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# Of Nation and State: Language, School, and the Reproduction of Disparity in a North Indian City

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## Abstract

*Banaras, a city located in the North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, offers its residents many types of schools for pre-university education. This article argues that only some schools, those bifurcated by a distinction between ones that utilize Hindi and ones that utilize English, cater to those people who belong to what a large number of media venues and scholars call India's "new middle class." By using the growingly salient notion of language ideology, this article explores the ways in which particular constructions of the Indian nation and state emerge from discursive reflection on schools in Banaras. When reflecting on the language in which classroom practice occurs in a school, people in Banaras foreground the nation as an organizing idiom, whereas when reflecting on school practices such as the collection of school fees and the affiliation of a school with an administrative board, people in Banaras foreground the state. By tracing the very different parameters of moral judgment that emerge within the two domains, this article calls for the study of constructions of the nation and state that illustrate the possibilities of their conceptualization in tandem. [Keywords: Nation, state, education, language ideology, Hindi, English, Banaras, North India]*

## Introduction

In Banaras, North India, the notions of the nation and the state produce different constructions of schools. Yet both domains ultimately contribute to the differentiation of schools—via language distinctions—as disparate institutions. Akhil Gupta notes that an ethnographic approach to institutions of the state demonstrates that “there is obviously no Archimidean point from which to visualize ‘the state,’ only numerous situated knowledges” (1995:392). Sam Kaplan adds, “the notion of the state is constantly being defined within changing political and social contexts,” and argues that the school is a key site whereby such is negotiated (2006:13).<sup>1</sup> Gupta and Aradhana Sharma urge anthropologists to consider “everyday actions of particular branches of the state to understand what has in fact changed and at which levels and to account for the conditions in which discrepant representations of ‘the state’ circulate” (2006:278). Gupta and Sharma’s goal is, in part, to rectify the neglect of the state in an era when the nation has captured so much scholarly attention: “The state has to be imagined no less than the nation, and for many of the same reasons” (2006:278). I show that concerns emergent from reflections in Banaras, a city of approximately 2,000,000 located in the heart of the Hindi-speaking region of North India, depend on whether the nation or the state is the focus. Each focus entails a specific relationship between Hindi and English, as well as a particular set of possibilities for their valuation.

It is hardly surprising that language has been the focus for many scholars of educational policy and practice in India. Scholars have noted, for example, the importance of language distinctions in arguments for the creation of new states within the federal system (Brass 1990, J. Das Gupta 1970), as well as in the gate-keeping role of the recognition of “official languages” in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India (Gupta, Abbi, and Aggarwal 1995). At the same time, the federal government has long held that educational policy, one of the primary vehicles for its language initiatives, is to be decided independently by state governments. The discrepancy between the spheres of government responsible for legitimizing languages and instituting their use in schools, many scholars have noted, is mediated at the national level by the “three-language formula,” devised by the Education Commission of 1964–66, also known as the Kothari Commission, that mandates a student’s training in a language of another region. The formula hoped to foster multilingual citizens capable of interstate communication (Aggarwal 1988, Srivastava 1990). Disrupting such plans for national cohesion, however, is a

division in school types, one in which English serves as a “medium,” or primary language of pedagogy, and one in which another constitutionally-recognized language serves as a medium. One scholar uses the medium division to characterize schooling in India as:

the existence of (a small number of) expensive [private] schools where English is the medium of instruction from the lowest classes, along with (a preponderance of) regional-language schools, for the most part run by [state] governments or municipalities, where English is taught—badly—as a subject for a few years” (Rajan 1992:19).

Although three languages are taught in both Hindi- and English-medium schools, Rajan and a host of other scholars point to the way in which language difference organizes schools as types rendering them unequal by cost, class, jurisdiction, and pedagogical quality.<sup>2</sup>

Gupta and Sharma’s assertions prompt me to ask of these insights on language and schooling in India: For whom and why has the language medium of a school come to matter so much? How do the nation and the state serve as frames for articulating language-medium difference? And, through constructions of the nation and the state, do different relationships inhere between Hindi- and English-medium schools? In keeping with Gupta and Sharma’s call to investigate the (changing) salience of the state in specific contexts, I demonstrate that ideological stances, discussed below, demonstrate that only some schools—precisely those schools in which language medium distinctions matter—provide a vehicle for middle class aspirations in India’s liberalizing economy. I also demonstrate that such ideological stances necessitate attention to constructions of the nation *and* the state because when people reflect on the two domains, they foreground different aspects of schooling, and their constructions do not mirror one another.<sup>3</sup> First, I describe ways in which people understand Hindi- and English-medium schools to be different when they are drawing on broader notions about Hindi and English. When reflecting on schools via language distinctions, people in Banaras use the nation as an organizing idiom. Second, I describe two school practices, collection of “fees” (*fīs*) and affiliation with an administrative “board” (*boṛd*), that, in and of themselves, have little to do with language medium distinctions, in order to explain that they enable the reproduction of the division between Hindi- and English-medium schools differently than do reflec-

tions on such schools qua language difference.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, people see the state, not the nation, as the issue in differences between Hindi- and English-medium schools reproduced by the collection of fees and affiliations with boards. Whether realized in the idiom of the nation or state, however, emergent from the ethnographic reflections presented herein is a spatial logic whereby English-medium schools encompass and exceed Hindi-medium schools.

While the ethnographic exploration of schooling in Banaras allows reflection on constructions of the nation and the state, I find it important to note that it does so through multiple modes of engagement with language. Most broadly, this article is inspired by the scholarly insight that while one might argue that the spread of English is a sign of growing transnational political-economic linkages through projects such as development or neo-liberal reform, one must temper the claim with an acknowledgment that global characterizations of any language are difficult to make, or are themselves signs of modernity facilitating the imagination of a unified and expanding language (Pennycook 2006, Ricento 2000, 2005). Whether envisioning languages from the point of view of scholarly distinctions between native or non-native varieties (Kachru 1986), demarcations of language through policy (Aggarwal 1988, Sonntag 2000), regional vicissitudes of political resonance (Sonntag 1996), or significances of language medium distinctions based in Gujarati and English (Ramanathan 2004, 2005), scholars of the social life of language in India have begun to explore what recent work in linguistic anthropology calls “language ideology” which “refers to the situated, partial, and interested character of conceptions and uses of language” (Errington 2001:110).<sup>5</sup> In an influential pair of publications, for example, Susan Gal and Judith Irvine develop a rubric for explaining some of the ways in which language ideology and social phenomena interrelate: linguistic features can be understood to embody social distinctions (iconization); relationships within one sphere of linguistic or social structure can be mapped onto others (fractal recursivity); and persons or practices can be hidden by the simplifications of ideology (erasure) (1995, Irvine and Gal 2000).

Stanton Wortham argues that educational institutions are key sites for the production of language ideology: “A society’s beliefs about language—as a symbol of nationalism, a marker of difference, or a tool of assimilation—are often reproduced and challenged through educational institutions” (2003:2). Yet, Patrick Eisenlohr points out that one reason for

which studies of institutions of whatever kind have not figured more prominently in studies of language ideology is that scholars have tended to foreground what he calls, following Silverstein (1992), “explicit metapragmatic discourse,” wherein people or artifacts overtly describe the relationship between linguistic phenomena and their contexts of use, whether immediate or projected.<sup>6</sup> Eisenlohr argues that such a focus risks the erasure of “less overt institutional and linguistic practices”:

The conceptual tools and mechanisms of linguistic ideologies have become increasingly well understood, but an understanding of how such politically charged interpretive schemata are mapped onto people, events, and situations also needs to be grounded in an analysis of how institutional and everyday practices form a constitutive part of such ideologies (2004:63).

Heeding Eisenlohr’s call, this article traces some of the ways in which educational institutions have come to embody language distinctions in North India, especially as people use the notions of the nation and the state to reflect on schools, sometimes directly, and sometimes by way of reflecting on a particular school practice.

Thus, in arguing for the necessity of the ethnographic investigation of issues of cost and bureaucratic structure among Hindi- and English-medium schools, I do not intend to foreground these domains of practice to the exclusion of overt linguistic reflection. People in Banaras render such non-linguistic aspects of schooling such as price meaningful with distinctions like “cheap” versus “expensive,” and, in turn, graft onto them such distinctions like “government” versus “private.” My argument is that the ethnographic investigation of cost and bureaucratic structure can reveal the ways in which practices of Hindi- and English-medium schools (and not others) point to constructions of the state the vicissitudes of which residents of Banaras do not articulate when they talk about Hindi- and English-medium schools via language distinctions. This hardly renders Banaras residents’ ideological reflections ethnographically suspect, however. Language ideology and school practices allow for different but complementary constructions of the nation and the state, respectively, demonstrating the importance of probing the school, described in terms of language difference, for its ability to refract multiple semiotic modalities through which the nation and the state attain salience.

### **The New Middle Class: Education and Language Ideology**

There are many types of schools in Banaras, and no school belongs to just one type. From October 1996 to October 1997, for example, I attended classes, sat in the principal's reception area, and talked to teachers and students during breaks in a school for girls, grade levels nine through twelve, in which classes (except English class) occur in Hindi; in a coeducational school, levels kindergarten through eight, in which classes (except English class) occur in Hindi; in a coeducational school, levels lower-kindergarten through twelve, in which classes (except Hindi class) occur in English; in a "convent" school run by a Christian religious order, levels kindergarten through twelve, in which classes (except for Hindi) occur in English; in an Islamic madrasa (school) for boys in which classes occur in Urdu; in a school for boys run by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an organization with complex ties to the Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in which classes occur in Hindi; and, finally, in several schools run either by volunteers or paid employees, part of whose goal is to offer hours, supplies, and locations that make schooling available to the disadvantaged, in which classes are taught in Hindi. Teachers in one school belonging to the last category argued that one factor that makes the school atypical is that classes occur in Hindi and English.<sup>7</sup>

In this section of the article, I explore reasons why only some of these schools have become especially important to what many scholars have called India's new middle class. I then explore ways in which language ideology focused on Hindi and English has become increasingly bifurcated during the emergence of the new class position. This section thus sets the scene for the next two wherein I show how the domains of fees and boards reproduce differences between Hindi- and English-medium schools in ways that differ from, but ultimately complement, differences emergent from language ideology.

William Mazzarella argues that it is more fruitful for anthropologists to approach the middle class in India as an emerging discursive space that entails concerns such as "Hindu nationalism, consumerist liberalization, and the pluralization/fragmentation of national politics" rather than as a countable sociological category (2005:1). Mazzarella thus follows Partha Chatterjee (1997) in noting that the middle class in India has never attained majority status, much less hegemony. What is certain is that the concerns Mazzarella notes indicate that a sea change in discourses of class in India has occurred. Different scholars as well as indigenous and interna-

tional media have identified different moments defined by policy measures of the Indian government to account for the transition, including Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's 1973 Pay Commission, or PM Rajiv Gandhi's 1986 or PM Narasimha Rao's 1991 moves toward liberalization of the economy and privatization of the government sector. Leela Fernandes, for example, uses such a moment to indicate a break with the past:

If the tenets of Nehruvian development could be captured by symbols of dams and mass-based factories, the markers of Rajiv Gandhi's shifted to the possibility of commodities that would tap into the tastes and consumption practices of the urban middle classes (2001:152).

Elsewhere, Fernandes elaborates:

Rajiv Gandhi's vision substantially rested on the role of the middle classes. His vision was encapsulated in concrete economic policies that began to loosen up import regulations in order to allow an expansion of consumer goods (such as automobiles and washing machines), that could cater to middle- and upper-middle-class tastes; even his vision for village development included the slogan "A computer for every village" (2000a:613).

Lise McKean echoes Fernandes's assertions about the effects Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's policies, and adds that such policies initiated a departure from Nehruvian concerns with development focused on the poor:

During the late 1980s the government's economic policies promoted the growth of the private sector, industrialization geared to urban middle-class consumers, and the reduction of transfer payments from rich to poor organized by the state (1996:11).

Chakravarty and Gooptu argue that the discursive space of the new middle class implicates many different groups including "urban professionals and managerial groups, commercial and entrepreneurial classes, white- and blue-collar employees as well as substantial rural landowners and farmers" (2000:91). As I will show below, it is the heterogeneous composition of the new middle class that has facilitated the emergence of diverse ideologies of Hindi and English.

Though she does not focus on them, Fernandes argues that schools take their place among the profusion of consumerist practices characteristic of the new middle class by virtue of being “diploma-granting institutions which provide skills and credentials” (2000b:90). Nita Kumar underlines the importance of education to the discursive space of the new middle class in Banaras:

The community and class background of these children, as befits a “mainstream” group, has not been discussed at any length. They are from a class that forms the “backbone of the nation,” that wants liberal education and secure “service” jobs for its sons, marriages into service families for its daughters and now maybe careers as well, if in proper establishments (2001:270).

Kumar’s invocation of “service” (*sarvis*) and its presumption of educational attainment provide an excellent illustration of the emergence of the discursive space of the new middle class and the maneuverability it makes possible. In the Nehruvian era, “service,” more marked than the more encompassing “job” (*naukarī*), or the yet more encompassing “work” (*kām*), often denoted an employment niche in the government sector, the apex of which is a position in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS).<sup>8</sup> It is this sense of service that D.P. Pattanayak addresses when he writes that “developing third world languages” are “passports to governmental positions which control the economy” (1987:xvii). Entrance to the IAS is controlled by an exam administered by the central government that presupposes higher educational achievements in a standardized language, and employees are sent to their posts at the district level. Such posts, as well as lesser ones, are extremely desirable for their prestige, but also for their well-known perks and pensions. In the post-Nehruvian era, however, “service” denotes a broader set of desirable jobs and no longer is used primarily to refer to a government post.

For example, Sharma Dry Cleaners sits next to the convenience store owned by my landlord during my year of field research in Banaras. Mr. Sharma has three sons, from eldest to youngest, Raju, Ramesh, and Guddu. Raju opened a branch in Sagra, a neighborhood five kilometers away from his father’s store, and Ramesh uses a motorcycle to run orders between the stores as well as from and to patrons’ homes. Guddu was already known as an especially gifted student in the fourth grade level during my field



research in 1997. During a more recent visit in 2005, I asked Mr. Sharma whether Guddu would join his brothers in the family business. His reply was cryptic: “We are waiting” (*ham intazār kar rahe hāĩ*). Guddu approached during the conversation and explained that he had been working extremely hard studying for his twelfth level exams. I asked about what he planned to do after school. He replied that everything depended on his exam results. If he did well, he would apply for admission to Banaras Hindu University in order to study accounting. He had developed an interest in computers, he remarked, and gently teased that he had tried, without success, to convince his father to generate receipts and keep records electronically. His father used the word “service” in order to explain that “accounting is good work” (*akaunṭing kī sarvis acchā kām hai*), but, waving his receipt book overhead, said that he would never entrust his business to computers because the electrical power in Banaras comes and goes. When I expressed confusion, asking, “service is a government matter, no?” (*sarvis sarkār kī bāt hai, na*), Mr. Sharma replied vehemently that he lacked the connections necessary to acquire such a job for his sons, and that reservations for disadvantaged groups had made the prospects for getting such a job that much more difficult.<sup>9</sup> Guddu reassured me that were he not able to gain entrance to the university, he could always join his brothers in the family business. With a sweep of his hand over the shop’s linoleum counter, he concluded, “this is good service too” (*yaha bhī acchī sarvis hai*).

Most of those people who can be considered to be in the new middle classes, however, lack the luxury enjoyed by Guddu, a job opening in the event of academic failure. Purnima Mankekar, for example, notes that since the 1980s, education increasingly has embodied the prospect of economic mobility, but also anxiety, for those in the lower reaches of the middle classes: “All it would take is a layoff, a bad debt, or a failed examination on the part of one of their children, and many of them would slide right back into poverty” (1999:9). Mankekar pays special attention to the double bind in which middle class girls find themselves wherein education is oriented to the satisfaction of spouse and family. Whereas the education of girls is increasingly seen as important, many people told Mankekar that a girl should be educated to provide a suitably interesting companion for her husband. In those cases in which a girl’s education made work outside of the house possible, Mankekar notes the gendered dual burden of domestic and professional labor. My own fieldwork confirmed Mankekar’s insights. While I did know a handful of girls whose families supported their pursuit of higher educa-

tion, most girls were being educated until the tenth or twelfth level in order to be suitably married and in order to be able to run a household via “home science” (*hom sāyans*) courses in which hygiene, food procurement and preparation, and the management of household funds are taught.<sup>10</sup>

In his now-classic formulation of the relationship between economic capital and cultural capital, Pierre Bourdieu argues for the relative autonomy of educational capital whereby value is underpinned by state sanction

with the academic qualification, a certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture, social alchemy which has a relative autonomy vis-à-vis its bearer and even vis-à-vis the cultural capital he effectively possesses at a given moment in time (1986:248).

When related to the ethnographic context presented here, Bourdieu’s assertion—ironically, perhaps—helps to explain how it is that people invest in the school system in a manner not predicted by their current attainment of economic or cultural capital, at the same time that the school system itself entails a distinction between those institutions able and unable to provide the “legally guaranteed value” of which Bourdieu writes. In other words, Bourdieu’s assertion foregrounds the way in which only some schools in Banaras inhabit the discursive space of the new middle class at the same time that the same schools do not necessarily preclude the attendance of those with class aspirations. While I discuss the bureaucratic structure of school boards in more depth below in order to show the ways in which it focuses contrasts between Hindi- and English-medium schools, school boards are relevant to the present discussion because the capital that they offer excludes many schools from relevance to the discursive space of the new middle class. Students at many schools in Banaras do not compete in national or state-wide exams after the tenth and twelfth levels the results of which are so important for further education and employment.<sup>11</sup>

The distinction between institutions able and unable to offer board-certified credentials is exacerbated by the fact that the same schools that cannot offer preparation for a board exam often suffer suspicion and prejudice. The rise of Hindu chauvinism embodied in the rising fortunes of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the 1980–90s, coupled with an increasingly cited connection between Islam and terrorism in international media, have provided some people the impetus to argue that madrassas cater to shiftless

and angry Muslim youths and inspire them to militancy. Apart from madrassas, a great number of schools belong to what used to be called the non-formal education (NFE) sector. The NFE sector was established in 1979–80 by a mandate of the Education Commission of 1964–6 to accommodate non-enrolled children in ten educationally backward states (including Uttar Pradesh, the state in which Banaras is located). The National Policy of Education of 1986 revised the NFE sector to accommodate voluntary agencies (VAs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to address the sector's limited successes (Ghosh 2004). As part of the World Bank loan taken by Prime Minister Rao's Congress government in 1991, the District Primary Education Program was launched in 1994 to address perceived failures of the NFE schemes, including a greater focus on the education of girls and members of Scheduled Castes and Tribes (SCTs) in rural areas deemed educationally backward. The nomenclature of the educational sector grew in complexity with the addition of alternative schools (ASs) and education guarantee schemes (EGSs) to address the needs of groups not well served by the NFE schemes (Ramachandran 2004).

Regardless of particular organizational affiliation, however, the aforementioned schools can still be considered to comprise a group because they generally aim to reach the population excluded from board-certified educational institutions. Strategies include charging extremely low or no fees, allowing students to forego uniforms, providing materials, and accommodating students, sometimes adults, with flexible hours. During an interview conducted in August 2004, Krishna Kumar, long-time scholar of education and newly appointed Director of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the Government of India's highest post in secondary education, told me:

It's very difficult today to clearly distinguish philanthropic private activity in education from NGO activity. And purely commercial activity in education is also widely rampant. The situation is far more complex than one could have seen in the early eighties when the state was definitely the main player in education, certainly in school education, and even in higher education (LaDousa: 1997:139-40).

Today, the sponsorship of a school by an NGO can expose the school to the charge that entrepreneurial activity—and not education—is the primary reason for the school's existence.<sup>12</sup>

One NGO school in Banaras considered itself a laudable alternative to board-certified schools as well as other schools run by NGOs for its incorporation of student creativity in the curriculum, flexible approaches to discipline, and involvement of parents in learning and communication with teachers. The principal told me that board certification would lend the school legitimacy and assuage fears of corruption. She explained that such a move also would resolve the school's enrollment problems whereby some parents remove their children from the school and place them in a board-certified institution in the years just preceding board examinations. But, the principal explained, the prospect of the school becoming a "diploma factory" helped staff members to reconcile the school's administrative disadvantages. Accordingly, the school will remain under the purview of an NGO and will not seek board affiliation.

The remaining schools in Banaras and across Hindi-speaking North India are affiliated with school boards. It is among these schools that the issue of language medium, English- or Hindi-, has become salient among the middle class. M. Verma invokes the concerns of language planning when he outlines issues that pertain specifically to board-affiliated institutions:

The standard arguments in favour of English as the medium of instruction are: equality of education, poverty of the regional languages and their inability to meet the demands of the role of a medium of instruction, paucity of books in the regional languages, the near-impossible task of large-scale translation, and the contact and mobility of scholars (1994:119).

Apart from the concerns of language planning, a direct link between competence in English and a middle class disposition preexists the expansion in discursive salience of the middle class in the 1980s. In a state of the art volume on the sociolinguistics of English in India, scholars include such comments as "English still continues to be the only sure key to good jobs and careers in the country today" (Nadkarni 1994:131), and "In short, it [English] is regarded as an essential part of the 'middle class' baggage" (Khubchandani 1994:78).

While such scholars are right to point out English's association with economic viability and mobility in contemporary Indian society, other scholars have shown that the language is hardly uncontested in its ability to offer an organizing cultural idiom. For example, one of the most signif-

icant developments in the decade before my year of research in 1996–7 was the rise in popularity of the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), especially among urban, upper-caste people (Hansen 1999). During their rise in popularity, Hindu fundamentalist rhetoric resonated with a language-inflected group that Richard Fox (1990) calls the “Hindian,” a coinage that combines “Hindi” with “Indian.” Emerging in the 1980s, “Hindians” were people who resented the remittances sent home by Muslims from employment in the Gulf States, disdained Urdu as a language imagined as an encroachment brought by Muslim invaders, and resented English as a language favored by the government of independent India, later branded by the BJP as “pseudo-secular” and unfairly sympathetic towards non-Hindus.<sup>13</sup> From an entirely different trajectory, in 1990, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, initiated a campaign he called *angrezī haṭhāo* (“eradicate English”) after Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s earlier slogan, *garībī haṭhāo* (“eradicate poverty”). The campaign demanded that all state government correspondence be conducted in Hindi (Sonntag 1996; Zurbuchen 1992). The move was a populist one meant to critique the access of English speakers to jobs in the state and appeal to Yadav’s constituency of underemployed lower-caste and Muslim followers. Media practices too highlighted the emergence of what Arvind Rajagopal (2001) has called a “split public,” configured by language difference. He notes the very different ways in which the destruction of the Babri Mosque on December 6, 1992 by those spurred on by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) was reported in Hindi-medium and English-medium newspapers. Akhil Gupta (1995) finds the language medium of newspapers significant as well in the manner in which they reported on corruption during his fieldwork in the 1980s.

I present these political and media developments only to introduce, and not to substantiate, the ways in which Banaras residents reflected on schools via language distinctions. Indeed, while reflecting on schools, no one spoke of politicians or responses to the destruction of the mosque. Their reflections are in keeping with the insights of scholars such as Fox, Gupta, and Rajagopal, however, in that not just English, but also Hindi, can be used to argue for a school’s moral legitimacy. When reflecting on schools via their language medium affiliations, the nation emerged immediately as a primary element of differentiation. People, whether involved with a Hindi- or an English-medium school, noted that Hindi is the “national language” (*rāṣṭrabhāṣā*) and also the “mother language” (*mātrabhāṣā*) whereas

English is the “international language” (*antarrāṣṭrabhāṣā*). Such designations, however, did not predict whether the speaker was characterizing attendance at a school, described in terms of its language medium, as positive or negative. Indeed, both were possibilities for both types of schools. For example, students of Hindi-medium schools often argued that attendance there embodies satisfaction (*santuṣṭ*) with life in Banaras and a lack of the need to go elsewhere to find better paying jobs than those available locally. Such people often described English-medium schools as evidence of just such a motivation, and often invoked cities bigger and to the west of Banaras such as Lucknow and Delhi as probable destinations. In contrast, students of English-medium schools acknowledged that Hindi is the “national language,” but argued that English is necessary if one is to “go outside” (*bāhar jānā*) of Banaras. Some explicitly invoked the desire to gain employment as a motivation for leaving the city, while others mentioned the necessity of English to “roam” (*ghūmnā*) to other locales. The different conceptualizations of space emergent among such constructions of schools via language distinctions (wherein the nation is key) foreshadow conceptualizations of space emergent among reflections on school practice (wherein the state is key), explored below, but demonstrate a greater range of reflections on the moral significance of attendance in a particular medium.

### **Fees: Cheap Versus Expensive**

Fees are paid monthly for school attendance by the student’s “guardians” (*gārdians*), a term used by school employees to refer to parents, other older relatives, or other sponsors. I asked about fees often, assuming that reflections on them would elicit interpretive frames used to organize the stakes of school attendance. I can only guess in retrospect that my focus on tuition as the relevant frame for imagining sacrifices involved in schooling was derived from my own upbringing in a predominantly Catholic area of a state in the southern part of the United States. There, relative to other areas of the US, private schools, most run by the Catholic church, provided a popular—if burdensome and barely affordable—option for people like my lower-middle-class mother desiring to escape an abysmal public school system (made more so by the growth and proliferation of private schools). I imagine that later, shared worries about financial aid for college only made more probable my focus on tuition during initial fieldwork in Banaras as the relevant concern linking sacrifice and education.

I indulge in these digressions to account for reasons why my use of the term fees for understanding reflections on schooling and cost was largely inappropriate for conversations about schools with many of the people with whom I spoke in Banaras. For example, after a few weeks of residing in her house, I used the word fees to ask my landlady about the cost of her daughter's government affiliated Hindi-medium school. In other words, the word fees translated nicely for my (uninformed) predilections. She looked at me searchingly, and smiled awkwardly. Finally, after an uncomfortable half-minute or so, she replied, "meaning one and a half to two rupees?" (*māne do ḍeṛh rupaye*).<sup>14</sup> When I responded affirmatively, she giggled nervously and added, "yes, that's all" (*hā̃ bas*). The focus on fees produced the same dynamic, confusion coupled with nervous humor, with all of my initial interlocutors involved in some way with government affiliated Hindi-medium schools. When I inquired about fees with parents of privately owned Hindi-medium schools, they simply told me the amount as a matter of fact. Most private Hindi-medium schools charge between 20 and 40 rupees per month while a few schools charge as much as 80 rupees. The reactions of parents of students at private English-medium schools mirrored those of parents at private Hindi-medium schools.

Only gradually did I learn to ask the parents or other guardians of Hindi-medium students about "expenses" (*kharc*). In contrast to the tense and short-lived discussions of fees, discussions of expenses were extremely productive, prompting a predictable list of items such as "books" (*kitābē*), "notebooks" (*kāpiyā*), "paper" (*kāgaz*), "pens" (*ḳalamē*), "pencils" (*pensilē*), "cloth" (*kaprā*), and "sewing" (*silāi*). Indeed, the PROBE (Public Report on Basic Education in India) Team comprised of independent researchers who administered a survey in villages across the Hindi-speaking states of Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh from September to December, 1996 report that the 318 households sending their children to government primary schools found a similar set of expenses most dear. The PROBE Team reports that respondents listed "fees" at 16 rupees, "textbooks/stationery" at 99 rupees, "uniform/clothes for school" at 159 rupees, "private tuitions" at 25 rupees, and "travel and other expenditures" at 19 rupees (1999:32).

The most costly expenditure related to schooling mentioned by people in Banaras was "tuition" (*tuiṣan*). This term does not refer, to my initial confusion, to the payment for school attendance, but rather to the tutor in one or more subjects that is widely thought to be necessary for the stu-

dent's success in school. Reporting from their fieldwork in Bijnor, a district in Uttar Pradesh several hundred kilometers to the northwest of Banaras, Roger and Patricia Jeffrey and Craig Jeffrey note:

Tuition is relatively uncommon for pupils in classes 6–8, but most pupils who can afford to do so take regular tuition in science, English, and maths for the class 10 exams, paying out a total of around Rs 500–700 per month. In classes 11 and 12, pupils in the science streams may pay up to Rs 1,000 for tuition in biology, physics and chemistry, possibly also continuing with maths and English (2005:50).

In Banaras, I saw that students from the third and fourth level utilizing tuitions, and their families reported paying the tuition between several hundred and 1,000 rupees per month. The upper range is several times the fees charged by Banaras's most expensive schools. A number of factors might explain the ubiquity of tuitions in Banaras vis-à-vis Bijnor. Banaras is a much larger city. Perhaps more significantly, tuition is an employment niche very popular with students attending Banaras's two major universities, Banaras Hindu University and Kashi Vidyapith. Families considered themselves lucky if they had managed to find a relative, a "cousin-sister" or "cousin-brother," who might take less money because of the kin connection. Some parents and students of both Hindi-medium and English-medium schools explained that more than one tuition (referring to the person or subject) can be required, making school an almost impossible financial endeavor.<sup>15</sup>

Devdas Singh, for example, has five children, two of whom (a boy and a girl) were studying in Hindi-medium government schools. When I asserted, "I have heard that many people use tutors" (*māĩ ne sunā ki bahut log tuiśan kāistemāl karte hāĩ*), he replied, "yes they do, people use tutors, but they are very expensive. They are not for us poor people. Now please understand that I make 2000 rupees a month. 2000 rupees and I have five children. Two children go to school. So please tell me where the money for tuitions for each child will come from. The tuition fees are 300 rupees [per month]. For that, the children have to eat... their own food [for consumption at school], they need clothing too, pencils, notebook.... Everything is expensive sir, everything is expensive sir. Therefore, poor people cannot hire tuitions" (*yaha to sar karte hāĩ log tuiśan kā istemāl karte hāĩ lekin bahut mahangā paṛ jātā ham garīb log ke liye nahĩ hāĩ ab ham log mān lījiye do hazār rupaye*



*mahīnā kā kamāte hāī aur do hazār rupaye pāc bacce hāī do bacce skūl jāte hāī aur batāīye do bacce ko alag alag ṭuīsan parhāne to ṭuīsan kā fīs itnā zyādā kahā se āyegā tīn sau rupaye ṭuīsan kā fīs lag jāyegā usī mē bacce ko khānā khānā hai apnā bhojan kapṛā bhī cāhiye pensils notbuk har cīz mahangā hai sar har cīz mahangā hai sar isliye ṭuīsan garīb log to nahī kar sakte hāī*). Devdas likely underestimates the charges incurred in hiring a tutor because he is unable to do so. The amount of 300 rupees emerges as a costly sum in his estimation. Interestingly, it was the mention of a tuition that often prompted Hindi-medium students' parents or guardians, were they employing one, to liken their own financial burdens to those of parents or guardians of English-medium students.

While a discussion of fees seemed awkward to the parents of Hindi-medium students attending government schools, the topic could nevertheless arise when it invoked a contrast with English-medium schools. This was true whether the students' Hindi-medium schools were affiliated with the government or were private. Consistently, when the parents of Hindi-medium students contrasted the fees charged by English-medium schools with those charged by their own children's schools, they exaggerated the upper amount, sometimes reporting a three-fold increase of actual charges. For example, even the principal of what I call the Saraswati School, the school in which my landlady's oldest daughter was enrolled in the tenth level, explained that a school nearby, what I call the Seacrest School, widely known to be one of Banaras's most expensive English-medium schools, "takes 900 rupees [per month]" (*nau sau rupaye lete hāī*). She followed with a rhetorical question about how anyone but "rich people" (*amīr log*) could send their children to English-medium schools. The fees for the Seacrest School's upper grade levels (eleventh and twelfth), the most expensive, were, in reality, 320 rupees per month. When I asked her to specify the amount of her own school's fees, she stated, "one and a half to two rupees" (*do ḍerh rupaye*), and, with a short pause, elaborated with the English "free."

Most broadly, the (exaggerated) differentiation of schools by fees mirrors the sharp division between Hindi- and English-medium schools emergent from overt descriptions of schools in terms of language medium difference because, in both domains, language difference between Hindi and English emerges as most salient from other possibilities of differentiating schools. Such alignments give evidence that a semiotic relationship of indexicality (Silverstein 1976)—one that cannot be accounted for solely by referring to

a school as Hindi- or English-medium—has come to inhere between the language medium designation of a school, on the one hand, and constructions of the nation and the cost of schools, on the other hand. The language medium of a school exhibits different indexical possibilities depending on whether it is framed by the domains of nation or cost. While language ideology that uses language difference to reflect on schools arranges difference in terms of the nation, whereby Hindi-medium schools index the nation and English-medium schools index the transcendence of national boundaries, the division of fees facilitates a different axis of school difference organized by the notion of the state. Those schools that charge an amount of fees, questions about which draw so much confusion (until English-medium schools are invoked), are called “government” (*sarkārī*) schools. Indeed, the government provides a subsidy to the schools reducing their fees. Many people used a kind of shorthand, using a noun in place of the adjective (*sarkārī*), calling the school simply “government” (*sarkār*).

Consistently, people drew a contrast between such schools and the handful of most expensive schools in Banaras that most people could rattle off by name. Thus, regarding the practice of charging fees, people contrasted those affiliated with the government and those with private administrations. The fact that people often mentioned, by name, a handful of the most expensive private schools as especially different from government schools demonstrates the ways in which the issue of language medium is implicated in discussion of fees. I often asked about the language medium of expensive schools mentioned by name. People, even those involved with private Hindi-medium schools where fees are substantial, treated me as I were a bit dense, noting that such schools are English-medium. Sometimes people assumed an ironic stance in discussions about schools that similarly singled out schools in Banaras that charge the highest fees. People would sarcastically mention that even the children of rikshawallas attend the most expensive schools in Banaras. The sarcasm would be followed by the comment that attendance by such students is “useless” (*bekār*). The children of rickshawallas, according to such people, would not benefit from the sacrifices entailed in exorbitant fees because they would not be able to find the type of job for which their education was ostensibly preparing them. It was in the context of such discussions that the issue of language medium emerged. Some people added a rhetorical quip about the child of a rickshawalla’s need of English.

Reflections on schools that focus on fees hold that the cheap (or the “free”) are run by the state with an assumption that such schools are Hindi-

medium while the expensive are run by private administrations with the assumption that such schools are English-medium. While reflections on schools via language medium distinctions are underpinned by a link between Hindi and the nation, and English and the transcendence of the nation's boundaries, the issue of language medium manifests indexical relationships that, in turn, exhibit a semiotic process that Irvine and Gal call "semiotic erasure." They explain that "semiotic erasure" is "the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible. Facts that are inconsistent with the ideological scheme either go unnoticed or get explained away" (2000:38). There indeed exist Hindi-medium schools that charge substantial fees and English-medium schools that charge comparable fees to their Hindi-medium counterparts. In reflections on fees, however, those examples remain unmentioned and are thus erased. Schools that charge modest fees index the presence of the state in education, and such schools are assumed to be Hindi-medium, whereas schools that charge the highest fees index private ownership, and such schools are assumed to be English-medium.

An encounter provides a prelude to the ways, treated in the next section, that the divide between the government and the private school, underpinned by differences between Hindi- and English-medium, can entail spatial logics in addition to notions about cost. During fieldwork in 2005, I was chatting with an owner of a store near a former place of residence. We were talking about how the street in front of his store had been paved, and how the street was joined to a bustling neighborhood to the south by a flyover traversing a large drainage canal. Just as we were talking about a marked increase in traffic, several buses rumbled by. These were not painted Seacrest's familiar blue, but were painted bright yellow. I noted that Delhi Public School, the name written on the side of each bus, must be somewhat new because it had not existed in Banaras during prior visits, the last of which predated the encounter by five years. He told me that Delhi Public School had fast become popular with "rich people" (*amīr log*), and that the inclusion of the name of the capital was surely meant to trump the names of local, established schools in terms of prestige. The principal of the NGO school that expressed fears that the school would become a "diploma factory" with the attainment of board affiliation, mentioned above, explained that Delhi Public School is indeed a chain that arrived in Banaras two years previously, and that the school can be found "in every city from Delhi to Banaras and even beyond."

## Boards: State Versus Private

Boards are administrative bureaucracies to which schools must apply to gain affiliation. A board requires that an affiliated school offer the courses comprising a “syllabus” (*silabas*), suggests, or, in the case of government-affiliated schools, mandates the books that a school can use, and oversees the distribution and grading of yearly exams the results of which determine which students can proceed to the next grade level.

Attaining board affiliation is notoriously complicated, difficult, and costly, and any school administrator sees her or his own board affiliation as an achievement or, if several decades old, as something thankfully accomplished. Such a feeling characterizes the administrators of Hindi- or English-medium schools, whether government-administered or private. Thus, in a sense, all boards fall under the purview of the Government of India in that all boards must meet a set of standards. Yet, in many ways, boards reinforce the division between Hindi- and English-medium schools in ways parallel to fees. For example, most government-administered schools are associated with what people in Banaras call the “Allahabad Board,” the designation focusing on the board’s location in the nearby city of Allahabad, or what at the national level is called the “Uttar Pradesh Board” or “UP Board,” focusing on the board’s jurisdiction in the state in which Banaras is located. Affiliation with the UP Board enables a school to receive funds for attendance not nearly compensated by the family’s payment of one and one-half rupees per month, as well as for teachers’ salaries that tend to be four to five times greater than those received by private school teachers.

The contrast in boards parallels the contrast in fees in that the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is a board to which Banaras’s most expensive private schools are affiliated. Indeed, affiliation with the CBSE, many schools principals and teachers of all types of schools explained, allows a school to take high fees. Affiliation with the CBSE is a source of pride for administrators and teachers, and is noted on signboards and advertisements of many affiliated schools.<sup>16</sup> Figure 1 depicts a signboard for Tulsi Vidya Niketan, a moderately expensive school located on the southern edge of the city. The sign also makes explicit that the school is affiliated with the CBSE on all levels, primary, secondary, and “up to class XII,” that includes the “intercollege” (*inṭṛkāḷaj*) levels 11 and 12. These last two levels are crucial for students desiring university admission because board exam results for the twelfth level are a necessary part of the application and partly determine whether a student will gain admission.



PHOTO BY CHAISE LADOUA

**FIGURE 1: Signboard for Tulsi Vidya Niketan.**

While schools advertise their affiliation with the CBSE, schools rarely advertise their affiliation with the UP Board. The one exception that I was able to find was an advertisement for what I call the Little Gems School. During fieldwork in 1996–7, class was held for approximately thirty students on the rooftop of the principal's home, and a handful of teachers, friends of the principal, volunteered their time. During fieldwork in 2005, I noticed that a metal sign had been erected on a road leading to the school, and, in addition to the school's name, the sign advertised that the school is seeking affiliation with the UP Board. A teacher at the Saraswati School told me that after my departure in 1997, the Little Gems School had received funds from an NGO, allowing them to expand enrollment such that the principal's entire home has become a schoolhouse. Apart from this one exception, however, schools affiliated directly with the government via the UP Board do not advertise. Indeed, the principals of several schools affiliated with the UP Board argued that there is no need of advertising because more students than can be accommodated seek admission each year.

The Seacrest School, one of the most expensive schools in Banaras, noted its affiliation with the CBSE on its signboards and advertisements during my initial period of fieldwork in 1996–7. In 2005, I noticed that reference to the CBSE had disappeared from Seacrest's signboards and

advertisements, including the one for the school's new radio station. The principal explained to me that Seacrest's reputation has grown so much that people assume its affiliation with the CBSE and, therefore, there is no need to include the affiliation on visual representations of the school. During my initial fieldwork, she spoke at length about the importance of affiliation to the CBSE, blending curricular requirements of the board with the high performance of Seacrest's students on the board's exams:

We teach according to the CBSE board. The syllabus we follow, that is from the board, the CBSE board, and in the CBSE board, up to class ten, all the subjects are compulsory, and, besides, those main subjects like Hindi, English, mathematics, social studies, and science, these are the compulsory subjects. I can say we have a very good reputation regarding all, hmm, they, our children have proven worth, they have shown very good results in the board examination.

The principal went on to explain how difficult and expensive it was to build the school's curriculum to attain affiliation with the CBSE. The principal explained that the expense, coupled with students' strong performance on exams, justifies the high fees charged by the school.

From the perspective of a later conversation in 2005, such challenges have faded somewhat, and that the principal's primary concerns have moved to other ventures making the school distinct from others, such as the establishment of the school's radio station, and the recruitment of students in music and the arts. This is not to claim that CBSE affiliation is no longer important, however, since the first thing that she did during our reunion in her office was to show me a signboard displaying the names of the school's "toppers," or students who excel on the CBSE examination. She noted the names of students who had achieved top scores since my last visit to the school eight years before.

Schools generally do not advertise affiliation with the UP Board, but this should not imply that differentiations between boards do not reach the city's public spaces through advertising. "Coaching centers" (*kocing senřarız*)—whereby a tuition can be hired—sometimes make explicit that the UP Board and the CBSE are particularly salient as contrasting options. In Figure 2, Rajkamal Coaching Center, located in Lanka, a neighborhood in southern Banaras, advertises its affiliation with the National Public School, a chain of schools affiliated with the CBSE and located around the country,



PHOTO BY CHAISE LADOUSSA

**FIGURE 2: Advertisement for Rajkamal Coaching Center. (Translation: Rajkamal Coaching Center; VI to XII U.P. & C.B.S.E. BOARD; National Public School; Flowertown, Lanka-Varanasi)**

and makes explicit that it is able to offer help to students from classes six through twelve studying in schools affiliated with either the UP Board or the CBSE. Most coaching centers, however, advertise that they serve students enrolled in schools in the CBSE, indicating its prestige in relation to the UP Board. The Saraswati Study Circle, for example, offers assistance to students in classes ten through twelve in the science and commerce “lines” (*lāynz*). The third line, arts, goes unmentioned.

A division in board affiliation interpolates the distinction between “cheap” and “expensive” schools, and, with it, the distinction between Hindi- and English-medium. Just as “cheap” describes those schools affiliated with the UP Board and “expensive” describes schools affiliated with the CBSE Board, the schools are assumed to be Hindi-medium and English-medium, respectively. In one conversation, the principal of the Hindi-medium government-administered Saraswati School explained that the board affiliation and language medium of a school are “different issues” (*dūsrī bātē hāī*). She explained that “private schools” (*prāyvaṭ skūlz*) take fees and that “government schools” (*sarkārī skūlz*) do not. Yet, when I asked her whether schools affiliated with the CBSE teach in English, she replied as if my assertion were a foregone conclusion: “yes, yes, what else?” (*hā hā aur kyā*).



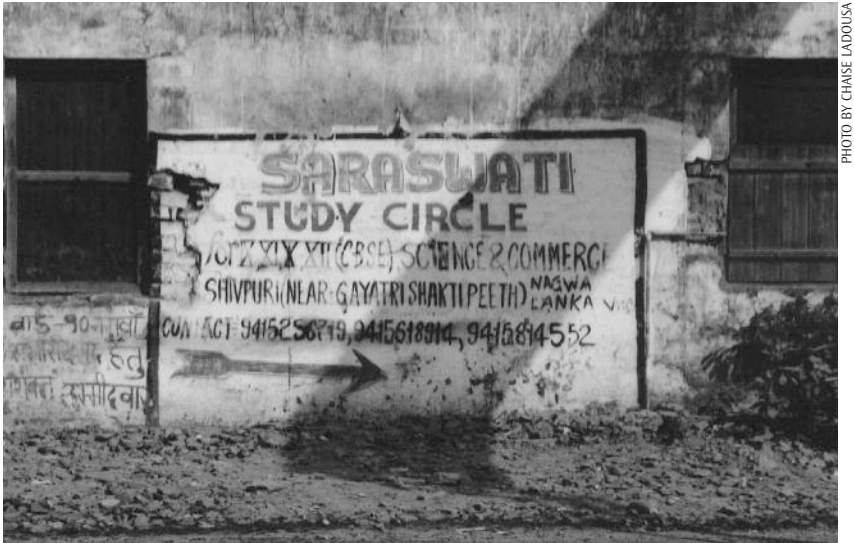


PHOTO BY CHAISE JADOLSA

FIGURE 3: Advertisement for Saraswati Study Circle.

Associations between board affiliation and language medium thus exhibit a complex process of semiotic erasure whereby the low cost of government schools is taken to be indicative of Hindi-medium status and the high cost of schools affiliated with the CBSE is taken to be indicative of English-medium status. Private Hindi-medium schools and English-medium schools not affiliated with the CBSE are erased in discursive reflection on boards.

While the differences between schools configured by their board affiliations mirror the differences between schools configured by the amount of fees they charge, the issue of school boards shows that Hindi-medium and English-medium schools operate in different spheres that are conceptualized spatially. When we talked about the significance of board affiliation, the principal of the Saraswati School initially focused on the yearly exam procedure, whereby teachers from schools affiliated with the UP Board must travel to other UP Board schools in Banaras to grade exams. This procedure, the principal explained, obviates bias in scoring exams. Later, however, she noted the many ways in which the Saraswati School has a “special relationship” (*khās ristā*) with UP Board schools in its vicinity. For example, several times during the year of my visits, the principal showed me a trophy case in which the trophies that the school’s students had won were displayed. She told me that the school has an intense rivalry in sports with schools nearby. She also told me something that I had



seen enacted each school day. The children who attend the principal's school are from the surrounding neighborhood, and one can see large groups of friends playing during recess and then walking home together, the group getting smaller as particular students reach their destination. Some students do travel to the more distant parts of the neighborhood by cycle rickshaw, but they are in the minority. Most students can simply walk. Such was not the case in schools affiliated with the CBSE. For example, the principal and owner of the Seacrest School explained that the prestige of the school draws students from all over Banaras. Indeed, a huge traffic jam of cycle and auto rickshaws, cars, and the school's several buses occurred in front of the school morning and afternoon.

An initial hint that schools in Banaras affiliated with the CBSE are evaluated according to a different set of parameters than are schools affiliated with the UP Board emerged in a conversation that occurred far from the city. I met with a retired official of the CBSE in her home in Delhi. She expressed surprise at my desire to study education anywhere in Uttar Pradesh, save perhaps in the state capital, Lucknow, where she claimed that there exists a "decent school." When I pointed out that some schools in Banaras are affiliated with the CBSE, she dismissed the claim with the statement, "education outside of Delhi is a disaster."

The administrator's sweeping generalization tells us little about education in Banaras. But, from the point of view of schooling in Banaras (and other places "outside of Delhi"), the generalization hints at the ways that different boards implicate the schools affiliated with them in different spatial spheres. Whereas practices of friendship and competition at UP Board-affiliated schools are oriented locally, toward other UP Board-affiliated schools nearby, CBSE-affiliated schools gain their prestige, in part, by their orientation outward, toward other parts of the city—or even the capital. Such an orientation emerges in the criticisms voiced by the parents of government-affiliated schools that decry the desire of English-medium students to leave Banaras in search of employment offering higher wages.

The outward spatial orientation of CBSE-affiliated schools puts their students and their families at risk of being criticized from another perspective. This perspective differs from criticisms aimed at people desiring to leave Banaras. Indeed, it marks Banaras as a place unable to offer the kind of English that would allow escape. Again, the English-medium school is foregrounded as the institution that constructs space and value and pits Banaras as an inferior place vis-à-vis the capital. A man in the neighborhood and I

would walk occasionally to a local tea stall to chat after his managerial shift at the State Bank of India. He had been transferred from Delhi in 1995 so that he could oversee the implementation of new practices among employees at a branch in Banaras. One afternoon, he expressed relief that he had left his wife and daughter in Delhi. He explained that he had overheard my landlady's daughter's tutorial during which she had been unable to speak English without using some Hindi. We both knew that my landlady's daughter attended the government-administered Hindi-medium Saraswati School. When I suggested that there are many English-medium schools in Banaras from which to choose, he countered that no school in Banaras could teach English free of Hindi. Some English-medium schools in Delhi, he added, "are really English-medium" (*asliyat mē angrezī mīḍīam hāī*).

Some people who have grown up in Banaras—unlike my bank employee friend—do not just criticize English-medium students and their families for the desire to go elsewhere, but sometimes use the same spatial logic to argue that schooling in English in Banaras is inferior to schooling in English in more "central" locations and institutions. One teacher disgruntled with teaching in the Seacrest School moved to another private school at the other end of the city. There, she explained, she was met with the same boring routines of classroom instruction oriented toward taking exams, as well as the low pay offered private school teachers generally. She decided to start what she called a "volunteer school" on the roof of her house for the children in the neighboring slum of Nagwa, one of Banaras's largest. She explained that fees were the least of the parents' concerns, and that her school offered instruction accommodating flexible and unpredictable work hours, and the inability to buy basic school supplies and a uniform. She went on to explain that the goals of the Seacrest School were misguided in that the owners' children, having attended the first few levels at the school, had been unable to gain entrance to the Doon School in Dehra Dun, the Modern School in Delhi, "etcetera" (*vagairaha*). They therefore had to attend the Woodstock School in Mussoorie instead. Once a student begins English-medium education in Banaras, she explained, language abilities prevent her or him from admission to the nation's most prestigious educational institutions.

## Conclusion

In North India, schools among which language medium distinctions matter allow for the ethnographic exploration of a mechanism of exclusion

from the new middle classes as well as the production of dissimilar notions of the nation and the state. Schools unaffiliated with a board are schools wherein the language medium of pedagogy is not constitutive of a type of institution. Whereas several of the schools in which I conducted fieldwork were unaffiliated with boards and use Hindi (or Urdu) as a language medium, the mention of them did not inspire the invocation of a realm of signification divergent from that of English: Hindi as “national language” and English as “international language.” Indeed, it would seem that in the realm of schooling, the significance of language distinctions is bifurcated along the axis of the national and the international just as it excludes institutions unable to offer participation in state-legitimated exams. The rubric of Hindi- and English-medium schools emerges as a vehicle for the new middle classes because it is underpinned by the offer of exams, a mechanism of the state to be sure.

Such could be seen as ironic given that when the state—and not the nation—is invoked in reflections on schools, it is relegated to only some of those schools able to offer participation in state-legitimated exams. From reflections on the practices of schools in charging fees and attaining board affiliations, people in Banaras talk about the governmental and the private. Through a process of semiotic erasure, the government is assumed to hold dominion over Hindi-medium schools, and English-medium schools are assumed to be private. Thus, very different processes of indexicality have developed. In one sphere, Hindi is to the national what English is to the international. In the other sphere, Hindi is to low cost and the government what English is to higher cost and the private.

The scholarly notion that the state is constructed in specific contexts informed by different modes of participation in, reflection on, and exclusion from institutions has informed this article’s ethnographic exploration of the nexus of schools, language distinctions, and class dispositions in Banaras. The ethnographic exploration reveals that not only the state, but the nation too is implicated in the bifurcation of schools by language medium, and that careful attention to the institutional form in which the nation and state arise yields different possibilities for the vision of language that can be created. When people in Banaras reflect on schools through a direct association with language, the idea of the nation and its transcendence by the international structures the difference between Hindi- and English-medium schools. Hindi emerges as an index of the nation, juxtaposed to English as an index of the international. The moral significance of atten-

dance, however, is hardly fixed, and praise or critique is a possibility for both types. The maneuverability manifested by a focus on the nation, however, fades when people reflect on the school via its practices of collecting fees and affiliating with boards. Reflections on school practice invoke the state rather than the nation. When reflecting on schools via their practices, Hindi emerges as an index of the state and English emerges as an index of the private. From this dichotomy, Hindi-medium schooling in Banaras emerges in juxtaposition with English-medium schools, just as in a focus on the nation, but as a cheap alternative. In view of the state, however, English-medium schooling can be used to create a spatial arrangement in which Banaras itself is a place on the periphery for its lack of ability to prepare students as well as can institutions elsewhere.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the National Science Foundation that funded initial research in 1996–7, and to Connecticut State University that funded subsequent research in 2004 and 2005. This article is an expanded version of a paper presented on April 2, 2004 at the annual meetings of the Association for Asian Studies in Chicago, IL. Thanks are due to members of the panel and audience, especially Peggy Froerer, Chris Fuller, Ann Gold, Nita Kumar, and Haripriya Narasimhan. My colleagues at Hamilton College, Haeng-ja Chung, Bonnie Urciuoli, and Chris Vasantkumar, discussed various aspects of the manuscript with me, and I am grateful for their insights. At *Anthropological Quarterly* the reviewers and editor encouraged me to clarify a number of issues and I benefited greatly from their careful attention. For collegiality in India, I am indebted to Ravinder Gargesh, Krishna Kumar, Chandrakala Padia, Rakesh Ranjan, and Rajiv Verma.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Sam Kaplan succinctly describes the distinct but related notions of nation and state: Forging a morally homogeneous and politically exclusive community of citizens is central to modern state formation. In this geopolitical imaginary, the moral qualities of citizenship, that is to say, ideas about groupness and identity provide rationales for systematically indexing distinctions within and between territorially delimited sovereign states (2006:73).

I join Kaplan's efforts to illustrate the ways in which people are multiply situated with respect to such efforts, as well as the ways in which "nation" and "state" provide different vehicles for understanding institutions, specifically those described with respect to a "national language" (*rāṣṭrabhāṣā* sometimes *deś kī bhāṣā*), on the one hand, and those described with respect to the "state" (*sarkār*), on the other hand.

<sup>2</sup>The ideological reverberation of languages in Indian schools, particularly English, is the subject of an immense body of scholarship. Examples include Aggarwal (1988, 1997), Annamalai (1991, 2001, 2004), Brass (1990), Dalmia (2003), J. Das Gupta (1970), P. Das Gupta (1993), Dua (1994), Faust and Nagar (2001), Jeffery (2005), Joshi (1994),

Khubchandani (1981, 1983), Krishnamurti (1998), Krishnaswamy and Burde (1998), Pattanayak (1987), and Sonntag (2000), among many others.

<sup>3</sup>In other work (LaDousa 2005), I have tended to collapse understandings of nation and state, focusing on plural, disparate constructions of the nation.

<sup>4</sup>Representing language with the written word poses ethical dilemmas to any scholar of linguistic interaction, ranging from concerns about distinctions between standardized and non-standardized forms (Jaffe 2000) to often-related options for the transliteration of phonological features (Schieffelin and Doucet 1998). Concerns about the visual representation of language are germane to the ethnographic context described herein because much of the terminology used in Banaras to refer to educational matters is “bivalent” in the parlance of Woolard (1999). Indeed, words such as “fees,” “tuition,” and “board” take their place in both Hindi and English. For example, “tuition” would do better than “fees” in an American context, yet means something like “tutor” in the ethnographic context presented in this article. I heard and used the words in conversations that were conducted almost entirely in Hindi. Some people in Banaras claimed that some of the terms are Hindi. On their first appearance, I provide a transliteration of words recognizable to readers of English in the same manner in which I transliterate Hindi words. I use italics and diacritics to indicate that the meaning of the terms is ethnographically specific. I want to caution, however, that in the relatively elite context of the most expensive English-medium schools discussed herein, no Hindi term is used such that people might claim that it is English. There is little doubt that this selective phenomenon points to the colonial origins of the institutional differentiation of language medium maintained in contemporary schooling (K. Kumar 2005). In order to avoid awkwardness in reading, I render the terms without transliteration after their first appearance. I do still use them, of course, as ethnographically specific references.

<sup>5</sup>For other overviews of the notion of language ideology, see Friedrich (1989), Kroskrity (2004), Rumsey (1990), Silverstein (1979), and Woolard (1998).

<sup>6</sup>Debra Spitulnik (1998) provides a notable exception with her study of radio broadcasting in Zambia. She shows that national unity—but also unequal linguistic exposure and prestige—can be found in the distribution of languages by channel assignment, languages’ radio airtime, and the program contents for which languages are utilized.

<sup>7</sup>N. Kumar (1998) provides a more comprehensive list of school types in Banaras, and N. Kumar (2000) provides a history of modern schooling in the city.

<sup>8</sup>See Upamanyu Chatterjee (1988, 2000) for irreverent, hilarious depictions of a fictional civil servant’s experiences. Chatterjee’s lampoons brilliantly capture the hierarchical relations between different posts.

<sup>9</sup>Mr. Sharma invokes the politically-charged 1990 mandate by Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh’s government that reservations of government posts for OBCs (Other Backward Classes) recommended by the Mandal Commission a decade earlier be added to reservations for SCTs (Scheduled Castes and Tribes). In Uttar Pradesh, and in many other states, the issue of reservations involves higher education too because a percentage of seats in medical and engineering institutes under the purview of the state government are reserved for members of SCTs and OBCs. In 2006, the central government promised to extend the policy, fulfilling its original intent, to all central universities and institutes. For analyses of ways in which reservation policies have played a part in the “pluralization/fragmentation of national politics” noted by Mazzarella (2005), see Hansen (1999) and Jaffrelot (2003).

<sup>10</sup>For evidence that the gendered dynamic of education varies in India, see Gold (2002), Mukhopadhyay and Seymour (1994), Seymour (1999, 2002), and Wadley (1994).

<sup>11</sup>Thus, educational capital is embodied in the board-certified certificate while symbolic capital is bifurcated by language medium, Hindi- versus English-, within the set of schools offering a board-certified certificate. The latter point is in keeping with scholarly insights that question Bourdieu's assertion that markets in which cultural competence embodies capital are unified in modern nation-states (Haeri 1997, Swigart 2000, and Woolard 1985).

<sup>12</sup>Aradhana Sharma (2006) notes that workers in Mahila Samakhyas, a women's empowerment program launched in 1988 as part of the Government of India's New Education Policy of 1986, strategically project the professional dispositions of a government or NGO employee depending on perceived contextual advantages. Such maneuverability seems to be erased in discursive reflection on boards.

<sup>13</sup>For descriptions of Hindi's increasing ideological separation from Urdu, see King (1994, 2001), K. Kumar (1990, 1993), Lelyveld (1993), Al. Rai (2001), and Am. Rai (1984).

<sup>14</sup>During fieldwork in 1996–7, slightly less than 36 rupees were equivalent to one US dollar.

<sup>15</sup>See also N. Kumar (2007), chapters 10 and 13.

<sup>16</sup>For an analysis of the use of languages and scripts in school advertising in Banaras, see LaDousa (2002).

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