests that the scribe arrived at the conclusion that Chamru (and indeed other residents of the colony) were poor by witnessing the squalor and the living conditions in the colony (Quote I). Yet, the semantic use of 'BPL' — despite the factual contradiction — suggests that the representation of poverty has been objectified with the image of being below an imaginary line of poverty. This clearly suggests that the PL, and the APL–BPL binary it naturally produces, have become the habitual way of thinking about poverty in the Indian public sphere.

In a similar example, another news report in the TOI revealed how the PL has become the naturalised way of thinking about poverty. The report describes the plight of five children whose parents died of AIDS. These children were ostracised and after the death of their parents were forced to live in a tent pitched next to their parents' graves. Soon, their plight came to the attention of bureaucrats.

> TOI: *Following reports in the media, the local administration swung into action and has reportedly allotted a house to the troubled children under the Indira Awas Yojana. A government official said that they would soon be given a BPL (below poverty line) card too. (27/07/2013)*

Receiving a BPL card is an official recognition of a person's poverty, and as the quote above illustrates, perhaps the only recognition of poverty. The report also indicates that the being recognised as poor is an improvement of sorts in the lives of people. People who are recognised as living below the PL are not the most underprivileged people in the country. That unfortunate distinction belongs to people like Chamru in a previous extract who were poor, yet not recognised as such. In many ways, the extract above beautifully captures the centrality of PL in giving meaning to the social object of poverty, and the deontic power (§ 2.2.2) exercised by the Government in the development of this social object.

To conclude, the data suggest that in the media, like in the Bholi community, the PL appears as the objectification of poverty. The PL is treated as the absolute channel for understanding, identifying, and taking ameliorative actions against poverty. Moscovici (1988) considers such

representations as hegemonic in nature and they tend to become the habitual way of thinking as they acquire the status of an objective truth. The PL is an image, an idea that seemingly identifies the poor in the society. Yet, a sustained acceptance of income as the sole criterion and the PL as its well-developed tool seems to have led to an essentialisation of BPL and APL as distinct groups in the society (Wagner, Holtz, & Kashima, 2009). As the data indicate, debates on understanding poverty are limited to merely being debates on improving the criterion of drawing the PL.

PART II: POVERTY AS A BARRIER

In the second domain, the media represented poverty as a barrier in the lives of people. Two themes fall in this domain and include discussion of a range of issues that the poor face including the day-to-day struggles, healthcare, education, and the possibility of surmounting the barrier of poverty.

7.2. PORTRAYING LIVES IN POVERTY

In portraying the lives of the poor and the experiences of living in poverty, news reports dropped anchor in three thematic areas: (i) the causes of poverty, (ii) the problems that poor people face, and (iii) issues of healthcare, education, and suicide.

7.2.1. The causes of poverty

In over 400 news articles that were sampled in this research, there were only 14 instances where the report deliberated on the causes of poverty. In that sense, the findings of the present research contradict the claims of Iyengar (1989) that the media coverage tends to overwhelmingly focus on the causal attribution of poverty, i.e., identifying the agents responsible for poverty. In the present dataset, in nine instances belonging to minority groups, in two instances each health issues and drought, and in one instance a legislation was identified as the cause of poverty.

> *HT:*   *The ban on dance bars pushed many women and their families to poverty, disrupted their children's education and drove them of out their houses, says a study by Forum against Oppression of Women (FAOW), a women's rights group. (18/07/2013)*

The lack of discussion on the causes of poverty can be understood in two different ways. First, most news reports analysed in this research used episodic instead of thematic framing in reporting poverty. Kim, Carvalho, and Davis (2010) argue that as opposed to thematic framing where the issues are reported in their larger context, an episodic framing focuses on individual cases and involves story-telling. With individual stories, the imperative to discuss the causes of

poverty in general diminishes. Second, the lack of discussion on the causes of poverty allows the distancing of an average reader from the threat of poverty (Chauhan & Foster, 2014). This fits well with the observation in the current project where the causes of poverty were discussed predominantly in terms of minority social groups.

7.2.2. Problems of the poor

The media representations of the problems that the poor people faced in their everyday life were organised around two ideas. The first idea was regarding poor people's lack of access to important resources and control over their own lives. A wide range of issues were discussed within this theme including the limited access to public spaces, judicial system, opportunities to nurture their talent, and even the basic necessities of life like portable water. The similarity between these reports and the ideas of the poor participants in Bholi is self-evident.

HT: *Bunty's parents are too poor to demand justice from the authorities. The administration knows it was the negligence of the sewerage department officials. Nobody has been held responsible just because Bunty hailed from a poor family. (23/06/2013)*

Similarly, reports also highlighted that people living in poverty had little control over the course of their own lives. There were references to specific individual cases as well as poor people as a collective. For example, at the individual level, both newspapers reported stories of talented athletes who were struggling to stay in the sport because of their poverty. At the collective level, in some instances the reports appeared to suggest an opposition between the general growth and development of the nation and the interests of poor people. For example, instances of industrialisation and urbanisation were reported as a threat to traditional professions and communal spaces used by the poor.

TOI: *Saini, who has also set his eyes on the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics in Brazil, said he is very happy after getting the assurance from the sports council chairman. "I am very thankful of Mali," he added. For a poor family comprising a disabled father, four brothers and four sisters, a proper running shoe was a luxury for him. (31/07/2013)*

TOI: *This is largely owing to the increasing use of machines in agriculture. At present, the blacksmiths, known as Kamars in these areas, work only for a month in the season of paddy cultivation and 20 days during the harvesting period. They remain unemployed during the remaining part of the year. As a result, the blacksmiths in these districts are passing their days in acute poverty. Many of them have already left their traditional profession. (25/03/2013)*

The second theme revolved around the exploitation of the poor people in the society. News reports highlighted a number of instances of police and government officers harassing the poor, fraudulent companies siphoning away their savings, private sector companies paying unfair

salaries, and instances of physical and bodily harm done to the poor. Once again, clear similarities exist with the ideas of poor (§ 5.1.2.3) and elite participants (§ 6.1.2).

> TOI: *"If the Bill is passed, the police and municipal officials will not be able to throw us around," said Champa Ben, a street vendor from Ahmedabad. She has been selling fruits and vegetables on the pavement for the last 28 years. "Yet I have to pay Rs 50 per day as protection money to policemen. Even then, they keep throwing away my wares and harass me," she said. (TOI, 03/05/2013)*

The unifying thread across the description of such a divergent range of problems that the poor face was the lack of control that they had over their own lives. The emerging representation of poverty is of a barrier in the lives of people was a recurring theme in the data — the idea gets fully developed in the context of healthcare and education, issues discussed.

7.2.3. Healthcare, education, and suicide

Following both poor and elite participants, the media representations of poverty drew heavily on the issues of healthcare and education. The representation of both the issues was developed in near identical fashion using the notions of barriers and opportunities. Poverty was represented as a barrier that prevented people from attaining good health and good education and conversely, gaining good education and achieving good health were represented as a way out of poverty.

When poverty was framed as a barrier that stifled the efforts of poor people to achieve good health, the news reports focussed on three aspects: hunger and malnutrition, shortcomings of the public health facilities, and the expenses associated with private sector healthcare. While it may already be evident, the symmetry between the representations of people in Bholi and the news-reports will be thrown in sharper relief as the discussion progresses.

The most common link that the news reports drew between poverty and failure to achieve good health was through hunger and malnutrition. In particular, strong emphasis was laid on the undesirable levels of malnutrition amongst poor children. Many ideas that were found in the data from Bholi — reliance on monsoons for agriculture, hunger, malnourishment etc. — were replicated in news stories.

> TOI: *Dar pointed out that more than a billion people in the world go to bed hungry and millions of children in Asia are malnourished. India's 1.2 billion people account for 17% of the world's population and malnourishment among the children here varies from 50% to 92%.(25/03/2013)*

> HT: *Forty-year-old Kumar Bhimaba Berad and his family, residents of Bhutashti village in Madha taluka, Solapur, eat just one meal a day. Until three years ago, the family used to eat three meals every day, but successive monsoon failures have left them with burnt crops and a pile of debt. The Berad family is not an exception: the story is the same in almost every house in Bhutashti. (18/03/2013)*

Next, both newspapers noted that the public healthcare system did not function properly. Once more, the specific problems that the newspapers identified with government hospitals were similar to the ones identified by people in Bholi. Take for instance the first extract and its similarity to the descriptions of poor participants DDS and AM in § 5.3.1, and the second extract and its similarity to the account of elite participants and the doctors in §6.6.1.

> HT: *Around 11pm, the 108 ambulance moved her to Jalandhar. "After registration, my daughter-in-law was not allotted a bed. We were told none was vacant. She had to sit on the floor. When we requested doctors and nurses to at least start the treatment, they told us bluntly to not teach them basics," (11/07/2013)*

> HT: *I asked Abhijit Banerjee, an MIT economist and co-author of Poor Economics, what he would do with the great army of health workers if he ran India . "If I were the prime minister, which, thankfully, I am not, I would shut down the bottom two tiers of the healthcare system...in most of north India (where less than a quarter of all health-related visits are to a primary health centre or subcentre)," said Banerjee. His solution: use the money on better ambulance services to district hospitals, which are "not great" but have doctors, working machines and experts on call. (29/08/2013)*

The private sector, on the other hand was represented as prohibitively expensive for poor people. Once again, the next extract from a report bears a near identical similarity with the experience of private treatment that people from Bholi described — the failure of government facilities prompts people to run to the private sector, often incurring a large debt in the process.

> HT: *Turned away in labour from one government hospital and denied bed and care in another, Gurminder Kaur, 25, lived the horror of losing her first child in the womb. Her poor family borrowed Rs 60,000 on interest to pay private hospital charges when forced to move her there. "I am shocked and still can't believe my son is dead," said the woman, tears rolling down her face. (11/07/2013)*

Like health, poverty was represented as a barrier to achieving good education. The stories in the press mirrored the experience of most poor participants in the study who could not stay at schools due to the poverty of their families. Two extracts are presented below. The first extract is the story of a child who had to be taken out of school so that he could contribute to family income. The second extract is more thematic in its presentation and argues that poverty pushes young children out of school and towards cities where they seek to earn a livelihood.

TOI: *Praveen said they had come to Bokaro from Bihar in search of livelihood around five years ago. His elder son Amit left the school after Class VIII as he could not afford to provide him education. Now Amit assists him in running the shop. (08/05/2013)*

HT: *Poverty and unemployment of parents are the main reasons as this causes fights between a couple and compromises on a child's education. As a result, the child's demands are not fulfilled and in many cases, they are even made to work at a very early age. (08/07/2013)*

Through presenting poverty as the cause for people failing to achieve good education and attain good health, media represent it as a barrier in the lives of the poor. As final evidence in this direction, the analysis revealed thirteen separate stories where poverty forced people and families to commit suicide. When conceived in terms of agency, suicide presents a paradox. On the one hand, it is certainly a course of action that an individual chooses. On the other hand, when poverty forces an individual to commit suicide, it suggests that the said individual had no agency whatsoever in terms of managing his life — poverty, thus, becomes the ultimate barrier that the individual could not overcome.

TOI: *Poverty forced security guard Prashant Sutavne to end his life. Sutavne, a resident of Verma Layout in Ambazari area was employed as guard in a library. His body was found floating at Sonegaon Lake by Sonegaon police on Wednesday morning. According to Sutavne's relatives, he was disturbed over the financial problems of his family. With Rs 2000 per month, he was not able to meet his family's demands. Sonegaon police have registered a case of accidental death. (04/10/2012)*

7.3. SURMOUNTING THE BARRIER: POLICY AND HARD WORK

The next theme captures the possibilities of surmounting the barrier of poverty that were discussed in news reports. Broadly, the news stories suggested that in order to overcome poverty, two opportunities were available to the poor. First, the poor can benefit from the antipoverty policies and second, in exceptional circumstances, their own hard work can help them overcome the challenges of poverty.

7.3.1. The potential (?) of policies

Both newspapers engaged in significant debates on anti-poverty social policy, identifying prime areas of focus in education, healthcare, cash assistance, food security, and sanitation. Crucially, the stories in the press critically examined many of these policies and problematized them. The overall representation of social policies, thus, was similar to their representation amongst research participants — they hold unfulfilled promise for the poor. Take for example the problems that people in Bholi described with the free housing policy, i.e. IAY. Poor people are either asked to pay a bribe (DW's quote in §5.6) to get a house allotted or the elite were

allotted those houses (DDS's quote in §5.2.1). The press narrated similar stories from different parts of the country.

> HT: *Taking note of the latest survey carried out by the Chandigarh administration finding out that around 27% of tenements allotted to poor people were illegally sold in the city, the Punjab and Haryana high court directed the UT to come up with some policy to check such illegal sale. (16/05/2013)*

In Chapter 6, the latent opposition of antipoverty policies was noted at several instances. The data from newspapers added further evidence in this direction and suggest that antipoverty policies are also interpreted by elite Selves in terms of the impact they may have on their own lives. The elite tend to oppose policies that may benefit the poor Alters but harm the Self. Two illustrations are presented below. In the first extract, medicine vendors opposed a policy — like the doctors in the study (see SKS in §6.1.3) poor people are an important consumer of their merchandise. In the second extract, private schools working on a pay-as-you-go model oppose the subsidisation and reservation of seats for poor pupils.

> TOI: *Ravi Goyal told TOI AIOCD demands were genuine and their association was supporting it. "New policy means almost 90% of drugs sold will be under price control. We are not against the government making these drugs available to poor people at affordable prices. But then it should be implemented in such a manner that the medicine sellers are not put to loss. (09/05/2013)*

> TOI: *The decision to reserve 25% seats for EWS and BPL categories was first announced in 2007 under the Haryana School Education Rules, 2003. However, owners of private schools began an agitation maintaining that they could not reserve one-fourth of the seats in every class from I to XII, stating it was not economically viable.(07/07/2013)*

In summary, it can be said that the representation of social policies in the newspapers links with both elite and poor people's representations. The stories in the press too considered social policies to be a pragmatic way of helping the poor. However, these policies had the common representation of being ill-planned. Moreover, news stories further substantiated the insights gained from Bholi elite perspectives on anti-poverty policies were shaped by the Self's vested interest in preserving poverty.

7.3.2. 'Reaching for the stars' — overcoming poverty through individual excellence

The second theme showcasing that the barrier of poverty can be overcome developed on the instances of individual excellence. Both newspapers reported a number of stories when poor people battled against the limitations imposed by their poverty and eventually found success. Whilst in most instances, the pathway to success was paved by hard work and persistence in

academic arena, excellence in athletics and sports were also portrayed as instances where poor people can demonstrate resilience and overcome their poverty.

> TOI: *Two city residents have proved that reaching for the stars is never impossible, no matter how insurmountable the odds may seem at first. Both of them have battled extreme poverty, one of them also his blindness, to crack CLAT, the national entrance test to prestigious law schools in the country. (19/06/2013)*

The portrayal of success in overcoming poverty through hard work and individual excellence take account of the agency that poor people can demonstrate. As such, they must be put in perspective, alongside reports at the other end of spectrum where poor people demonstrate the ultimate lack of agency and commit suicide. Despite being at the polar opposite ends of agency, the thread of individualism connects stories of both kinds. At one end there were people who demonstrated tremendous resilience to cope with the pressures of living in deprivation; and at the other end, there were people who chose to perish. From the standpoint of representing poverty, these seemingly diverse instances achieve the same outcome — the response to poverty, in both the frames, becomes a function of the individual and it is the individual that seems to determine the outcome of poverty. Agency, or its lack, and by extension poverty itself, is represented in the psychological constitution of the individual.

PART III: POVERTY AS A THREAT

7.4. THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON THE SOCIETY

The next representation of poverty in the mass-media was as a phenomenon that occupies the social landscape and influences the life of people who are themselves not poor. Akin to the representations *of* poverty that the elite people had (Chapter 6), this is the representation of the phenomenon from the outside. This theme encapsulates a clear separation of the Self as distinct from the Other, which is poor, and the social space becomes the arena where the interactions between the two shape the representations of poverty. From such a vantage point, the representations of poverty develop in three different ways: (i) as causing inconvenience to others, (ii) as the cause of antisocial behaviour, and (iii) as the cause of social evils. The theme of threat unifies all the ideas on poverty in this domain.

7.4.1. Poverty causes inconvenience

In the relatively milder representations of poverty as a threat, it was presented as an inconvenience to the society. Examples of such representations include broad discussions on poverty constraining the development of the country, preventing the spread of technological

development, causing diseases and environmental pollution etc. In other instances, both newspapers also presented stories of specific poor people encroaching public spaces, causing inconvenience by their disorderly behaviour etc. Once again, there was a lot of symmetry between the stories presented in the media and those narrated by elite participants in Bholi. For instance, the views expressed by MKT and RAT in § 6.3.3 are almost a facsimile of the extract presented below.

> *TOI:*   *Migrant workers living in the village has become a nuisance, says local Jack Fernandes. "After work, in the evening, they get drunk and walk around on the roads shouting and creating a racket. Also, the rooms where they stay don't have toilets, so they defecate in the fields creating unsanitary conditions." (08/05/2013)*

7.4.2. Poverty causes anti-social behaviour

There is a well-documented history of mass-media associating poverty and the poor with antisocial activities, representing them as a direct threat to the well-being of the Self (for e.g., Olzak, Shanahan, & Mceneaney, 1996). In the western context, the mass-media has played its part by presenting a stereotypical account of poor people as lazy, alcoholics, criminals, and dependent on welfare (see, Coughlin, 1989; de Goede, 1996; Gans, 1979; Martindale, 1996; Parisi, 1998; S. Thomas, 1998). The news reports sampled in this study provide similar representations of poverty as a threat to the society. Both newspapers represented poverty as the *cause* for people turning towards violent crimes, thefts, and other antisocial activities. In particular, both newspapers emphasised upon poverty as the cause of rising terrorist activities in the country. This could be attributed to the global increase in concern over terrorism in the recent years (for e.g. Chauhan & Foster, 2014). Interestingly, the focus in several of these reports was on poor people from Bihar, as evident in the two extracts presented below.

> *HT:*   *Former Bihar IPS officers and intelligence officials, who have worked in Mithilanchal regions of Darbhanga-Madhubani, attribute the growing radicalisation to rampant unemployment and poverty in the districts, especially among the Muslims community, which make up a strong 3.2 million of the population, according to the 2001 census.(29/08/2013)*

> *TOI:*   *Poverty and illiteracy are the main reasons behind some of the north Bihar districts falling prey to the terror outfits who use the youth of the region to serve their purpose.(23/01/2013)*

7.4.3. Poverty as the cause of social evils

Finally, the data also reveal that poverty is represented as the cause of several social evils that persist in India. Poverty was presented as the reason for human trafficking, female infanticide, child labour, domestic violence, child abuse, child marriages etc. Such portrayals of poor people are extremely significant in terms of their representational impact because in these instances, poverty seems to strip people of their humanity. Two illustrative extracts are presented below where poor people were noted for selling their children for money or in return for buffaloes and grinders.

HT: *She recounts, "A couple of years we came across a case wherein a girl in Bahraich was sold by her father against a buffalo. Yet another girl was sold by her parents in Balrampur for just an okhli (grinder)." […]But, is there a solution? It is high time that the country resorts to strict implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. (20/08/2013)*

TOI: *Driven by poverty, a man in Tripura allegedly sold his 16-year-old daughter to a couple from Rajasthan for Rs 2000. The girl, Swapna Sarkar of Mamu Bazar in south Tripura, was rescued by railway police in Assam while she was being taken to Rajasthan by train. Suspecting the couple's behaviour, a co-passenger raised an alarm, which ultimately led to her rescue. (27/06/2013)*

These descriptions are more likely to evoke disgust and evaluations of immorality rather than compassion and empathy towards the poor. Disgust is regarded as an innate human emotion and in an intergroup context has been argued to create a psychological separation between the Self and Others where the latter engages in acts and behaviour that evoke disgust in the Self (Buckels & Trapnell, 2013). What is more, the emotion of disgust and perceiving behaviours as immoral have both been strongly related to a dehumanising perception of the out-group that evokes it (Buckels & Trapnell, 2013; Esses, Veenvliet, & Hodson, 2008; Sherman & Haidt, 2011). Further, Haslam (2006) argues that infra-humanisation as well as dehumanisation are also facilitated by perceptions of essentialism with respect to the out-group — the greater the perceived similarity between the members of the out-group, the greater is the likelihood of considering them less humans than the in-group (on this issue, see also, Haslam & Loughnan, 2014; Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2000, 2002).

Thus, the recurring themes of infra-humanisation in the data collected in Bholi were also present in the news stories on poverty. This becomes very relevant to the present discussion of poverty representations. As argued earlier, media representations of poverty were infused with essentialist ideas, most clearly visible in the tendency to split society in the BPL—APL binary. Together with treating poverty as a essentialist category, infra and dehumanisation of the out-

group of the poor may further reinforce the stereotypical belief that they were responsible for their own plight and therefore, not worthy of receiving help (Esses et al., 2008).

PART IV: POVERTY AS OPPORTUNITY

7.5. POLITICISING POVERTY

The final representation of poverty in the newspapers captured the opportunistic use of poverty in the political rhetoric of India. In the socio-political landscape of India, poverty debates have remained at the heart of the party politics. The political field is indeed one of the most active fields where the representations of poverty develop. As discussed earlier, in the general elections of 1971, the incumbent Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's political party contested with the slogan '*Garibi Hatao'* (eliminate poverty). More recently, in the general elections of 2004 the incumbent Government referred to the growth and development of the country in its slogan 'India Shining'. The stories in the press reveal two key aspects of poverty's politicisation. On the one hand, the incumbent Governments at both national and state levels were identified as the key actors in the debate on poverty. On the other hand, poverty itself becomes a fiercely competitive agenda between political parties.

7.5.1. Government as the irresponsible other

Mass-media serves the role of highlighting critical issues in the society and in the process, contributing to the agenda setting in a country (McCombs, 2002; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Iyengar (1989) has noted that the mass-media tend to make two kinds of attributions: first, regarding the causes of poverty and second, regarding its amelioration. The range of stories engaging with the causes of poverty were limited (see § 7.2.1); however — contrary to the indications from past research (see for e.g., Lawrence et al., 1993; Wikler, 2002) — there was a lot of discussion on the amelioration and social policies on poverty (§7.3.1). The 'Government' was the chief social actor in all these debates.

Both newspapers identified ameliorating poverty as the Government's foremost responsibility and highlighted its failures in this regard. Interestingly, while invoking the Government as an agent in poverty discussions, news reports invariably seem to position it as the Other while the Self was presented as a collective of all Indian citizens, APL or BPL alike. The othering of the Government in the data is achieved by portraying it as irresponsible. The notion of irresponsibility, in turn, was developed through ideas regarding the Government's apathy towards the poor, failures in alleviating poverty, and intentions to harm the poor. Issues of red-tape, non-responsive local institutions, and conflicts between the central and the state

governments were also highlighted in several reports. Once again, the similarity between the representational schematic of news stories and research participants is apparent.

TOI:	*India may be facing the shame of 47% of its children suffering from malnutrition and about 30% of its population living below poverty line, but food continues to rot in government granaries. The Food Corporation of India (FCI) has admitted in data accessed through RTI that the amount of damaged wheat has increased from 2,010 million tonnes (MT) in 2009-2010 to 2,401.61 MT (2011-2012). (08/05/2013)*
TOI:	*Tamil Nadu fire and rescue service deputy director S Vijayasekar says the department says the lanes in slums are too narrow for fire tenders to enter, making it difficult to combat a blaze. […]Experts say the government should provide slum dwellers with fire-proof houses. "There are too many fire accidents in slums each year, but the government has not done anything to rehabilitate the slum dwellers," said Vanessa Peter, policy researcher of Information and Resource Centre for the Deprived Urban Communities. (23/07/2013)*
TOI:	*The Anna Bhagya scheme - Re one per kg rice to BPL families - set the government's agenda of its intentions to deliver. But the ground work for its implementation was lacking resulting in the scheme being postponed thrice before being launched. The logistics of procuring the rice and its distribution was not thought of before announcing it in haste, embarrassing the government on missing its own deadlines. (20/08/2013)*

Further, using the accounts of prominent parliamentary figures and NGOs the Government was also represented as actively scheming to harm the poor. Two things are important to note in this regard. First, such extreme representation of the Government were a common feature in the accounts of research participants (§ 5.5.2, and § 6.4). Second, both newspapers published a number of stories where in contrast to the government, NGOs were portrayed are being more efficient in helping the poor — as such, there was a clear distinction between the failure of the Government and the success of non-governmental efforts.

TOI:	*"Only 1 or 2% parents were able to get the benefit of reservation in private schools under this scheme of the government. Instead of implementing the 25% reservation, the government has reduced the quota for poor students for admission in private schools," Hooda told TOI on Friday. Group member Sandeep Singh, a lawyer from Rohtak, said, "The decision of the state government is anti-poor. We would launch a mass movement against this move." (07/07/2013)*
TOI:	*There are myriad ways to procure funds for a social cause and one method that is not commonly heard of is polishing footwear of others. A 32-year-old man from Thiruvallur district did exactly that on Trichy roads on Saturday to gather funds to help destitute students. (01/04/2013)*

To conclude, data indicate that the newspapers engage in ascribing the blame for persistence of poverty and the plight of the poor on the central and state governments. By localising the

blame for poverty on the Government and also pointing out its apathy and failure in helping the poor, the media develop the Government as the Other responsible for the plight of the poor.

7.5.2. The politics on poverty

Data reveal that poverty continues to remain a fierce political argument in the social landscape of India. Political parties frequently used it to levy charges of inefficiency on each other. The most repeated accusations in this regard were of being inconsiderate towards poor, being responsible for policies that harm the poor etc. India is a federal democracy and different political parties — or as more common in recent times, political alliances — form the central and different state governments. This provides political parties with an opportunity to use poverty as an argument for one's superior performance and the other's ineptitude. The reports sampled in research provide a remarkable insight on the political feud relating to the issue of poverty in India. Some illustrative examples from the data are presented in this section.

The excerpt presented below comes from a report in the HT where the critique of the *atta-dal* scheme (a food subsistence programme for the poor, initiated by the SAD-BJP coalition government in Punjab) by the ruling alliance at the centre is noted — it is worth mentioning that the SAD-BJP coalition is a part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) which is the alliance that forms the opposition front to the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in the Indian parliament.

> HT: *They said the SAD-BJP [Opposition coalition that is in power in the state of Punjab] government had not covered all poor families under this scheme and had discriminated with beneficiaries on political considerations. The food security bill [a policy by the ruling UPA alliance in centre], on the other hand, would ensure the coverage of 67% population of poor people, they said. (11/07/2013)*

About a month later, the story develops further when the SAD-BJP government in Punjab, in a response to the critique levied by the opposing coalition, is noted for having doubled the number of beneficiaries under its *atta-dal* scheme.

> HT: *Shiromani Akali Dal-Bharatiya Janata Party (SAD-BJP) government in Punjab has decided to double the number of beneficiaries under its own atta-dal scheme to 30 lakh families - almost the same number as required to be covered under the national programme - in an effort to prevent the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) from stealing their thunder. (20/08/2013)*

A large number of Indian voters live in poverty — regardless of the definition chosen to identify them — and it is not surprising that the issue of poverty becomes a metaphorical battlefront for political parties. Political parties use poverty for their political mileage, often using

it as a platform to market itself to the voters by launching policies in the run up to the elections scheduled for the coming summer. Several news reports were explicit in noting such political propaganda driving social policies on poverty.

HT: *To woo slum dwellers in the run-up to the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections and the Lok Sabha elections early next year, the government plans to allot 2,400 flats in Dwarka to those from economically weaker sections (EWS). In an unprecedented move, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has decided to allot 2,400 vacant flats in Dwarka directly to slum dwellers residing in nearby areas instead of including them in a regular housing scheme. (20/08/2013)*

In conclusion, poverty and politics are not a novel alliance. Poverty and the poor people have played a significant part in many historic political movements including the Russian and French Revolutions. Over 50 years ago, from a functional sociological perspective Gans (1972) outlined as many as fifteen functions that poverty serves in the modern society. Out of these, three were political functions of poverty including the use of the poor as symbolic constituencies. The data from this research seems to provide evidence that poverty continues to serve a prominent political function in the Indian society.

7.6. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The analysis of the press coverage on poverty presented in this chapter provided some crucial insights into the representation of poverty in the Indian society. The concept of poverty in the Indian public sphere is heavily guided by the idea of poverty lines. Not only did the participants of the research tend to speak in terms of being below or above the PL, the stories in the press too adopted the same binary. In this regard, this chapter argued that the idea of the PL has become the objectification of poverty. The analysis also revealed the points of similarity between the local thinking on poverty in Bholi and the more generalised discussion on it in the national press. Several instances are noteworthy but perhaps the most important issue is of the position of the 'Government' in the representation of poverty. Poor and rich participants in a remote village in Bihar, and the two national newspapers were alike in their representation of the Government. As a Generalised Alter, the Government was charged with both the responsibility of helping the poor and having failed in doing so successfully. The data seem to support the feeling of infra-humanisation that poor participants in the study expressed during the interview. Similarly, as a source of representing poverty from the outside, a number of similarities between the representations in the mass-media and the elite participants of the village were also observed. Finally, representing poverty both as a barrier and a threat, the analysis suggests a polyphasic

representation of the problem in the mass-media. These issues will be taken up for discussion in Chapter 9.

CHAPTER 8

ON THE DIALOGICALITY OF POVERTY
Social Acts & Alter(s)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter analyses the dialogicality inherent in the social meaning making and representations of poverty. It is useful to reiterate that the dialogical analysis undertaken in this project was guided by the second research question — how do meanings of poverty develop? Following the thesis of dialogicality, Chapters 3 and 4 postulated that these meanings are developed in terms of Alter(s). Further, following the conceptual framework of Mead, social acts were established as the fundamental unit of meaning creation, communication, and representation. The chapter is divided into three parts, each with a focus on a different aspect of the dialogical processes.

Part I analyses the representation of poverty in terms of social acts. Social acts are shown to dialogically facilitate three representational outcomes: (1) development of poverty representation, (2) conveying of latent information about the Ego, the Alters, and the phenomena they constitute, and (3) disclosure of perspectives.

Part II examines the Alters evoked in the data during the course of representing poverty. It demonstrates that both the Ego and the Alter are equally important to creation of meaning. Accordingly, the dialogical significance of the Alters is presented in two complementary ways. First, the Ego's evocation and management of the Alter to achieve representational goals is analysed. In this regard, three outcomes achieved by the evocation of the Alter are: (1) comparisons with Alter(s) allow the Ego to represent poverty, (2) tensions with Alter(s) define the social world of the Ego, and (3) certain Ego–Alter relationships become the definitive constituents of the phenomena of poverty. Second, the consequences of Alter(s)' evocation on the Ego are analysed. This is the realm of Alter(s)' command over the Ego's representational activity in two ways: (1) Alter(s) may necessitate changes in the Ego's identity position, and (2)

certain Alter(s) can necessitate a reorganisation of the Ego' relationship with other Alter(s). In essence, Part II presents the fundamental dialectic between the Ego and Alter — their influences on one another — as a constitutive feature of poverty representations.

Part III of the chapter is a meta-analysis of the dialogicality of this research project taken as a whole. Important instances of dialogical negotiations between the researcher and the participants are explored. In addition to being mandated by the project's dialogical focus, this part is also crucial to creating a reflexive account of the social act of doing this research.

PART I: THE SOCIAL ACTS

Social acts are a key modality of realising and communicating representations of poverty. In the data analysed for this project, they were at the heart of three dialogical outcomes. They:

1. Aid the development and communication of poverty representations.
2. Convey latent information about both Ego and Alter(s) — unique sequences of social acts become the distinguishing feature of the phenomena they constitute.
3. Reveal the perspectives of both Ego and Alter(s).

While it is expected that the meaning of the social act under discussion will become apparent during the analysis, the scope and definition of all social acts is available in Appendix IX.

8.1. REPRESENTING POVERTY THROUGH SOCIAL ACTS

People describe social acts while communicating but communication is itself a social act. In his conversation of gesture, Mead (1934) hints at three steps of a communicative act: person A's communication towards person B, B's response to A, and A's response to B's response. Needless to say, these steps continue iteratively as long as people keep communicating. The interesting aspect of the communicative act is that during the process, the Self of the agents involved undergoes a change "not only because of [its] interaction with B but also as a result of its *reflexion* on its own actions" (Marková, 1987, p. 295, italics in original). Thus, in a dialogical universe, interacting with Others also involves communicating with the Self through self-reflection.

Valsiner's (2002) theorisation of the Here–Now–I–System (HNIS) provides a sophisticated framework for understanding the process of reflection. In the HNIS, the Ego relies on the past experience and through reflection, charts its course of action in that moment. The human ability to connect its present state of consciousness to its past experiences and states of consciousness is a key postulate of Valsiner's HNIS. In any given moment, the HNIS can be understood as a sum-total or the *gestalt* of the human Self. Theoretically, there are at least two levels at which reflection *through* social acts can occur in the HNIS.

The first level is *during* the Ego's participating in the social act. The reflection of this kind is heuristic, immediate, and responsible for the imperative on the Ego to act — this is the stage of proximal reflection. For instance, in Blumer's classic symbolic interactionist example of the

social act[39] of a 'HOLDUP' (1969, p. 9), the HNIS may conclude that the robber presents a threat to the Ego and comply with his demands. The HNIS may draw upon its conscious awareness that the particular neighbourhood (Here) has a reputation for crime; that the street is deserted at this hour (Now); and that the Ego (I) cannot fight the Alter. Such compliance will be the product of the first level of Ego's reflection and can be seen as the Ego following the arc leading up to point A in Figure 6. Valsiner theorised 'A' and 'B' as identity positions, yet, they can be understood equally well as actions and behaviours of the Ego. What is more, the actions/behaviours and identity need not be separated as the former is predicated by the latter.
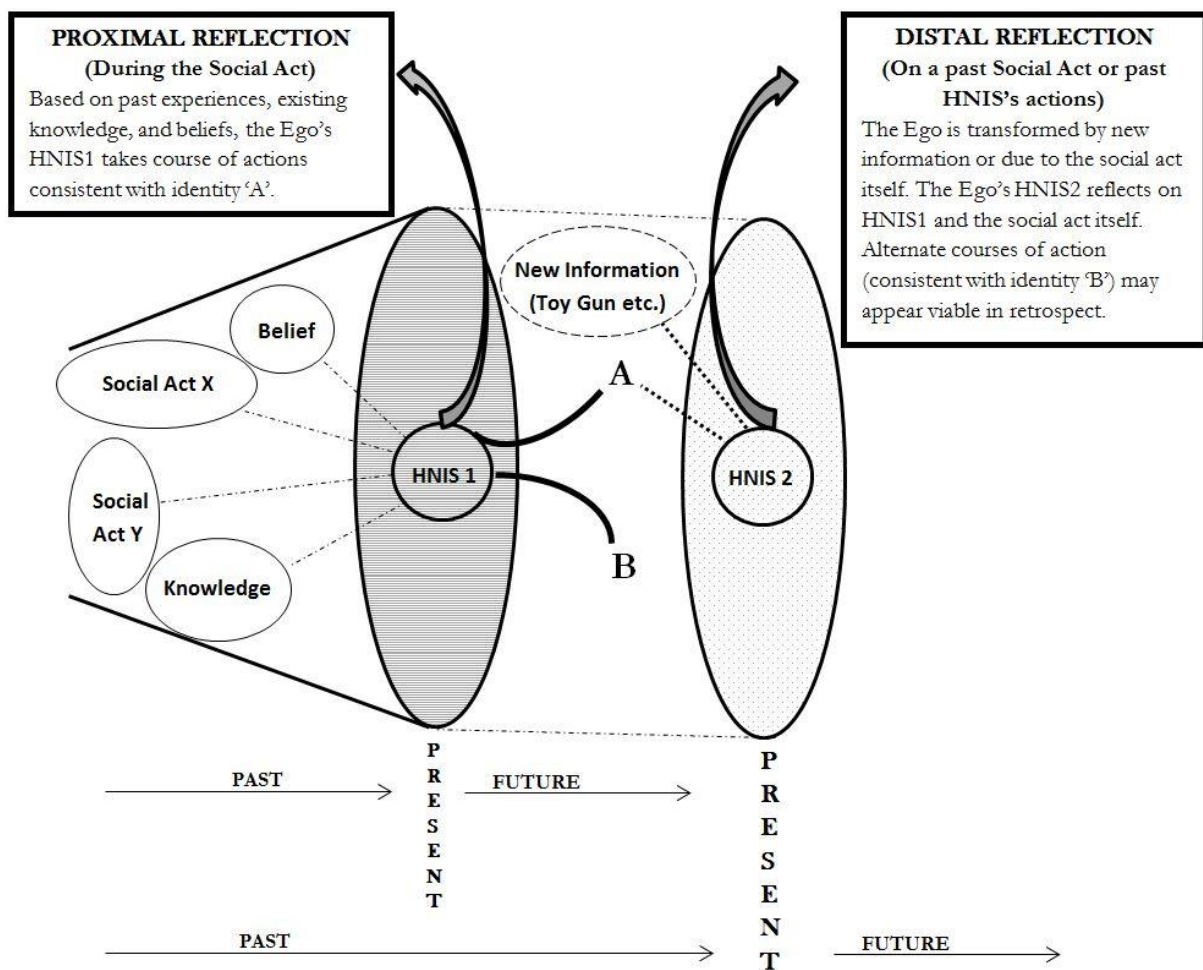
Figure 6. Proximal and Distal reflections in Valsiner (2002)'s HNIS.

The second kind is further in future from when the Ego was participating in the social act. This is when the Ego reflects on the social act itself and its participation in it — this is the stage of distal reflection. As shown in Figure 6, the HNIS2 will have changed significantly from

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[39] Blumer prefers the term 'joint-action' over the Meadian terminology of 'social act'. For the present discussion, the subtle difference in the meaning of the two terms is irrelevant to the discussion.

HNIS1 of the Ego during the act. The change could come from a number of reasons. The Ego may have gathered new information that was not available to the HNIS *during* the social act. For instance, the Ego may have learnt from the newspaper that the robber was subsequently caught and found to have been using a toy-gun. The Ego may, then, realise that it may have fought the robber and avoided getting robbed. At this point, the distal reflection can potentially suggest the Ego that an alternate course of action could have been possible. In other words, the social act and the HNIS1 of the past are both objects of reflection for the HNIS2 of the present. Distal reflection can suggest the unrealised potential of an alternate course of action leading to the arc B.

The social acts that participants evoked during the interview contain distal self-reflection in the HNIS of the Ego[40]. In recounting incidents from their own past (or of other people), the HNIS of participants during the interview was able to reflect retrospectively. Data suggest that the social acts helped participants develop as well as communicate poverty representations.

Let us take a look at some examples. EDUCATION was a common social act evoked by both elite and poor participants. Like any social act, EDUCATION provided an interpretative framework within which the Ego could assign meanings to the abstract concept of poverty — for the poor, poverty was the entity that interrupted EDUCATION. Take the example below. The HNIS of PMW can be roughly categorised as 'in an interview' (Here), 'in adulthood' (Now), and 'a person without education' (I). This HNIS, distally reflecting on EDUCATION, was able to realise and communicate the Ego's experience of poverty. The emerging representation is of poverty being a barrier that prevented PMW's participation in EDUCATION. The underlined sentences in the quote suggest that the Ego may have a trace of his parents' voice.

AC:	*Hmm…Did you go to school?*
PMW:	*Yes. Yes. I went to school…I read until 6th standard. Here in the village. I passed 5th standard here and then went to [omitted] for 6th standard. After that my parents were not capable so I left school.*
AC:	*In what sense were they not capable? Can you tell me more about that?*
PMW:	*They were capable in the sense that we were very poor. <u>You need more hands to work. If you have a mouth you need to feed it</u>…so by the time I finished 6th, I was old enough to work.*

Social acts also provide a means of understanding other Selves by acting as a template for interpreting the lives of other people. The Ego has access to its own life experiences, of which

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[40] It is crucial to note that dialogue with the researcher involves proximal self-reflection that may become precursor to distal reflections.

social acts are the fundamental units — as argued earlier, the HNIS is the *gestalt* of the Ego's consciousness. In the extract above, PMW was mindful of his interrupted participation in EDUCATION because of his poverty. The same social act can provides an anchor and a template to the Ego for understanding other Selves.

On the one hand, if a given Alter is similar to the Ego (i.e., poor), it would be likely that the Alter has had similar experiences on the social act. This gives the Ego the dialogical capacity to comment on the phenomena of poverty in general — poverty as a phenomenon should lead other Selves to have similar experiences with EDUCATION. Crucially, the Ego may not have a direct access to other Selves, yet, as a template, social acts allow the emergence of generalised representations. In other words, social acts provide the Ego with the opportunity to become reflexively aware of the Alter's life experiences and reaching beyond its own Self, *speak for* Alters. This is captured in the next extract where using EDUCATION PMW makes a dialogical transition from speaking about his own poverty to commenting on the lives of poor people as a group. The Ego is fully committed and submerged in the Generalised Alter — the voice of the Generalised Alter (underlined) can be seen emerging in PMW's communication.

> AC: *Okay…how do you feel about not continuing school now?*
>
> PMW: *Perhaps I could have found a job if I had studied until Matric [10th grade] and cleared the examination. But then again, if I had not started working, we would not have managed enough food. You see, <u>one thinks of studying only when one's stomach is full…if people are starving and the teachers tells them to write alphabets on the slate, their mind is elsewhere. They are thinking of food…it is not easy</u>. I think the fact that I went to the landlord's court [to work] is good in many ways…I got good food and survived. They took care of me.*

As templates for generating meanings, social acts are not limited to understanding Selves similar to the Ego, but also help understand Selves that are different. In the following extract, UR and BP use MEDICAL TREATMENT to represent the *non*-poverty of the Generalised Alter of 'Rich People'. Thus the Ego's dialogical awareness of the Alter through social acts need not be dependent on similarity or agreement — dissimilarity and differences are equally relevant as noted by Marková (2003b).

> UR: *You say that your mother died of TB. Did she die because she had TB or because you did not have any money? Tell me?*
>
> BP: *If we had money she would have got better treatment. We could have gone to private clinics and not left her on mercy of government hospitals.*
>
> UR: *Exactly. That's what! There is not a single rich person in this village who died of TB. People buy medicines and get better.*

Building on dissimilarity and differences between the Ego and the Alter, elite participants in the study used social acts to derive, illustrate, and communicate their representations of poverty. In the extract that follows, TBB evokes two social acts — ALCOHOLISM, and PROVIDING FOR THE FAMILY — and by using them collaboratively, is able to generate the representation of deficiency in the personality and behaviour of poor people (see the associated discussion in § 6.3). Also, representing poverty through these social acts hint on Ego–Alter differences and facilitate the distancing of the Ego from any responsibility of poverty. Thus, it can be argued that the exact social act that the Ego chooses for representing poverty — or more generally, representing anything — reflect the broader representational interests of the Self.

> PBB: *They [poor people] don't use their money properly. Say someone earns 10 thousand rupees [a month] and manages his family well in about one or two thousand rupees, saving the rest. But you will find such people here! They spend their hard earned money on alcohol. Whatever they earn, they use it for wrong things. This further increases their poverty.*

The differences between the Ego as elite and Alter as poor were a recurring feature of elite accounts of social acts. In the next extract, PB begins by noting the lack of education amongst the generalised Alter of poor people and proceeds to describe how members of his own family were well-educated. In this instance, the social act allowed the Ego to draw distinctions with the Alter. Crucially, the subsequent reflective engagement with the Ego–Alter difference facilitated PB's communication on poverty.

> PB: *Now what is still missing among the poor? Education. Let me talk about my own family…My eldest son…he is a Matric pass. He works at the board office. My middle son is a graduate and the youngest one is intermediate pass. My grandson and his wife are both graduate. […] So overall, in my family, everyone is educated. This is the story of my family. Then there are other families in the village. The Harijans, there are 2 or 3 Kumhar households, Hajams, Paswans, Rams — these people[41] lack education. They lack education.*
> AC: *Why do you think they lack education?*
> PB: *The reason…the reason is poverty.*

In the quote above, the presence or absence of education was arguably the surface level difference between poor people, and PB and his family. Poverty was the deeper and more fundamental difference between them. Social acts, thus, facilitate the Ego to access, represent, and communicate its deeper ontological differences with the Alter.

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[41] Harijan, Kumhars, Hajams, Paswans, and Rams are clans, more accurately understood in India as caste groups. The castes that PB quoted have a lower social status are amongst the poorest in the village.

In the newspapers, the two social acts that were most commonly used to represent poverty were POVERTY ASSESSMENT and CRIME & SUICIDE. As already discussed in Chapter 7, the newspaper representations of poverty were rooted in measurement issues. The following extract captures how evoking the social act of POVERTY ASSESSMENT facilitated the representation of poverty — poverty becomes the entity that can be apprehended by finding out the incomes of people.

> *HT:*   *What does it mean to be poor across the world? It means different things in different countries depending on the definition of the poverty line-an income threshold below which families are considered poor. (28/07/2013)*

CRIME & SUICIDE were dialogically more interesting social acts. Using CRIME & SUICIDE, news reports were able to associate complex meanings to the concept of poverty. As the next extract illustrates, the actors in the social act were poor people, driven by their poverty. Once again, there is an implicit indication of Ego–Alter differences while representing poverty — poor people as Alters are different not only on account of their poverty but also due to their deviance.

> *HT:*   *Driven by inability to feed his family, 40-year- old resident of local Virk colony, Gurmeet Singh, murdered his wife and two minor daughters on Friday. The accused also attempted to commit suicide, but was nabbed by the police. (06/07/2013)*

8.2. SOCIAL ACTS AS DIALOGICAL SPONGES OF INFORMATION

On a number of occasions, participants' descriptions of social acts were essentially stories from the village life where the interlocutor or other people from the community were the actors. Storytelling is a fundamental way of communicating information about the Self (Gergen & Gergen, 1988) and a deeply dialogical process (Hermans, 1996). In this regard, data indicate a second dialogical purpose that social acts served towards generating representations — they conveyed information both about the Ego and the Alter(s), and the phenomena of poverty.

Take for example the social act of SPEAKING UP. As discussed in Chapter 5 (§ 5.1.2.3), poor participants reported being oppressed by a range of powerful people in the community. Data reveal that when a poor Ego engaged in SPEAKING UP, the endeavours were mostly unsuccessful. As a result, the social act becomes the vehicle for the Ego's reflexive realisation of its powerlessness in opposing powerful Alter(s). In the next extract, DK narrated an exchange between a poor person and a shopkeeper in the nearby town. The shopkeeper was trying to sell mustard oil at an exorbitant price — in India, the maximum retail price (MRP) for every

commodity is fixed. The poor person tried SPEAKING UP against the shopkeeper — in this vignette, as indeed in several others, the poor person failed in opposing the powerful Alter.

> *DK:*   *I know such things, wait, I will tell you. Someone from this village went to buy mustard oil in half a litre pack — the doctor had asked him to get it. The shopkeeper told him 95 rupees for the half litre pack. This man said, <u>"You scoundrel, this thing is for 45 or 50 rupees and you tell me it is for 95 rupees?"</u> A big argument ensued and the shopkeeper refused to sell him. But the man was in great need. Eventually the shopkeeper took 200 rupees from him. Do you see how they <u>exploit us</u>? <u>What can we do</u>? This is what <u>makes us poor.</u>*

Through narration of a routine social act, DK was able to achieve a number of communicative and representational goals. The social act revealed the tensions between the poor Ego and the Alter(s), the power relationship between them, and the identification of the interlocutor with the collective Self of all poor people. It is also important to note that although DK did not participate in this social act, his HNIS *during* the interview was able to distally reflect upon a social act in which a different Self participated. More interestingly, the voice of the HNIS of the person engaged in that social act appeared unadulterated (underlined, within quotes) in DK's communication. Subsequently, as a testimony to the Ego's immersion in its collective Self, the voice of the collective Self (underlined) makes an appearance.

In § 8.1 it was noted that the Ego uses social acts to highlight its differences with the Alter and develops representations of poverty. Representations of poverty can also be realised by comparing elite and poor accounts of similar social acts. The following excerpt contains the social act of an elite SPEAKING UP in an incident very similar to the one narrated by DK. The extract captures a common theme in the data — in contrast to a poor Ego, the elite Ego was usually successful in its opposition of the Alter.

> *NML:*   *The shop had an electronic weighing machine for iron rods. I started playing with it and discovered that the shop owner had set it off to cheat! 1kg would show as 1kg and 100gms! I bought a 1kg packet of washing powder from a shop nearby — that too was 1100 grams. I weight a 1kg box of a chemical from the same shop and it was 1100 grams again! The salesman of the shop saw me doing all this and he told me that the container of the chemical was 100 grams extra. I told him, "That is why I got the washing powder. It comes in a plastic packet." Then I thought that if it is off by 100 grams per kilo, in a quintal of iron rods, it will be off by 10 kilos. So I corrected the weighing scale and then asked the salesman to weigh my load of iron rods. At this point, the shop owner arrived. He said, "What are you doing? You shouldn't be doing all this." I caught his hand and said to him, "Stop. You rascal! This is the right measure and I will take it this way." He was restless but he knew that he couldn't fight with me. So that is how they cheat everyone.*

The factual accuracy of neither of these incidents is important to the present discussion. The issue of interest is that poor people tended to construct SPEAKING UP in terms of Ego's failure whereas the elite constructed the same social act in terms of the Ego's success. The comparative faring of the elite and the poor Ego on comparable social acts not only provides valuable information about the interlocutor, but also an insight into how the representation of powerlessness in poverty develops.

Next, a critical observation must be made about the dialectic between social acts and social representations. In the extracts presented above, the interlocutors describe the social act in narrative detail. However, the data suggested that this was not always necessary. As communicative templates, social acts assimilate shared representations and a mere reference to a social act is often sufficient to convey the underlying meaning. For example, WEDDING, FUNERAL, and MEDICAL TREATMENT are three different social acts. However, in the socio-cultural context of Bihar, they share the common property of being expensive social affairs. The culturally shared social representations imbue these social acts with tremendous meaning and the necessity to elaborate upon them is rendered moot. In the extreme, owing to the shared social representations, even implied or assumed references to social acts become intelligible and effective acts of communication. The following three extracts make this clear.

> AM: *Yes. We had some land. All the land we had was sold during the days of my father…for his treatment. Now I do not have even one inch of land. In doing the funeral of my father and my mother, the remaining bits of land went away too. You know how it is in the village…after death; you have to hold a feast. If you don't do that, then they exclude you from the community. <u>Caste is Caste, after all.</u> If you don't do it, they will exclude you [from the community]. There are 20 kinds of things then. <u>"He didn't hold a feast. Exclude him".</u>*
>
> <div align="center">***</div>
>
> MKT: *If there is a wedding in the family, what can one do but sell the land?*
>
> <div align="center">***</div>
>
> BP: *I had a decent house in Kandiwali. In the year 2002, my brother passed away and I had to sell it off. It must be worth millions at present.*

In the first extract AM describes FUNERAL and explicitly elaborating on the intricacies of the social act, explains that they were expensive because of the communal feast mandated by the local culture. The multivoicedness of AM's communication is also interesting. The voice of the Generalised Other (Community) appears in a mild form (underlined) as an expression of the social norms. However, if the Ego were to defy the norms, the voice of the Community becomes more direct and markedly punitive (underlined, within quotes). The second extract presents an intermediate situation: MKT doesn't elaborate on the social act of WEDDING and assumes that

the meaning will be clear to the researcher. The third extract is the extreme form where the social act of FUNERAL is not mentioned at all, yet, its implied presence renders the communication intelligible.

In the third extract, BP mentions the death of his brother and informs that he had to sell his house *because* his brother died. Between mentioning the death of his brother and the sale of his house, BP makes a leap in his communication — unlike AM, BP did not elaborate on the monetary strain of the FUNERAL. Unlike MKT, he did not even refer to the issue of FUNERAL. His communicative leap is supported by shared representation that death necessitates the social act of FUNERAL. The implied social act bridges the gap between the seemingly unrelated events of his brother's death and the sale of BP's assets. Indeed, such social acts based on representations stemming from cultural practices contain a tremendous amount of information if the receiver of the message is equipped with the same representational tool-kit to decode the communication.

Finally, while different people may participate in the same set of social acts, the specific sequence of those social acts, and interaction between them, can indicate the larger phenomena. As Mead had observed, social acts are related to one another and constitute the social lives of people. However, depending on whether the person was poor or not, the nature of these interactions mapped out differently in the data. For instance, in the lives of poor people, EDUCATION interacted with WORK, MIGRANT WORK, and PROVIDING FOR THE FAMILY. The competition between the social acts of EDUCATION and WORK, as evident in PMW's quote in § 8.1, was unique to most poor people and absent from the lives of elite participants. The analysis revealed several social act cycles that were unique to the poor people. Take for example, the social act of MEDICAL TREATMENT. For the elite, it seldom interacted with other social acts whereas for poor participants, it often had a domino effect and activated several other social acts. In the following extract, BP describes a typical scenario of MEDICAL TREATMENT in a poor person's life. Throughout the extract, the individual voice of the Ego is deeply intertwined with the voice of the collective Self of all poor people of the village.

> BP: *If someone gets very ill, we bring him to the local quack. He is our doctor. We come here, take 3-4 tablets. If the person cannot come, we ask the quack to come with us. He gives saline, injections, whatever is needed. If we don't get better then we go to the government hospital. If that doesn't help, we borrow money from the rich on interest and take the patient to a private clinic. We pay whatever the bill is. If the person gets better, we bring him back and then take us work in Delhi or Bombay to pay back the interest and the principle to the moneylender.*

It can be noted clearly that MEDICAL TREATMENT triggered DEBT and in turn, MIGRANT WORK. Such relationship between these social acts was absent in the elite Ego's accounts of their MEDICAL TREATMENT. In the data, three social act cycles were discerned to be a unique aspect of poverty: [POLICY → BRIBE & CORRUPTION], [FUNERAL → DEBT → MIGRANT WORK], [MARRIAGE → DEBT → MIGRANT WORK]. Thus, the nature of relationship between different social acts not only constitutes the life of a person but is also indicative of the larger phenomena — in the present research, poverty.

8.3. SOCIAL ACTS REVEAL PERSPECTIVES

Social acts in the data were crucial for a third reason — they revealed the perspectives of the Ego. The description of a social act is itself an act of representing and reflects the Ego's interests and perspective. The perspectives become most readily apparent through examining the same social act, as described by different Ego positions. The social act of POLICY provides a good illustration. The extract below is from the interview with an elite farmer who evoked POLICY whilst discussing the condition of farmers in the village — the Ego was, naturally, a part of the collective Self of 'Farmers'. In the extract, the Ego's perspective on POLICY was shaped by its interest of finding cheap agricultural labour and not surprisingly, the Ego opposed social policies because they made poor people less likely work on inadequate wages as agricultural labour. Once again, in the extract the voice of the Ego is indistinguishable from the voice of the collective Self.

> *NML:*   *These days you may wander around the entire village but you won't find labour to work in the field. All of them are poor; still no one is available to work. The reason for the scarcity of the labour is that the government has given them a house to live in, every month they get heavily subsidised food grains under the Antyodaya scheme. So they work for one day, earn 200 rupees and that is enough for them to buy wheat and rice for a full month. Why would they want to work for the remaining 29 days?*

On the other hand, interviews with poor people contained different perspectives on POLICY. Their descriptions of the social act were commonly guided by the insufficiency of specific policy measures and bureaucratic corruption in their administration. In elite accounts, the Alter (Government) was making poor people less likely to work through its antipoverty POLICY; whereas, in poor people's representation, the same Alter was doing too little — the divergence in perspectives becomes apparent. What is more, in the social act, the coercive voice of the Generalised Alter (Bureaucrat, underlined) appears to demonstrate the powerlessness of the Ego, which is speaking on behalf of the collective Self.

> *DK:*   *Tell me, the provision of housing aid for the poor is from the government. But when you go to get the money, the officers in the district will take ten thousand rupees [as bribe]. Only*

> *then he will sanction the funds. If you don't give [the bribe], he will say, <u>"This person has</u>*
> <u>*got a lot of property. His son is employed. He is not poor."*</u> *He will strike your name off*
> *the list.*

The perspective of the Ego in any given HNIS is tied to the *specific* I-position of the Ego and its relationship with the Alter present in the social act. For instance, while discussing MEDICAL TREATMENT, both poor and elite participants adopted the Ego position of 'Patient' and constructed 'Doctors' as the Alter. The similarities between elite and poor participants' accounts of MEDICAL TREATMENT highlighted in the previous two chapters are a product of the interlocutors speaking from the I-position of 'Patient'. In the two extracts below, NML is a large farmer and PMW is a poor landless peasant. The former had significantly higher monetary capacity to sustain medical expenditure, yet, when their Selves were tied to the role of a patient, MEDICAL TREATMENT was described in very similar terms. This observation has significant implications on the relationship between groups and their SRs — Chapter 9 will pick this up later.

> NML: *If we get a simple fever and we go to any doctor in the district — whether it is Dr*
> *[omitted] or Dr [omitted], even Dr [omitted] who is amongst the oldest practitioners in the*
> *town. They get them in [admit the patient] and in one go they charge thirty thousand*
> *rupees. They rob their patients.*

> PMW: *I took my wife to two doctors. Abuses come to my mouth but I don't want to say all that.*
> *So what these doctors did was they gave some medicines and some injections. Ten days went*
> *by and then doctor said that we needed an operation. She did not undergo any operation*
> *— it has been four or five years and nothing has happened! There was no need for an*
> *operation and the doctor said that we needed an operation of the uterus. He just wanted to*
> *make money. He wanted to fleece us of ten or fifteen thousand rupees. That was the reason.*
> *You go to a doctor and they straightaway put you on intravenous drips to make a huge*
> *bill.*

Yet again, doctors — the Alter common to both elite and poor Egos participating in MEDICAL TREATMENT — revealed an entirely different perspective on the social act. As a doctor, the Ego believed that the expenses associated with healthcare in the private sector were warranted by the quality of the facilities made available. From this perspectival position, MEDICAL TREATMENT followed the standard logic of the service sector — higher quality services are more expensive. Thus, while revealing the perspectives of the Ego, the social acts also capture its speaking position.

> DD: *Comparing government hospital with private healthcare is like comparing a subsidised*
> *LPG cylinder and a non-subsidised cylinder. The differences are the same. Isn't it? So the*
> *public want that just like the government hospitals, private hospitals should also be cheap.*
> *The rates at which they get things done at government hospitals, it is impossible to do the*

same at private hospitals. The quality will deteriorate. The doctors are expensive here, the equipment is expensive, and the facilities are all world class. So that makes a huge difference.

PART II: THE ALTER(S)

In the present analysis, the Alters are other Selves that interlocutors brought into the discussions on poverty. Following the goal of exploring the role played by these Alters in the process of representing poverty, the analysis revealed two patterns of the interplay between the Ego and the Alter(s). In the first kind, the Alter(s) appeared to be under the control of the Ego — in these instances, Alter(s) serve functional roles for the interlocutor, allowing the Ego to elaborate upon its material and social world. The second pattern is observed when the Alter(s) destabilise the Ego and necessitate a restructuring of its social relationships and identity positions. These were the instances where the Alter(s) tend to become the stronger of the two dialogical participants.

8.4 EGO'S HANDLING OF THE ALTER(S)

8.4.1. Comparisons with the Alter

The analysis suggests that the Alter(s) serve the critical function of providing the Ego with reference points for social comparisons. Establishing similarities between the Ego and the Alter is critical to the representation of social objects. The previously discussed example of hunger (§2.2.2) can be used yet again to demonstrate the necessity of an Alter in representing poverty. As a physiological state, the human Self has access to the feeling of hunger without the need of other Selves. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 2, it is not constitutive of poverty — the organism may wilfully choose to go hungry while observing a religious ritual. In order to associate it with poverty, the Self needs to conclude that the Ego is hungry for reasons other than its own free will. But this conclusion requires further qualification. For the sake of argument, what if there was an absolute and universal famine in the world where no amount of money could buy any food and everyone went hungry? Would it still be feasible to regard one's hunger as poverty?

For the concept of poverty to exist, a fundamental distinction between an Ego in want and an Alter in fulfilment, or vice-versa, is necessary. Without the possibility of contrast between the two dialogical partners, it is impossible to represent poverty. Data provided numerous instances of interlocutors engaged in both implicit and explicit comparisons with Alter(s) to represent poverty. Take the following example where PMW engaged in implicit comparison between the poor Ego and the rich Alters.

> PMW: *Well, private treatment is for people who are loaded with money. Government treatment is for the poor.*

In the quote above, a representation of poverty takes shape only because there is a comparison between the Ego and the Alter in the context of MEDICAL TREATMENT. If the Ego–Alter dialectic were to be removed, the distinction between government and private hospitals will carry no meaning. Without an Alter, the whole utterance will indeed be rendered unintelligible. While in PMW's quote, the Ego–Alter comparison was implicit, it was done very explicitly on other occasions in the data. For example, in a group interview UR engaged in an explicit comparison between the poor Ego and the rich Alter while representing poverty.

> UR: *There is no comparison. Is there a single rich person in the village whose children and grandchildren go to the government school? They send their kids to private schools. Why? Why don't we send our kids there?*

In essence, the necessity of an Alter to represent poverty consolidates the arguments made at the start of the thesis regarding poverty being an abstract social object that acquires its meaning through human meaning making. Crucially, as demonstrated here, these meanings are contingent on Ego–Alter dialogicality. Further still, Ego–Alter comparisons also helped people establish and assert their identity positions. To preserve or achieve an espoused identity position, the Ego can engage in extreme comparisons with atypical Alter(s). An example of this appears in the discussion on EDUCATION in the same group interview from which UR's quote is presented above. BP, despite being a poor migrant worker, sent two of his children to a modest but respectable private school. To put things fully in perspective, several participants in the elite group also sent their children to the same school.

> BP: *Some things also depend on the parents. I see that many children of this village go to great cities to study. Their parents are capable. The parents who are not capable they keep their children at school as long as they can and then say, "My son! Go out and find some work". Even in this village, people who are rich and capable, I see them spend 3 or 4 lakh rupees [£3000 - £4000] on admission of their children at schools in Patna, Rajasthan, Gwalior, Bangalore, Poona…[…] They people who have that much money power, they are able to afford good education. But people who don't have anything — no land, nothing; the people who earn 5 or 10 thousand rupees a month [£50-£100], they can't. We have to manage food.*

During the group's discussion on the social act of EDUCATION, BP begins by invoking the generalised social Self of 'Parents' — a collective that his Ego was the part of. Like other participants in the group, the Ego had declared itself 'Poor'. Yet, in sending his children to a private school, as a poor 'Parent' it was different from *other parents* in the group. There was a conflict between BP's identity positions of 'Poor' and 'Parent' — the Ego considered itself

'Poor' but did not behave like a *poor* 'Parent'. In essence, the conflict destabilised BP's identity position as 'Poor'. The conflict needed resolution and as a restorative measure, BP redefined the Alter with which he compared his 'Parent' Ego. He proceeded to compare with extremely rich Alters — parents that tend to spend an equivalent of £3000 or £4000 every year on educating a child. Albeit in relative measures, this allowed the Ego to make initial attempts at resolving the conflict by suggesting that like other poor parents, it too struggled with EDUCATION. Further in the extract, by noting its landlessness like other participants, the Ego was able to further punctuate its position as a poor person. Finally, as a culmination of its restored identity as 'Poor', the voice of the collective Self (underlined) appears in the Ego's communication.

The specific Alter(s) with which the Ego engages in comparison has direct implication on the reflexive realisations that the Ego achieves. In the context of poverty, this has a significant implication. A poor person may compare himself with another poor person and realise that the Ego is relatively better positioned but may feel extremely poor while comparing itself with large farmers in the village. Similarly, as a large farmer, the Ego may compare favourably with Alter(s) engaged in manual labour but unfavourably with Alter(s) engaged in other professions. Interesting examples of the relativity of Ego–Alter comparison was observed in the accounts of all the large farmers. In these examples, while the Ego did not identify itself as 'Poor' and had substantial land ownership, it felt deprived while comparing itself with Alter(s) who were in permanent salaried jobs. Such comparisons led to the emergent realisation that the Ego lacked what the Alter had — the security of a stable monthly income, a livelihood that was not threatened by natural calamities like floods and droughts. An illustrative extract is presented below. NML compares his Ego as a farmer with the Alter of a person working as a *chaprasi*[42]. As a farmer with large land ownership, the Ego had a higher social status. Nevertheless, despite lower social status, the stable income of the Alter, led to the experience of lack in the Ego.

> NML: *I am a farmer. I have a lot of land but at this moment I need ten thousand rupees (£100) for the school fee of my grandson and I cannot find it. I am unable to pay his fee until I sell enough crops to fund it. In the middle of all this, I have a compulsion to construct that room for my younger son's marriage. Now do I prioritise this or that? I have to prioritise the wedding because the date for it is immovable. I will arrange money for his admission [to school] later. But if someone does the job of a 10th standard pass chaprasi, or a menial clerk, or a school teacher…that person doesn't face this problem. Even if they earn Rs*

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[42] *Chaprasi* is a colloquial term used in India to refer to the lowest job grade in the hierarchy of office staff. Depending on the office concerned, a *chaprasi* can be an orderly, a peon, a cleaner, a message boy etc.

> *10,000 (£100) a month, they know that come rain or drought he will get one lakh and*
> *twenty thousand (£1,200) every year. I don't have that luxury.*

In essence, the defining feature of Ego–Alter comparisons in poverty — the realisation that the Ego lived in want whereas the Alter(s) lived in fulfilment — emerged when the farmers compared themselves with salaried people. It can be argued that in such comparisons, the Ego experienced its relative poverty. This illustration substantiates several theoretical arguments made in Chapter 2 — as a social object, poverty has a relative experience dependent on the Alter(s) that the Ego chooses to compare itself with.

8.4.2. Tensions with Alter(s) define and organise the social world

The second major function that Alter(s) serves is of representing the architecture of the social world through its relationship with the Ego. The differences between the Ego and the Alter create competition, opposition, and tensions that become the fabric of social relationships, and indeed, the basis of society itself. The Ego–Alter antinomy is the most fundamental way of organising the social world in terms of what belongs and does not belong to the Self. In the context of poverty, the most natural Ego–Alter segregation was the Poor–Rich dichotomy, which was a fundamental way of organising the social world. In the next example, the opposition with the Alter (Rich) is the criterion on which the Ego (Poor) organises its social world. At the surface level, it contains the Ego's perspective on the specific social act of POLICY. However, at a more fundamental level, it reflects the Ego's representation of the social world that it cohabits with the Alter.

> AM: *The school gets so much money in [government] funds to educate the poor…what do they*
> *do of that money? They give it to the rich but never to the poor …The children of the rich*
> *get it all whereas the children of the poor never get anything. At best, they would give it to*
> *two or three poor kids and to the rest they will say, there is no more money to give.*

The dialogical tension and asymmetry in the Ego–Alter relationship — the Alter reaps ill-deserved rewards while the Ego remains deprived — is the key to the Ego's imagination of its social world. The quote is another example where the voice of the Ego reflects the concerns of the collective Self. Such worldviews anchored in the Ego's tension with the Alter was common in the accounts of poor people. In the next extract from a group interview, the poor Ego communicated the same representation using metaphorical expressions.

> SM: *There are lots of benefits of education. Yes? In the present world, education is the most*
> *valuable commodity. Yes? Educated people reap benefits. People in tattered loin-clothes*

> *work hard and people in nice clothes reap the rewards. The hard work of poor people benefits people with education. Why don't you think about that?*

The accounts of the elite too revealed similar tensions between the elite Ego and the poor Alter. This tension emerged from a number of different conflicts for different elite people. For large farmers the conflict came from the dwindling supply of poor people willing to work on minimal wage whereas for teachers it came from the perceived lack of interest in education amongst poor parents.

> MKT: *The pressure on the farmers has been growing regularly. The scope of work in the cities has grown tremendously and as a result we don't get labour for our fields. People have started running towards cities. Calcutta, Delhi, Bombay. There is a big scarcity of labour for agriculture. I have seen with my own eyes how the condition of the farmers has deteriorated.*

> RAT2: *What happens with poor children is that we give them homework but they never do it. "Why didn't you do homework?" "I didn't have a notebook." "Why don't you have a notebook?" "Papa didn't buy one for me". So this is there — their guardians are lax. The government gives the books for free but they need to arrange for the stationary. This makes our job very difficult.*

An interesting point about RAT2's extract is that it involves a re-enactment of the Ego's exchange with the Alter where the voices of both dialogical partners appear as reported speech (underlined). This is an interesting dialogical passage that captures both proximal and distal reflections of the Ego (§ 8.1). RAT2's HNIS *during* the interview engages with a social act from the past where the Alter (poor pupil) and the past Ego both become objects of reflection. During the act described by the participant, the 'I' in the Ego's HNIS of that moment was a 'Teacher'. Its proximal reflection on the responses of the Alter was guided towards understanding why the Alter did not do the homework — the HNIS in that moment, was not representing poverty. However, *during* the interview, reflecting distally, the present moment HNIS of the participant reveals tensions with the Alter and represents poverty.

Another interesting point of tension and contrast was the antinomy between rural and urban areas. Both elite and poor participants routinely drew an oppositional relationship between their village as a rural community and other towns, cities, and even countries that were largely portrayed as urban and different in their values. It is also important to note that when the Village–Not-Village dichotomy was evoked, the Rich–Poor dichotomy became subsidiary or even irrelevant. Interlocutor voices were inseparable from the voice of the broader community.

> KT: *These paramilitary commandos they don't say a word. They come and cane people and leave. People get scared. This is the condition of the village, not in the towns and cities. There people have experience.*

The next extract is from a news-report. It recreates the same Rural–Urban antinomy but it does this with a concurrent Poor–Rich antinomy. It is extremely interesting because in the context of the event under description — a graduation ceremony — these antinomies were not naturally relevant. The appearance of these antinomies, in a seemingly playful writing style, attests their centrality in the organisation of the Indian public sphere. The report highlighted a number of Ego–Alter differences and there was an implicit undercurrent of the Ego's autodialogue as well (Valsiner, 2002).

> HT: *The convocation is over. Amid a sea of bright black and red robes and khaki uniforms, a lean, elderly man, dressed in a pristine white kurta and a woman in a crushed cotton sari are looking a little lost and among the highly urbane population, a little out of the place too. But isn't this area of PGIMER closed for patients today? What are these village folks doing here? Have they lost their way? Well, they haven't. They are waiting for their son, who has reached his destination after traversing a tough, long path. Their son has become a surgeon today. (16/03/2013)*

The 'elderly man' is described as 'lean' — is he undernourished? He is wearing a *kurta,* which is the quintessential outfit of rural India. It is 'pristine' — is he trying too hard to fit in the elite surroundings? The 'woman' is wearing a 'sari', which is a common female outfit, but unlike other women, her sari is 'crushed' and unkempt. In the words of the newspaper, these 'village folks' were 'looking a little lost' and 'out of place too' amongst the 'highly urbane population'. The report also explicitly noted that coming from the rural India, and evidently not from a prosperous background, the Alters fit the profile of patients better. The ironic reveal that the rural Alters were parents of a graduating surgeon — and in that sense were similar to the 'in place' urban Alters — underlines the tensions in the social world organised around the Rural–Urban and Poor–Rich thema.

8.4.3. Ego–Alter relationships can become the specific property of a phenomenon

Social life is inherently an orchestration of symbolic interactions between social actors. Unlike natural phenomena (gravity, thunderstorms etc.), all social phenomena (wars, examinations, romance, poverty etc.) can be understood in terms of Ego–Alter relationships. For instance, in a war the collective Ego comes in conflict with the collective Alter where the foot soldiers on the belligerent sides become the individual Egos shooting at one other. The act of firing bullets at one another is not a unique social phenomenon by itself — criminal gangs do it in every major city of the world. As captured succinctly in Thomas Hardy's 1902 poem '*The Man He Killed*', the reformulation of the relationship between two people — where shooting one another is not illegal — is the defining feature of wars. In other words, the phenomena of wars are constituted, at least partially, by the reconstituted relationship between the dialogical partners — the

dialogical relationship in the social act legitimises what would, otherwise, have been a criminal act.

Data suggest that certain Ego–Alter relationships become the defining as well as distinguishing feature of poverty. A very clear example was the relationship between poor people and the landlords during the historic past of Bholi. Both elite and poor participants portrayed the relationship to be of absolute dependence — poor people were at the mercy of landowners for all aspects of their existence.

> PB: *I have seen all of it in such fashion…This is up until 1983…I have seen poverty in this village of the kind where people would eat on a day but starve the next day. They would not even have rice or chapattis. So during those day, the zamindaars [landlords] of the village…people with big assets…people would go to them and beg for work. In lieu of work, what would they get? 2 kilos of unchaffed wheat or they would get one maize chapatti…and that chapatti would not be well made…that would be an inch thick…along with some salt, a chilli, and an onion. People would eat that and survive.*

As evident from the extract, poor people not only lived under the "tyrannous rule" of the landlord, they were also dependent on him for their basic survival. The relationship of total fate control between the rich and the poor was a defining feature of absolute poverty. Interestingly, the dependence on Alter was not necessarily perceived negatively by the poor. Some participants recalled them with apparent fondness and evident gratitude. It is worth noting that due to the highly specific topic of narration, the next extract contains only the individual voice of the interlocutor.

> PMW: *So my father took me to the landlord and asked him to give me some work. I remember, initially, I would work on a monthly salary of 15 kilos of wheat. I started working on his courtyard…my job was to mind the cows, sweep the courtyard, water the plants etc…it was all very good. They gave me food as well. […] I think the fact that I went to the landlord was good for me…I got good food and survived. They took care of me.*

Albeit not of the same magnitude, to some extent a similar relationship exists in the present between poor people and the Government. People living in extreme poverty benefit from the welfare they receive from the Government and depend on it during periods of extreme hardship.

> PMW: *Well, private treatment is for people who are loaded. Government treatment is for the poor. People who have money, they go to private clinics. Helpless poor people rely on the government…the government is the saviour.*

Other examples of Ego–Alter relationships unique to the phenomenon of poverty were the dependence on educated people for paperwork of all kinds, the reliance on touts to penetrate

government offices, an unusual dependence on unlicensed quacks for medical treatment (see §
5.1.2.2).

Finally, a unique relationship that all the elite espoused for the poor involved an Alter that
was called the 'Guide' to the poor. With an underlying sentiment that the poor were incapable of
making correct life decisions, the elite valued the espoused Poor–Guide relationship highly. The
relationship was evoked in a wide range of contexts. Some spoke of 'Guides' who could
encourage poor parents to take education seriously, other spoke of 'Guides' who could inspire
people to hard work. In contrast, no poor participant suggested the need for any such
relationship with a guide. In some ways, the 'Guide' appears to be an espoused incarnation of the
elite Ego.

> MKT: *The reason for laziness and inactivity is that they all are directionless. There is no one to
> guide them in the right direction. Do you follow me? They do whatever comes to their mind.
> If they had a guide, he would have encouraged them. They lack guidance.*

8.5. ALTER(S)' HANDLING OF THE EGO

So far this chapter has explored how the representations of poverty emerge in social acts and
through negotiations with the Alter. A caveat of the discussion developed hitherto is that it gives
primacy to the Ego (as the interlocutor) and explicates it as the agent orchestrating its
relationship with the Alter. However, the Alter(s) evoked by the Ego were far from passive
dialogical entities. While they may be absent from the scene of communication, they exercised
tremendous influence on the communication and self-reflection achieved by the Ego. The
analysis suggests two kinds of influences: Alter(s) (1) necessitate changes to Ego's identity
position; and (2) reorganise its relationship with other Alter(s).

8.5.1. Changes in the identity position of the Ego

The human Self has a multiplicity of I-positions — the HNIS constantly moves between
these I-positions. The activation of the specific I-positions often corresponds to the demands of
the situation (Cornish & Gillespie, 2010; Duveen, 1993, 2001). Extending this assertion in the
case of communicative acts, the analysis of the present dataset suggested that the Ego's
prevailing identity position can become untenable due to the evocation of certain Alter(s). Once
certain Alter(s) were evoked, the Ego needed to change its I-position before it could continue
the conversation.

The reformulation of Ego's identity position can be understood in terms of the demands that the Alter(s) can put on the 'tellability' of certain assertions. Valsiner (2007) distinguishes between 'talkability' and 'tellability' as the constraints on human communication. Talkability refers to the normative cultural restriction on the Ego's potential to make some assertions, whereas, tellability is an intra-personal affective limit, which influences whether or not one is *able* to express something publically, despite permitting social norms (ibid). The data in this study indicate that the Alter(s) played a crucial role in determining the tellability of certain assertions.[43] This led the Ego to search for new identity positions that enhanced the tellability and forge relationships with the evoked Alter(s) to restore stability. Examples from the data will make these assertions clearer.

The extract below is from a participant who was a teacher at a government school, came from an elite family, and interestingly, was the parent of a child at a private school. The social act of the interview on the topic of poverty naturally made 'poor people' as the generalised Alter. What is more, it also accentuated the conflict between her identity positions as a teacher to poor children at government schools and a parent sending her own child to a private school. For most of her interview, as a teacher, she contested the negative representations of government schools and their teachers (see § 6.2.3 and § 7.6.2). The truncated extract presents the bookends of a passage in conversation about government and private schools and captures how the Alter can force the Ego's movement from one identity position to another.

AC:	*In many interviews, people explicitly told me that the quality of education in government schools is bad.*
RAT2:	*No. This is not true. There is a lot of teaching. The kids who are not interested will not learn anything even in private schools. There is good teaching [in government schools]. The government provides a lot of facilities and benefits to poor students.*
[…]	
AC:	*Do you think there is any difference between government and private schools?*
RAT2:	*The difference is that the parents of private schools are very keen on education. They think that when they pay so much, their children must get a good education. They keep a tutor; they are involved with homework, whether the child studies at home and all that. None of this is the case with parents of government school children. They don't have any interest. They don't care about the homework; they don't care about the education of their children.*

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[43] It must be noted that the researcher conducting the interview was an Alter whose presence must have imposed limits on the talkability and tellability of things. Part III of this chapter examines the role of the researcher and his dialogical relationship with the participants. The present discussion is limited to the Alter(s) evoked by the Ego/Researcher *during* the interview.

The participant begins by defending against the voice of the poor Alter by asserting that there was "a lot of teaching" at government schools. In the third sentence of her reply, there is a sliver of suggestion that private school pupils were better students — she says that children not interested in studying would "not learn anything even in private schools". In this phase, her Ego is ostensibly positioned in the Teacher–Parent dyad where the Alter (Parent) was in a powerful position to interrogate the Ego about the quality of teaching — the Ego needed to counter the representation of government school teachers' inefficiency. After the truncation, the Ego switches its position from 'Teacher' to 'Parent'. In the Parent–Parent dyad, the normative asymmetry in power positions was removed and both dialogical partners became equals. Adopting the position of a parent, the Ego enhanced the tellability of certain assertions, in particular those referring to its superiority over the Alter — as an educated elite parent, the Ego can present itself as keen on education whereas the Alter as a poor parent lacks the same quality. In the parent position, the onus of responsibility between the dialogical partners is at parity and the difference between government and private schools can be explained without the involvement of the Ego's weaker I-position of a 'Teacher'. It is important to note is that the Alter as poor parent(s) remained stable throughout. It is the Ego that is forced to change its identity position.

A similar switching of identity positions was observed among other participants. In the next example, a doctor was asked to comment on the public perceptions of exorbitant expenditure involved in the private sector. From the identity position of a 'Doctor', the tellability of the medical profession as a money making enterprise was low. Thus, in order to respond to the Alter, the doctor switched to the identity position of a 'Businessman'.

> AC: *People in the village consistently said that they do not get treated at government hospitals and if they go to private clinics, they are exploited.*
>
> SKS: *Not just in the village…even in cities…that is the common impression. That is the image that has been created.*
>
> AC: *What would your comment be?*
>
> SKS: *It is true. The public opinion is correct. Their blood gets sucked but it doesn't affect much. If you think of this as a business…business of health…so the business is growing every day. So people do think like that but the business doesn't get affected. Things like healthcare, hospitals, or private clinics, all these are flourishing every day.*

On other occasions, the evocation of Alter(s) did not lead to a switching of identity position but to the particularisation of individual identity while the Ego still remained immersed in the

same collective Self. Emphasising the individual character of the Ego enhanced the talkability in instances when the Alter(s) threatened Ego's collective Self with negative representations. The following extract is from the interview with a poor participant. AM was presented with the perspective of the elite Alter. AM agrees with the negative elite representations regarding the collective Self but immediately proceeds to particularise his own Self by highlighting its eagerness to work.

AC:	*Some people in the village told me that poor people do not want to work hard. What do you think?*
AM:	*There are many poor people who…for instance, now it is the time to harvest wheat…they would scavenge and steal from the fields. They think why should they go and work in the fields, why should they do any of that when they can just steal the grains at night…they think that if they work all day as a labour in the wheat harvesting season, they would get the same amount of wheat as their wages…so they think why should they ever work! That is why many people keep sitting and do not work. These are the problems here.*
AC:	*Ok.*
AM:	*Take me for example…I am sitting here…if I get a call from someone about a job, I will have to run…I would pick up my tools and scamper. I would get to the engine and test it…try to find out where it is broken…when I find the fault, I will change the broken things and repair the generator. I would get 200 or 300 rupees (£2 or £3) and return back home. End of story.*

8.5.2. Alter(s) reorganise the Ego's collective Self

In cognitively oriented theories of group life, viz., Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, Billig, & Bundy, 1971; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), the boundary between the Ego and the Alter reflects the need to achieve a positive social identity through favourable intergroup comparisons. Such theoretical perspectives postulate that the Ego achieves its espoused identity by committing itself to a collective Self (in-group) and seeking favourable comparison with the Alter (out-group) on a valued dimension. While not necessarily a critique of the theory, it must be noted that it tends to underplay the role of the Alter(s) in the definition of the Ego's in-group while overplaying the significance of salience of certain identity positions[44]. In a dialogical universe, the Ego and the Alter may differ in their power relationship but they remain interdependent insofar as the issue of defining each other's identity is concerned — identifying an Alter involves a concurrent forging of the Ego's identity as well.

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[44] As an exception, Reicher (2004) notes that on certain occasions the way the out-group is defined has real consequences for the collective action of the in-group. However, the salience of Ego's identity remains implicitly assumed.

In other words, the second influence that Alter(s) have on the Ego is of reorganising the latter's identification and differentiation with other Selves. The argument can be made more parsimoniously by working alongside the concept of basic themata. The relevance of basic oppositional themata like good—bad, pure—impure, etc. in organising social thought was discussed in Chapter 3. At the heart of each of these themata was the fundamental distinction between the Ego and the Alter. From the standpoint of every Ego, the world is organised in terms of entities that belong to the collective Self and those that do not. The present analysis suggests that the characterisation of the extended Self of the Ego is conditional on the specification of the Alter.

'Government' is a clear example of an Alter that caused a reorganisation of the relationship between different Ego positions. As already discussed in the chapter, while representing poverty, both elite and poor people drew upon the Rich—Poor themata, which was essentially based upon mutual opposition. However, in several instances where the Government was constructed as the Alter, the mutual opposition between the rich and the poor disappeared and the collective Self of the interlocutor included everyone in the rural community, rich and poor alike. When the Ego activated the Government as an Alter, the very act of its evocation reformulated the boundaries of the Ego's extended Self. The Ego expanded its extended Self to include what at a previous instance was an Alter — the elite and the poor both become the part of an extended Self of people that were 'governed' by the Government. The themata guiding the representation, thus, transforms into the oppositional dyad of Citizens—Government. Similarly, when participants referred to urban people, or from different states, the Rich—Poor themata was once again replaced by the Rural—Urban, and Bihari—Non Bihari themata respectively. Three examples are presented below to illustrate these points.

> KT: *If you see it from another angle, there is no difference between the rich and the poor. The Government doesn't give electricity to the village. If the schools are bad for us, they are bad for the rich too. The government is the culprit for the whole village.*
>
> ***
>
> NML: *The pain of India remains out of sight in the villages and the joy of India resides in the markets of the cities. We are all sick of the pain. We don't have a hospital. Even if the government makes a hospital here, no doctor would want to get posted in a village. They want to be in the cities.*
>
> ***
>
> BW: *The Bengalis and Nepalis in that part of India always frown when a Bihari gets a job. They think that locals should get it. They say, "You give the job to a Bihari and with all the education we run from pillar to post for a job."*

In the first two examples, with the Government as the Alter, both KT and NML erased the Rich–Poor antinomy and placed their Egos respectively in the Government–Governed and Rural–Urban dyads. In the third example, BW was talking about working in a town in Bengal and dissolved the Rich–Poor antinomy within the village to evoke the Bihari–Non Bihari distinction.

It must be noted, however, that that in not all instances a certain Alter will be able to reorganise the Ego's relationship with other Selves. Continuing with the example of the Government as the Alter, several other variations can be observed in the data. In the quote presented in § 8.4.2, AM evoked the Government but retained the distinction between the poor Ego and the rich Alter. In this instance, the Ego as poor was antagonistic to the Rich people as the Alter but considered the Government to be a sympathetic Alter. Similarly, in § 8.3, NML too evokes the Government without dissolving the difference between his Ego as rich and the poor as the Alter. Interestingly, in NML's quote in § 8.3, the Ego appears to be locked in opposition to both the Alters. The reorganisation of the Ego's relationship with other Selves, thus, is a possibility afforded by the evocation of certain Alter but is not a necessity.

PART III: RESEARCH AS A DIALOGICAL SOCIAL ACT[45]

So far this chapter has examined the dialogicality inherent in the representations of poverty. However, the process of researching itself is a dialogical exercise and Part III of this this chapter is dedicated to its reflexive analysis. This is a complicated task because of the numerous dialogical layers that have gone into the production of this thesis.

The first issue is of the dialogical relationships of the researcher. The researcher's Ego adopted numerous positions and entered into numerous relationships with numerous Alters. What is more, through this project the Ego anticipates entering into future relationships with other Selves — Alters examining this thesis, Alters researching poverty etc. The list is endless, yet the essence the idea itself is simple — social science research is a dialogical activity and this thesis is a dialogical expression.

The second dialogical issue is regarding the social act of researching. At the macro level, the RESEARCH encompassed the period of fieldwork, the process of analysis, and the process of writing up. At the meso level the Ego developed relationships with Alter(s) during the period of

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[45] Part III is purposefully written in first person to support the self-reflexive nature and goals of this segment of the chapter.

fieldwork, there were numerous social acts of interviewing, several discussions about the project with supervisors, colleagues, and family. At the micro level, each communicative instance between the researcher and participants was a dialogical event. My own Ego in the process of this research has touched upon many identity positions and is most certainly not the same as it was at the start of the project.

Clearly, an exhaustive analysis of the dialogicality of this project is a mountain to climb. To make the task more manageable, a reflexive analysis of the dialogicality of this research will be limited to the meso and micro level of my interaction with the community and the participants that I interviewed. Three issues stand out in this regard. First, issue is the interplay of mutual identification and differentiation between me and my participants. Second, both I and the participants formed and re-formed representations of each other. The third issue is of the differences in the representations of this research between me as the researcher and the participants.

8.6. MUTUAL ALTERITY AND MUTUAL IDENTIFICATION

Perhaps the most intense dialogical exchange between the researcher and the community takes place in the first few weeks. This was, in many ways, the most crucial period in the dialogical universe of this project and its analysis reveals some very important aspects of the findings reported in this project.

The issue of the participants of this project as the Alter to my researcher's Ego is complicated: At what point did I enter into a relationship with them? Clearly, while preparing the proposal of this project, I was already in a relationship with them. The participants as Alter(s) played a crucial role even at this stage — perhaps the proposal would not have been accepted for the doctoral research if it were not about poor people! A meaningful way of looking at my Ego's relationship with the participants is in terms of its historicity — I grew up in the same part of Bihar and in that sense my Ego has been in an old relationship with the Generalised Alter of other people living there. However, this relationship encompasses both similarities and differences which can be argued to form the basis of our mutual alterity and identification that kept playing throughout the period of fieldwork.

At one level, there was much ground for mutual identification — I grew up in the same district and my family still lived there. I had a legitimate claim of being a native with my natural command over both the local dialect and the cultural architecture. At another level, I was an

Alter for numerous reasons — I came from a privileged background, was living in a foreign country, and if inspected with a finer comb I fell out as an outsider to the village community.

The see-sawing of alterity and identification between my Ego and the Egos of the participants created several moments of dialogical tension. Take for example the following extract. An onlooker, Person X, interrupted an interview and began questioning my presence and activities in the village. Two things are noteworthy about my own Ego's dialogicality. First, it sought to assert its belongingness in the village by emphasising the amount of time I had already spent there (underlined). Second, in light of the information that person X did not live in Bholi but was visiting his in-laws, my Ego began treating *him* as an outsider. The sentiment is evident in my dismissive response ("I cannot help it if you haven't seen me here") and assertion that I was a local (My house is at [omitted]). Further still, by inviting the Alter to verify my belongingness by asking "anyone in the village", my Ego was demonstrating its strong relationship with the community.

AC:	*So I will start this interview now. As I told you, I am recording it. I want to talk to you about poverty in this village, the life of this village…[interruption]*
X:	*Of what thing?*
AC:	*I am talking to people in the village. <u>I have been coming here for nearly two months</u>.*
X:	*I don't understand. Can you explain why you are doing this? This is the first time I have seen you here.*
Child:	*He comes here every day.*
X:	*Really? I have been here for almost a month. I am married in this village. I sit at this shop every day. It must have been at least 17-18 days. I have never seen you.*
AC:	*I cannot help it if you haven't seen me here. I come here every day. My house is at [omitted]. Ask anyone in the village.*
Shop Owner:	*Yes, Yes. He comes here every day. We see him every day.*

In many instance the opposite was observed where the community actively integrated me as a part of their collective Self. As noted in § 8.5.2, often this integration was based on an opposition with a different Alter. In several instances, participants compared me to the elected representative of their parliamentary constituency. The dimension of contrast always involved the visibility element. I would arrive in the village every morning and stay there until dusk, would often participate in small communal activities, and was eager to talk to the people[46].

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[46] Perhaps the most interesting activity I participated in the community was umpiring in a cricket match. It was the final match of a cricket tournament between 8 neighbouring villages, played in over 40 degree heat of the Indian summer. Coincidently, the team of Bholi was playing in the final and the word spread that as an umpire I was hardly a neutral person. After a lot of arguments and counter-arguments, I was allowed to umpire an extremely volatile game. I was aware that every decision I made as an umpire was concurrently being evaluated by the other team in terms of my belongingness and

Contrastingly, the legislators were never visible in the community after elections. As such, both my and the elected parliamentarian's Egos were Alter to the community. Yet, on this dimension of comparison, there was identification with me and differentiation with the elected legislator. I present an illustration of the participants reducing the distances between their Ego and me as the Alter.

KT: *You come here every day. You see all the problems that we have.*

BP: *I have never seen any politician come to our village. If one politician were to come to the village, it will become a spectacle. People will want to catch a glimpse of him. But this has never happened. Yes, during the election period, the candidates come on their big cars, they bow to us. But once they win, they never come back.*

8.7. REPRESENTING THE ALTER

At least in some measure, any qualitative research includes the perspective of the researcher on the perspective of the research participants. The process of research itself includes the researcher making representations about the participants as Alter(s) and vice-versa. These representations are interesting because they are dynamic and in a constant state of evolution. The researcher often enters the field with a set of representations and expectations of the participants but these are bound to evolve and change as the research progresses. The same holds true for the participants whose initial representations of the researcher evolve as well. This dynamic process of evolving representations of the Alter can be separated in three distinct stages.

The first stage is of anticipatory representations. These representations draw more on expectations than on knowledge of the Alter. The Ego and the Alter (Researcher–Participant) may have never met in the real world but the researcher's Ego imagines a particular image of the Alter. In their widely popular monograph on ethnographic research, Atkinson and Hammersley (2007, p. 91) provide an interesting example of a genealogist, approaching the Yanomami people in the Amazonian forest. The genealogist was driven by a romantic fascination and an expectation that the Yanomami (Alter) would like and perhaps even adopt him (Ego). In reality, the Ego was welcomed by the Alter with drawn arrows! The following is the ethnographic account of the meeting from Changon (2004, p. 14):

I looked up and gasped when I saw a dozen burly, naked, filthy, hideous men staring at us down the shafts of their drawn arrows! Immense wads of green tobacco were stuck between their lower teeth and

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presumed loyalty to Bholi's team. I have to admit that I was extremely anxious in calling some leg-before-wicket appeals!

> *lips making them look even more hideous, and strands of dark green slime dripped or hung from*
>
> *their noses […] I was horrified. What sort of welcome was this for the person who came here to live*
>
> *with you and learn your way of life, to become friends with you?*

Clearly, the Ego had an image of the Alter that turned out to be different in real encounter. The example also illustrates the other side of representational work — the potential participants' representation of the researcher as an Alter. In this instance, the real life encounter made the Ego (Changon) scared of the Alter (Yanomani people), even as the Alter was suspicious of the Ego. In other words, it is not only the researcher that represents the participants — the participants represent the researcher too. In the context of the present project, as I came from the same district, my representations of the Alter were not guided entirely by expectations. However, my representation in the community — especially during the initial stages of the fieldwork when little information about my identity or motive was available — was built upon participants' suspicions. In a group interview, towards the end participants began discussing how I was represented during the first few weeks. As evident, the representation was guided by expectations instead of knowledge about the Alter. In essence, while the researcher may feel native, the participants may still continue to treat him as an Alter.

UR:	*So many days when I would see you in the village, I would think of talking to you and getting to know you. You were coming to the village every day and I thought one day I will stop you and take some of your time. I thought you were some government officer or something.*
AC:	*(laughs) You got to know me today!*
BP:	*There are some people here, so poor that they would be scared of a person like you. Initially, many thought that you were CID, or a terrorist, or something! (Everyone laughs)*

The second stage of mutual representing is based on an increased familiarity and knowledge of the Alter. As the community became more familiar with me, they began representing me with different ideas. A common representation that I encountered was of being a 'scholar' or a 'learned man'. In the following extract, AM received a phone call and his communication was curtailed. Yet, he explicitly identified me as a 'learned man'. Similarly, in the second extract, the participant's Ego was surprised at the questions I was asking. Implicit throughout her conversation was the expectation that with all my education, I should already know the 'answers' to my queries.

AM:	*If Lord Brahma has destined the child to hold a pen and pencil in his hand, he would flourish. Else, they would waste their lives trying to memorize things uselessly. Sir, you are a learned man...Now... [Participant gets a phone call].*
	***
AC:	*Why is the poverty less severe here and more there?*

SW:	*How can I say that?*
AC:	*What would improve things here?*
SW:	*That is for you to tell me.*
AC:	*I want to know your views.*

As participant Egos negotiated with me as an Alter, in microscopic dialogical exchanges, they drew upon the different identity positions they assigned to me. The range of assigned identity positions became apparent in context of offering me food. Much like the Biblical interpretation of 'breaking bread', in Bihar, eating a meal at someone's house is regarded as an act of friendship and solidarity. While offering meals it was common for participants to represent me as urban elite who may not enjoy the rural meal — the first extract below captures this. The second extract is even more interesting in this regard. It comes from the interview with an Islamic cleric who was the head of the madrasa of the village. He chose to identify me in an anticipated religious identity role a 'Hindu' and expected that I would not accept the offer of his tea. What is significant in this extract is that he positioned me as an Alter with an identity position that I personally seldom associate with my Ego. The exchange revealed the potential identities that I many not anticipate, yet they may be levied upon my Self. In essence, akin to my analysis in this chapter of participants speaking from different I-positions, there was a simultaneous assignment of my Ego to different You-Positions.

PB:	*I have a great desire that that you have a meal with us. It won't be very good but I will be very happy if you ate with us.*
AC:	*Of course Sir. I come here every day. I don't want to trouble your family today but I would be honoured to eat with you any day.*
PB:	*I know you will not like the food but sometimes it is good to eat bad food too! (laughs)*
AC:	*What are you saying! I was born and raised here! I love everything — even kaduwa. (Both laugh)*
	***
MAM:	*I would have offered you tea but I think you won't have my tea.*
AC:	*Why won't I have your tea! Of course I will!*
MAM:	*Ah. Good. I said this because I wanted to know if you will or not.*
AC:	*Of course I will. Thank you! But why did you think that I won't?*
MAM:	*Well, many people, like Hindus, don't want to have the tea of the madrasa.*

The third stage of mutual representation is of the Ego and the Alter representing each other *after* the cessation of the process of research. In the paradigm of this project, examining the dialogicality of this stage from both positions is complicated. This thesis is a reflection of my representation of the Alter(s) *after* I stopped meeting and interacting with them. Yet, I don't have access to how the Alter(s) represent my Ego in the period since my last visit to the village.

8.8. DIALOGICALITY IN REPRESENTING THE RESEARCH ACT

As noted earlier, from the standpoint of dialogical theory, this thesis itself is a dialogical product. From the standpoint of my Ego, the fieldwork and the interviews were a part of the research act, guided towards gaining an insight into the social world of Alters. However, the research act was independently represented by the participants as well. Several instances in the data implicitly reveal the divergent representations of the research act amongst participants.

A common representation was in terms of the expectation that the research carried a potential to change things in the village. The next extract presents an example. In the extract, the participant creates a fine balance between representing the researcher both as an Alter, and a part of the Ego. As an Alter, I was regarded as having the power to change things — something that the Ego cannot achieve. Yet, I was listening to the problems of the Ego, and hence, was not fully separate from the Ego.

> PMW: *I have to go now. I have told you all that I could. It is for people like you to pay attention to our miseries and pain and do something for us. We would remember you for generations…remember that someone from England was here to hear our problems and find solutions for them.*
>
> AC: *I can't change anything or make anyone do anything. I am merely researching.*
>
> PMW: *I believe something will happen. At least you are hearing our problems.*
>
> AC: *I too hope that but I would be surprised if something actually came out of my work. Before you go, do you have time for one final question?*

My own Ego, aware of the academic nature of the project, was keen to assert that it was unable to change anything in the short term. It is also worth noting that in the last line of the extract my HNIS was focussed on the research act from my own vantage point. The last line hints upon the superiority of my Ego's need to 'ask one final question' over its dialogical responsibility to correct the Alter's misunderstanding that solutions to its problem may materialise out of my research. In essence, the extract demonstrates that whole gamut of social acts in which my Ego participated in the village —meeting people, interviewing them etc. — could, in some instances, have been founded on different expectations amongst members of the Bholi community.

In certain instances participants considered the research act, and the researcher as the Alter, to be a vehicle for carrying the Ego's voices to an imagined audience. In two instances, participants explicitly asked me to 'write' certain things in my 'report' or 'book'. I present both the instances below.

MKT: *The second reason for poverty is that people are forced to sell whatever land they have. Why? I will tell you the true reason. People find themselves in scarcity so they take money from moneylenders. The interest is 5 per cent every month. If they borrow a thousand rupees, by the end of the year it becomes a thousand and half. They fall into some problem and fail to repay the loan that year. The next year it becomes three thousand. This system is sucking the blood out of the poor. I urge you to write this is your report.*

RJT: *I am helpless. The MPs and the MLAs are paid 80 or 85 thousands [a month] as their salary. Doctors get 40 to 45 thousand. The old teachers get 40 thousands. When you write your book, please raise this matter. In Bihar, there is such disparity in the pay of teachers. This too is a big factor. There is great disparity. I get 6 thousand rupees [a month]. Can I feed my family in that?*

The next issue links back to the methodological discussion on the complexity of social interactions that happen in a research interview. My Ego approached the process of research in the role of a 'novice' seeking to understand the Alter. Yet, as discussed in § 4.2.2, the Alter may not always be able to appreciate these roles and find the academically guided queries of the researcher as vague or at times even rude. The next extract captures one such dialogical exchange between the Ego (BW) and the Alter (AC). The conversational turns are numbered for the sake of referencing them.

AC: *Okay…So not having your own land makes you poor. Is there anything else that makes you consider yourself poor?* **[1]**
BW: *You ask the question as if you don't see…as if your eyes are like mine. When you look at me, do you think that he is a rich man? He is a man in a job? Look at my house…look at the clothes, the shoes that I wear.* **[2]**
AC: *Okay…Do you think your father was poor too?* **[3]**
BW: *Yes. He was poor but he had some land…I used to work in the fields then…he had some land…I don't have eve a square inch of land...* **[4]**
AC: *Okay…Do you think there are many poor people in this village?***[5]**
BW: *(Chuckles) What do you think? The village is full of poverty. Everyone is poor here.* **[6]**

I (Alter) prompted BW (Ego) to reflect on the reasons why he considered himself poor [1]. BW found the query pedantic and perhaps imprudent and replied with a stern rebuttal — for the Ego, its poverty was obvious and visible through its clothes, shoes etc. [2]. The next turn in conversation is guided by a more direct question from the Alter [3, 4]. However, the final two turns in conversation [5, 6] see the Alter resume its pedantic query and the Ego asks a rhetorical question to the Alter. In essence, an important dialogical aspect of this RESEARCH is in the parallel representations of the social act amongst the participants. The extract above illustrates that this occasionally involved participants struggling to comprehend the purpose of the queries of the Alter.

Finally, a unique dialogical instance in the research has had a powerful impact on my Ego, both in the context of this research project and beyond. During one interview, a participant explicitly told me that my research was ultimately a self-serving act for my Ego. I present the extract in full.

> *PB:*   *What do I say…what will ever happen? Nothing happens. Countless people have come along and blown their trumpet that poverty needs to be eradicated. Who has managed to get anything done? What solution has been found? Go try telling this to that starving mother and her starving child. I don't want to offend you and pardon me for saying this but you too are here to blow your own trumpet.*
>
> *AC:*   *No. Not at all. You do not offend me Sir.*
>
> *[42 second interruption; PB scolds his grandson]*
>
> *PB:*   *Anyway…this happens globally. The poor are just fodder for the rich. Whatever you want to respond to that, you can. But the truth is that the poor are just a source of amusement, a toy, in the hands of the rich. Say what you want but the truth is that the poor are just some toys for the rich.*
>
> *AC:*   *Okay. If we speak specifically about this village…It appears to me that this is an agricultural village. Agriculture seems to be the prime source of livelihood.*

There is clear evidence in the extract above that the Alter [PB] began destabilising my Ego through the evocation of other Alters [starving mother and her starving child]. My Ego responded by saying that it was not offended by the comment, yet, the next comment by the participant destabilised my Ego completely. Not only there was no response to the Alter's comment, under the sharp gaze, I turned the conversation into a new direction altogether. Another way of interpreting this exchange is in terms of the power asymmetry between the researcher and participants. The norms of the social act of interviewing gave my Ego the power to escape the remarks of the Alter — an asymmetry thrown in even sharper relief when compared with my persistent questioning of BW in the previous extract.

8.9. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter examined dialogicality as a basis of representing poverty. The analysis revealed that meaning making and communication, i.e. representing, is achieved by the interlocutor as the Ego in terms of Alter(s) as dialogical partners. The Ego may or may not be similar to the Alter, and may or may not have participated in the social acts — the process of ascribing meaning to the concept of poverty was achieved *through* Alter(s) on the basis of either similarity or differences.

The chapter analysed social acts as a crucial component of dialogical realisation of poverty. It was revealed that the Ego can reflect on social acts from its own, Alters', or the collective Self's life to develop the representations of poverty. The capacity of social acts to reveal the perspective of the Ego was identified, as was their capacity to convey a vast amount of information about the Ego and the Alter participating in them. Similarly, the specific interlinking of certain social acts was revealed to be a unique and constitutive aspect of poverty.

The relationship between the Ego and the Alter as dialogical partners was explicated as being of mutual influence. The Ego maintains control over the evocation of Alters in order to achieve representational goals. At the same time, the evocation of certain Alters can destabilise the Ego and have consequences for its identity position and ability to make certain assertions.

Finally, the dialogicality involved in the process of this research was examined. It was argued that the researcher and the participants were involved in a dynamic based on mutual identification and differentiation. Participants' representations of the researcher, and vice versa, were discussed to highlight the reciprocal nature of the dialogical relationship between them. Similarly, it was demonstrated that the process of research itself was an object of representation and divergence of perspectives between the researcher and the participants.

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION
& SUMMARY

How poverty representations
develop in terms of the Alter

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter provides the summary of this research, and discusses the implications of its findings. The chapter is divided in three parts.

Part I of the chapter summarises the representations of poverty and explores the findings of this work rigorously in terms of '*Who*', '*What*', '*Why*' and '*How*' questions related to the representations of poverty reported in this thesis. Both theoretical and empirical implications of research findings are concurrently explored.

Part II contextualises the empirical findings of this research and identifies two meta-themes which integrate a range of research findings. The two meta-themes discussed are (1) the role of trust; and (2) the importance of shared perspectives.

Part III of the chapter is the final act of this thesis. It presents the original contributions of this thesis, while mapping the landscape for future research.

9.0. SITUATING THE CHAPTER

The goal of this project is to develop a sociological SP of poverty. Throughout Chapters 1, 2 and 3 the ground for such an approach was identified and its foundations were laid. It was argued that poverty needs to be apprehended as a social object that can be understood through its dialogical social representations. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively analysed the representations of poverty from three vantage points — of the poor, the elite, and newspapers. In some ways, the three chapters were the different petals of the 'windrose' of poverty representations (Bauer & Gaskell, 2008). Chapter 8 analysed the dialogical processes that inform poverty representations — specifically, the role of social acts and the Ego–Alter inseparability in the act of representing. This chapter synthesises the work that this thesis embodies in its entirety. It fully integrates the theoretical and methodological commitments of the project (Chapters 1-4) with the research findings (Chapters 5-7) on the 'content' of poverty representations, and the 'process' of representing (Chapter 8) into a gestalt.

The foundation of studying any social object rests in appreciating the interplay between the content and the process of its representations. Indeed, a crucial, yet seldom attended commitment of SRT has been the integration of the processes and outcomes of meaning making. If not already evident in *La Psychanalyse* (Moscovici, 1976/2008), Moscovici has emphasised more explicitly elsewhere (1982, p. 143) on the need "to put an end to the separation between the processes and the content of social thinking." Following this agenda, this chapter integrates the two research questions of this study into an organismic whole of poverty representations. To recapitulate, the two research questions — the first exploring the 'content' and the second exploring the 'process' — were as follows:

1. As a social object, what meanings of poverty develop in the society?
2. How do people develop these meanings?

The content and the process questions are respectively *what* and the *how* questions. Yet, the findings of the project suggest that the '*who*' and the '*why*' questions are also crucial for a fuller understanding of the social representations of poverty — who developed these representations and why? Part I of the chapter incrementally discusses the findings of the research, beginning with a discussion on the 'who' of SRs, and progressing through 'what', 'why', and 'how' issues. In the process, the chapter will argue that the faithful way of understanding the SRs of an object is in examining the 'who', 'what', 'why', and 'how' questions simultaneously. In doing so, the chapter will explicitly emphasise why the content cannot be understood without referring to the process, as Moscovivi (1982) has asserted.

PART I: POVERTY AS A SOCIAL OBJECT: THE 'WHO', 'WHAT', 'WHY', AND 'HOW' OF ITS REPRESENTATIONS

9.1. WHOSE REPRESENTATIONS OF POVERTY?

The answer to the question as to 'who' were the people whose representations of poverty were apprehended, explored, and examined in this project might appear obvious. Most research done with SRT tends to retrospectively ascribe these representations to the groups that were researched without attending to the nuances. However, such an approach inadvertently weakens the power and flexibility of the theory and contributes to the criticism of ambiguity in the imagination of the relationship between groups and representations (see Jahoda, 1988; Potter & Litton, 1985). In light of the findings of the research, this project takes objection to a retrospective identity/group based explanation of representations and resists advocating a strong relationship between groups and representations. This is important for two reasons.

First, a firm commitment to social identities as the defining basis of understanding representations cannot avoid an implicit agreement that the identity brings shared group interests and relationships of solidarity with others with the same identity (for e.g. Reicher, 2004). The findings of this research are interesting in this regard. On the one hand, there was sufficient evidence to suggest that poor people were a distinct social group in the village. The widely shared representations regarding healthcare and educational institutions (§ 5.3 & § 5.4), bureaucracy (§ 5.6), social policies (§ 5.2), and general oppression in the society (§ 5.1.2.3) give credibility to the idea of coherent social group of poor people. What is more, while ideas similar to the poor were present in the discourse of the elite too (see § 6.6, § 6.4.2, § 6.4.4, and § 6.1.2 respectively for complementary ideas on the themes mentioned above), there was sufficient evidence that the poor and the elite were engaged in a relationship built on tension. So can the representations of poverty be attributed neatly to distinct identity/group position of 'poor' and 'not poor'?

Second, strong identity-based explanations of social representations can only hold true with the proviso that during the interview, everything that the participant(s) said was from a certain identity position and that position alone. In addition to the interview data, the media landscape of India lacks the partisan and political leanings of the UK, or indeed that of the French mass-media in Moscovici's original research on SRs. This is clearly evident in the polyphasic nature of poverty representations in the press where it was portrayed varyingly as a barrier (§ 7.2 and § 7.3), a threat (§ 7.4), an opportunity (§ 7.5), and as an objective condition (§ 7.1). How can the relationship between representations and social groups be imagined then?

Duveen (2008) has noted the need to take SRT away from a mechanistic imagination of the relationship between social groups and their representations. The dialogical orientation of this project provides an alternative without resorting to a strong identity/group based explanations. The basis of social identities, and indeed of social representations, is founded in the Ego–Alter dialogicality. Therefore, in order to properly outline the relationship between groups and representations, it is essential to take into account the Alter(s) that are dialogical partners in representing. The findings of this study provide evidence that the question 'Whose representation of X?' is incomplete without the corollary question 'in relation to which Alter(s)?'

This project has demonstrated that the Ego's affiliation with its collective Self, and its oppositional relationship with the Alter, are dynamic and evolve throughout the representational work. In a number of instances, the poor and the elite were locked in mutual opposition while representing poverty. The mutual dialogical opposition between the social groups contributed to a divergence in their representational work. For instance, based on the Poor–Rich/BPL–APL dialogical opposition, poor people represented poverty in terms of the oppression they faced in the community, whereas the Elite represented it in terms of behavioural and personality deficiency amongst the poor (see Figure7). However, in dialogical opposition with Alters like 'Government', 'Doctors', 'Urban People' etc. the Egos of both elite and poor participants identified with different collective Selves (Citizens, Patients, Rural People respectively) where the Rich–Poor group identity was rendered moot. The opposition to a common Alter resulted in similarities in representations of poor and elite participants. For instance, both groups represented the Government as responsible for poverty (§ 5.5 and § 6.4) and doctors (§ 5.3 and § 6.6) as inefficient and exploitative (see Figure 8).
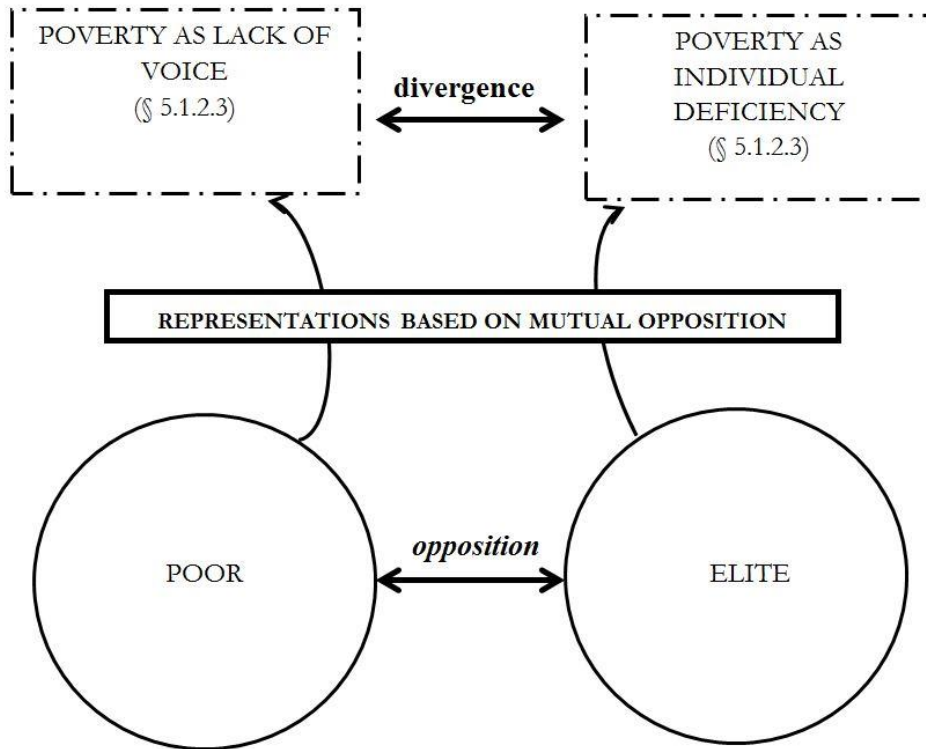
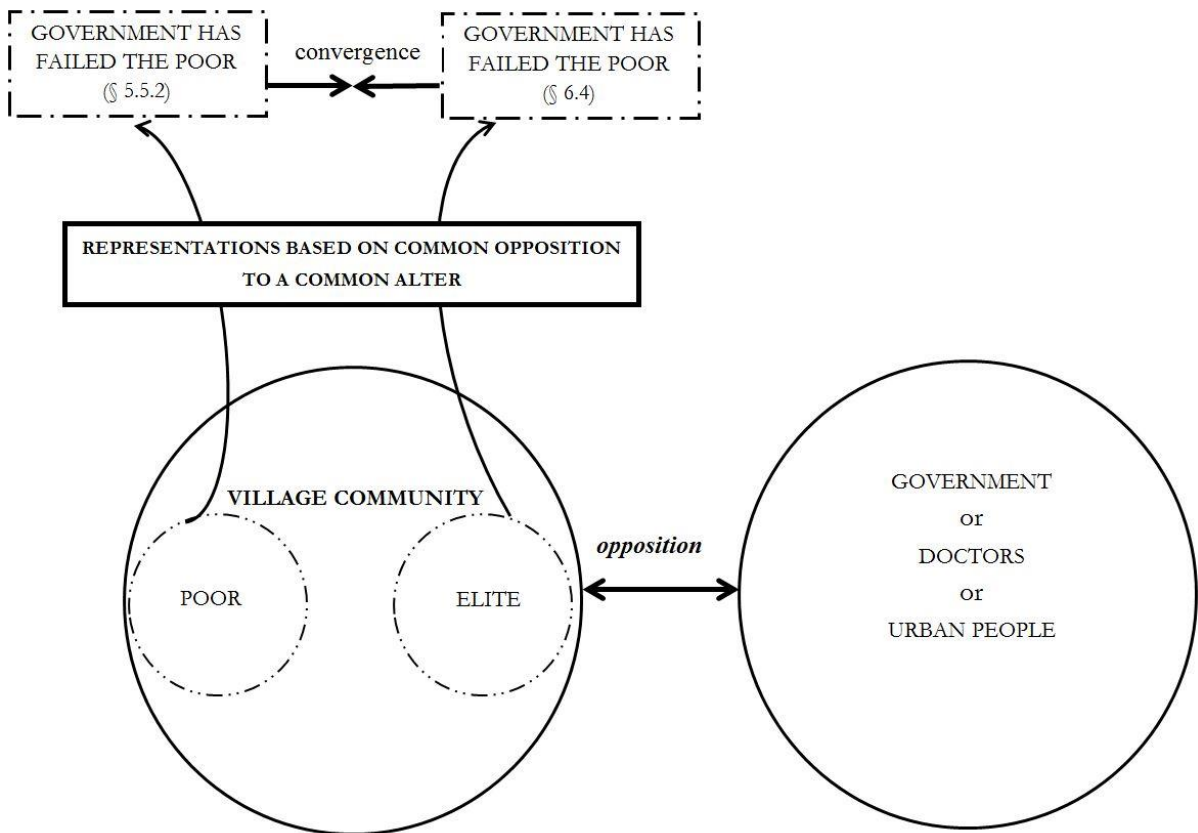**Figure 7. Representations based on groups in mutual dialogical opposition**

Figure 8. Representations of groups in dialogical opposition to a common Alter

The ancient Indian treatise on warfare, *Arthshashtra*, proclaims: 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend'. Human history is replete with illustrations of the relevance of this dictum — the reorganisation of the West's relationship with the Soviet Union during the Second World War is one of the examples. More importantly to the present discussion, this dictum suggests that the collective Self to which the Ego belongs — the group or social identity of the Ego — is contingent on the Alter with who it is in dialogical opposition. The findings of this study suggest that a formal and firmly bound imagination of groups based on transient identities such as 'poor' or 'not-poor' must not be linked to social representations without further qualification. When in mutual opposition, these groups can give the impression of a finite impermeable boundary as presented in Figure 7. However, as Figure 8 suggests, when confronted with a common Alter, the boundaries of these groups become permeable and identification with a larger collective Self is a possibility. As also illustrated in the two figures, such shifts in group identification can have a significant impact of representations made by each group.

In essence, it is evident that the content of representation is contingent on the process of representing. In other words, the representation of poverty depends on the dialogical negotiations that the Ego has with the Alter(s). Any comment on the content of representation is inseparable from the dialogical processes *through which* it was generated in the first instance. Additionally, the research underlines the need for SRT to further engage with the problematic of groups and representations. The dialogical perspective adopted in this project provides a solution to the dynamic nature of social groups and categories used in research — even when categories are based on self-identification as 'X'. The key to understanding the dynamic nature of representations is in capturing the evolving dialogical relationships *through which* representations are generated. This is a crucial finding of the present research and will have a bearing on the discussion of the overall representational field on poverty in the next section.

9.2. WHAT IS THE REPRESENTATION OF POVERTY?

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 analysed the representations of poverty in three different data groups. This segment aims to synthesise a commentary on the similarities, differences, and the overall organisation of representations of poverty in the Indian public sphere.

9.2.1. The stable core of poverty representations

The first observation that can be made is regarding the structural organisation of poverty representations. From a structural standpoint, a distinction can be made between the stable core and the malleable periphery of representations (Abric, 1993, 1996). The findings of the present

work suggest that in the Indian public sphere, the stable core of poverty is composed of two primary elements — the idea of measurement objectified by the PL, and the Government as a social actor.

9.2.1.1. The Government and the PL

As discussed in all three data chapters, the research found a persistent tendency amongst the participants to use BPL–APL labels to distinguish between poor and non-poor people in the society (§ 5.1, § 6.1, and § 7.1). While such observations can be explained as vernacular practices, there was ample evidence in the study to mount an alternate argument that 'measurement' forms the stable core of poverty representations. The first evidence comes from the acceptance of the PL amongst the participants of the research. The extracts from CGM and KL presented at the start of § 5.1 capture the idea that the legitimate existence of poverty is contingent on being officially recognised as a BPL person. Similarly, the quote from RKY at the start of § 6.1 presents the evidence that BPL has become synonymous with the idea of poverty. The second line of evidence comes from the analysis of news reports. Mass-media is the space for intellectual debate and challenge, yet, the monetary-measurement paradigm of poverty was not challenged. As noted earlier, debates were limited to the income criterion where the PL ought to be set. Similarly, in all data categories, the Government was represented as the chief social actor responsible for poverty. The ties between the Government and poverty were developed in a number of ways such as its responsibility towards helping the poor, its role in developing and administering social policies, its role in providing healthcare and educational services to the poor etc. In essence, the analysis of this project's data suggests that the stable core of poverty representations is built on two elements: the PL and the Government — the status of the PL and the role of the Government were never questioned or problematized.

9.2.1.2. The role of the thematic core

The role of the stable core of poverty representations needs to be discussed from two different vantage points. The first vantage point for understanding the stable central core is in terms of the functional and normative dimensions that it affords to the SRs of poverty (for e.g. Moloney & Walker, 2002). Guimelli (1998) has argued that the central core of social representations has two *essential* dimensions: functional and normative. The functional dimension determines the relationship between individuals and the object of representations, determining the social practices associated with the object. The normative dimension is associated with the derivation of value system and judgements about the object which determine the stance of the people towards the object. The findings of the present research suggest that the PL is associated

with the functional dimension. For instance, it allows the identification of poverty in the society, and simultaneously allows poor people to seek welfare support. On the other hand, the Government is associated with the normative function of the core. It allows people to ascribe responsibility for poverty and identify the agent responsible for alleviating poverty. The normative role of the Government, itself becomes a functional resource — as evident in Chapter 6, despite the elite Ego's conflict with poor Alter(s), the presence of Government enables the development of pro-poor representations.

The second vantage point on the central core comes from a synthesis of the notion of themata in social representations research. Ever since the formal introduction of the notion of themata within the rubric of SRT (Moscovici, 1993), it has been talked about often but less attention has been paid to systematic exploration of its relevance in the study of SRs. Two theoretical ideas are concurrently important here. First is Moscovici's assertion that all social representations are founded on a limited number of initial themata that tend to provide the skeleton upon which the representational corpus grows (Moscovici & Vignaux, 2000). The second assertion is regarding the nature of the themata itself — Marková (2003b, especially pp 181-202) notes that mutual opposition, or antinomies, are the basis of the themata that form SRs. These two ideas have a tremendous significance on the second vantage point on the stable core of poverty representations. The PL provides the template for the BPL–APL thema which is, but a version of, the more basic Poor–Rich thema. Similarly, the presence of Government in the central core forms the basis of another thema: Citizen–Government. Thus the central core of poverty representations can be understood in terms of the two themata that remain at its heart — BPL–APL and Citizen–Government.

In conclusion, the findings of the research provide evidence that the stable core of poverty representations is formed by the thematisation of the concept of poverty with the idea of the PL and the role of the Government. This stable core has far reaching implications on the overall representation of poverty and the discussion will return to it in § 9.2.3.

9.2.2. The peripheral field of representations: Importance of group perspectives

Being more flexible and dynamic, the peripheral field allows SRs to "be rooted in the reality of the moment [and] permits the integration of individual experiences and past histories" (Abric, 1993, p. 76). Accordingly, the peripheral field uncovered in the present project includes a wide range of ideas which reflect the specific interests of individuals and groups in representing poverty. The present research suggests a broad consensus in the Indian public sphere regarding three peripheral elements in representations of poverty, related to themes of social policy,

healthcare, and education. Despite populating poverty representations in all three data categories, they remain in the peripheral field due to the diversity in perspective of different individuals and groups on these issues.

9.2.2.1. Social policy in the peripheral field

Social policy was a key element in the peripheral system of poverty representations. There was consensus in all three data categories regarding their potential to help the poor. Consensus was also apparent in the all-round problematisation of social policies. Further still, the representation of the Government as a key actor in social policy was another point of consensus between different groups. Yet, crucial divergence in perspective existed between elite and poor participants on social policies. The poor represented them primarily in terms of their unfulfilled potential to help them overcome poverty (§ 5.2). The elite ideas about poverty were polyphasic. On the one hand, like the poor, they discussed the unfulfilled potential of social policies (§ 6.4.1). On the other hand, they also viewed policies in terms of creating welfare dependence amongst the poor (§ 6.3.2). The divergence in perspective and the polyphasic nature of elites' representation of social policy reflects the Ego's shifting dialogical opposition with different Alters. As discussed in the previous chapter, when the elite Ego was locked in dialogical opposition with the Government, the representations of the elite were similar to the poor. However, when in dialogical opposition with the poor, elite perspectives on policy produced a divergence in representations.

9.2.2.2. Healthcare and education in the peripheral field

Like social policies, both healthcare and education were represented nearly identically in all three data categories — both in terms of their importance in the lives of the poor and the failure of the Government in providing them (§5.3 & § 5.4; § 6.5 & 6.6; and § 7.3.1). Viewed from a different vantage point, ideas about both healthcare and education can be understood in terms of intersecting axes of quality and cost. Facilities in the private sector promised high quality but came at a high cost; whereas government facilities put a low monetary strain but were of low quality. In other words, the healthcare and educational options available to poor people are constrained by what is attainable and unattainable along the intersection of these two axes. Thus, the choices available to the poor are limited. Figure 9 illustrates the point.
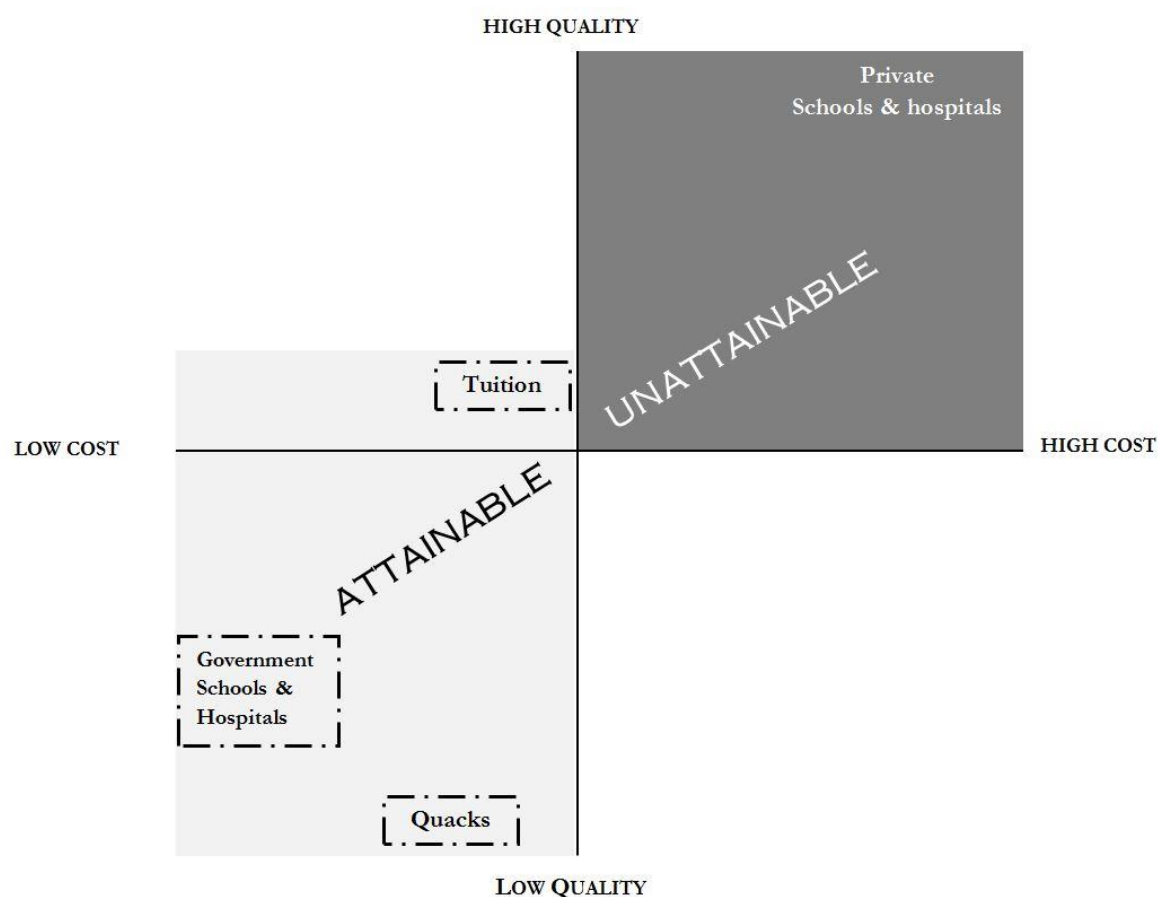
Figure 9. Constrained choices in poverty

The divergence in perspective of poor people and the elite on education and healthcare issues becomes apparent in when they assign responsibilities for them. Poor people blame the Government for the bad quality of its schools and hospitals, and the greed of doctors and private school owners for the high cost of the private-sector. In essence, poor people blamed other social actors for their inability to achieve good education and health. On the other hand, while elite participants too laid the blame on the Government, they also tended to blame the poor for their bad health and lack of education. For instance, doctors blamed the lack of education amongst the poor for their bad health (see § 6.6.3), and teachers blamed parents of poor children (see RY's quote in § 6.3.1). An even more striking demonstration of the divergences in perspective becomes apparent in poor people's use of local quacks during medical emergencies. As discussed in § 5.3.2, poor people were aware of the risks associated with quacks — from their vantage points, quacks are in the realm of attainable medical help as per figure 9. However, as SKS's quote in § 6.6.3 demonstrates, doctors blame the very act of seeking medical advice from quacks as a reason for bad health outcomes of the poor.

In essence, the peripheral elements of poverty representations contain similar themes. Yet, the plurality and divergence in perspectives makes them peripheral, instead of central element of poverty representation.

9.2.3. The big picture: The dynamic SRs of poverty in the Indian public sphere

After discussing the core and peripheral elements of poverty representations uncovered in this research, the final task is to outline the dynamic relationship between them and present the overall SRs of poverty in the Indian public sphere. This involves presenting a synthesis of a number of ideas including the discussions on the shifting nature of group/identity positions of Egos engaged in representational work (§ 9.1) and the structural organisation of representations (§ 9.2.1 and §9.2.2). Two questions guide this discussion: First, how does the thematic core serve its normative and functional role while retaining control over the peripheral elements of the representation? Second, how does diversity in SRs of an object become possible despite the stability of the all-important core?

The findings of this study indicate that the activation of each of the two thematic cores has implications on the peripheral elements and the overall SRs of poverty. When the BPL–APL thematic core is active, communication is guided by the dialogical tension and opposition with poor people. It was noted earlier that this led to divergence in representations. Additionally, it can be argued that the dialogical opposition with the poor has a more fundamental consequence — it relegates the social object of poverty to the realm of the Other. On the contrary, when the Citizen–Government thematic core is active, the BPL–APL /Rich–Poor antinomy is rendered moot and collective Self of both Ego positions gets subsumed by the common identity of Citizens or the Village Community. In turn, this assimilates poverty as a problem of the Self, founded on the dialogical opposition to the Government. As a result, the same themes in the peripheral system produce diametrically opposite representations of poverty depending on whether Rich–Poor or Citizen–Government core is active during the conversation. In other words, depending on whether poverty is seen as a problem of the Self or the Other, themes in the periphery change their meaning. Take the theme of health in the peripheral system for example. When the Citizen–Government thema is active, health issues are represented as a problem that the poor face because the Alter (Government) does not deliver on its promise of quality healthcare — poverty is represented as a barrier that causes bad health. Within this thema, there is a lot of similarity between the ideas in all three data categories because the respective Egos remain united in dialogical opposition to the Alter (for e.g. see, § 5.3.1, § 6.6.1, and § 7.3.1; also § 9.1). However, when the BPL–APL thema is active, the theme of health

issues is represented in terms of threats to the Self — poverty is represented as the cause of diseases (§ 6.3.3). This provides an instance of departure between rich and poor people's representations of poverty. Similar switching of other peripheral elements takes place with the case of education and social policy. Table 8 summarises the idea.

Table 8. The reorganisation of poverty representations on the basis of the thematic core

Representations with APL–BPL/RICH–POOR THEMA (Dialogical Tension with BPL/Poor as Alter)	THEMES IN THE PERIPHERY OF REPRESENTATIONS	Representations with CITIZEN–GOVERNMENT THEMA (Dialogical Tension with Government as Alter)
~ Poverty is the cause of diseases (§ 6.3.3)	← HEALTH →	~ Dysfunctional Government hospitals (§ 6.6.1) ~ Poverty is the cause of health problems and vice versa (§ 6.1.1)
~ Lack of foresight and investment in education (§ 6.3.1) ~ Lack of education leads poor people to extremist ideology and terrorism (§ 7.4.2) ~ Poor parents don't value education (§ 8.5.1)	← EDUCATION →	~ Problems at Government Schools (§ 6.5.1)
~ Welfare dependence (§ 6.3.2)	← POLICY →	~ Charade of social policy (§6.4.1) ~ Corruption in bureaucratic administration of social policies (§6.4.2) ~ Evil designs of the Government (§6.4.4)

Thus despite the peripheral diversity, the overall representational field on poverty is maintained by the representational core. Depending on which of the two representational cores is active, the presentation of elements in the periphery changes — as a result, the overall representation of poverty itself changes. The Citizen–Government thematic core results in representations that imbibe poverty as the problem of the Self; whereas the Rich–Poor thematic

core results in representations that distance poverty as a problem of the Other. Figure 10 presents the overall representational field of poverty in the Indian public sphere.
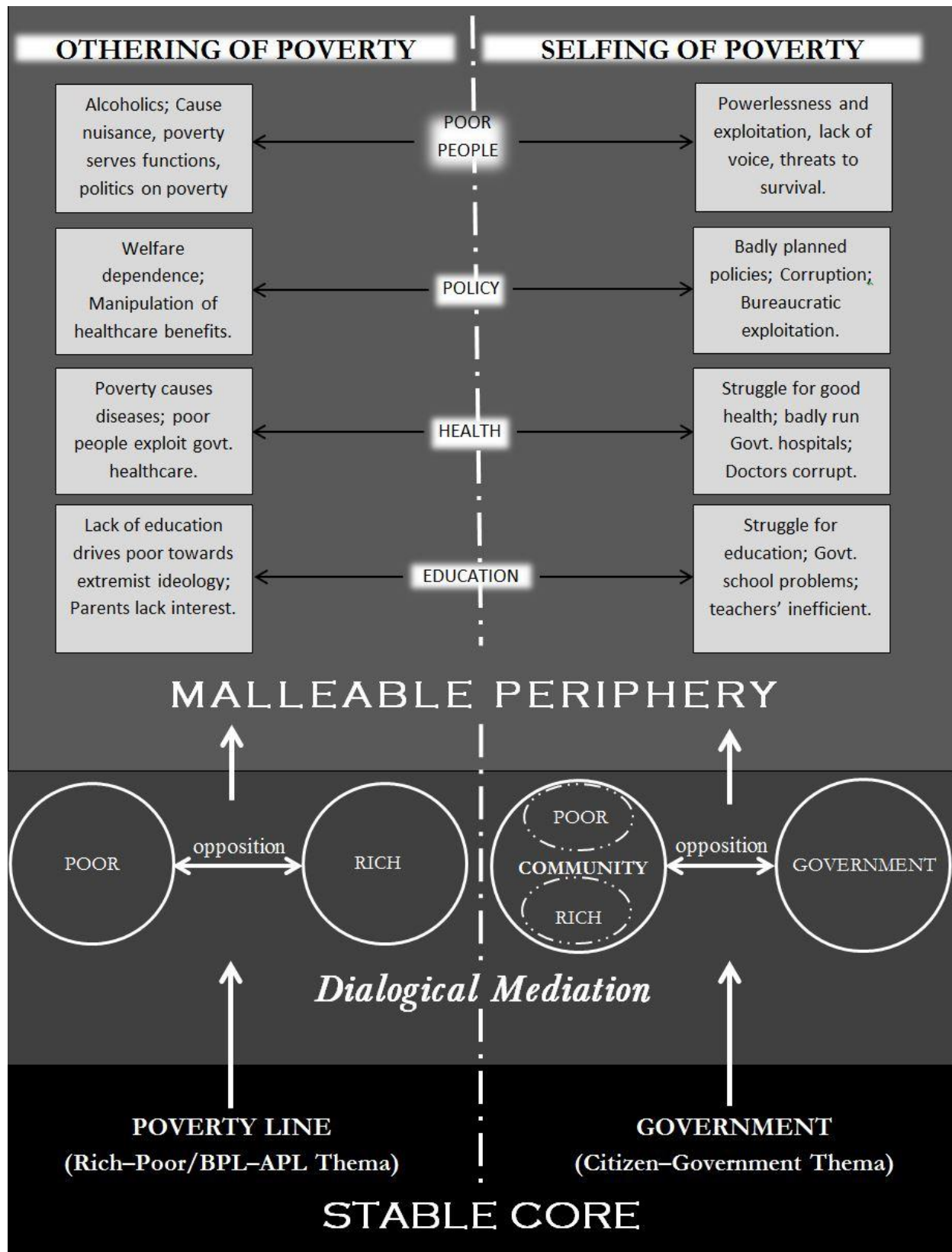

Figure 10. The overall field of poverty representations in the Indian public sphere

As the figure indicates, the stable core of poverty representations in the Indian public sphere is based on two ideas: (i) the distinction between people above and below the poverty line; and (ii) the involvement of the Government in all issues pertaining to poverty. These ideas are the basis of the two thematic antinomies that create the central core of representations (Rich–Poor and Government–Citizen). When people who themselves are not poor use issues of measurement, or the PL, as the basis of representing, the Rich–Poor thematic core is activated. Owing to the opposition between the dialogical partners, the malleable themes in the periphery are shaped in terms of the threat poverty poses to the Self. For instance, on the theme of health, poverty is portrayed as the cause of diseases. These representations, thus, tend to distance the Self and achieve the Othering of poverty. On the other hand, when the second thematic core — Citizen–Government — is active, the Rich–Poor opposition is diluted by a more fundamental, shared, opposition to the Government. This dialogical stance shapes themes in the peripheral field of poverty in terms of the problems they pose for people living in poverty. The same peripheral ideas are formulated to achieve different representational outcomes — for e.g., the deficient public healthcare system is held responsible for the plight of the poor. In this instance, the representational work achieves the Selfing of poverty. Two crucial remarks need to be made about this representational field of poverty.

First, the relationship between the core and peripheral field of representations is managed by dialogical mediations. As Figure 10 shows, thematic antinomies of the stable core define the Alter with which the Ego is locked in dialogical opposition while representing poverty. As discussed in this and the previous chapter, the dialogical mediation defines the overall representations of poverty. More generally, this thesis can state that any conceptualisation of the relation between the core and peripheral elements in a social representation must be examined in terms of the dialogical mediations that support the relationship.

Second, poverty is always the problem of the Self for poor people, regardless of their Ego's (Individual or Collective) dialogical tension with any Alter. Thus, whether the poor Ego is in dialogical tension with the Elite, Bureaucrats, Government, or Doctors as Alters, poverty continues to remain the problem of the Self. The peripheral elements in their SRs are usually driven in terms of the barrier that poverty poses. On the contrary, poverty is not necessarily a problem of the Self for elite people and the mass-media. It is an object in the social world which these groups apprehend dialogically. In analysing the representations of such individuals and groups, the examination of the inherent dialogical mediations becomes fundamentally important.

In essence, on the basis of this research, it can be argued that the hybridity of knowledge on poverty in the Indian public sphere is based on the thematic cores on which poverty representations are generated — one thematic core supports the 'Othering' of poverty, whereas the second thematic core allows for the 'Selfing' of poverty. The peripheral elements in the representational field are extremely malleable — the same theme is interpreted and represented in diametrically opposite fashion, depending on the exact dialogical mediation informing the representational work.

9.3. WHY THESE REPRESENTATIONS OF POVERTY?

As it was argued in Chapter 2, while considering poverty as a social object, the present work does not deny its real world manifestations in things like hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy etc. In other words, it acknowledges that social objects are related to, and dependent on, the interpretation of brute facts (Searle, 1995). In this framework, it is possible to examine the 'Why?' question, while working within the rubric of SRT. So, "Why did the poor, elite participants and the newspapers represent poverty in ways that this research has uncovered?"

The seeds of the answer are in understanding social representations as tools that people develop to cope with the brute facts of life — make sense of them, assign meanings, and chart their actions. In other words, the process of representing can be understood as a way of symbolic coping with brute facts (Wagner, 1998). Research with SRT has demonstrated how SRs assist individuals and group based symbolic coping with issues like biotechnology (Wagner & Kronberger, 2001), strange illnesses (Joffe & Haarhoff, 2002), and environmental challenges (Buijs et al., 2012). The symbolic coping function makes SRs both necessary and inevitable tools of human existence. Valsiner (2003, p. 6) argues that "higher human psychological functions operate via the construction of tools (signs, social representations) that subjectively stabilize the PAST→FUTURE movement through stability of the constructed signs." Following Valsiner, the representations of poverty can be understood in terms of how they help people negotiate their PAST→FUTURE movement.

The representations of poor people were understood as pertaining to three domains: the present state of being, pathways for escaping poverty, and social actors responsible for poverty. The representational activity in each of the three domains embodies poor people's symbolic coping and their efforts to move from an undesirable past state to an espoused future state. The first domain involves symbolic coping with the challenges of poverty through representational work. By identifying health problems, lack of employment opportunities etc., participants were

able cope with the 'brute facts' of their being in an undesirable present state. The symbolic coping achieved in this instance was of accepting the harsh realities of being poor. Similarly, through representing the hardship of poverty — threat of starvation, hard manual labour, dependence on others, and a general oppressed existence — participants were also able to justify the need for the espoused transition of the being from its present state of 'poverty' to a future state of 'not-in poverty'. The second domain — that of escaping poverty — helped poor people develop representations that contained templates of their plans to transition from 'poverty' to 'not poverty'. The path involved representations of social policies, achieving good health, and education as key pathways out of poverty. Crucially, the brute facts within this domain also led poor people to a reflexive realisation that the possibility of escaping poverty — the PAST→FUTURE movement — was stifled. This necessitated further symbolic coping that was observed in the third domain of their representations. By representing 'Government', 'Bureaucracy', and 'General Society' as the social actors responsible both for their present state and the stifled path of escaping poverty, the circle of symbolic coping was completed in the representational field of the poor.

The representations of the elite were also anchored in three very similar domains but there were crucial differences due to the nature of symbolic coping required by their specific Ego position. The first domain of elite representations contained their symbolic coping with poverty in terms of its necessity. By representing poverty as a necessity, the elite achieved a symbolic coping that allowed them to also outline their own PAST→FUTURE movement. As a necessity, for the elite's interests poverty must continue to exist in future — its continued existence will keep providing them with cheap labour to work in their fields, a steady stream of patients in their private clinics etc. As noted in Chapter 7, this form of symbolic coping was relatively muted, buried under a pro-poor discourse, and rarely came to surface. The second domain — representations of escaping poverty — shows a perfect symmetry between elite and poor people's representations and must be seen in conjunction with the third domain, which demonstrates self-protecting nature of the elites' symbolic coping. In representing the Government as the social actor responsible for alleviating poverty, the elite were able to deflect any onus away from their own Selves. This also allowed them to represent poverty as a problem of the Self in the second domain of their representations. What is more important, however, is that they also represented poor people as responsible for their own poverty. Thus the third representational domain was a vital pivot for elites' symbolic coping with poverty as it enabled them to absolve their own Selves from any responsibility for either the presence, or the failure in alleviating poverty.

Poverty representations in newspapers are a more challenging to understand in terms of the symbolic coping they afford. The four representational domains are perhaps best understood in terms of the ambivalent symbolic coping with poverty in the mass-media. On the one hand, poverty is represented as a threat to the well-being of the Self; on the other hand, it is also represented as a barrier. Similarly, another point of ambivalence exists in acknowledging the lived experiences of poverty on the one hand, and on the other representing it as an objective issue with focus on its measurement. By noting both the problem and the threat of poverty, the newspapers are able achieve a symbolic coping strategy that draws upon elements from both elite and poor participants. Ambivalence in media representations of other social issues has been noted by SRT researchers (Foster, 2001, 2006; Gill & Babrow, 2007) and in the context of the present research it can be understood as the newspapers' ambivalent symbolic coping with poverty while both reflecting and maintaining the status quo on it (cf. Joffe, 1998).

"Why do people represent a social object X in a certain fashion?" is an interesting question to ask. On one extreme, it informs efforts towards causal explanations in psychology. On the other extreme, the why question is inseparable from the problematic of access to the consciousness of other people — as Nagel (1974) argues, accessing consciousness of other Selves itself is problematic, much less the possibility of commenting on them. The explanation offered in this thesis is somewhere in between the two extremes. As Valsiner (2003, p. 3) notes, "representing is needed for experiencing, while experiencing leads to new forms of representing". If representation and experience are imagined to be in a cyclic relationship, the process of symbolic coping is the mechanism that acts as the catalyst.

9.4. HOW DO THESE REPRESENTATIONS OF POVERTY DEVELOP?

The founding principle in this project's attempt to integrate the separation between the content and process of representing is its conviction regarding the social nature of human mind (Valsiner & Van der Veer, 2000). In the same treatise, Valsiner and Van der Veer (2000, p. 5) note that "the mind is social, therefore we proceed to study it in ways X, Y, Z". The X, Y, and Z in the present research — or the approach to study the SRs of poverty — has drawn upon ideas of the Social Self and thesis of dialogical nature of social representations (Marková, 2003). This approach has allowed the project to reveal a number of interesting aspects about the integral nature of the content and the process of representations.

First, this research has demonstrated that representations of social objects are fundamentally linked to Alter(s) in the social world — SRs are not only developed *in relation to*, but also *in terms*

of these Alters. In adopting this perspective, and integrating the analysis of the content and processes of representations, this project seeks to develop a fresh perspective on conceptualising the relationship between groups and social representations in terms of Ego–Alter dialogicality. While there is a strong emphasis on the dynamic and evolving nature of social representations, the theory projects a static perspective on the groups that make these representations (Wagner, 1998; especially pp. 308). Findings of this research have demonstrated that the specific groups that Egos identify with are contingent on the latter's *relationship with* Alter(s) *in terms of who* SRs are developed. As discussed in § 9.1, this perspective allows for a dynamic conceptualisation of the relationship between social groups and their SRs, while also making the diversity in a group's knowledge on social objects more explicit within the framework of SRT. It can be argued that the hypothesis of cognitive polyphasia (Jovchelovitch, 2008a; Provencher, 2011) already provides a means for understanding the hybridity of social representations. However, such an explanation is limited to explaining the hybridity in the content of representations but fails to adequately explicate the processes that enable the hybridity. This thesis demonstrates that a full integration of *both* content and process can be achieved with a dialogical perspective on social representation where, to reiterate, representations are developed both *in terms of*, and *in relation to* Alter(s).

   Second, the project has also provided evidence that Alters(s) do not merely have a passive presence in communication — while the Ego retains control over the evocation of the Alter(s), once evoked, the Alter(s) have the power to occasionally destabilise the Ego. In this regard, this research further substantiates the notion of 'renegade voices'. Gillespie (2006) argues that occasionally, the voice of the Alter emerges in Ego's communication and upon their emergence, these 'renegade voices' have the potential to destabilise the Ego. In the present project, this phenomena has been analysed in terms of the power that certain Alter(s) hold to make certain identity positions untenable in terms of the 'tellability' of certain assertions (Valsiner, 2007). However, this also links with the larger debate in the thesis of dialogicality pertaining to the relationship with Hegelian dialectics. In line with Marková (1990), the findings of this research demonstrate that the dialogical relationship between the Ego and the Alter inherently change them for the future. For instance, as discussed in Part III of Chapter 8, the dialogical relationship between the researcher and the participants crucially evolved each of them both in microscopic moments with specific communication and over a longer period with regular dialogue (illustrations in § 8.7). Similarly, the project demonstrates that dialogical negotiations with the Alter(s), as well as with one's own Self, are the basis of Ego's reflection — in the act of reflecting, the Ego is no longer the same as it was *prior* to reflection. Essentially, the dialectic

growth and evolution of the human mind and Self become apparent in the findings of this project.

Third, a major contribution of this project is in demonstrating the relevance of understanding the social world in terms of Mead's formulation of social acts. The findings of the project demonstrate the power of social acts in at least three different ways: (1) they are crucial for representation of social objects (2) they contain vast amounts of information about the Ego and the Alter (3) they reveal the perspectives of the Ego and the Alter. Crucially, the project was able to present direct evidence as to how social acts create social objects and in turn, the social phenomena themselves — it was demonstrated that certain iterations of social act sequences are unique to the phenomenon of poverty (§ 8.2).

Fourth, while SRT has seldom tried to engage with Mead's work, the present project demonstrates the scope of making social acts integral to the theory. Social acts can become the unit of analysis for researchers working with SRT as they are a vital part of both microgenesis and ontogenesis of social representations (Duveen & Lloyd, 1990; Lloyd & Duveen, 1990). The findings of this research provide ample evidence in this regard. Ego's participation in a social act, or becoming aware of an Alter's participation in one, is essentially the tool for the ontogenesis of social representations. Foster (2011, p. 7) notes that ontogenesis is "how representations become active for the individual — how we grow into representations as we become functioning members of a social group." This research clearly shows that participation in social acts is a primary method of becoming aware of the way a society is structured and the SRs that populate it. For instance, the individual becomes aware of the representations of funerals being an expensive affair either through Ego's own participation, or through the observing the social enactment of FUNERAL[47]. For a different illustration, the research captured how through the social act of MEDICAL TREATMENT, doctors became aware of the representations that poor people have of government facilities and doctors (for e.g. SKS's last quote in § 6.6.1). Similarly, social acts are also microgenetic in nature. Recall the discussion in § 8.2 on the use of the social act of FUNERAL in the accounts of three different participants. While AM described the social act in full to drive the point about funerals being expensive, MKT only referred to the social act, and BP merely implied a funeral. Yet, in the latter two instances, both explicit and implicit references to the social act achieved the microgenetic evocation of social representations. Thus, social acts must be understood as a representational tool in terms of the ontogenetic and microgenetic roles

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[47] Of course, in this particular example, the same information can be obtained sociogenetically through a newspaper or a magazine story.

that they serve in everyday life. The proceedings of this research clearly demonstrate the potential of their integration with SRT.

Finally, as already discussed on § 9.2.3, this research demonstrates that dialogical mediations shape the relationship between the stable core and malleable periphery of social representations. In other words, dialogicality is not only at the heart of the generation of social representations but also of their activation and day to day use.

PART II: KEY FINDINGS FROM THE FIELD

A number of empirical findings from Bholi are important. The research has demonstrated that the lack of infrastructure and employment opportunities were the prime contributors to the persistence of poverty in the community. In this regard, the present research contributes to the corpus of studies that have linked planned public investment in creating and developing public infrastructure in India (Fan, Hazell, & Thorat, 1998), as well as other developing countries (Agénor & Moreno-Dodson, 2006). Similarly, the research revealed the lack of facilities at government hospitals and schools and contributes to the calls for greater spending on public institutions in India (Dreze & Sen, 2013). Another interesting empirical finding of the research is with regards the prevalence of protestant work ethic amongst the elite, when it comes to the issue of work attitudes of the poor. This is consistent with previous research that has found that in comparison to the UK and Europe, Indian middle class and elite tend to have greater subscription to just world beliefs (Furnham & Rajamanickam, 1992).

The scope of situating the empirical findings of the present research with other studies on the social representations of poverty is limited. Keeping the studies where poverty and disadvantage were contextual to the main issue of research aside (for e.g. Campbell, 2003; Campbell et al., 2012; Howarth, 2002; Jovchelovitch, 1995, 2000), apart from the author's published work (Chauhan, 2015; Chauhan & Foster, 2014), only two other studies have directly examined poverty with a SRT focus (Galli & Fasanelli, 1994; Rubi, 2004). The Rubi study examined the representation of poverty amongst the middle class, activists and NGOs, and poor people in Mexico. The study appears to have found two different representations of poverty but the paper does not provide sufficient clarity as to how the representations differed. Further, the methodological details of the study are sparse and the criterion for selecting participants in the 'poor' group can be seen as idiosyncratic at best, and stereotyping the poor at worst. The authors note that a "subjective identification based criteria" was used to include "people who don't want to work, with no values, no ambitions, etc." (Rubi, 2004, p. 130). Because of a lack of clarity in

procedure and reporting of result, along with a moral objection to an apparent stereotypical identification of poor people for participation, the present work will not refer to this study. The second research (Galli & Fasanelli, 1994) reported three studies done with children, attending primary and secondary school in Naples, Italy. Using drawings of "poor/rich dining room" (ibid, p. 5), the authors report that the drawings revealed a thematised representation of poverty in their drawings — the oppositional themata were dirty–clean; dark–bright; old–new. Similarly, a "simple content analysis" (ibid, p.8) of semi-structured interviews revealed that poverty was "described as a lack of something". In essence, the study was basic and the authors acknowledge it as a pilot research. Given the limited scope of this study, it is difficult to link it with the present work.

Moving ahead, a range of individual findings from Bholi can be organised in terms of two key social psychological issues: the issue of trust in the community and the importance of perspectives.

9.5. IF WE MUST, IN MONEY WE TRUST

Trust is a complex social psychological construct which is manifest in a wide range of everyday events (Marková & Gillespie, 2008). Valsiner considers trust to be a "semiotic mediator of the dynamic relation between stability and change of the life environment" (2008, p. xii). Trust is also a fundamental dialogical entity due to the necessity of dialectic relationships (Ego–Alter: I trust you; Ego–Ego: I trust myself), and the fundamental link with its opposite quality, distrust (Marková, Linell, & Gillespie, 2008).

The findings from Bholi suggest that as a social contract, trust was severely depleted throughout the community. It was missing in all imaginable dialogical relationships like 'Parent–Teacher', 'Patient–Doctor', 'Poor–Elite' etc. To some extent, the lack of trust was expected in light of the tension between the dialogical partners, apparent in all data chapters of the thesis. Yet, three issues are interesting regarding the lack of trust in the Bholi community. The first two are presented in terms of their relationship with one another and the third is posited as a potential explanation of the previous two.

First, differences with the Alter were not the only potential cause of the lack of trust — as noted (§ 5.7.2), poor people did not trust one another. Second, the lack of trust in the Government and democratic process was of an absolute nature and pervaded the discussions in the newspapers, and the accounts of poor and elite participants alike. These two issues need to be discussed in conjunction and contrast with one another. The issue of lack of trust in the

Government in general society of Bihar has been linked to the political situation and the descent of the state into near lawlessness in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Witsoe, 2013). The same theme has also been noted in Brazil where people lack trust in public institutions, yet, the crucial difference is that "Brazilians tend to trust people with whom they engage in contexts of everyday life, away from the state and political institutions" (Jovchelovitch, 2008b, p. 106). Trust in public institutions, politics, and the macro-social level has also been noted as an evolving entity in countries with new democracies (Mathias, 2008; Raudseep, Heidmet, & Kruusvall, 2007) — considering the evolving political situation of the state of Bihar where a governmental change has rekindled development and progress, this provides a potential explanation. Perhaps the most reasonable explanation of the lack of both interpersonal and institutional trust is afforded by Marková's argument about collective memory of the community (Marková, 2008). The collective memory based on "historically and socially constructed representations" (ibid, p. 268) is evidently tied to experiences of betrayal in the community. Data present clear evidence in this regard — for instance, KT referred to the memory of the colonial era when 'Divide and rule' was the political approach, and SD noted that both rich and poor were keen on cheating people of their money. This also brings to the issue of money which is the third noteworthy aspect of trust.

Money is a scarce resource in the deprived setting of Bholi, yet, it can be seen as informing the representation of trust. Empirical findings of the research indicated a strong distrust in government schools and hospitals and much greater trust in the quality of private schools and hospitals. A key difference between them was that the services at the former involved minimal or no monetary cost, whereas the latter required significant investments. This opens up a new perspective on the problematic — is the level of trust determined by whether or not people need to make monetary investments? In other words, does monetary cost inculcate trust in services? This hypothesis can be sustained by the evidence available in the data. As noted in § 5.7.1, one participant despite lacking any formal education or even a basic working understanding of the English language made the remark: "Money power [is] vast power". In some ways, the powerlessness that poor people experience in poverty (§ 5.1.2.3) can be understood in terms of their lack of what is perceived to be the basis of "vast power" in the community. Should this hypothesis be correct, it would collaborate with evidence from China where people partially derive trust from money — Liu (2008, p. 69) regards money as "deputy agent of trust" in this context. Thus, the lack of trust in anything else can be framed in terms of the presence of its opposite: trust in the power of money.

9.6. THE IMPORTANCE OF SHARED PERSPECTIVES AND KNOWLEDGE BASED REPRESENTATIONS

As discussed previously, the overall representational field of poverty in India is diverse and marked by a range of divergent perspectives. The second uniting theme of a number of empirical findings underlines the importance of creating shared perspectives and knowledge based representations. A number of instances of divergence in perspective between different groups are evident in the empirical data. The present discussion will examine two examples in depth to derive its arguments.

The first example of divergent perspectives is from healthcare. On the one hand, both poor and elite participants believed that doctors in government hospitals do not examine the patients properly — amongst other things, this observation was based on the short consultation period and was attributed to a lack of interest amongst the doctors (for e.g. AM's second quote in § 5.3.1 and TCB's quote in § 6.6.1). On the other hand, the perspective of the doctors on the issue was different and their explanations regarding patient load and inadequate infrastructure (for e.g. BKS's quote in § 6.6.1) were equally plausible. Similarly, a common representation in Bholi was that medicines supplied to the government hospitals were illicitly sold by the doctors (for e.g. PP's quote in § 5.3.1). Once again, the perspective of doctors on this issue was different — they argued that medicine availability was dependent on the Government supply (for e.g. SKS's last quote in § 6.6.1).

The second example can be provided in terms of the representation of the Midday Meal Scheme in the community. As discussed in § 5.4.3, the perspective of the Government in implementing this policy was guided by the agenda of improving nutrition, enrolment, and retention of poor children. However, in a climate of deficient trust in the Government, the participants' response to the policy were marked, on the one end, by strong opposition to it; and, on the other end, by altering their representations of schools. Based on these observations, this issue is discussed in a recent publication (Chauhan, 2015), available in Appendix X.

Differences in perspectives, inherently, are not undesirable. Gillespie (2008) notes that perspectival variation and alternative representations are a pre-requisite for communication. However, in the illustrative examples presented here, the differences are the basis of conflict and mistrust in the community. There are two potential ways of understanding these divergences of perspective with the aim of resolving the conflict. The first approach is rooted in Jovchelovitch'

s (2007) argument about dialogical and non-dialogical encounters[48]. She notes two important issues that determine the creation of shared perspectives: (1) the nature of Ego–Alter intersubjective relations; and (2) the representations about the knowledge of the Alter. Following Jovchelovitch's first argument, this research can argue with confidence that the relationship in both dialogical dyads (Patient–Doctor; Citizen–Government) is marked by tension, distrust, conflict, and opposition. These render the possibility of a dialogical encounter (see footnote 47) moot and hinder the creation of a shared perspective. The second approach to this issue can be derived using a more specialist formulation of intersubjective relationships between Ego and Alter (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010). Gillespie and Cornish's distinction between direct perspectives (Ego's opinion on issue X and Alter's opinion on issue X) and metaperspectives (Ego/Alter's belief about the other's opinion on issue X) can be used to understand this conflict. In the present instance, there is a difference in the direct perspectives of the dialogical partners — for e.g. poor people believe that doctors lacked interest whereas doctors believed that the quality of their medical care is constrained by patient load and facilities.

Potential solution to the conflicting perspectives rests in facilitating the development of metaperspective amongst the dialogical partners, i.e. doctors and patients/the Government and community are made aware of the Alter's perspective on the issue. In the least, this would create grounds for the recognition and awareness of the conflict, which must be regarded as the pre-requisite to the resolution of the conflict and creation of shared grounds. Interpreted from a different vantage point, creation of a metaperspective can also be understood as a precursor to enhancing participation of marginalised groups like the poor in healthcare issues and beyond (Campbell & Murray, 2004). What is more, the fostering of metaperspective can also link with Jovchelovitch's arguments about enabling the development of knowledge based representations.

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[48] Jovchelovitch's notion of dialogue is slightly different in its approach from the thesis of dialogicality that this project uses. She conceptualises dialogue in terms of recognition of the Alter and the legitimacy of its perspective which may be different from that of the Ego. Inherently, her position is informed by issues of social power, perceived superiority of certain forms of knowledge, and subjugation of alternative knowledge. She distinguishes between dialogical and non-dialogical in terms of the presence of recognition of the perspective of the Alter in the former, and a corresponding lack in the latter.

PART III: THE FINAL ACT

After a long and winding journey, this thesis enters its final act. The goal of this section is to engage in a review of what this thesis has hopefully managed to achieve. The end goal of this section, however, is forward facing — it seeks to explore the scope and purpose of future inquiries that this thesis can suggest.

9.7. ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The overall original contribution of this thesis is in terms of developing a novel paradigm for framing and guiding inquiries on social issues, not limited to poverty. It is hoped that when viewed in its entirety, this project has succeeded in fully developing an alternative, sociological social psychological, approach to studying social problems as dialogical social objects.

However, as Wagner (1998) notes, novelty in itself doesn't warrant validity and merit the acceptance of this paradigm. The strength of this paradigm comes from its development of a fresh perspective on poverty that has hopefully freed the concept of poverty from its epistemological thematisation in monetary theories. The approach developed in this thesis prioritises the social meaning making, without taking a strong constructivist position that cast a doubt on the existence of social problems beyond their social constructions. Conceiving poverty as a social object, this thesis has attempted an assimilation of the brute realities of poverty, along with a rigorous analysis of human meaning making and social construction. Second, as attempted through § 9.1–§9.4, this thesis seeks to present dialogical approaches as a means for integrating the research on 'content' and 'process' of representing within the framework of SRT. Finally, it is hoped that the thesis has demonstrated the opportunity and benefits of integrating macro, community/group level thematic analysis of social representations with meso and micro level analysis of dialogical negotiations that shape them.

Additionally, this thesis also makes a separate original contribution. Chapter 7 of this thesis bridges a surprising, yet extremely significant gap in literature — the chapter embodies the first known systematic analysis of the news coverage that poverty receives in the Indian press.

Finally, looking towards the future, it is hoped that this thesis will contribute to the development of a sociological social psychological approach where other social problems are conceptualised and researched in terms of their dialogical existence.

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APPENDIX I: Understanding India's poverty

There is seldom any debate on whether India is a poor country or not. Even the fiercest optimist will acknowledge that poverty is an undeniable reality in the Indian society. But has India always been poor? This section traces some of the archival accounts of Indian society and traces the prevalence of poverty and destitution in the country. As expected, the evidence from antiquity and middle ages is anecdotal, yet as the segment moves towards chronicling post independent India, data based on a monetary formulation of poverty become readily available.

Poverty during the days of the Raj (18th century—1947)

Perhaps the oldest surviving account of Indian society, written by a non-native and hence assumed to entail a degree of detached observation, comes from Pliny the Elder (AD 23—AD 79). In book 6 of his *Naturalis Historia,* Pliny the elder devotes several chapters to the land and people of India, meticulously noting the numerous thriving cities of the numerous kingdoms that occupied the modern day India (Pliny, 2014). Dreze and Sen (2013) note that Pliny the Elder 'provided descriptions of the open and flourishing economy of this region.' (p. 21). Yet, at best, such accounts can only provide an anecdotal window into the Indian society and economy in the days of antiquity.

Eighteenth century onwards, more reliable accounts of Indian society begin to emerge. In his magnum opus, *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith documents the prosperity of India prior to the arrival of the various East India Companies. In particular, Smith notes the presence of rich trade networks, thriving agriculture and exports that indicate a rather prosperous life in India. Writing about the province of Bengal[49], Smith notes, "Bengal, accordingly, the province of Indostan which commonly exports the greatest quantity of rice, has always been more remarkable for the exportation of a great variety of manufacturers than for that of its grain"(Smith, 1776, p. 555).

Comparing the living standards of Indians in the 18th century with their European counterparts is complex, yet studies suggest that for most part, Indian working class were well paid and lived comfortably. To illustrate, the wages of skilled artisans, namely, weavers, in mid-18th century India were between 55-135 pounds per week whereas in Britain, they were in the range of 40-140 pounds (Parthasarathi, 2011). As the British East India Company started gaining foothold in the local economy, followed by the accession of the British monarch as the governing sovereign over the Indian territory, the local industries and trade suffered (Dreze & Sen, 2013). It is, therefore, not surprising that the first assessments of poverty in early 20th century took a very grim position on the colonial powers and their role in the levels of destitution that prevailed in the country during that period.

The early 20th century assessments of Indian poverty are available in the accounts of Dadabhai Naoroji and RC Dutt — both shared a spirit of nationalism and endorsed the drain theory of colonialism. Naoroji's (1901) *Poverty and un-British rule in India* is one of the earliest accounts of poverty in modern India. Naoroji was a prominent nationalist and was opposed to trade policies that perished Indians to states of destitution. He estimated that 40 shillings per capita (Rs. 20) was the highest estimate plausible for the gross domestic product of India in the mid-19th century, which yet again provides a strong premise for engaging with the colonial argument for rise of poverty in India (Naoroji, 1870). Naoroji's works (1870, 1901) are critical,

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[49] The province of Bengal has since been divided into different states in India. Bengal, during the days of Adam Smith included regions that now fall under the territories of Odisha, Bihar, and the nation state of Bangladesh.

insofar as they provide some initial account of the prevalence and depth of poverty in India during the 19th century. In essence, his essays point in the direction of the colonial system and the trade restrictions put in place by the British administration as the prime factors responsible for deterioration of agriculture and indigenous industry that led to rise of poverty in the country. This thesis, often referred as the 'drain of wealth' had many supporters during the period and even post-independence (see, for example, Chandra, 1965; Dutt, 1992; Roy, 1987; Saberwal, 1979). Similarly, Karl Marx (1853) made several observations about the impact of colonial rule on the Indian society[50]. Without commenting directly on the drain of wealth thesis, Marx argued the British had not only neglected their responsibility of public works but were also responsible for actively damaging the native agriculture and industries. He writes,

> *"It was the British intruder who broke the Indian handloom and destroyed the spinning wheel. England began with driving the Indian cottons from the European market; it then introduced twist into Hindustan and in the end inunfated the very mother country of cotton with cottons. From 1818 to 1836 the export of twist from Great Britain to India rose in the proportion of 1 to 5,200. In 1824 the export of British muslins to India hardly amounted to 1,000,000 yards, while in 1837 it surpassed 64,000,000 yards. But at the same time the population of Dacca decreased from 150,000 inhabitants to 20,0000. British steam and science uprooted, over the whole surface of Hindustan, the union between agriculture and manufacturing Industry."*

Marx's ideas do not stand in solitude and indeed, writings from a large range of authors from the same era echo similar perspectives. Dutt (1916), for example, regarded British taxation on import and export of goods between India and Britain as unfair and systematically designed to stifle local industries of India. Sharing examples similar to Marx above, Dutt noted that the lopsided trade policies resulted in the collapse of many old centres of commerce and industry.

To conclude this section on poverty during the colonial era, on the one hand it can be argued that perhaps it would be foolish to regard India as a prosperous and thriving place before the British arrived, and hold the latter responsible for poverty in India — Maddison (1970) carefully observes that the Indian society during the middle ages was, among other things, deeply fractured around the caste system where the so called 'lower' castes lived in near abject poverty. Yet, on the other hand Maddison argues against absolving the colonial rules completely from the responsibility in creating a dysfunctional Indian economy ridden with poverty. To substantiate this argument, take for example, Rao's (1939) review of Naoroji (pp 11-22). It points towards some omissions and oversights in estimating per capita income during the years 1867-68 — Rao revised Naoroji's estimate from Rs. 20 to Rs. 23-24. Even with Rao's revision, the figure portrays an abominable state of Indian economy, strained and stagnated by the perils of colonial rule. In the 20th century period of colonial rule (1900-01 to 1946-47), the Gross Domestic Product of India 'grew' at 0.1 percent (Bagchi, 2010; Sivasubramonian, 2000). Yet, by all estimates, during the long colonial rule that lasted for centuries, the per capita real income of India did not grow, but instead, declined (Dreze & Sen, 2013). The relevance of the colonial rule to Indian poverty is perhaps best summed up by Dreze and Sen (2013) when they write, "Just as it is unnecessary to invent some imaginary golden age to acknowledge the relative prosperity of pre-colonial India, one does not have to be an aggressive nationalist to recount the rapid decline of the relative position of the Indian economy during the British Raj."

The last section provided a brief sketch of historical realities of poverty in India with a special focus on the colonial period. Admittedly, the statistical data from that period lacks the

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[50] It is important to note that in the same essay, Marx notes the several deficiencies of the Indian society that the British colonial rule had the potential to address. His article cited above is not a uni-dimensional critique of colonial Britain and its policies in India.

refinements of the modern estimates but they nevertheless, provide a useful window to the spread of poverty in the 18th and 19th century India marked by declining commerce and deterioration in income. Given the persistence reference to colonialism in most historic discussions on poverty, it sets up the task of tracing how poverty was dealt after India gained independence in 1947. The next section discusses that the transition into an independent India was not necessarily a transition into prosperity for the millions of poor Indians.

Poverty in the Independent India (1947 — to present)

After a prolonged struggle for independence, the undivided British India was partitioned into two independent nation states: Pakistan (East and West) and India. While the previous section refers to the undivided India, this segment deals with post-independence, post partition India.

Unlike many other countries that emerged from their colonial past throughout the 20th century, India had a distinct advantage of having a strong democratic idea along with a consensual and well formulated socio-political ideology (Chandra, 2000). Building on the ideas of self-reliance and rapid industrialisation which the state had set itself to champion, under the Prime Ministership of Jawaharlal Nehru, India adopted a Stalinist system of 5 year plans beginning with the first plan spanning 1951-1956. As it should be expected from a newly independent country, rapid economic growth, guided by some socialist ideas were at the heart of the early economic planning in India. During the first few decades, India could manage a rather modest rate of growth but post economic reforms in the early 1990s, the growth rate has climbed up the chart, making India one of the fastest growing economies in 2013 (Dreze & Sen, 2013). Broadly speaking, economic growth is supposed to benefit the poor and improve their living conditions — the broad idea is encapsulated in the 'trickle down' doctrine which has as many critics as there are supporters (for a brief overview, see, Arndt, 1983). Later in this chapter, some attention would be devoted to the economic growth achieved since independence and how this growth *has not substantially affected* — the state of poverty and the lives of the poor in the nation.

Poverty estimation exercises in India have always adopted 'absolute poverty' measures. Broadly, poverty assessment initiatives operationalise the concept of poverty in two ways: absolute poverty and relative poverty. Absolute poverty, most commonly used in developing countries, uses a minimum income threshold required to sustain the most important commodity requirements of life and people who live below this income threshold are regarded as poor. Most developed nations use a relative criterion where poverty levels are determined with respect to the income of the whole population — the UK, for example, uses this approach (for a good discussion on this issue, see, Foster, 1998). Attempts to systematically study the problem of poverty in India started in 1962 with an establishment of a working committee to estimate monetary requirements for a minimum standard of living. The committee noted that to maintain the minimum standard of living at 1960-61 prices, a per capita monthly income of Rs 20 in rural areas and Rs 25 in urban areas was required (GOI, 1993). Several estimates of poverty prevalence were made using these recommendations. It was estimated that between 46.0 to 59.4 per cent of Indians lived under poverty in 1960-61 (Dantwala, 1973). Another estimate used Rs 15 for rural and Rs 21 as urban cut off points (per capita, monthly expenditure, 1960-61 prices), and estimated 38 per cent of rural India and 44 per cent of urban India to be living under poverty (Bardhan, 1973). However, the defining moment in getting a grasp over the extent of poverty in India came with the landmark expert group report in 1972 (Dandekar & Rath, 1971a, 1971b). The operational definition of poverty used by the expert group was purely calorific-monetary. The committee regarded 2,250 calories as the minimum dietary intake necessary for an adult and using this calorific criterion, set Rs 170 and Rs 270 (per capita per month in rural and urban areas respectively) as the income threshold for poverty. These figures revealed that 30.92 per cent of

rural Indians and 46.50 per cent of urban Indians were living under poverty (Dandekar & Rath, 1971a). While the rationale behind the definition of poverty, as well as the poverty lines thus established were put under severe examination (see for example, Rao, 1977; Sukhatme, 1978), Dandekar and Rath's assessment of poverty proved to be the official poverty estimate from India (Dandekar, 1981). The poverty assessment methodology in India has subsequently been revised on several occasions(GOI, 2009); yet, poverty is still measured in India in absolute terms. The most recent poverty assessment exercise completed in June 2014 under the chairmanship of Dr. C. Rangarajan (henceforth, Rangarajan committee) recommends state specific poverty lines that would be sensitive to regional variances in incomes and prices of commodities (GOI, 2014, pp. 53–70). Using the Rangarajam committee methodology and the National Sample Survey (2011-2012) data, 30.9 per cent of rural and 26.4 per cent of urban population in India lives under poverty. In total, this amounts to 29.5 per cent of all Indians, or about 363 million people who live in acute poverty in India.

Compiling several poverty assessment initiatives in the post-independence India, one can make a rough estimate of the progress the country has made in tackling the problems of poverty. Table 1 presents the data on the poverty trends in India. It is important to note that the data for different time periods have been put together with different assessment methodologies and in that sense, are not comparable in the true sense. In the least, however, they give an idea about the 'officially' recognised levels of poverty in the country.

Table 1: The poverty trend in India

	Poverty %		Number of Poor (Millions)		
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Total
1960-1961	38.9	40.4	141.0	32.0	173.0
1964-1965	46.8	45.7	184.0	42.0	226.0
1970-1971	47.5	41.5	210.0	46.0	256.0
1973-1974	56.4	49.6	261.0	60.0	321.0
1982-1983	45.6	40.8	252.0	71.0	323.0
1987-1988	39.1	38.2	232.0	75.0	307.0
1993-1994	37.3	32.4	244.0	76.0	320.0
1999-2000*	27.1	23.6	193.0	67.0	260.0
2009-2010A	33.8	20.9	278.0	76.0	355.0
2009-2010B	39.6	35.1	326.0	129.0	455.0
2011-2012A	25.7	13.7	217.0	53.0	270.0
2011-2012B	30.9	26.4	261.0	102.0	363.0

Notes:
* The year 1999-2000 marked methodological changes in the collection of National Sample Survey (NSS) Data. Hence comparisons are fraught with difficulty.
[A] Estimates based on Tendulkar Methodology.
[B] Estimates based on Rangarajan Methodology.

Data from table 1 shows a clear trend. People became poorer than before in the 1960s and 1970s. By the middle of 1970s, over half of Indian population was living under a calorifically defined poverty line. There appears to be an apparent reduction in poverty levels through the 90s but if the most recent poverty estimates are taken into consideration (GOI, 2014), nearly 40 percent of rural India and 35 per cent of urban India was poor in 2009-2010 and 31 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively, in 2011-2012. More importantly, if we speak of officially recognised levels of poverty, the Rangarajan committee recommendations suggests that in absolute

numbers, India has the more poor people in the current national records, than ever before. The 363 million Indian poor, for sake of comparison, make over 5 times the total population of the United Kingdom.

To conclude, it is clear that in India poverty is problem of unimaginable scale and size. The headcount levels of poverty, or poverty in absolute numbers, keeps growing. The numbers are surely large, but how does Indian poverty compare qualitatively with other poor regions of the world and more particularly, in the neighbouring South East Asia? The next section examines Indian poverty in a comparative context.

HAVE THE POOR GAINED FROM GROWTH? A COMPARATIVE CONTEXT TO INDIAN POVERTY

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, India has boasted a very healthy economic growth for the last 10 years and indeed, in terms of GDP or GNP per capita, India ranks very high globally. Yet, this enigmatic growth needs to be examined closely as it often masks very harsh inequalities and the lack of well-distributed development. This sections moves beyond the paradigm of income growth and examines the status and development of Indian society on several social parameters. To provide a perspective, this section makes frequent comparisons with countries in sub Saharan Africa (SSA) and South East Asia (SEA)—the two clusters that are widely recognised as the poorest regions of the world.

The human development index (HDI) is a useful concept to rate any country's performance on advancing good living conditions for its citizens (Anand & Sen, 1994, 1997). The HDI is also a sharp and reliable indicator of general development and quality of life and is often regarded as an excellent indicator of the extent and nature of poverty in a country. Comprising of three broad dimensions, which include an income dimension, a health and well-being dimension, and an education dimension, the HDI is indeed a robust approach to evaluating the welfare and development of any country—unfortunately, for all its economic growth, India fares very poorly in the HDI. In the latest report from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), out of the 186 countries for which data were available, India ranks a lowly 136th(UNDP, 2013). Table 2 presents the performance of India on the HDI and its components and it is clear that on all components, India lags behind even the global average.

Table 2: HDI and its components — India and the Global average

	Human Development Index (HDI)	Life Expectancy at Birth	Mean Years of Schooling	Gross National Income (GNI) per capita
	(value)	*(years)*	*(years)*	*(2005 PPP $)*
Data Years	**2012**	**2012**	**2012**	**2012**
India	0.554	65.8	4.4	3,285
World	0.694	70.1	7.5	10,184

Source: Human Development Report 2013 (UNDP, 2013)

Most of the countries that are ranked below India on HDI are from SSA or are regions strife with political instability and civil war. Dreze and Sen (2013) make an incisive observation about

India's performance on several indicators of human welfare and development and compare it with world's poorest 16 countries outside the SSA. The comparison brings forward some very disturbing realisations. Even in this cohort, compared to the average, India has a lower life expectancy at birth, higher infant mortality rate, lower access to improved sanitation, lower mean years of schooling, lower female literacy rate, and alarmingly, is the second worst performer on child malnourishment rates[51].

All evidence suggests that the harvest of the great Indian economic boom has not been shared evenly by its citizens and it is the poor who have failed to receive a share of the development pie (Kohli, 2012). The most disturbing aspect, however, is that during the golden period of Indian economic growth (1991 onwards) the country has failed to improve its performance on a range of social indicators. In fact, among the six countries that form the Indian subcontinent, India has been overtaken by at least one country on the 12 most widely used indicators of development.[52] Table 3 [adapted from Dreze and Sen (2013)] presents the details:

Table 3: Decline in social indicators during the period of growth – India's rank in South Asia

INDICATOR	*India's rank among the 6 countries of the subcontinent*	
	1990	2011
GDP per capita	4	3
Life expectancy	4	5
Infant mortality rate	2	5
Under 5 mortality rate	2	5
Maternal mortality ratio	3	4
Total fertility rate	2	4
Access to improved sanitation	4-5[a]	5
Child immunisation (DPT)	4	6
Child immunisation (measles)	6	6
Mean years of schooling, age 25+	2-3[a]	4
Female literacy rate	2-3[a4]	4
Proportion of underweight children	4-5[a]	6

[a] Ambiguous rank due to missing data from Bhutan (Nepal, in case of underweight children).

Clearly, despite the high rate of economic growth that India has registered, the problems of the poor seem to stay firmly in place — what is more, as Table 3 indicates, India has failed to match the progress made by its neighbours on important indicators of development. The HDI, along with all the scientific literature on poverty, considers improving healthcare and education facilities to be the prime vistas in the path to fighting poverty and as Table 3 documents, India's performance on these two broad dimensions is appalling.

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[51] The 16 countries are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, Haiti, India, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Moldova, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Yemen. For further details, see Table 3.1 (p.49) in Dreze and Sen (2013).

[52] The 6 countries are: India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka.

The next section reviews the Indian healthcare and education system and argues how they embody a paradox for the 363 million poor in India. The purpose of the review is not to revisit the healthcare and educational policies of India, nor it is to document their evolution — several excellent reviews exist in that direction. The following section, instead, seeks to highlight the practical problems and the exclusion of the poor from healthcare and education.

Healthcare and Education: A paradox for the Indian poor

Poor people are the most disadvantaged social group with respect to achieved health and well-being, access to healthcare, and ability to avoid preventable illnesses (Dixon, 2000; Marmot & Wilkinson, 2006). Similarly, the poor are also severely marginalised with respect to education and are most likely to drop out of schools and formal education (Govinda, 2003; Tilak, 2002). Not surprisingly, in addition to improving the income of poor families, most anti-poverty programmes seek to improve the healthcare provisions available to the poor along with idea of enhancing their educational attainment. Yet, the poor in India remain severely excluded from participating in these areas.

Over the last 20 years, the public expenditure on health has remained around 1 per cent of the country's GDP, making it one of the bottom 10 countries of the world in this regard (Dreze & Sen, 2013). The government healthcare facilities in India are disorganised, lacking in even basic infrastructure and resources. The fundamental point of delivery of public healthcare in India is a Primary Health Centre (PHC) which is expected to serve all basic needs of citizens, save specialist treatments and major surgeries. A sample study by the Planning Commission of India revealed that not a single PHC sampled met the required combination of facilities, including the availability of a lady doctor (GOI, 2001). The study further revealed that the doctors are often absent and most patients are looked after by para-medical and auxiliary staff at the PHC. Dreze and Sen (2013) also report that a nationwide survey conducted on the functioning of PHC's revealed that 31 per cent did not have a single bed, only 20 per cent had a telephone and in the state of Bihar, most PHC were without electricity, a weighing scale, or even a toilet.

A very similar picture can be painted for the state of education in the country. The public spending on education is at a measly 3.20 per cent of the total GDP and with a global rank of 134th, is among the lowest in the world — not surprisingly, 40 per cent of adults (above the age of 15) in the country are illiterate (World Factbook, 2014). In the year 2002 the Indian parliament passed a landmark bill [Right to Education (RTE)] making primary education a fundamental right of children, and made it both free and mandatory (see MHRD, 2002). The RTE act has certainly improved the school enrolment figures — the latest Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) reports only 3.3 per cent of children aged 6-14 years were not in school (Pratham, 2014). However, just as the case was with healthcare, the state supported schools of rural India are very ill equipped — 54.7 per cent and 26.2 per cent of schools respectively fail to meet the pupil-teacher ratio and the classroom-teacher ratio outlined in the RTE Act of 2002 (Pratham, 2014). More shockingly, however, more than 1/3rd of primary schools lack functional toilets, over 1/4th of schools do not have drinking water and over 1/3rd of schools do not have a playground.

In essence, the lack of public spending on health and education, along with the poor facilities available of state funded institutions, has led to a burgeoning private sector in both these domains. In fact, India is regarded as having one of the most commercialised healthcare and education systems in the world where if one is ready to pay a steep price one can get healthcare and education of world leading standard in the private sector (Balarajan, Selvaraj, & Subramanian, 2011; Dreze & Sen, 2013; Sengupta & Nundy, 2005). The prevailing state of affairs presents a paradox for the millions of extremely poor households in India. On the one hand,

good health and quality education are routinely regarded as major contributors to one's chances of overcoming poverty (Connell, 1994; Govinda, 2003; Hanjra, Ferede, & Gutta, 2009; Krishna, 2010; Peters et al., 2008; Thiede & Traub, 1997). On the other hand, quality healthcare and education opportunities are highly commercialised and remain out of reach of the poor. The grim reality is that while Indians with a strong financial position who have really reaped benefits of the high growth rate have access to world class hospitals and schools in the private sector, while the poor still rely on state run hospitals and schools which do not even have bare minimum facilities. It appears that there are two Indias that co-exist in the same geographical space — an India of opportunity and comfort and an India of neglect and want. To further complicate the problematic, much evidence suggests that poverty appears to persist in some pockets of the country more than others. The paradox that India presents is of reconciling widespread hunger amidst a space programme; a quest to reach for the moon, when millions cannot read or write; a quest to be a global superpower while millions have no control over their own lives. In the last few years, there has been much heralding of the India that strives; yet, there is an India that starves — Bihar is the part of the second India.

APPENDIX II: Bihar: A short and purposeful introduction

If India presents a paradox, Bihar magnifies it several times. Historically, Bihar has been at the "centre of Indian civilisation for over a thousand years" (Sen, 2013, p. 3). Its capital city, Patna — or Patliputra as it was called in antiquity — was the largest city in the world for a hundred years between 300 BC and 200 BC (Chandler, 1987). Under the rule of the Mauryan dynasty, the city was the seat of the first empire when India, as we know it today, appeared under a single nation state. The state can hold to its credit the oldest university in the world, one of the oldest republics of the world, Aryabhatta's pioneering work in Mathematics, Panini's formal grammar of Sanskrit, and the religion of Buddhism (Sen, 2013).

The present day state of Bihar is a land-locked state in north India, sharing a long international border with Nepal to its north. It is flanked by the state of Jharkhand in the south, West-Bengal in the west, and Uttar Pradesh in the East. Bihar is divided into 38 administrative districts and the capital of the state, Patna, is located on the bank of the Ganges and is among the biggest cities in Eastern India. Today, Bihar is far removed from the glory-days of its remarkable past — things took a turn for the worse in the post-independence India hitting a crescendo around the middle of the first decade of the 21ˢᵗ century. In 2004, a special report on India published in the Economist devoted an entire section on Bihar titled as 'An area of darkness'. The report unabashedly observed that Bihar "has a claim to be the ancient heart of India. These days it is seen as the armpit. […] It has become the byword for the worst of India." By all accounts, by 2004-05 Bihar was at its lowest. More than half of Bihar's population was in poverty, with no jobs in the state, kidnapping and ransom were a thriving industry, and the rule of law was in tatters (Chakrabarti, 2013). Things had turned so foul that to capture the state of affairs in Bihar, a new moniker — *Jungle Raj* — was coined in the public discourse. *Jungle Raj* loosely translates to 'the rule of the wilderness' and it was only accurate in its description of Bihar, considering that in 1997 a bench of judges in Patna High Court observed that there was "no government worth the name in Bihar as a handful of corrupt bureaucrats ran the administration"(Prasad, 1998, p. 519).

In 2005, things turned around for Bihar. Bihar started making progress, and recorded the some of the highest recorded economic growth rates amongst all Indian states — this was reflected in the titles of some of the books written about the state towards the end of 2010s: Bihar Breakthrough (Chakrabarti, 2013), The New Bihar (N.K. Singh & Stern, 2013) etc. But what brought about this transformation? The upsurge in Bihar was the result of a change in the political landscape and government. After nearly fifteen years of rule by the Rashtriya Janda Dal (RJD), under Nitish Kumar's leadership, the state elected a coalition government of the Janta Dal United (JDU) and the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP). For outsiders, this was a puzzle — how could a state remain under lawlessness, severe decay, and abject poverty and keep electing the same government for three terms from 1990-2005? Even for Indians not from the state, understanding Bihar is difficult — authors writing books on the state have observed that "understanding Bihar in its mind-numbing complexity remained a daunting task" (Chakrabarti, 2013, p. 251). Understanding the social context of Bihar is a matter of appreciating the intertwinement of its poverty, its society and politics with economy and poverty of the state.

Society

According to the most recent census of India in 2011, Bihar is the third most populous state of India with a sex ratio of 921 females per 1000 males. Bihar has the poorest literacy rates for

both males (59.7 per cent) and females (33.1 per cent). The state has a predominantly Hindu population (82.69 per cent), followed by Muslims (16.87 per cent) — all other religious groups combined are less than 0.5 per cent of the population[53]. Bihar is primarily a rural state with the lowest level of urbanisation amongst all Indian states — agriculture and casual labour in the unorganised sector are the primary economic activity in rural Bihar (A. N. Sharma & Rodgers, 2015).

The social structure of Bihar is hierarchical with a significant onus on the caste system — a problematic social segregation strategy unique to India, and deeply entrenched in Bihar. Beteille (1965, p. 46) describes castes as "characterised by endogamy, hereditary membership, and a specific style of life which sometimes includes the pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system." As the definition suggests, the caste system segregates the society in 'forward' or 'upper' castes (Brahmins and Kshatriyas) and 'backward' or 'lower' castes (Vaishyas and Kshudras), sustained by sanctioning marriages within the same caste group. Historically, the 'upper' castes have held advantage over the 'lower' castes in terms of their relative prosperity (Borooah, 2005), greater social power (D. Roy, 2012), and greater control over politics (Heath & Yadav, 2010). Data indicate that the caste based domination continues to be significant in Bihar — in both 1999 and 2009, more 'upper' caste familes were feudal land-owners employing 'lower' caste landless labour in their fields than in 1981 (A. N. Sharma & Rodgers, 2015). With a society deeply entrenched in the caste system, caste issues have a big influence in the democratic processes — the issue of uplifting the 'lower' castes has been the winning political cause in the state for the past three decades.

The politics of Bihar is difficult to understand for an outsider, especially for people not familiar with the social structure. It has been long recognised that the biggest influence on the political landscape of the state is from the dynamics and alignment of caste politics (Blair, 2015; Gupta, 2005). The 'upper' castes in Bihar, despite their relative prosperity, comprise less than 16 per cent of total votes in the state (India Today, 2012) and historically, the governments have been formed in the state on the basis of 'lower' caste support. Over the last quarter of a century, between 1990 and the present, two figures have dominated the politics of the state: Lalu Prasad Yadav of the party Rashtriya Janta Dal (RJD) and Nitish Kumar of the party Janta Dal United (JDU) — both come from the 'lower' castes in Bihar.

In the assembly elections of 1990, the RJD came to power in Bihar under the leadership of Lalu. Mustering the support of the 'lower' castes, and the minority Muslim community, Lalu's RJD contested on the argument of social justice against the 'upper' caste domination of Bihar's politics. Lalu remained in power for 15 years, half of which was with his wife as the puppet Chief Minister, while he was jailed for corruption. Witsoe (2013) presents a cogent analysis of this period where he argues that despite the state slipping into lawlessness, the caste politics and corrupt elections ensured that the RJD remained in power through three elections. In 2005, political power changed hands. Nitish Kumar led coalition between BJP and JDU uprooted Lalu and won the election on the promise of good-governance and rule of law — this marks the start of the period of economic growth and development in Bihar (N.K. Singh & Stern, 2013). The newly elected government worked towards re-establishing the rule of law in the state by roping in the criminal underworld through speedy trials in special courts (Chakrabarti, 2013). This was a welcome change in a state where people had lived in a climate of fear and Nitish's JDU-BJP coalition was re-elected for a second term in 2010. However, in 2013, Nitish's JDU stepped out

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[53] All the data are from the 2011 census of India available at
http://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/bihar.html

of the coalition citing the perceived right-wing Hindu nationalist agenda of the BJP. In the most recent re-election of Nitish for a third term as Bihar's Chief Minister, the JDU entered into a hitherto unimaginable coalition with his long-standing opponent Lalu's RJD. The caste politics of Bihar ensured a victory of Lalu-Nitish coalition over the BJP with its combined electoral base of 'backward' castes and Muslims. As if history were to take a full-circle in the state, the return of Lalu's party in power has reignited the sobriquet of Jungle Raj in the media.

The empirical part of research was undertaken in 2013, when Lalu and Nitish were still sworn political enemies and the coalition between JDU and BJP was firmly in place.

Economy

In 2005-06, the growth rate[54] of Bihar's economy was 0.17 per cent — abysmally low compared to the national growth rate of 9.48 per cent (Aiyar, 2014). In the next six years, during Nitish Kumar's government, the state's economy grew at nearly 11 per cent on average whereas India's average growth rate in the same period was slightly over 8 per cent (ibid). While the turnaround in the economic growth of the state was nothing short of spectacular and receives a lot of attention, its lop-sided nature is seldom spoken about.

Between the three primary divisions of economy — agriculture, industry and services — contrary to popular belief, Bihar's economy is not agrarian if their relative contributions are taken into account. The carving of a separate state of Jharkhand from the erstwhile Bihar in the year 2000 took away most of its industries and therefore is a logical point for understanding the recent growth of Bihar's economy. After the bifurcation, the share of industry[55] in the economy was cut from 22.5 per cent to 4.6 per cent and the shares of service industry and agriculture rose from 36 per cent to 50 per cent and 41.5 per cent to 45.4 per cent respectively (Mukherji & Mukherji, 2012). When Nitish assumed office in 2004-05, industry contributed 6 per cent to Bihar's economy and services contributed nearly 62 per cent. Agriculture's share declined to a little over 30 per cent but at 81 per cent of the population, it employed a surprisingly large share of Bihar's workforce (Basu, 2013). As the economy of Bihar grew at an unprecedented rate of over 10 per cent on average during Nitish Kumar's first term (2004-2009), the share of service industry increased to 87.7 per cent — agriculture and industry further declined in their proportionate contribution to 7.7 and 4.5 per cent respectively (ibid). Interestingly, despite the continuous decline in its contribution to the state's economy, agriculture continued to be the source of livelihood for over two-third of Bihar's population (Shah, 2016).

Put together, the paradox of Bihar's growth becomes evident — the economy is unquestionably growing but it is doing so with a severe imbalance. The growing service industry benefits the middle class and the elite that dominate the sector, whereas poor people with no marketable skills or education rely on wages from manual labour in the dwindling agriculture sector. Not surprisingly, the stubbornness of poverty in the state is strongly linked to the poor state of agriculture. Shah (2016) has argued that poverty reduction in Bihar is difficult to achieve without the development of agriculture, which is being thwarted by lack of electricity, neglect of irrigation, and poor policies regulating the agriculture market. Unsatisfactory rewards from agriculture have forced a large population of adult Bihari males into casual manual labour as migrants in other states of India, providing an alternative source of income and diversification of

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[54] Growth rate measured in terms of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth at constant prices of 2004-2005.

[55] The respective shares in economy are measured in terms of Net Domestic Product (NDP). NDP is the GDP sans the depreciation in assets.

economic activities (Datta, Rodgers, Rodgers, & Singh, 2014). A recent survey of 37 villages in Bihar found that over 50 per cent of males between the age of 15 and 59 undertook seasonal employment outside their native village and state — of these, more than 90 percent spent longer than six months at a time in migrant employment (Rodgers, 2012). While no systematic data is available for the extent to which the poor households in the state depend on the income generated by migrant labour, the high percentage of households with migrant workforce suggests that this forms a significant part of the state's economy.

In summary, it can be said that the economic boom of Bihar is driven by the growth of services industry. However, agriculture continues to be the prime economic activity of the state on which nearly two-third of its population depends. Importantly, the dependence on agriculture is not in terms of cultivating one's own land for crops — as already discussed in § 4.1.2.1, the land ownership is limited to the 'upper' castes that comprise less than 16 per cent of Bihar's adult population. Instead, the dependence on agriculture is derived out of association with manual labour on the fields of the 'upper' caste landowners. As documented in the 2011 census, less than 19 per cent of rural households depend on agricultural produce for their livelihood, whereas marginally less than 71 per cent of them rely on income generated by manual labour — among the states of India, by far, Bihar has the largest number of households dependent on manual labour[56]. The workforce engaged in manual labour often takes up migrant work as a common strategy to support its income during periods when local jobs are thin.

Poverty

In early phase of post-independent India, Bihar was regarded as a model state with respect to its political consciousness, land reforms, and democratic governance (Rorabacher, 2008). However, in subsequent decades, Bihar became progressively poorer than ever before. Comparing poverty levels in Bihar during different time periods is difficult because of the differences in methodologies that were used. The three most recent exercises of poverty assessment in India have been undertaken by the Lakdawala committee (GOI, 1993), the Tendulkar committee (GOI, 2009), and the Rangarajan committee (GOI, 2014). The recommendations of Lakdawala committee were accepted by the government in 1997 and remained in use until January 2011. In the meantime, a second expert committee headed by Tendulkar was commissioned in 2005 and its report (GOI, 2009) was accepted by the government in 2011. In 2012, the Rangarajan committee was constituted and it submitted its report in 2014 (GOI, 2014) — in addition to producing a new methodology for poverty assessment, the report provided a breakthrough by retrospectively applying the pre-existing methodology of the Lakdawala committee on previous data, making it possible to meaningfully examine the progression of poverty in the country and its states. Table 4.1 presents the prevalence and progression of poverty in Bihar between the 1970s and the 2010s. The table also includes notes to assist the interpretation of the data and a list of states that were found to be poorer than Bihar in each assessment period. Figure 4.1 plots the progression of poverty in Bihar, as compared with India as a whole.

As evident from the table, regardless of the methodology adopted, over one-third of Bihar's population has always remained in poverty. Data suggest that while India managed to halve its poverty[57] between 1973 and 2005, Bihar lagged behind and could only reduce the incidence by

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[56] Data is from the Census of India, 2011. Available at
http://secc.gov.in/statewiseMainSourceOfIncomeReport?reportType=Main%20Source%20Of%20In come

[57] The data made available is for India as a whole, including Bihar.

less than one-third. This becomes more explicit from the fourth column of the table — Bihar continued to languish while the rest of the states, with the exception of Orissa, made significant advancements in reducing poverty. However, the change is government at the end of 2004 seems to have made a dent in the level of poverty. As the slope of the graph in Figure 4.1 suggests, in the subsequent period, Bihar seems to show a higher rate of poverty reduction than that of the Indian average.

Table II: Poverty in Bihar and other states during different assessment exercises.

Assessment period	BIHAR (% of population in poverty)	INDIA (% of population in poverty)	OTHER STATES (poorer than Bihar)
1973-1974[L]	61.91	54.88	Orissa, West Bengal
1977-1978[L]	61.55	51.32	Madhya Pradesh, Orissa
1983[L]	62.22	44.48	Orissa, Dadra & Nagar Haveli
1987-1988[L]	52.13	38.86	Orissa
1993-1994[L]	54.96	35.97	*
1999-2000[L]	42.60	26.10	Orissa
2004-2005[L]	41.4	27.5	Orissa
2004-2005[T]	54.4	37.2	Orissa
2009-2010[T]	53.5	29.8	*
2009-2010[R]	63.9	38.2	*
2011-2012[T]	33.7	21.9	Chhattisgarh[D], Jharkhand[D], Manipur, Dadra & Nagar Haveli
2011-2012[R]	41.3	29.5	Chhattisgarh[D], Jharkhand[D], Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Orissa

Table Notes: [A] *Lakdawala Committee Methodology, used for official purposes until January 2011* (GOI, 2014); [B] *Tendulkar Committee Methodology* (GOI, 2009); [C] *Rangarajan Committee Methodology* (GOI, 2014); [D] *Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand were carved out of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, respectively.*
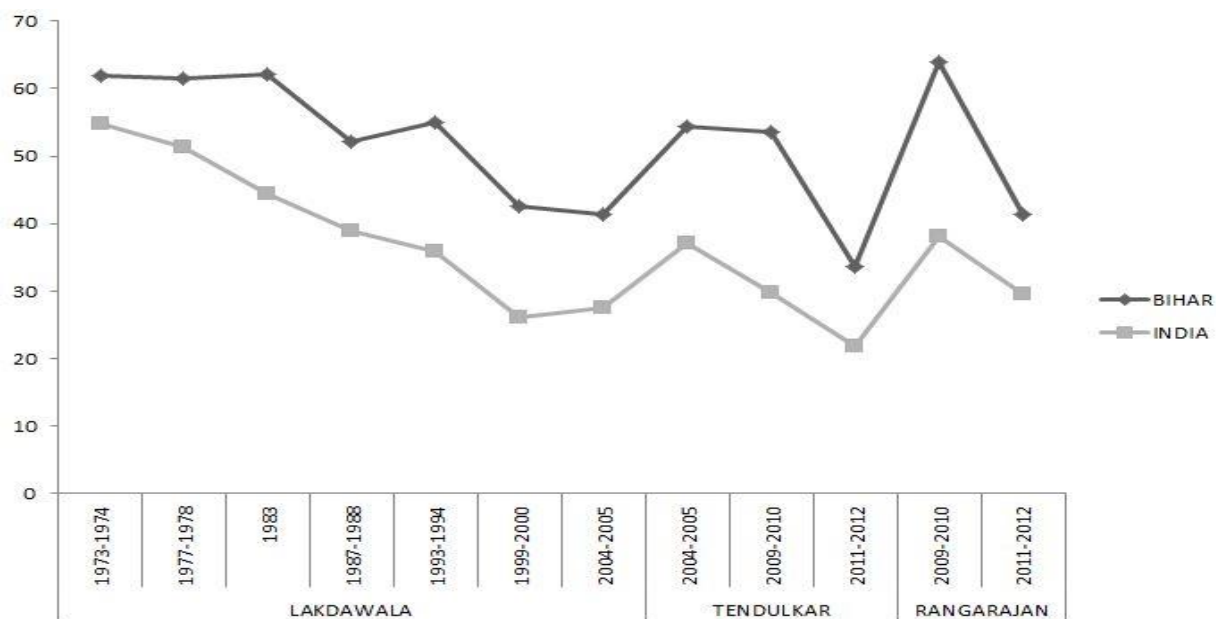
Figure II. The progression of poverty in India and Bihar

However, despite the current period of growth, the society of Bihar remains deeply entrenched in poverty and the latest estimates using the current poverty assessment methodology suggest that over 40 per cent of the population lives in poverty.

APPENDIX III: Original interview schedule

I.   POVERTY

Can you tell me the story of your life, starting from your childhood up until now?

- *Prompts on educational history*
    - *Did you go to the school?*
    - *What took you to school?/What prevented you?*
    - *Can you tell me about your experiences there?*
    - *For how long?*
    - *Why did you not study further?*
- *Prompts on parents*
    - *Did your father own any land? (Inheritance in Bihar is partriarchal)*
    - *Can you describe your father and his occupation?*
    - *Did your mother work?*
- *Prompts on marriage*
- *Prompts on their occupation and how they started doing what they did.*
- *Can you tell me about your livelihood? What do you do when you are not working?*
- *Participants who self-identified themselves as poor: You said that you consider yourself poor. Why do you think that you are poor?*
- *Do you think your parents were poor?*
- *When do you consider someone to be poor?*
- *Can you tell me some of the ways in which being poor has affected your life?*
- *In this village, how are the lives of the poor different from the lives of the rich?*
- *Most of the people that I have met in this village consider themselves poor. Why do you think there is so much poverty in this village?*
- *Do you think people manage to come out of poverty? How can people overcome poverty?*

II.   EDUCATION
- *Do you think education is important and can help the poor?*
- *Do your children go to the school?*
- *What are the arrangements of education in the village? Can you tell me something about the schools here?*

III.   HEALTH
- *Do you consider yourself healthy? How does one know whether one is healthy or not?*
- *Have you had health problems in the past? Can you describe to me what happened and what you did about it?*
- *People I have met in this village tell me that there are a lot of illnesses here. What do you think about that?*
- *What are the healthcare arrangements in the village? Can you tell me something about the hospitals here?*
- *I have seen many ayurvedic and homeopathic medicines being sold here. Can you tell me something about them?*

I have finished my questions but I am very keen on continuing this conversation. Is there anything that you would like to tell me or ask me?

APPENDIX IV: Revised interview strategy

<u>**Full Interview with AM as an illustration**</u>

AC: Before I begin this interview, I need to tell you about myself and my work. I am talking to people in this village to know about life in the erm…village. I am interested in finding out about poverty in the village, the schools and hospitals…as I said, broadly, I am interested in the day-to-day life of the village. I am recording this interview with your permission and you have indicated that you do not have any problems. I want to reiterate that participation in this interview is not mandatory and you can quit at any point in time. If you do not want to provide an answer to any question, you do not need to. If you are happy with all of this, I will now start the interview.

AM : Yes Yes. You can start.

AC: How do you write your full name?

AM: I am AM. I am 35 years old but in the voters' list I have put it down as 40.

AC: You have been a resident of this village for the past 30-35 years. Can you narrate a story of your life, starting from your childhood, up until now? What all happened in your life, how did things happen…Can you tell me the story of your life?

AM: Sir, I had my mother. My father died when I was a child. I had to be taken in the lap of an elder to give fire to his body. I had my mother but she was always ill…She was a patient of TB, dumma…I spent my childhood attending her treatment. She died when she was under treatment. After she died, I was on my own.

AC: Were you the sole child?

AM: Yes. I am the only one. Look sir, circumstances forced me. Since those days, I have been a victim of my circumstances. I don't have any land.

AC: Did your father have any land?

AM: Yes. We had some land. All the land we had was sold during the days of my father…for his treatment. Now I do not have even one inch of land. In doing the funeral of my father and my mother, the remaining bits of land went away too. You know how it is in the village…after death; you have to hold a feast. If you don't do that, then they exclude you from the community. Caste is Caste, after all. If you don't do it, they will exclude you. There are 20 kinds of things then.

AC: After the death of your father, who was responsible for the house?

AM: When my father died, I was only one year old. But after my mother died, I was on my own. I had to fend for myself.

AC: How old were you when your mother died?

AM: I don't remember. When she died, I was out playing near the sugarcane fields…you see those fields there? There I was. And someone came running to tell me that my mother had died. I ran back home, crying. I don't know. I must have been 8-9 years old. Since then, I have been responsible for everything. I would do any kind of work just to feed myself. Those days were different…it was nothing like today…today even if a 5 year old works at a tea shop, he gets

money. During those days, it was different. You work somewhere and the landlord will give you food in return. That was all. So I worked like that…I would tend the cattle, plough the field…whatever work I could do. I was very little so I couldn't do much. That is how it was. Somehow, by hook or crook, I have been raising up two kids.

AC: When did you get married?

AM: I got married in my childhood. There was no one. There was none to do anything…who would have cooked and given me food? That is why I got married in my childhood. Perhaps I was 15 or 16 at that time.

AC: What work did you start doing after your mother passed away?

AM: When I was a child (chuckles)…consider that I would play and thereafter would work as a labour…petty things cleaning the cows, feeding them, working in the fields etc. I did a little work as a contractor….small contracts…small work. Slowly, I started learning from the handymen who used to work with water pumping equipment. Those handymen would come and I would sit near them…without a morsel of food, I would be hungry and thirsty but would sit and watch them…how do they open the machine, how do they put it back together again…how do they put their mind to the task…slowly, I learnt from watching them work and these days, that is the work I do. I work with water pumping equipment as a handyman. I do some work and people give me Rs 100 or Rs 50…whatever (£1 or £0.50) and with that I provide for my family. This is the tragedy of my life.

AC: Okay. So you work as a pumping set mechanic. Did you go to school when you were a child?

AM: Sir…I did go…But you know how it is with a loved child. My mother beat me and would send me to school but I would hang around in the way to the school. I will take my slate and climb up trees…would not go to the school. I repent that. Today, I repent that. Today I am illiterate…I use my thumb print Sir (अंगूठा छाप हैं सर).

AC: So your mother used to send you to school but you would not go?

AM: No Sir. I would not. I would hang around in trees (chuckles).

AC: So now that you tell me this, can you also tell me why you wouldn't go to the school when you were a child?

AM: Now that I think about it, I feel as if I am falling down from the sky. My mother wanted to give me education. She would beat me up and would cook early in the morning and tell me "My boy, go to school.". Her boy would never go to the school (chuckles)…her boy would hang around mid-way and play kabaddi, hide and seek. I would keep my books, notebooks and slate aside and play and when the school hours would pass, I would return home.

AC: Does this still happen in the village? Do kids still do the same?

AM: I don't think they do it now. This doesn't happen these days. The guardians are very watchful of their kids…they keep looking where their kid went and what are they upto. All this is there but Sir, there is no education/teaching/learning in government schools today. There is no education…education…you can say…that if you get your child a tuition then the tutor teaches them alphabets and they learn. There are so many kids in government schools but the teachers they keep chatting among themselves. During the rule of Nitish government, they have hired female teachers who do not find any time away from their chatting to teach the kids.

All the kids from poor families, until they pay Rs 50 (£0.50) a month, they are not taught. The home tuitors come to the house and teach but if you send them to the school, they do not learn anything. You know, the kids who are sharp and take tuitions, they are the ones who would do good if Lord Brahma has destined it to be so. If Lord Brahma has destined the child to hold a pen and pencil in his hand, he would flourish….else, they would waste their lives trying to memorize things uselessly.

The school gets so much money in funds to educate the poor…what do they do of that money? They give it to the rich But never to the poor …The children of the rich Get it all whereas the children of the poor never get anything. At best, they would give it to two or three poor kids and to the rest they will say, there is no more money to give.

AC: What money are you talking about?

AM: The BPL money. The money meant for the poor. It comes to every school. All this racket is going on in the school here. My problem is that I don't have a penny in my pocket, there is no education in the schools, and if I do not send my children for tuition classes…how do I manage? Even if it is 50 rupees (£0.50) for a child, it becomes a lot if you have 2 or three kids. People with 2 or 3 kids, they too have dreams for their children.

AC: This village has three schools…one is a middle school and there are two primary schools. One is over here and the other one is on the bend of the road near the bridge. Is it the same for all the schools?

AM: Yes. They are the same. This one has a little bit of teaching but the other one is completely useless. The teacher who has herself not studied beyond second or third grade, they have made them teachers too! This is the problem Sir. The poor in this village are the victims.

AC: Okay. But do kids from poor families go to the schools?

AM: Yes, they do. You have this Aanganbaadi school…children go there too. Toddlers go to that and the grown-ups go to the government schools. Both my kids go to government schools but Sir the teaching there is terrible.

AC: Okay. So what else can you tell me about the schools in this village?

AM: They are all 'use and throw' [institutions]—the one's that you would not like. My children sometimes bring back the meal they get at the school and it is rubbish. This is the story [of the schools]. Sometimes even that food is not provided.

AC : What else can you tell me about them [schools]?

AM: What else remains? They are completely useless.

AC: Okay. Moving ahead, I would like to know what do you thing has changed in the village in general, over the last 10-15 years? Good changes, as well as bad changes.

AM: There have been some changes…but...but these days it is just too bad. It is far worse than before…in every regard. Say if two people gen in a fight or have some differences…say I have some problem with my aunty then two other goons would take advantage. They would come around and stand and provoke each other. They would not try to solve things but they would incite me and incite my aunty against one another and try to make us go to the courts. Here you have that problem. If a kid, the kids of poor people damage something, immediately, the matter goes to the courts. It wasn't like this before…people would scold and say never do this again. But now things have changed.

AC: Does this happen to everyone in the village or only to some people?

AM: It happens with everyone. Didn't I say that if I have a spat with my aunty, say some foul words were exchanged, say I slapped her once and she slapped me once, 4 of the goons would stand around and incite us to take advantage. These are the problems.

There has been development here…there has been some development and I see it. But there are 3 or 4 middle men in the village who want to pull down the development of the poor. This is the business here. For instance, there was no road in the village, no electricity, none of this was there. Now Sir, I have received an Indira Awaas. Let us talk about that. Long back I received an Indira Awaas (points towards his shanty)…the bricks are my own. I spent Rs 12,000 (£120) but you see I did not get a penny from the government…all I got was Rs 50 (£0.50) for the paperwork. Sir, they take ten thousand, twenty thousand, fifteen thousand, in bribes to sanction the money for Indira Awaas.

AC: Who takes the money?

AM: The touts at the government offices. Such is the misery and exploitation. If I have any kind of need…say I want to get a caste certificate…the touts will say, "Give me Rs 500 (£5.00), I will get it made." I am illiterate—I am a thumb print—so I have to catch Sirji and hope that I would get it made in a cheap rate. But what cheap rate do I get…he would take Rs 500 (£5.00) first and then I would have to keep running after him, day after day. "Did the work get done Sirji?" They would say, " No…no it will take time." One day they would say that a certain officer was absent, the other day they would have another excuse. This is the problem that we face.

AC: So did you get your caste certificate yet?

AM: No. I haven't got it yet.

AC: In principle, you have to go to your local administration to get these legitimate certificates. Did you go to your mukhiya and local administration? Do they listen to your grievances?

AM: Yes, he listens to it but the touts they get along and ruin things. The mukhiya says, give it in writing and I will follow up. But the touts say that this Block Development Officer takes this much of money, that I have to pay other people too if I want my certificate. All this racket goes on.

AC: If this is so, then why don't you oppose the corruption and fight for your right?

AM: Who would do that in this village, Sir? You see, the hand-pump that we use for our drinking water is bored at 50 or 55 feet, with a plastic pipe. You see Sir, those who have metal pipe hand-pumps are all well-to-do people, rich people…they have got a second and a third grant from the government to bore a hand pump and they have several handpumps. And when I and other poor people go and ask for a hand pump, they say that we are not dealing with hand pump grants at this moment.

AC: Okay. So why don't people oppose it? Why don't people gather a voice against this exploitation?

AM: It doesn't happen because the well to do people get plenty from the government and when their appetite gets satiated then why would they bother about us poor? Who will think of the poor? If some government official comes to make an inquiry and his hunger is satiated by people in the same village, then he too would think, "Why do I care about the poor!" Such are

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the stories of this village. There is no opposition or resistance. Look now, people have been allotted hand pumps recently…all around my house and when we poor go to make a request, we are told that no allotment is being done in the present time. We have went to the Block Development Officer, the Mukhiya, the vice-Mukhiya, they simply refuse and say that there are no allotments being made at the present time. If this were the truth, then were do these new hand pumps that others get come from? Where do these hand pumps come from? The Mukhiya doesn't pay for them from his own pocket, the BDO doesn't pay for them from his pocket…then where do these hand pumps come from? These are the problems.

AC: Okay. I want to step back for a moment and talk to you about this village. I want to know your thoughts on poverty in this village. Why do you think there is so much poverty in this village and it seems to persist?

AM: What can I say about this (chuckles)!

AC: I am interested in knowing what you think about it. You have lived here all your life…I mean, I am not interested in what the newspaper or the radio says. Can you try to reflect on this from what you have seen in your life?

AM: Okay…Like I said before…say you have 6 boys and 2 girls…the people who have that, say they do not have any assets or any land…so that is poverty. Poverty is that you have a big household expenditure and you have one member who earns and has to look after everyone…now whatever little money you manage to arrange, you have to look after everyone in that. If I had some land, then I could have cultivated it, and managed to get something out of it. If I were educated, I might have got an employment and could have given my best. These are the problems.

AC: Okay. From the conversation I had with you, it appears that you have faced several health crises in your life. Your parents were both ill and you told me yesterday that you don't feel good about your health. Can you tell me about the healthcare facilities available to you in this village?

AM: There are no healthcare provisions for the poor. Say if my child falls sick…the quack of the village…I mean, if it gets sorted out in Rs 200 or Rs 400 (£2 or £4) then we are fine else, we have to take the patient to [omitted]. The people with money, they go to good doctors and pay them whereas those who are poor, they don't have money to pay for good doctors. So they run to government hospitals. Even after going to the government hospital, the doctors there do not examine you properly. They will do no tests, they will just ask you what the problem is and after asking that, he would recommend only those medicines that have 'special' prices. You don't get those medicines at the hospital, instead you need to buy them from the market…at the hospital they only give you some stupid tablets.

AC: Have you ever had a personal experience of this kind?

AM: Yes. Yes. My nephew.

AC: Can you tell me what happened?

AM: My nephew…he lives nearby (points in the direction of his house). It was with him. He was very sick…nearly dead. I said to everyone, "Lets rush to the town." We scampered off with him…I had to hire a tempo…so we took him to the hospital in a tempo. He had an unbearable pain in his abdomen for several days. You know, pain makes a person restless. So we took him from here to Doctor [omitted]. We said to the compounder that we need to see the doctor. He replied: He is inside. So we met the doctor and I pleaded him that my nephew is in a critical

condition and begged him to see my nephew. He asked us to wait. After waiting he saw him. Two people had to hold my nephew while we were taking him to the doctor. After looking at him, he did not suggest him for any examination. There was no examination….he was straightaway prescribed a medication. I urged him to do some tests…I said, "Sir please examine him. He has pain in his abdomen…he is in a critical condition." He did not suggest any XRay. SO I pleaded him again. He then wrote him for a Xray but when we went downstairs for the XRay, we found that both the XRay rooms were locked. So we came back to the doctor and said, "Look, you have written an XRay but there is no one there. Both the rooms are locked." His lips were sealed…as if a lock was put on his mouth. He then mumbled: Oh…they both are on holidays. He had prescribed one tablet and a bottle and 4 bottles which were for Rs 150 (£1.50) each. These were not available at the hospital. I said to everyone: it is useless that we brought him to the government doctors. Let us take him to a private clinic. A friend of mine came to the hospital on a motorcycle and I sent him to the village. He came to the village and borrowed Rs 5000 (£50) from a rich man here and then we went to a private clinic where he was treated well. These are the problems…where would a poor person get all that money from? You see my child here, Sir? Recently I had to spend Rs 3500 (£35) on him. I did not take him to a government hospital. Because I knew it would be useless.

AC: What had happened?

AM: It was foot ache. So I did not take him to the government hospital. I took him to a *jhola chaap doctor* in the village. He gave some injections and some medication and my child was all right. These are the things that kill poor people.

AC: So why do you call this doctor a *jhola chaap doctor*?

AM: Ha ha ha…there are many doctors in the village!

AC: Okay. So what do you think causes these illnesses and diseases?

AM: The reason is….Sir, when we were young then the elders would say that back in the day, grains would grow on their own…look at what the situation in now…fertilizers…some or the other chemical is always there…I mean, starting from wheat to even ploughing…even while ploughing, they put chemicals, they sow paddy, they put it. People grow vegetables and fruits and without these chemicals, they do not grow. So that is the disease. What we eat is poison.

AC: So that causes all the problems?

AM: Yes. The older people say that they would grind the wheat with a stone grinder and make bread. There was no ill health. My opinion is that whether it is the poor or it is the rich…they have got so lazy and sophisticated that even if they have to grind a handful of lentils…they would say that it should be taken to the mill. Flour…you see…no matter how much the mills cost…when they start grinding, gradually, the grinder of the machine wears off…it erodes. Where does that go? It enters the flour. Where else would it go? SO one poison you have is the chemicals and the second is the flour you get from the mills. These are the problems Now you see, the government says that you should drink from a bore well that is 150-200 feet deep. And here, we drink from 55 feet deep boring. Compare the water from 150-200 feet deep boring and the one that is 55 feet. All the people who drink from this hand pump…the water gets shallow and dirty. Drinking this water is what causes the diseases.

AC: Okay. You spoke of your mother having TB and whooping cough. What caused that?

AM: That time I was only a kid…I was too small. My mother used to tell my sister and I would listen…She would say, "Why do I get cough and cold? I have it because I eat Litti and suthani. Since that day I fell ill and got 20 other problems."

AC: Okay. So if one gets such health complications, what is the right way to treat them? What should people do if they fall ill?

AM: Treatment…if I have money then I would go to Alpha town and see a private doctor…if I don't have money, I would get something done in the village itself…if that does not help, I would run to the government hospital. At the government hospital, I would either live or die. This is what would happen sir. People with money, they go to private clinics. They go there and they get good treatment and everything gets fine. They don't have any problem but the poor have monumental problems. Poor people have all the problems. If I will have to spend Rs 5000 (£50), I will have to think hard. I will have to think that if I borrow money from someone, how long will it take me to repay that. How will I provide for my family? How will I provide for my children? I will have to think about all these things. What would I do? I don't know.

AC: Is it common for people to borrow money for getting themselves treated at private clinics.

AM: Yes. It is very common. You won't find a single person in this village who hasn't done that at some point.

AC: So how does that work? How do people repay the loan?

AM: It works on compounded interest…4 percent…Rich people in the village do that…who else can loan money in this village? People are hand to mouth. People repay the loan with tremendous difficulty…you know…Delhi, Mumbai…these are the places where people go to work and then get some money.

AC: Did you ever go to these cities for work?

AM: Yes. I did.

AC: Where did you go?

AM: I went to Ludhiyana…I spent 6 months there. It was a long time ago. Then I went to Mumbai…there I worked in a garment factory. I was paid so little there…for 8 hours of work, I was paid only Rs 18 (£0.18). I would do night duty there.

AC: Okay. Can you share some of your experiences from Ludhiyana or Mumbai?

AM: I had many experiences Sir. I learnt that people who work get paid. If you are willing to waste yourself and your health, work like animals…turn your blood into water…then you can make some money. If you are not willing to do that, there is no work for you. Sir once I ran away from home…my mother was alive then. I came back home after playing and my mother beat me up with a stick. That very night, a contingent from our village was scheduled to leave for Punjab…to work there. There was about 2000 rupees (£20) in my house that my mother had saved…I stole that and ran away with them. I ran away…I was without food or water…When I got there…it was time for harvesting wheat in Punjab…They would make us work from 4am in the morning…until 4 pm in the afternoon. At 10 am, they would bring us tea…the owner would get us tea so I would have tea and then return to harvesting. Around noon we would eat…one of us was deputed to cook. So he would get the chappatis to the field around noon and we would eat that with a potato curry. Immediately after having that meal we had to return to

harvesting the wheat. Again the owner would send tea around 4 and after having tea we would get back to cutting the wheat. Then we would work until 10 at night…on some days even until 11…We would go back to our shanties and cook supper and sleep. But we would only manage to sleep for 2-3 hours…at 4, the owner of the farm would wake us up. That is how people survive when they leave their village and go to these places for work. Yes, this is true that the owner paid a lot more than what I would earn here. But was I working like a man? No. I was an animal. I was turning my blood into water.

AC: Right. So how much were you paid?

AM: Sir, it was on contract. You take the contract for a field and you get paid. The owner only pays you if you finish the work in the timeframe that he suggested. They would ask us to do such huge fields in one week that it is not possible for any human to do that. There were no machines…do you think we were working with machines? No! All we get is a sickle. You cut every single plant…one at a time and stack it. Every night my hands would be bloody…when you work like that, sometimes the sickle nicks you, sometimes the plants would cut your body…When I remember that now, I wonder how I ever managed to work like that (chuckles).

AC: Yes, you are right. It sounds very laborious.

AM: Let me tell you something more. No one speaks about this. You know the tea that the owner would send? That is the only thing that he would send and he would insist on us drinking that tea. You know opium? They would put opium in the tea. Opium kills hunger and gives you energy to keep working. You would not even feel the blistering sun. It starts intoxicating you and you keep sweating. Again when it gets to 7, you work through the night. I stayed there for a month and then I gave up. I realised that I cannot do it any longer…I ran away. Since that day I have never gone back to work in that line but I wonder sometimes…I am illiterate…what work is there for me? I somehow manage to get by with my work on the water pumping equipment.

AC: What work did you do in Mumbai?

AM: In Mumbai I worked in a *patra* factory.

AC: What is that? I don't understand that…

AM: Sir like you have a vehicle…a car…the car is not made all in one place. The make the body separately. So I was making the body there…I was welding the metal parts together. Welding machine…I stayed there for 2-3 months…I got burns all over my hands…see (shows his hands)…So I said fuck this. This work is pathetic. After that I went to a steel factory. I worked in a steel factory for two months…they used to make utensils there. I had to clean the utensils when they were being made. If you have the raw material of 4-5 colours, you have to treat them…even there I would get covered in filth and I had to work until 9 or 10 at night. Get back home from there and then clean yourself, wash, and then cook and the next day same thing again. That is when I thought God damn it. All this is pathetic. Fuck all this…I would go back home. I will have half a roti…will sleep on a half full stomach but that is better than all of this. You know…that's when I returned back to my village.

AC: So there were so many difficulties there but you would make more money than now.

AM: Yes. The money is a lot more. That is why people go there. Didn't I tell you…you have to turn your blood into water there…that is why you have money there. But I think that if you work that much here, you will have more money. But people don't work that hard here. Here people go to work at 8 and run away at 5. Unskilled labours get 150-200 rupees here (£1.50 to £2.00) and artisans get 400 or 500 (£4.00-£5.00) a day. If they do night shifts, they can earn a lot

more. But here, nobody is ever willing to do that. People are in a hurry to get to Delhi and Bombay but when they come back, they are wasted. They come back to the village and rests for 10 days…only then they can work again. That is because you have to make your blood water. No one feels good when he returns from there. There are many poor people who…for instance, now it is the time to harvest wheat…they would scavenge and steal from the fields. They think why should they go and work in the fields, why should they do any of that when they can just steal the grains at night…they think that if they work all day as a labour in the wheat harvesting season, they would get the same amount of wheat as their wages…so they think why should they ever work! That is why many people keep sitting and do not work. These are the problems here.

AC: Ok.

AM: Take me for example…I am sitting here…if I get a call from someone about a job, I will have to run…I would pick up my tools and scamper. I would get to the engine and test it…try to find out where it is broken…when I find the fault, I will change the broken things and repair the generator. I would get 200 or 300 rupees (£2 or £3) and return back home. End of story. These are the problems.

AC: You have these beautiful kids. What have you thought for their future? What are your plans for them?

AM: What can I think and plan for them. As of now, I am barely able to keep them alive and healthy. What can I think for them. If I earn a few rupees, then there are illnesses, familial relationships, friends and kids, everyone depends on those few rupees. I have to think of everything in the same few coins that I manage to earn. What can I think about the future? But yes, if the kids become naughty…you know that work that people do on sarees…what do you call that…eh….yeah…embroidery….one of my kids has found a job in that…

AC: Your son or your daughter?

AM: My son.

AC: Okay. Where is he?

AM: Mumbai.

AC: Is he your eldest?

AM: No. He is the middle one. And my elder one, he is learning the trade of a bricklayer. It has been a month that he has been learning that. I told him, "Listen son, if you learn that trade, you can earn 200 to 300 rupees a day even if you are here in the village." You need to have some skill, you know. If you get a skill, you can earn something but if you have no skills, you cannot earn anything…you will have a burden over your head for the rest of your life. So I will think about them.

AC: How long has he been learning the trade?

AM: It has been 5 months. And the other one…I have sent him to Mumbai but it hasn't even been a month. He says that "Father, in a month I will learn the trade and then I can send you Rs 5000 a month. After that, the more I work, the more increases in my salary I will get."

AC: Okay…and the other child, is he too in Mumbai?

AM: No. He is in [omitted].

AC: Okay…the district [omitted]?

AM: Yes. And the middle one has gone to Mumbai. So two of my sons are now away and working. Once they both learn their trade, only then I can think of other things and the future. Right now, I am the only one that earns and in my meagre income, I have to take care of everything and everyone.

AC: So you have two sons and then you have your daughters…I saw one of them here near the cooking fire…how many other kids do you have?

AM: I told you about the two sons…then I have this daughter…after her I have another daughter and then I have these other kids.

AC: Okay. And how old are your kids?

AM: the eldest one is 18…or maybe even 20. Yeah, 18 or 20. The middle one, the one on Mumbai is 14 or 15.

AC: Okay. SO your sons, did they go to the school here?

AM: Yes. They did. They did for a few days. The one near here.

AC: Okay. SO since when have they been helping you out?

AM: They are not helping me right now. But they will…they will for sure. To help me out, they need to first learn a trade.

AC: Okay. SO your kids, before they left the village, what were they doing here?

AM: They were doing nothing. They would read and study or something.

AC: Did they take their Matriculation exam?

AM: No. They didn't. I said that at least get literate enough to read or write a letter to me, if the need be. You know. Even if you go to the station to catch a train, you have to read the number of the train…you know, to know what number train goes where etc. So I told them that if you read, at least you will have that much of knowledge. When they saw all the misery and difficulties at home, they took their way…they all did. Seeing the problems of the house, they all tried to find a footing for themselves. They knew that their sole father, what all can he manage to do? If I stop studying and manage to earn even a few rupees, that would be a help to my family, if nothing more. These are the problems.

AC: But don't you think that if they were to finish their education, they would have had a chance to get better jobs? Wouldn't it have created a better scope for their future?

AM: Yes, there is scope. But where would I get all that money from? To keep them in school…Don't I see what happens with jobs? I know that to get a job you need 2 or three lakh rupees (£2,000 to £3,000)…and you see what I have here…just a small broken house. The roof leaks and whenever it rains hard, I am scared that the walls would cave in. Where would poor people get all that money from? Recently, this Mr [omitted]….you know…he took 2 lakh, 3 lakh, 4 lakh rupees to get people in the jobs of postmasters and doctors. He has even got employment for his own family members…in his house everyone has a job. How would poor people get all that money…first to keep their kids in school and then to count all that money to give bribes? This is where the problem emerges…that I get my kids education too and then arrange for all that money to bribe people…where would I get that money from to get my kids a job? And if

you don't have that much money, you have to herd cattle even with all the education. What can poor people do?

AC: What do you think…do poor people get any benefit from going to the school and getting an education?

AM: Do you think it benefits the poor? Those who have to reap its benefits, they do. The people who have the money to bribe, they reap the benefits of schooling…where would a poor family get all that money from? Take me for example…all I have is this house…I don't have any means…the days when I earn, I eat and the days I don't, I sleep hungry. If now I start educating my kids, then after getting them educated, I would also need to think that where am I going to get the money…2 or three lakh rupees (£2,000 to £3,000) so that my children get settled with a job. These are the problems.

AC: Do people like you, in this village, manage to continue their kids in the schools until their matriculation?

AM: Those who manage until Matric, they have to take the help of tuition classes. There is no money! The tuition teachers take 400 or 500 rupees (£4 or £5). These are the problems.

AC: Okay…I have a final question. I want to know that when you sit alone and think about your life…what do you dream of? What do you think will improve your life?

AM: What can say…I don't dream of motorcycles or good clothes or sunglasses. All I think of is how can I earn a little more to make sure that my family does not go to bed without a meal, all 360 days a year. I don't have any other dreams. I just hope that my children don't starve to death; they don't have to go to someone else's house to beg. That is all that I dream of.

AC: Okay…Do you want to tell me anything else? Do you have any questions for me?

AM: No. What else can I say…(Personal communication)

APPENDIX V: Participant profiles (Poor)

The demographic Profile of participants who self-identified as 'poor' is provided below.

S. No	Interview Type	Name	Sex	Age	Education	Work Profile	Marital Status & whether a Parent
1		AM	M	35	X	Skilled Work (Local)	Married; Parent
2		WAM	F	32	X	Goat Rearing (Local)	Married; Parent
3		KR	M	57	Matriculation	Small Farmer (Local)	Married; Parent
4		SML	M	19	X	Migrant Labour	Married; Parent
5		BMP	M	61	X	Snack Vendor(Local)	Married; Parent
6		DDS	M	29	X	Manual Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
7		CGM	M	45	X	Manual Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
8		SS	M	37	X	Manual Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
9	Individual	WCM	M	52	Matriculation	Tutor	Married; Parent
10		PMW	M	54	X	Agriculture Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
11		BW	M	55	X	Agriculture Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
12		DW	M	26	X	Skilled Work (Local)	Married; Parent
13		SCT	M	43	X	Agriculture Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
14		PP	M	49	X	Manual Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
15		UYB	M	49	X	Manual Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
16		WDW	F	48	X	Milk Vendor	Married; Parent
17		SD	F	60	X	Housework	Married; Parent
18		SW	F	21	X	Housework	Married; Parent
19		KT	M	38	Matriculation	Manual Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
20	Group1	BP	M	35	Can read	Manual Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
21		UR	M	33	Can read	Manual Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
22		SS	M	39	Can read	Agriculture Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
23		SM	F	31	X	Goat Rearing	Married; Parent
24		DK	M	18	Matriculation	Not Working	Unmarried
25	Group2	PB	F	24	X	Goat Rearing	Married; Parent
26		SP	F	27	X	Housework	Married; Parent
27		RRA	F	30	X	Housework	Married; Parent
28		DW	M	26	X	Agriculture Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
29		BDTW	M	31	X	Manual Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
30	Group3	KG	M	29	Can read	Agricultural Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
31		YS	M	30	X	Manual Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
32		MP	F	32	X	Milk Vendor	Married; Parent
33	Group4	KL	F	30	X	Domestic Help	Married; Parent
34		RM	F	37	X	Housework	Married; Parent
35		AP	M	21	SLC	Skilled Work (Local)	Unmarried
36		BB	M	22	SLC	Skilled Work (Local)	Unmarried
37	Group5	PY	M	21	SLC	Not Working	Unmarried
38		AK	M	21	SLC	Tutor	Unmarried
39		RW	F	49	X	Cook	Married; Parent
40	Group6	GM	M	44	X	Manual Labour (Local)	Married; Parent
41		VC	M	40	X	Manual Labour (Local)	Married; Parent

APPENDIX VI: Participant profiles (Elite)

The demographic Profile of participants who self-identified as 'not-poor' is provided below.

S. No.	Group/Individual	Name	SEX	AGE	Education	Profession	Marital Status
1		PB	M	63	University	Farmer	Married (with children)
2		MKT	M	65	University	Farmer	Married (with children)
3		MM	M	38	Pre-University	Farmer	Married (with children)
4		RJT	M	29	University	Teacher	Married (with children)
5		NML	M	53	University	Farmer	Married (with children)
6		RY	M	48	University	Teacher	Married (with children)
7		RAT	F	51	University	Teacher	Married (with children)
8		SKS	M	45	University	Doctor	Married (with children)
9	Individual	MA	M	31	University	Doctor	Married (with children)
10		RY	M	42	University	Doctor	Married (with children)
11		DA	F	51	University	Teacher	Married (with children)
12		DD	M	54	University	Doctor	Married (with children)
13		SS	M	46	University	Doctor	Married (with children)
14		PS	M	63	University	Doctor	Married (with children)
15		DD2	M	39	University	Doctor	Married (with children)
16		BKS	M	58	University	Doctor	Married (with children)
17		RAT2	F	43	University	Teacher	Married (with children)
18		TBB	M	29	University	Teacher	Married (with children)
19	Group 1	PT	M	19	High School	Farmer	Married (with children)
20		TCB	M	33	High School	Shopkeeper	Married (with children)
21		TB	M	50	High School	PDS Dealer	Married (with children)
22		MS	M	58	University	Farmer	Married (with children)
23	Group 2	RS	M	68	High School	Farmer	Married (with children)
24		GJ	M	39	Secondary	Farmer	Married (with children)
25		MSB	M	26	Seconday	Farmer	Married (with children)

APPENDIX VII: Details of newspaper reports

Detailed Description of the newspaper dataset, according to the dates sampled

	TIMES OF INDIA	HINDUSTAN TIMES

Number of news reports returning the keywords (n)

	TIMES OF INDIA	HINDUSTAN TIMES
In Headlines (1st Oct 12 to 30th Sep 13)	72	42
Anywhere in the Article		
Dates Sampled		
25/03/2013	34	4
01/04/2013	4	2
17/04/2013	6	1
19/04/2013	6	4
23/04/2013	3	1
03/05/2013	6	3
04/05/2013	5	3
08/05/2013	13	2
09/05/2013	11	5
12/05/2013	4	3
16/05/2013	8	8
29/05/2013	0	0
05/06/2013	8	5
09/06/2013	6	3
13/06/2013	33	1
19/06/2013	6	2
23/06/2013	4	3
26/06/2013	6	1
07/07/2013	8	4
11/07/2013	5	5
21/07/2013	6	6
23/07/2013	3	4
27/07/2013	10	8
31/07/2013	15	3
09/08/2013	7	2
16/08/2013	6	3
18/08/2013	14	1
20/08/2013	6	7
21/08/2013	0	5
29/08/2013	6	4
Key Words Anywhere	249	103
Keywords in Headline	72	42
TOTAL	321	145

N=466

APPENDIX VIII: Thematic analysis codebook

<u>POOR PARTICIPANTS' DATASET</u>

All open codes generated in the analysis of poor people's interviews are listed below. A total of 68 open codes, numbered below, were used. Name of the themes are in UPPERCASE typeface. Names of subthemes are in **bold** typeface.

CAUSES OF POVERTY

1. Alcoholism
2. Health problems
3. Illiteracy
4. Lack of infrastructue
5. Natural calamities
6. One earner
7. The person himself

LIVING AS POOR

8. Bad living conditions
9. Dependence on others
10. Fear of Police, Jail etc.
11. Inability to resist oppression
12. Lack voice
13. Poverty not as severe as before
14. Starvation and survival

THOUGHTS ON FUTURE

15. Bleak future prospects
16. Fatalism
17. Hard to plan for the future

WORK

18. Children working
19. Dangerous or hard work
20. KAMATE KHATE
21. Migrant Work
22. Underpaid
23. Work for food

EDUCATION

Importance of education

24. Bad Government teachers

25. Government school Problems
26. Issue of educational quality
27. Private School Better

Midday Meal Scheme

28. Preoccupation with meals
29. MDMS harmed education

Poverty Education Contradictions

30. Bribes for jobs
31. Education brings respect
32. Education doesn't solve poor people's problems
33. Education Important
34. Kids not serious about Education
35. Parents need to be responsible
36. Poor people cannot afford education
37. Regret lack of Education
38. Self Motivation for education

HEALTH

Government Hospitals

39. Bad medicines
40. Don't examine properly
41. Don't function properly
42. Poor people rely on them
43. Local Health Beliefs

Private healthcare and Quacks

44. Good treatment at private clinics
45. Healthcare expenses
46. Quacks
47. Unaffordable private healthcare

SOCIAL POLICY

48. Policy as vote bank
49. Policy changes needed
50. Welfare Benefits don't reach the poor

BUREAUCRACY

51. Bribe for everything
52. Bribes don't work anymore
53. Corrupt public servants
54. Institutional inefficiency amd mismanagement

GOVERNMENT

55. Governement needs to look after the poor
56. Government failure

SOCIETY
General lack of trust

57. Decline in the moral order in the village
58. Lack of co-operation in the community
59. Lack of trust in the community

THE PLACE OF POOR IN SOCIETY

60. Big fish swallows small fish'
61. Disrespect
62. hakim hare to muh me mare, jite to muh me mare
63. money power vast power
64. Noone cares about the poor
65. Poor people are enticed with money
66. Social acceptance and recognition
67. Society reaps benefits from the poor
68. **On importance of Land**

THEMATIC ANALYSIS CODEBOOK (ELITE PARTICIPANTS' DATASET)

All open codes generated in the analysis of elite people's interviews are listed below. A total of 70 open codes, numbered below, were used. Name of the themes are in UPPERCASE typeface. Names of subthemes are in **bold** typeface.

GOVERNMENT FAILURE

1. **Corruption**
2. **Evil designs of the Government**

Policy failure

3. Government eyewash
4. Government makes policies for votes
5. Government responsible for bad policies
6. Government wants to keep the poor poor
7. **Politics and Politicians**

INDIVIDUAL DEFICIENCY

Cause problems

8. Alcoholism

9. Decline in moral order of village
10. Poor people bring diseases

Free riders

11. Attitude towards work
12. Poor people like to take free things
13. Welfare Dependence

Lack future orientation

14. Parents not careful with education
15. Poor people are foolish
16. Poor people are irresponsible with money
17. Poor people don't understand their rights
18. Poor people lack direction
19. Poor people lack maturity
20. Population causes poverty

NEXUS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND POVERTY

21. Education is important for poor people
22. Lack of education detrimental for the poor
23. Poverty makes education difficult

POVERTY IN BHOLI

24. 'Big fish swallows small fish'

Precarious existence in poverty

25. Debt
26. Excluding the poor
27. Fate
28. Insanitary living
29. Kamate-Khate
30. Landlessness
31. Malnutrition
32. Migrant work
33. No future for poor people
34. Past severity of poverty
35. Poverty influences all things
36. Unemployment
37. Widespread poverty

The contradictory necessity of Poverty

38. Community Jealousy
39. Poverty serves functions

SHORTCHANGED ON EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS

Problems at government schools

40. Decline in government schools
41. Education needs to be made relevant
42. Government school books bad quality
43. Government schools lack infrastructure
44. MDMS

45. Parents' perspective
46. Poor children dont have books and stationary
47. Poor people and awareness about education
48. Poor people depend of government schools
49. Preoccupation with policies
50. Private schools better
51. Shortcuts to education

Teachers

52. Government schoolteachers' clash
53. Government schoolteachers' disinterest
54. Government schoolteachers inefficient
55. Problems faced by teachers
56. Teacher Appointment
57. Teacher Salary

WITHOUT GOOD HEALTH

Dysfunctional government facilities

58. Bad image of Government hospitals
59. Government hospital far away
60. Government hospital lacks infrastructure
61. Medicine problems at government hospitals
62. Poor people rely on Government hospitals
63. Problems faced by Government Doctors

The strain of private treatment

64. Healh private clinic poor people happy to pay
65. Private clinic vs govt hospital
66. Private clinics as business establishment
67. private healthcare expensive

Treating the poor

    68. Awareness about health
    69. Local Health Beliefs

70. **The role of Quacks**

THEMATIC ANALYSIS CODEBOOK (NEWSPAPER DATASET)

All open codes generated in the analysis of news stories are listed below. A total of 34 open codes, numbered below, were used. Name of the themes are in UPPERCASE typeface. Names of subthemes are in **bold** typeface.

POVERTY IS WHAT PL MEASURES

Learning about poverty through PL

1. BPL card as a solace to orphaned children
2. The national problem of poverty

Where should the PL be set

3. New Methodology for poverty assessment
4. Problems with the current PL

PORTRAYING LIVES IN POVERTY

Causes of Poverty

5. Bad Health
6. Legislative cause
7. Natural Calamities
8. Religion and Caste

Poverty as a barrier

1. Barriers to education
2. Poor children fail to stay at school
3. School not for education but for mid-day meal
4. Systemic barriers
5. Education as an opportunity
6. Caste and education
7. Education as a way out of poverty
8. Education while earning
9. Scholarship schemes

10. Hunger and Malnutrition
11. poverty is the main cause of ill health
12. Contradiction in health
13. Healthcare Expenses
14. Poor Facilities at Govt Hospitals
15. Suicide

Problems of the Poor

16. Access problems
17. Exploitation and suffering of the Poor

SURMOUNTING THE BARRIER—POLICY

'Reaching for the stars'

The potential of policies

18. Educational policies
19. Food policy
20. Health policies
21. Housing Policies
22. Opposition to pro poor policies
23. Problematising Policy

THE IMAPACT OF POVERTY ON SOCIETY

24. **Inconvenient presence of poverty**
25. **Poverty causes antisocial behaviour**

Poverty causes social evils

26. Child Abuse
27. Human trafficking
28. Linked to several social evils

POLITICISING POVERTY

Government as the irresponsible Other

29. Apathy towards the poor
30. Failed governmental interventions
31. Harms the poor
32. Non Government help to the poor
33. Succesful governmental interventions
34. **The politics on poverty**

APPENDIX IX: Glossary and Definitions of All Social Acts

AGRICULTURE: The social act of agriculture refers to all the activities undertaken by farmers involving the cultivation of crops in their fields. The relevant activities under this social act includes, but is not limited to, sowing the seeds, irrigation, managing fertilizers and pesticides, harvest, and the sale of crops. It is important to note, that this social act pertains only to elite participants in the study as only they had the land available for agriculture. For poor participants engaged in agricultural labour, see WORK.

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION: This refers to the act of purchasing and consuming alcoholic beverages. There is an argument against considering this as a social act as the individual buying and consuming alcohol may do so alone. However, in the data all references to it involved its impact on other people including the family of the person engaging in it, the moral order of the village etc.

BARTER: It refers to the act of exchanging goods or services with other goods and services without the use of money.

BRIBES AND CORRUPTION: This is the social act involving the exchange of a valuable commodity (commonly money) in lieu of the receiver acting in favour of the provider. In this social act, the receivers were generally people in formal power positions and the providers were rich/poor participants of the village.

CRIME: This social act involves an unlawful activity involving physical harm and violence. In principle, BRIBES AND CORRUPTION would fall under crime but they were treated as a separate social act.

DEALING WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICES: A social actor engaging with any government institution for any purpose was taken as participating in this social act. The two institutions excluded were Government Hospitals and Schools.

DEBT: The social act involving seeking a monetary loan from another social actor with the imperative of returning it within a stipulated time period. In most cases, the loan involved an interest rate of five to ten percent every month.

DEMOCRATIC ACTS: This is an umbrella term for the social acts of contesting an election of any kind, or voting in one, or canvassing for the contestants. This social act was related to POLITICS.

EDUCATION: The social act of education refers to all activities related to teaching and learning, from the perspective of any relevant party including pupils, teachers, parents, government etc.

FUNERAL: This term refers to all social acts following the death of a family member. This includes following the rituals and customs, and holding ceremonial feasts but excludes emotional responses to the death like mourning, and legal issues like division of the deceased person's estate.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING: This is an umbrella terms covering any sale or purchase of human beings.

MARRIAGE: This social act is the same as the dictionary meaning of the term but importantly also includes the associated wedding.

MEDICAL TREATMENT: This umbrella term covers all aspects of social actors seeking help with physical or mental health problems. It includes instances where the provider of the medical care was a quack, as well as a qualified medical doctor. It includes all types of medical care including first aid, hospice, accidents and emergencies. It included bio-medicine, homeopathy, shamanic and faith healers, or any other approach at both government and private hospitals.

MIGRANT WORK: This is a subtype of the social act of WORK. This involved the actor leaving the village for employment but excluded work taken in nearby towns and villages where the actor was able to return home every evening. Most commonly, the social actors moved to metropolises and industrialised parts of the country for this social act.

POLICE ENCOUNTER: This social act involved the meeting between an actor and members of the police force. In some instances, this included paramilitary personnel.

POLICY: This is an umbrella term for any social policy, not limited to specific anti-poverty policies. It included the descriptions of the actors of a number of policies, their perspectives on it, and their experiences of using (or trying to use) them.

POLITICAL INSTABILITY: This social act was coded in one news report only where it referred to the uprising of the radical left Maoist guerrillas against the democratic government in Chhattisgarh.

POLITICS: This social act was coined specifically for news reports to capture the reports of political parties arguing against one another on the topic of poverty.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION: This social act was coined specifically for news reports to capture discussions regarding the need to eliminate poverty from the country.

POVERTY MEASUREMENT: This social act was coined specifically for news reports to capture the discussions regarding various poverty line methodologies and their relative merits and disadvantages.

PROVIDING FOR THE FAMILY: This term refers to the references to the various social acts undertaken by an actor to meet the needs of his or her family. This included references to activities like foraging, stealing from the fields, or any other activity where the explicit goal was to meet the needs of one's family.

QUARREL: The social act of quarrel involved two or more actors engaging in verbal arguments, at times leading to minor physical confrontation limited to shoving, slapping etc.

RAISING A VOICE: This is an umbrella term for opposing the explicit or implicit actions of a social actor. Generally, these actions were regarded to be unjust.

RESEARCH ON POVERTY: Refers to academic, government funded, or NGO driven efforts to scientifically examine poverty.

RICH-POOR MEETING: Refers to all instances of exchanges between a rich and poor actor in the village. It excludes social acts like MEDICAL TREATMENT, DEALING WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICES etc. where presumably rich and poor people meet one another.

SALARIED JOBS: The social act of working for fixed monthly wages.

SUICIDE: The act of killing oneself. Like ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION, it was regarded as a social act because it was always discussed in relation of its impact on other people.

WELFARE DEPENDENCY AND ABUSE: This is an umbrella term for people depending on welfare to meet their needs and avoiding taking up work. It also includes instances where a rich person was alleged to masquerade as poor in order to claim welfare.

WORK: The social act of working for wages. It excludes both SALARIED JOBS and MIGRANT WORK.

APPENDIX X: Chauhan (2015) manuscript

APPENDIX X: Chauhan (2015) manuscript