

AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY OF THE LABELLING OF STUDENTS BY
TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS IN KATHMANDU

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A Dissertation

Submitted to

School of Education

Hattiban, Lalitpur

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Education Management

Kathmandu University

Dhulikhel, Nepal

July, 2016

ABSTRACT

This is a study with an explorative research design that studied the impact of labels attached by teachers onto students. The study aimed to explore the impact labelling had on students. The study was conducted in three schools in Kathmandu with different student population (ethnicity, class and gender). The study used class observation and in depth interviews with students (18) and six teachers.

The study found that labels were based on three broad categories, gender based labels which were attached to students on the basis of how closely they abided by the society's prescribed gender roles. The students who questioned these gender based norms were labelled negatively. The second label was based on the behavior of the students (how disciplined they were). Those of them who behaved according to the standards set by schools were labelled positively. However, students who were found defying school rules were punished severely. The third label was based on the perceived intelligence of the students. This was not necessarily only based on ability but rather was also influenced by family background.

The students were well aware of all the labels attached to them. They were most affected by the negative labels attached to them in regard to their behavior and the punishment they had to receive because of these labels. Girls seemed to be more affected by the gender based labels as they felt that they had to prove their worth to teachers every time because of their gender. Finally the perceived intelligence label seemed to affect students at a minimal level. The students had devised a coping strategy to deal with the labels (they had established an invisible support group in the form of friendships).

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation has not been submitted for candidature for any other degree.

.....

Pritha Dahal
Degree Candidate

July 24, 2016

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all the students who have defied expectations and carved their own path. Also, this dissertation is dedicated to the teachers who have made remarkable changes in the lives of their students.

Master of Education in Education Management dissertation of Pritha Dahal presented
on July 30, 2016.

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection
of the library of Kathmandu University. My signature below authorizes release of my
dissertation to any reader upon request for scholarly purposes.

Pritha Dahal, Degree Candidate

July 24, 2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not have been possible had it not been for the support of many people. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my supervisor Prof. Mahesh Nath Parajuli for his support and guidance in the thesis writing process. I would also like to thank Mr. Tika Ram Poudel for his support during the writing process as well as other members of the faculty for their feedback during the research. I would also like to express my gratitude to Mr. Raju Maharjan for his invaluable support in helping me format my thesis.

Also, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my father, Mr. Binoy Sharma for spending countless hours helping me proofread my work. I would like to thank my older sister Aastha Dahal for her valuable critical questions and interest in my research and my younger sister Aashrita Rimal for helping me format my research. Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Ms. Nirmala Sharma for her unconditional support as well as to my brother Abhinab.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the three schools that allowed me to conduct my research and to the participants of this study, without whom, my research would have been meaningless.

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ABBREVIATIONS

B	Boy
F	Female
G	Girl
M	Male
S	Student
S1	Sunflower School
S2	Saraswoti Higher Secondary School
S3	Star English Secondary School
T	Teacher

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In classrooms, the interaction between students and teachers is inevitable. In doing so, teachers label students (based on their behavior, looks, use of language, clothing style) that influence how they perceive themselves and their opinions (Marsh 2003). This chapter will explore the basis on which the research (the justification of the study, the research questions and the theoretical basis) was conducted on.

Context of the Problem

The Government of Nepal has given high priority to strengthen the education system. Here the Department of Education has sought to make structural reforms to ensure that the education system becomes more effective (The Ministry of Education, Department of Education, Status Report, 2013). Reports suggest that the Nepali education system needs to be made more child friendly, more relevant to help improve the overall quality and make it more effective.

One of the pressing issues that highlights the ineffectiveness of the education system is the current drop-out rate, where the net enrollment rate is 95.1% at primary level but in secondary level, it is merely 43.9% (The Ministry of Education, Department of Education, Status Report, 2013). According to the National Review Report of the Education for All (UNESCO, 2015) the possible ways to tackle this problem is to make the education system friendlier by creating proper learning spaces. This includes using, age appropriate furniture and setting up classes in an interactive setup. The other possible way to curtail the dropout rate is to ensure that the education system becomes more inclusive. In other words, it needs to take into account the

needs of the students and embrace the cultural diversity they bring to class. A third strategy can also be to make the subject matter more relevant to the interests of the students (UNESCO, 2015).

A fourth strategy to help curtail the drop-out rate is to work with teachers so that they can identify the “high risk” or “vulnerable” students and help ensure that they remain in school (Christenson, 2004). One of the ways is to work on strengthening the teacher student relationship is by trying to understand how the relationship functions. Here one area that needs to be looked into is the labelling process. It is vital to understand how teachers perceive students and in return how this affects the attitude of students towards themselves, their friends and their performance in school. This can possibly be insightful in helping identify the actual reason for students dropping out from schools.

Setting the Scene

I was once travelling on a bus and I overheard two passengers on the bus discussing their day. They were teachers and they were talking about their new students. One of the teachers remarked, "Did you see that new student, he has come from America and he has no manners what so ever. He did not even ask for my permission when he walked into my class. He simply strolled in as if it were a restaurant. Did you see his clothes? He looks like a drug addict, I tell you, that's probably why his parents sent him back to Nepal". Her friend immediately remarked, "As soon as I saw him, I was disgusted by the clothes he was wearing. And he wanted to correct my English. I am sure his English is good because he grew up in America but I am the teacher and he deliberately disrespected me as he actually corrected me in front of the students. Can you believe his audacity?" This is a snapshot of how teachers interpret behavior of particular students.

Theoretical Grounding for the Research

Schools are supposed to be a microcosmic representation of the larger society. Experts argue that this implies is that the relations that exist in larger society exist within the compounds of the educational institute (Kelly, 2008). The interaction and negotiation that take place in school between teachers and students often are based on shared values and norms of society (Marsh et al, 2003). Furthermore these interactions result in defining what is accepted behavior and what is not establishing a functioning relation with each other as well as the environment (Bates, 2013). The process whereby certain characteristics are attributed and interpreted by someone and results into categorization is what labelling is known as (Haralambos et al, p. . 69, 2008).

Fundamentally, sociologists have found that labelling results in what is known as “self-fulfilling prophecy” This theory argues that predictions made by the teachers of the future success or the failure of students will tend to come true because the prediction has been made. The teacher defines the pupil in a particular way such as “bright” or “dim”, based on this definition; the teacher makes predictions of prophecies about the behavior of the students. For example that they will get high or low grades (Hargreaves, 1995). If a teacher has negative image of a particular student then the chances of the student failing in school becomes much greater.

According to Hargreaves (1995) teachers subconsciously label students on the basis of their appearance, their use of language, their perceived ability, their interaction with their peers and their social background. Initially teachers observe the behavior patterns of the students, this is followed by speculation where they start placing students into certain categories and this is followed by elaboration, a process whereby the teachers’ speculations are either proven correct or incorrect based on the

activities of the student (Serpieri et al, 2014). Sociologists further argue that labelling takes place within a week and after that the behavior of the students is interpreted on the basis of the label the teachers have formed for the particular student (Serpieri, 2014). A study conducted by Cicourel et al (Vulliamy et al, 2000) found how counsellors in American schools assumed that students belonging to white middle class families were more likely to attend university than children who belonged to African American working class families. This assumption held strong regardless of the grades the children had. The study showed how black American children who had similar grades to that of the white American children were still advised to attend college or technical higher education while the white children were advised to explore university education.

Similarly, a study conducted by Nell Keddie (Augustine, 2014) also shows how labelling of students leads to streaming of knowledge. So students who were believed to be “smart” were given a more sophisticated level of knowledge (materials and questions) while the “less smart or the problem children” were given a lower level of knowledge altogether. Hargreaves (Haralmbous et al, 2008) further argues that pupil subcultures are formed on the basis of the labels that the students are given they are placed into streams (categories and levels of learning for example, section A has the brightest children and section C has the dumbest children). The study found that students who tended to rebel more, ask questions and who did not fit the image of the “ideal student” of the teacher were in fact put in a lower stream and were treated to be dumb and looked down upon. Furthermore other studies show that the ones who are expected to not do well in the education system belong to ethnic minorities and working class.

Furthermore, sociologists argue that schools often reinforce the masculine hegemonic discourse through sanctioning “appropriate behavior” (Moser, 2014). This is actively done by expecting boys to be assertive, risk takers, emotionally unexpressive and able to handle criticism or failure while the girls were expected to be docile, subservient, emotionally expressive (Mchale, 1999). Furthermore, teachers often unconsciously assumed that girls would be better in linguistic and artistic subjects while the boys were assumed to be better in subjects that used spatial, logical skills (Koivula, 1999).

Another aspect that the literature discusses is how student agency actively determines their learning and school experience (Myron, 1998). Furthermore, it has been found that students actively negotiate their positions in school (with teachers, and friends) which allows them to create their own space (Hoy, 2006). The students are no longer passive entities that simply receive information (Mitra, 2004). In doing so, they develop sub cultures within schools that allow them to resist the authority (Lund, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The sole purpose of the study was to explore the phenomenon of labelling of students by the teachers. The study aims to establish the factors that influence the labelling and whether external factors such as class, caste, ethnicity, language use, parental background affect the perception of the students. Furthermore, the second part of the study will explore the experiences of both teachers and students it has on the students and their self image.

Research Question

The research question of the study were as follows:

Main Research Question

How does the practice of labelling students by teachers take place in schools and what impact does it have on students?

Subsidiary research questions

- On what basis are these “labels” formed?
- How do students react to these “labels”?
- What do students think of these “labels”?
- How do the students perceive themselves? Do the labels affect the academic performance of students?

Delimitation of the Study

The study explored the cultural processes involved in the labelling of students by teachers. It studied how the value systems and beliefs of teachers influenced their perception of students. It looked into how the students dealt with these “labels”. At the same time, it assessed whether these labels affected the self-images of the student or not.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the background for the study. In doing so, it looked into how labelling affects the students (based on the general literature review)¹. Also, by outlining the research questions and the purpose of the study, the chapter has laid the foundation for the basis of the research.

¹There is no separate chapter for literature review. It has been integrated into the findings and will be present throughout the research.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses and justifies why and how a qualitative research design was selected. It provides a detailed overview of the schools, the participants (both students and teachers) and the methods employed to gather data relevant to the research questions.

Explorative Research Design

It was decided that a qualitative narrative interactionist approach would be used for the research. This is because there was a need to thoroughly understand the labelling process and experiences in Nepali schools, as there are not any prior studies in the areas of student labelling in the country. Moreover, qualitative methods are suited to conduct exploratory studies like this to establish the processes involved in labelling and its impact on students (Felizzer, 2010). The research design consists of a narrative interactionist paradigm necessary to capture the nuances of labelling. I chose to use field observation and open ended interviews (individual and group), focus group discussions in the study because these methods offered the scope of understanding a phenomenon in much greater depth than through surveys (Morrow, 2005). I also sought to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the research by ensuring that the experiences of all the participants were effectively and aptly represented and relatable (Morrow, 2005). I coded the common themes as well as specific one off incidents which helped increase the variance of experience (Morrow, 2005).

Research Time Frame/Sampling

I conducted the research for two months (May 20th to July 21st). I spent approximately two weeks in each school, conducting seven days of observations at each school, spending at least seven hours in the schools between official working hours of 9AM to 4 PM. The rest of the time was spent interviewing teachers and students. I observed 42 classes' altogether. I used convenience sampling to select 18 students and six teachers for interviews. I based my selection criteria of the participants for the research on gender, age, ethnicity and social-class background to try and explore the relation between different social factors and how labels were formed. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, I decided to speak to at least two teachers and at least six students in depth from each school. This allowed the study to capture the perspective of the students of the impact of being labelled.

Table: 1

Number of Respondents

Number of participants(Students) (N=18)	Number of participants (Teachers) (N=6)	Number of classes observed (N= 42)
Girls – 9	Female – 3	(13 classes n each school)
Boys – 9	Male - 3	

I approached those students who seemed to have difficulties during class time in a class (I identified them by their reactions as teachers had given me specific names), who seemed to do well in the system and those who were doing okay in the system (I looked at the students' academic records to help me determine that these students belonged to different "academic standings"). The children that I approached were willing to talk to me but it took time for them to actually open up fully. Out of the 20 children that I approached only two refused to participate in the research. I first

contacted them after observing their classes, talked to them and then set up meetings with them based on their preference of wanting to be interviewed in private or in groups. All of them preferred a mixed approach of being interviewed alone as well as in groups. I selected those teachers who wanted to be part of the research and who spent most time with the participants.

Location and Access

I had planned to do my research in different schools in Kathmandu for several reasons. Kathmandu Valley constitutes of both urban metropolis and outlying rural areas. People from all 75 districts of the country, representing the wide spectrum of socio economic class, castes and ethnicity live here. At the same time, I grew up in Kathmandu and was familiar with the lifestyle here and it was financially and practically more feasible to conduct research here.

Driven by my interest to study the process of labelling of students and how it affects students, I started visiting the schools to try and get a feel of how to proceed with my research I contacted the principals of these three schools² through personal contacts. These principals were ‘gate keepers’ (Shenton, 2004) whose approval of my research plan would determine my access to do fieldwork. I was advised by my supervisor to check with the school principals before I proceeded. After consulting the principals, it was certain that I could carry out research as planned. In Star English Secondary School, I was expected to help the administration write certain proposals to raise funds in return for conducting the research. It was easier for me to get access in Sunflower School as I worked there. I was asked to make sure that I did not disturb

²The names of the schools have been changed. Pseudo names have been used to refer to the schools throughout the research.

the classes during the research. While, in Saraswoti Higher Secondary School, I was told to conduct the research without disrupting the proceedings of the school.

Access to the Participants

The process of getting the approval from the principals was not that difficult but what I found more challenging was getting access to students (in all three schools, I was told that I needed to manage on my own and find participants willing to talk) As (Marshall et al, 2014) pointed out that this process of negotiating access from different layers of the organization did delay my fieldwork slightly. In retrospect though, as (Liebling, 2001)) noted, following the formal access procedure had its advantages. In my case, it increased my confidence when I approached potential participants (students and teachers) and when the teachers questioned me about my presence, I had legitimacy because there was approval from the highest authority in the schools.

To get the trust of the teachers, I had to engage in extensive out of “research’ conversations which involved talking to them about their lives, listening to their frustrations, their interests and their aspirations. I often listened to them and it required some convincing that the research was not a way to further draw more criticism upon their practices. Once they started trusting my research motives, they started enquiring about the research. As they started warming up to me, they became more enthusiastic about being part of the research and started giving accounts of their experiences.

As for the student participants, they seemed relatively more open compared to the teachers to be part of the research. All participants started feeling at ease with me after holding individual meetings with them where I told them about myself, my interests and enquired about their interests, aspirations, dreams etc.

The three schools that I approached had three different groups of students who belonged to a variety of socio-cultural backgrounds, social status and family structures. I grappled with the issue of whether or not to disclose the identity of these schools here and decided against it. I believe the disclosure of these sites would make it easy to identify the students and schools and breach the commitment I had made to protect their identity (Felizer, 2010).

Profile of Schools

Below is a brief description of the schools that were visited during the research. All names have been changed for confidentiality.

Sunflower School

It is an established school that has been functioning for the past twenty- eight years. The school has large buildings that have large spacious airy classrooms. The desks are arranged in single files where an average of 30 desks is placed in classrooms. There are dustbins placed along the corridors. The hallways lead to classes and walls are whitewashed with bulletin boards (black) placed in the corridor of each floor. The front of the school has a well maintained garden with luscious green grass. The garden is surrounded by two basketball courts. The campus also has a large fully equipped auditorium hall where a variety of events are organized.

Here, the students come from and learning process. The students are active in voicing out their opinions and often are found engaging in conversations with their teachers. However, there is a behavior code that is strictly enforced. Students are expected to stand-up when teachers enter or leave classroom, greet them in the hallway, and wear clothes that fit the dress code (no shorts, dresses, sleeveless). If the students did not abide by the dress code, they wouldn't be allowed into the premise.

Saraswoti Higher Secondary School:

Saraswoti Higher Secondary School is a community school that was established for thirty years ago. It is situated in the heart of Kathmandu next to a large vegetable market. The building has an extension that is fully carpeted and has false ceilings. The walls are grey colored. The classes have attached benches and desks lined up with worn out black boards in the front. An average of 45 students are found in one class. Students share the sitting space with up to five children sitting on a bench. Some rooms are well lighted while others have minimal light.

The students are expected to wear school uniforms. They are also provided with a tracksuit, blue colored with white stripes and white shoes. However, most of the times, students wear track pants as they find it more comfortable.

Star English Secondary School:

Star English Secondary School is situated in the middle of a residential area. It has two wings, the primary wing and the secondary wing. The secondary wing is a multi-story building with additional classes and extra classes thatched with tin roofs. The classes have white boards along with greyish blackboards (overwritten). The rooms are damp and dark looking with students seated in lines and the sounds of the adjacent rooms' interchange. Moreover, each class does not hold more than twenty students. The students often are seen sharing notes, inside jokes, *wai-wai* and *titaura*³ (under the benches). The children all have identical looks with the girls having two pigtails with skirts covering their knees with long white socks and polished shoes. The boys similar have perpendicularly creased pants with black polished shoes and similar short brush hairstyle about an inch long of hair.

³Local popular junk food (a brand of instant noodle and a sun dried flavored fruit candy)

Profile of Respondents

Below are brief descriptions of the participants (to help the readers get a feel of the research participants)

Participants from Sunflower School

Tshering Sherpa (Student) (Female) (17 years)

Tshering is five foot tall, barley white with waist length ebony black hair that she usually has in a ponytail. She is extremely comfortable in talking with others. She is the Class Representative⁴ and is academically one of the best in her class. She speaks softly but quickly and often has an opinion on issues.

Sheetal Maharjan (Student) (Female) (16 years old)

Sheetal is five foot one inch tall. She is chocolate brown in color with straight black hair that is shoulder length. She has a quiet temperament and only speaks when spoken too. She listens intently to everyone around her. She is very thoughtful of others. She is a very hardworking person who likes drawing and is a passionate singer.

Ritu KC (Female) (17 years old)

Ritu is five feet tall with (Student) large eyes and curly hair that is shoulder length. She loves debating and often is caught by the administration for “being too loud” or “laughing too much” or being “silly”. She is her class’ best short distance runner.

Uttam Yakami (Student) (Male) (17 Years old)

⁴Class Representatives act as liaisons between the administration and the students. They tell the administration when students aren’t happy about something or help in collecting money or giving names or organizing events.

He is five feet seven inches tall and is light brown in color with large eyes and pink lips. He is the president of the student body⁵. Academically, he is good but says that “he never has time “to study properly because he is involved in a lot of other activities. He is very opinionated and often argues till he has the last word.

Pratik Bajracharya (Student) (Male) (17 Years)

He is plump looking five feet four inches. He is a passionate dancer and is extremely cordial. He is willing to try his hands in anything. He also gets along with all his classmates and is highly welcoming and is non-judgmental. He often listens intently and also puts his opinions forward. He believes that people place far too much importance on academics.

Aavash Adhikari (Student) (Male) (17 years old)

Aavash is five feet nine inches tall with a chocolate colored complexion and wears large black framed thick glasses. He has a strong American accent having grown up partially in the United States of America and speaks Nepali with a “foreign” accent. He loves talking and engages in deep philosophical discussions, some often beyond his age. Also, he strongly believes that the administration does not understand him at all, especially his “American-ness”.

Kishore Budathoki (Male) (Teacher) (45 years old)

Mr. Budathoki is a Biology teacher and the head of the faculty. He has been teaching for almost 20 years and has been working at Sunflower School for the past ten years. He has a reputation of being one of the most hardworking staff in the school. He knows all his students by name (those who study in his faculty). He is extremely observant about his surroundings.

⁵**The student body is responsible for organizing extra-curricular activities, student programs as and acts as a liaison between the administration and students.**

Sujata Kafle (Female) (Teacher) (46 years old)

Ms. Kafle teaches Economics and is a coordinator in another school. She has been teaching for the last 15 years. She is known to have one of the best relations with her students and often students confide in her about their lives. She laughs loudly. She is very inquisitive about everyone, she interacts with,

Participants from Saraswoti Higher Secondary School

Pushpa Tamang (Student) (Female) (15 years old)

Pushpa is five feet with wheat complexion with bright red cheeks. She has her hair always in two braids. She loves dancing but believes that she does not really have a real chance succeeding as a dancer. She often wins dance and singing competitions. She is active in participating in extra-curricular activities. She is hesitant to try new things as she feels that “she is not good enough” and so there was no point in trying

Ritu Tamang (Student) (Female) (17 years old)

Ritu is five foot one inch tall and just like her younger sister (Pushpa) has wheat colored skin. She has shoulder length straight hair that is usually tied in a pony-tail. She loves dancing and writing poetry. She does not talk often because she has a speech impairment but once she opens up, she talks freely.

Riya Karki (Student) (Female) (17 years old)

Riya is a plump four feet ten inches with curly frizzy hair. She believes in abiding by the rules strictly to be in the good books of the teachers and parents. She thinks that she is not pretty but knows that she has what it takes to do well in school.

Sanjay Khadka (Student) (Male) (17 years old)

Sanjay is a petite framed, four feet 11 inches tall, he is flour white with brown hair and eyes. He speaks in a loud commanding voice and calls himself a *Jirekhursani* (Hot chilly) as he finds himself to be sharp with his words but hasn't grown accord-

ingly to his age. He is extremely attached to his village as he often brings up how Kathmandu does not feel like home but Kavre is more his home. He helps his father run a local tea shop and often brings doughnuts to class and gives it to everybody. Academically, he falls among the top five percentile of the class.

Sunil Tamang (Student) (Male) (16 years olds)

Sunil has honey colored complexion with short hair. He sings and dances and is also an artist. He is average academically but is popular in school for winning most of the extra-curricular activity competitions. He often wears a black colored light jacket on top of his shirt and always has polished shoes. He comes from a single parent family. His teachers informed me that his mother threatens to kill herself if he does not do what she asks him to do. He has drastic mood swings where he refuses to utter a single word when he is upset. He has a steady group of friends but often does his own thing.

Shisir Limbu (Student) (Male) (16 year old)

Shisir is approximately five feet six inches tall, he is medium built with brown eyes and dark hair. He tends to wear fitting tailored uniform and is often engrossed with his friends. He believes in defending himself and his friends in any way needed (even if this means getting into fights which he believes are necessary in order to survive in the area). He is academically one of the brightest in his class and believes in doing his work honestly. He is into singing and breakdancing.

Sashi Rai (Teacher) (Male) (27 years old)

Sashi teaches mathematics and is a permanent government teacher. He feels that he settled in life by becoming a teacher because of the responsibilities that he needed to shoulder. He believes that teaching is an extremely exhausting job especially because he has to work with students who come from the lowest economic strata.

Sakshi Verma (Teacher) (Female) (28 years old)

Sakshi teaches English. She is tall slender and has large light brown eyes with long black hair that is half clipped. She talks in a loud commanding voice and has an extremely light sense of humor.

Participants from Star English Secondary School

Sweta Shah (Student) (Female) (16 years old)

She is approximately five feet three inches with large round eyes and dimples on both her cheeks. She is known as the “prettiest” girl in school and aspires to be a model. She talks loudly and vibrantly and she makes sure her presence is felt. She eventually wants to leave Nepal and says that when she has a choice she will stop studying.

Anamika Ghale (Student) (Female) (16 years old)

Anamika has a dark chocolate brown complexion with small hazelnut shaped eyes. She has curly hair that is tightly tied in two pony tails. Academically, she is considered to be the best in class and teachers often sing praises of her. She is quiet natured. Also, she tends to be more confident in one to one situations rather than group settings. She believes that she will never marry as she is too dark. She provides concise straight opinions. She does not like to “waste” her words.

Amita Sherchan (Student) (Female) (16 and a half years old)

Amita is a loud character who will make her presence felt in a room. She plays an instrumental role in getting the entire class to work together. Her teachers also consider her to be intelligent but they believe that she does not fully work to her potential.

Rishant Rokaya (Student) (Male) (15 years)

He has a five feet eight inches large built frame and has a loud powering voice. He is academically extremely ambitious. His friends see him as being the most

reliable and trustworthy of all. He lives with his father as his mother passed away three years ago. He paints his right little finger with black nail polish and listens to punk music. He chews gum all the time.

Tej Magar (Student) (Male) (17 years old)

Tej is a tiny built Five foot person. He has deep sunken eyes and is extremely talkative. He talks in a loud hoarse voice (a contrast to his physique). To him, his friends are everything. This is why he will do anything to protect them. He makes it a point not to do his school work. He says that he is not made for education.

Aman Regmi (Student) (Male) (16 years old)

Aman is five foot six inches tall. He is an introvert and will only speak when spoken too. He lost his parents during the conflict and now stays with a family where he helps out with the household chores. He lives breathes and worships football, particularly, the Portuguese striker, Cristiano Ronaldo. He does not believe in friends and says that the world is a selfish place and one has to find his way alone. He does not like it when people try and force him into anything. He says, “The only person who can make decisions about my life is me,”

Pushpa Gurung (Teacher) (Female) (65 years old)

Pushpa teaches optional math and has been teaching for the last 30 years. Her son owns the school. She believes that the Nepali society is changing quickly and in doing so losing a lot of its culture and values. Furthermore, she greatly believes in discipline as she says, “discipline is the only guarantee to success”. She is a heavily built woman with grey/brownish hair and puts her glasses on her head when she talks. She talks in an extremely eloquent manner with logic and ration that are irrefutable.

Devendra Shrestha (Teacher) (Male) (25 years old)

Devendra teaches Science. He is saving up to apply for a masters' and has three jobs. He says that this is the only way he can make ends meet and apply for studies abroad. He talks softly but very quickly. He has a stiff body language and becomes red quickly. He has a good working relation with other staff members.

Methods of Data Collection

This section will discuss the different data collection methods that were used to collect data for this research.

Class Observation

I conducted class observations in the three schools during classes for several substantive and practical reasons. Firstly, class observation allowed me to see teacher student interaction in its 'natural setting' (Katz, 2015). This was important as it would serve as a basis for the interviews with the participants. Also I was able to witness the students' dealing with their peer groups and teachers. This helped me understand and observe subtle processes of labelling. As I was 'detached observer', I could pick up on the taken for granted social interactions (Mulhall, 2003 & Tracy, 2010). Class observation also helped me build a strong working rapport both with the students and the teachers. Also, it helped me formulate more specific questions to help answer the research questions (Tracy, 2010).

Reflections on Conducting Class Observations

The persona of a researcher as an 'insider' or 'outsider' is a useful lens through which to discuss my experiences of doing class observation. Merton's (1972) definition of 'insider' is an individual who possesses intimate or a prior knowledge of the community being researched. The 'outsider', according to Burges (1984) is an individual who is not already familiar with the setting he/she is researching. While

conducting class observation, I felt that I was, as Labare, (2002) describes, an insider and to some extent an outsider simultaneously.

My 'insider' identity came from me being Nepali and my familiarity with cultural norms, particularly with the Nepali language. This enabled me to read between the lines while witnessing the social interactions (Hockey, 1993). For example, I was able to understand when teachers were being sarcastic and the salient replies of the students during these interactions in classes. I could navigate through the cultural connotations of silence, in terms of when it was used as an act of defiance or when it was used to illustrate respect for authority. I was able to contextualize the use of insults and recognize their severity. I believe that such culturally specific meanings and messages would have been lost on an 'outsider' doing this research. Yet, I was also conscious of the disadvantages of this insider status. I felt that there were perhaps things that I took for granted as an insider which would have been evident to a researcher who was a stranger in this social setting.

As an observer, a primary point of reflection and concern for me was the extent to which my presence would distort the environment and thus compromise the trustworthiness of my findings. I believed that my 'insiderness' helped in reducing the effects of my presence in the classrooms, given my age and ethnicity. In the beginning though, during class observation, I felt that certain interactions were affected by my presence. This diminished once I became a regular 'part' of the classes, I was involved in class discussions and slowly after several observation sessions, I was not treated as a foreign entity. I usually sat on an empty chair behind in class. On occasions that I did get questions, it was to ask me of my opinion or share my ideas on the topic being discussed in class. In answering, I decided to provide an honest explanation in regards to the questions (Creswell, 2012).

The fact that my presence in the classes had become normalized was evident when students openly displayed their boredom by sleeping on their desks; talked with their friends and giggled hysterically in front of me; while the teachers openly used corporal punishment. In all three schools, teachers openly communicated their frustrations and walked out of classes when unable to handle the situation. At the same time, I was conscious that I had only spent a small period of time in schools and this may not have been enough to diminish observer effects. I was particularly concerned when teachers asked questions like, “How do you think we are performing? If you think we need to improve on certain things, do tell us”. I wondered how much this awareness that they are being observed changed their behavior.

I was also conscious of the side of me that was an ‘outsider’ while I observed the classes and interactions between students and the teachers. At a more obvious level, I was an outsider to the extent that I was neither a student (who had studied there nor a working teacher or someone who was involved with the school in anyway (except for Sunflower School, where I had been teaching for the past three years).

In order to ensure that my research was not clouded or influenced by my preconceived notions particularly, in Sunflower School, I made it a point to observe classes that I did not teach. The students in these classes knew of my existence but had not interacted with me so this helped maintain a “certain” sense of newness.

As I observed the interactions, I found myself feeling an array of emotions from outrage to joy. For instance, it was a struggle to sit silently and observe how students were publicly humiliated in class (Morse et al, 2009). At the same time, there were instances of joy when students and teachers worked meticulously together to

overcome a situation in class together, here the values and perception of the students or the teachers did not matter, they seemed to be on equal footing.

I believe that my reactions to the interactions in the classroom and the behavior were displayed was shaped by my personal education and upbringing. One of the most important elements of this, were the years I spent living and studying in developed countries and international schools. I felt that I may be assessing the quality of the teaching learning practices against the standards on the basis of my experiences. I often wondered whether teachers and students even noticed the discrepancies in the interaction like I did. It is in these thoughts that I found myself to be an ‘outsider’ (Burges, 1984) carrying different values from most of the individuals around me.

The long hours I spent in the field made writing up observation notes a time consuming and challenging. As advised by Dickson (2007), I only took jottings of what I saw and my personal reactions while observing to ensure that note taking did not distract me. I developed extensive field notes within 24 hours after each observation. I coded them by using common themes and categories. Although all communications took place in a mixture of English and Nepali, I took notes in English. One of the challenges in developing write ups in English was translating colloquial Nepali. Instead of translating such speech literally I wrote down their conceptual equivalence (Phillips, 1960) in English. I still wrote down what was said in Nepali besides the English text.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted to allow the research participants (both teachers and students) to use their own language to describe their perceptions and experiences of being labelled or labelling. As Nepali culture is very oral and conversational, I

considered that interviews would be an appropriate method of getting information about a relatively unexplored topic like this. I used an open ended interview structure as it allowed the participants to express their thoughts on labelling and at the same time help me gather some consistency in the information gathered (Dickson, 2007).

I started my interviews only after a week after conducting class observation in order to gather a sense of the context and processes relating to the labelling processes. A week's observation notes proved useful for constructing further exploratory and probing questions.

The interviews were conducted in Nepali. The final transcripts had to be produced in English though. I translated the interviews into English myself. This was because, I am fluent in both Nepali and English having completed university level degrees where the language of instruction has been Nepali and English. I have worked professionally as a translator and interpreter in these languages. Secondly, translation needed to produce the 'conceptual equivalence' (Esposito, 2001) of the speech in Nepali to English. For this as Carter (2005) states, translation requires an understanding of the way language is tied to local realities and carries cultural meaning. As I conducted the interviews myself, I felt that I comprehended more than just the spoken words. I understood the meanings in body language and tone therefore believe that I could carry all these messages through in English.

Reflection on Conducting Interviews

This section accounts my experiences of conducting interviews both with the student and the teacher participants. It discusses my thoughts and experiences during the interview process.

Interviewing Students

Altogether, I interviewed 18 students. I interviewed them both in groups and individually. Eight students felt that they were more comfortable talking to me outside the school premise as they said, the authorities would “overhear the conversations” subsequently actions would be taken against them. As a result they met me at nearby local tea shops.

I made every effort to make the relationship between me and the students collaborative as opposed to hierarchal (Mitchell, 2008), I asked questions in the same vernacular they spoke in. I let students elaborate freely about their experiences. I would keep the conversation within the parameters of the research by picking up on points they made that related to my questions and probing them. I watched their body language closely not just for interpretive cues to supplement their speech but to also watch for signs of distress (Harden, 2001).

I was most conscious of this as students spoke about their experiences. I especially felt tremendous guilt when I saw students break down because they felt helpless and useless. I often felt that I wasn't equipped with appropriate answers that would solve their issues.

Interviewing the Teachers

Altogether, I interviewed six teachers (two from each school). Unlike the students, I felt that I needed to go an extra mile to “convince” the teachers that I was not there to be critical of their teaching practices (or it was not a ploy of the

management to have teachers fired), rather I was trying to make sense and understand the intricacies that exist in the interaction between the teacher student relationship. Furthermore, these interviews acted only as points of references to how labels were formed (under what context).

As interviews that resemble normal conversations are deemed to elicit the best data (Mitchell, 2008), I tried to make the process as natural as possible. Instead of launching straight into the topic, I had a brief conversation with the teachers about their history in the teaching profession. I also framed questions in more colloquial Nepali. The rapport I had built with most teachers while conducting observations went a long way in mitigating possible discomfort and awkwardness during the interviews. I often found that the teachers justified their actions in class or that they provided explanations to why teaching was such a difficult job. I often had to redirect conversations back to the topic. I found that they preferred it when they were given space to talk. Thus I listened and deduced meanings from their thoughts when they spoke.

Teachers would answer questions calmly, giving away very little through body language. A part of my own impression management during the interview (Mulhull, 2003) was to decide on whether to appear naïve or familiar with the school culture when asking questions. I decided to opt for naivety so that I would have room to ask seemingly basic and obvious question. I let the interviews center around the knowledge and experiences of teachers allowing them to flow in their own unique directions (Harden, 2000).

Data Analysis

I elaborated the field notes in detail. After this I read through it multiple times to establish a pattern in the data. After this I coded the data that I had gathered into broad themes. I used different symbols and abbreviations to code the data.

While I was writing the research, I often went back to my notes, reflected upon the events. I often had new perspectives every time I reread the notes. I also went back to the notes to compare after reading different studies and literature and had new insights. These new insights I added to the appropriate category. Rereading my notes gave me a more holistic perspective as it gave me time to ponder and contemplate over the issues and my answers for my research questions. All of this helped me analyze the data further.

Quality Standards

To ensure that the quality of the research, I paid particular attention to ensure that my research has trustworthiness and credibility (Mitchell, 2008).

Trustworthiness

In order to maintain the trustworthiness of the research, I ensured that the data that were collected was detailed and as accurate as possible. When there were possible spaces for multiple interpretations, I double checked with my respondents to ensure that I had written what they were trying to communicate.

Credibility

In order to maintain credibility, I conducted in depth interviews and cross checked with my observation data. Furthermore, I analyzed the data systematically and based on the themes that that had been established.

Dependability

To make the study more dependable a detailed account of how the research took place was needed (Harden, 2000) which I have outlined in this document. This would help the future researchers. When I observed classes, interviewed students, I tried to interact with them without any preconceived notions. The interviews were open ended and it allowed the participants to completely express themselves. These information were later double checked with the data gathered from the class observation.

Transferability

To maintain the transferability of my research, I observed the classes, interviewed the students and I reviewed relevant literature to work towards obtaining authentic data.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure that the research met the ethical standards, I followed the following guidelines (Mitchell, 2008).

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

I informed my potential participants about the research and what would entail. In doing so, I got oral consent from the institution and the participants (both teachers and the students). The participants had complete freedom to discontinue if they wanted to at any given time of the research. Finally, to maintain confidentiality, all pseudo names were used.

Minimized Bias

I worked towards reducing the biases by ensuring that my field data and interpretation was done systematically, through coding. I sometimes felt that my opinions were becoming biased especially against the teachers, so I spent more time

with them to get to know them better and better understand their situations. This helped me become less critical of them. The other way that I minimized my bias was by ensuring that my notes were elaborative and detailed. This left little space for me to interpret it based in my beliefs while writing the research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the methodology of the research. In doing so, it discussed the research paradigm of the study. It further discussed the use of an exploratory research design. Moreover, convenience sampling was used and interviews and class observation were used as data collection tools. The data were coded based on common and most occurring themes and were finally interpreted in relation to the literature (to answer the research questions).

CHAPTER III

A GIRL IS SUPPOSED TO BEHAVE IN THIS WAY, A BOY IS SUPPOSED TO BEHAVE IN THAT WAY

The presence of labels was evident in the classrooms. The labels attributed by teachers often reflected the values and expectations of society, what the society endorsed as appropriate and inappropriate. There was a strict division of what acceptable behavior was for girls and boys and what was not. This chapter discusses the labels constructed by the teachers and how the shared values influence their perception of students' behavior. This will be followed by a discussion of how students react to these gender labels and what they think about it

The Nature of the Gendered Labels Formed by the Teachers

The labelling process did not follow the same pattern as defined by Hargreaves as teachers in the research attributed multiple labels on students which acted at different levels (Haralambous et al, 2008, p. 639). Rather than teachers first observing the behavioral patterns of students, and starting to construct hypothesis about them and testing whether these were true (Hargreaves,1996), teachers immediately judged students based on their values of how they behaved as girls and boys. Kishore Budathoki (T) (M) (S1)⁶ remarked, "I have been teaching for the last twenty years and I can tell instantly what students will be like. It does not take time. It is a gut feeling." Similarly, Shashi Rai (T)(M)(S2) when asked how he perceived students said, "Personally, I believe that if girls and boys behave how they are

⁶All teachers are referred to by their full names and (T)- Teacher, (M)-Male Sunflower School (S1) Saraswoti Higher Secondary School(S2) and Star English Secondary School (S3)

supposed to behave, they have no problems in achieving well. The problem arises when a girl thinks that she can change tradition and boys think that they can get away from their responsibilities by acting like girls.” Pushpa Gurung (T) (F) (S3) when asked how boys and girls were supposed to behave, she said, “For me, having lost my husband at an early age, I had to shoulder a lot of responsibility so I know that girls have to be independent and be competent to fend for themselves. The same applies for boys. I think that there are specific ‘codes’ for boys and girls.”

Code of Behavior for Girls and Boys

Teachers across all three schools believed that girls and boys needed to behave according to what their gender roles prescribed. Based on the class observation and interviews, teachers expected female students to *be talkative, emotional, less ambitious but not rebellious* in class while boys to be *loud, openly challenge authority and assertive*. This is in line with studies that show that teachers expected girls to be more emotionally expressive than boys (McHale, 1999). Kavita Shrestha (T) (F) (S2), the Nepali teacher remarked when Sangeet(S) (M) (S2) broke down in class, “You are a boy, you cannot cry in front of everybody. Life has just begun, you will have to face a lot of hardships and you have to be strong,” Similarly, Sushma Sharma (T) (F) (S1), a teacher during value⁷ class remarked, “boys have to be strong because their life is all about providing for their families.” Pushpa Gurung (F) (T) (S3) remarked pointing to Anamika(S) (F) (S3), “She is the brightest of the lot, she would go far in her career if only she was not born in the Nepali society”. This demonstrates how teachers placed certain behavior codes for girls and boys to follow.

⁷ Are classes that are compulsory for all students and they discuss what society expects from them, the moral way of behaving.

Teachers in all three schools believed that girls need not be academically ambitious because eventually they would have to take care of their families. Sakshi Verma (T) (F) (S2) during an interview commented that “It was acceptable for girls not to excel in class because realistically girls had to get married and look after their families, and so career became secondary.” Similarly Devendra Shrestha (T) (M) (S3) in class commented looking at two girls who were giggling, “The reason why you all (the girls) are not serious about school is because you are meant to take care of the family, you pursue your academics because it is simply your hobby, unlike the boys, who have to do well because they need to support the family as they will eventually be the primary bread earner in the family.”

On several occasions during Physics class in Sunflower School, Chandra Shakya ignored the fact that girls were raising their hands to answer questions, he once stated that girls in class, should not take it the wrong way but they needed to be realistic, as girls were not biologically programmed to handle high level computations required in physics.”

In class, boys were also actively reinforced of their roles of being strong⁸ and independent. In Sunflower School, when one of the boys became red unable to answer a question, the chemistry teacher, Shyam Shrestha said, “You are a boy, show that you are in control, do not be nervous like a girl.” Similarly, Pushpa Gurung (T) (F) (S3) during class picked on a student for giggling too much and said “You are a boy, act like one, you cannot always associate with girls.” In Saraswoti Higher Secondary School, a group of teachers including Sashi Rai (T) (M) (S2) were talking about a student who had been caught smoking outside the school, “He is a boy, he is meant to have fun, it is no big deal. Boys smoke, no need to make an issue out of it.” This was

⁸This entails being emotionally strong, not expressing one’s insecurities and fears

in contrast to a girl who was caught smoking in the same week at the same school, where teachers in the staff room were heard saying, “Can you believe it, she was smoking in front of everybody. It is girls like these who bring about shame in the family and society.”

It was evident that teachers in all three schools attributed what was “appropriate behavior for boys and girls” based on their own values. Devendra Shrestha (M) (T) (S3) said, “Based on my teaching experience, it is clear that girls who are too loud are more likely to get into trouble and boys who associate too much with girls are more likely to behave like girls.” Similarly, Sujata Kafle (T) (F) (S1) told me, “It is very difficult for the girls, especially the ones who study here. They are extremely independent, they behave like boys but the reality is that they have to get married and compromise, something that they will find it difficult to do. *You take Anisha for example, she is extremely opinioned and I have heard that she actually picks fights with her male friends. Now, how is a character like that going to adjust later on? You and I know very well, that the whole career business for girls is merely secondary*”. Sakshi Verma (T)(F)(S2), after facing a difficult time in handling class told me during an interview, “It is very simple for me, when girls stop behaving like how girls are supposed to, they become a problem. The sisters, Ritu (S) (G) (S2)⁹ and Pushpa(S) (G) (S2) have become my biggest headache because they do not behave like girls.”

In Sunflower School, when I was having a conversation with Kishore Budathoki (T) (S1) (M), a group of students were brought into his office for picking on a fellow classmate and calling him a girl. Kishore Budathoki was very clear that

⁹All student participants are referred to on the basis of first names(except for one of students who were not participants) and students(S),(B)boy,(G)girl,(S1) Sunflower School,(S2)Saraswoti Higher Secondary School, and (S3)Star English Secondary School.

such kind of behavior was not acceptable however, he pointed out that they should have let it remain a joke and not fuel it further as he said, “It was understandable to make fun of him when your friend behaves like a girl but to draw pictures of him with breasts, and gift him a dress is unacceptable.” After this, Kishore Budhathoki told me, “These boys were ridiculous, they were not serious in their studies at all, and they were simply pampered children belonging to extremely affluent families.”

Similarly, during one of my class observation days, a group of boys (not my participants) from Star English Secondary School were made to stand in the sun for an entire day because they had colored their hair red. Seeing this, Pushpa Gurung (T) (F) (S3) yelled at the students saying, “Are you boys or girls? You should now start wearing makeup, perfume and pink nail polish, I This is disgusting how you want to become girls. This explains why all of you will fail this year!” She later told me that those boys needed to be “corrected” otherwise they would “lose their way”. Furthermore, she added, “*They work like girls, halfheartedly,*” Such kind of comment reinforces the gender stereotype of how girls work mediocrely and it seemed that teachers’ seemed to view “*being a girl*” as being a setback.

Based on the above discussion, it is evident how the gender ‘code’ is apparently prevalent in social interactions and how those students who did not abide by the gender ‘code’ were perceived negatively.

Girls Risk Shaming the Family

In another instance, Sakshi Verma (T) (F) (S2) was talking to a group of girls, “you seem to be interested in everything else except for your academics. If you keep this up, you will end up working in cabin restaurants and you are going to throw away

your family's *ijjat*"¹⁰. Similar instance took place at Star English Secondary School, two students were brought into the principal's office for holding hands as they were deemed as a "couple". The male student was shouted at and was asked to leave the office while the female student was kept in the office and was shouted at for being "characterless" and being "selfish" and destroying the family's *ijjat*. The student started crying and apologizing saying, she would end the relation with the boy. After the student left, I asked why was the girl spoken to separately and was told "*boys have it in them to make girlfriends but the girls need to realize that they are carrying the family's ijat and they need to learn to say no.*" The social sanctions (Firestone, 2003) effectively reinforced the beliefs and expectations for girls and boys as set out by society (Lakshmi, 2007). Based on the above observation, it was evident how gender roles have been canalized in to the context of the society (LaFontana, 2002) and effectively served as benchmarks on the basis of which these labels were formed.

Based on the observation in the classes and interaction with the teachers, it was clear that there was an established code of behavior particularly for girls, a measure to ensure that they are "controlled" as they carried with them, the family *ijjat*. This became a basis on which labels were attached (Knobloch, 2005). It was also found that teachers blamed girls for putting their families to shame if they did something wrong, in line with Baker et al who argue that girls become escape coats when something goes wrong (Baker, 1999). It was found that girls who seemed to drift away from the norm were often labelled negatively. Dill et al argue that girls' are often portrayed as holding the family honor and if these codes are "broken", they are

¹⁰There is no apt translation of *ijjat* and so I have used it. The closest translation is honor, however, this does not fully translate the connotation of the word.

immediately questioned (Dill et al, 2007). Thus on part of the teachers, when they perceived a girl endangering the *ijjat* of the family, she would be berated severely.

Based on the observation, it was found that the teachers believed that girls in particular were susceptible to imitate the images shown by the media and effectively endangering the family's *ijjat*. In one instance, Pabitra Sharma(T)(F)S3) was teaching moral education at Star English Secondary School told the class, "When we were young, we did not care about fashion, boyfriends, girlfriends, but what we did was hard work. All of you think that you are superstars and life is easy, *especially the girls, you think wearing short clothes will get you through life. All of you are nakacharis (shameless girls).*" Conversations in the staff room in all three schools, reflected this belief that it was unhealthy"¹¹ for girls to be overly fashionable or mingle too much with the boys. Also, studies have revealed that by painting girls as the possible "vulnerable" group in terms of dishonoring family, particularly in South Asian families, girls have a pressure to act according to certain preconceived notions (Das, 1997). So students' who were perceived as being too influenced by the media especially the girls were perceived negatively and labels such as "wild", "shameless" were attached.

Influence of the Mass Media on the Students

It was found that the behavior of girls and boys were often attributed and exemplified with reference to celebrities from popular culture and mass media. The labels often had negative connotations. Teachers in all three schools gave examples of Nepali and Indian actors and actresses while engaging with students, "You think you are Kareena Kapoor, if only you could focus on your studies?" or "look at him, he dances like Salman Khan" or "He thinks of himself to be Rajesh Hamal". In

¹¹Something would eventually go wrong

Saraswoti Higher Secondary School, Sashi Rai while berating a group of students for skipping classes to practice dance, “All of you will turn into Sunny Leones¹², She is someone who *does not have character* and you want to become item girls, just like her.¹³ *What you do not realize is that, this will bring shame to your family.*”

In the staffroom of Sunflower School, during an interview while I was interviewing Sujata Kafle (T) (F) (S1), a Math teacher, Prabesh Poudel commented, “*The girls are too free these days. I blame the western influence, particularly the media. So the only way to control the girls is to ban all Hindi and English channels.*” A similar opinion was expressed by Shyam Shrestha, the vice principal of Saraswoti Higher Secondary School when I asked him about the changing roles of female students “girls have become uncontrollable because of the media. It would not surprise me if certain students from our school will use their bodies to get what they want.” I further enquired what “*uncontrollable*” meant to the same teacher and I was told that it often entailed *girls partying, smoking, drinking and mingling with a lot of boys.*

Theoretical Engagement on Labels Based on Gender

The notions about how boys and girls were supposed to behave stem from the expectations of the society based on shared meanings. This is further reinforced through teaching learning materials. A study found that the reading materials used in schools portrayed women in traditional roles while men as super heroes who save the day, (Moser, 2014). A follow up study conducted found that non gendered stereotypical books had increased but still had not become the mainstream norm (Moser, 2014). Another study showed that these stereotypical views of gendered

¹²Sunny Leone is a Bollywood actress who used to be a former porn star.

¹³Item girls were references of Nepali and Hindi actresses who have a sexualized image onscreen.

roles often aligned with the expectation of teachers' for their students leading to not taking female students seriously (legewie, 2012). Similarly, Levy et al argued that teachers often had a preset gendered values in congruence with the teaching learning materials and as such reinforce those beliefs in the classrooms through social sanctions (Levy, 2015). This was found to be true in the schools as well where the teaching learning materials (textbooks, poems, stories) reflected values similar to that of the teachers of how boys and girls were supposed to behave. Again, if students were not found abiding by these norms, they were viewed negatively.

The Perception of the Labels by the Students

Having discussed the general labels and how they were attached to the students. This section looks into how students perceived these gender labels. In doing so it looks into how this affected the children's attitude about themselves and towards their teachers and their work.

Dichotomous Gender Roles

All participants across all three schools were aware of the labels teachers held about them on the basis of gender. Tshering(S) (G) (S1) said, "We hear teachers' value laden opinions about how girls and boys are supposed to behave all the time and so it is clear how dichotomous their perception of gender roles are. They constantly watch us like hawks, and when they *see a girl and a boy talk, they pounce on us and start giving us the third degree about how disgraceful we, the girls are.*"

Tej(S)(B)(S3) when asked about how teachers viewed girls and boys, "Our school is co-ed only in name, I used to spend a lot of time with this female friend of mine, we were simply good friends, one day we were shouted at and after that she stopped talking to me completely. *I lost a friend because our 'friendship' was deemed as inappropriate.*"

Ritu(S) (G) (S2) during a group interview about the gender labels said, “I sometimes find teachers extremely *naïve and irrational*. They think that we, especially *the girls need to be controlled otherwise all of us will end up pregnant just by talking to boys*”.

Sunil(S) (B) (S2) further added “Teachers usually jump to *conclusions and make suppositions about whether we will be successful later on or not based on how well we behave as girls and boys.*”

“You know, the hardest thing here is to be a girl, teachers constantly remind us of how the only function we have is to be someone’s wife and have children. *I am never taken seriously in class because I am a girl*. Initially, these judgments affected me but now I have started becoming oblivious to these perceptions as these thoughts are outdated and irrelevant,” said Amita(S)(G)(S3) when I asked her if she thought being a girl affected her teachers’ perception about her. This sentiment rung true in the other two schools as well, “*If we laugh out loud, we will be prostitutes¹⁴ if we dance we will become dancers in dance bars, if we dance to our favorite songs, we will be prostitutes, if we wear nail polish to schools, we are bound to be prostitutes*” said Pushpa(S)(G)(S2). When asked how she felt about such assumption, she said, “Honestly speaking, *I do not expect much from my teachers. If I was a boy, they would tell me that I am still useless*. Just because they tell me, I will be a prostitute, *I will not become one, because I know what I want in life.*”

Similarly, Sheetal(S)(G)S1) told me when asked about whether she felt discriminated against for being a girl in class said, “It is astounding how easily teachers bring their biases against the female students into class. This one time, *Chandra Shakya sir came to me and my friend and asked us why we were studying physics when clearly our brains did not have the potential to solve the problems.*”

¹⁴ By prostitute the student was referring to commercial sex workers.

When asked how she felt about it, she responded, “*I wish I could tell you that these perceptions did not affect me, but they did. Sometimes it made me question everything about myself. But I have started to accept the fact that all people especially the teachers are full of prejudices. So I have conditioned myself not to be affected by such judgments.*”

This is in line with studies that showed that girls have agency, they do not simply act according to the labels attached to them (Sharpe, 1976). Similarly, Huguet (2009) also argues that girls are now defying the conventional stereotypes held about their abilities because the girls are constantly exposed to image of “powerful” women in the media, be it writers, politicians or scholars (Huguet, 2009). Also, Archer et al argued that girls from early as age of seven were found defying the stereotypical beliefs of females as being incapable of excelling in sciences or mathematics. They did this by being indifferent to the beliefs, as a result achieving better results than boys (Archer et al, 2012)). Similar conclusions were drawn from a follow up study that showed that girls had become more ambitious and career oriented (Nadal, 2013).

Defiance Against the Labels

From the interviews, it was evident that the female participants in the research felt that their teachers made them feel “bad for being girls” but they directly stood up against the teachers’ biases or coped with such biases in the form of resistance.

Ritu(S)(G)S1) when asked about how she coped with these labels beaming from ear to ear said, “*When I am reminded of being a girl and that I will eventually get married I tell them that I will make it a point to invite them to my wedding reception. Hearing this, most teachers change the topic or tell me that I need to respect teachers. I then tell them that maybe they need to stop seeing me as a trophy that is to be given to a man.*”

Riya(S) (G) (S2) said that she coped with such gender biased comments by, *“simply pretending like I did not hear anything and I continue with whatever I am doing. This is me showing them that I do not get affected by their comments and I do not.”* While Sweta(S) (G) S3) said, “I would listen to their comments about how incapable girls were and I laugh at their faces. Teachers think, I do that out of habit, *I was laughing at their thoughts.*”

“This one time, I was wearing a sweater, a black netted sweater to school and a teacher came up to me and asked me to take it off because it was not appropriate. Knowing I had not done anything wrong, I went and talked to Kishore Sir about it and after that the teacher did not even look at me or acknowledged my presence but I still got the highest in his subject,” said Tshering(S) (G) (S1) while talking about how necessary it was to stand up against the labels. Similarly, Sheetal (S) (G) (S1) said, “With all the money being invested in us, we have to stand up against these biases. My male teachers do not like me because I stand up to them.” Similarly, Amita(S) (G) (S3) shared an instance when she was walking down the hall and a teacher put his hands on her hips while talking with her, so she went and told the principal that times had changed and so no one can touch anyone without permission. These instances showed how girls have started defying the labels or perceptions of the teachers.

Reaction of the Male Students to the Gendered Labels

The male students' were also aware of how they were being judged on the basis of their “masculinity” but all of them concluded that, they never *“paid attention to such insignificant matters”*. Uttam (S) (B) (S1) said, “Yes the teachers constantly reminded us to *act like ‘proper boys’* but I never take it to heart, I did not listen to them. I did what I had to do.” Similarly, Aavash (S) (B) (S1) when asked about what he thought about the teachers’ beliefs about the gender roles, “Teachers here have

concluded the fact that I am more feminine than normal. Apparently, *I talk too much and was not into 'guy things'*, whatever that may entail. But do you think I care? Of course not, these narrow dichotomous divisions of gender roles are things that *I dismissed* when I was five.” Sanjay(S)(B)(S2) when asked about how it felt to be a boy in school, responded, “We are reminded that we need to be responsible over and over again because we are boys but this is not something that the teachers need to tell us.” Similarly, Sunil(S) (B) (S2) added to the same discussion, “The girls think that it is only them that are picked on, we are constantly reminded how we need to “*man up*” to our responsibilities. If I was to engage in dancing, a teacher is bound to come and tell me, you are boy, why are you dancing? But *I do not care of what they think.*”

Rishant(S)(B)(S3) from Star English Secondary School in a similar group interview on said, “*My desire to have long hair has been ridiculed countless times* but if god himself came and told me that by having long hair, *I become a girl*, I will tell him that I am happy being one; besides the teachers in this school have preconceived notions about long hair for boys which will never change and I did not want to put in effort or give them the satisfaction by being affected by their comments.” Tej (S) (B) (S3) said, “I personally have never been critiqued on me being a boy, but again, teachers are there to judge us, they do that all the time, why should we care.”

One of the reasons why boys seemed to be less affected by the teachers' remarks was because, they tended not to take the labels as indicators of something being wrong with their personalities, rather saw it to be the fault in the perception of the teachers' (Martino, 2000). Aman(S) (B) (S3) during an interview said, “I think part of being a boy is toughening up, especially to comments like these. If we let them

make us feel bad, we will be in a perpetual state of unhappiness. *Rather we need to be able to take the criticism with a grain of salt, not mope around like a girl*”¹⁵

“Ijjat” is used As a Means of Social Control

An issue that surfaced time and time again was that the children, especially the girls constantly felt under the pressure of safeguarding their families’ *ijjat*. “As girls, we were tied up with this idea of protecting the family’s *ijjat* to an extent that if we talked too loudly, we were told we would bring shame to the family. Often, it is the girls held responsible for destroying a family’s *ijjat* and it is very annoying. *I constantly fear that if I act a certain way, maybe I would be judged and subsequently parents would have to suffer,*” said Ritu (S) (G) (S3) in a group interview where the issue of what *ijjat* entailed was being discussed. In the same interview, Uttam(S) (B) (S1) argued that, “The girls were being too sensitive to what the society thought.” He continued that, “We (boys) were under the same pressure but we do not let it get to us.” To this, Sheetal(S) (G) (S1) replied, “*Daughters constantly have to prove themselves as being worthy. They needed to prove to our teachers and the whole society that we are worthy enough. And that we will not throw away the family’s ‘ijjat’* To this Aavash added, “I often find that the *more conservative thoughts* happen to be *held by the female teachers*, in class they constantly reinforce the idea that girls were like a ‘garden’ that might get infected with pests”. To this, Pratik(S) (B) (S1) commented, “That is why I believe that *teachers simply use the ijjat card to keep a close eye on the girls.*”

A similar discussion was held at Saraswoti Higher Secondary School. Here Pushpa(S) (G) (S2) shared, “I try and resist thinking that I will let the family down.

¹⁵This was said in a group interview with all the male participants at Star English Secondary School. I had expected a bit more of a discussion on this point however all the boys agreed. When I read this statement out in the other two schools, the boys seemed to agree there as well.

But I fear that one day, *I might actually throw away the family's ijjat, not that we have much*. I do not understand why the boys do not have the pressure to protect the *ijjat*, I just do not.” To this Ritu(S) (G) (S2) added, “Well, that is because a girl makes or breaks a family. Boys are never involved in this process,” Riya further added “That is true but sometimes I feel that teachers are so *preoccupied about how girls will destroy the family ijjat that they stop seeing us as individuals, which is infuriating.*” To this Shishir(S)(B)(S2) remarked, “It is true though, you all (girls) carry the *ijjat*, say if you go off track, the family will be blamed forever. I know what it feels like when society questions us. My older sister ran away when she was fifteen, the school had told us that she was having an affair. She came back two weeks later, pregnant. She effectively destroyed our *ijjat*. To this, Sunil(S) (B) (S2) commented, “No matter what, I mean *it is good that teachers remind us of the importance of ijjat.*” Riya intervened saying, “You do not know what it feels like to being constantly judged and accused by teachers on the slightest possibility that we may bring shame to the family.”

At Star English Secondary School, the participants argued that the teachers used *ijjat* as ammunition to blackmail students. Anamika(S) (G) (S3) commented, “This whole trumpeting of *ijjat* is so that teachers have something to talk about in the staff room. They use it to blackmail us into doing things they want us to do, they do not care about our family *ijjat*, and the only thing they care about is whether we behave as they want us to (being girls).” Sweta(S) (G) (S3) added to this, “This whole *ijjat* business has become nothing more than rhetoric. I have heard it so many times that I no longer care about it.” “Don’t get us wrong, *ijjat* is important for us but the teachers have made it a tool to emotionally blackmail us,” added Aman. Based on the interaction in all three schools, it was clear that girls felt more pressured into

protecting the family *ijjat* compared to the boys. Also, the students saw it a mechanism of control.

Pushpa Gurung (T) (F) (S3) when asked what she felt about girls' being responsible for maintaining the family *ijjat*, she said "girls have to be controlled because they are more vulnerable and so might make irrational decisions, especially when it comes to boys and relationships. Furthermore, if children are not taught to behave according to their gender now, they will never learn. Also, from the teaching experience that I have had, those who *abide by the social norms and act accordingly to their gender, are the ones who do well in life.*" This sentiment was common with the other two female teachers as well. Sujata Kafle (T) (F) (S1) said, "As teachers, we have to ensure that children, particularly, girls do not stray away. We have to protect them and so sometimes, we have to be a little bit strict with them." While Sakshi Verma (T) (F) (S2) said, "The children that I deal with are extremely vulnerable, especially the girls so it is important for me to monitor them. *They think I do not like them but I am simply taking care of them, I am doing what any mentor should be doing*".

This idea of protecting a girl stemmed from the belief that girls made impulsive emotional decisions that may endanger a family's pride (Gilbert et al, 2004). Furthermore, Dwyer (2000) argues that the struggle to maintaining or safeguarding *ijjat* becomes a struggle between the new and the old generation, where the new generation feels controlled but cannot completely let go of the fear of letting the society down while the old generation try extremely hard to maintain control.

Comparison to Popular Culture

The participants believed that the reference to popular culture especially celebrities was a comparison that did not affect the children in any way.

Pratik(S(B)(S1) responded when asked what is felt about the reference to celebrities, “I find that teachers know the name of one or two actors’ name and simply throw them around. For me, the references to these celebrities are insignificant.” Sweta(S) (G) (S3) an interview stated that, “I think our teachers have it all wrong, they think that the reason why we ‘act out’ is because of media. *We are not passive things. We do not simply follow what we see on television. They constantly warn us by saying, ‘be careful, you might become an ‘item’ girl’* but what they forget is, it is very difficult to make it in the acting world.” Sunil(S) (B) (S2) shared a similar thought, “Teachers use names of celebrities like adjectives, wherever possible. I do not see any purpose in comparing us to stars, I just do not.”

Chapter Summary

From the above discussion, it is clear that schools propagated hegemonic masculinity where girls and boys were supposed to behave on the basis of the discreet yet ever prevalent code of behavior that favor the boys (Schippers, 2007). This was further maintained by reinforcing dichotomous codes where boys and girls were constantly reminded of how they were supposed to behave in relation to their gender. This effectively labelled anyone who did not fall under the expected norm. The female students seemed to be more affected by the constant label and reminder of being a girl and how they were susceptible to shaming the family at any given point. However, they seemed to have developed different mechanisms to cope with it by convincing themselves that their teachers’ were traditional in their thoughts or by simply talking back to them or silently defying them. Boys seemed to completely be indifferent to such gender based labels because they prescribed to these values as well. However, ironically, they also had internalized the idea that there was no compulsion to abide by the prescribed gender expectations laid by the teachers.

CHAPTER IV

BEHAVIOR AS A REFLECTION TO THE CHARACTER

During the field work, the second major criteria on the basis of which labels were formed was contingent on how the children behaved. This was measured by the level of discipline which in turn was equated with ability and smartness. The labels here were much more visible and directly influenced the teachers' attitude towards students. The chapter also explores how the schools through the labels controlled the behavior of the students. The students seemed much more affected by these labels compared to the gender labels discussed earlier. The chapter has also discussed the 'exploitative nature of school' (Augustine, 2014).

Defining 'discipline'

By discipline the research refers to the extent to which the students conformed to the school rules and fulfilled expectations. Based on the response of the teachers in all three schools, discipline, in this context entailed the tidiness of the dresses children wore, how sincere they were in class and in performing their work, timely submission of work, their level of seriousness in class, whether they questioned authority or not and finally their academic performance.¹⁶

Importance of Abiding by the Dress code

During the class observations, it was found that a great emphasis was placed on whether students were dressed according to the stipulated dress code or not. At Star English Secondary School (S3), all students of grade ten were made to stand out

¹⁶Measured by their performance in exams

in the sun (for an hour) for not polishing their shoes, each student was hit three times for not polishing their shoes properly. A student was hit six times for not cutting his hair after repeatedly being warned, “You look like a *Tyape* (drug addict) with that kind of hair. Look at you, no personality!”¹⁷ Devendra Shrestha bellowed (T) (M) (S3). He later confided in me saying, “That student with long hair not only defies the school rules, he encourages others to do the same. He is good for nothing.”

On the same day, before the classes ended, girls from the same class were taken out from Social Studies class¹⁸ and hit five sticks for wearing short skirts. This time, Pushpa Gurung (T) (F) (S3) brought them to her office and reprimanded them for deliberately shortening their skirts. She further screamed at Sweta(S) (G) (S3) saying, “*I am sure you put friends up to this. You are a shameless girl. You have always found ways to disrespect the school uniform. What is this strand of hair on your face? Look at you, and that nail polish. Disgusting! This is why you are failing in class.*” The students simply stood there quietly with their heads turned down while they were rebuked.

Students were taken out of line during assemblies and asked to tuck in their shirts properly. During one of the morning assemblies, Anamika(S) (G) (S3) and Rishant(S) (B) (S3) were brought on stage to demonstrate how students should be dressed at school. The principal said, “Look at Anamika, she has perfectly ironed clothes and properly combed hair. *You see, she dresses impeccably and this is why she is always first in class. Also, the boys need to learn from Rishant, someone who wanted to have long hair now has such a well cut hair cut. He has perfectly ironed uniform with well-polished shoes. All the boys need to learn from him. And he is*

¹⁷The word that was used in Nepali was *tyape*

¹⁸I followed the girls out and watched the entire process

second in class, see those who abide by the dress code are the ones who will do well in studies.” There was a great emphasis to look “presentable” that is properly ironed pan/shirts, polished shoes, trimmed hair for boys and tied hair for girls with no extra accessories (nail polish, jewelry).

At Sunflower school (S1), a similar emphasis was placed on abiding by the stipulated dress code¹⁹. Aavash(S) (B) (S1) and Ritu(S) (B) (S2) were sent back home to change for not wearing proper collared shirts. Moreover, girls were often berated for not tying their hair, or for wearing nail polish or jewelry to school. On Fridays, when students had to wear black pants and white shirts, the checking was greater and students were often shouted at for not abiding by the dress code. Boys whose hair was deemed as being too long were asked to immediately go to a barber and have their hair trimmed. Sujata Kafle (T) (F) (S1) told me, *“Tshering dresses so impressively wearing decent clothes, she has an extremely pleasant personality and her dressing style indicates how intelligent she is.”*

At Saraswoti Higher Secondary School (S2), dress code was in place but was not enforced as strictly as in the other two schools. The teachers did not really reinforce it because according to Sakshi Verma (T) (F) (S2), “We cannot expect the students to come with clean ironed uniforms or proper shoes when they cannot even afford to buy enough food for their meals.”

The process of ensuring that uniforms are properly worn is a way of controlling the students’ bodily activities (Morris, 2005). Furthermore, if students are to be found breaking or disobeying the dress code, it is interpreted as being a defiance against the school (Kupchik, 2009). The emphasis given on dressing a particular way

¹⁹Even though Sunflower School did not have a set uniform, there was a dress code that was stipulated (boys were expected to have trimmed hair and wear full pants and collared shirts while girls were expected to tie their hair, wear full pants and collared shirts and not wear accessories).

is “an attempt on part of the schools to mold students, especially those perceived as being rebellious, into embodying what school officials consider proper comportment.”(Morris, 2005, pg. 27). Moreover, those who were seen to accept the dressing norm were accepted by teachers and looked at positively, (Kupchik, 2007).

Punishment as a Means to Ensure Discipline

The other way to ensure discipline was maintained was by administering corporal punishment to those deemed as being potentially problematic. So punishment was an effect of being negative labelled. At Saraswoti Higher Secondary School (S2) and Star English Secondary School (S3), corporal punishment was administered publicly as a measure to ensure that similar behavioral infractions were not repeated (from the students). The students who were “punished” were often the ones falling behind in their studies or the ones who were seen as “trouble makers” who were *“caught behaving inappropriately or were found questioning the authority unnecessarily”*. Pushpa (S) (G) (S2) was once caught for “stealing” a math book ²⁰and the math teacher, slapped her several times and yelled, “You are a thief, and do you think your parents worked so hard for you to become a thief!” Upon this, Pushpa did not react and stood there with her head held down. Sakshi Verma (T) (F) (S2) later shared with me that, “Pushpa was bound to fail in life, and she would never pass school. She had failed in all her tests (she showed me her academic records).”

At Star English Secondary School, a group of four boys were once caught drinking vodka from their water bottles during Math class. They were immediately thrashed with a stick that was in the corner of the class and were taken to the principal’s office. It was later announced that they had been expelled from school.

²⁰Pushpa claimed that the math book belonged to her and her friend had borrowed it from her but had refused to return it.

The next morning, the principal shared the incident during the morning assembly and stated that *“Those boys were trouble from day one, as they did not fear anyone. They had destroyed the school’s name with such reckless behavior”*. When I asked Devendra Shrestha (T) (M) (S3) about what his thoughts were about the incident, he said, *“To me it does not come as a surprise. They belong to uneducated families who do not know how to carry themselves. These boys were never serious about anything. They consistently broke the school rules. Therefore, it was expected for the boys to be expelled from school sooner or later.”*

Sometimes, at Star English Secondary School, students were not told why they were being punished. Here if students crossed the lines, they would be hit with a stick and anybody could be hit. Again, boys were hit more often than girls and it was the same group of boys who were constantly hit in front of everybody in class.

At Sunflower School (S3), when behavioral infractions were made, students were sent to Kishore Budathoki’s (T) (M) (S1) office where he talked to them personally²¹. If the behavior persisted, they would be sent to the principal’s office and their parents would be called for a meeting. This one time, Dipendra (a student) hit another student while playing basketball for insulting his mother, and so Kishore Budathoki (T) (M) (S1) made him make a presentation on anger management. But Kishore Budathoki often confided in me saying, *“Sometimes, I think these students need to be taught a lesson the hard way. They just do not realize the severity of the situation and the consequences of their actions. If you have noticed, it is the same set of boys and girls who constantly challenge the system”*. One day, all students were summoned to the auditorium for an emergency assembly to remind them of how students were expected to behave. The emergency assembly was triggered to address

²¹Behavior related problems were dealt at his closed door office.

the concern of an increasing number of boys and girls walking together holding hands in public (outside of school). The second incident that triggered the emergency assembly was that a student had posted a status making fun of the school which was noticed by the vice-principal. To this the students were very calmly reminded of how such impulsive acts could land them in trouble and if continued could result in expulsion from school.

The above incidents illustrate how schools are active agents of cultural reproduction where social sanctions in the form of punishments are used to ensure that a particular behavior is achieved by focusing on students who may disrupt the social order (Noguera, 2003). Teachers were determined to maintain order or discipline or what was “socially sanctioned behavior that achieve obedience” (Perlstein, 2015). Furthermore, it is evident from the above discussion that *“The body, once made to be tortured, became something to be trained and corrected, from the gymnastics of handwriting to regimens of personal cleanliness: a new moral orthopedics that was intended to fashion the future more than punish the past punishment acts”* (Deacon, 2006). So effectively students who were labelled as “troublemakers” were the ones who were “corrected” through severe measures. *Students had to be very careful in how they acted because, anybody could catch them at any given time. This helped maintain an unsaid air of fear or “panoptical” effect which in turn controlled how the students behaved* (Popkewitz, 1997).

Perception of Labels by Students

Having discussed how labels were placed on students based on their discipline, this section discusses how these labels affected the students. All of the students initially told me that they were not affected by being labelled negatively. But upon further investigation, it was found that most of them seemed to be disappointed

at the fact that they were labelled negatively. There was an evident sense of dissatisfaction and a sense of resentment towards the school authorities. The students in all three schools believed their teachers could never think of them positively.

Punishment as an Integral Part of Schooling

Tej (S) (B) (S3) was part of the group of four boys who were expelled for drinking alcohol in class. He agreed to talk to me and when I asked him how he felt about being expelled, he told me, “What I did was wrong and stupid. My friends asked me to join them and I could not say no. I knew that we would most likely be caught and this would probably result in our expulsion from school, which it did. I did not care then and I still do not care now. *I have loathed this school, always. It was like a prison. They reminded me every day of my imperfections and how my existence was futile.* Everything I did was looked down upon. I did not walk properly, I was among the dumbest students in class, and I had the wrong set of friends. Basically, the school disapproved of everything I did.” He continued, “I am not trying to make *excuses but none of my teachers ever cared about me. My friends were the only ones who were and are concerned about me.* I am willing to get expelled again and again for my friends. I have no regrets.” Saying this, he quietened down and started speaking softly, “Everybody says that I am an example of hopelessness and maybe I am. Maybe I was born to fail.”

He takes a deep breath and continues, “*Last year, I thought about changing so I started focusing on my studies, listening to teachers. I wanted to become better. After our first term exams, the principal called me to his office and declared that the 67 I got in mathematics was because I had copied someone else’s answers and he wanted me to find out whose paper I had copied from.* After this incident, I realized that I would never be trusted and so I decided to let go of school and live my life on

my own terms.” Saying this, he looked straight into my eyes and declared, “*My friends are my world. They see something worthy in me so I will go to any lengths to protect them and be with them*”.

Group interview with participants from Star English Secondary School

During a group interview with participants from Star English Secondary School (other than Tej), I asked the participants what they thought about the discipline code and the measures taken to enforce it. Sweta(S) (G) (S3) immediately commented, “You have probably noticed that *teachers make it a point to pick on particular sets of students and humiliate them*.” She stood up and started pacing around, “You see, the time they spend on checking our skirt lengths and hair, if they could use it to teach us better in class. *Every time, they (the teachers) hit or shout at me especially when I have done nothing wrong, it humiliates me beyond words*.” To this, Rishant(S) (B) (S3) added, “It is just not you, Sweta, *every time our teachers hit us or call us names, they take away a tiny part of our dignity*”. Sweta continued, tearing up “This one time I was beaten with fists (I do not know how many times) in front of everyone for wearing nail polish. It was excruciatingly painful when I was hit the first time, but by the third time, *I became numb. I felt like a sack of rice that was being thrown around*. Pushpa Ma’am never treated me the same after this incident. She has made it a point to comment about how ugly my hands are every chance she gets to an extent that I have become extremely conscious about my hands, I hide them as much as I can.”

“It is not only Sweta all of us have been scarred by the force used upon us to ‘discipline’ us” added Amita(S) (G) (S3). “I think that all our teachers became teachers because they could not find better jobs and so they lash their frustrations out on us”. Amita stood up, went to the window and looked around and started saying,

“They systematically beat us up for the most futile reasons like wearing the wrong colored sock. They feed on our insecurities and sometimes I think punishing us gives them immense pleasure. When our entire class was made to stand out in the sun (remember that day, one of my friends, was beaten severely for having too long of a hair and was called a tyape. The hair was not even that long. The friend has always been very insecure about his looks. After the incident, he constantly asked us if he looked that bad.”

Anamika(S) (G) (S3) stood up and started talking, “I am one of the lucky ones, I seldom get picked out in class or get beaten or humiliated because I work hard, I greet the teachers not because this is what it takes to please them but because I have been taught better at home. *But every time, one of my friends gets humiliated or slapped, I lose a little bit of respect for my teachers. In all honesty, the fact that these teachers actually think of me positively allows me to go about my business without fearing that I will get caught.*

“Exactly!” Aman(S) (B) (S3) added, “I do not really get beaten or humiliated. They (the teachers) *are very good at making us feel like bacteria, worthless, especially when one of us has done something wrong.*” Rishant(S) (B) (S3) further added, “This word ‘discipline’ just makes me angry. They do not want us to be discipline. *They want us to live in fear once they attach a label. We are engulfed with fear, fear of getting caught for maybe saying the wrong word, or laughing too loudly or crossing out an answer in an assignment”.*

To this Amita(S) (G) (S3) interrupted, “Maybe it is our fault. We are the ones who constantly break the rules, why can we not do what is expected of us?” To this Anamika(S) (G) (S3) raised her hand and said, “*Because we are not respected.*” Everyone nodded in agreement to this statement.

After two days, I interviewed Anamika(S) (G) (S3) separately and I asked her what she meant by ‘not being respected’, she clarified, *“Our teachers do not see any hope or potential in us. The teachers have never yelled at me because I have always managed to remain on top of class but I do not feel respected. Yes the teachers compliment me, but it is not true. They are only using me to create further differences between students (they are pitching us against each other, its crystal clear). You ask any of the students who are doing well in school, none of them take the compliments seriously because if we start believing in them, we will lose our friends”*²²

Based on the discussion above, it is clear that students were well aware of how their teachers perceived them. The negative perception of teachers made the students question themselves and feel bad. This has led to the manifestation of a great amount of dissatisfaction among the students towards their teachers. Also, it was evident that a deep seeded resentment was held by the students particularly, the way punishments were administered. The system currently resembles a “banking education system” (Freire, 1993). Here to a certain extent, the teachers are the “oppressors” who transfer knowledge onto the students who passively receive it (Freire, 1993). Furthermore, the teachers seem to blame the students for disobeying, disobliging and being irresponsible (Rice, 2013) and the students seemed to have developed a deep seeded anger and detest against their teachers for having such opinions about them. There seemed to exist an “us” versus “them” sentiment where the students saw themselves pitched together against the teachers. This idea of having a common “adversary” seemed to help students come together and support each other subsequently helped them cope with these labels (Furrer, 2014)

²²I asked Aman and Rishant and they agreed to this

Group interview with participants from Saraswoti Higher Secondary School

This similar essence of a sense of injustice was felt by students at Saraswoti Higher Secondary School (S2). All of them agreed that the teachers had opinions about each one of them and this subsequently shaped the behavior of the teachers' accordingly.

When asked how they felt about their teachers' perceptions about them, Sunil(S) (B) (S2) started the conversation by saying, *"You need to realize that we are insignificant because if we mattered we would not be treated like second class citizens in our own school. You have witnessed it yourself, they only notice us when we do something wrong and this does not help us, it is simply to demonstrate their power."* To this Pushpa(S) (G) (S2) added, *"If the teachers actually cared about us, they would try and understand why we act the way we do. They never try to understand us."*

Just as Pushpa finished her sentence, Riya(S) (G) (S2) spoke loudly saying, *"I think, I have become accustomed to being slapped. If I were not to receive them, my day would not be complete. Also I have realized that what the teachers think of me really does not matter because I know that I am different than what they think of me to be."*

"Exactly", said Sunil, *"teachers come and go. Some teachers like me others cannot stand me. So to me it does not matter. It is of course nice to have teachers who like me but if they do not, it does not matter!"* Ritu(S) (G) (S2) raised her hand and started speaking, *"I do not have it in me to be liked by my teachers. I know this very well. Otherwise they would not always make such scathing remarks about me."* She continued, *"That is why I am trying to create a situation on the basis of which they can expel me and I can start working and can make real money, which will actually help my family pay our bills."*

Shisir(S) (B) (S2) raised his hand and said, “It always *amuses me as to why our teachers are so judgmental about us and why are they angry with us all the time.* So I decided to find out why they have become teachers because I thought that would help answer my questions. I asked about ten teachers why they had chosen the teaching profession. All of them remarked out of compulsion. So technically, they did not want to become teachers. Subsequently, *we, the students constantly remind them of their failures and so they deal with it by judging us and hitting us.* Just like my father who is not happy with my mother.” Taking a deep breath, he continued “this revelation helps me not take the criticism I get personally.”

Sanjay(S) (B) (S2) stated, “*I have been called and insulted in every way possible. This includes being called a cheat, to being an idiot, to being hopeless, I have heard everything and so now it does not matter what they call me because I know that they will never approve of me* which is fine, so there is no point in trying to please them. *I have accepted this fact that maybe I am not likeable.*” Sanjay paused a while and continued, “But I know that I have far great issues in life like making sure that my father’s shop runs properly, buying the grocery needed, looking after the staff who work with us and more importantly saving up for my sister’s treatment, so forgive me if my teachers’ do not like me or that I do not get affected by their opinions.”

The silence was broken by Ritu(S) (G) (S2), “To tell you the truth, the school, school work and especially what teachers think of me does not affect me at all *not* because I have become used to it *but I have greater things to worry about,*” saying this she looked at Pushpa(S) (G) (S2) (her sister) who started tearing up, “Our parents fight all the time because we never have enough money. My mother is beaten every day and when I try to intervene, I get slammed against the wall. Then when Pushpa

comes to protect me, he hits her with whatever my father finds in his way.” Gathering herself, Ritu continued, “I or Pushpa can never complete our work on time simply because it is impossible to get work done when our mother is being beaten by our drunk father every day. *And so, it makes me angry that our so called teachers make scathing comments and judgments about us when they have no idea what kind of life we have outside of school.* They turn a blind eye to us and like Sunil said, **we are insignificant to** the teachers. They do not need to tell me that I will fail in school, I have known that from day one.”

The above discussion illustrates how the children from Saraswoti Higher Secondary School had to deal with multiple issues such as family instability and poverty. They believed that their teachers negatively labelled them without trying to understand what their lives were like outside of school. Ironically, this (the fact that they have so many issues to deal with) has become a source of coping mechanism as it has made it easier for them to dismiss the negative labels attached to them by their teachers. This has partly to do with the fact that “Education is viewed as ‘act of depositing’ piecemeal information which is divorced from reality and disconnected from each other “(Freire, p. 72).

Furthermore in congruence to a study conducted in England (Kao, 2014), the students seemed to be well aware of what was expected out of them however in the process of defying the authority they seem to actually fulfill the expectation of teachers’ unintentionally (Lund, 2014).

Group interview with participants from Sunflower School

A similar sense of discontent towards the teachers was also present among the participants at Sunflower School (S1). Just like the other two schools, the students were well aware of the opinions their teachers’ harvested against them.

Sheetal(S)(G)(S1), in an interview when asked her how she felt about herself, she answered, *“I feel that I am letting everybody down especially my parents because no matter how hard I try, I never seem to be able to do well in exams. Just a couple of days ago, I heard the physics teacher talk to the chemistry teacher about how I would never pass the exam no matter how hard I tried. It makes me angry that my teachers who are supposed to inspire me think of me as not being capable to get through the system.”*

In a similar interview with Ritu (S) (G) (S1), when asked what she thought about her teachers, said, *“Initially, the teachers and their condescending opinions about me as a person made it very difficult to feel good about myself. But after talking to my friends, I realized that teachers’ seemed to be judgmental about all of us. So I have decided that their opinions cannot define who I am.”*

“I am one of the lucky ones, I get along with the teachers, I honestly do what is expected from me and more importantly, I do not try to question authority because it is simple if we respect authority, at least they will not make our lives difficult)I have been labelled positively).” shared Tshering(S))(G)(S1). She further elaborated, *“I do not agree with the teachers but what I have learnt is that if I do not get in their way, they will not get in my way.”*

While Uttam(S) (B) (S1) when asked about what he thought about the teachers, *“I think all of us have internalized the fact that we need to resent our teachers. But sometimes, we need to understand that we are entities of our own. So when we have a problem, we probably ought to go and talk to them and tell them how we feel. I think we are making our teachers escape coats for not doing well in school. My teachers always tell me that I am not serious and that I might fail if I keep this attitude up. But like I said it does not affect me.”* Pratik(S)(B)(S1) who was sitting

next to Uttam further added, *“I think at a certain point, we need to make a conscious decision to detach ourselves from the criticism we get, not because we disrespect them but because it is our lives and we have to be able to make our own choices. I have been called everything from being dumb to too distracted, but now, it no longer affects me.”*

In a similar discussion with Aavash(S) (B) (S1) where I asked him how he coped with moving countries, he said, *“I have adjusted to the change. There are a lot of things that I do not agree with, especially how the teachers perceive me. But I have reached a point where I have realized that the experiences of the teachers’ shape their judgments and so when they find me too ‘kuire’, it is not their fault. Also, I know myself better than my teachers and so their opinions do not really matter”.*

From the above discussion, it is clear that students from Sunflower School were quick to pick up on the labels attributed by their teachers’. They seemed to be able to differentiate between their individual selves and what their teachers thought of them. This has partially to do with the fact that the children who study in this school come from affluent families and so have the “cultural capital” (Kingston, 2001) and the confidence to think of themselves as having their own agency (Waquant, 2004). Furthermore, the students could easily talk to the teachers which was not found in the other two schools. One of the reasons for this was that the parents’ regularly checked in on their children’s progress. Kishore Budathoki (T) (M) (S1) often told me, *“Many of the students have never been so much so as shouted at by their parents’, so we have to make sure that when we have to reprimand them.”*

During a discussion I had with the participants on what they thought of their teachers, Aavash(S) (B) (S1) replied, *“I often find that the teachers tend to limit and define the world in accordance to what they know. This just does not feel right, I have*

interacted with a variety of people and none of them are similar. So I find it very difficult to fathom how teachers make such sweeping generalizations about us when they do not even know us properly.”

Pratik(S) (B) (S1) stood up and said, “Often teachers judge us for what we have done (*usually they have opinions about us before we even open our mouths*). So it is clear that teachers are not objective when it comes to evaluating us.” Uttam(S) (B) (S1) added, “Teachers are not gods. They think of themselves to be one. But the harder they try to show how invincible they are, the more they expose themselves. Aavash knows this very well, he assisted Sujata ma’am to complete her presentation which she later on became very defensive about and denied the whole incident. *But you see, we are not blind, we know what our teachers’ are made out of.*”

Ritu(S) (G) (S1) further added, “*Time and time again that teachers openly categorize students into the “likeable” (who were the ones who succeed in class, who participate in all extra-curricular activities, maintained a good relation with the teachers especially Kishore sir) and the “invisibles” (who usually go unnoticed, get into occasional trouble, were average or poor in academics). However, their opinions do not matter because their judgments are based on narrow criteria.*”

The students from Sunflower School (S1) were able to negotiate better with the teachers, something that the students from the other two schools were not able to do. This is again linked to their “habitus” (Gaddis, 2013) which gives them enough confidence to assert their legitimacy because they talk the language of the ruling class, they have travelled to numerous countries, they have complete access to technology, they have read the ‘important’ works of literature which all gives them social and cultural capital to cope with these labels (Woollen, 2014).

A study conducted by Margaret Fuller (Haralombous et al, 2008, p. 640) found that sometimes when students are given a label, they resent it and work towards disproving it. This was prevalent in the black females that the study was done on; they worked tirelessly to prove their labels wrong and in fact did very well in school. Similarly, another study found that Muslim girls worked hard and were highly ambitious because they were tired of their teachers thinking they would fail the system (Kelly, 2008). This seemed to be present in the attitudes of all participants particularly from Sunflower School. There was a general defiance displayed by the students that stemmed from the belief that teachers did not understand or respect them as individuals. This is in line with what D'Souza argument that the young adolescents are not as naïve as the general society supposes them to be. In fact the negative association either pushes them over the edge or sometimes serves as a motivating factor, (D'Souza, 2012).

Chapter Summary

The chapter outlined how discipline was used as a yardstick on the basis of which students were judged. The behavior was judged on how well they abided by the school rules and when transgressions were made punishment was used as a means to control behavior. Often it was the same set of students who got into trouble. Teachers openly declared that certain students would never succeed in the system. Students on the one hand said that they were not affected by being labelled negatively but through interviews, it was evident that the students were deeply affected by the negative labels attached to them. The level of corporal punishment that was used in Saraswoti Higher Secondary School (S2) and in Star English Secondary School (S3) was evident and students felt humiliated yet had become conditioned to the practices. The students coped with these labels on many fronts. Primarily, they harbored a deep seeded

resentment against the teachers. This made it easier for them to refute their teachers' labels. They also had constructed an "us" versus "them" (teachers) belief making it easier for the students to resent their teachers'. While students from Sunflower School seemed to be able to deal with the negative labels attached to them by believing that their teachers' did not know them enough for them to make negative generalizations about them. This was because they possessed the social and cultural capital that helped them understand that their teachers' opinions only reflected a small part of reality.

CHAPTER V

FACTORS INFLUENCING INTELLIGENCE

This chapter looks into the labels that were associated with ability and family background. There were two wide categories that teachers used to label the ability of students, “intelligent” and “dumb” which were not merely based on the intellectual capacity of the students but was rather based on their behavior and the students’ family background also seemed to affect these labels.

Definition of “The Intelligent” and “The Dumb”

Another basis on which student behavior was assessed was based on whether a student was “intelligent” or “dumb”. “Intelligent” was defined by the teachers as being academically intelligent, active in sports and extra-curricular activities, respectful and obedient teachers (in all three schools). While a “dumb” student was defined by the teachers as someone who often lagged behind in academics, was found to be slow in grasping concepts in class, disobeyed school rules and questioned authority frequently. All teachers, when I talked with them told me that they could immediately recognize the “intelligent” ones from the “dumb” students.

The Success of Students can be Predicted

In Sunflower School (S1), Chandra Shakya (T) (M) (S1) had just finished his class and came to meet Kishore Budathoki (T) (M) (S1)²³. He triumphantly said, “Remember Kishore Sir, on the first day, I had told you that Ritu(S)(F)(S1) would never do well in Physics, look at this, she has only scored 20 out of 100!” After he

²³We were having an interview at the time

left, I asked Kishore Budathoki whether he could predict students' performance. *He listed out the names one by one and told me who he deemed as being more "intelligent" and therefore more likely to succeed versus those "dumber" students who were more likely to fail the system.*

This confidence in predicting student success or failure was present both in Star English Secondary School (S3) and Saraswoti Higher Secondary School (S2). Pushpa Gurung (T) (F) (S3) told me, "When you have had more than ten years of teaching experience, you tend to know students instantly. All the students that I have said will do well in school have lived up to the expectations. Sakshi Verma (T) (F) (S2) told me while having tea, "I believe I have a natural gift in understanding the students. I can predict what kind of students they are within a day or two".

It was found that teachers' judged their students based on their "gut feeling". When asked to all teachers whether ethnicity, class, speech pattern made a difference in the students' performance, all teachers said ethnicity and class were never good enough predictors. The 'gut feeling' stemmed from the teachers' experiences and their world view which was their habitus and cultural capital (Woollen, 2014).

This phenomenon of predicting students and it coming true is known as 'self-fulfilling prophecy' which is "a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior, which makes the originally false conception come true." (Hargreaves, 1995). This seemed to hold true in all three schools and because of these predictions teachers dealt with students differently. Ritu(S) (F) (S1) confided in me saying, "I do not know whether I am supposed to be telling you this, *but once Tshering(S) (G) (S1) and I submitted the same assignment for Economics, Tshering got an A for her assignment while I got a C for my assignment. Although there was no substantial difference in terms of writing style and content.*"

Aman(S) (M) (S3) told me, “Our teachers’ carefully mark the papers of the first, second, third students in class. The rest of the papers are corrected in fifteen minutes based on their preconceived notions about us.” This was further verified by Amita(S) (G) (S3), Sweta(S) (G) (S3), and Rishant(S) (B) (S3).

In Saraswoti Higher Secondary School (S2), Sunil(S) (B) (S2) and Pushpa(S) (G) (S2) also shared similar grievances that no matter how much effort were put into the assignments, only the first girl or boy would be appreciated and given proper feedback.” So the perception of the teachers clearly affected how they viewed the work of the students.

A study (Furrer, 2015) showed how labelling of students leads to streaming of knowledge. As a result, students who were believed to be “smart” were given a more sophisticated level of knowledge (materials and questions) while the “less smart or the problem children” were given a lower level of knowledge altogether (Furrer, 2015)

This was found in all three schools *where the supposedly “intelligent” students’ questions were addressed while others were ignored or dismissed or ridiculed. When the “intelligent” students asked questions, it was interpreted as being intellectual curiosity while when students deemed as “dumb” asked a question, comments like, “do not be over smart or you are simply disturbing the lesson” were made*²⁴

In all three schools, teachers constantly reminded the students of the exemplary students. At Saraswoti Higher Secondary School (S2), teachers constantly reminded their class that they needed to learn from Prajwol Rai. This was because he was quiet, listened to the lessons intently, never argued with the teachers, was punctual in handing his assignments, always became first in exams, had beautiful

²⁴These events were noted in all three school and were highly subtle

handwriting, was the best football player and sang well too. At Star English Secondary School, teachers often were heard saying that Nishma Kafle made them proud. She would always become first in whatever she did because she had the intelligence and discipline needed.

At Sunflower School, most teachers talked about how cordial and respectful Ashish Singh was. According to teachers this student had great humility and so this would take him far in life. It was clear that teachers have certain expectations from students and so it becomes a benchmark on the basis of which they evaluate students (Thomson, 2012). A study that found students who tended to rebel more, ask more questions and who did not fit the image of the “ideal student” of the teachers’ were in fact labelled negatively (Gibbs, 2015).

A study tested this hypothesis in an elementary school in California where 20 percent were selected randomly and the teachers were told that these children were expected to show rapid intellectual growth. All students were administered IQ tests before the beginning of the experiment. A year later, the students were retested and it was found that the “selected” students showed greater IQ gains and the report cards also indicated that teachers believed this group had undergone the most intellectual growth. The teachers’ communicated their beliefs to the students through facial expressions, posture, degree of friendliness and encouragement all led to self-fulfilling prophecy (Haralombous et al, 2008, p. 639).

In this study, a teachers also proudly shared with me how students always fulfilled their expectations, whether positive or negative. “I had a student that everybody thought would fail but he was a very gifted child so I worked with him and now he is attending a prestigious university,” said Kishore Budathoki(T)(M)S1) while talking about how good he is at understanding the potential of students. Pushpa

Gurung (T) (F) (S3) said, “You will probably judge me for this but students who do well, do well right from the start. It is very rare for students to pick up once they have fallen behind in everything.”

The findings of this explorative study, seems to some extent to be in congruence with the theory of self-fulfilling prophecy. However, this study also showed how students coped with these prophecies by internalizing the fact that their teachers were inherently biased. This was possible because all of them had a very strong set of friends.

Studies have also shown that teachers label students on the basis of class they belong too. In a study of American kindergartens, (Parlstein, 2015) found that as early as the third day, students were seated in various tables based on being “fast learners” or “slow learners (Parlstein, 2015)”. However this categorization was not simply based on the child’s ability but rather based on demeanor that correlated to the children’s class. Kaiser also argues that teachers’ often have preconceived association of behavior and class and this leads to students being categorized early on (Kaiser, 2013).

Teachers in class did not make direct remarks about class of students. At Saraswoti Higher Secondary School (S2) and Star English Secondary School(S3) however all four teachers time and time again referred to *how difficult it was to mold children who belonged to poor and uneducated families as these students spent the major portion of time with their families*. Devendra Shrestha (T) (M) (S3) once told me, that the parents they had to deal with were irrational and thought that once they gave birth to their children, their duties were over. A similar view was expressed by Pushpa Gurung (T) (F) (S3) who said, “*No matter how much elegance we try to instill*

in the students, their family backgrounds and their lifestyles do not allow them to become the individuals we want them to be.”

Students in Star English Secondary School felt that one of the reasons why their teachers' were so harsh on them was because their parents' never cross questioned the teachers or showed dissatisfaction towards the school.

At Saraswoti Higher Secondary School, Sashi Rai (T) (M) (S2) said that one of the reasons why students were not doing well in school was because the parents had not inculcated the importance of education; rather they have been taught that money is everything. A similar opinion was put forward by Sakshi Verma (T) (F) (S2), “Many of the children were not supposed to be born and therefore do not receive the care they are supposed to. This effectively affects the performance of the students at school”

The students felt that partly, had their parents been educated, the teachers would not walk all over them as they did right now. But they said that their social backgrounds were simply another excuse for their teachers to detest them.

Literature supports the idea that schools should not be blamed for the poor performance or the dissatisfaction of students. One such author is Herbert Hyman who argues that the children's values are the reason why they feel isolated in school. It is because these values made students unambitious and so place a lower value on education (Bird, 1980). Similarly, (Muggleton, 2005) attributed this to the subculture of the working class students which encouraged immediate gratification, present time orientation, fatalism and collectivism. All these values led to students not prioritizing their school work and so effectively setting back students in class (Muggleton,2005)

Students at Saraswoti Higher Secondary School(S2) and Star English Secondary

School(S3), did not really feel that their family backgrounds made things worse because according to most of them, it was already at it's worse.

While at Sunflower School (S1), students felt that teachers often labelled them negatively for having affluent parents. During a group interview that was held regarding teachers' perceptions. Sheetal(S)(G)(S1) shared how once when she was unable to solve a physics question, Chandra Shakya Sir told her that she did not have to be good at solving questions because she had a big fat bank account.

To this, Uttam(S) (B) (S1) added, "Once Sujata Ma'am came up and asked how much my watch cost and I told her that I did not know. She then snarled at me and said that at such a young age, I have been spoilt by my parents. As a result, I will never learn to work hard in my life because I get things (expensive) for free."

The students were aware that judgments were made based on their parents' status but did not seem to be affected by it. Participants from all three schools were not affected by their social background and its effects.

Ethnicity did not seem to influence the perception of both teachers towards students and the students' perception towards themselves. The students did not even consider ethnicity as criteria for anything. However, in Saraswoti Higher Secondary School (S2), because of the government provisions for scholarships for marginalized groups and females, students belonging to such groups were identified but it only served a functional purpose of distributing the scholarship money. I asked Sakshi Verma (T) (F) (S2) and Sashi Rai (T) (M) (S2) and both of them said, "It does not matter what ethnicity or caste the students belonged to because we do not have to interact with them extensively."

Chapter Summary

The above discussions make it clear that teachers' perception of students was influenced by their "perceived intelligence" and family background. But these labels were only auxiliary and the students themselves were not as affected by the label (compared to the previous two labels, gender and behavior). The labels were not clear cut exclusive tags but rather they seemed to work minimally.

CHAPTER VI

CONTEMPLATION AND TYING THE LOOSE ENDS

This chapter will account my perspective of the entire study and in doing so I will first look into the experience I had with the participants and move onto the theoretical discussion and finally put forward my ideas regarding this study. This will be followed by a general summary of the entire study.

Self-reflection about the Research

Dickson-Swift et al (2007) say that “When researchers invest their time, effort, the research no longer is limited to simply becoming assignment; it becomes part of their lives that often changes them in a profound way.” This is exactly how I feel at the end of the study.

Initially, when I first came up with the research proposal, I had assumed that the study would be relatively straightforward. Teachers would label the students based on the criteria set by the literature and the students would either internalize it or reject it. However, over the course of the study I realized that the labelling phenomenon was reflection of the complexity of the Nepali society and an ongoing negotiation between students and teachers.

I had the opportunity to get to know the inner workings of a class and in doing so, I witnessed the maturity and sensibility of the students. My general assumption that students would probably be passive young naïve individuals was questioned. I witnessed intelligence, maturity and sensibility in all my participants during interviews. Even though at times, the participants broke down while talking about their struggles, there seemed to be this unsaid but unfaltering warmth and support in

the form of friends. Some of the participants were not that good of friends yet when they shared their personal experiences, everyone listened out of respect and supported each other.

Sometimes, when the students talked about their battles I had to struggle greatly to hold back my tears because as a researcher I had to maintain objectivity. In the process of interviewing, when Pushpa(S) (G) (S2) told me how she and her sister were beaten up every day and how they never had enough to make ends meet, I felt extremely helpless.

Watt describes aptly that when researchers work in such close proximity with participants, they are bound to get involved or moved by instances. In fact when this happens, the rapport between the participant and the researcher becomes better (Watt, 2007). This sharing of experience helped me gain more detailed accounts of the experiences of the students.

Similarly, in the beginning based on my readings, I felt that teachers' were far too quick to jump to conclusions about students. However, over the course of the study, I realized that the teachers' opinions and experiences were a reflection of the Nepali society. They were themselves a product of the values and norms that were used to label students. Furthermore, I realized that the teachers had a lot of social and practical factors to take into account while teaching students and this effectively shaped their behavior and perception. Teachers' unlike in the west have often been given extra responsibility of becoming the parent. This makes it inevitable for teachers' not to come up with labels.

There were days when the research became emotionally taxing as I witnessed an array of events and heard experiences that often made me contemplate about life and how unfair everything was. I read literature that has criticized the education

system for conditioning students into obedient, socially and submissive entities (Zolob, 2014) and often being criticizing it for making students detached from the learning experiences (Robinson, 2006) held true in many instances. As classes were designed to ensure that syllabuses were completed or exams were properly given by students without any concern for their students' interests and experiences. This effectively left behind a lot of students simply because they had different learning styles. This subsequently led to labelling of the students as being "dumb" or being "slow" learners.

My Reaction to the Punishment that was Administered

I often found myself disagreeing principally with certain practices particularly, corporal punishment that was administered in Saraswoti Higher Secondary School (S2) and Star English Secondary School (S3). I felt that the amount of force used on students was disproportionately high. In an effort to "control" behavior students had become conditioned to being beaten. I believe that this resulted in not only resentment but had developed a sense of apathy towards their situations particularly, at Saraswoti Higher Secondary School (S2), diminishing on part the pro-activeness of the students. Part of the reason why the administration of corporal punishment made me so unconformable was probably because I grew up in a school environment that never used physical punishment. Effectively the authority was setting up a power base where behavior was being regulated and controlled. This was done by regulating the organization of space (architecture, room setup), of time (timetables/schedule) and people's activity and behavior (drills, posture, movement) (Noguera, 2003). It is enforced with the aid of complex systems of surveillance. Foucault emphasizes that power is not discipline, rather discipline is simply one way in which power can be exercised (O'Farrell, 2007). This process was present at Sunflower School, they just

did not use corporal punishment instead a strict behavior code was enforced which ensured that students did not “do whatever they wanted to do”.

In this process of regulating behavior and enforcing discipline, those of them who were seen as a threat were labelled and often “punished” to ensure that the social order in schools were maintained but the labels were not as “fixed” as I thought it would be. Rather, a student had multiple labels attached to them and it seemed fluid.

The Extent to Which the Labels Affected the Students

Yes the labels affected the students however, they seemed to have internalized the fact that teachers’ views would never change or the fact that they were insignificant was not a reflection of how they felt about themselves. I felt that this was partly due to the intimate relations they shared with their friends. Even though all students were not best of friends, they did not seem to judge each other. Furthermore, in all three schools, there seemed to be a strong sense of comradely between the students which helped form a shield against the judgments and labels of the teachers’. Also Nepali children grow up being labelled by their family and friends. The culture itself is very articulate in making fun of others.

The Strained Relationship between Teachers’ and Students

The teachers felt that students were often there to question their authority and make trouble while students felt that the teachers were there to prove how insignificant and horrible their existence was. So the relationship between teachers and students was greatly strained particularly at Sarasowti Higher Secondary School and Star English Secondary School.

At Sunflower School, the discontent between students was evident (the teachers did not really exude much discomfort with the students) however, they still had a working relation where students and teachers’ openly talked to one another. This was

probably the result of multiple school trips that allowed teachers and students to bond outside of the school setting, something that was not present in the other two schools.

The Importance of Cultural Capital

I realized the importance of cultural capital throughout the course of the study. One of the reasons why I had the legitimacy with both teachers and students was because I had the cultural capital and my habitus (Kingston, 2001) was seen as “appropriate”. This was because I was educated in a recognized private school in the country, went outside to pursue my higher education, have a good command of the English language and I was seen as belonging to a “good family”. In Star English Secondary School (S2), I was asked to help them write proposals to raise funds for the school in return of the field work that I was conducting. Similarly, every time, someone raised an eyebrow about my presence, another would tell them how I was foreign educated and I was conducting a research right now. I helped Devendra Shrestha from Star English Secondary School (S2) to study for his IELTS and after that he was willing to help me in every way possible in my research.

I found that students particularly from Saraswoti Higher Secondary School (S2) lacked the cultural capital that students from Sunflower School (S1) possessed and thus the students from (S2) were not in a position to negotiate much with their teachers. While at Star English Secondary School (S3), some students could negotiate better with their teachers than others again it was contingent on the cultural and social capital they possessed.

Labels: A Reflection of the Experiences of the Teachers

In the process of trying to understand the extent of the impact the labels have on students as well as on the interaction between teacher students. I believe that labelling is an inevitable phenomenon however, in doing so, students seemed to resent

their teachers for seeing them negatively or “favoring” others over them. The labels were largely grounded on the experiences of the teachers and as such it is important for a better communication channel to be established between students and the teachers. The labels reflected the habitus and the cultural capital of the teachers’ (Woollen, 2014).

This is why I believe that Krishnamurti’s idea that children need to be taught to express their emotions and experiences holds true (Krishnamurti’s, 2003). I got a sense from the students that they wished their teachers’ would show interest in their personal lives. Ritu(S) (G) (S2) told me once, “I dream of a day when a teacher will come up to me and tell me, ‘whatever you are going through, I went through it. I still have deep seeded fears and I am not perfect’.” Krishnamurti’s, in his book argues that when students are taught to love, explore their insecurities then they embrace the power of knowledge (Krishnamurti’s, 2003). They become active agents of learners who are not guided by fear.

The Writing Process

The other arduous battle that I had with myself was in writing down the study. There were days at a stretch that I just could not write anything because I felt that my writing would not be a true representation of what took place in the field. The questions that haunted me were questions like, “How do I capture the emotions of the participants when all of them agreed that their teachers did not see them as individuals,” or “How do I portray participants who face tremendous hardship not as helpless but as brave individuals,” or “How do I ensure to impart the fact that the teachers were not wrong as well from where they stand.” Moreover, I had extensive notes which made selection of examples extremely difficult. I had to filter out countless conversations that meant a lot took me but did not directly contribute to my

research questions. In addition, I could not include everything that my participants said, I had to pick out quotes that represented the majority's point of view and those that answered my research questions.

Conducting Study in Nepal

Finally, in the process of conducting this study I read as much literature as possible that was related to Nepal ranging from the educational policy documents to various analysis of the issues and problems of the education system. Based on my readings and observations, I understand that there are provisions made by the government that try and provide an equal opportunity for children especially those belonging to the marginalized groups however, the effectiveness of this is highly questionable. I often caught myself being bothered by minuscule details, details of how teachers refused to get to know students yet managed to judge them. Yes of course, teaching is an extremely difficult job and maybe it is not well paid but to know the names of the students, it does not cost money. If my study is anything to stand by, the students are open and it seems that if someone is willing to listen to them so are they.

In the process of writing this thesis, I realized just how large of a gap we have in terms of academic researches. There were so many times that I told myself that the researches are great but none of them fit the Nepali paradigm. Even the theories that I have discussed above, I realize that they are applicable only to a certain extent because they do not capture the cultural and the social nuances and social structures present in the Nepali society.

Tying the Strings Together

Given the government's continued effort in trying to improve the education system, right now the focus is on improving the quality of schools. This is because the

dropout rate of students is extremely high (as stated in page). One of the reasons why the dropout rate is high is because the students do not feel like they belong to the system. To make them part of the learning process, it is important for the teacher student relationship to be explored and understood for sustainable and meaningful changes to be made.

Studies discussed throughout the research have established that the labels are often formed on the basis of the values and norms of teachers. The teachers shape the behavior of students and sometimes through labelling; “self-fulfilling” prophecy is seen to take place (Marsh, 2003).

In Nepal there is a severe lack of academic research especially in the area of classroom dynamics particularly, the relationship between teachers and students. Keeping this in mind, this research was an exploratory study. It looked at how the practice of labeling of students by teachers takes place and the impact it has on the students. The study looked to establish the criteria on the basis of which these labels were formed. Furthermore, it assessed the effects of labelling on the interaction between students and teachers as well as how students responded to such labels.

The study had a qualitative narrative design and used observation (class) and interviews both individual and group as method to gather qualitative data. Three schools were selected, two were private schools and one was a community school. In these schools, 18 participants were selected, six from each school and six teachers altogether (two from each). Criterion based purposive sampling was used where gender, ethnicity were taken into account.

The Nature of Labels

It was evident that labels were present in all three schools. The teachers labelled their students on the basis of a “gut feeling”. The teachers did not follow a

process to label their students rather it came to them “naturally”. This is in contrast to what literature shows where the labels were formed by following a process (Hargreaves, 1996). There were three major types of labels that were found. The nature of these labels were relatively fluid compared to what had been discussed in the literature.

Gender Based Labels

The primary category based on which labels were formed was on the basis of how well students abided by their gender roles. It was found that boys were expected to be “loud”, “openly challenge authority”, “ambitious” and “assertive” while girls were expected to be “emotional”, “talkative”, “less ambitious” and “obedient”.

These assumptions acted as benchmarks to what were deemed as “appropriate” and inappropriate” behavior. Furthermore, girls in particular were constantly reminded to stay within the “line” which in common words is “*ijjat*”, because it was viewed that girls were more likely to bring shame to the family. If girls were being too friendly, particularly with the boys, it seemed that teachers’ would often raise questions to their character. While, the teachers in all three schools constantly referred to media as being the primary reason for girls forgetting how they ought to be.

All students were well aware of the gender based labels. Girls took it more personally as they felt the pressure to prove themselves as worthy. They had internalized the fact that their teachers’ in the name of ‘protecting and safeguarding’ their “*ijjat*” to some degree were controlling the lives of the girl students. Boys on the other hand were nonchalant about these labels as they felt that the teachers’ had conservative views of how boys and girls should behave.

Labels Based on Discipline

The second category of labels was based how well the students behaved. This was measured by the level of discipline which in turn was equated to ability and smartness. By discipline the study refers to as the extent to which the students conformed to the school rules and fulfilled expectations of the teachers. It was found that the same group of students that were “caught” for behavior infractions and were punished severely in all three schools. At Saraswoti Higher Secondary School (S2) and Star English Secondary (S3), corporal punishment was used while at Sunflower School (S3), the children were constantly reminded of what was expected out of them and they were monitored closely.

The students at Star English Secondary School (S3) felt that the teachers’ did not respect them, some questioned themselves but most of them seemed to have come to terms with what their teachers’ thought of them. They believed that these opinions did not necessarily reflect the students and for them their friends’ opinions mattered much more. Most of them had internalized the fact that their teachers’ were simply frustrated with their lives and so the children were simply a medium for them to express their frustrations in life.

In Saraswoti Higher Secondary School (S2), the students felt that they were insignificant and in doing so seemed to have developed a sense of apathy towards their situation. This was manifested in the form of resentment towards the teachers for not taking time to try and understand them. The students felt that if they could not invest time and effort in them, the teachers’ opinions did not matter. The students felt that they did not have a future, given their social background and so they thought that the opinions of the teachers’ really did not matter (for they already knew of this).

At Sunflower School, the students were well aware of the labels that teachers placed on them however the students had made it a point to detach themselves from these labels. This was because they felt that the teachers should not be given such power to help them control their lives. This has partly to do with the cultural capital (Waquant, 2004) that the students had and therefore had a higher bargaining power compared to the participants from the other two schools. Furthermore, the students here openly challenged their teachers and their opinions.

Labels Based on Intelligence and Family Background

Another basis on which the labels were formed on was based on ‘intelligence’. Teachers across all three schools claimed that they could predict instantly whether they were “intelligent” or “dumb”. Subsequently, when the students who were deemed as “intelligent” were encouraged to ask questions while those who were perceived as “dumb” were reprimanded for asking questions. The students on the other hand even though they said that their teachers’ opinions did not matter, their work seemed to be affected to some extent.

Similarly, teachers talked about the importance of the family background in shaping the “intelligence” of the students. Teachers strongly believed that children cannot be changed especially when they belonged to uneducated families. While teachers in Sunflower School argued that the educated parents had made their children too sensitive to an extent that it made teaching difficult.

In my study, unlike what studies have shown, ethnicity did not seem to be a factor in the process of forming labels and students themselves did not seem to associate themselves or feel that their ethnicity contributed anything to their identities.

Final Reflection

The study brought out the complexities involved in the labelling process and how it affects the teacher-student relationship. The literature indicates that negative labelling often leads to students falling behind in the system or having a low self-esteem about themselves (Mulford, 2008). There were participants who had low self-esteem but did not attribute it as being a result of their teachers' opinions. The rest of them seemed to see themselves in a neutral manner. Furthermore, even the ones who were not seen as having the potential seemed to consistently work towards their academics. This is probably because Nepali children grow up in an environment where parents constantly reinforce the fact that they need to keep up with their academics. This is one of the cultural context Aluja-Fabrigat (1998) talks which make the reaction of students to the labels different from that of the literature. The students in contrast to the literature had a strong social support (most of them) especially in the classroom; they were close with their friends and so did not really feel isolated.

Students were highly disengaged in the learning process and this was evident through the observation and interviews. All the student participants one time or the other expressed how detached they were with the learning process. This reaction was partly caused by the labels attached to them.

The teachers' labelled students based on their gender, behavior, perceived intelligence and their family backgrounds. The study reflected the prevalent orthodox values associated with gender roles and how gender is still an evident factor on the basis of which active discrimination takes place. In doing so, the students were well aware of these labels and most of them seemed to be resentful towards their teachers' for jumping to conclusions without actually taking out time to get to know them. The

labels unlike the literature were fluid, teachers have multiple labels for students based on the different criteria.

The other important aspect that the research brought out was that students had agency. One of the primary reasons why they were able to “fend off” these labels was because the friends circle was extremely tight and the peer group often shared similar experiences which acted as evidences that allowed students not to take the labels personally.

This study is simply a foot in the door of the tremendous scope that is still left to be uncovered in terms of the relationship between teachers and students and the subsequent impact it has on students. Moreover, the study has unleashed the complexity of how various factors actively play a role in achieving an impact. However, this study does not fully encompass the effects and the impact of labelling. It is necessary to conduct longitude studies to find out the real effects on students (how they perform in class as well as in their work). It is also necessary for studies that focus on the perspective of the teachers be conducted to get a more holistic understanding of the relationship dynamics between teachers and students.

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APPENDIX

Guiding or Probing Questions for Teachers

These questions are just a general guideline to function under, questions have been improvised according to the situation.

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. Do you enjoy teaching?
3. What do you like about teaching?
4. What are your interests? Hobbies?
5. What is your philosophy in teaching?
6. Can you tell based on your experience what kind of students do well and kind of students do not do well?
7. What kind of students in your opinion do well in school?
8. What kind of students do not do well?
9. Why do you think certain students fail in class?
10. Do you think that ethnicity has anything to do with class achievement?
11. How do you deal with student misbehavior?

Guiding or Probing Questions for Students

These questions are simply a general guideline to function under, questions have been improvised according to the situation.

1. Do you like coming to school?
2. What is your biggest dream?
3. How close are you with your friends?
4. Do you like studying?
5. How do you cope with failure?
6. Do you think grades is everything?
7. What do you like most about your school?
8. What do you hate about school?
9. What are the characteristics of an ideal teacher for you?
10. Do you think teachers are judgmental about you and your friends?
11. Do you agree to everything your teacher believe in?
12. If you were teachers what would you do differently?
13. Do you feel your gender makes a difference in how you are perceived as ?
14. How do you see yourself as?
15. What do others think of you? Do you think that what others think of you influences how you see yourself?
16. What is your biggest fear regarding school and studies?
17. Do you think your teachers understand you?
18. If you had to choose between friends and family who would you choose?
19. If you could tell your teachers' how you felt, what would you tell them?
20. When you do something wrong, what kind of punishments do you receive?
21. What are your opinions about these punishment measures?

Specific Guiding or Probing Question for Gender Labels

1. Why do you think teachers have such dichotomous gender role perceptions?
2. Do you question yourself for being a girl?
3. How do you deal with such opinions?
4. Why do you not care? Can you please illustrate an event to show this?
5. Have you talked about this to others?
6. What response have you gotten?
7. What do you think of your teachers comparing students to celebrities?
8. Does this affect you?
9. What does ijrat mean to you?
10. Why do you think it is important to protect the 'ijrat' of a family?
11. Why girls are held responsible for shaming the family?
12. How do your teachers perceive you?
13. Are you aware of what they think of you?
14. Does this affect you?

Specific Guiding or Probing Question for Behavior Labels

1. What does discipline mean to you?
2. Do you think if it can be achieved?
3. Why is there such a strict enforcement of dress code?
4. Why do you want to defy the dress code?
5. How do you feel when you are punished?
6. Would you do things differently if you were teachers?
7. What would you do differently?
8. What do you think of your teachers especially when they administer punishments?
9. Have you ever tried to stop your teacher from punishing you?
10. Have you ever been wrongfully accused of an infraction that you have not committed?
11. Why is so much of effort put into trying to control you?
12. How do your teachers perceive your behavior?
13. Are you aware of what they think of you?
14. Does this affect you?
15. If you could say anything to your teacher, what would you tell them?

**Specific Guiding or Probing Question for Labels Based on Perceived
Intelligence**

1. Do you think you are intelligent?
2. What does your teacher think of your ability?
3. Do you think your ethnicity influences the way you are perceived?
4. Do you tell your parents when you become upset with school?
5. What according to you makes an intelligent person?
6. Please illustrate an incident where your teacher had undermined you but you proved them wrong?
7. Please illustrate an incident where what your teacher thought came to be true?
8. How close of a relationship do you have with your teachers?