

Country Girls: Gender, Caste, and Mobility in Rural India

Dissertation

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Abstract

Since the late 1990s, India has asserted its modernity through a “new middle class” that promises inclusion to all worthy citizens. Yet India’s claims to modernity are consistently challenged by trenchant gender, caste, and class inequalities. The figure of the poor, uneducated rural woman marks the limits of Indian modernity. As such, rural young women and their families have become key targets of development programs. This dissertation looks at how families and young women in rural India are responding to new pressures to achieve social mobility and represent the nation. Using ethnographic data from ten months of fieldwork in the Guntur region of south India, I argue that gender, class, and caste are reproduced in distinctive ways, despite the vastness of change associated with modernization in India. I distinguish the current re-articulation of gender, class, and caste inequalities from the formations of the past on the basis of three characteristics: First, though women are becoming more educated, I find that education alone is insufficient to address social inequalities and may even increase disparities. Second, I demonstrate how the transnational migration of elites has transformed social life in Guntur. Lastly, I find that educational privatization has produced a highly stratified educational system that almost perfectly reproduces the class system. My analysis clarifies whether and how rural young women, who are often perceived as the most disadvantaged fraction of Indian society, are able to achieve social mobility.

Dedication

Dedicated to my parents, who encouraged my curiosity and gave me a sense of justice.

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This dissertation is a labor of love. My own love, of course, for India and for the people I came to know during my fieldwork. But the labor of the dissertation was made both deeper and lighter by the love of friends and family. Though I cannot name everyone who I would like to thank in the space given here, the following is a start.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Family, Hegemony, and Social Change in India

In 2011, when I began to conceptualize this dissertation about social change in India, I went to my hometown of Guntur, Andhra Pradesh to collect some preliminary information. I wanted to focus on childrearing because Andhra Pradesh had undergone a rapid transition in the total fertility rate, from 4.4 children per woman in 1978 to 1.7 in 2005 (Ramachandran and Ramesh 2005; National Family Health Survey-3, 2005-2006). The change in fertility was not only notable for its speed, it was also remarkable because there was very little variation in fertility rates across social groups, and because this change had occurred in the absence of significant institutional changes that predict fertility decline¹(James and Subramanian 2005). A number of demographic works suggest that the change in fertility rate is due to a normative shift in conceptualizations of the family (Säävälä 2001; Ramachandran and Ramesh 2005; James and Subramanian 2005; Guilmoto 2005; Dommaraju and Agadjanian 2009). In her insightful ethnographic study of fertility decline in rural Andhra Pradesh, Minna Säävälä (2001) argues that, rich or poor, rural women in the state are having fewer children because they want to provide a better life for their children. Because her research focuses on fertility, it was beyond the scope of Säävälä's study to investigate whether and how parents were trying to realize

¹ Guilmoto (2005) reports the highest variation in fertility rates as approximately .2 children per woman. General predictors associated with fertility decline are women's education and labor force participation, health care access, industrialization and other indicators associated with social and economic modernization.

² Marital conventions dictate that women should marry men who are at least as

this better life. However, it was clear from these studies, and from my own observations, that significant material and cultural shifts were taking place in Andhra.

In order to understand the social changes taking place in Andhra Pradesh, I wanted to talk with parents about how they were raising their children and the challenges they faced in doing so. I met Laxmi in July of 2011 at my aunt's house in Guntur city. As a *chākali*, a member of the washerfolk *jati*, Laxmi's occupation was somewhat determined by her birth. Though some members of the *chākali jati* are employed as petty bureaucrats or clerks in the government bureaucracy, those who were under-educated like Laxmi work as manual laborers and are usually channeled into the same type of work as their parents. Six days a week for eight to ten hours a day, Laxmi laboriously hand-washed laundry for middle-class Guntur households.

Laxmi did not want her three daughters to do what she called "hard work in the hot sun" and she and her husband had worked and strategized to educate their daughters. In Andhra Pradesh, a state where only half of adult women are literate (National Family Health Survey 2005-2006, NFHS-3), two of Laxmi's daughters had finished high school and her youngest daughter Anila had earned a bachelor's degree in Commerce. Yet Anila was also washing clothes so she could save enough money to pay the bribe required to get a clerking post in the local government bureaucracy. Unlike Laxmi's other daughters, Anila could not get married because her dowry would be very high². Laxmi explained

² Marital conventions dictate that women should marry men who are at least as educated as they are, with a preference that men hold a more prestigious and lucrative degree than their potential partner. Laxmi estimated that the dowry for a suitable match for Anila would be Rs. 250,000, or \$5,555 USD. Laxmi reported that she earned between Rs. 3,000- 3,500 (\$66.66-\$77.77 USD) per month, which she

that Anila needed her clerking job to earn enough money to dower herself, since neither Laxmi or her husband could earn enough to do so.

A few days later, I was in the village of Gutlapalli talking with a small group of disadvantaged caste women about their children's educations. I was surprised to hear a story very like Laxmi's and Anila's predicament, about a girl in the village who had finished her bachelor's degree and could not find a job or get married. Though there was unanimous agreement that children now needed to go to school, a number of women explained that the family could not make enough money to survive unless one of their children occasionally worked. At the same time, some women were skeptical about whether even education was enough to move out of manual labor. They recounted examples of several young men from the village who had finished college and were "somehow getting by" (*etta gotta brathiki*) as they looked for work in Hyderabad or Guntur. For educated women, the group explained, the case was even worse since it was *verboten* for unmarried women to live by themselves in a city. Not only would she be unable to work, a woman with a college degree might also be unable to get married since many educated young men left the village and since dowry would be very high for an equally educated groom.

The narratives I encountered in India reminded me of Annette Lareau's (2003) scholarship on the cultural logics of childrearing in middle-class and working-class white and African American families in the United States. In *Unequal Childhoods*, Lareau uses

considered slightly low since she had some health conditions that prevented her from working more. Laxmi estimated that if she had been in better health, she could have earned another Rs. 1,500 (\$33.33 USD) per month by working for two additional households.

Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and habitus to show how social inequality is reproduced through family socialization. She finds that working-class parents believe in the importance of educating their children and want them to go to college, just like the working-class and poor families I spoke with in India. Lareau argues that working-class parents confer forms of cultural capital to their children that are detrimental in institutional contexts. Despite their best efforts, working-class parents are unable to help their children overcome their disadvantaged backgrounds.

My research similarly highlights the impact of social class on intergenerational processes. But it also shows how other dimensions of inequality such as caste and gender influence the intergenerational transmission of cultural capital. Though Andhra Pradesh is a significantly different structural and cultural context than the communities in the US mid-west and northeast where Lareau conducts her research, it is this very distinctness that can help to develop sociological theory about the relationship between family socialization and broader processes of inequality.

This dissertation elaborates on how social power³ organizes people's chances for intergenerational mobility. I do so by exploring how families and institutions in the state of Andhra Pradesh are socializing rural young women. The majority of scholarship on social change in India has focused on urban and transnational groups, but rural populations are also affected by the cultural and structural changes of the last thirty years.

³ Bourdieu defines four "fundamental" social powers, or capitals: economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital, which are the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate (Bourdieu 1989, 17).

My analysis clarifies whether and how rural young women, who are often perceived as the most disadvantaged fraction of Indian society, are able to achieve social mobility. By comparing families from advantaged and disadvantaged castes, I am able to analyze how gender, caste, and class share structures and meanings and are mutually dependent. I show how these structures and meanings are conjoined in people's everyday practices, and how people negotiate with and struggle to transform them. In doing so, I seek to develop an understanding social structure that treats structure not as a deterministic, pre-discursive realm, but as emerging both from historical processes and through people's everyday practices.

My research focuses on the relationship between advantaged castes, especially the Kammas who are the dominant caste in coastal Andhra Pradesh, and disadvantaged castes with special attention to Dalits, formerly called the "untouchable" castes. These two groups are conjoined in class and caste struggle, Kammas as landowners, and Dalits as laborers. The notion of a dominant caste was first proposed in 1950s by M.N. Srinivas at the village level, however I argue that this caste now exerts dominance through transnational processes. According to Srinivas (1959, 2), "For a caste to be dominant, it should own a sizable amount of the arable land locally available, have strength of numbers and occupy a high place in the local hierarchy." Kammas form only 5 percent of the population of Andhra Pradesh, but more than 20 percent in the Krishna delta where they own 80 percent of the agricultural land (Srinivasulu 2002). Despite their relatively small numbers, Kammas occupy key positions in the politics and economy of Andhra Pradesh. However, their hegemony is challenged by the growing assertion of Dalits, who

have gained some political power and access to education. I investigate how caste affects family socialization processes and intergenerational inequality.

I find that gender, class, and caste are reproduced in distinctive ways, despite the vastness of change associated with globalization and liberalization. I distinguish the current re-articulation of gender, class, and caste inequalities from the formations of the past on the basis of three characteristics: I argue that rural and disadvantaged caste young women have become the targets of modernization efforts. Women's education is often assumed to be a panacea for a variety of social and economic problems, but I find evidence that education alone is insufficient to address social inequalities and may even increase disparities. Second, I demonstrate how the transnational migration of elites has transformed social life in Guntur. Class, caste, and gender structures now have an important transnational dimension, which is disseminated through transnational institutions such as extended families and civil society organizations. Lastly, I find that educational privatization is increasing socioeconomic inequalities in new ways. Private schools vary tremendously in quality, but the poor reputation of public schools, coupled with an emphasis on English language education, has encouraged parents to send their children to private schools rather than public schools. This has produced a highly stratified educational system that almost perfectly reproduces the class system. I show how this has especially disastrous consequences for rural Dalit and Muslim children.

In this chapter, I begin with a discussion of Lareau's analysis and argue that the privileging of social class in *Unequal Childhoods* obscures how gender, race, and class are mutually influential. In order to understand social inequality, scholars must study the

processes through which these different social phenomena affect each other. I discuss the issues raised by *Unequal Childhoods* in light of research on gender, caste, and class in India. In the Indian context, caste is ideologically and structurally similar to race. Like race, it is expressed through biological, embodied idioms. The maintenance of caste difference and hierarchy relies on taboos against intermarriage. Though overt taboos against interracial relationships are considered archaic in the contemporary US, race still influences marital attitudes and practices. Only 2.9 percent of all marriages in the US in 2002 were interracial (US Bureau of the Census 2003, cited in Joyner and Kao 2005), nearly one-third of US whites reject interracial relationships, and whites are less willing to marry and bear children interracially than to date interracially (Herman and Campbell 2012). There is residential segregation by caste, just as there is by race. Caste discrimination shapes education and employment outcomes and political affiliation (Yadav 1999; Sheth 1999; Desai and Kulkarni 2008; Sridharan 2011). This is not to say that caste and race are sociologically identical. The historical processes through which race was formed in the US is different than the formation of caste in India. Therefore the cultural and structural features of caste in India and race in the US are distinct. The parallels between them do suggest, however, that in studying processes of intergenerational inequality, caste and gender processes must be considered in conjunction with those of class.

Next, I review the research on social change and inequality in India. Scholarship on post-liberalization India has argued that the “new middle class” is a hegemonic class. By presenting itself as modern, against caste, for women’s empowerment, and

meritocratic, the new middle class is thought to perpetuate elite dominance by eliciting the consent of subordinated groups. Nearly all of these studies have focused on transnational and urban subjects, and therefore cannot assess whether and how the majority of Indians, who live in smaller towns and villages, accept the legitimacy of these narratives. My research addresses the question of elite hegemony through the study of disadvantaged class rural families. This dissertation highlights how the high level of social differentiation in India, alternative forms of political and social organization among disadvantaged groups, and the limited regulatory power of state institutions may pose challenges to elite hegemonic projects.

In the last section of this chapter, I describe my research setting and outline my argument through a discussion of the remaining dissertation chapters. In chapter two, I review the historical processes through which caste, class, and gender are co-constituted in India. I discuss their contemporary forms in the research sites of Guntur and its rural hinterlands with special attention to the regionally dominant Kamma caste and Dalit resistance. In chapter three, I analyze the socialization of advantaged caste young women from rural backgrounds using data from a caste-based educational hostel in Guntur city. In chapter four, I look at how families negotiate institutional failure and geographic immobility through a study of disadvantaged caste families in rural Andhra Pradesh. In the final chapter, I explain my conclusions, describe directions of future work, and make some suggestions for addressing social inequality in India.

Taking Lareau and Bourdieu to India

Lareau (2003) offers a counterpoint to mainstream narratives in the US that present the life accomplishments of a person as the result of her or his individual qualities. Instead, Lareau proposes that parents have a definitive role in shaping children's linguistic and cognitive abilities and their sense of authority, which have incremental but cumulatively significant effects on children's educational and career outcomes. She advances her argument through a careful study of how white and African American middle-class and working-class parents interact with their children, organize their children's leisure time, and intervene in social institutions such as schools on children's behalf.

Lareau (2003, Appendix B) explains that her analysis is informed by Bourdieu's understanding of social class, and in particular his concepts of cultural capital and habitus. Like Bourdieu (1977; 1984), she goes beyond simple human capital approaches to class inequality by demonstrating the close links between class, family socialization, and the acquisition of cultural capital. Lareau (2003) argues that class-based differences in parenting practices produce forms of cultural capital among middle-class children that are in alignment with central institutions such as schools. Working-class children also gain skills, but their skills are not easily transferable to school settings. Middle-class children therefore have enhanced abilities to interact with institutions and gain social and economic benefits through them, whereas working-class and poor children do not have a similar ability to garner institutional benefits. She argues that race does not have a significant influence on parenting, and emphasizes the importance of social class over race.

By insisting that class trumps race in the intergenerational transmission of cultural capital, Lareau uses an additive approach to inequality. Critical approaches to inequality suggest two principal difficulties in this approach. First, an additive approach to social inequality obscures how different forms of inequality affect each other. Scholars of intersectionality have argued that class, race, and gender are not static categories, but are “relational concepts whose construction involves both representational and social structural processes in which power is a constitutive element (Nakano Glenn 1999, 9).” Second, it only analyzes the effects of class, gender, and race for disadvantaged groups, and does not account for how dominant groups benefit from their advantaged positions.

Though she argues throughout *Unequal Childhoods* that social class is more important than race in shaping parents’ practices, Lareau’s sensitive reporting of her data hints at the intersectional processes at work in the lives of her subjects. In both of the middle class African American families she studies, mothers engage in the intensive attention that is associated with middle-class logics of childrearing. However the issues African American mothers monitor and their interventions in these issues are often determined by racial inequality. Alexander Caldwell’s mother makes sure that her son is not the “only black kid” in an activity or classroom. When issues of racial discrimination do arise, Alexander’s mother tries to minimize and distract her son, and instructs him that “he is never to use discrimination as an excuse for not doing his best (Lareau 2003, 120).” Lareau (2003) notes that Stacey Marshall’s mother, like other African American parents in her study, was “alert to the possibility that whites might have low expectations

for [her] children” (181) and in another incident, attempts to deal with a bus driver who makes the African American students sit in the back of the bus. These incidents reveal that schools are racialized institutions (Royster 2003; Nunn 2011), and not only classed as Lareau (2003) argues.

In India, schools are similarly biased against disadvantaged caste, and especially Dalit, students. Advantaged caste teachers are reported to have low expectations of Dalit students and consider them to be dull and uneducable (The Probe Team 1999, cited in Desai and Kulkarni 2008). In my own fieldwork, I witnessed a disadvantaged caste girl who was made to sweep the school and heard disadvantaged caste and/or class students referred to as “dullards.” These data demonstrate that an analysis of family socialization must take up the question of how educational institutions discriminate against students based on factors other than class.

Lareau (2003) recognizes the burden of African American mothers’ carework, but she views this as “more labor” (181), rather than as labor that is different in *kind*. Lareau’s (2003) data does suggest that middle-class African-American parents engage in evaluating and managing race in ways that white parents and working-class African American parents do not. Lareau describes how the middle-classes African American children are numerical minorities in their schools and in sports clubs. Because of this, “the potential for racial discrimination is always present, [though] isolating race as the key factor in a specific situation can be hard (Lareau 2003, 181).” Stacey Marshall’s and Alexander Caldwell’s mothers must constantly evaluate whether or not they should attribute incidents to racism, decide whether and how to intervene in these issues, and

decide how to address these incidents with their children. Both Ms. Caldwell and Ms. Marshall try to minimize racial incidents and use class logics to manage racial tensions. Ms. Marshall defines white parents who are racially tolerant in terms of the middle-class quality of being “cultured” (121) and attempts to ensure that her children socialize only with these “cultured” people. Both Ms. Caldwell and Ms. Marshall are cautious about confronting racial discrimination because it contradicts the middle class logic of meritocracy; both of them believe that racism can be overcome if their children achieve at a high level.

Lareau does not analyze how race influences parenting practices in her chapters on experiences of Tyrec Tyler and Harold McAllister, who are from working-class African American families. This may be because being middle-class is associated with whiteness (Bonilla-Silva 2004), so that middle-class African American parents have to deal with racial issues that are different than their working-class counterparts. These practices show how class logics affect race-aware parenting in problematic ways: the need to downplay issues of racism could lead to a retrenchment of “color-blind” racial politics as African American parents attempt to help their children integrate into white, middle class society. At the same time, the inability of working-class African American parents to intervene in schools may not only be due to class differences. It is likely that these families also faced issues of racism. In the case of Harold McAllister, his mother reports that some people in the adjacent white neighborhood turn off their house lights when African American children are making their trick-or-treating Halloween rounds. Ms. McAllister dismisses this as instances of individual parents “acting stupid,” yet it is

notable that she exposes her children to these incidents when compared with the protectionist behaviors of middle-class African American parents. An analysis of whether and how race and class processes influence each other in parenting practices could clarify the broader implications of these processes for how dominant groups protect their cultural and structural power.

I find that advantaged castes attempt to reproduce their cultural and structural power by perpetuating a discourse⁴ of “caste blindness” (Deshpande and John 2010). Caste blindness masks the historical advantages and contemporary forms of exclusion enacted by advantaged caste groups. Over the last three generations, advantaged castes were able to “fully encash their caste advantages...they no longer [need] to invoke caste explicitly, having acquired all the other resources that [guarantee] them the “legitimate” advantages of inherited wealth, expensive education and abundant connections among their own kind” (Deshpande and John 2010, 42). While caste distinctions are proscribed in the public sphere, advantaged groups simultaneously advance an understanding of caste as a “private” matter through the gendered institution of the family and through

⁴ I use discourse and narrative to refer to two related but distinct kinds of social meaning making. “Discourse” refers to a collective set of concepts and language used to talk about a given topic. These concepts and language create a system of shared meaning in a society. Since meaning informs conduct, all practices have a discursive element (Hall 1992, 291). Discourse therefore regulates “intelligible ways to talk, write, and conduct oneself ...[and] restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic (Hall 2001, 72). Multiple discourses on the same subject may exist, for example a socialist or neoliberal discourse about the state. Discourses are relatively institutionalized forms of meaning; they implicitly and explicitly shape policy, are enacted through practice, and are disseminated through various texts. Narrative refers to the way that individuals and social groups engage with discourses and apply them to define their experiences. These are somewhat novel configurations of meaning, since narratives are shaped in relation to a specific set of circumstances or a particular event.

civil society organizations. Caste identity regulates intermarriage, religion, philanthropy, food habits, and other aspects of “intimate” social life. This configuration of the hiddenness of caste in the public sphere and its reconstitution in the private sphere enables advantaged groups to hoard resources such as high-quality schooling, enact gender-based projects that subject young women to intensive forms of social control, and de-legitimate public redistribution efforts based on caste and class inequalities. Definitions of social life that divide the public and private sphere are therefore critical for the perpetuation of caste, class, and gender inequalities.

Disadvantaged caste families and younger people were much more willing to discuss caste than advantaged caste parents. This reflects caste-based contestations over the definitions of what is properly public and private, and by extension, caste-based assertions about the redistributive role of the state. Disadvantaged castes did not have the ability to remain anonymous because they experienced forms of exclusion that were undeniably based on caste. They also had to claim their caste identities to gain benefits from the state. Disadvantaged caste parents in India, regardless of their class positions, were quick to identify caste discrimination in schools.

Awareness of discrimination and individual strategies were not enough to overcome the structural processes that concentrated disadvantage through public schooling. A few better-off families dealt with discrimination by sending their children to private schools, but almost all of the disadvantaged caste parents I spoke with had sent their children to public school for at least some part of their educations. Yet only a couple of the disadvantaged caste and class parents felt that they had the social or cultural capital

to intervene in their children's schooling. Even though public education is accepted as a legitimate redistributive function of the state, in practice public education helped reproduce caste and class inequalities. Teachers were biased against disadvantaged caste and class students, disadvantaged caste parents had limited ability to interact with schools, and public schools were often poorly funded.

Younger people discussed caste both because some of them were more critical of caste inequality, and because they had not been socialized into the public silence about caste that was characteristic of advantaged castes. In the second and third chapters of this dissertation, I discuss how caste socialization for advantaged castes intensifies in young adulthood. Institutions such as the Kamma hostel and caste peers encourage college students to socialize solely with members of their same sub-caste, and this socialization impacts the political affiliation of advantaged caste groups. In addition to these individual and community-level attitudes towards discussing caste, the state has a decisive role in managing discourse about caste. The Indian census did not collect information on advantaged castes until 2011, and these data are not publicly available at the time of this writing.

The unmarked character of advantaged groups points to a second problem with Lareau's analysis. *Unequal Childhoods* does not examine the effects of race and gender for dominant groups. Lareau discusses how race functions for African Americans, but does not account for how white parents attend to racial issues. The only chapters in which she analyzes race are the ones in which she focuses on middle-class African American families. These analyses are separated from analyses of class and discussed in chapter

sub-sections. Again, we can see in her data, though not in her analysis, how race and gender affect white families. Both Billy Yanelli and Wendy Driver live in all-white neighborhoods, but their homes are not far away from African American neighborhoods and they attend integrated schools. Despite their geographical proximity to African American families, Billy and Wendy primarily socialize with white children, shop in stores where most of the clientele are white, attend white churches, and otherwise live in segregated worlds. There is no discussion of the parenting practices involved in maintaining such segregated lives for children. Though Lareau mentions that Billy Yanelli's father has an African American "best friend from childhood" that visits the Yanelli's several times a week, there is no mention of whether it has any effect on Billy's racial attitudes. Lareau also reports that Wendy Driver's mother has tried to raise her children to be open-minded about race, but offers no examples of how this might be done.

Lareau seems to be suggesting that though Billy's and Wendy's parents' racial attitudes are somewhat progressive, segregation is an inevitable fact of life for white families. The lack of critical engagement with the production of racial boundaries by whites is especially problematic in light of research that whites do not interpret their racial isolation and segregation from blacks as something racial. Instead, whites do not see any need to explain these things at all, or they have a tendency to try to explain segregation away (Bonilla Silva, Goar and Embrick 2006, 248). Racialized socialization processes facilitate a white culture of solidarity that has the effect of closing off opportunities to other groups (Royster 2003) and therefore influence social mobility.

Advantaged caste narratives about caste affinity similarly disavow discrimination based on caste but in practice families socialize primarily with members of the same sub-caste or in similarly advantaged sub-caste. The caste-based spatial segregation of villages is so deeply ingrained that it is not even questioned as an aspect of inequality by advantaged castes. One of my advantaged caste informants explained that people in the same caste have familiar *padhathilu*, or manners, and feel comfortable and natural with each other. In another instance, I witnessed a real estate agent refusing to rent an apartment to a Muslim family. She casually explained that “we don’t want to give the apartment to someone like that.” My inquiries about mixed-caste marriages were alternately met with uncomfortable giggling, cautionary tales about why such unions were doomed, and hushed whispers relaying mixed-caste marriages. These incidents show how practices of social and residential segregation are masked by narratives of naturalness and inevitability, and must be interrogated to understand processes of family socialization and intergenerational inequality. Bourdieu’s theorization of the habitus could be used to examine the sense of natural affinity that undergirds caste. The habitus reproduces social differences (or distinctions, in Bourdieu’s lexicon) through its enactment of the “tastes and distastes, sympathies and aversions, fantasies and phobias which, more than declared opinions, forge the unconscious unity of a class (Bourdieu 1984, 77).” The habitus can therefore be understood as a mechanism through which racial, and in India, caste distinctions are reproduced (Bonilla-Silva, Goar and Embrick 2006; Perry 2012).

While Lareau is attentive to racial nuances in the lives of African American and white children, she does not interrogate how race works for white children. The conclusion that class has more influence than race on parenting practices is almost inevitable since race is only interrogated in some of the cases whereas class is analyzed in all of them (Choo and Feree 2010). Lareau has a similar approach in her treatment of gender; she points out girls' differences from boys without analyzing masculinity and femininity. Lareau's data about Wendy Driver highlights the importance of an intersectional approach to gender, class, and race. Wendy may have an undiagnosed learning disability, and one of Wendy's teachers tells the researcher that if Wendy had been African American instead of white, she would have been in special education classes without the delays that Wendy was experiencing. The teacher adds that Wendy may have been allowed to advance to the fourth grade because she "is so cute and so sweet...she has a smile for everybody" (Lareau 2003; 212-213). These comments reflect how white girls may be evaluated as more competent and as better suited to educational environments than African American girls (Grant 1992; Morris 2007). Being white may actually be detrimental to Wendy since it prevented her from getting help with her learning problems. Lareau's (2003) implicitly additive model, which treats femininity and African American racial identity simply as disadvantages from "normative," i.e. masculine and white, experiences cannot explain Wendy's situation.

In chapters two and three, I show how Kamma hegemony is consolidated through the education of women. My analysis of the class and gender processes associated with the socialization of young Kamma women draws attention to the problematic ways that

class and gender inequalities are reproduced within caste, even as the purported mission of education is to “uplift” rural young women. At the same time, the constitution of caste as a “private” matter by advantaged castes allows the reproduction of caste inequalities between advantaged and disadvantaged castes.

Lareau (2003) describes *Unequal Childhoods* as “a reasonably straightforward, if partial, empirical application of Bourdieu’s theoretical model (270),” and indeed, *Unequal Childhoods* can be critiqued for the same limited analysis of gender and race that scholars have identified with Bourdieu’s work. *Unequal Childhoods* (2003) focuses on “‘moments’ of social and cultural reproduction” (277), but Lareau is sensitive to how the values assigned to various forms of cultural capital are somewhat arbitrary and tied to social power. Lareau (2003) notes that institutional standards are “ever-changing”, even from year to year (255) and critiques how working-class children’s social skills such as organizing their own time, spending time away from adults, and hanging out with adults in an unobtrusive fashion are not recognized or valued in the school environment (6). Yet Lareau’s (2003) orientation towards social reproduction treats structure as relatively static, where change can only be imposed from above rather than through contestation from below⁵.

Unequal Childhoods concludes with policy recommendations that the state institute redistribution programs such as child allowance and consolidate working-class

⁵ This is also a criticism of Bourdieu, see (Jenkins 1992; Alexander 1995), but Lois McNay 2001 and Diane Reay (2004) have pointed out that especially in his later works such as *The Weight of the World* (1999), Bourdieu used notions of habitus and field to analyze “individuals struggling to make the world a different place” (Reay 2004, 437).

and middle-class neighborhood resources. These recommendations are qualified by Lareau's doubts about "the existence of the political will to support this redistribution of wealth. Instead, Americans...are likely to remain preoccupied with more individual solutions (Lareau 2003, 252)." The family observations in *Unequal Childhoods* demonstrate how this individualism is learned in middle-class homes. As Lareau acknowledges (2003, 276), the analysis in *Unequal Childhoods* does not make an explicit connection between the attitudes and dispositions learned in the home and their consequences for political orientation. Including this analysis in her concluding chapter would help clarify how the emphasis on individuality and competitiveness in middle-class homes legitimates class inequalities and limit the scope of redistribution policies.

Both Lareau (2003) and Bourdieu (1977; 1984) privilege social class in their analysis of inequality, and in doing so misunderstand the relationship between class and other forms of social inequality such as gender and race (Moi 1991; McCall 1992; Cicourel 1993; Skeggs 1997; Lovell 2000; Reay 2004; Choo and Feree 2010). In all of his many works, Bourdieu makes no mention of how the habitus is influenced by race, despite his ethnographic work on the Kabyle in Algeria. He acknowledges race as a "secondary" principle organizing social life and conceptualizes race as somewhat independent from the class structure (Bourdieu 1985, 743; McCall 1992). He similarly conceptualizes gender as secondary to class (McCall 1992; Cicourel 1993; Bourdieu 2001), and his understanding of gender has been critiqued for prioritizing class over gender and for being overly-deterministic in conceptualizing gender (Moi 1991; McCall 1992, 2000; Skeggs 1997; Reay 2005). Scholars of inequality in India have demonstrated

that the cultural and material formations of class are constituted through the structures of caste and gender, and also shape these structures through a process of on-going mutual influence at the cultural and material levels (Fernandes 2006; Ray and Qayum 2009; Radhakrishnan 2011; Viswanath 2014). Thus social power is not located primarily in the economic sphere, but is realized through the interaction between multiple structures of inequality.

Issues of power are central in Bourdieu's (1984) conceptualization of both class and family as simultaneously objective and subjective phenomena, whose privileged forms are the result of struggle. Bourdieu argues that boundaries between classes are made through "classification struggles"; these are not only struggles to obtain scarce forms of cultural capital, but also to assert the legitimacy of one form or understanding of cultural capital over the other. Similarly, the definition of family as a private sphere of social life conceals the public juridical and political processes through which the private is constituted (Bourdieu 1996). Despite the attention to the everyday practices through which class is reproduced through family socialization, Lareau's approach treats class as categorical rather than processual and contested. This is not to argue against the material basis of class formation; Bourdieu's approach to class acknowledges the objective economic structure. He emphasizes that subjective interpretations of the material structure are the basis of class formation (Bourdieu 1984, 476) and that these subjective interpretations have political meaning. The analysis in *Unequal Childhoods* describes how privileges in the private sphere of the family are translated into advantages in public institutions such as schools, but it does not engage with the ways that the opposition

between the public and private is integral to the reproduction of social inequalities, for example by limiting the scope of redistribution policies. In doing so, *Unequal Childhoods* loses the critical potential of Bourdieu's theories to politicize understandings of class and family.

The important sociological contribution of *Unequal Childhoods* is its ability to show how class shapes the quotidian practices of family life, and how these practices transfer class-specific forms of cultural capital from parents to children. My dissertation builds on these insights to show how dominant forms of cultural capital are not only classed, but also incorporate caste and gender. I focus on the everyday practices through which cultural capitals are produced, transmitted, and hoarded. By engaging more fully with Bourdieu's critical approach to class and family, I show how childrearing practices are part of a larger "terrain of social and political struggle (Jeffery, Jeffery and Jeffery 2007, 8)". In the next section, I contextualize my research within the recent work on social change in India. I describe how my dissertation contributes to sociological understandings of class, caste, and gender in contemporary India.

India's New Middle Class: Cultural and Material Processes of Class Formation

This dissertation investigates parenting practices in rural Andhra Pradesh in order to understand processes of social change and social inequality. However it also speaks to broader literature about neoliberalism and the "new middle class" in India. The emergence of a new middle class is associated with sweeping social and economic changes in the country. For families, the promise of social mobility has encouraged investment in education, but neoliberal economic changes have undermined the

opportunities for educated young people to obtain stable, well-paid work (Xiang 2007). Older forms of social inequality persistently channel elite youth into more stable salaried work (Fernandes 2006; Radhakrishnan 2011). Despite this evidence, the combination of people's expanding educational attainment and the diffusion of discourses about mobility and social change in India continue to make the new middle class an important political and aspirational force.

The composition and role of the new middle class has been the focus of lively popular and academic debates. Popular imagery and consumer-oriented economic research in the post-1990 period was dominated by economists, demographers, business analysts and corporate media and was "largely congratulatory in tone" (Baviskar and Ray 2011, 9). The new middle class was represented as a progressive political force and a rapidly expanding, mythically rich consumer market⁶. Sociological and postcolonial works have taken a more critical stance towards the middle class, arguing that middle-class cultural dominance reproduces inequality (Deshpande 2003; Fernandes 2006; Bhatt, Murty, and Ramamurthy 2010). These scholars have drawn attention to how the new middle class, which by even the broadest estimates comprises only 26 percent of households (Sridharan 2011), gains social and political power over a significant portion of Indian households that have substantially lower incomes.

In liberal democratic states such as India, cultural projects help advantaged groups establish their worldview and interests as universal; these groups are granted moral

⁶ A 2007 McKinsey & Company report describes the Indian consumer market as "the bird of gold" ("The Bird of Gold: The Rise of India's Consumer Market," www.mckinsey.com).

legitimacy and political power by claiming to speak in the interests of all Indians. However, elite worldviews and interests are *opposed* to those of the masses. Thus, the success of the cultural projects of the elite depends on their ability mask the relations of exploitation and domination through which they gain their social, political, and economic advantages. This mystification of exploitation and dominance, and its transformation into legitimacy, is accomplished by the “new middle class.”

Instead of defining the middle class as a demographic category or individual identity, the middle class can be understood as political construct (Deshpande 2003; Fernandes 2006; Fernandes and Heller 2006; Bhatt, Murthy, and Ramamurthy 2010). Since the colonial period, the middle class in India has represented the nation. The middle class is therefore an idea, one that “came to be inhabited by those who saw their role as the shapers of national historical destiny and national modernity (Bhatt, Murthy, and Ramamurthy 2010, 128).” The old middle class led the anticolonial struggle; until the late 1980s, this class asserted its leadership through its bureaucratic and managerial control of the postcolonial developmental state. The “new middle class,” specifically the dominant fraction of this class, is now thought to exert its moral and political leadership over the state through its support for policies of economic liberalization, marketization, and consumption (Bhatt, Murty and Ramamurthy 2010, 129; see also Ray and Qayum 2009; Radhakrishnan 2011).

In both academic and popular narratives, the emergence of the new middle class is coupled with the advent of neoliberalism in India. The period between 1989-1992 is portrayed as a “truly ruptural moment in contemporary Indian history” (Menon and

Nigam 2007, 4), a national moment in which social, political, and economic transformations decisively divided the old India from the new (Bhatt, Murty, and Ramamurthy 2010). Thus neoliberalism itself, while materially and politically grounded, is simultaneously represented through a set of prescriptive and aspirational discourses that legitimate or critique these political economic arrangements (Mankekar 1999; Chopra 2003; Deshpande 2003; Bhatt, Murty, and Ramamurthy 2010).

The material and political changes associated with the 1989-1992 period include the opening up of the Indian economy to global capital; the diffusion of global, and especially US, media into India; the privatization of previously public goods; and the successful political activism of disadvantaged caste groups and women. These changes destabilized the material and cultural bases of power of the postcolonial middle class. For example, as disadvantaged caste groups gained power in the polity, they were able to institute redistribution policies that promoted educational opportunities for disadvantaged caste students and increased public sector employment quotas. The “democratic upsurge” (Yadav 1999) of these groups indicates the successful mobilization of caste- and class-consciousness into institutional channels; though caste and class activism were present even in the colonial era (Rao 2009; Viswanath 2014), electoral victories indicate greater democratization of the polity (Sheth 1999; Yadav 1999).

The mobilization of disadvantaged groups fractionalizes the middle class and threatens elite power, and it is here that the hegemonic function of the *new* middle class

becomes critical for understanding how challenges to elite domination are managed⁷. Hegemony is “a specific type of class domination that relies on eliciting consent from subordinate groups (more so than on coercion) through a ‘political-ethical’ project that is effective because it resonates ideologically with the ‘commonsense’ of the masses and because it is materially grounded (Gramsci 1972, cited in Fernandes and Heller 2006, n.3).” Scholars of inequality in India have argued that the new middle class is just such a political-ethical project (Deshpande 2003; Fernandes 2006; Fernandes and Heller 2006; Bhatt, Murty, and Ramamurthy 2010).

The new middle class is a class-in-practice, that is, a class defined by its politics and the everyday practices through which it reproduces its privileged position (Fernandes and Heller 2006). As an increasingly differentiated class, the elite fraction of the middle class specializes in the production and dissemination of the rules, aspirations, and exclusionary logics of the new middle class. This elite segment is largely composed of the old postcolonial middle class (Fernandes 2006) and includes the intelligentsia, who are “specialists in legitimation” (Gramsci 1972, cited in Deshpande 2003, 141). Politicians, high-level bureaucrats, media persons, and other intellectuals help produce, disseminate, and institutionalize forms of knowledge that support their elite worldview. The mass fraction of the new middle class has more caste, economic and regional diversity than the elite fraction, which tends to be advantaged caste, urban, and

⁷ Gramsci explicitly contrasts the material interests of a hegemonic class (or bloc) with dominant (capitalist) classes that act in accordance with their “narrowly corporate economic interest” (Gramsci 1972, cited in Fernandes and Heller 496). I do not explore the distinctions between middle-class and capitalists interests in my discussion since it is the coordination of these interests that enable the domination of disadvantaged castes and classes (Deshpande, 139).

transnational (Kapur 2010). This more common (in both senses of the word) mass fraction engages in the “exemplary consumption” of elite ideologies, thus investing them with moral legitimacy and increasing the numerical strength of this class (Deshpande 2003, 139; see also Mankekar 1999; Fernandes and Heller 2006; Sridharan 2011).

By broadening the definition of what it means to be middle class through neoliberal discourses that associate progress with individualism and merit, the elite fraction of the middle class is able to navigate its “paradoxical need to produce order and unity amongst its fractions, on the one hand, while preserving its dominance through the reproduction of hierarchy and exclusion, on the other (Fernandes and Heller 2006, 507).” The neoliberal emphasis on individual achievement and merit promise entry into an expansive and prosperous new middle class, but they mask the economic and social investments required to produce the markers of merit, such as academic achievement (Lareau 2003) or the acquisition of scarce credentials (Fernandes and Heller 2006).

The investments that enable academic achievement and the acquisition of credentials are typically made by the family and are therefore misrecognized as sort of natural or genetic inheritance, a point I discuss in greater depth in the next section. At the same time, neoliberal discourses of individualism and merit censure the use of communal identities such as caste and de-legitimate state redistribution policies. Disadvantaged caste beneficiaries of these policies are disparaged as lacking merit and as holding back the progress of the nation by reinforcing their caste identities (Fernandes and Heller 2006; Radhakrishnan 2011, 89-91). The neoliberal “commonsense” of the new middle class therefore is thought to bolster elite hegemony by transforming elites’ social,

cultural, and economic capitals into the symbolic capital of “merit” or individual “hard work.”

Scholars of social inequality in India have convincingly argued that the cultural projects of the elite are targeted towards legitimating their dominance. However, this work overstates the consent of dominated groups. Hegemony is accomplished through shaping the commonsense of the dominated, and this commonsense is located in both material and cultural processes. This suggests that hegemony is partially contingent on the shared cultural and material experiences of dominant and dominated groups. Some scholars have suggested that the lived experience of dominated groups, through recognition of their condition of subjugation, can lead to a critical consciousness (Scott 1985; Ray and Qayum 2009, chapter 6). Yet almost all of the ethnographic research on new middle class hegemony focuses on the material and cultural lives of urban and transnational groups.

The lack of research on whether and how dominated groups see themselves as part of the new middle class, and by extension as part of the nation, poses two problems in understanding social inequality in India. First, the focus on advantaged groups overlooks the cultural production of disadvantaged groups and therefore misunderstands how disadvantaged groups accommodate, circumvent, or challenge the hegemonic projects of the elite. Second, and related to this, studying hegemony through advantaged groups tends to recognize the agency of disadvantaged groups only in terms of collective resistance and structural transformation. This focus ignores the everyday forms of resistance that are enacted without confronting authority directly (Scott 1985) and the

ways in which marginalized people can make claims on the state, negotiate entitlements, and contest social hierarchies (Sharma 2006, 81).

In this dissertation, I focus on rural, disadvantaged class women who are now privileged targets of hegemonic new middle class projects. I investigate the everyday practices of rural, disadvantaged class families to move beyond an understanding of cultural hegemony "...merely as ideological mystification (Lears 1985, 571)." I approach hegemony as relational, and attempt to account for how hegemonic processes "require selective accommodation to the desires of subordinate groups...[and serve] the interests of ruling groups at the expense of subordinate ones (Lears, 1985, 571)."

I trace the ways that disadvantaged groups are recruited into hegemonic projects. Schools, churches, and civil society institutions partially reproduce discourses that encourage self-development and social mobility. However, families and individuals do not always interpret these discourses in terms of entering the new middle class. I describe how my subjects search for a variety of ways of belonging to the nation-state, and how these strategies can accommodate and challenge the neoliberal restructuring of the state. In the next section, I demonstrate how these forms of belonging are articulated through the family.

Gender, Family, and Nation

What emerges powerfully from recent ethnographies of the middle class in India is the centrality of gender in shaping people's everyday practice and in the linkages between the individual, family, and nation-state. At precisely the moment when the nation-state has come into question because of its limitations in regulating global capital

and because of the transformation of cultural forms by global media (Appadurai 1996; Sassen 2000), India is being resignified through its most territorially-bound subjects, rural women. Discourses about the private and public spheres and women's place within them have long been used to navigate representations of the nation (Chatterjee 1993; Bhatt, Murthy, and Ramamurthy 2010; Radhakrishnan 2011). Some scholars have argued that this representation can only be advantaged caste and urban or transnational (Fernandes 2006; Radhakrishnan 2011), while others have pointed out that the political assertion of women and disadvantaged groups and must be acknowledged for the new middle class to be hegemonic (Bhatt, Murthy, and Ramamurthy 2010). My dissertation intervenes in this debate by comparing how advantaged and disadvantaged caste rural families engage with discourses about gender.

Indian nationalism is articulated through gendered discourses about the Indian (implicitly Hindu) family. In order to present itself as embodying the values of a modern India, the new middle class must address questions of gender inequality within the family and within the nation-state. Since the colonial period, India's "lack of modernity" has been associated with a repressive gender regime, so that Indian women are portrayed as needing to be saved from their own patriarchal society (Spivak 1988). *Sati* (widow immolation), child marriage, and taboos against widow remarriage were invoked by the British to demonstrate the oppressive gender relations of the subcontinent and justify their rule (Nair 1996; Kosambi 1996; Uberoi 1996; Sinha 1997; Sarkar 2000, 2012). In the present day, World Bank reports, Human Development Index rankings, and other

agencies and metrics⁸ continue to diagnose the ills of Indian society through a focus on gender relations, and these diagnoses are used to promote economic liberalization in India.

During the colonial period, the “new Indian woman” became the site for the production of a modern nationalist culture. To assert that India was both capable of modernity, like the colonial powers, and distinct, anti-colonial projects asserted a national, cultural difference in the “inner” world of the home, a place distinct from the world (Chatterjee 1993). Men were responsible for accommodating the changes occurring in the “outer” world of the economy and polity. The new Indian woman was the guardian of the home and of Indian (implicitly Hindu) spirituality, and she was also an educated and enlightened member of society (Chatterjee 1993). This new woman could only be middle class or elite, and her distinction from disadvantaged classes and castes was represented in terms of her respectability.

Respectability is a form of symbolic capital that is produced within the conjugal (heterosexual, nuclear) family. The elite colonial woman was distinguished from both the individualistic and immoral Westernized woman and the superstitious and promiscuous “common” woman through her education and her commitment to her family. While elite women were encouraged to become educated, women’s education was primarily regarded as accruing to the family and nation-state; educated women would help preserve

⁸ See, for example, “Widespread job restrictions on Indian women: World Bank report;” <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/widespread-job-restrictions-on-indian-women-world-bank-report/article7636260.ece> and “India fares poorly in UN human development index,” <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/india-fares-poorly-in-un-human-development-index/article6244720.ece>.

traditional Indian (Hindu and advantaged caste) culture in the home and help produce an educated, yet distinctly Indian citizenry (Sarkar 2001). Through this representational division of labor, and through changes in property relations, the indigenous middle-class and the nation itself was increasingly defined through the conjugal family (Chatterjee 1993; Sreenivas 2008).

The conjugal family ideal encapsulates cultural projects and material relations that support a set of gendered binaries between the spiritual/material, home/world, private/public. The public/private division, represented as the state/economy/polity as public, and the family as private, is a critical discursive strategy for the perpetuation of social inequality. The “well-founded illusion” of the family perpetuates the “opposition between the public and the private [and] conceals the extent to which the public is present in the private” (Bourdieu 1996, 25). It does so by constituting itself as natural and universal, and therefore separate from economic, political, and social structures. People typically learn their assigned place in hierarchies of caste, gender, sexuality, nation, and social class in their families of origin (McClintock 1995; Bourdieu 1996; Collins 1998; Lareau 2003; Radhakrishnan 2011). At the same time, they learn to view such hierarchies as natural because the hegemonic nuclear family ideal conceals its members’ accumulated privileges in these structures. In this way, the family as a private institution “[becomes] indispensable for legitimating exclusion and hierarchy within nonfamilial social forms such as nationalism, liberal individualism and imperialism”(McClintock 1995, 45). As Lareau (2003) has shown, the accumulated privileges of middle class children become part of their habitus, their seemingly natural way of being in the world,

but this habitus takes extensive investments of time, intellect, and emotion. The lack of redistribution programs for working-class families, and the challenges to expanding them, is due to the ability of the “private” institution of the family to mask and simultaneously reproduce its relationship to “public” institutions and structures such as class.

Some scholars argue that in contemporary India, the representation of the Indian nation continues to be constituted through the “new Indian woman” (Donner 2008; Radhakrishnan 2011). Emerging in India and in the Indian diaspora, the global Indian woman is both an icon and an identity that manages social anxieties about gender and globalization in India. Elite women such as IT professionals inhabit this identity and promote hegemonic narratives about women’s merit and the entrepreneurial self, transform diverse local practices into generic pan-Indian forms that are palatable to Western employers and co-workers, and define themselves primarily in relation to their nuclear families (Radhakrishnan 2011). At the same time, they distance themselves from the consumption practices and sexual mores of women in lower-tier pink-collar workers, who make up the aspirational mass fraction of the middle class. Radhakrishnan (2011, pp. 6-12) documents how “background” is used as an ambiguous term to delineate class, caste, and rural/urban differences between the elite and mass fraction of the middle classes. In this conceptualization, middle class hegemony, represented through the respectability of the new global Indian woman, is constructed through the exclusion of disadvantaged class, disadvantaged caste, and rural women.

The urban, advantaged caste and class character of the “new Indian woman” has historically been unmarked, allowing advantaged groups to represent their interests as

universal interests and claim moral, cultural, and political leadership of the nation (Chatterjee 1993). However, in the past three decades, political activism by rural disadvantaged caste and women's groups has challenged elite domination of Indian society and polity. Additionally, disadvantaged caste and class women, particularly rural women, have become targets of development discourses and projects (Sharma 2006, 2008; Purewal 2014) and are important figures in contemporary articulations of Indian modernity (Bhatt, Murty, and Ramamurthy 2010).

Government, non-government, and philanthropic projects now encourage rural families to produce healthy citizens, encourage daughter's educations, limit population growth, and prevent gender discrimination. One such policy is the Andhra Pradesh Girl Child Protection Scheme (GCPS). Recently renamed the *Baangaru Thalli*⁹ (www.thehindu.com) program, the GCPS is a government program that "aims at preventing gender discrimination by empowering and protecting the rights of the girl child through direct investment by the government" (www.unfpa.org). The program is targeted toward below-poverty line (BPL) families with daughters. Girls are entitled to collect Rs.50, 500, mostly as aid for education. Upon completing 12th grade, young women are entitled to a lump sum of Rs. 50,000. Young women lose this benefit if they marry before age 18. In addition to this program, federal programs such as Janani Suraskha Yojana (Hindi for Mother Security Scheme) encourage women to give birth in hospitals by giving cash assistance with delivery and post-delivery care.

⁹ Literally "golden mother," in Telugu, but glossed as "golden girl" or "darling girl."

Disadvantaged class rural girls and their families are subject to new demands to improve themselves and represent the nation. Families with daughters must engage with discourses about modernity and respectability as make claims on the state. This suggests that they may be recruited into the hegemonic project of the new middle class. The widespread practice of having two or fewer children is an important example of changing ideas about family and childrearing in Andhra Pradesh. However, much of the research on the domestic life of the “new middle class” in India has focused on urban, professional households. Though these insightful studies have demonstrated how middle-class aspirations and practices permeate everyday life among the urban advantaged classes (Donner 2008; Bhatt, Murty, and Ramamurthy 2010; Radhakrishnan 2011), they cannot assess the significance of the “new middle class” for disadvantaged caste and class groups. Nearly 70 percent of the Andhra Pradesh population lives in rural areas (www.censusindia.gov.in), and this rate is similar throughout India. Since 1990, there has been significant emigration of highly educated young people from rural India (Kapur 2010, Chapter 3). In addition to this, much of the public and scholarly dialogue about development in India focuses on improving rural conditions. Therefore social mobility in rural India is a critical and understudied topic.

Ethnographic work on caste inequality in rural India offers a nuanced perspective on how disadvantaged castes interpret the promise of social mobility and how these groups reconcile the failure of these promises (Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2004 a,b, 2007). Many of the families I spoke with had children who held “degrees without freedom” (Jeffery, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2004a, 2007). These families had taken on heavy

debts to educate their children, but their children could not find salaried employment. In their study of the Bijnor district in rural Uttar Pradesh, the Jeffreys (2004a,b, 2007) find that educated young Dalit and Muslim men face similar circumstances. The Jeffreys explain that these young men and their parents respond in two main ways to unemployment. First, in Dalit and Muslim communities, education becomes a “discursive ‘scaffold’” through which these groups, who have historically been categorized as “backwards,” can assert a modern, achieved status distinct from ascribed definitions of respect.

Second, young men informally expressed their resentment at the mismatch between the promises of education and their enduring marginalization from employment. Following Scott (1985), the Jeffreys (Jeffrey et al 2004b, 2007) suggest that these informal critiques are “weapons of the weak;” they allowed young men to vent their frustrations to each other while concealing their resistance from higher castes. Additionally, marginalized groups may not have engaged in more formal protests because these groups believed that the state government had little interest or power in increasing employment opportunities (Jeffrey et al 2004b, 2007). Lastly, by avoiding direct conflict, Dalit and Muslim men were able to claim respectability- they could maintain their self-esteem and “the decorum associated with educated cultural distinction” (Jeffrey et al 2004b, 980).

The Jefferys’ research in rural Uttar Pradesh shows how education can function as a cultural resource through which educated Dalit men can gain status. I found similar patterns among disadvantaged caste young men and their families in Andhra Pradesh.

However, education does not function similarly for young women. Young men have more freedom to participate in public life and their assertion of “modern” identities adds to their respectability. For disadvantaged caste young women, especially Dalit young women, movement in public space and modern identities are problematic. Dalit women may be harassed and assaulted, with little recourse from local law enforcement. . The Jefferys’ work was also limited by the low rates of women’s education in rural Uttar Pradesh at the time of their research (Jeffery, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2007, 30-31). Andhra Pradesh, and the southern states have historically been more gender egalitarian than the northern states. The coexistence of conflicting forces that promote women’s education on the one hand, and constrain it on the other, captures the diverse gender practices and discourses that family engage with as they raise their daughters. By studying rural families with daughters, my research provides new information and insight about how families and young women interpret and navigate the promises of social mobility.

Description of the Research Sites and Subjects

I chose to study intergenerational mobility by conducting ethnographic fieldwork in the Guntur region of Andhra Pradesh. The Guntur region has a long history of class and caste mobility and is associated with relatively progressive gender politics. It has had contact with European trade networks from at least the early 18th century (Washbrook 2004); over the last five decades, globalization in the region has increased rapidly through migration and transnational remittances. This makes the region a particularly informative site through which to investigate whether and how social inequalities in India are changing under the forces of liberalization and globalization.

Since the colonial period, the city of Guntur has been an important site for regional processes of class formation. Prosperous rural farmers were directly involved in agricultural markets (Washbrook 1973) and increased their investment in tertiary education for their sons. This enabled the upward mobility of peasant castes such as the Kammas, who went from being rural cultivators to urban capitalists and professionals (Upadhyaya 1988, 1997). In the last five decades, educated Kammas from both cities and villages have further increased their wealth through migration to developed economies in Europe and to the United States. These historical and contemporary processes of class formation and its relationship to caste, along with the intensive involvement between village and town, make the Guntur region an interesting case study for how rural inequalities are being challenged and reproduced in India.

Caste and class processes in the region are inextricably tied to gender practices. Guntur, and south India more broadly, are marked by a regional identity that is partially defined through gender. Folk and academic knowledge portray the southern Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala as more gender egalitarian than the northern and Western states. Historical kinship and inheritance systems, particularly the practice of bride price over dowry, patterns of consanguinal marriage (usually cross cousin or uncle-niece dyads) and women's coparcenary property rights were more commonplace in the southern regions¹⁰, which suggests that advantaged caste and class

¹⁰ The southern or northern regions of India are by no means culturally or economically homogeneous, however people in India do define themselves through this regional lens. My usage of it here is to explicate the use of gender as a historical marker of difference between the two regions in order to understand processes of

women fared somewhat better in than their counterparts elsewhere on the subcontinent (Trautmann 2001, in Kenneth Hall. ed.;). This is further borne out by the relatively egalitarian sex ratio in the southern states as compared to the northern states (Dyson and Moore 1983; Drèze and Sen 1995; Chakraborty and Kim 2010).

During my fieldwork in the Guntur region, advantaged class people from the Kamma *jati* (sub-caste) regularly mentioned that many women in Guntur had bachelor's degrees. Some Kamma informants would list a number of women in their families who held degrees as evidence of how education for women had become normative. Guntur has become associated with women's education in part through the promotion of this practice among urban, elite Kammass as well as by other advantaged caste groups. Guntur city is also one of the educational centers of the state; one of the oldest medical schools in the country is located in Guntur and there are several state colleges near the city. According to the 2001 district census, there were 3,906 total primary schools (classes I-V), upper primary schools (classes V-VIII), and high schools (classes IX and X)¹¹ in the Guntur district. The development of educational infrastructure, the promotion of women's education, and the history of transnational ties in the Guntur region make it an informative site to study the cultural and material transformations taking place in much of India.

Recent work on social change in India has focused on the formation of the "new middle class." These works have used Bourdieu to theorize macro-level phenomena such

identity formation in the Guntur district. For a critical discussion of South India as a useful concept for historical analysis, see Nair 2006.

¹¹ "Guntur District- At a Glance" <http://guntur.nic.in/statistics/ataglance.pdf>, accessed 28 February 2015.

as the relationship between the middle-class and the state (Chopra 2003; Deshpande 2003; Fernandes 2006; Fernandes and Heller 2006) and historical and contemporary processes of class-formation (Upadhyaya 1997; Fernandes 2006), and micro-level processes such as the production of distinction within the household and family (Ray and Qayum 2009; Radhakrishnan 2009; 2011). Work combining Bourdieu's theorization of the cultural processes of class domination with Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony (Fernandes 2006; Fernandes and Heller 2006) has tended to adopt a Bourdieuan understanding of social inequality. Both Gramsci and Bourdieu place central importance on people's commonsense of the social world, which is comprised of the rules, myths, and symbols of social life. Commonsense can legitimate the relations of domination. For Bourdieu (1985), commonsense is largely unconscious and therefore can only reproduce inequality. The cultural meanings and practices of dominated groups therefore reproduce relations of domination. Gramsci (2000, chapter 6), on the other hand, argues that disadvantaged groups actively consent to their domination and may also produce counter hegemonic understandings of the social world. While commonsense may help to legitimate the relations of domination, the material conditions of existence can also produce a "good sense" that is critical of social relations. This enables Gramsci to account for the use of force as a key composite of hegemony, as well as the channeling of political will into civil society institutions. Both force and civil society are important for understanding the perpetuation of inequality in India. By combining Gramsci's understanding of commonsense with Bourdieu's theory of practice, I attempt to more accurately describe the relationship between everyday practice and hegemony.

Understanding the relationships between commonsense, social practice, and hegemony (what Bourdieu calls symbolic violence) are critical for understanding inequality. Despite Bourdieu's focus on class and his limited analysis of other forms of social inequality such as gender and race (Moi 1991; Cicourel 1993; Skeggs 1997; McNay 1999; Lovell 2000; Reay 2004), his theoretical tools of *habitus*, *capitals*, and *field* have are easily adapted to study gender, caste, and other markers of distinction in India.

Bourdieu argues that childhood socialization in the domestic sphere and in schools forge orientations to the self and to others. This "socialized subjectivity" is the habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2002:126). For Bourdieu, the habitus is not a matter of conscious learning, or of ideological imposition, but is acquired gradually and unconsciously through "lasting exposure to particular social conditions and conditionings, via the internalization of external constraints and possibilities" (Wacquant 2006, 267). The habitus gives people their physical bearing, or "hexis;" their tastes and beliefs, or dispositions; and their sense of their place in society, or "feel for the game" (Bourdieu 1984). Minute, individual practices such as the way people chew, to interactional practices such as adopting positions of authority or deference in relation to others, to broad political practices like voting for or against redistribution policies, are all manifestations of the habitus.

The habitus in Bourdieuan theory is unconscious; though it can be modified in later life, Bourdieu argues that such modifications produce segmented and conflictive sets of dispositions (Bourdieu 2000, 127). Gender and postcolonial scholars have pointed out

that this is a deterministic understanding of the habitus that conceptualizes power as repressive (Moi 1991; Skeggs 1997; Lovell 2000; Mahmood 2004). These scholars have provided examples of individuals transforming their habitus in ways that are not conflictive or separate from other aspects of their selves. Similarly, though Osella and Osella (2006) do not use the term habitus, they show how Gulf migrants integrate their “global” dispositions with local forms of masculinity. Using my observations at an advantaged caste hostel in Andhra Pradesh, I show how institutions can modify the habitus through the exercise of disciplinary power. I also find that the habitus can be consciously modified through religious practice so that disadvantaged groups can assert their dignity and challenge the domination of advantaged groups.

The habitus is shaped by the cultural and material resources, or capitals, to which people have access, and is therefore an embodied form of social structure. A capital is a resource or power that enables an individual to compete and appropriate the profits in any given social arena (Bourdieu 1984, 114). There are four principle kinds of capital: economic capital, which is comprised of material and financial assets; cultural capital such as scarce symbolic goods, skills and titles; and social capital, which are the resources that can be derived from social relations. The fourth kind of capital is symbolic capital, is the effect of any form(s) of capital that is not recognized as such (Bourdieu 1985). I describe the emergence of transnational cultural capital, a form of cultural capital that is specific to the emergence of a transnational middle class. I show how this new form of capital is developed in the transnational social field.

The various social arenas in which capitals are activated are social fields. Each field, such as science, the law, the economy, and so on, is “a structured space of positions, a force field that imposes its specific determinations upon all those who enter it (Wacquant 2006, 268).” Wacquant (2006) gives the example that if someone wants to succeed as a scientist, they have to acquire the minimal scientific capital required and follow the mores and regulations enforced by the scientific milieu of that specific time and place. It is simultaneously a field of struggle through which agents and institutions seek to preserve or overturn the existing distribution of capital; for example in the scientific field, various institutions, disciplines, theories, methods, journals, and so on compete to gain scientific capital and perhaps to discredit that of others. I use this notion of field to describe the emergence of a transnational field in Andhra Pradesh and show how people compete for recognition in this field.

Throughout the dissertation, I refine Bourdieu’s deterministic conceptualization of commonsense and the habitus in light of critiques that the unconscious and deterministic conceptualization of the habitus does not account for social change or agency (McCall 1992; Cicourel 1993; Skeggs 1997; Lovell 2000; Mahmood 2004; Burawoy 2012). The dominated are not necessarily dupes to mystification, but can see mechanisms of power from their social locations of disadvantage (Collins 1986; Haraway 1988). I am interested in explaining how social formations such as gender, class, and caste are reproduced in distinctive ways, despite the vastness of change associated with globalization and liberalization. In doing so, I seek to develop an understanding social

structure that treats structure not as a deterministic, pre-discursive realm, but as emerging both from historical processes and through people's everyday practices.

Argument and Structure of the Dissertation

The main argument of this dissertation is that power and inequality mediate childrearing strategies and young women's ability to achieve social mobility. Though this dissertation focuses on a specific region of India, it looks toward broader questions about how gender, caste, and class inequalities are reproduced at the intersections between the family and other institutions. I argue that scholars should focus on how gender, caste, and class influence each other. I advance my argument by using the work of Pierre Bourdieu, and specifically his theorization of cultural capital, habitus, and field, to show how the cultural and structural dimensions of gender, caste, and class are articulated through everyday practices and objectified in institutions. I develop Bourdieu's work by moving away from an emphasis on class as the primary mode of social differentiation and instead adopt an intersectional approach that considers how class, caste, and gender are mutually constitutive.

Intersectionality has become a "buzzword" (Davis 2008) in the last two decades as scholars have grappled with different theoretical needs. In this dissertation, I use an intersectional analytical approach to highlight the perspectives of rural disadvantaged class women. The multiple-marginalization of my subjects requires an analytic shift from an additive approach that conceptualizes multiple forms of inequality as independent of each other. Instead, intersectional theory understands these inequalities as interactive and capable of constituting unexpected new cultural and material processes. This approach

also acknowledges the “recursive relationship between social structures and cultural representations” (Collins 2015, 4), highlighting that both material and cultural relations of power structure societies (Glenn 1999). A core element of an intersectional approach is comparative analysis that provides comparisons above the level of the individual (McCall 2005). My chapters are organized to facilitate this comparison.

I acknowledge two important silences in my work: first, my analysis relates primarily to young women. Though I do discuss men and masculinity, and I interviewed parents who were raising boys and young men, my focus is on girls and young women. Here, as elsewhere, the cultural and material formations of gender are relational. My decision to focus on rural young women was motivated by the desire to engage critically with the work on new middle class hegemony that focuses solely on urban and transnational Indian women.

The other focus of this work is on disadvantaged class families. The advantaged class and urban families I spoke with inform my understanding of the range of strategies parents used to raise their children. These strategies were similar to the ones suggested by earlier studies of urban middle class parents in Kolkata (Donner 2008), though they were inflected differently because of the region. I discuss some of my interviews and observations of these advantaged caste and class families throughout the dissertation. My analytical focus, however, is on rural, disadvantaged class families since we know very little about their perceptions of social mobility, how they strategize to achieve this mobility, and how they manage this failure.

The second chapter of this dissertation develops an intersectional and historical understanding of how caste, class, gender, and nation are co-constituted in India. I describe the cultural and material processes through which these social differences were produced through the colonial encounter. The development of the census and the legal system institutionalized advantaged caste and class interests in ways that increased caste and gender inequalities. These historical processes continue to shape social, political, and economic organization in contemporary Andhra Pradesh.

The third chapter considers the social and geographic mobility of Kamma caste girls and young women from working-class, rural backgrounds. I analyze two months of observations and several interviews with residents, wardens, staff, and administrators from an educational hostel for young Kamma women. The hostel is supported by donations from Kammas in the United States and in India and is meant to promote the education of “deserving” rural girls. Therefore the hostel is a key site through which new middle class hegemony is articulated. I develop the concept of transnational cultural capital as a defining feature of the new middle class. By tracing the contestations over this form of capital in the hostel, I show how civil society institutions such as the hostel help to manage class tensions within caste, promote the interests of caste elites, and help make caste relevant to transnational processes. The hostel reproduces inter-caste inequalities by facilitating Kamma dominance of educational institutions in Guntur and by establishing a hierarchical relationship between the disadvantaged caste custodial workers and Kamma residents. While the hostel does enable rural young women from this caste to acquire educational and social capital, which they may be able to translate

into careers and better marital options, it also accustoms them to intensive surveillance and promotes intra-caste gender inequalities between the hostel residents and administrators.

In the forth chapter, I explore the consequences of a lack of geographic mobility for disadvantaged caste young women. I use observations from a local public school as well as interviews with teachers, parents, and students. Disadvantaged caste girls and young women are increasingly urged to become educated and live up to middle-class ideals of respectability, but they have limited opportunities for social mobility. The public schools that serve these rural families have few resources, are poorly organized, and often reproduce caste and class inequalities. Disadvantaged caste families attempt to manage the contradictory injunctions to educate their daughters with the lack of rural educational infrastructure, their fears about daughters' safety, and their obligations to see daughters' settled in marriage. Parents reconcile these competing narratives through religious or state-based ideas about self-development. Religious self-development projects articulate *virtuousness*. I argue that virtuousness is a disadvantaged caste and class form of symbolic capital that is parallel to, but distinct from, middle-class respectability. State self-development projects are informed by ideas about empowerment. I show how both virtuousness and empowerment have ambivalent effects on mitigating social inequalities.

The concluding chapter of this dissertation reviews how social inequalities are reproduced, circumvented, or challenged by families and communities efforts to raise young women. I argue that while there have been some small improvements in education for women, caste and class inequalities continue to exercise powerful constraints on the

educational achievements and employment opportunities for rural young women. At the same time, rural parents are pressured to educate their daughters and rural women are targeted by development schemes and discourses. As these women have come to represent the limits of India's claim to modernity, they bear the burden of representing themselves as modern and educated but face near insurmountable obstacles. I offer some suggestions for civil and state interventions that can help promote the well-being of rural young women and address broader caste and class inequalities.

Chapter 2: A Brief Primer on Caste, With a Discussion of the Advantaged and Disadvantaged Castes Guntur Region of Andhra Pradesh

The intent of this chapter is to show the historical processes through which caste, class, and gender became mutually constitutive and clarify how this process is ongoing in the Guntur region of Andhra Pradesh. Caste influences almost every aspect of social life in India: where children are seated in a classroom, who can socialize together and intermarry, what foods people eat and who may prepare them, what subjects young people study in college, which jobs people can access, and how people vote in elections are all affected by caste. Yet when I asked people about caste inequality during my fieldwork, or when caste was raised in the media, it was disavowed as pre-modern and as quickly eroding under the forces of modernization and globalization.

The mismatch between my observations of the pervasive effects of caste with declarations that caste was not very important reflects the contested understandings of caste at work in India. Caste inequalities are being challenged— anti-caste movements, disadvantaged caste political assertion, and the liberal discourse of equality have censured overt forms of caste discrimination. Discrimination in schools, labor markets, and public spaces are still common despite this censure. At the same time, the widespread interpretation of caste inequality in terms of individual-level discrimination masks the historical and structural continuities of caste inequality. Moreover, caste is bound up with and articulated through gender and class structures and meanings.

In order to understand how caste influences inequality in contemporary India, I trace the historical process through which caste, gender, and economic structures became mutually constitutive. The use of caste as the dominant explanatory framework for understanding Indian society has been the subject of recent critique. These critiques identify two issues: first, they point out that caste itself, which was somewhat fluid in pre-colonial South Asia, was significantly strengthened by the colonial preoccupation with caste and its institutionalization in the colonial bureaucracy (Cohn 1996; Dirks 2001); and second, the focus on caste has often precluded consideration of other political and social institutions such as class and gender (Chakravarthi 1993; Bhatt, Murthy, and Ramamurty 2010). My discussion of caste accounts for these critiques in two important ways. First, rather than assuming that caste is a timeless system that has always existed in Indian society, I review recent scholarship that treats caste as a “set of understandings, institutions, and dispositions” (Jeffery 2001, 218) that are created through social action, have an important geographic dimension, and that continue to change over time. Second, I examine how caste relates to other forms of social difference, specifically gender and class, and to political formations such as nationalism, party politics, and civil society (Sarkar 1983; Chatterjee 1993; Pandian 2007).

The first section of the chapter discusses the religious foundations of caste and contrasts the ideal version of caste reified in religious doctrines and Orientalist scholarship to locally-grounded manifestations of caste and its relationships with class and gender. The second section examines the history of caste to describe how male,

advantaged caste economic interests and understandings of gender became institutionalized through the colonial encounter. The third section looks at how caste was challenged and reformulated through nationalist and anti-colonial movements. I bring these historical and somewhat broad understandings of caste into the specific context of this dissertation by describing caste, class, and gender in coastal Andhra Pradesh, with a specific focus on the relationship between the Kammas *jatis* (*jatis* are regionally-specific sub-castes) and other castes. I focus on the everyday practices through which caste boundaries are enacted and analyze their relationships to historical and political processes. Contrary to arguments that caste is becoming less important due to globalization and modernization, I show how caste is reproduced in distinctive ways through class and gender processes and made relevant to contemporary society.

Canonical Ideals, Historical Practices, and Contemporary Entrenchment of Caste

Caste groups can be understood as three socially identified collectives – *varna*, or the pan-Indian system for the four classically defined groups and the out-group of Dalits (formerly called “untouchables”); *jatis*, which are the approximately 4000 regionally-specific descent groups that are recognized by local populations and the state; and *jati-clusters*, which are bureaucratically and/or politically organized collectives of socially proximate *jatis*. All three understandings of caste are invoked in sociopolitical life by social actors and social observers. Even though these various elements are easily recognized and widely shared, they are not completely rigid and change in relation to broader sociopolitical processes. Caste remains trenchant in Indian sociopolitical life because it is enmeshed with gender and class structures and meanings.

The word caste comes from the Portuguese *casta*, and translates as “chaste,” or “pure” and is often glossed as “pure breed.” The most widespread understanding of caste is based in Hindu religious doctrine. The Rg Veda describes the chaturvarnas (chatur, meaning “four” in Sanskrit, and varna, meaning “group” or “order”) as emerging from the body of the cosmic man *Purush*. The Brahmin varna which consists of religious officiators, are represented as the most enlightened and were formed from his head; the Kshatriya caste of warriors and kings grew from his arms; the merchants and traders of the Vysya caste grew from his thighs. These castes are the “twice-born” castes, and are thought to be spiritually and physically pure. The lowest caste of Shudras, the peasantry including farmers and artisans, originated from his feet. Among Shudras, some groups claim *sat-Shudra*, or “clean Shudra” status to distinguish themselves from the so-called untouchables. Dalits, formerly called untouchables, form the fifth Indian social group, and are not formally included in this system. The exclusion of Dalits is often misunderstood in analyses of caste, which see the differences between caste groups as differences of degree. Dalits, however, are treated as different in *kind*; they are unmentioned in religious texts as members of society. The description of these groups in common parlance and bureaucratic policy as avarna (without varna), panchama (fifth varna), or atishudras (low Shudras) shows that they are recognized by the caste system, and describe the boundaries of caste through their very exclusion. Moreover, this exclusion is inextricably tied to the need to control and exploit their labor (Viswanath 2014, especially Chapter 1). In addition to working as agricultural laborers, Dalits work with polluting substances, as scavengers and sewage-cleaners, and they work with dead

bodies, including leather workers and those who work with the human dead. Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Parsees and others also fall outside the caste system but are not considered “untouchables” because they are not Hindu.

The varna system is pan-Indian, and did not become widely used until the later part of the 19th century (Cohn 1996; Dirks 2001). Because of the material, political, and cultural diversity of the geographically vast subcontinent, local *jati* groups were a more salient, lived identity than varna. *Jatis* are regional groups that are themselves created and recreated through social actions. *Jatis* can be formed through recounting the shared history of a particular group, which then strengthens *jati* boundaries by emphasizing descent and lineage. *Jati* histories help construct group identities that situate *jatis* in local, national, and global societies (Katten 2001; Osella and Osella 2006; Rao 2009). *Jatis* are also created through the regulation of marriage practices. Rather than assuming that *jati* groups exist *a priori*, endogamy can be read as a social activity that attempts to produce a group with shared social and biological ties (Chakravarti 1993, 2003; Ambedkar 2014, section 5.4).

Jatis were incorporated into the chaturvarna categories through the interactions between native groups and between these groups and the British colonial state, a process I discuss in detail in the next section. Both caste and *jati* identities are currently understood as conferred at birth, tied to ritual occupations, and un-mutable. However historians of caste have shown that while *jati* was associated with birth, one’s *jati* did not strictly define one’s position in society. The Kakathiya rulers of the 12th to 14th century CE, who presided over what is now Telangana and Andhra, considered themselves

Shudras rather than Kshatriyas; similarly, military commanders in the dynasty were from the Kamma and Reddy *jatis*, which are in the Shudra varna. Beginning in the early twentieth century, Kammas in coastal Andhra began to directly participate in agricultural markets and lend money, activities that were properly associated with the mercantile *jatis* of the Vysya varna.

Contrary to scholars such as Dumont (1970) who assert the centrality of religious ideology in maintaining caste hierarchy, gender scholars have demonstrated how caste purity was articulated through the control of women's sexuality. In Brahminical patriarchal ideology, inheritance and lineage is patrilineal, therefore caste purity can only be ensured through the sexual control of advantaged caste women (Chakravarti 1993, 2003; Sen 1998). Widely disseminated Hindu and Buddhist oral stories as well as religious texts described the wicked and insatiable sexuality of women and advised men to carefully guard their wives to ensure patrilineal succession and preserve caste purity (Chakravarti 1993). These women were implicitly from advantaged groups—concerns about succession pertain to ruling and land-holding groups, whereas ideas about purity are associated with Brahminical groups. Unmarried women, women in *jatis* that did not control property, and/or that of *jatis* that were considered impure were rarely mentioned, an omission that stratified women along caste lines. Lower caste and unmarried women were invisible and upper caste women were defined solely in terms of their value to kin and caste groups. This was not the case throughout the subcontinent; though elements of Brahminical patriarchal ideology may have been widespread well before the colonial

encounter, some *jatis* practiced matrilineal succession as well as a variety of conjugal and familial forms (Kodoth 2001; Sreenivas 2008).

Changes in property relations under British colonial law divested women and poor peasant castes of their usufructuary rights to land. The creation of alienable ownership rights in land changed the economic structure of the subcontinent, creating new classes such as capitalist farmers and increasing the number of landless laborers (Washbrook 1981). Under these new laws, some peasant castes such as the Kammas of Andhra Pradesh¹² were able to accumulate land and become “dominant castes” (Srinivas 1956). As principal landowners, the dominant caste has the economic power to set agricultural wages and control workers. Dominant castes express their social and political power in the institutional form through caste or village councils and through political parties. Thus, the Kammas in Andhra became economically and politically dominant through their ownership of arable land in the coastal region of Andhra (Upadhya 1988, 1997). As I discuss in the final section of this chapter, their economic and political dominance over laboring castes continues to the present day.

Over the last century-and-a-half, Dalit and women’s groups have worked to assert their rights, demand justice, claim dignity, and make a place for themselves in the Indian polity and economy. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Dalit and feminist activists helped articulate a national identity and modernity (Rao 2006). In the 1990s, these groups were able to gain some foothold in the polity and implement social redistribution efforts (Yadav 1999). But caste and gender oppression, though distinct, are also embedded within global capitalism, which is embraced as crucial to India’s

¹² Srinivas (1956) develops the definition of dominant caste through his study of the Okkaligas of Rampura village, in what is now Karnataka state. Additional recent work on dominant caste focuses on the Jats of western Uttar Pradesh (Jeffrey 2001).

modernizing project. The liberalization of India's economy and dissemination of liberal ideologies have entwined caste, class, and gender in ways that are mutually reinforcing and work to sustain these inequalities.

A few economically successful Dalits and/or women are trumpeted in the media as evidence of the opening up of opportunities and end of discrimination ushered in by liberal economic policies and ideologies (Bhatt, Murty, and Ramamurthy 2010). Yet attempts to address these inequalities through government social redistribution programs and legislation are severely criticized as undermining Indian tradition, "reverse discrimination," or catering to identity politics. The supposed ability of rational liberal market mechanisms to create job opportunities and replace caste patronage with meritocracy has not been realized in India, where Dalits continue to be the poorest, least educated, and most precariously employed. Therefore, while a few Dalit *jatis* and individuals may have escaped their former enslavement, and some women have gained economic power, an oppressive and exploitative socioeconomic system endures and perpetuates caste, class, and gender inequalities despite activism on all of these fronts.

What can account for the remarkable persistence of these forms of oppression in India? What relationship do emerging forms of inequality have with older ones, and what possibilities do the social changes taking place in India offer for resistance to these inequalities? In the following section, I review the historical processes through which caste, class, and gender structures became braided together. I show how they share ideological and material resources that help sustain an advantaged-caste, middle-class, patriarchal hegemony in India.

The continuity of specific configurations of inequality suggests that the liberalization of the Indian economy in the late 1980s and its attendant cultural discourses have not created a radical break from India's past as some scholars of neoliberalism have argued. The concentration of land ownership among advantaged caste men and the prevalence of intra-caste marriage reproduce gender, caste, and class inequalities. These ideas and practices existed in a similar version in the past, and their continuity has enabled advantaged groups to maintain hegemony through longstanding forms of social and economic illiberalism.

Caste under Colonialism

Caste became entrenched in the bureaucratic state through the subcontinent's colonial encounter with the British. The British quantified, theorized, and manipulated the caste system to further their rule and increase the extraction of revenue from the subcontinent. In their turn, natives of the subcontinent responded to British strategies of rule by attempting to preserve and shape changing institutional structures in their favor. Native male elites were able to perpetuate their dominance over other indigenous groups even as they were subjugated under colonial rule. Yet disadvantaged groups did gain some ground; the egalitarian rhetoric and reform efforts of the British state and Christian missionaries was taken up by non-Brahmins, Dalits, and women to demand rights such as education and representation in the polity (Forbes 1982; Viswanath 2014).

The dialectical constitution of caste was done through native engagements with two projects of colonial rule: 1) the enumeration and classification of the native people through the national censuses and 2) the establishment of a national legal-judicial

apparatus. From the early nineteenth century onwards, the census and the law connected the emerging caste system with class interests and gender ideologies, so that caste, class, and gender were, and continue to be, mutually constructed.

From the early 18th century, the British East India Company attempted to count and classify the indigenous population. Though regional censuses documented over 3000 different regional *jatis*, colonial administrators made no concerted effort to consolidate disparate census categories. Instead, they focused on generating lists of useful facts about each region that could be used for taxation, trade, and defense purposes. After a series of rebellions on the subcontinent, the Raj (colonial administration) concentrated their efforts on learning more about the peoples and customs of the subcontinent. They began to focus on caste as the defining feature of Indian society.

The development of a racial theory of caste gave caste “causal weight” (Walby and Haan 2012) and appealed to the colonial Raj’s desire to predict, and therefore direct, the behavior of native groups. At the same time, the racial theory of caste established clear biological distinctions between the British and natives and justified British rule over native populations, particularly through its construction of British and native masculinities.

The census data were used to support colonial theories about native masculinities; because these data drew on information about sub-castes, colonial theories of masculinity further joined together conceptualizations of caste and race. The earliest use of caste as a basis for interpreting social and demographic data arose in the mid-nineteenth century in the context of British interventions to prevent female infanticide, which they believed to

be customary among the Rajputs in western and northern India (Mani 1990). Data about the practices of *sati* (widow immolation) and child marriage were incorporated into racial theories of caste and used as evidence of the corrupted and abusive masculinity of the subcontinent's natives (Sarkar 2000, 2012). Paradoxically, educated Brahmin men were characterized as effeminate (Sinha 1995). The assertion that the enlightened situation of British women could be conferred on women of the subcontinent existed alongside British admiration for Hindu patriarchal norms as the feminist movement in England became more influential (Sinha 1995).

Rather than undermining British legitimacy, the varied and often contradictory tenets of colonial discourses of masculinity had the effect of bringing native claims to civilizational equality up for debate and making gender central to this debate. Indigenous groups internalized these narratives and constructed group identities that were at times complicit with and at times challenged British rule (Sinha 1995; Cohn 1996; Constable 2001; Dirks 2001; Rao 2009). The association between gender politics and civilization continues to the current day. For example, the Hindu Right asserts its political leadership of the nation through its claims that high rates of childbearing among Muslims is driving overpopulation in India and hinders national socioeconomic development. These supposedly higher rates of fertility are attributed to "backwards" gender ideologies among Muslims; Muslim men are portrayed as aggressive, oversexed, uneducated and oppressive to women, and Muslim women are portrayed as passive and uneducated (Jeffery and Jeffery 2006).

The gross inequalities of caste, specifically those imposed by untouchability, were noted by colonial administrators and missionaries. Initially, this appeared to have limited influence on the British; for example fully one third of the Bombay army was comprised of Mahars, a so-called untouchable *jati*. At the same time, the British did not try to reform practices of untouchability. Caste was seen as founded in Hinduism; the colonial categorization of religion as a form of *social* difference allowed the British some ability to disregard caste in their political and economic administrative practices, as long as they did not intervene in native institutions and customs (Riser-Kositsky 2009). After the Sepoy Rebellions of 1806 and 1857, however, the British became increasingly concerned with reprisal from native elites for disregarding indigenous cultures. When some elite Aryan Kshatriya *jatis* attempted to distance themselves from Mahars, the British appeased the Aryan Kshatriyas by phasing-out army recruitment from the Mahar community (Constable 2001). Thus the colonial state incorporated the arguments of native elites and advanced the notion of caste as a hereditary system. It institutionalized caste by limiting educational and occupational opportunities for to the upper castes and classes and withholding them for the lower orders.

The ambivalences of the male British lawmakers and administrators towards the woman question and the caste question were an important factor in the development of the colonial legal-judicial structure. This structure operated in tandem with the census; as such, the legal-judicial system entertained extensive debates about indigenous customs and rights that were framed within colonial discourse about caste. These debates produced knowledge about and institutionalized caste, class, and gender in colonial India.

At the same time that the Company was carrying out censuses, they were also fashioning a legal-judicial apparatus that would “ensure the steady and painless yield of revenues (Nair 1996, 19)” from the subcontinent. To enable effective administration and extraction and minimize military engagement, the Company initially tried to develop a system of law that took into account indigenous institutions and codes that had the binding force of law. In their search for certainty and because of their own cultural bias towards written texts, lawmakers began to privilege written religious texts over the great variety of local customs. These texts were written by elite men and elite native men played a significant part in the development of colonial law. In this way, the patriarchal interests of male elites became institutionalized in the law (Mani 1990; Sarkar 2000, 2012). These interests varied between land-holding groups, nobility, and religious elites and changed over time (Sreenivas 2004). However, they were all centrally concerned with the control of women so that caste and class politics became, quite literally, intimately entwined with gender politics.

Because of their widespread impact, the development of legal codes generated “free-ranging, self-reflexive debates in the emergent public sphere (Sarkar 2000, 601).” An important set of debates unfolded around women’s rights, which can be divided into women’s right to life, and women’s right to property. The issues of child marriage, upper caste prohibition of widow remarriage, and *sati*, or widow immolation, dealt with the claims of a woman’s (or girl’s) right to life against the woman's community/family/caste to the right to inflict death on her (Sarkar 2000, 602). Though they were not widely practiced in the subcontinent, they were portrayed as emblematic of indigenous society

by the British (Mani 1990; Chakravarti 1990; Sarkar 2000). The trope of the “white man saving the brown woman from the brown man” (Spivak 1988) was rooted in constructing indigenous masculinities as weak, despotic, and corrupt, which helped to justify British rule.

The debates over women’s property rights brought together and reconstituted caste, class, and gender inequalities in response to the changing political and socioeconomic conditions of the subcontinent. On the one hand, the development of the law helped articulate women’s individuated self-separable identity from the family-kin-community nexus (Sarkar 2000; Sreenivas 2004, 2011). On the other hand, men from land-owning, mercantile, and professional castes and classes advanced their often competing economic interests through debates over the “traditional” joint family and the “modern” conjugal family. Ultimately these debates and reforms made conjugality the defining aspect of kinship, gave men from advantaged castes and classes greater control of property than they had enjoyed in the past, and defined women’s property rights in extremely narrow terms (Sreenivas 2004).

Patriarchal property laws were one manifestation of an emerging politics of respectability that stigmatized non-conjugal sexuality to promote the caste and class interests of male elites. These politics were situated in the colonial relationship between Victorian ideas of family, the patriarchal and capitalist relations that shaped this understanding, and the changing political economic relations on the subcontinent. In the public sphere, debates over the law helped constitute the ideal Indian woman in terms of

advantaged class and caste gender politics. In the legal-judicial system, advantaged caste and class gender ideologies became codified in the law.

Indian nationalism emerged in the context of gendered colonial constructions of the subcontinent as pre-modern in both cultural and material realms. Nationalist articulations on the subcontinent, therefore, confronted the dilemma of establishing themselves as “different but modern” in relation to the West (Chatterjee 1993). The dominant nationalist narrative in India responded to this constitutive contradiction through a gendered articulation of the nation. The inner or spiritual realm of the nation was defined through the Hindu home, with the chaste, upper caste women as its guardian. In this realm, nationalists could claim civilizational superiority to and autonomy from the West. This allowed nationalists to acknowledge the technological advancements of the West in the outer, material realm. However, the nationalist claim to civilizational superiority had to do more than claim autonomy in the domestic sphere to address the critiques of child marriage, *sati*, dowry, and other gender practices that marked Hindu custom as uncivilized. In order to assert civilizational superiority, nationalist projects had to substantively engage with the debates over women’s rights.

The “caste question” was as pressing as the “woman question” in establishing Indian modernity. Just as with gender, distinctions between the religious/social/private and secular/economic/public were also used to argue against British intervention in caste. As I describe in the next section, the nationalist responses to the gender and caste question have continuities to the present day.

Caste and Regional Nationalism

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, non-Brahmin movements emerged in multiple regions of the subcontinent. The development of print capitalism during the late nineteenth century fostered articulations of the subcontinent as “India.” Non-Brahmin movements emerged in the context of a developing imagination of the nation and the attendant demand for self-rule. The interaction between the nationalist movement and regional non-Brahmin movements produced distinct regional articulations of national belonging, exemplified by the foundation of Indian states along linguistic lines. In Andhra Pradesh, economically dominant sub-castes such as Kammas and Reddys attempted to achieve hegemony by asserting their moral and political leadership of the state. Political parties were founded along caste lines and incorporated disadvantaged castes through persuasion and force. The economic and political relationships between landed peasants and landless laborers that developed during this late-colonial and early postcolonial period have continuities to present day.

The British began to introduce institutions of self-rule in India with the Government of India Act, instituted in 1919. This act proposed a "dyarchy" in which the nation-building departments of government were largely turned over to native elites. The departments of agriculture, education, and public works were placed under ministers who were individually responsible to the legislature, which was comprised of the Council of State and the Indian Legislative Assembly. Finance, revenue, and home affairs were left in the hands of the British Governor General and his appointees.

Non-Brahmin groups saw the potential opening up of the state as an opportunity to gain a foothold in the administrative structure, which had been dominated by

Brahmins. Non-Brahmin movements in Andhra developed regional *jati* histories that drew from British Orientalist histories of the subcontinent as well as pre-colonial local articulations of *jati*¹³. Orientalist histories and the attendant race/caste categories developed through them had privileged the Aryans, and later the Mughals and finally the British, as the conquerors and therefore rightful rulers of the subcontinent. Many of these histories were admiring of the Aryans, who had brought the Vedas and Shastras, and with them the rule of law, religion, statecraft, and aesthetics that defined Hindu civilization. Moreover, H.H. Risley's caste taxonomy had established a racial link between the Aryan Brahmins of India and Europeans, further justifying British and Brahminical ascendancy.

To assert their place in the polity, non-Brahmin *jatis* in Andhra used regional histories to recast the Aryan invasion as proof of Brahmin *illegitimacy* to rule. Importantly, the atishudra *jatis* were excluded from this history, a point I will return to shortly. Kammas articulated their place as leaders of Indian society through their deployment of shifting caste identities, first as Kshatriyas who had a historical and divine right to rule, then as patron landlords, and later as peasants who were communist leaders

¹³ There was significant exchange between intellectuals and activists in different regions of the sub-continent and regional movements were influenced by and borrowed from each other. The challenge to Brahminical dominance in Andhra was influenced by the Brahmo Samaj movement (Leonard and Leonard 1992). Similarly, the earliest version of alternate caste histories was advanced by Jyotirao Phule, a nineteenth century political activist and scholar from the atishudra Mali *jati* in what is now Maharashtra. Phule claimed that Mahars and other atishudras had been the original inhabitants of the subcontinent and had historically been warriors, forming a Dravidian Kshatriya caste. Kshatriya status in Phule's narrative was not limited to lineage; instead the status was open and anyone could become Kshatriya through military service. In Phule's history, the Mahars had freed their Dravidian brothers twenty-one times from conquest by Aryan Brahmins but were finally defeated through chicanery and cunning. Phule named these groups Dalits, a Hindi word meaning broken, to mark this history and their ongoing state of subjugation.

of their comrades. During the late-colonial period, Kammas began to claim their place as leaders of a national destiny and modernity through the construction of a distinct *jati* history, and through it a caste identity. Caste classifications based on doctrinal understandings of caste were used to alternately authenticate or undermine such claims.

Initially, Kamma history was not distinct from a regional history of the Telugu speaking regions of the subcontinent. The first regional history of Telugu-speaking of south India, *Andhrula Charitramu*, was published in 1911. This text defined the Kamma, Reddy, and Vellama *jatis* as belonging to the Shudra varna. Vellama *zamindars* (landholder, glossed as aristocrat) were the first to object to this classification and employed a Brahmin scholar to publish books claiming that Vellamas were Kshatriyas (Yamada 2008, 363). Kammas and Reddys soon adopted this strategy and claimed that they too were Kshatriyas, citing their military service in the Kakatiya dynasty (12th-14th century CE). The term Andhra Kshatriya was adopted to describe people who originated in Andhra, mixed with Aryans, particularly Brahmins, as well as Kakatiyas and other kings (*nayakas*), and became local kings or administrators. According to Raghavayya, author the first history of the Kamma *jati* which was published in 1922, the local connotations of Andhra Kshatriya were objectionable to Kammas (Yamada 2008, 364). Raghavayya asserted that Kammas sought inclusion in the general Kshatriya status located within a universal varna order, which would give them a higher ritual and political position. As various regional shudra *jatis* sought to make a place for themselves in the nation and gain social status, their claims to Kshatriya status implicitly acknowledged and reinforced the validity of a varna-based caste hierarchy.

Through claims to Kshatriya status, which was recognized throughout the subcontinent and associated with the right to rule, local histories helped diverse vernacular publics articulate their place in the emerging nation. In these accounts of Shudra histories, while Brahminical domination was challenged, the structure of caste itself was preserved. This can be evidenced by exclusion of atishudras in the formation of regional civil society organizations. Throughout the Madras Presidency, landowning groups benefitted from the subjugation of atishudras, who performed the bulk of agrestic labor. These groups made claims to the state through missionaries, who acted as intermediaries between “the Depressed Classes” and the colonial state. By defining themselves as human and asserting their rights as such, Pariahs argued for state protection and redistribution (Viswanath 2014).

The shared class interests of these landowning *jatis* fostered political alliances across *jati* groups. In the Andhra region, the first civil society organization, the Krishna Jilla Mandala Sabha (Krishna District Governing Assembly), was formed in 1892 to protest a proposed increase in land revenue. It was comprised of both Brahmin and non-Brahmin members and was held under the auspices of the Guntur Tax Payers Association. Caste-based associations formed shortly thereafter. The Kamma Mahajana Sabha (Kamma Great People’s Assembly), which first convened in 1910, allowed Kammas to articulate and advance their specific *jati* interests and distinguish themselves from other *jatis*. At the same time, they also took part in broader political activities such as the non-Brahmin movement, and allied themselves with its political arm, the pro-British Justice Party, to gain political power.

When the loyalist Justice Party won the first direct elections in the Madras Presidency in 1920, it was widely supported by Kammas and Reddys (Harrison 1956) as well as atishudras (Viswanath 2014). By this time, the Pariah atishudras in the Presidency had advanced critiques of caste and argued for state redress for over two decades (Viswanath 2014), but their hopes for the Justice Party and the British Raj were sadly misguided. The Brahmin-lead Congress party was growing increasingly anti-colonial; in this context, British colonial officials were hesitant to upset landholding castes such as Kammas who objected to state intervention in caste politics. These *ryots*, or cultivators, had a history of collective organization against the colonial Raj, for example gathering funds among farmers to send delegates to Madras to protest revenue increases (Frykenberg 1965). The *ryotwari* revenue system in Guntur district led to political organizing among landholding peasants, who developed political networks to manage land, water, tax and other issues. The class interests of the landholding castes in Andhra were therefore privileged over those of the laboring castes, even though the Justice party expressly argued against caste domination.

During the civil disobedience movements of the 1930s to protest revenue hikes, some Kammas began to emphasize their identity as peasants, or *kisan*. The use of this secular word over shudra was partially informed by the adoption of socialist rhetoric among Kammas under the leadership of N.G. Ranga. When most of coastal Andhra was under the *ryotwari* system, many of the large landholders were Kammas. Ranga's deflection to an anti-aristocratic (zamindari) movement was a good way to shift people's

attention from Kammas' socioeconomic dominance and forge solidarity with landless peasants (Harrison 1956; Yamada 2008).

Once the Justice party lost power in the 1937 election, Kammas attempted to gain political control in the region. Kamma farmers from the coastal districts were dependent on the water catchments that were in the Reddy-dominant region of Telangana. To control the catchments, they pushed for the inclusion of Telangana in the formation of Andhra Pradesh, arguing for the formation of states according to linguistic groups. Brahmins and Reddys controlled the politically-dominant Congress party in the 1930s and 40s; in order to challenge these groups Kammas joined the Communist party. Kammas were able to mobilize labor in their favor, whether it was through inspiring laborers with the promise of redistribution or by coercively leveraging their power as landlords and employers of laborers. The demographics of their home delta regions, with its extremely high concentration of landless labor, also worked in their favor (Harrison 1956).

Kammas further benefitted from their affiliation to the Communist party when they remained unscathed by the tumult of the Telangana movement. The Telangana movement was a movement of migrant untouchables in the Krishna delta and in Telangana. It was organized along standard Communist guerrilla lines with wholesale land redistribution and parallel village governments. Communist squads raided villages and police battalions. From 1948 through 1950, clusters of villages in the delta and nearly all of Warangal and Nalgonda districts in Hyderabad were under Communist control. It took Indian Army troops until 1951 to restore normal local government. Most Kammas

with their valuable paddy land were unaffected by the movement. The Andhra Communists had made no secret of their “rich peasant” policy within the party. They explicitly declared themselves in a 1948 program report for the Indian Communist Politburo, stating that “In delta areas the pressure of population would be heavy, and as such slogans should be raised [removed] for the distribution of lands belonging to rich ryots among poor peasants and laborers... Assurance should be given that we should not touch the lands of rich ryots...” (Harrison 1956, 391).

Kamma hegemony in Andhra Pradesh was established through political and economic strategies. These strategies operated through institutions such as civil society organizations, political parties, and regional economic structures. In the next section, I describe the current avatar of elite Kammas, that of the meritorious, self-made, global citizen. Just as Kammas have maintained the material and institutional bases of their power, the identities described above have continuities to present day.

Hegemony and Contestation in Contemporary Andhra Pradesh

The Kammas achieved their hegemonic status in Andhra Pradesh during the last three decades, though the cultural, political, and economic projects they have used to gain hegemony emerged during the middle of the eighteenth century (Frykenberg 1965). At the advent of British rule in Andhra, Guntur was an administrative center of the Madras Presidency. Brahmins were local leaders and land holders in the Guntur and Krishna districts. As educational and occupational opportunities opened up for Brahmins in the colonial bureaucracy, they moved away from being peasant landholders and were supplanted by Kammas (Yamada 2008; Stoddart 2010). Kammas, who, along with

Reddys, are now one of the dominant castes of Andhra Pradesh, were mainly a rural, land-owning caste, with some ties to the military and bureaucracy of Coastal Andhra (Upadhyaya 1988; Frykenberg 1965). In an effort to break Brahminical power and undermine what they perceived to be Brahmin-lead home rule movements, the British started to open-up the colonial bureaucracy to non-Brahmins.

At the same time, wealthy Kamma farmers from the Krishna district were producing large agricultural surpluses and sought to diversify their economic interests and gain political power. They began to send their sons to professional schools and to invest in industries, and these sons established themselves in Guntur to form a class of urban professionals, bureaucrats, and capitalists (Upadhyaya 1988, 1997). From this period to current day, Kammas economic, political, and cultural dominance in Andhra Pradesh has been justified as the meritocratic result of their educational achievements and business acumen.

The elite fraction of the new middle class is comprised of Kammas and other regionally-dominant castes. These elites have an interest in reproducing their privileges and do so through a range of cultural, social and economic practices that enforce the boundaries of privilege and ensure ongoing exclusion. At the same time, members of the elite fraction of the middle class attempt to represent their practices as potentially available to all social groups. These representational projects are developed through films, television shows, and advertisements (Mankekar 1999; Fernandes 2006; Bhatt, Murty and Ramamurthy 2010). Discourses about nation, class, and gender are woven together in the media to produce “hegemonic aspirations” (Fernandes and Heller, 2006)

that legitimate the lifestyles, consumption practices, and political interests of the elite. Hegemonic aspirations therefore elicit the consent of dominated groups and encourage imitative social, political, and economic practices.

Two of the key institutions that inculcate and channel hegemonic aspirations in Andhra Pradesh are private education and philanthropic organizations. Advantaged caste migration to the US has helped to develop an association between social mobility, geographic mobility, and English-language education. Whereas the first wave of migration from Andhra to the US was overwhelmingly urban and advantaged caste (Bhat and Bhaskar 2007), recent national trends in migration indicate that rates of high-skilled migration from rural India to the US have increased (Xiang 2007; Kapur 2010, Chapter 3). The development of rural educational infrastructure such as private engineering colleges and the promotion of financial instruments that enable landholding rural parents to take out loans on land to pay college fees have increased the transnational mobility of some rural, advantaged caste people in Andhra. In the media and in people's everyday talk, the rural background of these migrants is glossed as a "humble background." The trope of a "humble rural background" elides the advantaged caste and class origins of migrants and suggests that disadvantaged caste and landless people have the same chances for mobility. However, more than ninety per cent of migrants to the US are from advantaged castes (Kapur 2010, 82). In my fieldwork, all of the families who had relatives in the US were advantaged caste and landowning, none of the disadvantaged caste families I spoke with had relatives outside of India.

Despite these caste-based differences in migration, the opening up of education in rural areas and the conspicuous display of migrant wealth has expanded the desire for English-medium education to all castes and classes in Andhra. Because of the poor reputation of public schools, the demand for English-medium schooling has created a boom in the private education sector. Many of these schools are low quality but disadvantaged caste and class parents send their children to private schools because they are thought to be better quality than the public option. Advantaged castes can disinvest in village public schools by taking out loans on their land in order to send children to private schools or by sending their children to live with relatives in cities, which tend to have better public education facilities. Disadvantaged castes, especially Dalits, do not own land and have urbanized more slowly than advantaged castes. In addition to this, urban Dalits are often poor and work in manual labor, so they may not be able to house or otherwise care for an additional household member. The decline of primary and secondary public education, largely due to advantaged caste and class disinvestment, coupled with a cultural privileging of private schools because they present themselves as “globally oriented,” (see figures 1 and 2) have made private schools seem like the best option for educating children. Disadvantaged caste and class children are often channeled into low quality private schools because they are more affordable, they are perceived as less discriminatory towards disadvantaged caste students, and because undereducated parents are not able to critically assess the level of instruction at these schools. Because of these factors, the preference for private education, even if it is bad quality, has become a form of “commonsense” that helps advantaged castes and classes maintain hegemony.

Advantaged groups are able to send their children to the best schools and develop scarce forms of cultural capital through private schooling while disadvantaged groups must try to acquire privileged forms of cultural capital from poor-quality public or private institutions.

English-language education is a form of cultural hegemony; however educational institutions in India also use force to ensure advantaged-caste, Hindu control of the state. Everyday interactions on college campuses enable segregation based on caste; in doing so, socialization in college helps to produce a “caste feeling.” Caste feeling describes a strong affiliation towards and pride in one’s own *jati*, coupled with an active disdain for other castes. In common parlance, caste feeling was limited to describing the attitudes of Kammas and Reddys in Andhra Pradesh. I did not hear disadvantaged castes use this term to describe themselves or other disadvantaged castes¹⁴. It was also a somewhat negative phrase- to describe someone as bearing caste feeling or expressing caste feeling was to suggest that they were being discriminatory and that they were parochial. Caste feeling was manifested through forms of harassment that were dismissed as common to the college experience, and through seemingly frivolous contestations over favorite movie heroes or preferences for particular colors, but these preferences had important political registers.

Kamma students perpetuate Kamma dominance of local educational institutions in Guntur through a sort of caste-based hazing. Several college students I spoke with

¹⁴ Though some politically active Dalits adopted their caste names for their surnames as a political act to make themselves visible and assert their dignity, they did not claim the attendant disdain for other castes that constituted caste feeling.

explained that during freshman year of college, upper-class Kamma students will identify the *jati* identity of freshman and prohibit cross-caste socialization. Keerthi describes the process at LMD (name changed) college, which was founded by a Kamma administration and is well-known to be a Kamma-dominated college:

If you are standing with your friend, they will come up to you and ask, are you C¹⁵? Then they will ask your friend, are you C? If you are with someone who is not a Chowdari, they will say “Why are you going around with that person? You should be with other Chowdaris.” Then they know your caste and if they see you with that person you may have to face a lot of ragging, like they will knock your books over, or talk about you so that other people don’t want to be your friend, or they won’t let you sit next to them in class...they can make it very hard for you to go to college.

Keerthi’s account shows how advantaged caste students police other members of their caste to enforce segregated socialization. Even if young women and men wanted to have friends from other castes, they had to contend with the potential social exclusion and harassment. In schools where Kammas were numerically dominant, there was significant pressure to maintain caste boundaries. Even relatively passive methods such as avoiding other castes helped to cement caste identity.

Keerthi’s narrative suggests that caste feeling is aggressively displayed in college, and this was further supported by the accounts of other college students. Siddhath was a

¹⁵ Chowdari is regional name for the Kamma sub-caste and is often used interchangeably with Kamma. Students may have used the initial “C” rather than the full word Chowdari because outright use of caste language is somewhat taboo.

disadvantaged caste young man was attending engineering college in a village near Guntur city. When I asked him if there were incidents of caste-based aggression in his school, he first denied that people in college cared about caste. After I probed a bit by relaying news reports and other students' accounts of caste-based problems, Siddarth explained how young men argued over film heroes, and formed their attachment to particular heroes based on caste. In Telugu cinema, some actors were known to be Kamma, and others were Reddys or Rajus. Advantaged caste young men would align with the hero of their caste and these groups would often get in heated arguments and physical fights over which hero was better. By channeling caste feeling into the iconic, muscular figures of Telugu movie heroes, young men expressed caste rivalries between Kammas and Reddys through caste-based contestations over masculinity.

College students in India are politically active and develop their identities and sense of national belonging through their political activity. Advantaged caste young women and men express their caste feeling through their political party affiliations. These affiliations often arise in mundane situations. For example, I was attending a local fair in Guntur city with Sunitha, who was just finishing her bachelor's degree in engineering. While we were waiting in line for the Ferris Wheel, Sunitha told the operator that she wanted to wait for the yellow cabin. The young man asked why she wanted yellow, and Sunitha explained that it was because to show her support for the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), whose colors are yellow, green, and red. The operator exclaimed that he was also a TDP supporter, and the two of them hailed each other as fellow party supporters. Like the fights over movie heroes, this display of party affiliation seems relatively innocuous.

Contextualizing the TDP through its caste affiliations reveals how party support is associated with the economic and political domination of Dalits in Andhra.

The Telugu Desam Party, was the first Kamma-controlled party in Andhra Pradesh since the Communist party, which was dismantled in 1956 (Harrison 1956). Rural Kammas tried to use their economic power over their indentured Dalit farm laborers to coerce Dalits to vote for the TDP and shore up Kamma power in the polity. When Dalits refused to comply and allied with the opposition Congress Party, a series of violent assaults were launched against Dalits in the villages of Karamchedu and Neelukonda. These events raised the caste awareness of Dalits and encouraged Dalit political action (Srinivasulu 2002, 45-49). Indira Gandhi's populist radicalism and the weakening of the Congress party a decade earlier had already mobilized marginalized groups and created the political conditions for the formation of subaltern political parties (Srinivasulu 1999, 2002). The Dalit Maha Sabha (DMS) formed in 1985, following the Karamchedu massacre. Reaction to the Karamchedu event was overwhelming and unprecedented. The TDP lost power in Andhra in the 1989 and subsequent elections because they were unable to capture the rural Dalit vote. To this day, rural Dalits ally with the Congress Party.

This history of the TDP is not known to most TDP supporters, and college students who were not even born at the time of the riots were very unlikely to know about these events. Yet many students were passionately allied with their Party because this allegiance was accomplished through caste feeling. The anti-Dalit and anti-Muslim registers of caste feeling are masked by the pro-populist slogans and regalia of the party,

for example when Chandrababu Naidu, the current TDP Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, appears in solidarity with farmers and wears farmer's garb in TDP colors (see figure 3).

Advantaged castes argue that caste is a private affair, but these incidents at the college show that caste is very much at large in the public sphere. In addition to these informal expressions of caste identity, formal student organizations such as the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Pratishad (ABVP, Hindi for All India Students Association) enable the mobilization of caste among young adults. The ABVP is associated with the Bharathiya Janatha Party (BJP), the Hindu nationalist party. The majority ABVP members are advantaged caste, but the organization represents itself as caste-neutral. Disadvantaged castes have vigorously challenged the public silence about caste in colleges and universities through associations such as the Ambedkar Student Association, named after the Dalit activist and legal scholar B.R. Ambedkar. While these organizations have formal equality, the ABVP has the coercive force of advantaged castes and the state behind it. This helps advantaged castes retain control of educational institutions through associations between civil society organizations like the student organizations and the state.

The aggressive nature of advantaged caste suppression became evident in the incidents leading to the suicide of Rohith Vemula. Vemula was a 26-year-old second year PhD student at the University of Hyderabad¹⁶. He committed suicide on the evening of

¹⁶ The following summary of Rohit Vermula's expulsion from Hyderabad University and the events leading up to his suicide. The information is from the articles "Dalit Students In Hyderabad Central University Forced To Vacate Their Rooms" by P.

Sunday, January 17, 2016. In early January, Mr. Vemula and four other Dalit students (Dontha Prashanth, Vijay Kumar, Seshu Chemudugunta and Sunkanna) were expelled from Hyderabad Central University (also known as University of Hyderabad) for allegedly physically attacking another student, Susheel Kumar, in August of 2015. Kumar, who is President of the ABVP at Hyderabad Central University (ABVP-HCU), posted a Facebook status in which he referred to ASA members as “goons.” The ASA students at the university protested this behavior and demanded an apology. Kumar apologized in writing to the ASA in the presence of security officials on August 3, 2015.

The following day, Kumar, along with his brother who is a member of Bharathiya Janata Yuva Morcha (the youth wing of the BJP) alleged that over 30 students from ASA had attacked Susheel Kumar, beaten him, and forced him to write the apology letter. After an investigation in 2015, the ASA students were cleared of the charges. The Vice Chancellor R.P. Sharma stepped down in December of 2015 and Apparao Podile, a Kamma from the Guntur district, took up the Vice Chancellor post at the university. The students were suspended by Apparao Podile shortly after he took office. This was most likely because the alleged attack was raised again by Bandaru Dattarya, a member of Parliament from Hyderabad. Dattarya sent a letter to Smriti Irani, the Minister of Human

Victor Vijay Kumar (<http://www.countercurrents.org/pvk0060116.htm>); “Social Boycott Of Dalit Scholars : Locating Caste In Modern Context” by Agnes Amala T. (<http://www.countercurrents.org/amala080116.htm>); “Hyderabad University suicide: Rohith Vemula hangs himself in campus, student unions protest” by Vishnupriya Bhandaram (<http://www.firstpost.com/india/dalit-phd-student-rohith-vemula-commits-suicide-hyderabad-central-university-students-cry-foul-2588166.html>); and “How the ABVP-BJP killed Rohit Velmula: a short history of events that led to ‘suicide’” (<http://www.indiaresists.com/how-the-abvp-bjp-killed-rohit-velmula-a-short-history-of-events-that-led-to-suicide/>).

Resource Development, stating that the Hyderabad Central University was “casteist and anti-national” due to the protest activities of the ASA students. Though it is unclear if Irani intervened in the affair, Podile suspended the five students named by Kumar without any additional inquiry.

The suspended students were permitted to attend classes, but were barred from entering the hostels and common areas in groups and participating in student union elections. This reproduces older practices of restricting Dalits from public space: the expelled Dalit students were not allowed to enter the library, dining hall, hostel, or other public university spaces. The death of Rohith Vemula and the suspension of his fellow Dalit ASA members demonstrate how political agendas are realized through civil society organizations. Advantaged castes try to retain their monopoly on educational resources and discipline Dalit assertion. When advantaged groups cannot elicit the consent of those they are trying to dominate, they suppress them with force.

The assertion of Dalits demonstrates that not all disadvantaged caste and class people believe that they are immiserated because they lack merit. In my research, the parents I spoke with critiqued the “merit” of dominant groups. Some disadvantaged people resist the hegemonic projects of the elite through their relationship with the state and through their critiques of neoliberal ambitiousness, by disparaging private employment and “money-mindedness.” Disadvantaged caste parents offer counter-hegemonic narratives about how government employment enables employees to work a fixed number of hours, or “time-to-time,” and spend time with family. Additionally, these narratives are gendered: the ability for women to stay at home, rather than having to work

is a way that these groups can claim dignity. This resists the hegemonic neoliberal narrative that women's liberation comes from their ties to the labor market.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to describe why and how caste matters in Indian society. I have traced the historical processes through which caste, class, and gender became mutually constitutive. Though caste existed in some form for millennia in India, there was a great degree of regional variation. The colonial encounter gave caste a somewhat national uniformity, though regional variations are significant. The projects of the census and the law helped to calcify relationships between caste and class. The diverse gender arrangements and family forms throughout the subcontinent were reformed through the law: property relations made the conjugal family the privileged family form. The public debates over these laws brought gender decisively into the public sphere. Indian nationalisms have had to define themselves in relation to the women question as a result of these colonial era debates.

Since independence, caste and class interests have been channeled into the political sphere. Dalit assertion as well as some mobility of the rural peasantry has opened up the polity. Advantaged castes have responded to the redistributive politics of the state by trying to advance their interests through civil society organizations and through private education. At the same time, advantaged castes still hold great political power, and they apply it through civil society organizations. Disadvantaged castes also organize through civil society, but they are often punished for doing so through the

coercive state power of advantaged castes. This recursive relationship between the state and civil society gives the “private” matter of caste public life.

In contemporary India, the economic power of local elites in Andhra has been consolidated through migration. The neoliberal discourse of the new middle class dismisses caste and gender inequalities as things of the past, unable to survive in the era of globalization and liberalization. Yet advantaged caste, male citizens continue to wield decisive economic and political power. Kamma are estimated to own approximately 80 percent of the land in coastal Andhra Pradesh (Srinivasulu 2002) and remittances from Kamma migrants are regularly used to purchase land in Andhra. Though the overwhelming majority of agricultural labor is performed by women, very few women own agricultural land. Alienation from land is compounded for Dalit women. In my study, women owned land in four out of nineteen advantaged caste families, whereas only one woman owned land among the twenty-one disadvantaged caste families. In the next chapter of this dissertation, I explore how caste, class, and gender are reformulated in contemporary Andhra Pradesh.

Figure 1: Advertisement in Guntur City for NRI's Indian Springs School.

The statement to the right of the figure of the multi-armed boy figure reads: “He is not only a class leader, he is tomorrow’s leader.”



Figure 2: School sign and grounds in rural area, approximately 30 kilometers south of Guntur.



Figure 3: Chandrababu Naidu on the Campaign Trail in October, 2012.

Naidu is pictured in the center wearing a headdress in the Telugu Desam Party colors of yellow and green.

Source: <http://www.newindianexpress.com/thesundaystandard/article1288645.ece>



Chapter 3: Cultural Capital and Class Struggle in Civil Society

In this chapter, I focus on how class, gender, and rural/urban tensions are organized and managed through an advantaged-caste philanthropic institution, the Kamma Jana Seva Samithi (Kamma people's helping society, KJSS). Civil society institutions such as the hostel have been hailed as one of the many ways migrants remittances to India "act as an antidote to poverty and promote prosperity" (Kaushik Basu, www.worldbank.org). Some scholars have taken a more skeptical view of these philanthropic activities, suggesting that they have little long-term effects in alleviating poverty (Kapur 2003) or demonstrating how migrant philanthropy tends to be caste-based and therefore increases inequality between castes and may exacerbate class-based tensions within caste groups (Dekkers and Rutten 2011). My research supports this more skeptical view and builds on this work to show how flows of money, commodities, ideas, and people are "loaded with cultural meanings" (Upadhyaya and Rutten 2012, 59).

I argue that the KJSS, colloquially known as the Kamma girls' hostel, helps advance Kamma hegemony in coastal Andhra Pradesh. The hostel was established to help rural young women from the Kamma caste attend schools Guntur city. It is funded by donations from wealthy Kammas from coastal Andhra Pradesh and transnational migrants, almost all of whom are from the coastal region. While the manifest function of the hostel is to increase educational opportunities for rural young women, the everyday practices of the hostel and the hostel structure itself reinforces class and gender

inequalities within caste. The hostel also increases inequalities between Kammas and other castes by increasing Kammas numerical strength in local educational institutions, inculcating “caste feeling” among hostel residents, and structurally recreating distinctions between the advantaged caste residents and disadvantaged caste maintenance workers at the hostel. Lastly, the hostel helps intensify transnational caste networks and makes caste relevant to transnational processes.

I begin with a recent history of Kammas in the Guntur region and the hostel to explain the importance of education and transnational migration to contemporary Kamma identity and hegemony. I then describe class-fractionalization within the Kamma caste and show how this fractionalization is managed through the philanthropic project of educating rural Kamma girls. Next, I develop the concept of transnational cultural capital circulating at the hostel and show how these are related to gender, class, and rural/urban differences. These understandings are strategically deployed in everyday interactions as various actors try to gain benefits and status within transnational institutions and the transnational social field. The Kamma hostel enables the reproduction of gender, class, and rural/urban inequalities within caste, even as it helps some Kamma girls gain cultural capital. The hostel administrators develop political ties within Andhra, raise Kamma prestige in the region, and maintain social and economic ties between Guntur and the US through their management of the hostel. Through their philanthropic donations, Kammas who live abroad can stay connected to coastal Andhra. As migrants, Kammas are in an intermediate position in the racial hierarchy in the United States but in an elite position in Andhra. Donating to the Kamma hostel enables migrants to enjoy this esteem and

position themselves as contributing to regional development. Contrary to recent work which suggests that transnational migrants eschew local cultural forms to adopt a pan-Indian identity (Radhakrishnan 2011), the persistence of regionally-specific *jati* identities indicates that migrants engage in multiple identity projects. In the last section, I discuss the Kamma hostel in relation to issues of gender and caste in Andhra Pradesh.

My data for this chapter draws from two and a half months of participant observation at the Kamma Jana Seva Samithi as well as some of my rural fieldwork interviews. I was able to gain access to the hostel through an introduction from my maternal uncle, who is a resident of Guntur and was acquainted with several of the hostel administrators. Because I am from the Kamma caste and am proficient in Telugu, the local language, I was accepted into the hostel as somewhat of an insider. My position as a researcher from the US also gave me credibility and access and I was able to move freely through the hostel after the first few visits.

I began to visit the hostel in late February of 2012 and observed at the hostel until I returned to the US in mid- May. During this time, I went to the hostel at least three days a week; during my visits I observed the daily procedures of the hostel and talked with hostel staff, administrators, and residents. I attended religious celebrations at the hostel, played games with residents and staff, I wrote field notes during my visits and audio recorded all formal interviews and some informal interviews.

I became close with several of the staff, who informed me about the daily workings of the hostel, common issues with residents, and about everyday life in Guntur more broadly. I formally interviewed four residents, two administrators, two floor

wardens, and the head of the kitchens. Though I was not able to formally interview any of the parents of residents, I did informally speak with some parents when they came to complete the application process for the new academic year.

These data, as well as my own experiences with my family in India and in the US, give me some specialized access to the subtle performances through which caste identity and distinctions are formed. Through an exploration of the intersection of caste, class, and gender at the Kamma hostel, I am interested in developing a critical ethnography of caste. I advance an understanding of caste that challenges the notion of caste as “a reified substance that simply exists (Lukose 2006, 42),” and show how caste is constructed within a set of relations that intersect with gender, class, and locality. This approach to caste offers a perspective of social power that is not hegemonic because it is imposed from the top-down; rather I show how various dimensions of caste identities help extract consent and complicity through shaping people’s commonsense and their everyday practices.

Kammas, Education, and the Kamma Jana Seva Samithi

Education became an important marker of status in Guntur during the late-colonial period through the socioeconomic mobility of the Kamma caste. At this time, Guntur was an important administrative center of the Madras Presidency, with Brahmins, zamindars, and large landholders holding political power in the region and alternately accommodating or resisting the British Raj (Frykenberg 1965). Kammas, who are the current dominant caste of Andhra Pradesh, were mainly a rural, land-owning caste, with some ties to the military and bureaucracy of Coastal Andhra (Upadhyaya 1988; Frykenberg

1965; Harrison 1956). In an effort to break Brahminical power and undermine what they perceived to be Brahmin-lead home rule movements, the British started to open-up the colonial bureaucracy to non-Brahmins¹⁷. At the same time, wealthy Kamma farmers from the Krishna district were producing large agricultural surpluses and sought to diversify their economic interests and gain political power. They began to send their sons to professional schools and to invest in industries in Guntur, but few villages had secondary educational institutions. Existing educational institutions were Brahmin-lead and actively excluded non-Brahmins¹⁸. To facilitate the education of young men from the villages, a hostel for Kamma boys was established in Guntur in 1919¹⁹. The emerging group of educated young Kamma men established themselves in Guntur to form a class of urban professionals, bureaucrats, and capitalists (Upadhyaya 1988, 1997). From this period to

¹⁷ The Communal Government Ordinance allotted 5 out of every 12 administrative posts to non- Brahmins; by 1940, non-Brahmins had greatly benefited from this arrangement (Ramaswami 1978).

¹⁸ Ramaswami (1978) cites the reports of “the Kollur incident” of 1916, where it was alleged that Brahmin teachers denied Kamma students the right to study the Vedas, the primary Hindu religious texts. At Amritalur, Kamma students were “driven away by Brahmins enraged by the presence of shudras who had no right to hear the Vedas (293).” During this period, the Brahmins in the Krishna district filed a registered notice that Kammas specifically should not be allowed to study Sanskrit. These events set off a chain reaction of Kammas organizing social and political resistance to Brahmins in order to advance their own educational credentials and ritual status (Ramaswami 1978).

¹⁹ Washbrook observes that caste organizations during this period had a dominant streak of elitism. The initiative for organization did not come from the mass of the rank and file, but from the powerful and politicized “publicists” of the caste. David Washbrook, “The Development of Caste Organisation in South India 1880 –1925,” in *South Indian Political Institutions and Political Change, 1880-1940*, edited by C.J. Baker and D.A. Washbrook, 1975, (Delhi: MacMillan), pp. 150-203.

current day, Kammas economic, political, and cultural dominance in Andhra Pradesh is justified as the meritocratic result of their educational achievements.

Kammas early holdings in educational capital enabled them to migrate as high-skilled labor to the US in the late 1960s. As this already elite group gained even more economic power through migration, their prestige in the Guntur region grew and migration itself took on immense symbolic weight. America was conceptualized as the material manifestation of a fantastical, futuristic society and migrants were understood to be extraordinary individuals specially suited to live in such a society. Coupled with their experience as racial minorities in the US, Kammas claim that their economic successes are a result of individual talent, hard work, and adaptability to non-Indian cultures that are of sufficient merit to overcome racial prejudice. At the same time, this heightened interaction with the West drew from and intensified an earlier pattern of Westernization among Kammas (Srinivas 1956; Upadhyaya 1997, 177) and encouraged the education of women. As early as the 1930s, Kamma urban elites gained symbolic capital as “modern” Indians by educating women. Moreover, cross-cousin and uncle-niece marriages were common among Kammas, and it was not unusual for women to grow up as part of the same extended family household, or *kutumba*²⁰, as their future spouse. Therefore returns to investments in girls’ education, which are seen as lost to the natal family upon marriage in exogamous cultures (Purewal 2014), could, among Kammas, accrue to the kin of the *kutumba*, who were simultaneously both natal and affinal.

²⁰ Bhattácháryya explains that the word *kutumba* refers to a large kin group who live together, take meals together, have common funds and common means of support, and own extended landed property together. *The Law Relating to the Joint Hindu Family*, Krishna Kamal Bhattácháryya, 1885.

As migration to the US became more common among the Kamma elite, education gained importance for women's prospects in the marriage market. Young women who had tertiary educations and could communicate well in English were seen as better matches for well-educated sons who would live in English-speaking countries. Well-educated women could bolster family wealth and prestige and were thought to be better suited to raise children. For these reasons, women's education has been fostered for several decades among elite Kammas and functions as important economic and symbolic resource for Kamma hegemony in the region.

A concerted caste-based effort to promote girls' education among Kammas was initiated at a meeting on 23 April, 1978 in Guntur. An assembly of 216 Kammas from the Guntur region unanimously voted to establish a hostel for young women who wanted to attend school in Guntur and one acre of land in Guntur city was purchased for this purpose shortly thereafter. Due to various zoning issues, the land could not be registered as a hostel site until 1990. The first building for the hostel was constructed in the early 2000s, after several large donations were collected from prominent local Kamma families. The hostel opened in June of 2003, and was comprised of one dormitory building that housed approximately 300 young women. Today, the hostel has four dormitories and houses 1,500 women.

Rural Kammas, Agrarian Change, and Girls' Education

In Andhra Pradesh, Kammas have a reputation of being wealthy transnational migrants, urban capitalists, and rural landholders. However a significant number of rural Kammas were economically disadvantaged. In the villages where I conducted fieldwork,

one of the most frequent complaints I heard from Kamma farmers was that agriculture had not been profitable in over a decade due to irregular water supply, fertilizer and seed costs, and natural disasters²¹. Two of the Kamma families I spoke with had sold their land in the early 2000s, following several years of droughts and flooding after which they could not repay their agricultural loans. Of the six rural Kamma families in my study who owned agricultural land, all but two families had men and women in the family who worked as field laborers or graded tobacco or did other forms of arduous, non-supervisory manual labor. In addition, rural Kammas were often cash-poor and undereducated. Though all of the rural Kamma mothers I spoke with were literate, only two had finished high school. Most were educated in Telugu-medium schools and had some difficulty reading English.

Rural Kamma parents often expected that their own generation would be the last one that would farm the land, both because it was unprofitable and because it was associated with low status manual labor- with “dirt on your feet” as Ramamurthy, one of my informants, stated. When I asked him about what he thought would happen to farmers in the next generation, he explained how the movement out of farming was tied to marital prospects in a global economy:

“Who knows what will happen? No one wants to do it, there is no profit in it (*eymi laabam ledhu*). People won’t even give their daughters [in marriage] to a man with 100 acres, only to someone with a job. Now

²¹ Though farmers made some attempts to get insurance coverage for crop losses in case of natural disasters, at the time of my fieldwork only tobacco farmers, who were organized by a powerful regional Tobacco Board, were able to contract with an insurance company.

all the girls go to school and they won't live in a village, they want to go to America..."

It is in this context of the limited prospects and low prestige of farming and an acute awareness of globalization that Kamma parents from the villages strategize to educate their daughters. Because Kammas assert the superiority of their caste in part through their educational achievements, rural Kammas are pressured to catch-up to the achievements of their urban counterparts in order for Kammas as a caste to distinguish themselves from less advantaged castes. This strategy of distinction is particularly important for Kammas, who, as shudras in the *varna* caste system are part of the peasantry and have a ritually low status.

Kammas forward-thinking attitude about women's education does not extend to progressive sexual ideas; marriage is near universal and the most valued identity even for educated women is that of a mother. Sexuality can only be appropriately expressed within marriage; girls are not allowed to date and even spending time alone with a boy who is not a relative can invite criticism about a girl's "moral character."

On the one hand, rural Kamma parents are exhorted to educate their daughters at least to a bachelor's level. All the rural Kamma families in my study had women who completed tertiary education in their kin network and saw this prospect as achievable and beneficial; not educating daughters was associated with backwardness and poverty. Parents felt that arranging a beneficial marriage for their daughter was an important parental duty, and they were especially concerned about matrimonial prospects, which emphasize educational capital. The best matches are considered to be with young men

who work abroad, especially in the US, and a tertiary degree was considered compulsory to be considered a match for these boys, with a preference for young women with post-graduate degrees. On the other hand, adolescent girls are considered vulnerable to the temptation of romance and to sexual violence. Any suspected sexual activity, whether voluntary or forced, ruins a young woman's marriage prospects. At the caste-level, the fear that girls may have too much freedom when they come to the city to study threatens the respectability of the caste.

The Kamma hostel resolves these competing pressures by enabling Kammas to gain status and cultural capital by educating girls, and mitigates the perceived risks of letting girls have freedom to wander in anonymous urban space. The KJSS performs several functions that alternately coordinate and reinforce inequalities between different fractions within the Kamma caste. First, the hostel acts *in loco parentis*, and in doing so performs the modernizing function of moving private labor into the public sphere. The work of housing, feeding, monitoring, cleaning-up after, grooming, and giving moral and spiritual instruction are transferred from the family into the institution of the hostel. This movement from the private into the public sphere is accompanied by a set of norms about time management and appropriate public conduct.

The hostel is caste-based and therefore has connotations as an extended kin group, or *kulam*. *Kulam*, which Bhattácháryya (1885) translates as family, is used as an alternate and more intimate word for sub-caste, or *jati*. Thus the intra-caste nature of the hostel can also be read as intra-familial, a connotation that caste members use to justify the exclusion of young women from other *jatis*. The familial duty of preserving young

women's chastity justifies intensive forms of surveillance at the hostel. Young women are divested of privacy and autonomy; for example residents are forbidden to have cell phones, have to sign in and out of the hostel for every outing, ask permission to leave the hostel even for even short trips to the tailor or pharmacy, and the hostel uses facial recognition technology to enforce curfews.

Finally, by using funds from US Kamma donors, the institution forms part of a transnational social field that includes hostel residents as alternately wards of the institution and as members of an extended transnational caste network. This triple nature of the hostel- as institutional/bureaucratic, familial, and transnational- offers a unique perspective on how public/private and local/global binaries are constructed in relation to each other, and how they are strategically deployed as individuals and groups compete for resources.

Transnational Cultural Capital

Most people in the Guntur region regard globalization as a positive force that demonstrates India's modernity. However the understandings of what it means to be global and the benefits various actors expect from globalization are conditioned by class, caste, gender, and rural/urban differences. Key institutions such as the family, private schools, and civil society organizations have a variety of ties within Guntur and outside of India, especially to the United States. To gain control of these institutions and benefit from them, social actors must be both "global" and authentically "Indian." These categories are not necessarily *a priori* truths, but are constructed in relation to each other

and articulated through the production of a new form of cultural capital, transnational cultural capital.

Transnational cultural capital is understood as an alleged talent for crossing national and/or cultural boundaries, the ability to “go anywhere and be comfortable,” while remaining tied to some notion of “Indian-ness.” This form of capital is the distinguishing feature of India’s “new middle class.” Discursively, the ability to traverse national boundaries yet still remain (and represent) India helps those who think of themselves as middle class assert their positions as leaders of a new national modernity. People who possess TCC can represent the nation as simultaneously culturally and temporally continuous despite the de-territorialization of its citizens, and represent the “New India” as dynamic and at the vanguard of global economic and cultural change. Materially, TCC positions those who possess it in the “contradictory class location” of the middle class. It is comprised of scarce skills and resources that enable this class to occupy a supervisory role in the labor process and share in the surplus produced by the working classes and accruing to the capitalist class, but they also sell their labor in the form of mental labor power and are therefore exploited.

Transnational cultural capital is produced in the transnational social field. This field is created by social actors who are defined in relation to each other and are therefore joined in struggle for social position (Bourdieu 1985; Leavitt and Glick-Schiller 2004). The transnational social field in this research is created in through the networks linking actors in Guntur city and its rural hinterlands to transnational institutions and individuals.

To go anywhere and be comfortable, and to stay wedded to some notion of Indian-ness, individuals must have some mix of the following qualities:

Table 1: Transnational Cultural Capital

Mobility (“go anywhere”)	Indian-ness
1. Ability to communicate in English	1. Proficiency in the local language
2. Widely-recognized educational credentials (cultural capital)	2. Widely-recognized and esteemed name (social capital)
3. Facility with technology	3. Facility with technology
4. Adherence to bureaucratic time	4. Time with and prioritization of family
5. Eating, dress, and grooming habits that allow person to socialize with dissimilar others	5. Awareness and enjoyment of local food habits and dress
6. Liquid Assets	6. Property (land) in India
7. Familiarity with global culture	7. Adherence to local <i>padhathulu</i> (formal manners and customs)
8. Soft Skills	8. Piety (demonstrated by regular observation of Hindu religious rituals)
9. Meritocratic	9. Noble

Different social groups engage in contestations over the mix of mobile and Indian qualities that comprise the ideal form of transnational cultural capital. These contestations arise from class, caste, gender, and rural-urban differences in access to material and cultural resources, which shape people's perceived abilities to embody or develop various qualities associated with transnational cultural capital. I trace the understandings, production, and contestations over transnational cultural capital through three institutions: families, private English-medium schools, and advantaged-caste hostels. By tracking the institutions and the everyday processes through which transnational cultural capital is produced, I show how individuals and social groups assert varied definitions of and claim different benefits from a globalized India.²² I also demonstrate how competition for position in the transnational social field reproduces gender, class, caste and rural/urban inequalities.

The KJSS manages three competing understandings of transnational cultural capital that circulate within the *Kamma jati* of Andhra Pradesh. The first understanding of transnational cultural capital that circulates in the hostel is that of the hostel residents. None of the residents I spoke with had travelled outside of India, and only a few had close relatives such as siblings or parents' siblings who lived abroad. Their Indian-ness was unquestionable and young women were primarily concerned with demonstrating

²² I use "global" or "globalization" to acknowledge the territorial and bounded limits of the nation-state, and transnational to account for a social space that is materially grounded in and links nation-states together, but also exists as a semi-autonomous network space through which social actors, resources, and ideas circulate (Castells 1996; Leavitt and Glick-Schiller 2004).

their knowledge of global culture and their ability to be mobile. Residents did so through their educational and marital aspirations, their dress and grooming habits, their familiarity with technology (which was often associated with their fields of study such as computer science), and through consuming television shows and movies from other countries, especially from the US and South Korea. Most young women hoped to travel to the US, though many stated that they would not want to permanently migrate because they felt like the quality of life in India was good and because they did not want to live far from their friends and family. A few young women did hope to migrate to the US. These young women were much more active than most residents in developing their facility in spoken English. They also saw marriage as a migration strategy and, perhaps jokingly, ranked US residence above looks and personality in desirable qualities for a potential groom. The residents' understandings and assertions of transnational cultural capital was sometimes aligned with and sometimes contradicted that of the hostel administrators.

The second understanding of transnational cultural capital that circulated within the hostel was that of the administrators. At the time of my fieldwork, the hostel governing body was comprised of 11 members, only one of whom was a woman and who I did not see in my three months of fieldwork at the hostel. Most governing members were in their late fifties and early sixties and owned capitalist enterprises such as cotton mills in or near Guntur city. The daily bureaucratic oversight was performed by three men who worked at the hostel every day of the week except Sundays. In addition to these administrators, three members of the governing body board visited the hostel at least once a week. Three of the administrators I spoke with had close family members who lived in

the US and had travelled to the US. Like the hostel residents, these men's Indian-ness was secure, and they asserted their transnational cultural capital through two strategies. In one strategy, they demonstrated their own ability to go anywhere and be comfortable by invoking their familial ties to migrants and discussing their visits abroad. However they had limited abilities to embody several important qualities required for mobility: they tended to be educated in Telugu, had limited facility with computers, and few "soft skills." They therefore used a second strategy to demonstrate that they understood the value of the qualities they could not embody by attempting to inculcate them (at times aggressively) in hostel residents. For example, only one of the six administrators had a tertiary degree from an English-medium school. Yet girls at the hostel had to take an English proficiency test upon entry to the hostel and had to take tutoring if she did not perform satisfactorily on the test. Administrators tried to claim certain qualities associated with mobility by showing their awareness and esteem for these qualities and by taking credit for developing these qualities in the hostel residents.

The final understanding of transnational cultural capital is that of Kamma overseas donors, who have the most holdings in the qualities associated with mobility, but have fewer ones associated with Indian-ness. Because these Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) are the most vulnerable to the loss of "Indian" identity due to migration and their subsequent immersion in non-Indian cultures, this group asserts its claim to India through its remittance activity. The hostel not only provides these groups with material signs of belonging, in the form of engraved plaques with donors' names that are displayed throughout the hostel, hostel administrators and residents also produce a local regional

identity and history that recreates subtle forms of distinction between Kammas and other castes and between Kamma elites and their poorer counterparts. Overseas Kammas are therefore able to stay connected to a shared, territorialized history and see themselves simultaneously as preservers of Kamma culture and as leaders of development activity in India.

Coordination, Contestation, and Inequality

Soft Skills

One of the most common discussion topics among hostel administrators was “soft skills” and their strategies to inculcate these skills in the residents. The promotion of soft skills is prevalent not only in the hostel, but also appears in advertisements for secondary schools, colleges, and coaching centers in Guntur. This “buzz word” is associated with communication and interpersonal skills, and entered the cultural landscape of Guntur through the diffusion of IT workplace culture into everyday life. As such, soft skills are inextricably linked to migration and an important element of transnational cultural capital. Ironically, though the hostel administrators claim some transnational cultural capital by invoking soft skills to demonstrate their knowledge of global corporate culture, Indians in IT workplaces are often perceived as lacking soft skills. Indians are thought to have cultural habits that make them poor communicators and workers, such as lack of assertiveness and independence and inability to meet deadlines (Upadhya 2007; see also Radhakrishnan 2011).

During his inaugural address to hostel residents, one of the senior members of the hostel board, Punnai Chowdary-garu, explained that soft skills are “how you stand, how

you speak, how you perform namaskaram...we should perform namarskaram so well that people will fall over..." Punnai Chowdary-garu's folding in of the quintessentially Indian namaskar (which is the Hindu custom of bowing with palms pressed together, a gesture of reverence in the presence of the divine) to a description of soft skills exemplifies the melding of mobile and Hindu-Indian qualities associated with transnational cultural capital. While namaskar is a performance that may not be associated with soft skills in workplaces outside of India, and perhaps not even in global firms within India, among hostel residents and administrators, the inclusion of this custom in soft skills shows how transnational cultural capital is defined through locally-situated practices.

In addition to the more ephemeral description of soft skills as modes of comportment, facility in English language communication was also promoted in the hostel policy. First-year hostel residents have to take an English proficiency test and if they do not pass the test they have to take an English language class at the hostel. Hostel administrators lamented at the poor attendance to these classes, which were free of charge to hostel residents, but the residents I spoke with explained that the class was held at a time when many of them had other tutoring for their courses. In addition to this, hostel residents preferred to take courses outside of the hostel with their classmates from school. While the residents themselves did not expressly tell me that English coaching courses were places where they could socialize with young men, one of the wardens explained that this was why girls often preferred to take classes outside of the hostel. Despite the poor attendance to these courses, the hostel planned to conduct classes in the upcoming year and had also added a soft skills training course.

Hostel residents, even those who had been educated in English in secondary school, had limited proficiency in speaking English because they rarely spoke it outside of school. None of the girls I spoke with had parents who spoke English so they did not speak English at home and even those girls who had lived in hostels tended to attend schools that did not emphasize speaking English outside of the classroom. I met only one resident who could converse comfortably in English, and she had attended school in Hyderabad, which was the capital city of Andhra at the time of my fieldwork²³. Despite their limited proficiency as English speakers, most hostel residents understood written English well; for example all of their school course materials were in English and they watched English-subtitled South Korean dramas for leisure. This gave residents a sense that they were proficient in English, and some girls interpreted administrators' demands that they learn English as overly critical and unfounded.

The appropriate comportment of the body, or *hexis* (Bourdieu 1984), to show the soft skills of confidence and assertiveness was at odds with a gendered imperative that young women show deference and humility in their bearing. During the same speech about English proficiency and soft skills, Punnai Chowdary-garu recounted how one of the wealthy NRI donors they had gone to visit in the US had bent down on one knee to tie the shoelace of one of the administrators. The humility of the woman in the anecdote, despite her high status, signals her adherence to properly “Indian” ideals of extreme deference to elders and to gendered acts of care-giving. This anecdote suggests to hostel

²³ Telangana state, in which Hyderabad is located, became independent of Andhra Pradesh on June 2, 2014. It was announced on October 9, 2014 that the new capital of Andhra Pradesh will be located in Guntur.

residents that they should be similarly deferential to their elders and it contradicts the egalitarian ethos implicit in notions of confidence and assertiveness.

In addition to formal mechanisms institutionalized by the hostel for teaching English, some hostel administrators would informally quiz girls in English. Most hostel residents were intimidated by the wealthy, older, middle class male administrators and rarely addressed them. Since young women had been socialized all their lives to act with deference in relation to these men, some girls froze up in the presence of administrators and were unable to respond satisfactorily to administrators' questions. The following anecdotes from my field notes describe two incidents that demonstrate this dynamic:

Dharmalingam-garu, was introducing me to various people in the hostel. We met one of the wardens and her daughter, who is 13. Dharmalingam-garu asked her in English to recite her name, where she went to school, the year she was studying, and her favorite topic. She was a bit slow to talk and she only got out a few words before he cut her off and said "See, you are a student and you should be able to do this. Where do you go to school?" When she told him the name of the school he said "That's an English medium school. You should be able to answer in English." Then he marched through each of the questions with her and she was still a little shy and talked slowly. After going through the questions one by one, he made her repeat her answers in one continuous narrative. After she did so, he said "You must speak confidently and clearly. What's the point of all this if you cannot answer simple questions?" As we walked away from her he said to me "See? These girls must learn to talk with confidence but they cannot even answer simple questions. We teach them with classes but they do not understand the importance."

* * *

Jaya Sri (a floor warden), Radha and I were sitting at one of two tables for applications for the hostel. Rama Devi and Shilpa are handing out applications, and we are taking in completed ones. Koteswari-garu, who had just returned from his trip to TANA (Telugu Association of North America) in the US, walked over to the area where we were sitting, accompanied by his servant. Everyone stood up as he walked and greeted him with a “Hello Sir” in unison, and he stood looking over all of us. Radha asked him in Telugu “How was your trip sir?” and he said in Telugu “Our trip went very well. Very well.” But he didn’t smile or even make eye contact with any of us. He asked the girls at the other table how many completed applications we had received- since they were only handing out the applications they didn’t know and they just stood in awkward intimidated silence. I then told him we had taken 738, and he said: “And who are you?” As I was telling him I was conducting research at the hostel, he cut me off to say “I know very well who you are.” Then he upbraided the other girls by saying “How is that this girls knows and she does not even live here and you don’t know” in a contemptuous tone. The girls looked dejected and he left after giving them a look of distaste.

These incidents are not only gendered enactments of dominance between residents and administrators, they also enable administrators to demonstrate their own holdings in transnational cultural capital and residents lack of this capital.

Dharmalingam-garu was able to display his own English language facility, and Koteswari-garu showed his ability to succeed in the US, even if it was for a short fundraising trip. Both administrators were trying to teach these young women to be confident public speakers, yet their authoritative demeanors and methods of instruction

intimidated the young women, who are taught throughout their lives to be extremely deferential to older people, wealthier people, and men.

Whereas administrators often quizzed girls, instructed them to do various tasks, or addressed them for any number of other reasons, hostel residents were not similarly able to initiate conversations with the administrators. Radha's inquiry about Koteswari-garu's trip to the US demonstrated her confidence and facility with making conversation, but she was not credited for these skills. Instead, the interaction enabled Koteswari-garu to demonstrate his own proficiencies as someone who can "go anywhere and be comfortable." The ability to address these girls is itself a demonstration of power, and this is amplified by the quizzing nature of the interactions recounted above. Through routine informal tests of this nature, administrators position themselves as experts able to evaluate the hostel residents and as enacting their duties of uplifting these girls through education. If residents fail to answer in the manner administrators would like, the administrators can confirm their greater proficiency in soft skills such as confidence, and their English language abilities. These displays of the qualities of mobility associated with transnational cultural capital further bolster their authority over residents. If residents like Radha do demonstrate a confident demeanor, administrators may not notice this or reward it, or they may take credit for developing these skills in residents. Similarly, the girls' knowledge of global cultures, which they displayed through their wearing of Western fashions such as jeans and pajamas and their consumption of Korean dramas, were illegible as transnational cultural capital to hostel administrators, who dismissed these practices as frivolous.

Some hostel residents like Radha were aware of and critiqued the inequalities that were formally and informally institutionalized in the hostel. After the interaction with Koteswari-garu, Radha told me that she “knows about him and watches him.” She explained that he favors the pretty, fair-skinned girls at the hostel. Several years ago when he was arranging his son’s marriage, Koteswari-garu used his position at the hostel to look for a potential match for his son among the residents. Even among the young women who were critical of some administrators’ treatment of them and of hostel policies, they spoke only among themselves and did not, and in fact could not, contest the power inequalities between themselves and administrators. The residents’ subordinate position was so deep-seated in their habitus that outright critique was unthinkable. In addition to this, most hostel residents wanted to be included in the hostel because they had friends in the hostel and because it was prestigious due to its associations with NRI Kammass in the US.

Radha’s discussion of Koteswari-garu’s iniquitous treatment of hostel residents shows how young women used gossip to “embody...a critique of things as they are as well as a version of things as they should be” (Scott 1985, 23). Yet even Radha’s resistance was somewhat subdued by the patronage of the hostel. Just before I finished fieldwork, Radha had won a scholarship at the hostel to go to Hyderabad (the state capital at the time) and take an intensive preparation course for the Indian Administrative Service exam. The course was one month long and expensive, and Radha would not have been able to attend had she not won the scholarship. By offering these scholarships, the hostel could present itself as meritocratic and generous. Thus, patronage helped to elide

class and gender inequalities within caste and garner the consent of these dominated caste fractions.

Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Kammas, as both aspirational symbols and as donors, were critical for Kamma hegemony. NRIs who donated to the hostel would often visit the hostel if they were in or from Guntur. Though I did not see any NRI visitors when I was there, the hostel residents and administrators recounted the visits with pride. Even though NRI donors were only occasionally present in person, NRI influence in the hostel was pervasive. This was based to some extent on the myths of the NRI as fabulously wealthy and brilliant, but was also materially grounded in local events and in the flow of technologies into the hostel, as I discuss in the next two sections.

Weddings and Dowry

Kamma NRIs build transnational cultural capital and assert their Indian-ness by building social capital in India. Monetary donation to the hostel is the most obvious way NRIs build social capital, but social events like weddings and receptions are also important sites for constructing and asserting dominance through displays of transnational cultural capital. Kamma NRIs from the Guntur area who donate to the hostel will usually invite some of the hostel administration to family weddings, which are held in opulent wedding halls in Guntur. During my fieldwork, the daughter of a member of the hostel board was getting married. Since the wedding was in late April, during school holidays, only about 300 residents were at the hostel and all of the hostel residents were invited to the reception. The daughter was an IT worker in the US, as was the man she was marrying. The wedding reception was rumored to be attended by several

thousand people. I heard speculations that the bride had a dowry equivalent to \$250,000, and an SUV that was given as part of the dowry settlement (see figures 4 and 5) was decorated and prominently displayed at the front entrance of the reception hall.

The lavish weddings and receptions of NRIs and other wealthy Kammas function as “rituals of consumption” that convert economic capital into symbolic capital (Dietler 2001). The reception feast we attended demonstrated the NRI bride’s and groom’s vast holdings in the liquid economic capital required to host such an extravagant event, their transnational cultural capital that allowed them to acquire this wealth abroad, and their allegiance to local customs and social ties that attest to their authentic “Indianness” despite their migration to the US.

By hosting this reception and inviting hostel residents, NRIs are able to claim the highest position in the transnational social field between Guntur and the US. The reception used the powerful idiom of commensal hospitality to “reproduce relationships capable of encompassing sustained aggressive competition by effectively euphemizing it in a symbolic practice that encourages collective misrecognition of the self-interested nature of the process (Dietler 2001, 73).” This misrecognition of class inequality (what Dietler calls aggressive competition) was not complete, and some residents critiqued the class differences between NRI donors and hostel residents that the reception simultaneously demonstrated and attempted to mystify. Radha, a hostel resident, and I were discussing the reception. Radha said “Yes, that will be a big sound party.” She explained that a sound party was a large, lavish event held by wealthy Kammas, and the soundtrack of this event was the sound of gold coins clinking. Radha explained that she

feels alienated from the hosts of these events, saying “What do we have in common these kind of people? [*Manaki itlanti valutho emi samandam?*]” Unlike Radha, the hostel administrators praised the grandness of the reception and generosity of the nuptial couple. Because they share class positions with the NRI couple’s parents, their perception of the event supported the mystifying project of the feast- to convert transnational cultural capital into the symbolic capital of legitimacy, which enables migrants to hide their accumulated class privileges and recast their wealth as a result of hard work and merit.

In everyday life at the hostel, the version of transnational cultural capital advanced by NRIs is deployed by the administrators to create “hegemonic aspirations” (Fernandes and Heller 2006) in hostel residents. During his inaugural speech, Punnai Chaowdary-garu described the fantastical wealth of the NRIs he had met in the US, and stated that many of the NRIs were from the same villages as hostel residents. He urged residents to focus on their studies so that they too might realize such wealth. But as Radha so eloquently expressed, this kind of wealth was unthinkable to many hostel residents. Administrators did not expect many girls to achieve this sort of wealth. Instead, the invocation and affiliation to a version of transnational cultural capital that was defined by earning power and merit reinforced the legitimacy of the dominant class fraction of Kammass over their rural and less advantaged counterparts.

Security measures

Another way NRIs shaped the culture of the hostel and developed their ties in Guntur was through developing the technological infrastructure of the hostel. NRIs were especially willing to donate funds for a computer lab, and one of the NRIs associated

with the hostel had donated a new facial recognition system for the hostel's front gate to monitor residents. Accounting for the residents was one of the chief bureaucratic tasks of the hostel staff and administration. There was a register at the front gate that residents had to sign when they left and re-entered the hostel. They also had to sign in and out with their floor warden. This was done for every outing, and brief non-school outings such as trips to the drug store or tailor required verbal authorization from the administrator on duty. For overnight trips such as visits home, residents were required to submit a written request in which they specified what time they planned to leave for home, their expected arrival at home, and what time they planned return to the hostel. The request had to be approved by their floor warden and an administrator. Floor wardens were required to call parents to inform them of their daughter's plans and account for residents return at the expected time. All of these measures were undertaken to manage girls' safety and account for any missing girls, but the subtext of many of these policies was that they were measures to prevent girls from meeting up with boys.

For this reason, cell phones were strictly prohibited and any resident caught with a cell phone was immediately dismissed from the hostel. However, some of the residents I became close with explained that girls in the hostel carried on flirtations on Facebook with young men from their colleges. Hostel administrators were somewhat naïve about Facebook and other online platforms through which residents could communicate with boys. In the same way that Western dress and South Korean dramas were illegible to administrators, online forms of communication were not perceived as potentially leading girls astray. Thus residents were unwilling to assert claims to the technological

proficiency associated with transnational cultural capital; residents actively masked some forms of technological proficiency to circumvent the scrutiny of administrators.

While the hostel was remarkably proficient at keeping track of residents, the daily auditing of books and crosschecking was time-consuming and not fool-proof. Residents could stay out after curfew and sneak back in without signing the register, and claim that they had forgotten to do so. If girls were indeed missing, the register for the floor had to be checked against several pages of names in the register for the front gate. The facial recognition technology for the front door was expected to mechanize these processes and would automatically send text messages to the hostel administrators, floor warden, and residents' parents if residents did not check-in at the front gate by the curfew.

By facilitating the close monitoring of girls, NRIs could assert their allegiance to local norms that forbid girls from any sustained interaction with boys. Transferring the hardware and knowledge to implement technologically advanced forms of monitoring from the US to Guntur allowed NRIs to display their facility with technology that they acquired abroad. The definition of transnational cultural capital through the use of technology helped NRIs assert their holdings in this capital as the most valuable.

Administrators took up some aspects of technological management, however they also resisted the conversion of monetary hostel accounts into accounting software. Most of the hostel administrators were unfamiliar with such software but were intimately familiar with the double-entry bookkeeping that was used at the hostel because many of them used it for their own businesses. These administrators argued that it was unnecessary to spend the time and effort required to convert the current paper system into

booking software. For administrators who were somewhat unfamiliar with computer technology, the implementation of monitoring technologies signaled that they were at the technological vanguard. This promoted NRI projects of developing transnational cultural capital through the hostel. At the same time, it helped administrators counter the connotations of backwardness associated with their resistance to the use of accounting software.

Whereas soft skills, weddings, and uses of technology are mainly shaped by flows from the US into Guntur, the dining practices and religious monitoring at the hostel help to produce a regionally-specific Kamma identity that flows from Guntur to the US. Food and religion are understood as private practices, but the hostel demonstrates how these practices can simultaneously be subject to public regulation. The hostel perpetuates the kin-like quality of caste by maintaining food habits that are associated with the caste, but they also use dining as a way of instilling bureaucratic discipline. Kammas' Hindu identity helps them to claim moral hegemony and increase their political appeal to disadvantaged classes and castes.

Dining

Coastal Andhra culture is hegemonic in the state, and one element of this hegemony is expressed through the assertion that Kammas from the coastal region have a refined culinary culture. For this reason, food preparation at the hostel is supervised by a Kamma woman, Revathi-garu. In the mornings, residents were served a regular "tiffin-" or light breakfast dish, not rice. Lunch was rice, one hot pickle dish that was served again at dinner, one vegetable course, rasam (a light pepper and tamarind broth), and yogurt.

Dinner consisted of rice, one hot pickle dish, two vegetable courses, sambar (a dal based soup), and yogurt. Eggs of some kind were served three times a week and meat, usually chicken, was served on Sundays. These food habits were highly specific to the region and were advantaged-class and Kamma. Poorer families could not afford a variety of grains and working women (laborers) did not have time to make a separate breakfast and lunch before they went to work. Other advantaged-castes such as the Komatis and Brahmins did not eat eggs or meat.

For hostel administrators and NRI donors, the food habits of the hostel were deeply nostalgic. Hostel administrators described the dining habits of residents to potential NRI donors to invoke this shared culture, and NRI donors often commented in the excellent quality of the food in the NRI guest book. These food habits were also venerated as a form of folk knowledge about nutrition through which NRIs and administrators asserted a civilizational superiority to the West. At the same time, allopathic ideas about nutrition were also promoted at the hostel. A nutritionist was scheduled to come to the hostel to explain the principles of nutrition to residents.

Hostel administrators actively discouraged girls from eating outside of the hostel, due to concerns about food contamination and lack of nutrition. However, the advantaged-class urban families I interviewed actively tried to accustom their children to eating Western food and make them familiar with Western eating habits and manners, for example by teaching them how to eat with flatware. These eating habits demonstrated the cosmopolitanism of urbanites and also broadened the palate of advantaged-class children,

which parents felt would help them socialize with a diverse group of people and help them adjust to non-Indian cultures if they went abroad for schooling or work.

As important as the food itself was the organization of dining. Floor wardens watched the flow of residents and organized residents to come to the dining hall in progression so that there was no congestion. Residents were trained to form orderly queues and the efficiency with which mealtimes were managed was a source of pride for the hostel administrators. In this way, girls are taught about bureaucratic order and time through organizing them for mealtime. The dining hall was a place where bodies were brought into alignment with bureaucratic notions of time, orderliness, and efficiency and was simultaneously a place where caste-eating habits could be enacted. Hostel administrators could claim to develop residents transnational cultural capital by accustoming them to bureaucratic time and orderliness and maintain a uniquely Kamma food culture.

Residents themselves did not see much value to this orderliness, and regularly complained about the food. Many of the girls I spoke with did want to eat at the Kentucky Fried Chicken or Dominos restaurants that were in Guntur, but this was seen as a leisure activity rather than an alternative to the hostel food. The hostel residents often stated that they did not feel like they had eaten a proper meal unless they ate rice. Thus hostel residents had limited potential to define their transnational cultural capital through their dining habits. Hostel administrators were able to forge transnational social ties and elicit donations from NRIs through a shared food culture, and donors were able to

express their nostalgic ties to Guntur by donating money and implicitly endorsing the food culture of the hostel.

Religion, Caste, and Class

While some scholars argue that caste is no longer tied to religious practices and is becoming secularized through civil society institutions (Sheth 1999), I found that caste boundaries were still defined at the intersection of religion, class, and caste at the girls hostel. A number of comments in the donor guest book suggested that the hostel should be open to all rural girls, not only Kamma girls. However, the following incident from my fieldwork demonstrates how the hostel manages religious and class-based caste boundaries:

Jaya Sri the floor warden, Radha, and I are taking applications for the hostel. Jaya Sri is taking applications and counting the application fee, which is 100 rupees. Jaya Sri asks applicants for their names for the application register, and Radha writes the names down next to a list of application numbers. This is how the hostel keeps track of how many applications have been taken in and how they reconcile the collected fees. A girl and her mother walk up to our table to turn in their application. Jaya Sri asks their names and the girl gives her name as Maria, and the mother's name as Anna. Jaya Sri says "Your names don't sound like Kamma names, when I hear them they sound like Christian names." The mother and girl don't say anything and Jaya Sri takes their application and makes a point of looking it over before handing it to Radha. Sometime later, another girl and her mother walk up with their application. As they hand her the application Jaya Sri Madam asks them "You aren't wearing a bottu [a dot applied to the forehead that signifies that one is Hindu], are you Kammass?" The mother answers that they are Christian converts.

After they leave, Jaya Sri asks Radha to tell her their application number. Radha asks her why she needs it, and Jaya Sri says “We have to note that they are Christians, don’t we?” Radha tells her the number but then someone new comes up and Jaya Sri does not find the application to make a note on it. Earlier that day Jaya Sri asked me why I was not wearing a bottu, to which I gave my standard reply that I do not have any strong religious beliefs so I do not wear the bottu.

The production of caste is related to the production of religious identity. The Hindu identity of hegemonic groups is portrayed as threatened, and indeed polluted, by its association with Christianity, which in this region of Andhra is associated with Dalits. However the production of religion and caste are also associated with class. The Kammas who convert to Christianity tend to be poor and to work as laborers for land-owning Kammas. Conversion implies an affiliation with the laboring castes and classes; as such, it challenges caste unity and the religious basis of Kammas’ symbolic power. Kammas in Andhra Pradesh reinforce religious hierarchy and manage class tensions through caste.

Allegiance to Hinduism signifies both class and caste identity; Jaya Sri’s disapproval and discriminatory attitude towards non-Hindus demonstrates how “an immediate adherence, at the deepest level of the habitus, to the tastes and distastes, sympathies and aversions, fantasies and phobias which, more than declared opinions, forge the unconscious unity of a class (Bourdieu 1984, cited in Fernandes and Heller 2006, 509).” This habitus is not only classed, but also forged through caste-consciousness. It manifests itself in the desire to purify the Hindu, advantaged caste space of the hostel from anyone who falls outside of the boundaries of this class/caste.

Rural Kammas assert their caste identity and distinguish themselves from other rural working-class people by socializing almost exclusively with other Kammas. At the same time, the Kamma farmers I spoke with wanted to reform and expand the state reservation (affirmative action) policies to base benefits on income rather than on caste. Works on the hegemonic projects of the new middle class have argued that class differences within advantaged castes are managed through religion (Fernandes 2006; Fernandes and Heller 2006; Jeffery and Jeffery 2011). My informants' often-repeated desire to make reservations based on income supports these studies.

Conclusion

Kamma families attempt to adapt to the economic changes in rural Andhra Pradesh by educating their daughters. The decline of the economic benefits and social prestige of farming coupled with the high-levels of elite Kamma migration has created a preference for educated, geographically mobile citizens who can adapt to any society. The disadvantaged class rural girls at the hostel had limited abilities to migrate outside of India, but they were able to move to cities and live in working-women's hostels. This enabled young women to earn money to send to their families and to save for their dowries.

Civil society institutions such as the Kamma girls' hostel manage changing configurations of class, caste, and gender through processes of patronage. Within the hostel, different understandings of globalization lead to different definitions of and claims to transnational cultural capital. For hostel administrators and NRI donors, the young women at the hostel function as objects to be transformed from rural to transnational. As

subjects, these residents are often unable to accomplish this transformation, in part because hostel administrators are not aware of the cultural habits that connect residents to global forms of consumption and leisure. Residents also mask their technological proficiency in order to escape the scrutiny of hostel administrators.

Class tensions within caste are elided by offering some girls opportunities to acquire forms of cultural capital that are associated with the new middle class. At the same time, advantaged class fractions of the Kamma caste appropriate the cultural production of the mass fraction of the caste, for example through the veneration of regional food culture and the policing of religious boundaries. Young women at the hostel are subject to intensive levels of monitoring in the interests of preserving their respectability. Women are defined in relation to their value to their families and to their *jati*. *Jati* functions as a mythical kin group; since women must marry within this group, all *jati* members are potential relatives (Chakravartty 1993). This meticulous oversight of young women's sexuality expands patriarchal power over women and facilitates its transition from the private sphere of the family into the semi-public institutional sphere of the caste. These processes re-inscribe gender and class inequalities within caste, even as they allow some economically-disadvantaged caste members to gain cultural capital.

At a societal-level, the Kamma Jana Seva Samithi is a key site through which the new middle class performs its cultural role of articulating hegemonic values and beliefs. By promoting transnational cultural capital as the defining form of capital for aspirants to the new middle class, the hostel helps to obscure the exploitative relationship between global capital and Indian professional labor. Work in global firms is valorized as the

epitome of success. This encourages large numbers of young women to enter engineering fields and leads to an oversupply of qualified workers. The oversupply of labor depresses Indian IT workers wages and has led to more temporary and precarious employment in the IT sector (Xiang 2007). Women are especially unlikely to benefit from engineering degrees since they are less likely to migrate (Xiang 2007; Kapur 2010).

At the same time, the hostel may help inculcate caste feeling. Two of my informants at the hostel explained that before they came to the hostel, they did not think too much about their caste and socialized with members of other castes. However the environment of the hostel allowed for Kamma caste young women to freely disparage other castes without fear of being overheard or censured. Caste inequality was part of the hostel structure. The administrators, wardens, and head cook, all those who exercised power over the residents with the exception of the gate guard, were Kammas. The sweepers, cooks, and other service workers were from disadvantaged castes. The hostel residents regarded these arrangements as natural.

Though some aspects of gender inequality are changing, the importance of caste purity as well as the unexamined exertion of masculine dominance in everyday practice restricts young women's life chances. In the next chapter, I look at how caste affects the social and geographic mobility of disadvantaged caste women. By comparing these groups, I show the parallels and divergences in the linkages between gender and caste.

Figure 4: A SUV displayed as part of the dowry for a lavish non-resident Indian Kamma wedding.

This car was displayed at the gates of the banquet hall grounds during a wedding reception in Guntur in May, 2013.



Figure 5: The attendees of the same non-resident Indian wedding in Guntur.



Chapter 4: Rural Disadvantages and Modern Desires

Rakumari's family was a rarity among the Dalit families in the village of Munjapalem- her eldest daughter was finishing a master's degree in computer science, her son was in an excellent state engineering college, and Rakumari had hopes of sending her youngest daughter to medical school. Rakumari's ambitiousness was cause for suspicion and censure among other Dalit mothers in the community. When I was asking after her one day in the village, Vijaya, the woman who had introduced me to Rakumari, said that she and Rakumari were no longer speaking to each other. Rakumari, Vijaya explained, was "always thinking about money." On another occasion, I overheard a couple of women in the village criticize Rakumari for her "thoughts of greatness" (*goppa allochinulu*) in a conversation about potential marriages. They suggested that Rakumari would not be interested in any of the potential matches in the village because of her thoughts of greatness. These incidents made me aware of the sentiment among some of her caste peers that Rakumari was "too ambitious." This disciplining of ambition among disadvantaged groups stems from Rakumari's failure to tacitly accept her place, to mark and keep the social distances (Bourdieu 1985, 728) that are proper to caste, class, and gender.

Whereas Rakumari's actual practices were looked on with suspicion, narratives about ambitious disadvantaged caste individuals achieving glorious success are breathlessly recounted in the media and people's everyday talk in India. The

disadvantaged caste and class backgrounds of public figures such as Narendra Modi, India's current Prime Minister and former *chaiwalla* (tea seller), are highlighted as evidence of India's meritocratic society. Very few people are able to realize the promise of social mobility that is central to the liberal ideologies circulating in India, yet the disadvantaged caste and class parents I spoke with associated good parenting with children's social mobility. Parents wanted their children to be educated and work in salaried jobs, be married to educated spouses, and be able to afford commodities such as motorbikes, household appliances, and nice clothing. These aspirations were not only individual or family strategies to move out of arduous labor and economic deprivation; they are reflective of the struggles of disadvantaged groups to assert their place in India's society and polity. Yet the censure Rakumari faced because she was ambitious about her children, and the very unusualness of her case among her Dalit peers, indicates the ambivalences of disadvantaged caste mobility.

In this chapter, I look at how disadvantaged caste parents and children claim a place in Indian society. Disadvantaged caste groups are those who have historically been associated with manual labor, and as such have been excluded from formal education and employment. Therefore disadvantaged caste groups tend to be class disadvantaged; they are concentrated in informal and irregular manual labor and have limited opportunities for economic mobility. In the past three decades, the liberalization of the Indian economy and the political activism of marginalized castes have helped to advance the idea that inequalities such as caste, class, and gender can be overcome. This proposition is articulated through a cluster of dualities that pose a modern, urban, educated, casteless

subject as representative of the “new India” in opposition to the traditional, rural, non-literate, caste-bound subject that defined the “old India.” Disadvantaged caste groups, who have long been represented as rural, undereducated, and dependent on caste-based reservations, must somehow reconstitute themselves to assert a modern identity.

My research builds on recent ethnographic work to look at how disadvantaged caste and class parents and daughters navigate the promise of social mobility and assert modern identities. Caste inequalities in India are produced through multiple and contradictory discourses, especially discourses relating to class and gender. Ideas about equality, self-improvement, social mobility, and modern selfhood may be opening-up possibilities to challenge caste, class, and gender inequalities. By analyzing the dialectical relationship between everyday practice and broader discursive and material processes through the study of disadvantaged caste and class women, I contribute to the work on social change in India. Additionally, a “view from below” accounts for the desires, experiences, and forms of collusion and resistance that shape social life, which are undetectable to macro-level studies.

Caste and Social Change

Recent work on caste inequality in India has had two divergent approaches to questions of caste; however both of these approaches offer a limited perspective on how disadvantaged castes perceive social mobility and how they attempt this mobility. Scholars who have emphasized changes in the caste system argue that caste is now largely detached from the ritual status hierarchy, and Dalits and other disadvantaged castes have gained power in the polity through competitive democratic politics (Sheth

1999). Disadvantaged caste representation in the polity has been critical for these groups to gain entry to educational institutions and government employment, however gender inequalities in education and employment continue to persist among disadvantaged and advantaged castes alike. Moreover, the focus on mass movements by disadvantaged castes does not capture the everyday ways that people from these castes both resist and accommodate the domination of advantaged groups and the alternative strategies they may use to seek status.

Some scholars have highlighted enduring caste-based disadvantages in education and employment, despite educational gains by disadvantaged castes (Fernandes and Heller 2006; Desai and Kulkarni 2008). Disadvantaged caste immobility is tied to discriminatory processes, but these processes are masked as a legitimate system of hierarchy based on “merit.” This suggests that disadvantaged groups share the aspirations of advantaged groups and also accept that they are less qualified and competent than advantaged groups to achieve these aspirations. I found that disadvantaged caste and class parents do not uncritically share the aspirations of dominant groups. They disparaged private employment as too demanding and unstable, and critiqued the “money-mindedness” of advantaged castes and their own ambitious peers. However, they also wanted their children to be educated in private English-medium schools with the hope that they could enter salaried jobs, despite the fact that many educated disadvantaged caste children in their villages were unemployed.

Ethnographic work on caste inequality offers a nuanced perspective on how disadvantaged castes interpret the promise of social mobility and how these groups

reconcile the failure of these promises (Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2004 a,b, 2007). Many of the families I spoke with had children who held “degrees without freedom” (Jeffery, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2004a, 2007). These families had taken on heavy debts to educate their children, but their children could not find salaried employment. In their study of the Bijnor district in rural Uttar Pradesh, the Jeffreys (2004a,b, 2007) find that educated young Dalit and Muslim men face similar circumstances. The Jeffreys explain that these young men and their parents respond in two main ways to unemployment. First, in Dalit and Muslim communities, education becomes a “discursive ‘scaffold’” through which these groups, who have historically been categorized as “backwards,” can assert a modern, achieved status distinct from ascribed definitions of respect.

Second, young men informally expressed their resentment at the mismatch between the promises of education and their enduring marginalization from employment. Following Scott (1985), the Jeffreys (Jeffrey et al 2004b, 2007) suggest that these informal critiques are “weapons of the weak (Scott 1985);” they allowed young men to vent their frustrations to each other while concealing their resistance from higher castes. Additionally, marginalized groups may not have engaged in more formal protests because these groups believed that the state government had little interest or power in increasing employment opportunities (Jeffrey et al 2004b, 2007). Lastly, by avoiding direct conflict, Dalit and Muslim men were able to claim respectability- they could maintain their self-esteem and “the decorum associated with educated cultural distinction” (Jeffrey et al 2004b, 980).

The Jefferys' research in rural Uttar Pradesh shows how education can function as a cultural resource through which educated Dalit men can gain status. I found similar patterns among disadvantaged caste young men and their families in Andhra Pradesh. However, education does not function similarly for young women. Young men have more freedom to participate in public life and their assertion of "modern" identities adds to their respectability. For disadvantaged caste young women, especially Dalit young women, movement in public space and modern identities are problematic. Dalit women may be harassed and assaulted, with little recourse from local law enforcement. In the villages of Munjapalem and Kalakanchi where I conducted my research, I heard several accounts of young Dalit women who had been sexually assaulted by advantaged caste men. On one occasion, a couple of women I had come to know cautioned me about a specific advantaged caste man because they saw me visiting his household. They intimated that he had assaulted a young Dalit woman who came to clean his house, saying that he "fell upon her" when he had been drinking.

Respectability was precarious for Dalit women. Some advantaged caste men used their economic and social power to coerce women into sexual relations or used force with no consequence. Advantaged caste men were often related to people in the local police department, so that Dalit women's complaints against them were ignored, or worse, their complaints were reported to the accused. Dalit women not only risked exposure, humiliation, and further abuse by reporting an assault, they also worried about being excluded from work. Most Dalit women and men worked as agricultural laborers for advantaged caste landowners. If they reported an assault they could be excluded from

working not only for the person whom they accused, but for other advantaged caste landowners in the village.

In this fraught environment, parents of Dalit girls were especially cautious about allowing their daughters to attend schools outside of the village. Since the local schools in Kalakanchi and Munjapalem only went through grade ten, many Dalit girls ended their education at that grade. This structural feature of the villages shaped social norms and practices related to marriage for disadvantaged caste and class girls. A few better-off Dalit parents were able to afford private buses or hostel tuition for their daughters. The average cost for these were Rs. 10,000 (approximately \$220 USD at the time of fieldwork 2012-2013) and Rs. 50,000 (approximately \$1100 USD) per year respectively. For agricultural laborers who made Rs. 150 (approximately \$2.20 USD) a day, and who worked six months a year, this cost was prohibitive.

This chapter focuses on disadvantaged caste and class girls and their families for two reasons. First, though postcolonial scholars have convincingly argued that the construction of Indian modernity has been negotiated through gender, this work has concentrated on advantaged caste and class women (Chatterjee 1993; Radhakrishnan 2011). The “new Indian woman” embodies a global Indian modernity by maintaining “Indian,” implicitly Hindu, culture in the home, while simultaneously engaging in professional work in the global economy (Radhakrishnan 2011). The urban, advantaged caste and class character of the “new Indian woman” has historically been unmarked, allowing advantaged groups to represent their interests as universal interests and claim moral, cultural, and political leadership of the nation (Chatterjee 1993). In the past three

decades, political activism by rural disadvantaged caste and women's groups has challenged elite domination of Indian society and polity. Disadvantaged caste and class women, particularly rural women, have become targets of development discourses and projects (Sharma 2006, 2008; Purewal 2014) and are important figures in contemporary articulations of Indian modernity (Bhatt, Murty, and Ramamurthy 2010). Therefore disadvantaged caste and class girls and their families must engage with discourses about modernity and respectability as they negotiate new demands to represent the nation. By studying rural disadvantaged caste families, my research provides new information and insight about how Indian modernity is being configured in the contemporary era.

Second, disadvantaged-caste girls have different avenues for social mobility than disadvantaged caste boys. Disadvantaged caste young women and men have limited opportunities for professional employment since these positions are regulated through caste networks. Advantaged caste groups dominate managerial positions in the private sector and tend to give jobs to other members within their social network who share their caste position. Though there are state-mandated reservations (affirmative action-type policies) for public sector jobs, the predominance of advantaged caste people in managerial positions in these jobs continues to keep disadvantaged caste people out of professional and semi-professional-level positions. In the introductory chapter of this dissertation, I introduced Anila, who I met while conducting preliminary fieldwork in 2011. Anila was a young disadvantaged caste woman with a bachelor's degree who was working as a washerwoman. Anila explained that she had been considered for clerical position in a municipal government office, but the advantaged caste man in charge of

hiring was asking for a Rs. 10,000 (\$220 USD) bribe. She was working to earn money to pay the bribe, but was unsure whether the position would still be open by the time she had saved Rs. 10,000. Even when disadvantaged caste groups are employed in the public sector, they tended to be concentrated in non-professional jobs²⁴. Anila's predicament reveals how educated disadvantaged caste young women face a number of obstacles in gaining professional employment.

Education functions as a "contradictory resource" for disadvantaged girls (Jeffery and Basu 1996). Whereas young men may be able to use their education to assert their modernity and sophistication even if they do not find employment (Jeffery, Jeffrey and Jeffery 2004a,b, 2007), these qualities contradict notions of femininity that associate girls' respectability with "simplicity" and naivety. Though they may be able to marry into more class-advantaged families within their *jati* (sub-caste) if they are educated, girls who go to college are also suspected of sexual profligacy since college is associated with cross-gender sociality and flirting (Osella and Osella 1998). In addition to this, girls who move in public spaces, especially Dalit girls, are subject to rape and harassment.

²⁴ Approximately two-thirds of formal sector jobs in India are controlled by the government, and 80 % of these are categorized as Group C (driver, technician, typist, mechanic, and the like) or Group D (food service worker, peon, sanitary worker, watchman, and the like). See Appendix I for a more comprehensive description of public sector employment categories. Nearly 29% of the public sector employees in Groups C and D were from dalit or adivasi background, while only 13% at the higher level fell in this category in spite of the mandated quota of 22.5% (Indiastat 2006, cited in Desai and Kulkarni 2008). Government and public sector jobs have a 15 % reservation (affirmative action) quota for Scheduled Castes (Dalits, abbreviated as SC) and 7.5 % quota for Scheduled Tribes (adivasis, abbreviated as ST). Articles 16(4), 320(4) and 335 of the Indian Constitution are meant to ensure adequate representation of SCs and STs in services and public sector jobs.

Focusing on disadvantaged caste girls clarifies how caste and class inequalities continue to be articulated through gender.

Caste Inequality and Education

One of the key features of caste disadvantage has been educational deprivation. Universal education was a tent-pole in Gandhian and Nehruvian political thought, but state investment in education was concentrated in urban secondary-schooling (Fernandes 2006). This benefitted advantaged class and caste groups who could invest in primary education and enabled them to hoard and leverage their accumulated privileges and reproduce social distinctions, especially through English language education (Fernandes and Heller 2006, 497). English proficiency has practical and symbolic value in India. English literacy is required for almost all professional work and is associated with the middle class through its occupational importance. But English also has immense symbolic weight; it signifies the modern, educated, cosmopolitan subject and is an important cultural resource for the Indian elite. Historically, English-medium schooling was associated with urban, advantaged caste and class groups. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Brahmin *pandits* and Muslim *mulvis* learned English as part of their duties advising the British colonial courts. As these groups gained political and economic advantages through their mastery of English, and as post-secondary education became increasingly English-medium, they consolidated their elite position in the colonial polity and society through English-language education (Frykenberg 1985).

Within anticolonial struggles, these advantaged groups asserted their leadership of the emerging Indian nation through their bureaucratic and managerial positions in the

state. This “service gentry” (Joshi 2001) used western Enlightenment ideas of democracy and rationality to marginalize traditional elites and drew on older caste hierarchies to denigrate the lower classes. The emergence of the sociopolitical identity of “the middle class,” and its notion of itself as “the public,” enabled advantaged caste and class groups to inhabit a national identity as Indians. By claiming to speak not just for themselves but for all the people in anticolonial struggles (Pandey 2009), Indian elites involved in anticolonial struggles became an unmarked universal group. It is no mere cultural fancy that the elite spoke in English, and command of English continues to be one of the critical cultural assets of India’s middle class.

Except in rare cases, disadvantaged caste and class groups were excluded from education altogether. Poor and rural families had limited access to schooling until educational expansion in the past two decades (see figure 9). During this period, education was increasingly articulated as a human right. The *Mohini Jain v. Union of India* (1992) and *Unni Krishnan v. State of Andhra Pradesh* (1993) (<https://www.escri-net.org>) cases addressed the issue of “capitation fees,” which post-secondary private institutions charge to students who do not score highly-enough on state exams to gain admission to a very limited number of government-funded seats. Though these cases involved post-secondary education, they helped to frame education as a universal right that should not be based on economic principles, and provided a legal opening for the revision of the 21st Article of the Indian constitution, which guarantees the right to life. Article 21-A was instituted in 2002, and states that the right to education flows from the

right to life. As such, the state is required to provide free and compulsory education for children aged six to fourteen (<http://indiacode.nic.in/coiweb/amend/amend86.htm>)²⁵.

Through the articulation of educational rights, human rights discourse has extended its influence from Dalit political organization (Yadav 1999; Sheth 1999) to the subject formation of parents and children who see themselves as citizens of a changing India. The possibility of moving out of physical labor into professional work is a defining feature of this perceived change. Given the historical association between English and social, political, and economic advantage, the desire for English language education among disadvantaged castes suggests that these groups accept the premise that Indian society is becoming more meritocratic. Parents value education and English language proficiency because they expect that their children can move up in society by becoming educated, regardless of their caste background.

Discourses about education have been more inclusive in the last two decades. However disadvantaged children, especially Dalit and Muslim children, are subjected to discriminatory practices in schools such as being made to sit outside the classroom, on the ground, or in the back of the room. Dalit parents also related that corporal punishment was meted out more frequently and harshly to Dalit children than to non-Dalit children.

²⁵ It is interesting to note that India signed the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child in 1992, during the period of these landmark cases. As India sought more power on the international stage, its reputation as democracy and the economic power of an educated populace converged to make the state more amenable to “human rights” related reform efforts, a process which Martha Finnemore (1996) describes as a “socialization” of states by international bodies such as the UN. This also suggests that disadvantaged caste groups and individuals can internalize and strategically deploy human rights discourses in order to gain access to education.

This was thought to be because schoolteachers feared reprisal from advantaged caste parents but did not have similar concerns about disadvantaged caste parents, and because teachers had biases towards Dalit students. The majority of disadvantaged caste and class parents I spoke with had left school by fifth grade. Some people from very poor families had left school to work as agricultural laborers, women reported leaving school to stay at home to take care of younger siblings, and some parents explained that they not been able to learn anything at school and had not seen the point of continuing to attend. Because disadvantaged caste parents themselves had limited education, they had difficulty overseeing their children's educations. Most disadvantaged caste and class parents in Kalakanchi were unsure what subjects their children were studying in school, did not emphasize regular school attendance, and rarely interacted with schoolteachers.

Though disadvantaged caste and class parents had a lack of practical knowledge about schooling, everyone I interviewed stated that they wanted their children to be educated, at least to the tenth-grade level. Parents related the desire to educate children to an emerging consciousness among even the most disadvantaged groups that social mobility was possible. Krishna Kumari, who was from the *golla* (cowherd) *jati* explained that "...These days, everyone is sending their children to school. Even people that catch fish are educating their children. At one time, people would catch a few fish and sell them and somehow live, but even they are sending their children to school. Now they think, 'Why should our children struggle like us?'" When I asked parents why this new way of thinking had started, they often explained that in the past people had not known better, but now they had become more intelligent (*telivi*). This teleological narrative associates

the contemporary era with social mobility achieved through education. Both education and social mobility become necessary qualities for modern subject-hood among disadvantaged castes and classes. Those who are not educated or who work as laborers are not only mired in poverty, they are also mired in the past.

Good parenting is defined by the ambition and intelligence to educate children, and particularly daughters, so that they can become modern. However, disadvantaged caste and class parents had limited resources to educate their daughters. Discourses about women's respectability as well as the physical dangers faced by disadvantaged caste and class women restricted girls' access to education. Public schools varied widely in organizational practices, and the school environment itself was partially influenced by the class and caste composition of students and the level of participation of parents. Kalakanchi high school had limited funding and organizational issues that were compounded by the concentration of disadvantaged caste and class students in the school. Munjpalem high school, on the other hand, had greater caste variation in the composition of the school and greater levels of parental intervention. The school instituted organizational practices that tightened its disciplinary power. In order to assert a modern identity and achieve social mobility, parents and children had to navigate institutional and cultural scaffolds. I will show how disadvantaged caste parents and daughters did so by investing in different forms of cultural capital. These investments were at times affective,

in the sense that they were embodied and unconscious, though not necessarily “habituated,” and at times were planned and strategic²⁶.

Kalakanchi

Kalakanchi is a small village in the Prakasam *jilla* of Andhra Pradesh. Though it was less than 15 kilometers from the city of Ongole, it usually took me close to an hour to reach the village. On most days, I would catch the bus on the main road in Ongole. The 9 am bus was typically filled with college students from Ongole who were attending any one of the three large engineering colleges along the national highway, as well as women going to work in the tobacco grading stations in Tungtoor. The colleges were close to the town, and after a few stops, I would be able to settle into a seat and relax for the rest of the ride to Kalakanchi. On Sundays and holidays, I would stand on the main road to flag a “share auto,” a small van-sized vehicle with a driver and passenger seat in the front and two rows of seats in the back. In addition to these seats, the back trunk area was also used for additional seating. The share auto would only stop on the national highway and I would disembark near the road that led through the tobacco fields into Kalakanchi. From here, I would have to take another, smaller, three-wheeled vehicle called an auto-rickshaw into the village. On one side of the road there was a small shop that sold cold

²⁶ I use affect to refine the application of Bourdieu’s habitus in sociological inquiry. By emphasizing intensity and sense experience, affect does not reduce the body to “dumb matter available for discipline and cultural inscription (Mazzarella 2009, 293).” Affect is tied to *mana*, the sacred power of the social as it emerges (mainly in the form of mimesis) in collectives (Mazzarella 2009, citing Durkheim). I use affect to apprehend the habitus in a way “that does not start with the bounded, intentional subject,” (Mazzarella 2009, 291) and to contrast this with feminist critiques of Bourdieu that highlight the intentional and “pedagogical process by which a habitus is learned” (Mahmood 2004, 139; see also Skeggs 1997; Lovell 2000; Reay 2004).

drinks and snacks and on the other side stood a tree under which auto drivers would park and nap as they waited for customers. It was rare that the driver would take the auto into the village with fewer than four passengers; I would often find myself standing under the tree watching for additional passengers so that we could be on our way.

The two kilometers of road into Kalakanchi were not paved, and the pressed dirt path was barely wide enough for the bus. Auto drivers traveling into or out of the village tried to avoid the road when they knew that the bus would be coming from the opposite direction, but this was an imperfect system. After a few harrowing meetings with the bus when I first started visiting the village, I tried very hard to avoid taking an auto. When I asked the son of the village *sarpanch* (head of the local *panchayat*, or governing body) how a relatively small village like Kalakanchi had gotten a bus service, he explained that a Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Andhra Pradesh who was from the village had instituted the route in 2005.

In fact, I had chosen to conduct fieldwork in Kalakanchi because of the unusual combination of the remoteness of the village with the availability of the bus. I had visited similar tobacco-farming villages near the national highway, but most of them had to be entered by foot, bicycle, scooter, or auto. I was interested in how rural parents dealt with the lack of infrastructure in their efforts to educate their children. As I was unable to arrange to live in a village to conduct fieldwork, the very lack of infrastructure I wanted to understand made daily village visits nearly impossible. With Kalakanchi, I was able to strike a compromise: the village had only one public high school and one elementary

school and was somewhat difficult to reach from the nearest city but I could visit regularly because of the bus.

Munjapalem

Munjapalem is a large village located approximately 15 kilometers south of Ongole.

Though it is the same distance from Ongole as Kalakanchi, it is much easier to reach by bus because it is adjacent to a well-paved two-lane road that connects the mandal (district) administrative centers of Tunguturu and Kondapi. From Ongole, I would catch one of several buses that went to Tunguturu and easily hire an auto from there, or I would catch the Kondapi bus, which would stop near the *Madhiga palle* of the village. On days that the state buses were not in service, I would catch a share auto going towards Tunguturu and from there take an auto-rickshaw to the village. Because the village was located on a main road, I rarely had to wait for an auto-rickshaw.

In Munjapalem, people waited for the bus under a large banyan tree that was planted in a raised bed. Gender, age, class, and caste differences in the occupation of public spaces were noticeable in quotidian practices such as waiting for the bus. Women were more contained than men, though very young and older women were somewhat more relaxed in their behaviors. Men and children would sit on the waist high wall of the bed, while women would lean against the wall. Older, disadvantaged-caste women would sometimes sit on the ground, whereas older advantaged-caste women considered sitting on the ground in public spaces to be dirty and undignified. If there were more than a couple of men at the stop, a young woman by herself would often stand a little to the side of the raised bed, still under the shade of the tree but separate from the men. I noticed this

gesture of modesty by violating it. I was waiting for the bus one afternoon, along with a couple of men who looked to be agricultural workers and a young woman who was standing a few feet away from the raised bed. I positioned myself several feet away from the men and hopped up onto the wall, and all three glanced over in mild surprise. I noted this interaction and I was unsure what to make of it, but I found myself unconsciously adopting the spatial positioning of younger and advantaged-caste women.

This incident demonstrates the inter-subjective and adaptive processes through which the habitus generates new behaviors. These new behaviors most often reproduce social advantage and disadvantage. Though I was unfamiliar with the norms of the bus stop, and in fact thought that I had kept some appropriate distance from the men there, the sense that I had done something untoward kept me from sitting on the wall again. Like other advantaged caste women, I would lean against the wall or stand a little away if there was a group of men at the stop. My apprehension and adherence to the common sense of the bus stop was not conscious, at least not initially. It was shaped by my habitus, my pre-reflexive sense of myself as an advantaged caste and class young-ish woman. By not sitting on the wall and standing away from the men, I confirmed my own position as a respectable, advantaged caste woman and helped to substantiate the association between class and caste advantage, a gendered form of modesty, and respectability. This demonstrates how the habitus is more than “habit,” which suggests that individuals can only “forego reflection to the extent that it [is] routinized and repetitive (Weininger 2005, 131).” I was able to generate new, though imitative, action somewhat spontaneously next time I was at the bust stop.

In the mornings, young women and men from the village would stand under the tree as they waited to take the bus to school. The few who were dressed in uniforms were on their way to one of the nearby junior colleges²⁷. The young women and men who were attending any one of the nearby engineering colleges did not wear uniforms, but could be identified as students by their book bags and the college identification cards they wore on lariats around their necks. The young women and men who took the state bus to college were primarily from disadvantaged class positions. Most of junior colleges and engineering colleges offered bus services and advantaged-class parents opted to send their children on the college bus, which usually cost between Rs. 10,000- 15,000 per year. Disadvantaged-class parents were able to send their children to school on the public bus, which cost Rs. 5 or less each way. Not only was this cheaper by Rs. 7000- 12,000 over the course of the school year, the daily outlay of Rs. 10 was a more manageable expense than college bus fees, which had to be paid in full each term.

Access to education was much better in Munjapalem than in Kalakanchi because of its location along a main bus route. I met only one disadvantaged caste young woman who had studied beyond 10th grade in Kalakanchi, but I met four in Munjapalem. Though my interview sample is not representative, this greater number of educated young women did not appear to be coincidental. More of the disadvantaged families I spoke with had

²⁷ The last two years of high school (years 11 and 12) are taught at separate institutions than years 1-10. Junior, or intermediate, colleges provide specialized courses that are meant to prepare students for the entrance exams that determine undergraduate college admissions. These exams are career-focused; students who want to study engineering, for example, will enroll in an engineering course of study in junior college and take the EAMCET (Engineering, Agriculture and Medicine Common Entrance Test) to get into undergraduate engineering institutions.

strong positive attitudes towards girls' education and told me about other educated disadvantaged caste young women in the village when they learned about my research.

In addition to this, the school had a greater number of advantaged caste students than the school in Kalakanchi. Though I was not able to formally observe at the school, one of my key informants, Jyotsna, was an aganwadi (preschool) teacher at the school. I was able to visit during the day and saw that the children wore uniforms, sat in neat rows, and only moved outside of the classroom between classes and at lunchtime. Jyotsna was an advantaged caste mother and her daughters had attended the public school. She explained that several years earlier when one of the teachers had been skipping school, she and a couple of other parents had spoken to the headmaster and had the teacher replaced. The ability of advantaged caste parents to interact with schools was of critical importance for their children. In a public school setting, this also appeared to help the disadvantaged caste and class children who attended the school by ensuring regular teacher attendance and a school environment that was conducive to learning. Kalakanchi school demonstrates how the public schools that do not have this kind of parent intervention can compound caste and class disadvantage, as I discuss in the next section.

Educational Institutions, Intergenerational Disadvantage, and Undisciplined Bodies

Despite its remoteness, many of the children in Kalakanchi went to private primary and secondary schools. While a few of them took the same government bus I used, private schools such as Bhashyam and Sri Chaithanya provided bus service to the village. They would arrive at seven in the morning and stop in several other villages as they made their way to their respective buildings in Ongole. School bus services were

costly, approximately Rs. 10,000 (\$220 USD) a year. Only advantaged caste, landholding families could afford the costs of private education, since tuition at private primary and secondary schools ranged from Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 50,000 (approximately \$670 to \$1100 USD) in addition to the bussing fees. In disadvantaged caste and class families, the main source of income was agricultural labor. Workers earned Rs. 100 to Rs. 150 (\$2.20 to \$3.30 USD) a day, and the cost of private schools was prohibitive. The local public high school was comprised of children from the Dalit Mala and Madhiga *jatis*, *adivasis* (tribal peoples), and Muslim community. No advantaged caste children were enrolled in the school at the time I was conducting fieldwork.

In order to observe at Kalakanchi high school, I had to obtain the permission of the head master, Rajagopal-garu. An advantaged caste man in his late 50s, Rajagopal-garu was at first suspicious of my interest in the school. He wanted to know where I was planning to report my data and seemed to believe that I was going to evaluate the school in some official capacity. I explained to him that I was a student from the US, and was working on a PhD about how parents in rural areas educated their children. As our discussion ventured into education for girls, Rajagopal-garu warmed to the subject and stated that women (*stree*) must be educated because they were the foundations of society. He argued that “we” had believed in the education of women since olden days (*pathakalalu*), as evinced by the fact that the patron goddess of learning, Saraswathi, is female. His use of *stree*, the formal Sanskrit word for women and a Hindu “we” to stand for the Indian nation, and his invocation of a Hindu goddess to represent education indicate the continuing resonance of a Hindu national public in the pedagogical

imagination (Benei 2009). Rajagopal-garu's narrative conjoins gender, education, and nation in order to assert a teleological advance towards a distinctly Hindu national modernity.

Once Rajagopal-garu was satisfied that I was an earnest researcher, and not an undercover official, he agreed to let me visit the school for a few weeks. The next morning, I arrived at 8:30 in the morning, a half-hour before school started. Rajagopal-garu and some of the other teachers were already there. As Rajagopal-garu introduced me to the Hindi and History teachers, I noticed a girl who looked to be of school age sweeping the school courtyard. At 9, Suresh, one of the ninth grade students, began to manically beat a large drum to call the students into the school's courtyard. All of the children in the school, including the girl who had been sweeping, lined up in the courtyard according to their grade. Rajagopal-garu told Suresh to stop beating the drum and greeted the children with "Namaskaram." The students sang a short version of Jana Gana Mana, the Indian national anthem, with their right arm extended horizontally, "as if they were taking a pledge in court (Benei 2009, 77)." Rajagopal-garu introduced me as a student from America who was coming to learn about schools in India. He explained that I was also from Andhra Pradesh, from Guntur, and exalted Indians as people who were now in all nations of the world.

Rajagopal-garu's valorization of Indians as a geographically mobile group reflects the centrality of the global in contemporary images of the ideal Indian citizen. Though none of the children I spoke with had any relatives in the United States, or had even seen an English-language film or television show, the figure of the transnational migrant was

invoked by school authorities, in casual conversations, and in Telugu television shows and Telugu cinemas. Disadvantaged class and caste rural children imagined themselves in relation to this aspirational figure, investing it with moral legitimacy. The production of hegemonic aspirations (Fernandes and Heller 2006) in children is especially powerful because it shapes early processes of identity formation and becomes incorporated into their commonsense.

I had hoped to observe unobtrusively in the school: I chose the ninth grade class so I would not distract the tenth grade students who were preparing for the important tenth grade graduation exams; I arrived early so that I could integrate myself at the start of the day; and I wore a plain, serviceable churidhar much like the ones that young women in the village wore. However the school children were fascinated by the novelty of an outsider, and one from America, no less. This meant that in addition to their usual problems with holding students' attention, the teachers had to contend with whispering and constant curious staring in my direction.

Though there were technically 32 students enrolled in the ninth grade class at Kalakanchi, the highest attendance rate I saw in my two weeks of observation was 19 students. On my first day, there were only 16 children, twelve girls and four boys. The absence of boys in the school was due to two reasons. First, at high school age, boys were able to begin to participate in some income generating activities like selling fruit or other small goods. These older boys enjoyed some sense of freedom and accomplishment by earning money. Some boys worked to contribute to the family economy. Second, parents

were more willing to invest in the private education of sons than of daughters, which left more girls than boys in the public schools.

High schools were funded based on the number of courses taught at the school, rather than the number of children. This funding structure de-incentivized the enforcement of a strict attendance policy. It took considerable effort on the part of administrators and teachers to contact parents; very few parents had phones, had phone numbers that changed, or would not answer the phone because they had a limited number of talk time minutes. Teachers could go to parents' houses, but in Kalakanchi this meant either arriving well before the start of school or missing the last bus. In addition to these challenges, parents themselves may not have been amenable to sending children to school. Children were sometimes kept out of school to work and the economic necessity of this work for the family made school attendance unfeasible. These circumstances made teachers and administrators somewhat cynical about insisting to parents that children attend school.

Unlike most of the public and private school students I observed in India, children at the Kalakanchi school did not wear uniforms. Divya-garu, the English teacher, explained that this was because most of the children at the school were from very poor families with troubled parents. Troubled usually meant that the father drank or that one of the parents was deceased. A sentiment that was echoed by teachers and parents whom I interviewed was that while a few poor parents who cared about their children sent them to the government school, most families who cared about their children's educations would somehow manage to find the money for private school. Though parents and

teachers were critical of private schools because most private school teachers were less qualified than public school teachers, they associated private schools with parents' dedication to their children's education.

Divya-garu described the school population as those who were uncared for, stating that "Many people, if there is no one to take care and be persistent, they come to the government school." Though I do not interpret the irregular attendance, lack of school uniforms, and general lack of discipline among the Kalakanchi students as necessarily indicative of a lack of care, this statement captures teachers' frustrations with children and their parents. Irregular school attendance was common among disadvantaged caste children, and teachers complained that parents could not be made to understand that their children had to come to school regularly. This lack of attendance made it difficult for teachers to follow lesson plans, and students would often fall behind or lose interest during class. Moreover, children could not be habituated to the school because teachers were unable to enforce a "conformity and acceptance of school goals" (Thapan 2014, 342) among children and parents. This production of "docile bodies" (Foucault 1977), in this instance the production of students who could sit still in their seat, face the teacher, and follow her or his instructions, requires the spatial enclosure, partitioning, and ranking of bodies. Students at Kalakanchi school resisted these practices by not attending school, leaving and entering the classroom in the middle of lessons, leaving the school midway through the day, and switching seats during class.

During the first period Hindi class, I sat in the back of the classroom, thinking that since the students would be facing the teacher in the front of the room I would be less

distracting. Instead, the first ten minutes of the class were spent with Latha-garu, the female teacher, admonishing most of the twenty or so students to stop turning in their seats to look at me and ask me questions. She began to make students read from the textbook but many of the children either did not have a book or had left their books at home. There were several groups of three or four students crowded around a single textbook to follow the text as their classmates read. Some children were standing while others sat in order to see the text, contributing to a general sense of disorderliness. The lack of resources such as textbooks undermined teachers abilities to coordinate a conformity of goals in the classroom, which teachers themselves acknowledged when discussing the difficulties of teaching at the school. After a few minutes of a halting reading of the “Mother Crow, Father Crow” fable by one of the students, Suresh, the student who beat the drum at the morning assembly, started a fight with the boy next to him by pinching him on the arm when he moved the textbook that he and Suresh were sharing. The teacher sent Suresh into the courtyard, where he began to go from classroom to classroom and stand in the doorway only to be shoed away by the teachers.

The next class was mathematics, and Murali-garu was known for being a strict disciplinarian. Though government teachers are prohibited from using physical discipline, some of the children explained that Murali-garu would shout at students and explained that he could terrify a misbehaving student into submissiveness with the “eye fear” (*kallu bhaiyam*) instilled by his stare. Despite the similarities in the classroom desks and layout between Murali-garu’s class and the Hindi class, students sat in orderly rows facing the front of the room in order to listen to the lesson. Once Murali-garu had

explained right angles and the Pythagorean theorem to the class, he had them work on a couple of story problems. The students sat quietly and worked on their answers as Murali-garu walked around the classroom to observe their work. Murali-garu's use of intimidation and humiliation shows that students *could* be made into docile bodies through forms of punishment that "strike at the soul" (Foucault 1977, 17).

The "strike at the soul" works at an affective level- the girls and boys in Murali-garu's class were disciplined through an embodied invocation of fear and shame through the *kallu bhaiyam* (eye fear) stare. *Kallu bhaiyam* was a disciplinary technique that was often discussed among the young people I spoke with. It was characterized as fierce, unblinking stare, accompanied by the widening of eyes, lowering of brows, and a stiff grimace. The person who was the object of this stare was humiliated by this intense observation. Though it may have been associated with the threat of physical violence in Kalakanchi school, especially in light of Murali-garu's shouting, *kallu bhaiyam* also functioned as a pre-emptory technique that induced children to monitor themselves to avoid punishment. However, the effects of Murali-garu's disciplinary regime were temporary, and in the next class period, the students once again conversed freely and moved around the classroom.

For disciplinary power to operate at a "capillary level" and induce students to always act as if they are in Murali-garu's class, they would need to be made to internalize regulatory discourses, for example discourses about "how to behave at school," through a routinized system of hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and examination (Foucault 1977). In the West, these methods of surveillance and discipline produce an

individuated self that adheres to a bureaucratic organization of time and space. Individual will and bodily forces can be channeled according to institutional needs through a docile body that “may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault 1977, 136). While the students at Kalakanchi were intermittently exposed to observation, judgment, and examination, these were inconsistently applied throughout each day, and there was little continuity between the practices of the school and the practices of parents. Most of the students in the school were not observed, judged, and examined at home in any way that resembled these intermittent activities at the school. While some parents did care about children’s performance in school, they were undereducated and unable to follow children’s studies. Moreover, teachers, who embodied the institutional authority of the school and were responsible for evaluating students, were often absent from school.

For example, the next class after Murali-garu’s was supposed to be social studies but the teacher was on medical leave for several weeks and the district had not yet provided a replacement. The children were expected to read by themselves because there were no teachers available to supervise them. They immediately abandoned their books and crowded around me to ask questions about America. Thinking that I had some experience teaching, I decided to try to manage the class and take advantage of the situation to ask the students about their aspirations and favorite school subjects. I asked them to tell me their name, their age, and their favorite subject in school. By the time we had reached the third student, three of the girls in class had moved seats and started whispering to each other. I asked these girls to answer my questions in an effort to incorporate them into the class but they responded by asking me about America. I

promised that if the class answered my questions, I would answer theirs. I was able to get responses from a few more students before Suresh appeared in our classroom, moving from seat to seat while chewing on a stalk of sugarcane. As he tried to squeeze onto an already crowded bench of boys, the boy at the end tried to shove him off which started a fight that had Suresh running out of the classroom.

Lunch followed his period, and most of the children went home. I was surprised that none of the students in the school participated in the Midday Meals program, a government program that provided free meals to students. This program was implemented to improve the nutritional status of poor students and encourage them to come to school. When I inquired about this, teachers and students explained that the food was not of good quality- the rice had small stones in it, the curries were poorly prepared. Since there was no place at the school to prepare the meals, and no one to prepare them, the school actually did not provide midday meals. I am unsure whether this was allowed, but none of the teachers seemed hesitant to disclose this to me.

After lunch, school recommenced with ninth grade English. Divya-garu suggested that I explain my research to the class, so I began with a pedagogical exercise. I asked in English “Why is school important?” After several seconds of puzzled staring and giggling, I asked in Telugu if someone could translate the question I had asked into Telugu. This was followed by a few more seconds of silence until Divya-garu called on Sidhu, who translated the phrase quite closely, as “For what is school necessary (*school dheniki mukkyam*)?” Some of the students began to answer in Telugu, stating that school was necessary to get a job and that school was necessary to go to other countries. When I

asked whether they could tell me their answers in English, they fell silent again. I then spent several minutes explaining that I was looking at how parents try to send their children to school. Initially, the students seemed intrigued by my English but soon lost interest as they were obviously unable to understand me. After I returned to my seat in the back of the class, Divya-garu had them write out sentences in their workbooks to prepare for their exam. A few children who had workbooks did this, while others drew in the margins or changed seats to talk to each other. Divya-garu sat in the front of the classroom and occasionally told the children to sit still.

A few days later, Divya-garu was absent so I took the opportunity to sit with the class. I asked them how many of them would like to speak English, and all of them eagerly responded that they would. When I asked why they wanted to speak English, many of them seemed puzzled by the question. Yousef explained that all higher studies are in English, so if one wants to study one must know English. Rama explained that to go to other countries, one has to know English. When I pressed the girls in the class if this is why they want to speak English, they explained that they wanted to learn because it is part of being able to “speak well.” Sireesha explained that if one has foreign visitors to their home, one can address them in English. The instrumental value of English for boys reflects how education and travel, even if imaginary, are more accessible to boys than to girls. The symbolic value for English for girls suggests that few girls imagine themselves pursuing higher education or travelling abroad. English, and education more broadly, appears to function as a resource through which girls can assert a modern, achieved status, similar to the function of educational degrees for the Dalit young men

studied by the Jefferys (2007). However it is not the lack of economic opportunity that directly shapes girls' interpretation of education; discourses about femininity and masculinity, which are themselves shaped by caste, regulate girls' desires and imaginations about education.

Wardens of Respectability

Discourses about disadvantaged caste femininity and masculinity associate women's work outside of the home with a lack of respectability, particularly since these women predominantly work as agricultural or domestic laborers (Still 2011). As Still (2011) notes, the emergence of an increasingly patriarchal system among Dalits can be tied to codes of respectability that prevent women from working. This affected the aspirations of parents and their daughters. Most of the disadvantaged caste girls and young women I spoke with described their ideal life as one in which they could be married to an educated man who would have a "job"²⁸. Girls and young women did not see themselves as job-holders; when I asked if they were interested in making their own money so that they could spend it as they liked, girls and young women said that they could take-up sewing or performing cosmetic services in their home. This kind of work was described as pleasurable because, as one young woman laughingly put it, "clothes and people could all be made pretty (*battalu, manshulu, anni andhamga chaiochu*)," because women could take in work as they liked, and it would enable them to take care of their families "without having to always be working (*eppudu pannilo oondakunda*

²⁸ The English word "job" was used to describe salaried, professional employment. It has almost completely replaced the Telugu word for salaried employment, *ujjogam*, a lexical change that indicates an association between English, salaried employment and conceptualizations of modernity.

oondochu.)” Because disadvantaged caste women, especially rural women, had few opportunities for salaried employment, girls from the community generally did not imagine themselves as jobholders. Paid and feminized work that could be done in the home was seen as an agreeable way of supplementing men’s earnings. Still (2011) suggests that this exit from employment could undermine disadvantaged caste women’s economic power and their ability to support themselves if necessary.

The shaping of girls’ aspirations was not only founded in the desire to avoid the arduousness and dishonor of physical labor; inculcating appropriate aspirations for girls was also important for preserving men’s honor. Discourses that institutionalized hypergamous marriage associated masculinity with economic power and worldliness. Parents worried that it would be difficult to find matches for educated daughters since they would have to be married to similar or more highly educated young men who were demanding significant dowries. In Kalakanchi and Munjapalem, the reported dowries for disadvantaged caste young men in the village with BE degrees (bachelor’s in engineering) was upwards of one lak (Rs. 100,000, equivalent to approximately three years of college tuition at a modest private engineering college). Moreover, in the villages where I conducted fieldwork, and throughout India, disadvantaged caste young men are becoming more educated but cannot translate this education into professional employment. This meant that educated daughters might be married to unemployed men and in some cases were themselves discouraged from working by their educated husbands. This was the case with Adhi Laxmi’s daughter, Radhika, and her son-in-law, Madhu. Radhika and Madhu had moved back in with Adhi Laxmi after they spent half a

year in Guntur where Madhu had been unable to find a job in the state bureaucracy. Radhika had supported them during this time by working at a retail shop, but this was a source of embarrassment for Madhu since it indicated his failure in the labor market and made him dependent on his wife. During the first month they were in Guntur, Radhika had an opportunity for more stable employment as a pre-school teacher because she had finished her intermediate education. However she did not take the job because Madhu expected to find employment. He explained that he wanted Radhika to be at home and not become used to working. In this context, limiting girls' educational aspirations had the effect of giving disadvantaged caste men the upper hand in terms of educational achievement and employment and curtailed the humiliating possibility that they would be dependent on their wives.

Matrimonial conventions further dictated that husbands be older than wives, with a preferred age gap of five to six years. Disadvantaged caste and class parents indicated seventeen or eighteen years old was a good age for young women to get married, and twenty-two or twenty-three as a good age for young men. When I asked why young men could not marry at age eighteen or young women could not marry at age twenty-three, parents described differently structured marriage markets for young women and men. Marriage options were shaped by gendered notions of "maturity;" the forms of desirable and contaminating maturity varied between women and men. Desirable maturity for young men was associated with employment and ability to exercise authority over one's own household, for example by having the practical knowledge to undertake the social, legal and financial procedures necessary to rent a flat or house. In order to achieve this

maturity, young men were thought to need time to find work, learn about the world, and become disciplined. At seventeen or eighteen, they were considered too naive and rash to take care of a wife. Desirable maturity for young women focused on their physical maturity and their ability to perform basic household tasks. Young women who had reached menarche and could take care of the house were considered mature enough to be married. Young women *could* wait, but parents detailed how getting married became harder as women got older because new cohorts of eligible young women would crop-up. Men could marry these younger women, and in fact might prefer younger women, whereas women who waited to marry were left with fewer marriage prospects.

Women's options were narrowed not only because there were fewer older men left in the pool, but because women's maturity was associated with a less flexible personality and/or sexual "impurity." Potential grooms and their families might suspect that a woman in her early twenties had participated in a sexual liaison or consider older brides too strong-willed and therefore unable to adjust to her marital household. Whereas men were considered capable of exercising self-discipline as they became older, women were conceptualized as incapable of self-discipline. Older brides may lack self-discipline in subjugating their personalities to those of the marital household, or in managing their sexuality.

Parents and/or husbands acted as wardens of young women's respectability. Married young men were unable to enact class-based modern identities since they were not engaged in professional work. However, they could claim to be modern through the respectability of their wives. For parents, being modern meant educating their daughters,

but they often could not afford to educate girls and maintain their physical safety. Rather than claiming to be modern and respectable, some Dalit Christian mothers emphasized their own virtuousness, a point I explore further in the next section. For girls and young women, the desire to stay at home and to “make everything pretty” reflects the sensuousness affective pleasures that they invest in the cultural goods associated with femininity (Mankekar 2004). Parents and young men dismissed these pleasures as silly or attempted to suppress them because they were problematically associated with erotic desire, with “wanting too much” (Mankekar 2004, 410).

Class, Status and Virtue

Among disadvantaged caste and class people, many parents began to make marriage arrangements for their daughters after girls finished tenth class. Girls are typically fifteen or sixteen at the completion of tenth grade, yet in interviews parents usually said that they wanted their daughter to be seventeen or eighteen when they got married. This mismatch may have been an effort to appear more modern since early marriage of daughters was associated with *patha –kallam allochinulu*, or “old-timey thinking.” However, parents may also have wanted to wait; as one informant explained, she wanted to “keep [her] daughter near for a little while” since her daughter would have to leave the natal household upon marriage. This was a common sentiment among parents. Because getting young women settled in life was defined in terms of arranging a good marriage among most disadvantaged caste and class parents, the pressure to fix a marriage once a good prospect came along often trumped parents’ desires to wait until daughters were seventeen or eighteen.

Efforts to channel girls' aspirations away from post-secondary education and careers and towards domestic life competed with discourses that encouraged the education of girls. Advertisements for schools prominently feature pictures of female students (see figures 7,8, and 9). Government programs such as the Initiatives to Girls for Secondary Education²⁹, gives Dalit and Adivasi girls who pass the tenth grade exam approximately Rs. 3000. These images and programs help associate good parenting with practices that promote girls' education. The educational achievements of girls themselves further challenged efforts to brush aside the importance of girls' higher education. Girls in Andhra Pradesh out-performed boys in several state exams during the fieldwork year (www.thehindu.com)³⁰. Good students were encouraged to seek higher education by teachers. In these cases, girls' educational aspirations could conflict with parents' views, as was the case with Chinni, a tenth grader at Kalakanchi high school. The math and physics teachers, as well as the school principal, pointed Chinni out to me as the "best student in the school." Her brother Prasanth had also been an excellent student, and he had scored well enough on the Engineering, Agricultural, and Medical Common Entrance Test (EAMCET), commonly considered one of the most difficult exams, to get a free seat

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http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/scheme_incentive.pdf

³⁰ Though there is no caste-wise disaggregation of school performance between girls and boys, it is unlikely that the better performance of girls can be explained solely by the performance of advantaged class girls since even the most generous estimate of the advantaged classes estimates them to be approximately 20 percent of the population. From my own observations, girls tended to be more attentive in class and gender norms that restrict girls access movement in public space meant that they spent more time at home than boys. Girls spent some of this time at home studying, which may have given them small but cumulatively significant benefits.

in one of the engineering schools in Guntur. Chinni wanted to go to medical school, but her mother Sushmita was ambivalent about sending Chinni to school after tenth grade. Sushmita wanted to live according to what “people like her” could achieve, which usually excluded higher education for young women. Yet ensuring that her daughter was taken care of by arranging her marriage was not sufficient to ensure Sushmita’s own claims to being a good parent.

I first met Sushmita several weeks before I had observed at the high school. It was my habit to visit Radjamamma and her daughter-in-law Bharathi Laxmi in the *Madhiga palle* (hamlet) of Kalakanchi. Radjamma was an elderly matriarchal figure in the village, her mother had been a well-respected nurse and from her Radjammama had inherited 2 hectares of farmland near the village. Bharathi Laxmi would sit in the back courtyard of their house and sew, and women from the village would come to gossip, or get clothes sewn, or cut a lime from the tree in their yard. One day, as Sushmita and Bharathi Laxmi were discussing the new saris Bharathi Laxmi was planning to sell, Bharathi Laxmi said teasingly “Here, you should interview this woman. She doesn’t want her daughter to go to school.” Sushmita smiled sheepishly at this. I did not want to further discomfort Sushmita, so we made light conversation about where I was living in Ongole, though I made sure to get Sushmita’s commitment for an interview. Over the next few weeks, I met Sushmita a few more times at Bharathi Laxmi’s and another woman’s house.

When I was finally able to coordinate an interview with her, I asked her about her educational aspirations for her children. This was standard in all my interviews but after hearing about Chinni from her teachers, coupled with Bharathi Laxmi’s teasing comment,

I was especially curious about Sushmita's response. During our conversations, Susmitha said that they would educate their son and daughter for as long as they were able to afford to do so. Sushmita was concerned about her ability to pay for her children's schooling-her family did not own any property and both she and her husband worked as laborers. Sushmita had pulled her eldest daughter out of school after the fifth grade in order to take her to work. Many disadvantaged caste and class parents had faced this reality and expressed feelings of frustration and failure that they had little recourse to make ends meet in their household. In the following excerpt from her interview, Sushmitha's concern that she might not be able to afford to educate both her son and younger daughter is bound-up with her ambivalence about her daughter's education ("I" is interviewer, "R" is respondent):

I: Your other two children, to what level do you want to educate them?

R: Well, with them...how much do we want to educate them...their ambition to study, we will struggle and educate them, that is what we are thinking. That is, based on their studies and their desires, we will labor, we will educate them...

I: Now your son is a bit older, how far does he want to study?

R: The boy is saying he will study until his [bachelor's] degree. But we... that is, it depends on our money. That is, we can educate him only if we have money. We have to do coolie work to educate him, so based on that we will go to work and educate him. With my son, we will struggle and educate him, that is our desire.

I: And your daughter?

R: Our daughter too, we want to educate her [a little abashed laughter in her tone].

I: Is she saying anything?

R: Our daughter too is saying she wants to study.

I: And how is she studying?

R: She is studying well, well enough.

I: Your daughter, how far does she want to study?

R: My daughter... my daughter too is saying she wants to study.

I: And what are you thinking about that?

R: Our daughter too, we will let her study, that is, as much as our circumstances allow, we will educate her.

While Sushmita stated her determination to do “coolie work” and educate her son Prasanth, she had to be prompted throughout the interview about her daughter Chinni. In addition to this, Sushmita downplayed Chinni’s educational achievements, perhaps because of her experience of failure in educating her eldest daughter. Sushmita negotiated the possibility that she would not be able to educate both Chinni and Prasanth by prioritizing Prasanth’s education and Chinni’s marital prospects. Yet Chinni’s educational success was at least partially due to Sushmita’s work ensuring that Chinni attended school regularly, was attentive during class, and diligent about her homework. As my earlier description of Kalakanchi school suggests, this was somewhat unusual among parents of children at the school.

A few months after our interview, I learned that Chinni had scored the highest in the school in the 10th class exams. Her score of 513 out of 600 was considered a respectable score even among students in good private schools. I saw Sushmita and Chinni again when I was visiting Kalakanchi, and congratulated Chinni on her high marks. When I asked if Chinni was planning to join her intermediate studies (11th and 12th grades), Sushmita explained that they were waiting to see if Chinni would get a

scholarship in one of the private educational institutions near the village. Directing her answer as much to Chinni as to me, Sushmita hedged about committing to sending Chinni for further schooling. Sushmita explained that even if Chinni got a scholarship, she and her husband might not be able to afford the fees for uniforms, books, and transportation. Bharathi Laxmi later told me that Chinni's parents had agreed to a match for Chinni several years earlier, with Chinni's cross-cousin. Cross-cousin marriages are common among both disadvantaged and advantaged castes in rural Andhra Pradesh, though they are declining among more class advantaged groups as these groups are more geographically mobile and have more extensive caste networks. For disadvantaged class parents, intra-familial alliances are thought to be good matches for several reasons: parents know the prospective groom or bride; dowries are uncommon in these alliances and if paid, tend to be minimal; and these arrangements can be made early in life, so parents feel that they have discharged one of their main duties towards their children.

Sushmita was ambivalent about gendered discourses of modernity that encourage the education of young women. She wanted Chinni to be educated, but only to the 10th grade, a level that was normative among her caste peers. Sushmita responded to explicit and implicit injunctions that she should educate Chinni by drawing attention to the financial difficulty of educating both Chinni and Chinni's brother. Sushmita was also ambivalent about Chinni's good score on the 10th class exam, a marked contrast to advantaged caste and class parents who eagerly discussed their children's tests results. The inability to financially invest in Chinni's schooling may have limited her ability to

affectively invest in Chinni's educational achievements, to take pleasure in Chinni's success as I observed advantaged class parents doing with their daughters.

Another theme that emerged in Sushmita's interview was about living according to her means. In the following excerpt, Sushmita's sense of the limits of status mobility through consumption becomes apparent in our discussion of the purchase of clothing for her children:

I: How about other things like clothing?

R: Yes, aren't they there [those costs]? For clothes, they need four or five pairs, don't they?

I: sounds of agreement

R: For clothes, it costs, it will cost Rs. 5-6,000, and that is if we take the cheaper ones. Aren't there more expensive clothes (ekuvu rateullu lo untam ledha, battalu)? Because we are people who don't have [money] (leynu vullu) we take the cheaper clothes. That is, a little bit, not taking the higher priced, but the cheaper ones, because we are people who don't have money, [instead of] 2,000 we take for 500, or 3,000 we take for 1,000 like that.

I: I mean to say, do they want a particular name of the clothes?

R: No, what I am saying is, even if we wanted to take better ones, we are laborers (coolie-panni chasinvallu), so we can't spend a lot of money. Because we are laborers, we take the cheaper things, like that...

I: Do they ask for more expensive things?

R: Even if they ask, we can't get it. And we can say, "That's expensive, dear, take something cheaper."

I: I mean, do they ask for those kind of things?

R: They do ask, don't they? (said in tone of 'of course they ask')

Sushmita's description of how she negotiates the purchase of clothes is one example of the mismatch between children's desires and parents' abilities to satisfy these desires. Sushmita's notion of living within her means was not only about what she could afford, but about what was appropriate to her station. When I asked Sushmita about whether she would ask for a *katnam* (dowry) for her son, she explained that she would only ask for a small one, because it would not be appropriate for her to ask for a big *katnam*.

Sushmita's habitus, her embodied sense of her place in the social order, was shaped by her experiences as a "coolie," or agricultural laborer. This process is congruent with Bourdieu's theorization of the habitus as emerging from an individual's position in class and status structures. It does not follow, however, that Sushmita's desire to educate her son and arrange her daughter's marriage were "an immediate adherence, at the deepest level of the habitus, to the tastes and distastes, sympathies and aversions, fantasies and phobias which, more than declared opinions, forge the *unconscious* unity of a class (Bourdieu 1984, 77, emphasis mine)." In fact, her caste peers like Bharathi Laxmi teased Sushmita for not wanting to educate her daughter further. Sushmita had to *consciously* navigate the disjuncture between her own limited resources and her identity as a good mother who should encourage the education of her daughter.

Bourdieu explains the conflict between Sushmita's common sense (that she should want things appropriate to her place) with the injunction that good parents should want to educate their daughters, as a crisis that unravels the *doxa* of the social field. In this case, the conflict reveals the myth of meritocracy and shows that the discourses that

associate good parenting with the education of disadvantaged caste girls fails to account for the impossibility to do so on a laborer's earnings, in a village where access to schooling is limited, in a fraught environment where disadvantaged caste girls and women are routinely subject to violence, and so on. This crisis must be resolved, according to Bourdieu, through a self-reflexive critique of the social order, which he equates with agency, or through a retrenchment in orthodoxy that attempts to restore "the primal state of innocence of *doxa* (1977, 169)." Bourdieu identifies this as the mechanism through which the dominated reproduce the structures that dominate them, by "condemning themselves to what is in any case their lot (Bourdieu 1984, 470)." Thus, Sushmita's inclination to get her daughter married rather than educate her demonstrates how Sushmita's habitus, shaped by her lifelong experiences of caste, class, and gender disadvantages, helps reproduce these very inequalities. In this reading, Sushmita's actions cannot be understood as anything other than an over-determined reproduction of the social order. It does not account for the imaginative work and self-discipline Sushmita had already engaged in to educate her son and younger daughter, actions that are incongruous with a dogmatic submission to accept "what is in any case her lot."

Sushmita's arrangement of Chinni's marriage can be read as a conscious distancing from gendered, middle-class notions of respectability in order to enact a gendered, Dalit-caste form of Christian virtuousness. Among some Dalit Christians, the transformation of caste and class inequalities are thought to happen through divine agency

(see also Roberts 2014, 2)³¹. Their relationship with others in their community relies on their production of a virtuous self. Virtuousness is a form of social and symbolic power (or capital, in Bourdieu's terms) which is produced through the associational activities of Dalit Christians. Church services, dinners with pastors, bible study, and friendships formed with other church congregants enabled Christian Dalit women to develop alternative discourses and embodied practices through which they claimed virtuousness. Notions of middle class respectability were often utterly incongruous with Dalit women's lives- their poverty, the arduousness of their labor, their vulnerability to physical harm, alcoholic husbands and sons, and so on, required an alternative set of cultural narratives and embodied practices through which women could claim dignity.

Virtuousness is akin to respectability, and it addressed the particular abjection of Dalit women. Like middle class respectability, it emphasizes asceticism (Radhakrishan 2011), but this asceticism is not only gendered, it is also fundamentally associated with caste. The proclamation that "Jesus was not born in an air-conditioned room" was regularly invoked by church pastors and congregants. This narrative enabled class and caste-disadvantaged people like Sushmita to develop an ethical self by forming an embodied affinity with the divine. Dalits' material deprivation and lack of social status are profoundly embodied. Though practices of untouchability are outlawed, I witnessed the use of separate plates for Dalits in advantaged caste households on several

³¹ "Transformation and the Suffering Subject: Caste/Class and Gender in Slum Pentecostal Discourse" Nathaniel Roberts, cited with permission of the author.

occasions³². Dalits perform arduous manual labor that often deal with noxious substances such as excrement and dead bodies, live in areas that typically do not have water, sewer, or electrical infrastructure, and are subject to rape and physical beatings by advantaged caste people. Thus this embodied affinity was especially powerful and evocative. Virtuousness was seen as both conferred by and essential to this connection.

Dalit Christian women developed virtuousness through two gestures: a self-conscious retreat from public spaces, and covering their heads with their sari *pallus* (the long part of the sari that drapes over the shoulder). Through these activities, “the body became thematized...as a site of moral training and cultivation” (Mahmood 2004, 139). At the end of one of my days in Kalakanchi, Sushmita and her friend Anjamma, who went to the same church, companionably walked with me to the village bus stop. As we left Anjamma’s house, they both covered their heads with their *pallus*. There was a small tea stall near the stop that sold *pongulu* (a savory fried dumpling) and was frequented by men who worked in the nearby fields. On this particular day there were five or six men milling near the stall. As we neared the stall, Sushmita remarked that there were lots of men there and Anjamma agreed. They stopped walking toward the stall and after a few moments of conversation, we parted company some twenty feet or so from the bus stop. Anjamma and Sushmita’s reactions were not obviously fearful; if they had thought that

³² However, none of the Dalit households I visited appeared to be using different plates for me when we shared food or drink. I was regularly offered food and drink as a form of hospitality. Though I always carried my own lunch as I usually spent the full day in the village, I realized that my ongoing refusal to accept food or drink could be interpreted as my distaste for the families I was visiting. After a few weeks in the fieldwork villages, I began to accept food and drink and regularly brought sweets or fruits as gifts and to share with the households I visited.

the men were dangerous, they would have warned me against waiting at the stall. Instead, I read this retreat from the tea stall space as an enactment of feminine Christian virtuousness. Sushmita and Anjamma marked the space of the tea stall as a potentially sexualized space. This cast their retreat from the tea stall as virtuous, a display their self-regulation and modesty.

The second way Dalit Christian women developed a virtuous habitus was through regular practices of communal devotion where they covered their heads. Covering the head is a gesture of bodily containment and therefore signals women's self-disciplining, a key quality of virtuousness. Sushmita attended church services for two to three hours on Sundays and joined in bible study for an hour on most days of the week if she did have to go for agricultural work. She also engaged in regular informal prayers. At Bharathi Laxmi's house, Radjamamma, Bharathi Laxmi's mother-in-law, often led prayers for women, for example a prayer for safe journey if someone was travelling, or a prayer for a good health if someone had a sick relative. On these occasions, the covering of the head signified the sanctity of these events. The gesture, performed in an instant, evoked the many hours of devotional practice through which Dalit Christian women cultivated virtue and simultaneously imbued the moment with sanctity.

The habitus is not only based on an unconscious internalization of the class and status structure, but can be consciously acquired "...through repeated practice until that practice leaves a permanent mark on the character of the person. Thus, virtues... are acquired through a coordination of outward behaviors... with inward dispositions (Mahmood 2004, 136)." Dalit Christian women's bodily acts of covering the head and

retreating from public space reflect their constant vigilance and monitoring of their practices. Thinking about habitus in this way enables an understanding of the structuring conditions of ethical life by exploring people's reasoning on their own terms (Mahmood 2004, esp. Chapter 1). Sushmita's reasoning is not only a re-enactment of class or caste disadvantage, though these certainly structure her life. It demonstrates the imaginative work and self-discipline that disadvantaged caste and class mothers engage in as they respond to narratives about modernity and social mobility.

Dalit Christian women like Sushmita were constantly alert to the way that they were judged as inferior mothers, especially in terms of their investment in children's educations. Cultural images and government projects that encouraged the education of girls help to associate advantaged class and liberal ideas of modernity with moral goodness. These modes of gaining respectability are often inaccessible to disadvantaged class and caste mothers, however disadvantaged caste and class mothers do not define respectability through these classed terms. Instead, they invest in virtuousness, which can be understood an alternative form of respectability that specifically addresses the lived experiences of Dalit women.

Dalit women's engagement with Christianity introduced new ways of accounting for the self that is distinct from the Hindu Dalit experience. While the highly individuated self associated with modernity was not present in rural areas, where few institutions could exercise the intensity of surveillance required for the internalization of disciplinary power, the practices of Dalit congregants produced more individuated selves but simultaneously tied these selves to the church community. Church sermons and women's

everyday talk about religion promised liberation from suffering. Through diligent prayer, regular church attendance, and modesty in dress and desires, individual suffering could find collective redress. Roberts (2014) finds a similar dynamic between individual misfortune and collective redress in his study of Dalit Pentecostals in Chennai. In Sushmita's case, the transformation of caste and class inequality is not something to be affected through educating her daughter Chinni. The production of a virtuous self in Sushmita's case can be read as a logic quite different than the middle class one that equates respectability with middle class ideas about good parenting. Yet it is unclear whether the desire for collective liberation will help affect this transformation in the caste and class structure. It is especially problematic that this narrative dovetails with gendered inequalities. It may be that Dalit girls exit from manual labor, coupled with a limited education, is merely transferring Dalit women's oppression from the labor market to the home.

Mahmood's caution against reading agency in terms of resistance (or lack of resistance) presents an important caveat about the politics of critique in scholarship. While I agree that a focus on secular ideals of "liberation" as a goal of scholarship limits a more complex reading of agency (Mahmood 2004, Chapter 1), attempting to locate agency often reveals constraint, as I describe above. Even if we read people's reasoning in their own terms, their activities and beliefs are part of broader political process to which they contribute (a concept to which Mahmood herself is attentive). Additionally, agentic acts that are not resistance in one setting can become resistance in another. For example, by choosing around whom to cover their head, Christian women were able to

define whom among “the public” *mattered*. They covered their heads in the presence of non-familial Christian men, and this was a gendered act of formal deference and of sexual modesty. In this setting, it signaled women’s virtuousness. However, Dalit women only selectively covered their heads in the presence of men who were not Christian. They did not cover their head when interacting with their advantaged caste agrarian employers or government officials. By not affording deference to these powerful figures, Dalit Christian women engaged in what Scott (1985) calls “Brechtian forms of resistance” (34). The prosaic act of not covering the head becomes an act of self-assertion against the class, caste, and gender dominance exercised by more powerful women and men.

My engagement with work on the active shaping of the habitus is not to argue against an analysis of inequality and its embodied reproduction through the habitus; rather, it is to identify the multiple ways that the habitus is produced. This is especially important in understanding contemporary Indian life because of the circulation of a variety of cultural practices, many of which promise liberation in some form. These practices are adopted consciously and can be practiced until they become inscribed into the body, performed imperfectly and therefore denigrated, or challenged in order to maintain social distinctions. In the next section, I describe two cases in which women actively attempt to shape their habitus, and discuss the significance of these attempts for understanding inequality.

The Politics of Modern Ambitions

Mahmood (2004) locates the agency of women in the piety movement in their ability to articulate an ethical self within a non-secular setting. While the practices of Christian worship enabled some women the ability to assert their virtue, in some cases the associational practices of the church limited women's agency through the disciplining of Dalit Christian women's bodies. Becoming visible as an individual was problematic for disadvantaged caste and class women, as illustrated by the comments of Mary Kiran's pastor and by the censure directed at Rakumari, who I introduced at the beginning of the chapter. The monitoring and regulation of bodies chastened young Dalit women for being ambitious and "modern;" to wear fashionable clothing, style their hair in new ways, and use cosmetics. In these cases, the non-secular values of modesty and demureness work in concert with secular, advantaged caste narratives that disparage the aspirational practices and social mobility of disadvantaged caste women (Bhatt, Murty, and Ramamurthy 2010).

For example, Mary Kiran was a young woman who was working with HELP, the non-governmental organization (NGO) that I volunteered with during my fieldwork. When she had cut her hair short, her church pastor had asked why "people like her should have hair like that." Mary Kiran's mother Nirmala told me this story, in tones of deep mortification, on several occasions. Nirmala was anxious that Mary Kiran wanted to take the teaching service exam, and felt that she should get married instead. Nirmala brought up Mary Kiran's short hair and the pastor's remark, fussing that Mary Kiran's desires were incomprehensible and a source of embarrassment to Nirmala. When Mary Kiran wanted to get a stylish churidar sewn, Nirmala was anxious that Mary Kiran was dressing

in “too fine” clothing, spending money, and drawing too much attention to herself with her short hair and fashion. Though most Dalit Christian families were not as anxious about their daughters as Nirmala was about Mary Kiran, the associational activities of the congregants and their collective desire to claim virtuousness often lead them to constrain the ambitions of young women.

Mary Kiran wanted to take the teaching exam in order to help support her family. Her father had passed away when she was twelve years old³³. Because she was the eldest child, and because her mother was somewhat timid, Mary Kiran became the default head of the household. When I met her, Mary Kiran was twenty-one. She did most of the household errands such as shopping, cooking, and cleaning, earned more than half of the household income, managed the family finances, applied to the state for her brother’s scholarship fees, and ensured that her sisters were attending school regularly. These responsibilities had made her independent and exposed her to Dalit women who worked as teachers, clerks, bank tellers and other pink collar work. Mary Kiran also wanted to become educated and work in a profession. Mary Kiran’s investment in her clothing and hairstyle, as well as her desire for more education, were efforts at social mobility. Skeggs (1997) notes a similar strategy in her work on English working class women. She argues that English working class women’s ambivalence towards their own class position, which

³³ This contributed to Nirmala’s anxieties about how she would be able to financially take care of her children and how she was perceived in local society. Widows are treated with pity and if they are young, with suspicion. They are often under extreme financial duress. If they do not have any close male kin to intervene on their behalf, they may be subject to sexual coercion by men. I heard several accounts of disadvantaged caste and class women who had been coerced in to having sex in order to keep their jobs. Though remarriage is not taboo, Nirmala did not remarry. My impression was that she was regarded as moral and overly anxious by her peers.

they lived as the “hidden injuries” of shame, awkwardness and the sense of being judged by others, encouraged them to invest in their external appearances in order to pass as middle class (94). For Nirmala, these modern forms of dress and grooming were associated with Mary Kiran calling too much attention to herself. By adopting the fashions of more elite social groups, these practices exposed disadvantaged caste and class women to censure by influential caste peers such as church leaders. Thus it was better to not try to affect caste or class mobility as an individual, but to focus practices of self-improvement on the development of virtuousness.

Not all Dalit Christian women felt similarly about leaving class and caste mobility to divine intervention. Vijaya, one of my key informants in Munjapalem, helped Mary Kiran secure employment at the NGO where I met her, and encouraged her to take the teachers exam. Vijaya sent her own sons to private school and offered insightful critiques of the caste and class politics of Munjapalem. Similarly, Rakumari, who I introduced at the beginning of the chapter, was very ambitious about her children’s educations. Both of these women worked for the state, Vijaya as a *anganwadi* (preschool) teacher, and Rakumari as an Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA). Vijaya also intermittently worked for HELP, the NGO I worked with to gain access to the rural fieldwork sites. The interaction with bureaucratic institutions and the training they receive as part of their jobs has produced, on the one hand, a notion of empowerment that may “deradicalize [disadvantaged caste women] and bring them in line with civil society (Sharma 2006, 80)”, or it may “provide the ground for mobilizations of political society in which

marginalized subjects make claims on the state, negotiate entitlements, and contest social hierarchies (Chatterjee 2004, cited in Sharma 2006, 81).”

ASHA is part of India’s National Rural Health Mission, a government program that was instituted in 2005 to “improve the availability of and access to quality health care by people, especially for those residing in rural areas, the poor, women and children (Mission Document, National Rural Health Mission³⁴).” Though ASHAs are volunteers, they are given a performance-based incentive for promoting immunization, referral and escort services for reproductive child health (RCH) and other health delivery programs. They are also involved in the preparation of village health plans. One of the ten ASHA training modules is called “Knowing Myself” and implicates the self-development of the ASHA worker with national development³⁵. These aspects of the ASHA position, like other government sponsored programs oriented towards “empowerment” may make women amenable to neoliberal ideas about self-improvement (Sharma 2006). Certainly Rakumari’s ambitiousness and her strategies to educate her children resonate with narratives about social mobility and meritocracy in India. She did not, however, favor privatization, a key aspect of neoliberal ideology.

Rakumari regarded the state as critical for the ability to educate her children. She had developed a keen understanding of how to interact with state bureaucracy through her work with the National Rural Health Mission. In our discussion of education for her children, she detailed a number of state services that she used to help her educate her

³⁴ http://www.nird.org.in/brgf/doc/Rural%20HealthMission_Document.pdf, downloaded 20 November 2015.

³⁵ <http://nrhm.gov.in/images/pdf/communitisation/asha/book-no-5.pdf>, downloaded 20 November 2015, pp. 5-6.

children, including the fee reimbursement available to Scheduled Caste students for college, her own incentives from her ASHA work, and her use of loan funds from the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) state-sponsored micro-finance program. She was aware of and participated in more state services than most parents and saw herself as both a state worker and beneficiary.

For many disadvantaged caste and class parents, the state bureaucracy was difficult to navigate. State officials were infamously slow and required bribes to perform their official duties. Parents interacted with three state programs: the ration card program which entitled people to subsidized rice and food and subsidized cooking gas, the program for maternal and infant health, and the state primary and secondary education program. In general, people complied with the state when necessary and tried to get around the state when they could. For example, the “white card,” or below poverty line (BPL) ration card, required information about employment and residence from applicants. It was common for people who lived in the city to come back to their natal village during the yearly ration card re-application process and apply for benefits as agricultural laborers in their villages. Proving residence in urban areas could be difficult since few people had formal written documents and/or would have to bribe various legal officials to obtain them. In addition to this, the income of city residents was usually higher and could harm the chances of getting a white card. Residence in rural areas was confirmed from the listed residence in the previous years application and from the confirmation of other villagers. The government worker who processed these applications

usually took a fee; in the year of my fieldwork, rural informants reported paying fees of Rs. 200 to Rs. 300 to the local representative.

While Rakumari acknowledged corruption among state workers, she also saw the state as an ally. Rakumari explained that the newspaper *Andhra Sakshi* (Andhra Witness) was her “favorite” because the political figure “YS [Rajasekhara Reddy], he is the one who gave [me my] job...” as an ASHA worker. *Sakshi* is owned by Y. S. Jaganmohan Reddy, son of the late Andhra Pradesh Congress Party chief minister Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy (YSR). This was the preferred paper among the educated Dalits I spoke with because it was thought to cover issues that interested Dalit people and many Dalits felt that they had benefitted greatly from YSR’s rural reforms. The rival paper *Eenadu* (Today) was owned by the Kamma business tycoon Ramoji Rao. No Dalit people I spoke with read *Eenadu* due to its association with Kammas.

Dalit women often understood structural inequalities and actively engaged in local power networks that helped them to navigate these inequalities. They engaged in projects of self-making that allowed them to assert dignity and, more practically, interact with authority structures in ways that enabled them to exercise agency. For some Christian women, this agency oriented them towards virtuousness, a form of self-improvement that was distinct from, but akin to, middle class notions of respectability. Some Dalit women who worked for the state or for NGOs associated self-improvement with class and status mobility. These mothers did not uncritically accept the neoliberal narrative of meritocracy that encourages privatization and denigrates the state (Fernandes and Heller 2006). These women acknowledged help from government schemes and utilized state

services to advance their goals of educating and employing their children. Through their resistance to privatization and their political support of state reservations, they challenge advantaged caste and class efforts to eradicate social redistribution.

Urban Uncles and Ambitious Nieces

Access to urban space and culture helped some disadvantaged caste rural families educate their daughters. The greater upward mobility of disadvantaged caste, but not “untouchable,” *jatis*, compared to the untouchable Dalit *jatis* is partially due to increased access to urban space. Though other disadvantaged caste *jatis*, such as *padhmasalees*, *chakalis*, and *kurumas* (weavers, washers, and shepherds, respectively) who belonged to the so-called “backward-castes” also worked as agricultural laborers, non-Dalit disadvantaged caste parents were more amenable to girls’ education than Dalit parents. This is because non-Dalit groups had an earlier pattern of migration to urban centers, which increased the number of educated people in their caste networks. A number of non-Dalit disadvantaged caste families in the fieldwork villages had migrated to cities such as Ongole and Guntur to work as domestic laborers, shop assistants, cooks, and other forms of labor that was more readily open to these “non-polluted” *jatis*. Non-Dalit disadvantaged castes who migrated to cities had access to public schools that tended to be better-funded, staffed, and managed than rural schools. Urban residence also mitigated some of the costs of private schooling since cities offer a greater number of private schools, including low-fee schools. Urban children could live at home and attend these schools and their parents did not have to bear the additional expense of boarding fees. As a few educated urban members emerged among these castes, they promoted a “taste for

education” among their *jati* peers and helped to educate their rural family members. Urban relatives provided a range of practical and material support by housing rural kin in cities so that they could attend better government schools, advising less educated rural kin on educational strategies for their children, paying for private school fees or tutoring fees for state exams, and paying for uniforms and books.

Krishna Kumari, a disadvantaged caste woman from the golla *jati*, relied on her brother for advice about how to educate her two daughters on her limited income. Krishna Kumari ran a small *kendra*, or milk collection business and her husband was a driver for the 108 state rural ambulance service. Both of Krishna Kumari’s daughters, Madhavi and Shanthi, were studying to become teachers. When I interviewed her, Krishna Kumari’s eldest daughter Madhavi was enrolled in a Bachelor’s of Education (B. Ed.) program. Her younger daughter Shanthi, on the advisement of her uncle, had forgone the longer training of the B. Ed. Program and was taking the exam for the Teacher Training Certificate (TTC). Whereas the B. Ed. is required to teach grades nine and ten, a TTC allows certificate holders to teach grades 5-8. The compensation for TTC holders is lower, however Krishna Kumari could not afford to have both girls in college. Her brother, who was a teacher at a government high school, had pointed out that if Krishna Kumari waited a year to enroll Shanthi in school, Shanthi might forget significant parts of what she had learned. He suggested that Shanthi could enroll in a TTC preparation course, which cost Rs. 5000 (approximately \$110 USD). This would allow Shanthi to begin working, and she would be able to return to school for a B. Ed. once her elder sister had started working.

For rural, disadvantaged caste and class parents with limited educations, educating children was a costly and somewhat inscrutable proposition. Male urban relatives not only helped them understand the options available to them, they also made social mobility seem possible. In addition to this, some educated disadvantaged caste men had strong positive attitudes towards women's education and employment. Advocating for their nieces therefore helped them to feel that they were modern and educated, and also that they were fulfilling their responsibility towards their family. In addition to this, educated urban Dalit men may have encouraged Dalit women's education and employment as a form of radical political activity. This was the case with Kumar, a Dalit man who I had heard about from Bharathi Laxmi, his sister-in-law.

Bharathi Laxmi was a member of the only landowning Dalit family I met during my fieldwork. Though neither Bharathi Laxmi or her husband Harsha had completed the tenth grade, their youngest daughter Anila was finishing her doctorate in communications in Hyderabad and their eldest daughter had completed her intermediate studies. The unusually high educational achievement of their daughters was due to the encouragement of educated family members and to their ability to borrow against the family land for educational costs. Bharathi Laxmi explained that many people in her family, including her mother-in-law and her husband Harsha, were pushing her to arrange a marriage for Anila. Bharathi Laxmi was able to resist these pressures both because she was proud of her daughter's academic achievement, and because her brother-in-law Kumar advocated for Anila's continuing education. As the eldest son in the family, Kumar had some authority in deciding what should be done in family matters. Though his mother

(Bharathi Laxmi's mother-in-law) wanted Anila to get married, he encouraged her to take out loans to pay the Rs. 50,000 (\$1100 USD) a year in hostel and ancillary educational fees that were necessary to keep Anila in college. In addition to this, he and his wife Jupaka lived in Hyderabad and they visited Anila regularly at her hostel. This helped ease Bharathi Laxmi's concerns about having her daughter live far away from home. Kumar also advised Anila on practical details that helped her advance educationally, such as helping her to secure an internship at Doordarshan, the government television channel.

I met Kumar during Sankranti, a harvest festival during which people typically returned home to their *sontha uru*, their home village. During our conversation, he and Jupaka explained that Dalit women had typically enjoyed more freedom than advantaged caste women. Jupaka worked in the Andhra Pradesh Secretariat, and she explained that casteism was a serious issue in the government bureaucracy. She had taken her *jati* name, Madhiga, as her last name. This practice by Dalits is a challenge to the stigma of their *jati* origin and it makes caste visible. Kumar's and Jupaka's efforts to help their niece get her PhD was informed by their political consciousness. During our conversation, they gave me examples of how Dalit students that are discriminated against in colleges and critiqued the government's disinvestment in public education as a form of advantaged caste efforts to deprive Dalits of education.

The education of Dalit young women offers some hope about the radical potential of education. Though education is problematically associated with nationalism (Benei 2009) and is increasingly subject to privatization, women like Rakumari and Vijaya suggest that education may help Dalit women make claims on the state in important

ways. They are able to use state development discourses to assert their place in the community and encourage the education of their daughters.

Conclusion

Over the last two decades Dalits and other disadvantaged caste groups have made modest educational gains (Desai and Kulkarni 2008) but have not been able to translate these gains into employment (Jeffery 2007). These inequalities are sustained by intergenerational inequalities based on caste, class, and gender, as well as by larger processes of economic contraction. My fieldwork clarifies how historical class and educational disadvantages and ongoing processes of caste and gender inequality contribute to the poor educational and employment outcomes of disadvantaged caste and class groups. Family-level disadvantages are compounded in rural areas that have no advantaged caste children in the public school. The concentration of disadvantaged caste and class children in schools like Kalakanchi made it difficult for teachers to create a classroom environment that was conducive to learning. In addition this, disadvantaged caste parents were unable to demand improvements to the school; advantaged caste parents did so with some regularity at the Munjapalem school.

Rural, disadvantaged caste women have become the targets of modernizing projects in India, but few disadvantaged caste and class women were educated enough to achieve class mobility by earning a living through professional work. Dalit parents are unwilling to let their daughters attend schools that require travel outside of the village since Dalit women are especially vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. Since most rural schools only teach through the tenth grade, many Dalit girls are not educated

beyond this point. One of the most effective ways to increase education among disadvantaged caste and class girls is to facilitate their ability to move safely in public spaces. In Munjaplaem, disadvantaged caste and class parents had more positive attitudes towards girls education than in Kalakanchi. As the families I spoke with were similar in terms of household resources, this difference can be attributed to cheap and relatively safe public transportation.

Disadvantage caste and class parents who do not educate girls risk being censured as backwards or as having less affection for their daughters. This idea of parenting is associated with middle class notions of respectability. Respectability supports advantaged caste and class hegemony because it makes morality public, positioning it as an object of knowledge (Strathern 1992; Skeggs 1997; Radhakrishnan 2011). This enables advantaged caste and class groups to define respectability in terms that legitimate their domination over disadvantaged caste and class groups.

Some Dalit Christian women distance themselves from middle class understandings of respectability to develop an embodied practice of virtuousness. Virtuousness does not actively critique the class and caste advantages required for the production of respectability, but it does enable Dalit women to define themselves and address the caste, class, and gender inequalities that shape their lives. The social support women gained through the church helped some young women such as Mary Kiran find employment through her church network but it also subjected Mary Kiran to scrutiny. When disadvantaged caste women like Mary Kiran or Rakumari aspired to social mobility, they were censured by other disadvantaged caste and class women.

State services that are targeted towards women helped disadvantaged caste and class mothers navigate the state bureaucracy. Seemingly marginal positions such as *anganwadi* teachers or ASHA health workers taught parents how to interact with bureaucracy and disseminated pro-mobility narratives. The ASHA program in particular promoted women's empowerment. This narrative provided the material and discursive resources through which Rakumari could both imagine having highly educated children and successfully strategize to accomplish this. However, this potential incorporation into the "new middle class" limited the possibility that empowerment "...could be used as an alternative means for consciousness raising, a spontaneous mobilization tactic, or a loosely defined blueprint for radical action against oppression" (Sharma 2006, 80). Empowerment is increasingly becoming mainstreamed and packaged into government-sponsored development programs—it has, in other words, become a "category of governance" (Chatterjee 2004:69). If anything, the ire and social disapprobation targeted toward ambitious disadvantaged caste women like Rakumari points to class fractionalization with disadvantaged castes. This may undermine disadvantaged caste political power as it creates divisions between those few disadvantaged caste and class women who were ambitious and "empowered" and their peers.

In addition to state services, kin networks were critical for the education of young women. Educated family members offered both practical support and enabled parents and children to imagine that people from their abject caste and class positions could be educated. For disadvantaged caste men, promoting the education of disadvantaged caste women was positively associated with being modern and educated themselves. Some

men did not want their wives to work because they associated masculinity with making enough money to support the household. In addition to this, Dalit women traditionally worked in manual labor so working outside of the home was considered demeaning. Dalit women or men who could imagine Dalit women in professional work consciously critiqued the caste and gender inequalities Dalit women faced. This suggests that though narratives about social mobility may support advantaged caste and class hegemony, educated disadvantaged caste and class people do not necessarily have to conceptualize mobility in the same way. Social mobility may not be defined through attempts to ascend the current social structure, but through the ability to critique and dismantle structural inequalities.

Figure 6: Total number of educational institutions in Andhra Pradesh

Source: Commissioner & Director of School Education, A.P, Hyderabad

Directorate of Intermediate Education, AP, Hyderabad

Education

Item	1960-61	1970-71	1980-81	1990-91	1997-98	2004-05	2005-06	2008-09	2009-10
Primary Schools (No.)	34525	37349	40408	48731	49919	78347	79449	65609	65932
Enrolment (In Thousands)	2817	3224	4042	5826	8370	8697	8570	5686	5392
Junior colleges (No.)	1224	2994	3975	6164	8661	3289	3712	-	4593
Enrolment (In Thousands)	553	994	1797	2850	3713	1384	1377	-	1516
Source: Commissioner & Director of School Education, A.P, Hyderabad									
Directorate of Intermediate Education, AP,, Hyderabad									

Figure 7: Advertisement for co-ed engineering college on a residential road in Guntur.

SRI MITTAPALLI GROUP OF ENGINEERING COLLEGES
* DISCIPLINE * KNOWLEDGE * SKILLS * PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT * PLACEMENTS

SRI MITTAPALLI COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING
Courses Offered:
B.Tech : ECE, EEE, CSE, IT & Mech
M.Tech : ECE, CSE, CS, SE, EEE, (PE & ED)
MBA & MCA
POLYTECHNIC: ECE, GSE, EEE & Mech

SRI MITTAPALLI INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR WOMEN
Courses Offered:
B.Tech : ECE, EEE, CSE & IT
M.Tech : CSE, ECE (VLSI & ES)
MBA

100% PLACEMENTS
250+ Placements In 2012

EAMCET & ICET - PGECET
CEEP CODE : MPLG

EAMCET, ICET & PGECET CODE : MPLW

HOSTEL FACILITY FOR GIRLS IN CAMPUS

NH5, Tummalapalem, Guntur- 522 233. Ph:0863-2344490 / 03 Cell: 90004 47117
City Office : 42, Brundavan Gardens, Guntur. Ph: 0863 - 2330315 Cell: 95023 42424
www.srimittapalieducation.com Email:smitw08@gmail.com

Figure 8: School advertisement for co-ed institution in Guntur city.

MONTESSORI
International System of Education

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Figure 9: School billboard advertisement in Guntur for co-ed school.



Chapter 5: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Future Work

In the past few decades of in Andhra Pradesh, rural families have tried to help their daughters become educated and empowered. Young women and their families are the targets of development programs and private philanthropic efforts that attempt to address the gender inequalities in Indian society. These programs are unable to reconcile the promise of social mobility with deep-seated gender, caste, and class inequalities. The parents I studied had different ways of assessing social mobility and strategizing to help their daughters have better lives than their own. The most important issues shaping educational aspirations and outcomes for young women is their geographic mobility and the gender norms about education in their caste. The differences in present day cannot be attributed to more progressive or “backwards” castes, but were shaped over the course of several centuries. A historical perspective shows that gender, caste, and class processes are bound together, and attempts to address social inequality must address all three of these issues.

Advantaged castes such as the Kammas were peasant castes that were able to enrich themselves through the development of agricultural technology. A fraction of the Kamma caste urbanized in the early twentieth century and Kammas were able to translate their economic power into political and social power and become hegemonic. As these elites migrated to the developed countries, they have created an orientation towards the

global that encourages migration. The cultural capital required for migration such as English language proficiency and tertiary degrees is largely produced in the private sphere. This process has compounded caste and class advantage. In order to manage class fractionalization within the caste, philanthropic organizations such as the Kamma hostel help disadvantaged class fractions of their caste educate their daughters. While young women are able to attend college in the city and develop some facility in dealing with bureaucracies, the day-to-day functioning of the hostel reproduced gender and class inequalities within the Kamma caste. It also reinforces the centrality of caste in shaping young women's identities and perpetuates Kamma dominance of local educational institutions.

Kapur (2010) has argued that elite migration has worked as a “venting mechanism” that has helped to strengthen Indian democracy. Education and technological training in Western countries facilitated the flow of social remittances such as technological expertise to India and has helped integrate the country into the world economy through the development of global firms. The “gradual but perceptible” (Kapur 2010, 83) ascendancy of disadvantaged caste groups is argued to be indicative of a “silent revolution” (Jaffrelot 2003). In this view, marginalized groups are taking up the places in the polity that have opened up by elite migration. This hopeful analysis is called into question if we look beyond the formal state and consider the power of civil society.

Gramsci (2000, 235) describes the state as a combination of civil society and political society, “hegemony protected by the armor of coercion.” The function of civil society is to advance cultural hegemony. The construction of civil society as voluntary

and private enables advantaged castes to hoard their material and cultural resources within caste and contributes to inter-caste inequality. Civil society institutions such as colleges and philanthropic organizations channel caste feeling into political activity. At the same time, political affiliation based on caste is articulated through student organizations. In cases where this hegemony is challenged, as is the case with the Dalit student organizations who contest the coercive actions of the state, advantaged castes are able to consolidate their social and political power to gain control of this very same coercive state apparatus. Thus advantaged castes are able to use state power to aggressively suppress Dalit assertion. Contrary to Kapur's claim, older Indian elites do not appear to be less likely to resist the loss of political power in India. They have merely shifted their political strategies into different channels while maintaining significant structural power within the state.

Disadvantaged castes also engage in civil society activities but they lack the economic and political power to bend the state to their political will. Despite the political assertion of Dalits since the 1990s, state redistribution efforts in education are being supplanted by the booming private (civil) sector. Private schools vary widely in quality and channel disadvantaged children into low quality schools. But perhaps more importantly, they are enabling advantaged groups to disinvest in public schooling. This has created a situation where the most disadvantaged groups—disadvantaged caste and class rural young women—are sent to the worst schools. The lack of public educational infrastructure in the villages means that young women must travel everyday or migrate to cities to continue their education. However they face substantial physical danger in doing

so. Thus the limited geographic mobility of Dalit girls and young women severely restricted their social mobility.

Disadvantaged-caste and class rural parents had to confront irreconcilable contradictions between educating their daughters, preserving their daughters' physical safety, and ensuring their honorability through marriage. These contradictions simultaneously stemmed from and reinforced the exclusion of disadvantaged-caste and class young women from middle-class forms of respectability. Because advantaged caste men (and disadvantaged caste men) are able to assault disadvantaged caste women with little or no punishment, and in many cases at some penalty to the woman herself, the potential risks of educating young women are high. Disadvantaged caste women were discouraged from working because work was associated with manual labor, and because even pink-collar, middle-class labor was seen as threatening to disadvantaged caste masculinity. Few disadvantaged caste and class parents wanted to educate their daughters past the tenth grade, but this lack of university education marked the boundary rural, disadvantaged-caste and class femininity and respectable femininity that was signified through the middle-class credential of a bachelor's degree.

Some disadvantaged caste women consciously cultivated their ethical selves to assert their virtuousness. Virtuousness was akin to respectability in that it was a gendered form of symbolic capital, but it was distinctly disadvantaged caste and class. By sequestering themselves from public spaces, challenging neoliberal promises of social mobility, and middle class ideas of femininity, Dalit Christian women were able to assert their dignity. Virtuousness, like respectability, made morality public. Dalit Christian

women who were ambitious, wore modern clothes or hair styles, or were otherwise thought to be transgressing the qualities of virtuousness were censured by their communities.

The exit of Dalit women from paid work and their subjection to new codes of gendered conduct may be undermining the traditional equality that existed between women and men (Berremen 1993; Kapadia 1995). While this may be one possible consequence of not earning a wage, research on women's agricultural work suggests that wage work does not mitigate gender inequalities, which are also based on patriarchal family norms and cultural restrictions on women's geographic mobility (Garikipati 2008). Women often do not retain control of their wages, the feminization of agricultural labor may have lowered agricultural wages, and income from seasonal migration is causing the wealth gap between men and women to widen (Garikipati 2008). Additionally, the women I spoke with explained that as agricultural laborers, they were subject to sexual coercion. Almost all of the agricultural workers I spoke with reported health problems from the arduousness of physical labor and from contact with tobacco leaves, which was the main crop in both fieldwork villages. Any intervention should therefore address the kind of work to which women have access. At a practical level, this requires reforms to public education infrastructure, legal arrangements that give men rights over women's earnings, and policies that address caste-based employment discrimination. At a cultural-level, a more critical engagement with caste and gender inequalities can enable people to identify and challenge these inequalities and encourage young women to imagine themselves doing dignified work.

My insistence that gender, caste, and class inequalities must be addressed simultaneously may seem like an unrealistic prescription. However, my aim in this dissertation was to draw attention to how these inequalities are bound together quite matter-of-factly in everyday practice. I tried to show how the attempt to change one sphere, gender, was severely constrained due to persistent caste and class inequalities. These inequalities are not insurmountable. Some of the parents I spoke with were able to educate their daughters, and some of the young women were savvy and critical and took advantage of the few opportunities they had. Yet the success of these parents brings up more troubling questions about the nature of social change taking place in India. In the rest of this chapter, I consider the broader implications of some of the trends I have identified throughout this dissertation and discuss future directions for my research.

Institutional Failure: Private vs Public Schooling

Public primary and secondary schooling in India is in a dire situation. Though a few excellent schools can still be found, they are held together by a few tireless headmasters or headmistresses and their funding is inconsistently supplemented by philanthropic projects. Like the diner who gets an unpleasant meal and complains about the small portion, public education in India is not good and there is not much of it. Despite the fact that public schools do reproduce class, caste, and gender inequalities, they also provide the populace with skills such as literacy and numeracy, which people need to live in contemporary society. There is almost no discussion in the media of the terrible state of the schools. During my fieldwork in the 2012-2013, I scoured the Telugu-language newspapers for some discussion of schools. The only article I found in six

months was about how some parents were calling for schools to limit homework because children's book bags were very heavy from carrying all their books back and forth to school. *The Hindu*, which was the English language paper I surveyed, had a weekly education section. This section was filled with the stories of elite students studying in the US, Scotland, Australia, Germany, and other Western countries. I could find no discussion of public education.

The silence around public education is accompanied by growing support for private education. Literacy rates have increased steadily in the past few decades and may continue to do so despite the lack of public infrastructure, but just measuring literacy masks growing educational inequalities between disadvantaged and advantaged castes and classes. This is especially pronounced in rural areas, where people do not have access to many private educational services. The Indian government's most recent five-year plan³⁶ recommends further deregulating the private education sector encourage private expansion into rural areas (sections 21.73, 21.106, and 21.107). The plan also suggests the use of a voucher system (sections 21.107) which would channel state funds into private schools. Private expansion may create more problems than it solves since many low-fee schools tend to be poor quality. It was not uncommon for low fee schools to shut down the day after school fees were due; owners of these schools would wait to collect tuition fees and abscond with the money. Moreover, there was a high-level of segregation by caste and class in private education; the best schools were the most expensive. Though the Right to Education Act in India mandates that private unaided schools reserve a 25

³⁶ Government of India Twelfth Five Year Plan Volume III: Social Sectors
http://planningcommission.gov.in/plans/planrel/12thplan/pdf/12fyp_vol3.pdf

percent quota for economically and socially disadvantaged children, a 2015 study by the Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad found that less than one percent of these seats were filled in the schools in Andhra Pradesh in the 2013-2014 school year³⁷. In addition to this, there was stratification within schools, for example some schools offered instruction in air-conditioned classrooms for a higher fee. Private education therefore tends to increase educational inequalities rather than mitigate them.

If educational privatization increases, it could also affect the availability of stable, well-paying jobs. Private school teachers are paid one-sixth of the salary of public school teachers (Muralidharan and Sundararaman 2013), turnover rates tend to be higher, and some private schools close without warning. Educational qualifications for teaching in the private sector tend to be lower, and educational metrics are increasingly shifting to “results-based” evaluation that affects central government funding (Government of India Twelfth Five Year Plan sections 21.75-21.77).

Nearly every parent and child I spoke with complained about the memorization-based learning in many corporate private schools. Because exam results determined young people’s admission to the next level of education, everyone who could afford it attended some kind of grueling coaching program the year of their exams. The pressure on children was intense and several of the students I spoke to attributed student suicides to this pressure. This was especially acute for rural children, whose parents took out educational loans on their farmland.

³⁷ <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Hyderabad/less-than-one-per-cent-schools-implemented-rte-act-in-combined-ap/article7032130.ece>

Education in India needs nothing short of revolutionary reform. Some of the migration to the private sector may be irreversible, but the greater caste variation in better public schools suggests that some parents would take up the public option if it was better managed. Teacher attendance is a serious issue in rural schools and stricter attendance policies for teachers and students alike should be implemented. School management was also a decisive factor in student and teacher attendance. The two high-quality public schools where I observed had a strict attendance policy for students and teachers. Absent students had to write a letter to the school headmaster/mistress explaining why they were absent. This set the expectation that students should attend school, and appeared to also discipline parents who may have tried to keep children home. Absent teachers were disciplined by the headmaster/mistress and were often transferred out of schools. Some of the teacher absenteeism at Kalakanchi was due to the headmaster's sense of ineffectualness in managing staff. Developing a management training program for school headmasters and mistresses may help these administrators better manage their staff and create a culture that emphasizes closer oversight of the school.

Future Directions

I would ideally like to follow-up with the families I interviewed and see where these children and parents are today. This would help me assess which strategies were successful and better understand the challenges disadvantaged children face as they try to achieve social mobility. I would also like to collect the life histories of female college students from Andhra who are in the US to develop my understanding of gender and transnational mobility. I am especially interested in Dalit students. Though this may be a

difficult population to access since so few Dalits migrate to the US, it would also be informative about how students manage this mobility and how they experience caste in the US.

Thinking more broadly, the Guntur Vijayawada region is slated to be the new capital of Andhra Pradesh, after bifurcation of Telengana and Andhra Pradesh in June of 2014. I would like to study how changes the infrastructure and culture of the region affects families. The development of the capital region will increase land values and will likely exacerbate class inequalities. The somewhat mixed class neighborhoods in Guntur will quickly become advantaged class. I would like to follow-up on what happens to Radha Krishna public high school, which sits on over an acre of land in a posh neighborhood in Guntur.

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Appendix A: Methodology: Trying to Get the Fish to Talk about the Water

The aphorism that “the fish don’t talk about the water” captures the challenges of ethnographic research. In order to understand social life, the ethnographer tries to know both about the activities and thoughts of a group of people, and the material and cultural world in which the people live. Yet because people are born into and grow up in the material and cultural “waters” of their society, it is difficult to get them to talk explicitly about, for example, social class. This is because experiences of class (and caste and gender and geographic location) are normalized, taken-for-granted as “facts of life.” The ethnographer has her own limitations in recognizing and understanding the social waters in which she transplants herself. The subtitle of this chapter is somewhat disingenuous because I only slowly became aware of the societal waters in which I conducted fieldwork. This is perhaps the core work of ethnographers, to “attune themselves to the horizons and rhythms of their subjects’ existence (Burawoy 2000, 4).” I attuned myself by trying to live in the same waters, by spending as much time as I could with those who would have me, and by making mistakes that disrupted the smooth currents of everyday life. Before I mix too many metaphors, let me state that the following chapter describes my attempts to attune myself to the fieldwork sites of Guntur city and the villages of Munjapalem and Kalakanchi (names changed). My rationale for choosing to collect the

data that I did, my methods of data collection, and my analytic process therefore describe both the fish (including myself) and the water.

Family Interviews and Home Observations

Family interviews and home observations make up the core of this dissertation. These are supplemented by observations in institutions, specifically secondary schools and an educational hostel for young women from the Kammas sub-caste, as well as observations in several villages and Guntur city, and analysis of textual material in English and Telugu that pertain to education and family life (such as Telugu cinemas, advertisements, school websites, and newspaper articles). The earliest part of this project began in 2011, when I interviewed five rural families and two focus groups in rural Andhra Pradesh about their experiences raising children. I gained access to these interviewees and focus group through a non-governmental organization (NGO) called HELP (name changed), which works in the tobacco farming villages in Guntur and Ongole districts (similar to US counties). When I returned to India in July of 2012 to collect data, I continued to work with HELP to gain access to the fieldwork villages. For the urban sample, I did not work with any organization and relied on my personal contacts in the city of Guntur to recruit my sample. The forty family interviews that I draw from for my dissertation were collected at this time.

The family interviews were semi-structured; in addition to collecting demographic information about each household such as household composition, age and employment status of household adults, and educational background of adults, the interview questions focused on mother's everyday work, their educational aspirations for

their children, consumption patterns, and ideas about marriage. The interview questions were sometimes quite broad in order to provide informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms. For example, I asked questions in the following way: “Tell me about your life as a child;” I was interested in how parents’ family of origin shaped their attitudes towards education, modernity, gender ideas, and so on. Asking questions in this broad way helped bring out unexpected information about how parents and children define and try to achieve social mobility and gain status. I would pose this open-ended question and follow-up on interviewees responses based on whether their discussion had covered a set of basic questions that I wanted to collect with each interview. A framework of regular interview questions helped make the more intricate and unique data of each family comparable with other families.

All but two interviews were conducted in the family homes. This allowed me to observe the material conditions of everyday life and interactions between family members. Visiting a variety of homes helped me understand what social class and caste look like on the ground. I use these observations to compare household consumption and labor and inform my assessment of class. I was able to identify broader patterns of spatial segregation based on caste and their impact on access to resources such as water and electricity, and to assess rural/urban differences in infrastructure. For example, in Kalakanchi, during a one-month period beginning in late November, the municipal authority did not deliver water to the water tank for the Dalit section of the village. Families were able to get water from the well in their section of the village, but the households in this part of the village did not have running water in their homes. During

this period, all of the advantaged caste families I spoke with in the village had water. Though many of these observations are not explicitly discussed in the dissertation, they helped me attune myself to the interactions between politics, spatial organization, and everyday experiences of caste and class and inform my analysis.

In all but two cases, I obtained consent for interviews and home observations at the same time. This was because I conducted the interviews in people's homes. In order to obtain informed consent for the interviews, I gave the potential interviewee a Telugu or English language copy of the consent form (depending on their preference) for the research. If they could not read the form, we found someone who would explain the form to them, usually a family member. I avoided reading the consent form to non-literate people out of concern that they would question whether I was giving them the correct information on the form. At the end of the interview, I asked families if I could come back to them with follow-up questions if necessary. All of the families I spoke with agreed to allow me to follow-up. This research protocol was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the Ohio state University.

In the villages, the people I interviewed knew each other, at least by name. Some women would mention that they knew I had spoke with a particular family or ask if I was the same person who had visited so-and-so's house. On the one hand, I read this question as a way of placing me since I was an unfamiliar person and an attempt to understand my purpose for interviewing women. On the other hand, inquires about other women sometimes felt like people were fishing for information. I was careful to keep my discussions with interviewees confidential. If I had interviewed a family I was asked

about, I would acknowledge that I had visited them and then attempt to redirect the conversation towards the current interview. This usually worked though I sometimes heard gossip about other families or was warned not to visit certain homes. I treat this non-interview information as valuable data about dynamics between people in the village, even if the content of these conversations may be suspect.

On subsequent visits to the villages, I made an effort to briefly visit or ask after the women I spoke with in order to develop my connection with the local community. After a couple of months, I had an informal relationship with a few families who were willing to let me observe for longer periods in their homes. The families I saw several times tended to be somewhat better-off than those I visited only once or twice. This is because women in poorer families were likely to be working during the day when I conducted my fieldwork, so they were not home for me to casually stop by or to visit for longer observations. During my observational visits, I was not able to fade into the background as Lareau (2003) and her research team were able to do. However, in several families I was accepted as a friendly visitor rather than as a researcher or inspector. I became close to six key informants; if I visited their village I would usually stop by their houses first. I would spend time in their home or perform some minor housework with them or they would introduce me to other interviewees. I attended local fairs, festivities at the local temples, and family functions such as weddings and birthdays with these women and their families. These interactions provided me with insight about variations in styles of interactions within families.

In Guntur city, I was not able to drop-by people's homes or talk with sets of people who knew each other as I did in the rural sites. Despite the relative anonymity of the city, I was able to have more intensive interactions with my key informants. I observed at the home of my two key informants in the city. In addition to these families, I interviewed a woman who lived next door and was able to visit her with some regularity. The fourth family I observed was one who I met through my observations at the local high school in Guntur. After my initial interview, I learned that the father had died suddenly and went to offer my condolences. I was invited to a *dhinam*, a funeral feast, which I attended. As a result of these interactions, I became acquainted with the family and visited them several more times.

I audio recorded my interviews. Since I used an open-ended question format, discussions often diverged from the interview guide. I wanted to capture these discussions and be able to review them multiple times for analysis. While I did jot down notes during my interviews, I wanted to focus on holding a conversation rather than on taking notes. By recoding the interviews, I was able to let conversation be more free-flowing and develop a rapport with my interviewee. However, the recorder was often regarded with curiosity. After some initial awkwardness, most people seemed to be comfortable with the idea that the conversation was being recorded. Occasionally, the recording device was regarded with suspicion. I encouraged these women to ask me questions about my research in order to assuage their concerns about my intentions and their risks. In addition to this, I emphasized that women could stop the interview at anytime and could asked to be excluded even after the interview, at which time I would

remove their interview. In one case, the interviewee let me tape our discussion after we spoke for a half-hour or so about my work, my connections to the NGO, and my project. On another occasion, the woman I spoke with refused to be recorded.

On these occasions, audio recording did feel coercive. I excluded families from participating in the study if they did not consent to being recorded. However, I was giving a stipend of Rs. 300 (\$6.67 USD) to the families I interviewed. The amount I offered was equal to a couple of days of agricultural wage. I did not mention this as part of my recruitment strategy and only offered it to women after we completed the interview, however it was likely that after a couple of months this information became commonly known as people discussed my visits with each other.

Most of the interviews are with mothers and their children; some fathers are included if they were available on the days I interviewed or observed in people's homes. I focused on interviewing mothers and children for two reasons. The first reason is based on my engagement with academic work that emphasizes women's central place in childrearing. Mothers, as workers within and outside the home, and as idealized symbolic figures, play a significant role in the reproduction of social inequalities (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Papanek 1979; Smith 1990; Skeggs 1997; Dickey 2000; Lareau 2003; Reay 2005; Donner 2008). I concentrated on recruiting mothers in order to extend this work into the study of social mobility in contemporary Andhra Pradesh. The second reason I did not insist on interviewing fathers was due to normative expectations in India that restrict cross-gender socialization. My ability to speak Telugu, the local language, my own ties to the region through my family and early childhood residence in Guntur

city, and my appearance as a south Indian woman, gave me the status as somewhat of an “insider.” Because I was read as an insider, I was accountable for adhering to local gender norms. I worried that I would have been considered too forward or disrespectful if I actively recruited men or demanded their presence for interviews. In addition to this, women would sometimes limit their own interactions with me and defer to their husbands when answering questions during the interview. Though most fathers were interested in their children’s well-being and had significant power in deciding family expenditure on children, they did very little day-to-day work in childcare.

By focusing on mothers and using a semi-structured interview format, I was able to gather data about the everyday practices of childrearing and engage in more ruminating, informal conversations about the cultural logics associated with this work. I developed informal, affectionate relationships with several of the women I interviewed. Even though I used a hard copy of an interview guide and audio-recorded interviews, my desire to interact with women multiple times, and to not insist on the participation of their husbands, helped me distance myself from “official” fieldworkers like those from NGOs or the government. I also made sure to greet any of the family members I interviewed if I saw them in the village, or ask after them if I ran into someone who knew them. This sustained informal engagement with women helped me partially integrate myself into everyday life in the villages. I met some women at the houses of other women, heard gossip about local society, witnessed a rift that developed between family members that led to the dissolution of a joint family household, and became somewhat accepted into village life. I was able to conduct multiple household observations in ten households,

eight of which I visited over five times each. I kept field notes in a journal after these visits, and these ongoing interactions helped me develop a more holistic understanding of social life than interviews alone.

Participant Observation

In addition to family interviews, the other major source of data for this dissertation is the ethnographic observations in the fieldwork sites. A guiding interest in this research was to develop an on-the-ground account of how different social institutions intersect, and how the mutual influence between institutions shape inequality. In order to understand how processes in the family affected processes in schools, and vice versa, I conducted formal ethnographic observations in two rural public high schools and one urban public high school. I was only able to visit one of the rural schools for one day, under the aegis of the NGO with which I was volunteering. The school had received some funding from a US-based tobacco company that distributed funds through the NGO and was counted as a “model school” in the region. During my visit, I interviewed the school headmistress and six students and observed classes. Because this school was over a two-hour journey from where I was living at the time, it was not feasible to visit the school regularly. However, my observations at this school do inform my analysis of the high school in Kalakanchi, where I conducted two weeks of observation beginning in late January of 2013.

I also observed at a large and highly-reputed public high school in the urban site of Guntur. I visited this school for a month beginning in mid-March of 2013; for the first week, I visited the school every day and then several times a week for the rest of the

month. I also attended two school events, a formal Hindu *pooja*, or prayer ceremony, which was conducted for the tenth grade students before the state exams in April, and an end-of-year celebration in May.

I wanted to observe in high schools because I wanted to study children that had some chance of advancing to upper-level study. Professional employment, whether in the public or private sector, generally requires a degree from a junior college. Educational transition from tenth class into junior college is influenced by gender, caste, and class inequalities³⁸ and is therefore significant for understanding the reproduction of these inequalities through educational differences. I also wanted to talk with students about their aspirations and plans at a time when they were likely to be considering their education and employment options.

In order to gain permission to observe in the schools, I met with the headmaster of each school. I described myself as a PhD student from the United States. I explained that I was studying how children were being raised and educated in India. At the rural school in Kalakanchi, the headmaster was initially hesitant to let me observe and I spoke with him at length about who I would share my research with and my intentions more broadly for my project. At Radha Krishna high school (name changed) in Guntur city, I was introduced the headmaster of the school by family friend, who was a well-regarded member of the committee that oversaw the school. In both cases, I explained that I would

³⁸ Desai and Kulkarni (2008) find that in the 1999-2000 year, Dalits, adivasis, and Muslims all are less likely to progress from grade ten to junior college than advantaged caste Hindus. This disadvantage is large and statistically significant for both girls and boys. Additionally, household per capita expenditure, as a proxy for class, had an effect on educational transitions. They also find that household expenditure and urban residence help mitigate educational disadvantage for girls.

share my research with my colleagues and supervisors in the US. I described how I would attempt to preserve the anonymity of the schools, teachers, and students by changing their names. I also changed the names of the rural villages to maintain confidentiality.

I spent my time at the schools observing in classrooms, talking with students, and sitting with teachers in the teachers' lounges. I observed the ninth grade class in both high schools. Students in the tenth grade class were preparing for the important tenth grade exam, which would determine whether they graduated from tenth grade and their admission into junior colleges. My presence at both schools was disruptive, though towards the second week at the urban high school, this disruption became minimal. I thought I would be more likely to get permission from school officials and teachers to observe in the ninth rather than tenth grade and I did not want to affect exam preparations. Observations in classrooms helped me identify how schools reproduce broader social relations. The manifest function of schooling is to instill academic knowledge, and its latent function is to instill discipline. In order to address both of these functions, I took field notes about the daily lessons in class and about the class environment itself, including students' and teachers' interactions. Talking with teachers helped me coordinate these observations with teachers' own reports about the challenges of teaching, their perceptions of students and their families, and broader societal narratives about education. My conversations with students were wide-ranging; when I could, I tried to steer the conversation to their aspirations and their perceptions of social

change in their village or city. These conversations informed me about what cultural images and narratives resonated for young people.

Public schools were dominated by working-class and poor students; in order to assess the relationship between social class and school experiences, I attempted to observe in private schools that would have advantaged caste students. I visited two private schools, one near the fieldwork villages, which was the school of choice for advantaged caste rural families, and one corporate school in Guntur city. I spoke with administrative staff in both schools and was asked to submit a formal letter to get permission to observe. I applied to observe in these two private schools by writing a letter in which I introduced myself as a PhD student from the United States, and described my research as a study of children's education in India. I did not receive a response to these letters and followed up by emailing the administrative contact person at the rural school and visiting the urban school. I did not receive a response to my email to the rural school; the administrative staff, Murali-garu, at the urban school explained that as a corporate school, they would have to get permission from their main office. Murali-garu assured me that they would forward my letter but I did not hear back from them. During this time, I began to observe at the public high school and the Kamma girls' hostel. I shifted my time to these observations and to my family interviews and observations.

Though I was unable to observe at private schools, I did speak at length about school experiences with families in which the children attended private primary and secondary schools. In addition to this, I surveyed ten websites for educational institutions in the Guntur metropolitan area and collected educational pamphlets from schools. From

this data, I am able to assess class differences in the perceived function of schools, preferred pedagogical styles, and educational “buzz words” that influence ideas about schooling.

I observed at the *Kamma Jana Seva Samithi* colloquially known as the Kamma girls’ hostel. My uncle was acquainted with a board member and introduced me to one of the administrators in late February of 2013. I began to visit the hostel in March of 2013. During the first few weeks, I visited the hostel one a week. The guard at the gate would have to get the permission of the office administrator to let me enter the hostel grounds. These first few weeks, I would go the front office to greet the administrator and ask permission observe at the hostel. I would then visit with the kitchen supervisor, one of the floor wardens, or some of the residents. After a few weeks my presence was not particularly remarkable; the guards sometimes let me enter without calling the front office or one of the wardens since they knew me, and I even began to help with some of the office tasks as they began to reorganize the student files and digitize them. I reduced my observation time at Radha Krishna high school in early April and began to visit the hostel approximately three days a week during this time. In late May, I helped to take in applications for the upcoming school year and visited the hostel five days a week during this two week period.

Other Ethnographic Material

In addition to observation and interviews, I wanted to be able to substantiate my impressions about the broader social world in which my informants were situated. In order to attune myself to the “horizons and rhythms” of the parents and children I spoke

with, I visited the fieldwork villages, took extensive field notes about the structural conditions of each of the fieldwork villages, and took photographs of the built environment of the village and city. I also collected visual documents, including advertisements for schools, clothing stores, restaurants and other goods and services that pertained to education, gender, or globalization. Between February and June of 2013, I collected articles on education from *The Hindu*, India's leading English language newspaper. I analyzed the written and visual material on the websites of ten schools near Guntur city. I watched popular Telugu language films and TV shows and took notes on the major themes of these media.

Participant observation and analyses of popular texts are crucial methods for excavating deeply embedded cultural systems and contextualizing informants' narratives. These taken-for-granted ways of acting and thinking are difficult to uncover through surveys or interviews. They are thought to be self-evident and are rarely discussed (Bourdieu 1984; Swidler 1986). Even the most careful interviewer can only collect data for the questions they ask, but observation and media analysis allows for the discovery of novel information and offers insights into local culture.

As I wrote my dissertation, I also collected some information about various educational and redistributive policies in India by using primary sources from the Indian government. All of the government source documents I use are available online.

Selection of the Research Sites

I conducted fieldwork in three sites in the Guntur region: Guntur city and two villages in that were located about 100 kilometers from Guntur. I selected the fieldwork

communities based on theoretical and practical considerations. The primary aim of my research was to gather information about how people in India were raising their children, and what this means for processes of social inequality. Popular narratives in India suggest that large parts of Indian society are entering the middle class, but even to the casual observer, these accounts seem to be out of touch with the heterogeneity of India's population. Scholars of inequality in India have pointed out that a significant portion of the population is still concentrated in menial agricultural labor (Garikipati 2008; Srivastava and Srivastava 2010). Though more children are attending school and literacy rates have increased, few disadvantaged caste people are able to finish college or get jobs even if they have a degree (Jeffery, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2007; Desai and Kulkarni 2008). Like many postcolonial countries, India's rural infrastructure lags behind that of its cities. Because of this, Indian villages are the targets of a variety of development programs that are run by the state, non-governmental organizations, and national and international private philanthropic endeavors. Private schooling has expanded and has been promoted as a solution to the lack of government schools in rural areas. However schools vary widely in quality and disadvantaged class children are channeled into low-quality private schools (Desai et al. 2009; James and Woodhead 2014). This research, as well as my own observations of rural and urban differences in India, informed my research design of investigating how cultural and material differences between rural and urban India affect parenting strategies and children's life chances.

I chose to conduct research in Andhra Pradesh because of the fertility decline in the state. The decline in fertility suggests that ideas about childrearing have changed, and

parents from diverse class, caste, and rural/urban backgrounds are attempting to enhance their children's social mobility (Säävälä 2001; Ramachandran and Ramesh 2005; James and Subramanian 2005; Guilmoto 2005; Dommaraju and Agadjanian 2009). In addition to these theoretical motivations, it was also feasible for me to conduct fieldwork in Andhra Pradesh because I am a fluent speaker of Telugu, the local language, and because I have family contacts in the state.

The research site of Guntur city and its rural environs provide a window into everyday life in India. The majority of ethnographies about social change in India concentrate on "global cities" (Sassen 2000) like Hyderabad. However, smaller urban centers are modernizing rapidly, especially those that have significant histories of global interactions (Upadhyaya and Rutten 2012). Guntur is a prominent provincial town in coastal Andhra Pradesh, has had global ties for centuries, and is at the vanguard of demographic changes in the state (Upadhyaya 1997; Guilmoto 2005; Washbrook 2007). Guntur's ties to foreign investment, its draw for regional migrants, and the growth of modern industries in the region makes it an ideal site to investigate how social changes are unfolding in India's understudied "provincial global" (Upadhyaya and Rutten 2012) societies.

In Guntur, I lived with my family. Public transportation such as local buses and autorickshaws made it easy to travel to interviewees homes. By living in the city, I also had some sense of the norms and pace of city life.

I selected the rural villages of Munjapalem and Kalakanchi based on their relative size- Munjapalem has approximately 1000 households and Kalakanchi has approximately 400 households. I wanted to have significant variations in caste/class configurations and

interview some disadvantaged caste families who were economically well-off, as well as advantaged caste families who were economically-disadvantaged. Villages of less than 100 households tended to be very poor, and this affected my selection of villages.

The villages I chose were easier for me to travel to- sometimes to reach smaller villages, which are also more remote, I had a three hour travel time because I had to wait 1-2 hours for buses that go to these little villages. Getting back home was a problem, especially being out at night as an unaccompanied woman. The agricultural labor season had started in September and women worked in the fields sometimes seven days a week. It was difficult to coordinate interviews in these areas and I needed to be able to travel to the villages with some regularity to accommodate the schedules of these families. The villages of Kalakanchi and Munjapalem are relatively accessible by bus and I was able to visit the communities two days a week each, become familiar with local people, and accommodate women's schedules.

Sampling

The decision to include both advantaged and disadvantaged caste and class groups and to study families in urban and rural sites was determined by my research questions. I wanted to understand how narratives about social mobility in India circulate among different social groups, and the significance of their circulation for processes of hegemony. Hegemony refers to "...a specific type of class domination that relies on eliciting consent from subordinate groups (more so than on coercion) through a "political-ethical" project that is effective because it resonates ideologically with the "common sense" of the masses and because it is materially grounded (Gramsci 1972,

cited in Fernandes and Heller 2006, 496 n.3).” Scholars of inequality in India have convincingly argued that the “new middle class” is just such a political-ethical project (Fernandes 2006; Fernandes and Heller 2006; Bhatt, Murty, and Ramamurthy 2010).

Much of the research on the domestic life of the “new middle class” in India has focused on urban, professional households. Though these insightful studies have demonstrated how discourses of personal responsibility and empowerment permeate everyday life among the urban advantaged classes (Donner 2008; Bhatt, Murty, and Ramamurthy 2010; Radhakrishnan 2011), they cannot assess the significance of the “new middle class” for disadvantaged caste and class groups. Research on disadvantaged caste and class youth, however, suggests that the promise of social mobility is not accepted uncritically (Jeffery, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2007; Lukose 2009). These works highlight how hegemony is a process that is constantly negotiated between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. In this context, it did not make sense to study the relationship between parenting practices and narratives about social mobility among only one class or caste.

Similarly, almost all of the sociological accounts of the “middle class” in contemporary India focus on urban areas and occupations (but see Jeffery, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2011; Vaid 2012). Nearly 70 percent of the Andhra Pradesh population lives in rural areas (www.censusindia.gov.in) and approximately fifteen percent of these rural people in Andhra Pradesh own over ten acres of land (Prasad 2015). The Jeffreys (2011) suggest that these land owners can be conceptualized as middle class with regard to their income levels and stability, their position of authority in terms of work, and their

consumption habits and lifestyles. Since 1990, there has been significant emigration of highly educated young people from rural India (Kapur 2010, Chapter 3). In addition to this, much of the public and scholarly dialogue about development in India focuses on improving rural conditions. Therefore social mobility in rural India is a critical and understudied topic.

I decided to interview twenty families in each site, with the intention that I would visit at least half of these families more than once and closely follow two advantaged caste and two disadvantaged caste families in each site. I was able to follow six families closely. I wanted to interview 40 families, divided into 20 families in each site, because I wanted to have enough interviews in each site that I could find some variation in my respondents' experiences and opinions of their local society and also be able to identify similarities. This number was also feasible in the ten-month period I had to complete the fieldwork. Coupled with my other ethnographic materials, talking with 40 families helped me identify the effect of the local setting on peoples' sense of what they can achieve, the constraints they face, and local norms and attitudes. I was specifically interested in norms about education, consumption, gender, and sexuality. For this reason, I interviewed families with both daughters and sons, though this dissertation primarily focuses on women.

For my recruitment strategy, I used a snowball sampling method. I had key informants in the villages and in Guntur city who introduced me to families I could interview. In the villages, the key informants were people who I met through Kuruvindhamu (name changed) a fieldworker from the NGO with which I volunteered.

The NGO had selected contact women in the villages who were well-regarded and had diverse networks in the community due to their work with government programs such as the anaganwadi (pre-school) program. Kuruvindhamu was acquainted with these women through her work in the villages and introduced me to them. During the first few weeks, Kuruvindhamu and I visited the villages together, which helped ease my relationship with several families.

I sought out variation by caste and class in the villages and in the Guntur city. I did not attempt to have precisely the same number of families in each of the categories in each site³⁹. Instead my strategy was guided by the caste composition of the villages, which I only came to understand after a few weeks visiting villages. As of 2001, scheduled castes (Dalits) composed over 80 % of the rural population, but only 17 % of the urban population (Director of Census Operations, Government of India). I did attempt to sample an equal number of advantaged and disadvantaged class informants, and accomplish. I discuss how I define class in the next section.

The disproportionate caste compositions of my rural and urban samples are due to demographic differences in rates of urbanization, and to my lack of access to disadvantaged caste people in the city. Advantaged castes are numerically small to begin with; in Andhra, only 22 percent of the population is “high” or advantaged caste (Prasad 2015). In addition to this, land ownership has typically been concentrated among the advantaged castes (Upadhyaya 1997; Vijay and Sreenivasulu 2013), who tend to diversify

³⁹ This sample would have been comprised of 20 rural families and 20 urban families, with ten families from advantaged castes and ten families from disadvantaged caste groups in each site. Within each of these site-specific caste groups, five of the families would be advantaged class and the other five disadvantaged caste.

their economic interests by educating their children, migrating to towns, and investing in other businesses (Upadhyaya 1997). The urban sample also contains four advantaged caste families who I categorize as disadvantaged class. Three of these advantaged caste families had been unable to pay the debt that they had accrued on their farmland and had to sell it. Since it was difficult to find another means of living in the villages, and these former landholders considered it fruitless and shameful to work as an agricultural laborer, they moved to the towns. For these reasons my rural sample was biased towards disadvantaged castes, and my urban sample was biased toward advantaged castes.

Tables 1a. and 1b, show the distribution of the 40 families I interviewed by caste, class, and rural or urban residence.

Defining Class and Caste in Andhra Pradesh

There is considerable theoretical and conceptual ambiguity about how to measure class in India (as elsewhere). Some of the challenge is due to the availability of data and the incommensurability of data across heterogeneous contexts such as rural/urban differences, different states within India, and consumption differences over time (Deshpande 2003, 133; Sridharan 2011, 35). Another factor is the varied conceptual attempts that draw on both traditional economic calculations and occupational status and on culturalist approaches associated with consumption and the social imagination (Appadurai 1996; Bardhan 1994; Mazarella 2003; Fernandes 2006; Donner 2008; Sridharan 2011; Radhakrishnan 2011). Since the purpose of my fieldwork was to develop an intensive, realistic portrait of family life, I was able to analyze only a small number of

families. Surveying the demographic composition of the villages and adopting a fine-grained definition of the class system to my fieldwork sites was not possible.

I addressed some of the conceptual problems and problems of measurement of class by defining class position in terms of local understandings of who was well-off, who was working-class but not poor, and who was poor. People generally divided themselves into two groups: *leyni vallu*, and *oona vallu*, which translate to “those who do not have,” and “those who have.” “Have,” in these folk categories, refers to the possession of property, including productive resources such as land; wealth such as houses, apartments, jewelry, cars, and consumer durables; and cultural capital in the form of educational degrees. To “not have” means to work as a manual laborer; to own no property except one’s own labor; have no significant savings and few possessions; to be un- or under-educated; to live, in short, in a state of precarity.

The categories of *leyni vallu* and *oona vallu* demonstrate how lived understandings of class blend together economic and cultural conceptualizations of class. These categories map well onto the general scholarly consensus of India’s class structure, which can be understood as two broad categories: the dominant proprietary classes and the laboring classes. In addition to the Marxian categories of industrial capitalists and landlords, scholars working from a neo-Weberian and Bourdieuan framework have expanded the definition of the proprietary classes in India to include those who possess cultural capital, which can consist of identities such as caste, community, or region, or competencies such as educational credentials, linguistic or other social skills (Deshpande 2003, 140; see also Fernandes 2006; Radhakrishnan 2011, 16-18). Deshpande (2003)

defines cultural capital as sharing three attributes of property: it has 1) tangible and psychological benefits; 2) the ability to exclude others; and 3) transmissibility across generations (140). Thus the proprietary classes include professionals who have power in the state bureaucracy, work in the media, and possess (relatively) scarce educational degrees (Rudra 1989; Bardhan 1994; B eteille 2001; Deshpande 2003; Sridharan 2011).

Reading more closely into the *leyni vallu* and *oona vallu* categories, these categories imply a competitive relationship between the haves and have-nots. It is obviously hierarchical, but it also suggests a relation of domination. Advantaged classes must be created through the economic deprivation and cultural dominance of disadvantaged groups. In this dissertation, I follow the folk categories of *leyni vallu* and *oona vallu* and draw on the scholarly work on India's class structure to settle on two class categories, *advantaged* and *disadvantaged class*. These categories highlight the relational understandings of classes that my informants themselves used, and it acknowledges the ambiguous and contested understandings of class that are highlighted in culturalist literature (Bourdieu 1984; Fernandes 2006; Fernandes and Heller 2006).

In addition to these two class categories, in Table 2a., 2b., and 3, I have added a category of "marginal" families. These are families who owned land, businesses, or held forms of cultural capital and who would be considered *oona vallu*, members of the advantaged, proprietary classes. However, they were somewhat less stable than the other advantaged caste families in this sample. Of these eight families, two families owned agricultural land and both were advantaged caste. Their land parcels were less than five acres. One of my informants, Jyothi, had to supplement her income with work as an

anganwadi teacher and at the local gas company. Her husband was not employed and was reputed to be an alcoholic; since she was supporting her two daughters entirely by herself, she was in a more precarious state than most of the other landowning families in my sample. Sridevi's family also owned land, but the land parcel was small enough that they had difficulty making a profit on the tobacco they grew. Sridevi reported that they had not made a profit in two years. They worked on the land themselves, did not have any hired help either in the field or in their home, and were in heavy debt. Of the remaining five families, three relied on income from small businesses; two more relied on salaries from private sector employment but did not have college degrees, and one person was a degree holder but earned a relatively low income as a government clerk. One disadvantaged caste family did not own agricultural land, but they did own their home and one other property that they rented out. The remaining five families did not own any property and had no alternate income if the primary paid worker lost their job or if they lost money on their business. These six families also appeared to have lower consumption levels than the rest of the advantaged class sample. They lived in smaller apartments or houses than the other advantaged class families, two families sent their children to public schools, and only one family owned a computer. I sub-divide the advantaged class category to capture some of the differences in stability of income between different fractions of the advantaged class.

I used the bureaucratic categories of Scheduled Caste (SC), Backward Caste (BC), and Other Caste (OC) for categorization of people into *advantaged* and *disadvantaged castes*. These categories, like advantaged and disadvantaged class, are

meant to draw attention to the relational and hierarchical relationships between castes. In addition to this, members of the sub-castes that were subsumed under the bureaucratic categories of SC and BC qualified for government redistribution programs.

Redistribution programs established quotas for public and private employment, school seats, and political representation. Thus redistribution policies should theoretically mitigate the economic and political domination of advantaged, or OC, castes.

The use of disadvantaged and advantaged caste is also abstracted from my informants' own understandings of caste. Though all of my informants know their sub-caste, or *jati*, on a few occasions, people were unsure if they were considered BCs or OCs. The main difference between these groups in Andhra Pradesh is that the OCs were either from the three ritually pure "twice-born" varnas (Brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vysya) or were members of the dominant Kamma and Reddy sub-castes. OCs own most of the land in the state, hold high-level positions in the state bureaucracy, occupy political offices, and dominate colleges and universities. These castes were therefore described by all of my informants as the most advantaged sub-castes in the state. Some sub-castes had more ambiguous social positions, but they defined themselves as disadvantaged in comparison to the OC castes listed above. For example, one family who were Kapus, and could be categorized as OCs, identified as BCs. They explained that further divisions within the sub-castes, as well as region, determined the bureaucratic categorization of sub-castes. The difference between and OC or BC categorization by these groups was based on the perceptions of their economic and political power relative to the indisputably OC *jatis*. Dalits were never ambiguous about their bureaucratic caste

categorization; Dalits identified as SCs. I discuss the connections between class and caste in depth in Chapter 2.

Analysis

My analysis of my material began during fieldwork. From my preliminary fieldwork in 2011 and my reading of the literature on inequality in India, I decided to look at educational inequalities, consumption practices, and embodiment. The centrality of education was apparent from my earliest interviews and from my observations of the built environments. Rural and urban differences in educational infrastructure, the availability of consumer goods, and the ways people consumed- for example in large stores where they could browse compared to shops where the owners took out and displayed goods- was also readily apparent. My initial task was therefore to refine my questions. For example, while I was initially interested to find out whether people wanted to send their children to English-medium schools and what barriers people faced in doing so, I began to ask more fine-grained questions about how families perceived school quality. While my interview guide questions were consistent throughout the fieldwork, I pursued different lines of inquiry in people's responses. I became better at identifying unusual statements and focused on drawing these out for potentially critical insights or innovative practices related to childrearing or to social inequality more broadly.

My decision to observe at the Kamma educational hostel emerged as part of my ongoing assessment of findings in the field. The societal emphasis on the education of rural young women was a somewhat novel finding; while scholars have discussed policies targeting rural women as an attempt to "empower" them (Sharma 2006, 2008;

Purewal 2014), their symbolic importance as representatives of a modern India is not investigated. I became interested in the hostel as I grew to understand the importance of education to Kamma identity and the special place rural young women held in this identity project. In addition to the interviews and observations, I took pictures of the villages and the city, including advertisements for schools and documented the infrastructure of the villages and the city. I used these materials to understand how rural or urban residence shapes parents and children's sense of possibility; to paraphrase Burawoy (2000), I try to understand the horizons of my informants' existence.

Once I returned to the US, I reflected on my fieldwork for a few months. I began to analyze my interviews by listening to the recordings and making notes. Some of my information about land ownership and income were on these interviews, and some information I had collected during other interactions. In addition to this demographic information, interviews are my main data for understanding peoples' understandings about caste and their economic positions, and their aspirations for their children. I listened for similarities in peoples' aspirations for their children and their childrearing practices. I looked for common themes, language, and imagery. I also listened for unusual statements or narratives. I grouped my interview notes by whether they were from the rural or urban sites, and then developed my class and caste categorizations based on my notes and through an engagement with the literature on caste and class in India. I then separated the rural and urban interview notes by class. I compared these interview notes to my observational field notes and analyzed the relationship between local

infrastructures, norms, and parents and children's narratives. I went back to especially informative interviews and translated and transcribed key parts of these interviews.

I then began a second round of analysis by reading through my notes and transcriptions. I reread the literature, talked to people, and reread the notes. I tried to link individual families experiences to their local communities and to broader social, political, and economic processes. I considered organizing the dissertation chapters as case studies of different families, following Lareau (2003). However I decided to focus on the overarching theme of how families and institutions such as schools, economic structures, civil society, and the state can be understood as "webs of interrelated rules and norms-- formal and informal--that govern social relationships" (Brinton and Nee 1998, 8; see also Iverson and Armstrong 2006). I began this project with an interest in how class and caste shaped processes of social mobility, and these themes remain an important part of the dissertation. Yet other, unexpected themes also emerged: particularly the importance of the historical processes through which caste, class, and gender were mutually constitutive; the growing focus on rural young women in national and international development discourse; the role of institutions; and the importance of religion; and the impact of kinship ties. The form and focus of the dissertation emerged from this process of analysis and the theoretical and practical information this yielded.

Issues of Fieldwork

Ethnographic work that addresses issues of social inequality and power is challenging both because the researcher is in a position of power over the people they are studying, and because this position of power limits the researcher's own perspective.

Though I was conscious of these issues and tried to manage them in my time in the field, they still shape the data.

The interview data is often stilted towards socially-desirable responses. Though this is an issue with interviews generally, my own position as an advantaged caste woman from the US may have encouraged interviewees' tendencies to represent themselves and India as modern and meritocratic. Questions about caste inequality and educational aspirations for girls were routinely met with answers that caste and gender inequalities were things of the past. Yet my interpretation of my observations and more casual conversations revealed that these inequities are ongoing. However, my interviewees may understand these inequalities differently than I do. Their responses may reflect their beliefs that caste and gender discrimination are things of the past or at least that they are much better than they were. In writing this dissertation and drawing from secondary analyses, I am exercising intellectual privilege in representing these responses and issues.

Some of my questions seemed downright insensitive- for example asking rural working-class women if they had ever seen a computer felt like I was highlighting their lack of modernity. Though this information was significant because only a couple of parents had seen computers in the villages, but almost everyone in the city had seen one, it reinforced my position of privilege.

Another issue is one of the friendship-like intimacy that I developed with my informants. It is difficult to consider these relationships as purely professional; I heard intimate stories about people's lives and their troubles, relied on them for things as basic as shelter, for example when I visited the villages during the rainy season and had to duck

in from the rain, and shared my stories about my own life. Yet I am making some of these intimate stories public for my own gain. I have tried to be respectful towards people's stories and changed their names to protect their privacy. However, the exploitative possibility of this endeavor is not easily dismissed.

In addition to these issues, more scholarly ones about the limitations of my data must also be acknowledged. I was unable to arrange to live in a village, and this limits my understanding of village life. M.N. Srinivas's masterly work *The Remembered Village* (1964) is filled with insightful analysis of seemingly small incidents in village life. My work is somewhat limited by the fact that I only visited the villages. I did try to mitigate this by visiting the villages regularly and fostering my social relationships with village residents.

Another issue is that I do not have good demographic information on the villages. It was not possible for me to conduct a village survey and the NGO I worked with did not have this information available. Though my observations of the physical environment of the villages and my use of state and national data approximates some sense of the resources available in the villages, accurate data about the caste composition, number of households in the villages, and employment and poverty demographics would give a better picture of the villages.

Lastly, the questions and interests with which I entered the field changed as I conducted fieldwork. In the rural areas, my interest in consumption patterns became somewhat secondary to my interest in labor relations in the rural areas. In the city, the importance of the transnational migrant in the popular imaginary was apparent through a

number of schools and business that used NRI (non-resident India) in their name or description. I did not plan on focusing on this aspect of local society, and it was by luck that I was able to explore this through my observations at the Kamma girls' hostel.

Research Timeline:

June 2011

Email contact with NGO HELP regarding possible engagement with fieldwork.

August 2011

Initial visit to Andhra Pradesh. Meeting with NGO HELP and preliminary interviews.

August 2012

Return to Andhra Pradesh. Move to city of Ongole. Begin fieldwork visits to potential villages.

September 2012

Finalize village selection to Kalakanchi and Munjapalem. Begin regular fieldwork visits to villages.

October 2012- early February 2013

Interview and observations in villages.

Mid-February 2013-mid June 2013

Move to Guntur city. Interviews and observations in urban site.

Mid-March 2013- Mid-May 2013

Observe at Radha Krishna high school

Mid March 2013- Early June 2013

Observe at Kamma Jana Seva Samithi- weekly visits and more intensive observation beginning in early April 2013.

Mid-June 2013

Return to US.

Appendix B: Samples

Table 2. Rural Sample Class and Caste Composition

	Advantaged Class	Marginal Advantaged	Disadvantaged Class	Caste Total
Advantaged Caste	4	2	0	6
Disadvantaged Caste	2	3	9	14
Class Total	6	5	9	Sample total: 20

Table 3. Urban Sample Class and Caste Composition

	Advantaged Class	Marginal Advantaged	Disadvantaged Class	Caste Total
Advantaged Caste	7	2	4	13
Disadvantaged Caste	0	1	6	7
Class Total	7	3	10	Sample total: 20

Table 4. Family Observations- More than three visits

Name	Urban/Rural	<i>Jati</i> and Bureaucratic category	Class
Nalini	Urban	Kapu (BC)	Disadvantaged
Rama	Urban	Kamma (OC)	Disadvantaged
Malleswari*	Urban	Kamma (OC)	Advantaged
Prafula*	Urban	Kamma (OC)	Advantaged
Vijaya*	Rural	Madhiga (SC)	Marginal
Sushmita	Rural	Madhiga (SC)	Disadvantaged
Bhagya Laxmi*	Rural	Madhiga (SC)	Advantaged
Jyothi*	Rural	Kamma (OC)	Marginal
Koteswari*	Rural	Kamma (OC)	Advantaged
Laxmi	Rural	Reddy (OC)	Advantaged

*These were women who became key informants. I visited all of these households over five times. With four of these families, I went on outings with them, exchanged gifts, and attended family functions.

Appendix C. Descriptions of Government Job Categories

Group A (sometimes referred to as Class I)

These are the highest class of government servants and include commissioned officers of the Indian Armed Forces; scientists who work in research and development programs for the Government of India; directors, vice-chancellors, deans, and faculty at government universities and colleges; magistrates; Chief Medical officers at government hospitals; and other high-skilled managerial and professional positions.

Group B (or Class II)

These are professional and administrative positions such as junior commissioned officers of the Indian Armed Forces; officers in State (as opposed to Central government) Civil Service, doctors in government hospitals; office executives and office supervisors; inspectors in State and Central Police services and other high-skilled professions. These require at least a bachelor's degree.

Group C (or Class III)

These positions include havildars and naiks (equivalent to sergeant and corporal, respectively) in the Indian Armed Forces; head clerks; police head constables; typists; telephone operators; aganwadi (state preschool) teachers; Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA); and other public servants in predominantly non-supervisory jobs. Most jobs require at least a 10th grade degree.

Group D (Class IV)

These are skilled or semi-skilled manual worker positions such as food service worker; peon (errand person); sanitary worker; and watchmen. They often require basic literacy skills.