The Rich And Poor Inequality In Mumbai

Isobel Nga
Individual Project

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Introduction
This individual project looks into the income gap and living conditions of the rich and the poor in Mumbai, India. The analysis is drawn from statistics, documentaries and research that is focused on poverty as well as the richest in India in the last 10 years. This paper will begin with the background and motivation for this topic followed by the research questions addressed. Next, the paper will discuss the findings and arguments. Alas, ending off by summarizing the conclusions and suggesting areas for future research.

Background and Motivation
More than half of Mumbai’s population now lives in its slums, according to latest statistics from the World Bank (Infochange India, 2006). Ironically, despite Mumbai’s general prosperity, about 54 percent of its citizens (an estimated 6.2 million out of the total 11.5 million) live in some 2,000 slums cramped in about eight percent of the city’s land area (The World Bank, 2006). The urban poor in developing countries face enormous challenges in their daily lives (Baker, 2005). In a video by Gapminder, Professor Hans Rosling mentioned 3 main factors to look at when assessing the poor. They are, access to water, electricity and education. These problems of access may be linked to the failures of the economy, lack of equity in provision of services and poor or unaffordable transport links to enable mobility (Baker, 2005). Social institutions are lacking proper infrastructure to support the inadequate systems that are for the people.

Mumbai is a city of contrasts with Dharvari sitting just a few miles from the southern area which is home to some of the country’s wealthiest people - including Bollywood film stars and international businessmen (Cooper, 2014). The country’s financial capital Mumbai with 2,700 multi-millionaires, is among the top 25 cities globally for multi-millionaires (Firstpost, 2014). Though India enjoys a decent 8th position globally, Mumbai is the only Indian city in the top 30 cities in the world for multi-millionaires (Firstpost, 2014). In fact, the richest man in India, who is also the fourth richest man in the world, lives in Mumbai and has a 27 storey building worth £630m. Ambani has received calls from the Indian prime minister for business leaders to be “role models of moderation” (Roberts, 2010). However, that did not stop him from continuing with his plans on his building even though surrounding his home are clearly slums and people living in poverty.

The goal of this paper is to better understand the income gap in Mumbai by looking at the realities of the poor and find out what is needed to break the vicious cycle of poverty. By identifying the problems in the social system in India and lack of infrastructure, this paper will link social theories and concepts to the consequences of various policies and culture in India that might attribute to the widening gap in income.

Research Question
In this paper, the main focus of the project would be to first describe the poor living conditions of Mumbai and their everyday struggles followed by the luxuries of the rich and what they have been doing to help the people in their country as well as who is blaming or relying on the rich to play a part in alleviating poverty in India, if any.

This would then bring us to the research question for this paper which is: To what extent does the rich in Mumbai have a responsibility to help the poor in their country?
Findings and Arguments

The government and politicians in India are the first to be held responsible when their country is experiencing social problems and high levels of poverty. In the earlier developing years of India's economy, greater drive was placed on agriculture than industrialization (Ganguly and Mukherji, 2011). A major problem in India was its high poverty levels. Policies that focus towards agricultural development has led to the positive impact on India's food security and alleviate poverty in 1965-1970. However, alleviating poverty met limited success and autocratic politics of Ghandi failed in solving social problems as the policies were also not favorable to foreign trade and investments (Ganguly and Mukherji, 2011). Thus, after 1970, when India saw that the world economy such as other Asia countries were benefitting from industrial deregulation, India began to realize that the world economy can benefit poor developing countries. With the opening up of markets and international businesses, the millionaires and billionaires in India grab such opportunities of expansion and trade which attributed much to their wealth.

The wealthy in India are increasing and this is apparent through the area of housing in Mumbai. South Asia is a land of sharp contrast and mind boggling disparities (Ghani, 2010). One recent report from the slums of Mumbai and Pune, India, speaks plainly to how the lack of basic infrastructure, in this case, safe drinking water, has devastating consequences on the physical well-being of women (Sachs, 2004). The challenges involved in providing basic services, particularly adequate housing and related infrastructure, are enormous. Sanitation especially poses daunting challenges since more than half of the city's population of 13 million, that is, 6.3 million people, live in some 2,000 densely populated slum settlements (The World Bank, 2006). On the other hand, we see that 10-15% of the people in Mumbai stay in apartment and houses (Infochange India, 2006) and the centrepiece for the middle class to the wealthy is Mukesh Ambani’s luxury home, Antilia. The polarities in housing conditions gives attention to the foundations of the social system in India. Are the political parties or organizations doing anything to solve inherent problems? Is the Indian culture promoting social immobility and preventing the poor from improving their lives?

In Fernandes (2006)'s article, he mentions that with the rise in middle class, reveals another key problem whereby India has a 'growing amnesia' towards poverty and poor. This 'growing amnesia' refers to political discursive process in which specific marginalised social groups are rendered invisible and forgotten within the dominant national political culture (Fernandes, 2006). Labour in India's economy also shows how organized and unorganized sectors is also a division across caste and gender (Harris-White & Gooptu, 2001). The inequality in the caste system has been a longstanding social problem. Fernandes (2006) states that India is looking at cleansing the urban city of any sign of the poor or poverty. In fact, Ganguly and Mukherji (2011) showed how India organize themselves effectively in order to oppose trade liberalization and stall the empowerment of the poor and lower-caste groups. Mumbai suggests that both state practices and exclusionary definitions of community and citizenship produce visions of urban development that exclude poor and working-class communities (Fernandes, 2006). Why is India not making efforts in solving these social problems but trying to 'forget' and disregard the poor and lower caste?

The conflict theory emphasizes the social, political and material inequality of a social group. Marxism posited that capitalism would bring about tensions between the ruling class and the proletariats,
inevitably leading to its own destruction. The collective conscience is determined by the masses and in Mumbai, the masses are living in poverty. Durkheim’s social conflict was crime and in a city with high poverty rates, crime is apparent. Social problems are rampant and it is key to find out the roots of these problems so as to find solutions to address them holistically. One such problem that segregates the population is the caste system with the Brahmins at the top and the Dalits or the untouchables at the bottom. Labour is the key to income, with discrimination in employment and positions in the jobs and education spheres, the system is a major hindrance to mobility for the poor.

The key to ending poverty is to create a global network of connections to the very centres of world power and wealth back again (Sachs, 2004). One such project undertaken is the Slum Sanitation Program (SSP)—a component of the World Bank-financed Mumbai Sewage Disposal Project approved in 1995 and implemented by the Municipal Corporation of Brihan Mumbai (MCBM)—is a demand-responsive participatory approach to providing quality sanitation services. The SSP supported a new strategy in urban community sanitation that provided incentives to multiple stakeholders to work together to deliver reliable community sanitation in a flexible manner (The World Bank, 2006). Policies are vital in instituting change in the society. In the areas of proper access to water, electricity and education, it is key that policies and organizations aid in the funding of such projects to provide adequate infrastructure to improve the slum areas. There has been slight improvements to the slum areas and many people in the poor category are moving up to the middle class. However, in a study done by Professor Hans Rosling, he mentions the fragility of the middle class where an unexpected disaster or event can allow them to fall back into poverty. One such example would be unexpected healthcare costs. Despite growing improvements, politicians and organizations should be aware of other factors that contribute to the poor remaining poor.

In this light, these questions spur further study and research into the poor in Mumbai. Finding out the realities and everyday problems of the families in the slum areas can help us identify and assess which problems are more urgent and need to be addressed.

**Methodology**
Ethnography and qualitative methods will be used as the main methods in this research to understand the problems faced by the poor. Weber believed that the subject matter of sociology differ from natural sciences, hence, its research techniques should also differ (Mclyntyre, 2011). For a qualitative approach, a semi-structured interview will be used for the interviews as it allows for more flexibility and some of the questions will be able to be different from person to person. The tone of the interview will also be kept as informal so as to encourage participants to share their thoughts and private feelings in a confidential setting. Ethnographic studies will be conducted through participant observation in the poor areas of Mumbai.

The expected outcomes at the end of the project would be

(a) An overview on the everyday problems and issues in the poor people of Mumbai
(b) An analysis on the initiatives and projects undertaken by the government, organizations and the wealthy to aid the poor
A derivable conclusion in the effectiveness of these initiatives and projects and who the poor expect the aid to come from.

Conclusion

We see that the rich is flaunting their wealth while just outside their window, their neighbours are living in mud houses and sleeping on cardboard boxes. The issue of humanity is in question as even though they are not obliged to help the poor, the wealthy are however, in the position to extend aid through charities or funds to alleviate poverty in Mumbai when the government or social system has failed to do so. This is especially so when the super rich is building extravagant buildings and spending on ridiculous unnecessary rich people toys such as 3 helicopter pads on the rooftop of Antillia. The disparities between the rich and the poor becomes incredibly obvious which also proves the incapability of the Indian government to solve social problems. While this project seeks to identify the thoughts and feelings of the people living in slums, ethnographic studies will be able to show to what extent the rich has been doing to participate in the solving of these social issues and whether they should shoulder a part of the responsibility to improve slum conditions. Even though the rich do not owe their success to the people of India, they should carry some empathy for the poor instead of emphasizing on the widening income inequalities in India which may spark a revolution, as Marx would predict. Therefore for future research, it is a salient point to take into account the thoughts of the rich as well. To encapsulate a more holistic perspective on the responsibilities for the poor in India, qualitative interviews should be done to politicians, organizations and the wealthy.
Cooper. R. (2014). Slumdog Millionaire district where doctors and lawyers live side-by-side with the poor: Squalid area of Mumbai no one wants to leave... because of the community spirit. Daily mail UK


Roberts, L. 14 Oct 2010. India’s richest man Mukesh Ambani moves into £630m home. The Telegraph.
