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# Changing Contours of Sociality:
## Youth, Education, and Generational Relations in Rural Gujarat, India

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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis draws on eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork to examine the everyday lives of young people aged between 16 and 30 years in rural Gujarat, India. It is shaped around four standalone articles that examine the spatial aspects of young men and women's secondary and higher education, and employment strategies. Taken both individually and collectively, the articles employ a conceptual framework of relationality in order to critically examine the complexity of young people's everyday lives. Relationality crosses spatial scales, from the individual body though to intersecting with processes of globalization. My analysis interrogates these scalar connections within and across different spaces, and the ways in which these spaces produce, reinforce, and transform relations of power, difference, and identity. In doing so it makes a series of critical contributions to ongoing debates about educated unemployed youth, geographies of friendship, youth transitions and imagined futures, and young people's mobilities. The thesis reflects on "the everyday" as a locus of social change and continuity, focusing on a first generation of formally educated young men and women from socioeconomically marginalized Other Backward Classes, Scheduled Caste, and Scheduled Tribe populations in rural Gujarat. Among this demographic, and in part a consequence of ongoing structural transformations to India's education sector, families are increasingly prolonging the formal education of their offspring as they pursue projects of social reform. In a context where education manifestly cannot guarantee a smooth transition into secure employment, a relational approach that places an emphasis on the quality and nature of connections and relationships provides a valuable framework for understanding young people's lives.

My work forwards three broader arguments in relation to this emergent generation of educated young people from marginalized communities. Firstly, I argue for greater empirical and theoretical attention to young people's movements within and across space in order to fully theorize age as a social relation. Related to this my analysis supports the case for a multi-sited methodological approach in order to locate young people within the significant social relations that shape their everyday lives. Secondly, the scale of the everyday offers productive insights into how the political and economic changes associated with liberalization in contemporary India are affecting marginalized populations. Rather than focusing on processes occurring within educational institutions, the thesis takes a broader focus to examine how young people conceive of, value, and mobilize their formal education in their daily lives. Finally, attention to both inter- and intra-generational relations as significant and influential to young people's everyday lives foregrounds the breadth of social relations that bear down upon the social, cultural, and economic aspirations of youth in contemporary rural India.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| AISHE | All India Survey of Higher Education |
| BJP | Bharatiya Janata Party |
| BPL | Below Poverty Line |
| CAG | Comptroller and Auditor General |
| CEPT | Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology |
| CUREC | Central University Research Ethics Committee |
| DFiD | Department for International Development |
| ESRC | Economic and Social Research Council |
| FC | Forward Caste |
| FDI | Foreign Direct Investment |
| GIDC | Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation |
| ICSSR | Indian Council of Social Science Research |
| IT | Information Technology |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| INC | Indian National Congress Party |
| INR | Indian Rupee |
| KHAM | Kshatriya-Harijan-Adivasi-Muslim |
| MHRD | Ministry of Human Resource Development |
| MSME | Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises |
| NCAER | National Council of Applied Economic Research |
| NEP | New Economic Policy |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NRI | Non Resident Indian |
| NSS | National Sample Survey |
| OBC | Other Backward Classes |
| PTR | Pupil-Teacher Ratio |
| RSS | Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh |
| RTE | Right To Education |
| SC | Scheduled Caste |
| SGDP | State Gross Domestic Product |
| SPIESR | Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research |
| ST | Scheduled Tribe |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund (previously the United Nations Fund for Population Activities) |

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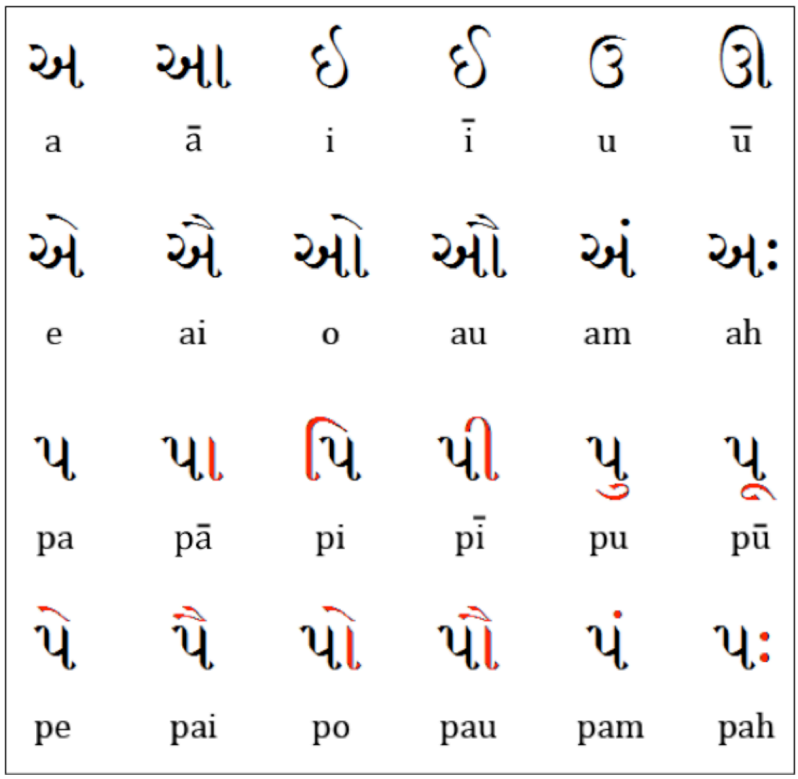

## NOTE ON LANGUAGE, TRANSLITERATION, AND QUOTATION

Gujarati is a syllabic alphabet in that each consonant has an inherent vowel. Whilst they can be written as independent letters, vowels can also be written using a range of diacritical marks that are written above, below, before, or after the consonant to which they are attached. In this thesis my transliteration follows the conventions outlined below.

**Consonants**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ક | ખ | ગ | ઘ | ઙ | ચ | છ | જ | ઝ |
| ka | kha | ga | gha | na | ca | cha | ja | jha |
| ટ | ઠ | ડ | ઢ | ણ | ત | થ | દ | ધ |
| ta | tha | da | dha | na | ta | tha | da | dha |
| ન | પ | ફ | બ | ભ | મ | ય | ર | લ |
| na | pa | fa | ba | bha | ma | ya | ra | la |
| વ | શ | ષ | સ | હ | ળ | ક્ષ | જ્ઞ | |
| va | sha | sa | sa | ha | la | ksa | jna | |

**Vowels and diacritics**




In transcripts I use *italics* to indicate a verbatim account, most commonly to signal an informant's use of the English language. When incorporating the transliteration of specific Gujarati words, phrases, or sentences, these are included in parentheses immediately following the English translation (*like this*). [Square brackets] indicate non-verbal notes on informants' behaviours, or editing in order to protect the anonymity of informants/places.

**A BRIEF NOTE ON CASTE.**

Caste in India invokes two terms: *varna* and *jāti.* Varna refers to the four subdivisions of the traditional Hindu hierarchy: Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaisyas (merchants), and Sudras, each of whom performed a broad range of tasks. Dalits (formerly the "untouchable" caste) were held to be intrinsically impure by Hindu populations and lie outside of the *varna* hierarchy altogether. Adivasis (India's indigenous minority), whilst considered uncivilized and primitive, were not usually regarded with the same level of impurity. Each *varna* encompasses numerous *jātis*, or "types" of groups historically characterized by:

> endogamy, hereditary membership, and a specific style of life which sometimes includes the pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system. (Beteille 1965:46)

*Varna* and *jāti* are not absolutely correlative (Beteille 1992). Srinivas (1989) outlined a process he termed "sanskritization", whereby under certain circumstances *jātis* may attempt to move up between the fourfold *varna* system (see also Corbridge et al. 2012:240). As I elaborate on in Chapter 3 it is also possible for *jātis* to seek downward movement in order to take advantage of quota-based affirmative action in the form of reserved places in government-run colleges and public-sector employment (see "Hardik Patel claims to speak for 18 million Patels. Does he, really?" 2015, Jeffrey et al. 2008). Moreover, in addition to the Hindu religion there are castes among Christians, Sikhs, and Muslims in India (see Srinivas 1996) and people often invoke dynamic and flexible identities when mobilizing caste. As Jamous (1996) observes, for example, Muslims are able to simultaneously adhere to normative aspects of Islam regarding equality whilst simultaneously conforming to notions of caste hierarchy.

In contemporary India, *varna* is rarely spoken of. On the other hand *jāti*, as Corbridge and colleagues note, remains a salient aspect of everyday politics, education, marriage, and work (Corbridge et al. 2012:240). In this sense, it has been argued that whilst hierarchies of castes have become less significant, differences between castes have come to figure more importantly in everyday life, representing something of a horizontal assortment of competing interest groups (see Fuller 1996, Harriss 1982).

Notably, there are distinct regional variations to how caste becomes manifest across India (see, for example, Tambs-Lyche and Sud 2016, Mines 2007, Manor 1973).

The 1950 Constitution of India outlines four official classifications by which contemporary Indian society is categorized, and which I use in this thesis. Forward Caste (FC) encompasses the first three subdivisions of the traditional Hindu hierarchy (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas), and constitutes between 10 to 18 *per cent* of society. This section of society is considered socially, educationally, and economically advanced. Other Backward Classes (OBC) encompasses the Sudras and various Muslim communities. OBCs are described as "socially and educationally backward" classes, and the OBC register maintained by the Indian Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is derived on the basis of social, educational, and economic factors. The 1971 Sattanathan Commission outlined a wealthier and better-educated stratum of OBCs – officially termed the "creamy layer" – that is not in receipt of any form of government sponsored affirmative action. Scheduled Castes (SCs) refers to Dalits, and Scheduled Tribes (ST) refers to Adivasis. These historically disadvantaged tribal and ethnic groups in India comprise around 16 and 9 *per cent,* respectively, of the Indian population.

In this thesis when referring to "socioeconomically marginalized" populations, I refer to OBCs (minus the "creamy layer"), SCs, and STs. Reference to these classifications as "marginalized" is pervasive across both academic and political discourse, and is reflected in the quota of reserved positions in public sector employment and higher education institutes that each receives in contemporary India. I elaborate on caste, and its relationship with class in India, in Chapters 1 and 3.

# Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

## "The Youth of Today"

In early September 2014 I was sat with Mohan Chaudhury[1], a 58-year-old father of three, under the front veranda of his small brick-built house in a village of South Gujarat, India. As heavy monsoon rains lashed the tiled roofs of adjacent homes, Mohan proceeded to reminisce about growing up in the village. "Back when I was little we used to wade through mud to get to school. The mud would come up to here," he told me, levelling his hand just below his waist. "We didn't like it, but we did it. And I'll tell you why: because we had no choice. The youth of today (*ājakāla nā yuvā)* have different lives." Mohan is an Adivasi; a heterogeneous set of ethnic and tribal groups in India. Owning a small patch of land, he and his family are agricultural cultivators who engage primarily in subsistence farming supplemented by seasonal agricultural and manual labour. Taking a sip of locally fermented palm wine (*tādī*), he continued: "They do not stay put in one place, they are always moving. When I was younger we did not have these large private schools nearby, we did not attend colleges in Ahmedabad, and we did not do small business with big men in the city. Just like me, my father (*bāpujī*) used to work in our field (*kethara*), but Ashwin is different."

Ashwin, aged 26 years, is Mohan's eldest offspring. When we first met back in May 2014 he had more the appearance of a city businessman than an Adivasi farmer's son. Despite the blazing heat of the Indian summer he wore a chequered cotton

[1] In this thesis all names are pseudonyms.

shirt buttoned up to the neck, skinny black jeans, and a pair of brown leather boots. A tall and slender young man, he carried himself with a distinct air of confidence. Ashwin's educational achievements had far surpassed that of his father's generation; following the completion of secondary schooling at a private school in a neighbouring village, he had gained a B.Comm degree at a government college in Ahmedabad city. One afternoon after a small lunch of rice and lentils (*masur nī dhāla*) in the family home, Ashwin stood up abruptly. "Come, I'm headed into the city. I have some business there," he proclaimed loudly, beckoning me outside. "Come," he stressed again, "I'm in a bit of a rush."

Like many young men from similar socioeconomic backgrounds in the village, Ashwin had come to pride himself on his ability to navigate between the village and city. "Papa doesn't come here," he shouted over his shoulder as we transitioned from the dirt track of the village to the tarmacked highway leading to the city. "He brings *ma* to the market some days but he doesn't go in to the city like me, because he doesn't have the right *balance*." We soon arrived at a small paint shop in the heart of the city where he had come to make final arrangements for some paid project management work he was completing. Upon entering the shop Ashwin's demeanour changed. With his back arched he deepened his voice and, rather than using the colloquial village dialect, he spoke using a much cleaner Gujarati (*shuddha Gujarāti*) interspersed with English, more characteristic of a formal office setting. Upon our return to the village, Ashwin weaved his bike in between a cluster of schoolchildren all smartly dressed in school uniforms. "Eh!" he called out jokily as we passed the group, directing his gaze at a slender young woman with similarly wavy hair who was walking with her friends. A few

moments later the same young women emerged from around the corner wearing her bright blue uniform, eyeing me with a suspicious gaze. "That's Risha, my little sister (*mārī nanī bahena*)," he muttered as the scooter slowed to a halt outside the house.

Following in the footsteps of her elder sister Avinashi, 17-year-old Risha was currently enrolled in a large private secondary school located a few kilometres away in a neighbouring village. In our conversations she placed significant value on her education; not only her prolonged enrolment, but also the new opportunities offered by her enrolment in a private school outside of the village. Her daily commute took her well outside the vicinity of the Adivasi locality in the village and into new spaces where she interacted with a much broader student body. "At [the local school] there were only 16 or 17 of us," she told me one afternoon after school as we trailed back toward the village. She went on to tell me about her time spent in the local government school and interaction with younger villagers from other caste communities. "We did not speak much. We used to go straight home (*ghare tarataja jātā hatā*)." This paired in contrast with Mohan's distinct weariness of the private school's distant location and its diverse student body. "Back at [the local school] she was close. We knew where she was and whom she studied with. At [the private school] not all students are from the village. When she is talking about school we do not know anything."

In addition to these perceived risks of Risha's schooling, Mohan and his wife often agonized over the prolonged period their daughters were spending in education. These apprehensions were typically articulated in terms of marriage prospects and

the protection of family honour. Avinashi, for example, was currently studying at a government college in Ahmedabad city some 250km away. In two years' time at the point of her graduation she would be 22 years old, an age her mother perceived as being beyond acceptable. As such, an expectation characteristic among Adivasi families was of their daughters returning to the village following their higher education in order to marry and relocate patrilocally within the Adivasi community. Avinashi, however, had her own set of hopes for the future, central to which were the friends she had made during her time in metropolitan Gujarat. "I speak to my friends here and immediately they know what they want to do," she told me, marvelling at their conviction. "One wants to work in commerce, another wants to do *marketing*. So I, too, want a job in the city."

I begin by recollecting the story of Mohan and his family as it illustrates the key themes addressed in this thesis: education and schooling, youth, and generational relations. The ongoing liberalization of India's education sector is transforming the everyday lives of rural youth, particularly those from low caste and lower class populations. This demographic is increasingly investing in education in pursuit of social reform and upward mobility (see ASER 2014, Cross 2014:139, Nakassis 2013, Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India 2011a). The contrasting perspectives of Mohan and his offspring around work and education highlight how stark differences in educational attainment across generations manifests in disparate sets of social and cultural aspirations. Ashwin, for example, depicted a distinct reluctance to join his father in agricultural labor, instead cultivating friendships with other young men in pursuit of semi-skilled, short-term work in and around neighbouring villages and the city. Using his father as a

negative point of reference, he prided himself on the "balance" with which he was able to navigate the city. The story also illustrates how young people's everyday lives are highly gendered; they experience and value their secondary and higher education in different ways, and in stark contrast to their parents' generation. As a result, their social lives are markedly different. Young men like Ashwin, in contrast to their fathers, are comfortable in navigating between the rural and urban, thus widening the scope of their opportunities for work and leisure. In a similar manner young women like Risha and Avinashi are encountering new spaces of secondary and higher education, and having to navigate a fresh set of social experiences that these spaces entail. Labour, mobility, gender, class, and normative understandings of age and "youth" in contemporary India are all enmeshed in how these transformations manifest at the scale of the everyday.

At its core, this thesis is an ethnography of everyday life in rural India. Scholars have highlighted "the everyday" as a locus of social change, stressing its generative potential. Lefebvre (1991) suggested that the mundane workings of everyday life could cause unexpected moments of transformation (see also Gardiner 2002, Morson and Emerson 1990). He argued that in particular "moments", individuals' experiences of daily hardship might lead them to critique aspects of their everyday lives. Whilst fleeting, moments provide "a promise of the possibility of a different daily life, while at the same time puncturing the continuum of the present" (Highmore 2002:116, see also Lefebvre 1991). As Lefebvre argued,

> [t]here are determined biological, historical, economic, sociological *conditions* (which are taken over and modified by their own creative praxis), which constitute the 'real' in its accepted sense. There are *processes*, which contain the evolution and forward movement of the real.

> These conditions and processes point towards *possibilities*. (Lefebvre 1991:110)

At the same time, Lefebvre was interested in continuity and the ways in which the production of everyday life becomes "the dominant process of reproducing social relations" (Goonawardena 2008:137). In this sense the everyday, rather than a seemingly mundane space, emerges as a power-laden site where tensions between the marginalized and dominant powers manifest. Sensitive to this perspective, the analyses presented in this thesis attempt to draw out the particularities of everyday life through a focus on young people. Focusing on everyday aspects of work and education, I explore how increasing levels of education among historically disadvantaged communities is engendering a transformation of everyday social relations. I am particularly interested in how perspectives differ both within and across generations, and the specific role played by formal education.

In situating the subjectivities of young people within the wider context of their families, caste communities, and peer groups, the thesis takes an approach that extends understandings of "space as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions" (Massey 2005:166). My interest is in how young people construct and perform identities as they move variably through space, and the role played by the wider social relations significant in their everyday lives. Drawing on eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the westernmost state of Gujarat I set out a theoretically informed account of how young men and women from socioeconomically marginalized backgrounds are navigating a transforming educational and employment landscape in contemporary India, foregrounding the

ways in which these changing strategies are transforming young people's social practices. In particular, the four papers constituting the empirical sections of this thesis make a series of critical contributions to ongoing debates about educated unemployed youth, geographies of friendship, youth transitions and imagined futures, and young people's mobilities.

This introductory chapter provides an overview of key literature on the three broader themes that form the backdrop for this thesis: youth, the Indian middle class, and education and schooling. Following this I introduce the conceptual framework and overall argument, and outline the overall structure of the thesis.

**Youth and Generation in Globalizing India**

Globalization forms the broad backdrop for my research into the social and cultural lives of young men and women in rural Gujarat. Whilst there are several academic responses critiquing globalization as an inevitable occurrence that necessitates neoliberal policy-making (see Gregory et al. 2009:309), the term is usefully defined by Albrow and King (1990) in broad terms as the process of international integration arising as a result of the interchange of worldviews, products, ideas, and other aspects of culture. In contemporary India, globalization has manifested most apparently in the context of specific economic conditions associated with the "new economic policies" of liberalization initiated since in the early 1990s. Immediately following Indian Independence in 1947, the trajectory of national development was characterized by the nationalist vision of a "gradual" revolution spearheaded by Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister (see

Frankel 1978). This projected ideology was one of the Nehruvian middle classes; a civil service-oriented salariat without financial resources but who monopolised state institutions (Mazzarella 2005, Ciotti 2010). In the mid 1980s, under the leadership of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, India began to pursue a gentle liberalization of various economic sectors and thus the link between the "old" middle classes and the Nehruvian vision began to weaken.

This process of liberalization gained momentum in 1991 by way of India's New Economic Policy (NEP), which was necessitated by a balance of payments crisis that took the country to the brink of bankruptcy. Consequential pressures from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and from the United States of America saw a significant devaluation of the Indian Rupee, the transfer of gold from India to London, and a subsequent embrace of liberalization and privatization (see Pendakur and Kapur 1997, Jenkins 1999). As Rajagopal (2001) notes, it also marked a severing of the socialist political ideology of Nehru. In policy terms, the NEP signalled the end of License Raj - the system of licenses, regulation and red tape required to establish and operate businesses in post-Independence India – as well as the end of quotas on economic activity. It also reduced the role of the public sector; the number of controls and restrictions on state monopolies were decreased whilst allowances for foreign exchange were increased and investments from Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) were made much more straightforward (Sengupta and Neogi 2009). In addition to the easing of regulations with regards to the licensing of imports, tariffs and restrictions, this collective implementation of neoliberal economic policies resulted in the opening up of the Indian economy to global capital.

The shift in sociopolitical sensibilities over the past 25 years has engendered a series of significant and interrelated structural and cultural transformations within India that form the context for my research in rural Gujarat, and which I introduce in this chapter. In examining the changing nature of everyday sociality brought about by ongoing policies of liberalization in India, this thesis takes an empirical and theoretical focus on rural young people aged between 16 and 30 years. This demographic is empirically significant; 9 out of 10 young people live in less developed countries and, with 365 million young people aged between 15 and 30 years, India's youth population is the world's largest (UNFPA 2014).[2] In Gujarat specifically, of the 16.9 million young people within this age category the majority live rurally (Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India 2011b). This is reflective of India's broader rural-urban population split whereby almost 70 *per cent* of the population live rurally. Moreover, the culturally and economically optimistic discourse of "India Rising" celebrates the role of a post-Independence generation of young people as "a key instantiation of globalized India" (Lukose 2009:4); youth form a potent new market for fashioning India's newly globalized middle class (Lukose 2009).

From a theoretical perspective young people constitute important sources of everyday social, cultural, and political transformation, and offer a productive lens through which to examine the ways in which globalization manifests at the scale of

[2] In the non-empirical chapters of this thesis, the term "children" refers to those aged 5-15 and "youth" refers to those aged 16-30 (c.f. Skelton 2009, Jeffrey 2009). I use the term "young people" to refer to both children and youth. In the empirical chapters I use the terms children (*chokrā*) and youth (*yuvā*) in line with how they were invoked by informants. Whilst I did not set out to bind my study to any biological age group, it was extremely rare for individuals aged over 30 years to be described (or conceive of themselves) as youth.

the everyday (McCracken 2014, Jeffrey 2012, Cole and Durham 2008, Ruddick 2003). Sociologist Karl Mannheim (1956) famously argued that young people are often located closely to pressing socioeconomic problems and, therefore, are more likely to engage in novel strategies. That youth lack personal experience, Mannheim argued, "means a lightening of the ballast for the young; it facilitates their living on in a changing world" (1956:296). Yet given the relational nature of youth, Cole and Durham (2008) argue, "one cannot analyse their role in social change without taking account of the complex generational relations within which they are embedded" (2008:18, see also Cole 2004).

Reflecting this, scholars of India have directed attention to the generational disparities inherent in contemporary India. Lukose (2009), for example, notes "a shift in generational sensibilities, attitudes, and values" between those mired in the ideological baggage of Nehruvian nationalist development, and a generation of contemporary youth who embody "India's newly found confidence and ambition on the global stage" (2009:5). Such depictions of contrasting generational experiences are also readily apparent within the media; print media and online outlets such as *IndiaToday* highlight the contrast across generations in terms of consumption practices, educational attainment, and technological capacity (see "Generation Why" 2005). Lukose (2009) attests that the construction of the lifestyle and generational sensibilities of globalized Indian youth encompasses a capitalism versus socialism ideological difference, a shift from agricultural famine to surplus, a growth in educational attainment across diverse socioeconomic groups, shifting career choices, rising literacy rates, the spread of mass media and technology, changing practices of consumption, and the breakdown of the post-

Independence hegemony of the dominant nationalist political party. This narrative links the values and attitudes of this new generation to the economic liberalization of the economy and the cultural impacts of globalization.

**Being and Becoming Middle Class in India**

Before the onset of liberalization, being "middle class" in India referred almost exclusively to the lifestyles of public servants and professionals (see Misra 1961, Mines 1984). A culture of "self-assured bourgeois nationalism" (Jaffrelot and van der Veer 2008**:**20) in conjunction with the strength of state institutions characterized the close association of upper-caste Hindu cultural traits with "middleclassness" among this "old", Nehruvian middle class. In contemporary India, the old middle classes are now themselves more heterogeneous, and "their cultural, political, and economic hegemony can no longer be taken for granted" (Donner and De Neve 2011:4). Social integration, affirmative action, and the economic achievement of upwardly mobile communities have broadened the discourse on middleclassness and created novel practices and social relations (*ibid.*) The tensions this extensive and more inclusive process of class formation caused first materialized in the uproar following the Report of the Backward Classes Commission (Mandal 1980) - commonly referred to as the Mandal Commission - on the effects of affirmative action in the form of quota-based reservations in publicly funded educational institutes and public sector jobs. In advocating for policies to support individuals from historically disadvantaged groups, the Commission contravened the mantra of meritocracy circulating among the old middle classes. Whilst the benefit of the reservation scheme to their target

demographic remains a topic of debate (e.g. Frisancho and Kala 2016, Chalam 2007, S.Deshpande 2006), Donner and De Neve (2011) assert that state-led economic development, such as the Green Revolution of the 1960s, created opportunities for socioeconomic mobility among low status rural communities.

The subsequent policies of economic liberalization of the 1990s were accompanied by a set of public discourses and media images, which not only attributed the rise of a "new" urban middle class to the success of the economic reforms, but also saw the middle class as the main beneficiary (Robinson 2014, Fernandes 2000). Media depictions centre around the new middle class as a cultural site marked by attitudes, lifestyles and consumption practices associated with commodities made available in India's liberalizing economy (see Fernandes 2004:2416). The rapid post-liberalization growth of India's Information Technology (IT) industry in many ways epitomized these ideas, signalling the emergence of a new middle class culture founded upon professionalism and global outlook (Radhakrishnan 2011a, Sancho 2015). The IT sector is often seen as the "primordial employment niche" for India's new middle classes (see Fuller and Narasimhan 2007, Van Wessel 2004). Yet in pragmatic terms there is little consensus over the empirical definition of the middle class, with estimations ranging from 50 to 250 million people, or 5 to 25 *per cent* of the total population (Robinson 2014). For the purposes of demographic practice and economic planning a "more or less homogenous, urban Indian middle class is constructed on purely economic grounds" (Sridharan 2004, cited in Donner and De Neve 2011:3).

In countering the more celebratory accounts of the middle class originating from within the media and corporate sector, a well-established body of social-scientific scholarship examines the extent to which idealized images of middle class subjects resonate with the actual experiences across India (e.g. Baviskar and Ray 2011, Donner 2011, Fernandes 2000). Scholars have taken a particular interest in the ways in which this social tier has shaped and in turn been shaped by processes of economic liberalization, cultural nationalism and democratic mobilization (e.g. Corbridge and Harriss 2000, Sridharan 2004, c.f. Jayadev et al. 2011:90). This work highlights the socioeconomic breadth of those engaged in the social construction and performance of middle class sensibilities across space and time, foregrounding key themes of consumption (e.g. Lukose 2009, Nisbett 2007, Liechty 2003), employment aspirations (Radhakrishnan 2011b, Jeffrey 2010a, Fernandes 2006), educational investments (Sancho 2015, Deuchar 2014), and changing ideas about "companionate marriage" and love (Fuller and Narasimhan 2013, Donner 2002, Puri 2002, Parry 2001). What emerges strongly from this work is the plurality of the Indian middle class; those self-defining or being described as middle class in India vary dramatically not only in terms of consumption practices and economic positioning, but also in terms of status and values (see Belliappa 2013, Ciotti 2011).

Donner and De Neve (2011) attribute this in part to the streamlining of educational and occupational trajectories in post-liberalization India. Middle class status, they argue, "is no longer the privilege of those living in the metropolis or urban centres, but can increasingly be realized elsewhere" (Donner and De Neve 2011:4). This makes it possible for a greater diversity of aspirational individuals

and communities to access social and cultural arenas and practices earlier available only to high-status groups. In this sense, the analytical utility of the Indian middle class is as a discursive and performative space, and as an ideological project (see also Baviskar and Ray 2011, Joshi 2010, Donner 2008, Srivastava 2007, Fernandes 2006). In line with this, Donner and De Neve (2011) suggest careful usage of the term "middle class" as a noun, given the conceptual confusion arising from its multiple associations. They instead advocate the concept of "middleclassness", which marks "the tensions arising from struggles over symbolic boundaries" (2011:12) and instead emphasizes the contested nature of efforts to (re)produce class status through everyday practices and in a relational manner (Bourdieu 1984). This view resonates with Liechty (2003), who advocates an approach toward understanding middleclassness as a cultural project or practice "rather than a social category or empirical condition" (2003:21). Marked by an aspirational way of being it "is lived and experienced through desire and aspiration rather than actual labour relations" (Donner and De Neve 2011:13). This perspective articulates a key distinction between caste and class in contemporary India; unlike caste, which "confines a collective identity rather than an individual asset" (Brosius 2010:17), class is an open system defined by merit vis-à-vis accumulating various forms of capital.

It is therefore necessary to embed an empirical engagement with India's middle classes within wider theories of class, and in theorizing the middle class as a social and cultural formation scholars of India have drawn productively on Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) analysis of class reproduction (e.g. Sancho 2015, Deuchar 2014, Baviskar and Ray 2011, Donner and De Neve 2011, Jeffrey 2010a). Class, according

to Bourdieu, is a cluster of individuals who take up a similar position in social space "that is determined by pedigree, symbolic and financial capital and class-consciousness" (Brosius 2010:15). Bourdieu was interested in the ways in which society is reproduced and the strategies dominant classes use to maintain their position. Drawing on his analysis of French society, he argued that people are differentiated according to their varying degrees of economic, social, and cultural capital. Social capital refers to the total resources accrued by an individual or group by virtue of possessing "a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:119). Cultural capital, by contrast, can be "embodied in an individual person, objectified through cultural artefacts, and institutionalized in academic qualifications and credentials" (Waters 2009:404). These forms of capital are always spatialized either "by means of imagination, perception, experience, or materialisation" (Brosius 2010:16). Within Bourdieu's (1984) framework class identities and locations are continually formed in relation to, and different from, other classes (see also Donner and De Neve 2011:12). This relationship between economic, social, and cultural capital forms a useful conceptual tool in the analysis of individuals' pursuit of middleclassness in India.

Young people are often the most visible aspirants to middle class culture in India (Nisbett 2007, Liechty 2003), gaining a widespread exposure to images in national and international television and print media of middle class ideals of "adulthood" founded upon formal education, consumption practices, and professional employment (Jeffrey 2009, Fernandes 2000). As Nisbett (2007) notes, Indian youth are seen as embodying "the hopes and desires of the sub-continent, as they

struggle to obtain the requisite consumer products and enter the new forms of labour which enable this consumption (and the associated symbolic capital)" (2007:936). These studies signal the potential for tensions to emerge within households as young people attempt to negotiate their own social, cultural, and economic aspirations against a set of expectations emanating from older generations. Such tensions are likely to manifest among marginalized communities, who have been historically linked with particular occupations (see Breman 1985, Gist 1954).

Accordingly, studies of the Indian middle classes direct attention to how youth creatively shape selfhood through incorporating the different symbolic forms that come their way (e.g. Cullity and Younger 2004, Saldanha 2002). This strand of work denotes the family as a site where selfhood is shaped through the need to negotiate intergenerational tensions. Van Wessel (2011), for example, researching among youth in Baroda, central Gujarat, highlights how middle class young people inhabit "a culture of their own that expresses itself in terms of clothing style, consumption patterns, language and sites" (Van Wessel 2011:103) - forms of objectified and embodied cultural capital in Bourdieu's terms. She notes how, though expressed through the consumption of various forms of youth culture with its clear style and lifestyle connotations, "many of these categorisations are rooted in broader social differences and index class through reference to gendered patterns of behaviour and style, educational pursuits and moral assumptions" (2011:103), thus conforming to the moral and cultural ideas of their elders. Intergenerational relations form a domain in which conflicts over meaning surface. Young people, as noted in observations in similar contexts such as McDonald's

(1999) work on Australian youth cultures, engage in a process of constructing subjectivity in the face of culturally and socially diverging forces (c.f. Van Wessel 2011:115). The family, then, is a key site where young people grapple with and negotiate their own cultural aspirations toward middleclassness against expectations emanating from older generations.

Moreover, in contemporary India images of middleclassness have acquired a hegemonic role, not least because the lifestyles that accompany them are closely entwined with the aspirations and discourses of modernity. A collection of essays edited by Henrike Donner (2011) highlights how gender relations and gendered bodies are specifically significant in the reproduction of middleclassness; women are expected to embody reified ideas about "tradition" and are responsible for their social reproduction across generations (see also Lukose 2009, Donner 2008). These points are neatly illustrated in De Neve's (2011) research in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. He explores the gender-specific education, employment, and marriage strategies pursued by wealthy industrial capitalists. Despite both young men and women being pushed toward higher education, gendered roles emerged strongly within these education strategies; there was an expectation of daughters marrying men from within the community and the common perception that female education was a matter of status rather than economic benefit (see also Frøystad 2006).

My interest is in engaging with the micropolitics of "middleclassness": the unspectacular, the everyday, the routine, and the mundane, which demarcate class as a social field in Bourdieu's work. I explore how rural youth selectively

appropriate elements of a middle class cultural discourse, and the ways in which this performance varies across space as they encounter and negotiate dominant social identities emanating from kin and caste communities, and the peer group. An ethnographic approach to the study of the production of middleclass values and practices among young people facilitates an exploration of how subjectivities relate to both group-based identities and intrafamilial generational relations.

**Globalization and Education in India**

Education constitutes one of the key commonalities that shape the expression and consolidation of India's globalizing middle classes (Deuchar 2014, Donner and De Neve 2011, Radhakrishnan 2011a), and thus educational spaces also constitute sites within which middle class dispositions are encountered and appropriated. Education in India has also become an ostensible manifestation of globalization in a number of ways. The integration of India into global networks of capital stimulated the growth of the Information Technology (IT) sector over the past two decades. International schools have grown in size and influence (Hayden 2011), expanding beyond their historical niche of elite expatriates to include striving, postcolonial middle class families (Qureshi et al. 2013, c.f. Sancho 2015). Combined with this, public discourses circulate images of the prosperous urban middle class consumer and the associated rise of "young urban professionals" who, having gained a formal education, are able to benefit from salaried work from multinational companies and subsequently from Indian companies (Fernandes 2000:93). Individuals and families often seek to convert newly acquired economic capital into social and cultural capital by enrolling in relatively more expensive and

privately-run institutions whose membership offers prestige, the possibility of social mobility through future employment prospects, and access to otherwise exclusive social networks (see Gilbertson 2014, Fernandes and Heller 2011).

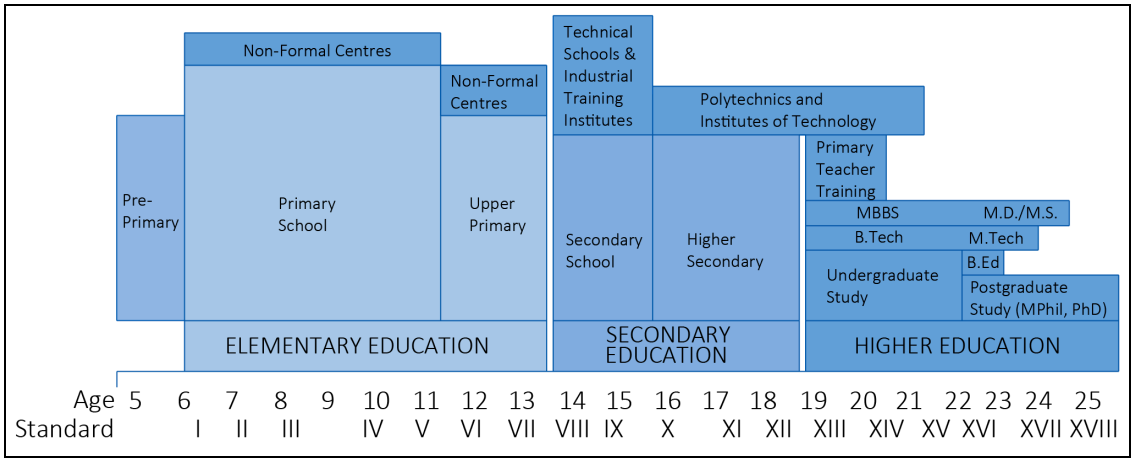



**Figure 1.1** Overview of the education sector in contemporary India, *author's own (adapted from http://education.nic.in/cd50years/g/u/9F/ouifozoI.htm)*

Thus as both a side effect of, and response to, globalization, India's education system has undergone a series of structural transformations by way of policies of economic liberalization (see Figure 1.1). Higher education has witnessed a broad shift toward "autonomous" colleges since the late 1980s. As perhaps the most pervasive manifestation of liberalization within the Indian higher education sector, autonomy is a form of public-private partnership wherein colleges are affiliated to a government university but are under no obligation to follow a set syllabus or curriculum. Given the small scale of their operations as compared to full sized universities, they require a lower investment to build and establish and thus constitute an attractive prospect for investors and entrepreneurs in India. Table 1.1 gives an indication of the scale of the rise in the number of private (affiliated) colleges in post-liberalization India. Between the period 1990-91 immediately

following the NEP and the period spanning 2014-15, for example, the number of private colleges affiliated to government universities in India underwent a remarkable growth from 5,748 to 38,056. A significant number of these colleges are engineering and technology-oriented, catering to a rising post-liberalization demand among the upwardly mobile middle classes for more engineering courses to facilitate entry into high-paying sectors (Fuller and Narasimhan 2006, Fernandes 2000). Enrolment rates reflect this dramatic shift toward private higher educational provision; the Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development's (MHRD) All India Survey of Higher Education recorded over 22.5 million students enrolled in higher education across the period 2014-15, as compared to 8.4 million enrolled across the 2000-01 period (MHRD 2015).

| Period | Number of affiliated colleges registered in India |
|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 5748 |
| 2000-01 | 11146 |
| 2010-11 | 31324 |
| 2014-15 | 38056 |

**Table 1.1** India-wide increase in private affiliated colleges, 1990-2015, *data from MHRD (2015)*

Importantly, this expansion in response to increasing demand in industry-specific education has resulted in changes to the caste and class distributions of those enrolling in higher education. The increasing interest among the urban middle classes and OBC "creamy layer"[3] - the wealthier and better-educated members of the OBCs who are not eligible for quota-based affirmative action - in engineering and business administration-oriented courses has created a vacuum in liberal arts

[3] The creamy layer is defined by the Government of India as OBC households whose collective family income exceeds 600,000 INR (7060 GBP).

colleges (see Figure 1.2). In particular, Nakassis (2013) notes how this has led to an increasing interest within liberal arts education in computer science, commerce, and science Bachelors degrees. In responding to these changing demands many of these colleges have initiated self-financing specialized courses which, receiving no financial aid from the Indian Government's University Grants Commission, have smaller class sizes, and curricula tailored toward specific employment trajectories. A consequence of this, Nakassis (2013:10) observes, is an increase in the number of women attending traditionally all-male campuses. The growing division between engineering and business administration colleges, and liberal arts colleges, has thus resulted in a divergence of student bodies. Those attending liberal arts colleges increasingly come from working class, low caste, and rural backgrounds; a first generation of entrants into India's higher education sector.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Empty seat syndrome is haunting Arts colleges

TNN | Jul 1, 2014, 10.29 PM IST Bharat Yagnik

AHMEDABAD: Empty seat syndrome is haunting Arts colleges in the city. Of the 32 Arts colleges in the city, barring the top four-five, the rest are grappling with the specter of over 50% empty seats this year.

The rush for admission at these premier institutes is in stark contrast with the other colleges staring at vacant classrooms. And this has been a trend for last three years at all 81 colleges under the Gujarat University. The situation almost same at the 49 colleges situated in rural areas.

Principal of St Xavier's College Father Robert Arockiasamy said: "In premier colleges like this, filling up of seats is never a problem but we have noticed a drop in the number of applications. The cut off marks also has slipped down as compared to earlier years. Students are now more inclined to take up English, economics and psychology as their core subjects. Gujarati and Sanskrit have very few takers."

Some educationists blame the state government for the drop in interest level of students towards Arts subjects. Dean of Gujarat University's Arts faculty, Dharamsinh Desai, said: "Due to the state government's apathetic attitude, the number of schools offering Arts courses is steadily decreasing. The city today has got no more than 10 schools that offer Arts in the 11 and 12 standards. The state government should encourage this academic discipline. Otherwise many Arts colleges will down shutters and students will suffer from tunnel vision in academics."

Principal of LD Arts College Mahipatsinh Chavda said: "Earlier we saw 2,000 forms being submitted by admission seekers. Now the number is down to half. The merit percentage is also steadily dropping. Hindi, Sanskrit, Guajarati and philosophy, geography and political science are not drawing enough students. This problem is acute in city colleges. I have noticed a drop of 30-35 % in number of students applying for these courses in the last five years."

**Figure 1.2** Excerpt from online media highlighting deficit of student applications to Gujarat's liberal arts colleges, *"Empty seat syndrome is haunting Arts colleges" (2014)*

Caste constitutes a particularly salient and controversial aspect of higher education in contemporary India, where the Government of India's policies of affirmative action have been a source of controversy since the 1990s. Positive discrimination in India dates back to the 1920s in Mysore, alongside the Madras and Bombay Presidencies (Heyer and Jayal 2009). In the 1950 Constitution of India it took the form of provisions for affirmative action for SCs and STs in public employment, in the central and state legislatures, and in higher education. The 1990s witnessed an extension of these policies to incorporate the OBCs, following acceptance of the Mandal Commission. The OBCs were awarded a 27 *per cent* quota in public employment, which was extended in 2006 to include quotas in higher educational institutions such as Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), and medical schools and universities (see Heyer and Jayal 2009:9). This engendered widespread protests among upper caste, middle class populations, highlighting a discourse of merit as central to the ideological foundations of the middle classes; those entering colleges through quota-based affirmative action are commonly conceived of by these populations as having neither the intelligence nor the talent required (Ghosh 2006:2430, see also A.Deshpande 2013).

Protests over reservations in higher educational institutions and public sector employment are, in part, a reflection of rising rates of educated unemployment across contemporary India. In Gujarat, over 1.5 million educated youth - those with at least a completed secondary school education – are currently registered with the state government as unemployed ("Congress lashes out at BJP over fix pay

policy" 2016). This is a result of both increasing investments in education and a shortage of salaried employment for university matriculates. Notwithstanding celebratory discourses regarding economic growth in the post-liberalization era, it has been widely argued that the country is experiencing "jobless growth" ("What explains the high GDP growth?" 2007); whilst a national shift toward the service sector has generated significant economic growth, it has been less successful at generating employment. Corbridge and colleagues (2012) attribute India's 6 *per cent* average growth rate in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) since the mid-1990s in most part to the country's prosperous IT sector, which generates very little in the way of employment. Across this same period the share of agricultural production in GDP has decreased whilst employment in the sector has grown (see Deuchar 2014:137). Such trends highlight the income and wealth inequalities that have increased socially and geographically in post-liberalization India.

Taken collectively, these analyses signal the precarious situation faced by an increasingly educated generation of rural youth from historically disadvantaged OBC, SC, and ST populations in contemporary Gujarat; in addition to a shortage of salaried work and the associated income, employment in the private sector holds social and cultural significance in the imaginaries of young men and women as they pursue a set of middle class ideals.

**Research Problem and Questions**

Globalization has effected profound social, cultural, and economic impacts upon the everyday lives of young people in contemporary India. In particular, a shift in

sociopolitical sensibilities over the past 25 years has engendered a series of significant structural transformations to the country's education sector. An increasing pursuit of engineering and business-oriented occupations among the urban middle classes and the OBC creamy layer has created a vacuum in liberal arts colleges that is being filled by young people from lower class and caste, and rural backgrounds. Whilst these historically disadvantaged populations are increasingly enrolling their children in secondary and higher education as a signifier of a family's financial standing and advancement, marginalized young people commonly fail to make successful transitions into work as they lack the requisite forms of social and economic capital (see Cross 2014, Still 2014, Jeffrey 2010a).

Formal education is also culturally significant. The past two decades have witnessed the emergence of a "new" urban middle class, which, whilst economically heterogeneous, coalesces around a series of cultural aspirations predicated upon consumption practices and salaried employment, both of which are underpinned by formal education. Young people are constantly exposed to public discourses of middleclassness by way of both old and new media. A first generation of formally educated young men and women from socioeconomically marginalized backgrounds in rural India marks a generational rupture not only in terms of young people's social and spatial experiences as they increasingly pursue higher education in urban centres, but also in cultural terms as they pursue and engage with various elements of middleclassness.

There is now a broad body of scholarship on the social and cultural practices of educated youth across India's urban spaces. The majority of this work takes an empirical focus on young men (e.g. Sancho 2015, Deuchar 2014, Jeffrey 2010a, Nisbett 2007, but see Krishnan 2016, Dyson 2014, Lukose 2009). This research has made important contributions to our understandings of the affective and subjective lives of youth in primarily metropolitan India, with focuses including unemployed young people's temporal and spatial anxieties, understandings of consumption and citizenship, and middle class respectability. Despite this welter of research, there remains very little examining the experiences of youth from rural India, where over 68 *per cent* of the Indian population still live (Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2011c) and whose historically disadvantaged Other Backward Class (OBC), Scheduled Caste (SC), and Scheduled Tribe (ST) populations have increasingly been investing in secondary and higher education over the past decade.[4]

This thesis addresses this deficit. I provide a theoretically informed account of the gendered ways in which young people living rurally are navigating a transforming educational and employment landscape, examining the central question:

- *How are the everyday social and cultural lives of young men and women from socioeconomically disadvantaged OBC, SC, and ST communities changing in contemporary rural Gujarat?*

[4] Rural is defined by the Government of India as places having a population of less than 5,000, a population density of less than 400 per square kilometre, and where "more than 25 *per cent* of the male working population is engaged in agricultural pursuits" (Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2011c).

The project is guided by two related sub-questions:

- *How do educated youth engage with and appropriate normative ideas about age and "middleclassness" as they pursue particular education- and employment-oriented goals?*

- *To what extent is increasing investment in formal education affecting how social relations built out of solidarity (kinship, friendship) and power (hierarchy) are articulated both within and across generations?*

In answering these questions I draw on substantive ethnographic fieldwork conducted across 2014 and 2015 in Kota[5], a case study village Gujarat, India's westernmost state. Over the course of eleven months I conducted a multi-sited ethnography, tracing the physical movements of young men and women as they pursued education and employment across Gujarat's urban centres. Scholars have stressed multi-sited ethnography as a methodological response to globalization, which now describes an increased awareness of the world as a single place; a world characterized "by complex mobilities and interconnections; a world where boundaries and borders are increasingly porous" (O'Reilly 2012:145, see also Gille and O'Riain 2002, Hannerz 1996). The essence of multi-sited research, Falzon (2016) argues, "is to follow people, connections, associations, and relationships across space" (2016:1). It involves a spatially dispersed field through which the

ethnographer moves both physically, through movements between places, and conceptually, by means of techniques of juxtaposition of data.

In addition to addressing an empirical gap in studies of youth in South Asia, the thesis makes two broader contributions. First, it makes an essential and timely contribution to social-scientific studies of childhood and youth. In the field of youth studies, thinking around the concepts of youth, young adults, and the nature of adulthood itself has undergone a transformation, reflecting the "changes in the ways in which people are living and learning in the 21st century" (Wyn 2014:5). As this chapter suggests, India's changing educational landscape has resulted in an expansion of "youth", both in terms of age and social domain. This is due to the extended time being spent in education and increasing diversity of student bodies, as well as the increasing pressures young people (primarily young men) face in entering salaried positions before marriage (see Jeffrey et al. 2008). Moreover, it has been suggested that youth as a social category is gendered (see Nakassis 2010, Osella and Osella 1998); it is conceived of as a masculine identity whereby the exclusionary ideas concerning young women's access to the spaces and temporalities that define youth are reinforced. Focusing on the influences of formal education on young men and women's everyday lives, my analysis engages critically with a set of distinct but interrelated debates about educated unemployed young men, geographies of friendship, youth transitions and imagined futures, and young people's mobility practices. These themes are underpinned by a core interest in how young people are rearticulating forms of everyday sociality.

[5] Village names have been anonymized throughout this thesis.

The term "sociality" has become increasingly prominent across the social science over recent decades, yet remains a contested concept and is deployed differently both across and within disciplines. In thinking through its definition, social anthropologists Long and Moore (2012) stress sociality as a process, one that "cannot 'precede' its articulations, but is rather co-extensive with, and as, articulation" (2012:2). Implicit in their definition are aspects of both continuity and change. I find this conceptualization of sociality as a fluid and dynamic process that requires ongoing work useful in thinking through the ways in which young people's social practices are (re)articulated as they move through space.

Second, and more broadly, the thesis addresses aspects of caste, kinship, gender, and generational relations that relate directly to ongoing debates about the transformative potential of education. In both academic and policy discourse, education has become synonymous with "progress", "modernity", and "development", "drawing marginalized individuals and groups more fully into the modern state and increasingly globalized economy" (see Froerer 2015:376). This discourse has largely determined the ways in which activists and policymakers within India engage with and advocate education, contributing to significant increases in educational attainment, particularly at the levels of primary and secondary schooling. However, and as scholars have indicated, the purported benefits associated with formal education are not accessible to those groups governed by their structural positions within systems of social and economic inequality (see Sancho 2015, Jeffrey et al. 2008, Chopra and Jeffery 2005). As Froerer (2015) notes, there has been little substantive ethnographic analysis from the perspectives of rural young people that critically addresses the different ways

in which education-related social mobility is conceived of and pursued by marginalized young people. This is understandable given the central role families, particularly parents, play in the educational strategies of their offspring (Jeffery and Basu 1996, Mukhopadhyay and Seymour 1994). My analysis seeks to nuance the family- and typically parent-centric foci of studies of young people's education through examining the perspectives and strategies of young people themselves. It is important to note here that, rather than being an educational ethnography that constructs a detailed picture of intra-educational spaces, my interest is in the social and spatial impacts of increasing formal education on young people's everyday lives.

**Conceptual Framework**

In engaging critically with the everyday experiences of young men and women, and exploring how these strategies manifest variably across space, this thesis adopts a conceptual framework of relationality. A relational approach emphasizes the complexity of young people's everyday lives. It focuses on the connections between and across different spaces, and the ways in which these spaces produce, reinforce, and transform relations of power, difference, and identity at various scales. In a context where education manifestly no longer guarantees a smooth transition into secure employment, an approach that stresses the quality and nature of connections and relationships provides a valuable framework for understanding young people's lives.

Rather than the substantivalist viewpoint of individuals as self-acting entities, relationalism stresses the *practices* that constitute individuals. Mustafa Emirbayer, in his 1997 *Manifesto for a Relational Sociology*, traces the tradition of privileging relations over substances to the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus. Along with Fourcade, Emirbayer acknowledges the presence of relational ideas in the work of several founders of sociology, including Marx, Weber Durkheim, and Simmel (see Fourcade 2007, Emirbayer 1996). Early and mid-20th century sociologists such as John Dewey, Pierre Bourdieu, Arthur Bentley, and Norbert Elias propounded the more recent "relational turn" across the social sciences.

Critical social theory defines social human practices as endlessly reconstituted, reshaped and reorganized by the ongoing structured and structuring flow of their reciprocal relations, and not merely by their respective personalities or identities (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:224). As Powell and Dépelteau (2013:91) note, this helps resolve old theoretical dualisms and dichotomies insofar as "the relation between the social agent and the world is not that between a subject…and an object but a relation of ontological complicity – or mutual possession" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:20). Relational theory thus rejects the notion that "one can posit discrete, pre-given units such as the individual or society as ultimate starting points of sociological analysis" (Emirbayer 1997:287). Crossley's (2011) book *Towards a Relational Sociology* introduced an approach toward binaries of structure/agency and individual/whole in which "relations are lived trajectories of iterated interaction, built up through a history of interaction, but also entailing anticipation of future interaction" (2011:i). Informing sociological relationalism is the so-called "anti-categorical imperative" (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994:1414),

which dismisses explanations of social behaviour "as the result of individuals' common possession of attributes and norms rather than as a result of their involvement in structural social relations" (Wellman 1983:165, c.f. Tsekeris 2010).

Within Geography, the emergence of relationality is often credited to the work of Doreen Massey (2005, 1994), and the relational turn across the discipline pays closer attention to space rather than people (Andrews et al. 2013). Relational thinking marks a paradigmatic departure from the concerns of absolute and relative space, dissolving the boundaries between objects and space and, in doing so, rebuffing forms of spatial totality. Within a relational view, "objects *are* space, space *is* objects, and moreover objects can be understood *only* in relation to other objects - with all this being a perpetual becoming of heterogeneous networks and events that connect internal spatiotemporal relations" (Jones 2009:491, emphasis in original). Other geographers have developed a relational understanding of space through drawing on Lefebvre's (2004) trialectic of space as perceived, conceived, and lived. Lefebvre's notion of "lived space" sees space as "produced and modified over time and through its use, spaces invested with symbolism and meaning…space as it is lived, social space" (Elden 2001:815). This interest in "lived space", as a way of understanding both the material and ideal, considers the connections within and across different spaces, including how spaces produce and reinforce relations of power, difference, and identity (Worth 2015:345).

Geographers researching among children and youth have advanced a relational approach through examining spatial aspects to young people's identity formation (e.g. Skelton 2013, Worth 2009, Valentine 2003). Within a relational framework,

an object (or person) "can be said to exist only insofar as it contains and represents within itself relationships to other objects" (Harvey 1973:13). Adopting this theoretical perspective reflects postmodern approaches toward youth identity across other disciplines that embrace context, subjectivity, and an inherent relationality (see Rattansi and Pheonix 1997). In theorizing spatial aspects to young lives, an ongoing and productive theoretical debate among youth geographers revolves around the concept of young people's transitions through the "life course" (Hörschelmann 2011, Hopkins and Pain 2007) in order to locate understandings of youth and young adulthood within a wider understanding of sociospatial experience that considers age as a socially constructed category. The notion of a relational understanding of space usefully locates the life course "not through time but through different microspaces like school, home, work, and street - recognizing that identity is both read and performed differently across space" (Worth 2015:346, see also Massey 2005). In this view the field of youth studies contains numerous examples of research that employs a relational framework (e.g. Hopkins et al. 2015, Leccardi 2012, Andres and Wyn 2010, Henderson et al. 2007).

Given its sociological roots in the critical appraisal of analytical categories (see Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994), thinking relationally offers a productive means through which to develop theorizations of age and youth. Geographers have recently engaged with the concept of intersectionality in theorizing the complexity and diversity of social identities (see McDowell 2008, Valentine 2007). Rather than adding or multiplying categories of social difference, an intersectional approach involves understanding how different social identities are "imbricated, co-constituted, or intermeshed" (Brown 2012:542). Space becomes critical to

understanding the subject given that identities are situated accomplishments; there are "dominant spatial orderings that produce moments of exclusion for particular social groups" (Valentine 2007:19). Relationality crosses spatial scales, from the individual body though to intersecting with processes of globalization. It is thus useful in thinking about the ways in which young people creatively manage and respond to normative discourses circulating at various scales. Hörschelmann and Schafer (2005), for example, examine young East German's experiences of globalizing processes as their society transformed from state socialism to capitalism. Through interrogating young people's use of urban space, they consider how youth engage with global and local issues through "everyday practices of identity formation" (2005:220). Their work highlights the ways in which the identities young people construct in their engagement with globalization is mediated by age and social status. Central to my analysis is understanding how young people's movements through power-laden spaces intersect with locally normative ideas about age and youth, and the extent to which they are able to exercise agency through constructing and performing particular social identities. I elaborate on relational theorizations of space and time, and the concept of intersectionality, more comprehensively in Chapter 2.

**Thesis Overview**

This thesis is organized as four academic journal articles that, whilst each addressing a specific set of debates, are united by their scholarly focus on geographies of youth. Each of the articles has been submitted for publication in a

peer review journal and all articles are currently at different stages of review and revisions. The current status of each article is noted on its cover page.

Chapter 2 that follows introduces relevant theoretical social-scientific and geographic scholarship that frames the study. This review is intentionally broad, given that each of the four papers addresses a more-specific set of debates within this broader framework. Chapter 3 introduces in greater detail the historical and contemporary social, cultural, economic, and political context for my empirical research in the state of Gujarat. This detail is intended to provide greater contextual background for the articles, given the word limits stipulated by each journal alongside the specifically geographical focus of each article. Following this, Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive overview of the ethnographic methodology I employed over the course of my research, alongside introducing the case study for my research in greater depth. I also reflect on methodological issues of ethics, reflexivity, and the dynamic process of negotiating and performing identity.

Chapters 5 - 8 constitute each of the four standalone articles that constitute the core of the thesis. Chapter 5 [Article 1], "*Utāvala* (haste): Temporal Tactics and Educated Unemployment Among Marginalized Young Men in Rural Gujarat, India" (hereafter "Temporal Tactics and Educated Unemployment"), nuances broader accounts of the relationship between economic reforms and the temporal and spatial insecurities of marginalized young men in the Global South. Within this literature, young people's experiences of temporal disjuncture typically manifest through feelings of inertia and being "in limbo". In India, specifically, scholars have

highlighted how educated unemployed young men from lower-middle class[6] backgrounds find themselves engaging in somewhat inevitable cultures of "simply passing time" (colloquially expressed as "*timepass*"). I argue that increasing educational attainment among marginalized rural populations is changing the nature of young people's everyday sociality; a cohort of educated OBC, SC, and ST young men in rural Gujarat enact a shared set of dispositions centered around the Gujarati notion of *utāvala*, which translates literally as "haste". In constructing and performing an exclusionary culture of haste these male youth seek to challenge the sensibilities of their more affluent counterparts in the village through engaging with a broader middle class cultural discourse. Signalling the heterogeneity of temporal experience among educated young men, the article contributes to broader debates concerning the relativity of space and time and goes some way in addressing calls among recent theoretical human geographic work for a conceptual focus on performative social practices (see May and Thrift 2001).

Chapter 6 [Article 2], "The Business of Friendship: Unpacking the Changing Nature of Sociality Among Educated Young Men in Rural Gujarat, India" (hereafter "The Business of Friendship"), extends this focus on the same subset of male youth in order to locate young men's social practices within wider social, economic, and cultural formations. The paper makes a critical contribution to ongoing efforts within geography that seek to afford greater prominence to friendship as a form of interpersonal relationship that may be differentiated from kinship and affinity. My analysis points to the networked and highly exclusionary nature of everyday

[6] Jeffrey (2010a) invokes the term "lower-middle class" in his analysis of a middle-ranking Hindu caste in Uttar Pradesh. His analysis extends to include educated young men from socially and economically marginalized Muslim OBC and SC households.

friendship among educated unemployed young men. College-educated male youth, unable to find salaried work or sustain themselves economically in metropolitan India, return to their natal homes following their graduation. Here they construct friendships in order to negotiate and perform intersecting age, caste, class, religious, and gendered identities. A focus on the dynamic performance of identity across different spaces and at different scales of the household, village, and wider city highlights how practices of positive sociality among young men both transgress caste and religious boundaries, and simultaneously reinforce normative ideas about exclusion circulating among their kin and caste communities. In emphasizing its fluidity, my analysis foregrounds the role friendship plays in broader processes of social ordering and transformation. Giving theoretical and empirical prominence to the intragenerational influences significant in young people's everyday lives, the article makes a broader argument concerning class as a continuous process undertaken by individuals.

Chapter 7 [Article 3] maintains a focus on aspects of higher education, examining the experiences of a first generation of young women attending college in metropolitan Gujarat. The article, "Parents, Permission, and Possibility: Young Women, College, and Imagined Futures in Gujarat, India" (hereafter "Parents, Permission, and Possibility"), advances a spatial theorization of young people's post-educational transitions through directing attention to the interplay between young women's past, present, and imagined futures. Focusing on young women attending college in Ahmedabad, Gujarat's largest city, the article highlights the ways in which particular kinds of spaces and spatial arrangements facilitate and limit *intra*- and *inter*-generational contact, and the extent to which this impacts

upon young women's conceptions of the future. In taking this approach the study addresses calls for affording theoretical prominence to the role of the family and peer group in supporting young people's social, economic, and political transitions (see Hardgrove et al. 2015b).

Chapter 8 [Article 4] returns to the rural context to examine young men and women's experiences of India's rapidly transforming secondary schooling sector. Focusing on students in 11th and 12th Standard (aged 16-18), the article, "College for the village kids": Secondary Schooling and Gendered Youth Mobilities in Rural Gujarat, India" (hereafter "College for the village kids"), presents key insights into the contemporary nature of youth transitions and the ways in which educational liberalization in India is transforming young men and women's experiences of, and movements through, the life course. Engaging critically with the "new" mobilities paradigm (see Cresswell 2010, Gough 2008) the article illustrates the multiple relationalities underpinning young people's mobility practices, highlighting how young people both constitute, and are constituted by, relations of mobility and identity formation. I contribute to broader debates about geographies of young people by demonstrating how educational privatization is transforming locally normative ideas around "childhood" and "youth", as well as complementing ongoing attempts to streamline young people's mobility into the new mobilities paradigm, recognizing "the roles of young people as actors and agents of the mobile world'" (Skelton 2013:469).

Following these standalone articles, Chapter 9 ties together observations across each of the four papers to draw out a series of conclusions and contributions to the

scholarly debates introduced in Chapters 1 and 2, as well as revisiting the initial research questions.

# Chapter 2. ARGUMENT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature I use to examine everyday life in rural Gujarat. The review foregrounds the theoretical geographical approaches I employ throughout my analysis, as well as identifying gaps in the literatures that this thesis addresses across each scholarly article. Given the specific debates with which each article engages, the review is intentionally broad.

I begin by introducing geographical theorizations of space and time, reflecting on absolute, relative, and relational ways of seeing space and time. I consider recent empirical scholarship that provides situated accounts of these conceptualizations, locating my own work among these ongoing efforts. Following this I discuss conceptual frameworks for analyzing young people, focusing in particular on scholarship concerned with theorizing "youth" relationally, young people's transitions to adulthood, and spatial aspects to young people's everyday lives. I relate these to some of the structural processes that marginalize young people, paying particular attention to aspects of education and work. I then reflect on calls for relational geographies of age, concentrating on geographical scholarship that seeks to advance a spatial understanding of social relationships within and across generations.

Following this I introduce recent theorizations among human geographers of the relationship between different social categories. I pay particular attention to the concept of intersectionality (see Valentine 2007) and scholarship that takes

account of the range of vectors of relationality present within social identities in different places and at different times (Hopkins and Noble 2009:812). Taken as a whole, this chapter articulates the broader relational conceptual framework underpinning each of the standalone papers, and the thesis as a whole.

**Space, Time, and Relationality**

Early social scientific scholarship identified space as the site of stasis and stability. In this view, "the essential characteristic [was] that all the causes of any change which may taken place [were] internal to the structure itself" (Massey 1994:252). This closed and self-determining view of the spatial directly opposed ideas about time, which, early scholars posited, took the form of dislocation (e.g. Jameson 1991, Laclau 1990): "a dynamic which disrupts the predefined terms of any system of causality" (Massey 1994:252). In this sense, conventional social science imagined space as devoid of the possibility of politics. From the 1970s onwards, this hegemonic positivist "spatial science" was increasingly challenged by a new generation of radical geographers who, drawing heavily on Marxist theory, directed attention toward how to conceptualize the relationship between space and society (e.g. Harvey 1989, Peet 1998). Many of the these early endeavours to re-theorize "society and space" were underwritten by Harvey's (1982) re-readings of Marx, work on spaces of historical materialism, and discussions on dialectics and permanence (see Harvey 2006). Harvey argued that Marx's critique of political economy implied a latent, but not explicit, spatial structure: "capitalism as a system of commodity production also depends on the production of a space-economy, and its spasmodic crises in turn require a precarious 'spatial fix'"

(Gregory et al. 2009:708). Other scholars drew on the work of alternative Marxist scholars such as Henri Lefebvre (1991), who insisted upon the significance of considering not only what might be called "the geometry" of space, but also "its lived practices and the symbolic meaning and significance of particular spaces and spatializations" (c.f. Massey 1994:251). Collectively, this body of emergent radical geographical work conceived of space as a social construct: that is, as being "constituted through social relations and material social practices" (Massey 1994:254). Yet this formulation implied a one-sided understanding that geographical forms and distributions were simply the endpoint of social explanation and was soon conceived of as inadequate, and was thus reframed in the 1980s to reflect the ways in which the social is simultaneously spatially constructed (see Lefebvre (1974) for a similar position being argued around the same time).

In his 1980s conceptualization of the relationship between space and time, David Harvey (1989) used the term "time-space compression" to theorize the increasing speed of social life and the alteration of the meaning of space under conditions of changing modes of transportation and economic production, and technological change. His primary purpose was to designate "the product of what Marx saw as the compulsion to 'annihilate space by time' under capitalism'" (Gregory et al. 2009:757). He argued that the history of capitalism was characterized by an increasing pace of life, "overcoming barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse in upon us" (Harvey 1989:240). Harvey's thesis of time-space compression has been subjected to both critique and development, with scholars directing attention to the multiple registers through which time–space

compression is socially differentiated. Massey (1994), for example, advocated the "power-geometry of time-space compression", which was located against a framework of agency and affect, position, and power. Rather than collapsing the differences between the "spatial" and the "temporal", her primary concern was in drawing attention to the limitations of this dualism, instead making the point that "space and time are inextricably interwoven" (1994:261). Elsewhere May and Thrift (2003), in their edited collection, theorize the ways in which space variably expands and contracts, and time variably speeds up and slows down. They signal the multiplicity of times and routines, critiquing the failure of the standard narrative of time-space compression to account for the heterogeneity of the social and spatial positioning of the individual (see also May 1994).

In contemporary geographical thought, then, "the spatial" can be seen as "constructed out of the multiplicity of social relations across all spatial scales…[i]t is a way of thinking in terms of the ever-shifting geometry of social/power relations, and it forces into view the real multiplicities of space-time" (Massey 1994:4, see also Gregory and Urry 1988). This relational approach advocates an understanding of space as both productive of, and constituted through, social relations, and stresses the inherent need for a more dynamic and fluid conception of space (see also Marston et al. 2005, Amin 2002). Harvey (1974) articulates a theoretical framework that captures a wide array of definitional approaches. In his 1974 book, *Social Justice and the City,* he combines his own tripartite model of space (as absolute, relative, and relational) with Lefebvre's tripartite division of space (as experienced, conceptualised, and lived), whilst acknowledging the inability of this matrix to "do justice to either the experienced or the lived realms

of spatiality" (2004:103-104). He suggests, in a similar manner to Thrift (2012), using a multitude of approaches to the study of space, proposing that the spatial frame being used "depends on the nature of the phenomena under investigation" (Harvey 1974:8).

In this thesis I advocate a relational understanding of space. In this view, processes "do not occur *in* space but define their own spatial frame" and space is embedded in process (Harvey 2006:96). A relational understanding brings into view the microsocial interactions across the family and peer group that young people negotiate, and that serve to define their everyday subjectivities. This view resonates with Massey's definition of space as "the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions" (Massey 2005:166). The spatial is inherently political: "social relations are inevitably and everywhere imbued with power and meaning and symbolism, this view of the spatial is as an ever-shifting social geometry of power" (Massey 1994:3).

**Theorizing Youth**

The influences of liberalism and romanticism during the 19th century saw social theorists begin to conceptualise childhood and youth as distinguishable stages. "Childhood" was defined as an asexual period of dependence and playfulness (Aries 1962, Philo 2010), and "youth" as a phase of semi-dependence (Hall 1904, Van Gennep et al. 1960, Kett 1971). This "life stage" model characterizing social maturation was formalized by scholars by the early twentieth century. Anthropologists quickly countered this apparent universality of life "stages". Mead

(1949) and Arnett (1999), for example, highlighted cultural variations that did not map neatly onto these models (see also Keniston 1971). Since the 1980s scholars across the social sciences have developed new approaches toward theorizing young lives, developments that emerged partly in response to when youth labour markets in developed countries began to fail (see Wyn 2014).

Sociologists have been particularly engaged in these pursuits, developing empirically informed and flexible accounts of young people's "transitions" from childhood to adulthood, often mediated by an interstitial period of "youth" (Evans 2008, Valentine 2003, Furlong and Cartmel 1997). The concept of youth transitions to adulthood assumes a linear transition between childhood and adulthood marked "by key events, stages, or rights of passage" (Evans 2008:1664) such as the transition from school to work, family home to independent living, and dependence on family to marriage and becoming a parent (see Valentine 2003). This empirical and theoretical focus on the study of young lives that emerged in late 20th century is reflected in the establishing of academic journals specifically geared toward the scholarly study of youth and young adulthood. *Journal of Youth Studies*, for example, was established in 1998 and brings together social scientists working across a range of disciplines to study young people within a variety of contexts such as education, the labour market, and the family (see, for example, recent work published in the journal by Farrugia (2016), Roberts et al. (2015), and Salvà-Mut et al. (2015)).

The influence of, and relationship between, structures and agency remains a fundamental basis for scholarly work on youth transitions and trajectories. Central

to this discussion are Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) theories of individualization which posit that modernity, characterized by a decline in the importance of "traditional" institutions such as the church, has led to an associated decline in certainty regarding "traditional" life courses previously structured and regulated through institutions such as state schooling and religious and moral norms around family structures and sexual relations (see also Jeffrey 2009, Evans 2008). Thus it is argued that youth transitions are no longer predetermined or mapped out with rights of passage, but rather "that individuals are free to choose their own life path, with structures, such as class, gender, religion, etc., no longer determining an individual's future" (Evans 2008:1665). An emphasis on individual agency is more so prominent within Arnett's (2000) conceptualization of "emerging adulthood" as a distinct period of life in which individuals consider and act upon life opportunities. As Wyn (2014) notes this has led to youth transitions being characterized as "extended" (Furlong and Cartmel 2007), "arrested" (Côté, 2000), and toward an "emerging" yet ever-retreating phase of adulthood (Bynner 2005).

Scholars have critiqued elements of the transitions model and the implicit overemphasis on individual agency (e.g. Roberts et al. 2016, Côté and Bynner 2008, Furlong and Cartmel 2007). Whilst individualization is valuable in directing attention to the complexity and multiplicity of youth transitions, it risks obscuring the role played by structural factors such as class, gender, religion, and geographical location which determine the opportunities and experiences of young people (e.g. Tolonen 2008, Valentine and Skelton 2003). Skelton (2002) queries the extent to which individualization might force upon young people a

"responsibility" to achieve successful transitions. Elsewhere, France (2007) argues that the reliance on normative patterns of transition has the effect of creating "at-risk" categories of youth who, subsequently, become the targets of policy interventions geared toward conformity. A significant critique of "transitional studies" of youth emerged from Johanna Wyn and Dan Woodman at the Melbourne Youth Research Centre in Australia (see Woodman 2013, Wyn and Andres 2011, Wyn and Woodman 2006, Wyn and White 1997). A central tenet of their critique rests in the correlation transition studies has with psychosocial models of development. This normative view, focusing primarily on the "school-to-work" transition neglects the broader "context" of contemporary transitions. Instead, Wyn and Woodman (2006) propose a theorization of "social generations" which, they argue, "locates young people within specific sets of economic, social, cultural and political conditions [and therefore] offers a way beyond seeing generations as a series of birth cohorts because age is no longer the defining feature" Wyn and Woodman 2006:499). This social generations approach is underpinned by its ability to understand social *change*, with advocates levelling accusations at previous youth studies of focusing too much on continuity (see Andres and Wyn 2010).

Yet scholars have rebutted these criticisms, arguing that this critique fails to appreciate the diversity of scholarly work around youth transitions (see Roberts 2007). A notable response comes from Alan France and Steven Roberts (2015), who argue that the dominant work in youth studies is embedded in a social constructionist position. They note how the earlier research of Jones and Wallace (1994), Wallace and Kovatcheva (1998) and Irwin (1995) rejected linear

trajectories, instead suggesting the emergence of new pathways into adulthood in late modernity. Transitional scholarship, France and Roberts argue, "does not assume some sort of vacuum in which ahistorical changes occur" (France and Roberts 2015:219). Rather, this work has directed valuable attention to the role of culture, politics, and economy (e.g. MacDonald and Marsh 2005, McDowell 2003, Nayak 2006), accepting the necessity of generational contrast in revealing interdependencies between biographical and historical change (Roberts 2007). As such, they contend that "a wide range of work has been developing in the field that aims to be constructionist, and holistic in its understanding of context that is building upon young people's subjectivities" (France and Roberts 2015:227, see also France et al. 2012). This convergence of transitional and social generational approaches around the recognition of "youth" as a social construction acknowledges the role played by ecological processes as well as broader meanings and discourses in particular societal contexts (France et al. 2012). A crucial geographical contribution to these theorizations has been to foreground the embeddedness of these social constructions within scalar processes and relations. Ruddick (2003), in her discussion of the relationship between globalization and the politics of aging, explores how social formations at a variety of scales are being included in, or excluded from, the contemporary "global system". She argues that modern notions of "youth" and "childhood" that became hegemonic in the West over the past century are being exported to non-Western contexts "in which resources to adequately reproduce these forms are sadly lacking" (Ruddick, 2003:334).

Thinking more broadly, geographers have been and continue to be particularly active in the study of youth transitions (e.g. Hopkins et al. 2015, Punch 2015, Smith et al. 2014, Tse and Waters 2013, Butcher and Wilton 2008). In developing theorizations of young people's lives, studies have directed attention to several key interrelated spatial (e.g. Horton and Kraftl 2006, Ansell and van Blerk 2007, McKendrick 2000, Holloway and Valentine 2000, Matthews and Limb 1999) and temporal (e.g. Hardgrove et al. 2015a, Ansell et al. 2014, Worth 2009, Langevang and Gough 2008) aspects. My approach toward theorizing young people aligns with notions of "transition" as "a general, overarching concept; a metaphor that does not presume a particular sort of content, direction or length at the level of individual experience" (MacDonald and Marsh 2005:36, see also Punch 2014). Rather than dismissing the idea of transitions as no longer relevant, this view embraces the fragmented, complex, and contested nature of youth transitions (see Wyn et al. 2011), instead making the case for developing new theoretical options that "help explain the dynamic process of growing up, including personal motivations, the fluid experience of time, and perceived constraints to future success" (Worth 2009:1051).

One particular stand of theoretical and empirical work on youth transitions focuses on better understanding the social relationships significant within young people's everyday lives and is particularly pertinent to a theorization of young lives in Gujarat. Punch (2014) uses the notion of negotiated and constrained interdependencies within and across the generations as a way of conceptualizing youth transitions. She argues that relations of interdependence between young people and their families are not only constrained as a result of their limited

socioeconomic opportunities, but are also negotiated both within and across generations as well as time and space. Moreover, Langevang (2008), researching in Ghana, highlights the importance of the social networks young people use in coping with a precarious social and economic context. In illustrating youth as "both a shifting social position and a fluid process" (Langevang 2008:2046) she supports those who argue for the study of young lives as they unfold in practice and in context (see Christiansen et al. 2006, Dalsgaard et al. 2008). Taken collectively this body of literature underscores the significance of the prominent social relationships in the everyday lives of young people as they move through the life course (see also Morrow 2013, Huijsmans 2012), supporting broader calls for relational geographies of age. I seek to extend this approach through reflecting on how young people negotiate these prominent social relationships as they move across space, and the extent to which these interactions lead them to reproduce, transform, and undermine socially constructed ideas about age and maturity.

## Age and Generational Relations

There is considerable theoretical debate over the ways in which geographers approach the study of age in geography and it has been argued that research has developed in a highly compartmentalized fashion (Vanderbeck and Worth 2015, Hopkins and Pain 2007, Vanderbeck 2007). Scholars have challenged the disproportionate focus on the socio-chronological margins, reflected in the emergence of strong sub-disciplinary concerns regarding "old age" (e.g. Tarrant 2010, Pain et al. 2000) and "childhood" (Vanderbeck 2007, Valentine 2003). Hopkins and Pain (2007) argue that "geographers have still to break out of the

tradition of fetishizing the margins and ignoring the centre" (2007:287). Instead they call for more relational approach wherein geographies of children and young people are located within broader geographies of age. Citing a breadth of research primarily around childhood and youth (e.g. Holloway and Valentine 2000, Wyn and White 1997), they look to question the "situated, fluid and contested nature of age" (Hopkins and Pain 2007:287) more broadly.

Understanding the social construction of adulthood can contribute to the nature of how youth is constructed and performed as a transitionary stage (see also Skelton 2002, Evans 2008). In this view, Hopkins and Pain (2007:288) note how space and place gain significance:

> People have different access to and experiences of places on the grounds of their age, and spaces associated with certain age groups influence who uses them and how. Further, people actively create and resist particular age identities through their use of space and place.

In seeking to advance a spatially sensitive approach Hopkins and Pain suggest the concept of intergenerationality, which refers to the relations and interactions between generational groups. Intergenerationality, they contend, assumes that social identities are dynamically constituted between different age groups or generations. In this view individuals' movements across space becomes significant in defining the nature of their interactions with particular generational groups. Other geographers of young people have made similar calls (e.g. Vanderbeck and Worth 2015, Richardson 2015, Valentine 2003, Tucker 2003). Skelton (2007), for example, notes the potential repercussions of an analytical separation of children from the intergenerational networks of which they are a part. Such networks, she

argues, “are often part of complex reciprocal relations that are invaluable at times of crisis or insecurity” (2007:174). These theoretical reflections have far-reaching methodological implications for the manner in which research with young people is conducted.

Such calls have attracted criticisms, in particular from cultural geographers adopting a “non-representational” theoretical position (see debate between Horton and Kraftl (2008) and Hopkins and Pain (2007, 2008)). John Horton and Peter Kraftl (2008) argue that whilst “childhood”, “youth” and “old age” might be constituted in relation to other ideas they constitute powerful discourses regardless of their relationality, and that these discourses exceed age and identity. Hopkins and Pain (2008) refute this argument, noting how scholarship across the social sciences (e.g. Costanzo and Hoy 2007, Vanderbeck 2007, Walker 1996) has emphasized that intergenerationality, in a similar way to “childhood”, represents a “point of articulation for social practice, policymaking, expert knowledge and mass-mediated representations” (Horton and Kraftl 2008:284). Age and ageism, they argue, remain far more important to social and spatial life than has been acknowledged.

Horton and Kraftl also query the extent to which the concept of intergenerationality can *explain* social geographies. Generational differences, they argue, “can be ascribed to much more powerful, cross-cutting differences in attitude, education, assumption, morality, experience (themselves intersecting with gender, class, ethnicity, etc.) which evade any loose correspondence with a particular ‘generation’ in whatever sense” (Horton and Kraftl 2008:285). Hopkins

and Pain challenge this assertion that generational differences are always reducible to a checklist of other social categories. They argue that, whilst "there are times and places when intergenerationality might not figure at all in explaining particular aspects of people's lives" (2008:290), there are places and times when it figures powerfully. Intergenerationality, they argue, "is every bit as contested a concept as childhood although, interestingly, it does not have as much popular currency or attract the same level of academic critique" (Hopkins and Pain 2007:289). Geographers, they contend, are well placed to unpack the complexities and implications of intergenerationality and its usefulness in critically examining the lived experiences of young people.

More recent geographic work reflects this growing interest in the concept of intergenerationality (e.g. Tarrant 2010, Valentine et al. 2012, Mitchell and Elwood 2013), with several scholars paying particular attention to spatial aspects (e.g. Cook and Waite 2015, Vanderbeck 2007). In their edited collection titled *Intergenerational Space,* Vanderbeck and Worth (2015) advocate spaces and places as "not merely static arenas in which relationships between people transpire; rather, they are both constituted by and constitutive of social relations including relations of age and generation" (2015:1). Hopkins and colleagues (2011), studying the intergenerational transmission of religiosity among young Scottish Christians, explore the diverse influences on young people across space, and at different scales. Their work illustrates the range of social relationships significant in the transmission of religious identities among young people, particularly the ways in which "intergenerationalities change across space and across time and more than one of these sets of relationships may be being negotiated at any one

time" (2011:325). Yet what remains under-examined within this literature is how space both facilitates and constrains generational relations; as Vanderbeck (2007) notes, important questions remain concerning the sustained impacts of both intra- and inter-familial generational relations on young people's subjectivities.

This thesis makes a critical contribution to developing a spatial theorization of generational relations. Developing this contribution is particularly significant in the study of young people given that the social relations influential to their everyday lives beyond the home tend to be located close by in schools, colleges, and sites of leisure (see Hopkins 2015:762). Rather than prolonged encounters, young people find themselves moving through and negotiating multiple spaces in their everyday lives. Thus, paying analytical attention to the specific nature of social relations being sustained across space and time enables a more accurate idea of the dynamics of young people's construction and performance of identities.

Each of the articles presented examines the specific nature of these social relations across space and time, and at different scales, whilst engaging with a more specific set of debates within social-scientific studies of youth. The article "The Business of Friendship", for example, examines the ways in which rural young men negotiate multiple and intersecting identities within and beyond the family space following their graduation from college and subsequent return to their natal homes. Highlighting the analytical value of focusing on non-kin forms of sociality such as everyday friendship, the article highlights the ways in which extra-familial intragenerational relationships emerge as crucial in enabling male youth to meet normative ideas about age and maturity, and exclusionary ideas about caste and

religion, circulating among kin and caste community. Simultaneously, the article emphasizes how the highly exclusionary nature of everyday friendship serves to pacify older generations' notions of caste- and religious-based differences, allowing young men to strategically engage with a middle class cultural discourse circulating more broadly at the regional level in India.

In "Parents, Permission, and Possibility" I examine young women's movements across space as they migrate to metropolitan Gujarat in pursuit of higher education. A fresh set of social encounters within the new spaces of the hostel, college campus, and the wider city exposes young women to alternative post-educational futures and new potential occupational trajectories. The article focuses on how young women's higher education facilitates and constrains generational contact, and the extent to which this impacts upon their conceptions of the future. Furthermore, "College for the village kids" marks an empirical return back to the village context in order to examine the impacts of rural private secondary schooling on the nature of young women and men's everyday mobility practices. It interrogates the co-implication of age-identity and mobility as young people move through, and beyond, the village space.

Calls for further research into generational relations from scholars such as Hopkins and Pain (2007), Vanderbeck and Worth (2015), and Skelton (2002) bespeak recent feminist critiques directed at the limits of the notion of the individual based on bounded, neoliberal subjecthood and of the subsequent conceptualizations of independence, agency, and responsibility particularly evident when considering young people (see McDowell 2007, Ruddick 2006).

**Identity and Intersectionality**

The move to situate young people within broader social relations is also entwined with recent calls to consider "the ways in which young people's lives are structured according to a range of (embodied) differences (age, gender, class, race/ethnicity, (dis)ability, etc.)" (Evans 2008:1676). Specifically, feminist geographers have adopted the concept of intersectionality: "the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations" (McCall 2005:1771, see also Romani 2015, McDowell 2008, Valentine 2007). Whilst this approach theorizes identities as diverse and complex, and as spatially contingent (see McCall 2005), scholars have stressed definitional discrepancies. Valentine (2007), drawing on the work of Crenshaw (1991), cites Minow's (1997) definition of intersectionality as "the way in which any particular individual stands at the crossroads of multiple groups" (1997:38). Yet, as McDowell (2008) notes, despite rejecting the notion of identity as discrete and fixed, Valentine's conceptualization becomes problematic when discussing race, class, and gender as different social structures that are experienced simultaneously by individuals (2008:492).

A central discomfort within theorizations of dimensions of social difference rests in the extent to which they accept the rejection of analytically distinct categories, or the extent to which they "at least insist that identity and analytical categories are inseparable" (McDowell 2008:501). From the perspective of post-structural theories of the subject, a focus on multiple identities is not enough; identity politics has been criticized for its assumed stability of identities. Recognizing this, McCall

(2005) outlines three approaches in her attempt to address the demand for complexity: anticategorical, intercategorical, and intracategorical. Each differs in how they understand and use analytical categories to explore the complexity of intersectionality in social life. Anticategorical complexity considers social life as too irreducibly complex to construct fixed categories. In this view, categories constitute simplifying social fictions that create inequalities in the process of constructing differences. In contrast, intercategorical complexity accepts existing analytical categories and encourages their usage in order to document relationships of inequality "along multiple and conflicting dimensions" (McCall 2005:1773).

Intracategorical complexity lies somewhere in the middle of this conceptual spectrum, interrogating the boundary-making and boundary-defining prices itself, whilst acknowledging "the stable and even durable relationships that social categories represent at any given point in time, though it also maintains a critical stance toward categories" (McCall 2005:1774). Citing Dill (2002), McCall (2005) notes how scholars working in this approach tend to focus on social groups at neglected points of intersection; "people whose identity crosses the boundaries of traditionally constructed groups" (Dill 2002:5). However, what is rather unclear, McDowell (2008) contends, is the extent to which each of these different positions is methodologically and philosophically discrete. Different dimensions of identity formation and bases of inequality interact in specific ways depending on the context. The key difference rests in the scale at which analysis takes place and the focus within or between group difference as the departure point. She suggests that both inter- and intra-categorical approaches lead to much the same conclusions

and add to our understanding of inequality despite their different sets of assumptions regarding the basis of identities and, as such, advocates for a type of theoretical promiscuity.

Scholarship on youth and age, Hopkins and Pain (2007) argue, could benefit from adopting an intersectional approach toward understanding the ways in which age is lived out and encountered through the lens of different markers of social difference. A series of geographical studies have highlighted the possibility of advancing an intersectional approach toward the study of youth (e.g. Hopkins et al. 2015, Hopkins et al. 2011, McDowell 2003, Dwyer 1999). Romani's (2015) research in eastern India, for example, employs an intersectional framework to examine the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as a cultural and political force in shaping the gendered and classed subjectivities of young women growing up in "red-light areas". Drawing on ethnographic data she highlights how the intersections of class, caste, ethnicity, and sexuality all combine to shape young women's ability to harness NGO cultural resources. Her attention to young women at the intersections of poverty and other social marginalities reveals "the differentiated experiences of subalternity as well as NGOization" (Romani 2015:14).

This thesis undertakes an intracategorical analysis in order to examine the situated nature of young people's lives and the dynamic processes through which identities are constructed; it "starts with complexity and works its way towards unravelling the implications" (McDowell 2008:503). In conceptualizing markers of social identity such as caste, class, gender, and age, I acknowledge both the

durability that these social categories represent whilst, in the case of age and class identity in particular, interrogating the boundary-defining processes by which these identities are constituted. Hopkins and Pain (2007), in their call for relational geographies of age, direct attention to the significance of space and place to intersectional and intergenerational experiences of age. The articles in this thesis endorse this spatially-sensitive approach toward an intersectional analysis. In particular, "The Business of Friendship", "Parents, Permission, and Possibility", and "College for the village kids" each interrogate how young people construct their identities variably across space. In doing so I foreground the heterogeneity of marginalized young women's and men's construction and performance of identity, reflecting on how they conceive of social identities, and the ways in which these are reproduced, undermined, and transformed through everyday social practices.

Methodologically, in undertaking an ethnography of the everyday life within a case study village my research approach aligns with a longstanding tradition of social-scientific research. It accords with feminist scholars interested in intersectionality that have drawn upon qualitative case study methods to identify groups at the intersection of multiple categories, before proceeding to interrogate the differences in lived experiences embodied in that location (e.g. Romani 2015, McDowell 2003, Dwyer 1999). As described in detail in Chapter Four, the early months of my fieldwork were loose and exploratory, not researching among any one particular category but very much seeking to embed myself within the complexities of social life in order to reveal diversity, variation, and heterogeneity (Ragin 2000). Following this I embarked upon a more focused analysis of how normative social identities were constructed and performed.

**Summary**

In this chapter I have introduced a broad body of theoretical social scientific - and specifically geographic - literature around space, time, age, youth, and identity, which I use to study the everyday lives of rural youth in Gujarat. I have placed an intentional emphasis on highlighting how these strands of theoretical work are united by relationalism. A relational theoretical perspective in this context advocates dissolving the boundaries between objects and space, rejecting forms of spatial totality. Instead, it advocates a conceptualization wherein space and objects are productive of one another. I hold that a relational perspective is useful for the study of young men and women's everyday lives in rural Gujarat. It serves to address an empirical imbalance in current scholarship whereby young people are often studied spatially either "on campus" in metropolitan India, or in "the village" across rural regions. Appreciating formal education as a temporally-bound duration, a relational approach toward understanding the social relations significant in young people's lives necessitates a multi-sited methodological approach that traces their physical movements across space whilst unpacking the micropolitics of their everyday lives.

Relational thinking is not without its critiques. Jones (2009), for example, queries the extent to which relationally constructed space matters. He argues that, despite the multiple potentials of space flagged in relational thinking, factors can constrain and structure space. One of his primary critiques is that it "implies openness that often belies the lived-experience of many" (Jones 2009:493). This view accords with Cochrane and Arredondo (2005, cited in Jones 2009) who suggest a potential

lapsing into spatial voluntarism whereby contextual forces characteristic of advanced capitalism (such as class, race, and gender) are disregarded. I argue that a conscious engagement with the concept of intersectionality serves, in part, to pacify these concerns. Intersectional approaches that seek to understand the (re)production of social difference draw on post-structural theories of identity formation (see McDowell 2008). Such approaches are critical of notions of individual as autonomous, coherent and unitary, instead arguing for individuals as both constituting and constitutive of social relations. In this sense, the intracategorical approach toward understanding intersectionality outlined in this chapter is conducive to a relational approach in that it demands a critical examination of the processes and social relations that both produce and reinforce social categories.

The following chapter introduces the context for my empirical research in the state of Gujarat. As the chapter demonstrates, young people in rural Gujarat are growing up in a social, cultural, economic, and political context that varies dramatically from that of older generations. Reflecting on how these changes manifest in differing sets of social and cultural expectations is central to understanding how young men and women undergo a dynamic process of performing identity as they move through space.

# Chapter 3.

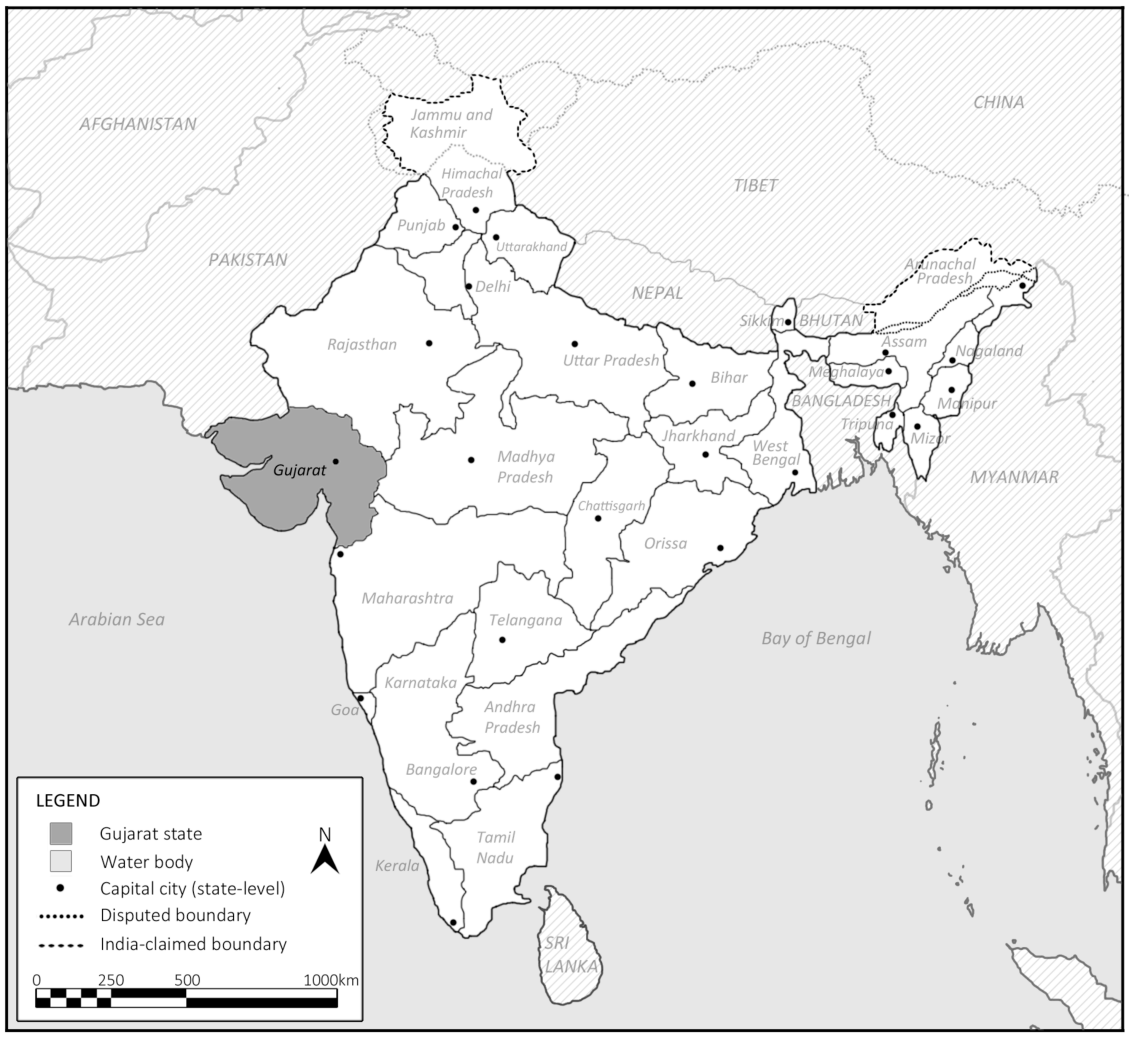
## CONTEXT: LOCATING YOUNG LIVES IN CONTEMPORARY GUJARAT

### Introduction

India is bounded by the Indian Ocean to the south, the Arabian Sea to the southwest, and the Bay of Bengal to the southeast (see Map 3.1). It shares land borders with Pakistan to the west; China, Bhutan, and Nepal to the north-east; and Myanmar and Bangladesh to the east. The most recent Census of India - conducted in 2011 by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India - holds the population at a little over 1.2 billion: the world's second largest after China. Whilst for the first time since Independence the overall growth rate of the population has declined sharply, close to 70 *per cent* of the Indian population still lives rurally (Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India 2011c).

Contemporary India is a federal republic constituting 29 states and 7 union territories. The country, approaching its seventieth year of Independence, has remained a democracy with civil liberties and an active Supreme Court, yet is simultaneously marred by crises of poverty and pervasive caste- and religious-based violence, as well as unresolved territorial disputes with Pakistan and China (Metcalf and Metcalf 2006). This chapter outlines the contemporary Gujarati context that forms the immediate backdrop for this thesis. After a cursory overview of post-Independence Gujarat, I look at Gujarat's political trajectory in the latter half of the 20th century. I then direct attention more specifically on the distinct "Gujarat model" of development that became the driving force for the then state Chief Minister (and now Indian Prime Minister) Narendra Modi in his

political campaign leading up to the 2014 Indian General Election. A focus on Gujarati politics and development is closely entwined with notions of social and religious polarisation, which I discuss with reference to inter-communal tensions, Hindu nationalism, and educational provision. Gujarat offers a compelling case study for my research. Given Modi's campaign pledge to replicate Gujarat's alleged successes more widely across India, a Gujarati case study provides a timely analysis of how Modi's established and implemented policies manifest at the scale of the everyday.

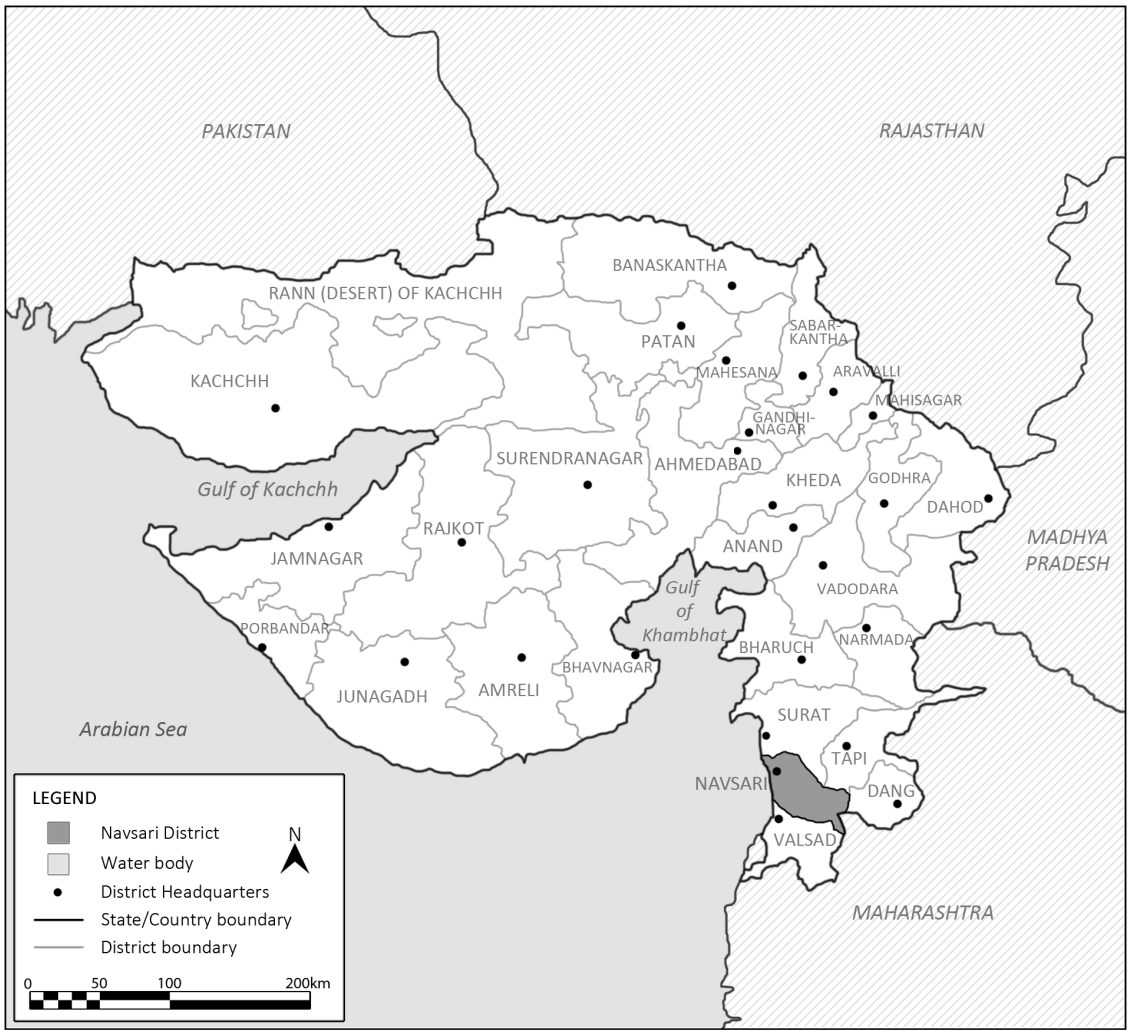



**Map 3.1** Map of South Asia detailing Indian states, *author's own*

**Gujarat: Geography and Economy**

Following the partition of India in 1947, the former princely states of Gujarat were agglomerated into three states; Saurashtra, Kutch, and Bombay. In 1956 Kutch and Saurashtra were absorbed into Bombay along linguistic lines under the States Reorganisation Act. In May 1960 Bombay was split, once more along linguistic lines in accordance with its Gujarati and Marathi speaking populations (Guha 2011), creating the two present-day states of Gujarat and Maharashtra (see Map 3.2).

Gujarat's coastline constitutes one quarter of India's coastline, and has a rich mercantile history. Its location within Asia and its ports along the northern centre of the Indian Ocean placed it at the intersection of a number of trading systems. At the scale of the national, its location between the maritime routes of the Indian Ocean and the drier plains of northern India proved propitious to Gujarati merchants. Tambs-Lyche (2010) outlines two poles of Gujarati culture, the mercantile and the martial, in his discussion of the key differences between the fertile areas on the coast of central and southern Gujarat and plains along the Sabarmati and Mahi rivers on one hand, and the various peripheries including the less fertile regions of Saurashtra, Kutch, and North Gujarat on the other. This historical "centre-periphery" dualism, he argues, embodies contrasting systems of power with associated differences in their caste hierarchies and was a catalyst for the Rajput-Koli and Patidar-Kanbi caste blocks which compete for political and cultural influence in contemporary Gujarat (for a comprehensive history see Tambs-Lyche and Sud 2016).




**Map 3.2** Map of Gujarat State detailing individual districts, neighbouring states, and Pakistan border, *author's own*

Gujarat's economy is founded primarily upon agricultural and industrial production and trade. The state's total geographical area is 19.6 million hectares. 48 *per cent* of this is cultivated land, of which just under 40 *per cent* is irrigated (Government of Gujarat 2012). Two thirds of the Gujarati population is engaged in and makes a living from agriculture (Government of Gujarat 2012). In 2011, cultivators of, and labourers on, agricultural land constituted 50 *per cent* of all recorded workers in the state (Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India 2011c). The primary crops grown across the state include wheat, pearl millet, rice, maize, groundnut, cotton, and sugarcane. Modernizing agriculture was

prioritized in India from the mid-1960s onwards following national food shortages, which in turn stimulated the New Agricultural Strategy that underpinned the Green Revolution. In Gujarat, dam building took place across the 1960s and 1970s for this purpose. Across rural Gujarat, animal husbandry and dairying also play significant roles, with primary livestock raised including buffalo, cattle, sheep, goats, and chickens. Dairying is particularly significant; Gujarat is India's largest processor of milk, functioning on a cooperative basis across the state with over 3.6 million members. One such example is the Amul milk co-operative, whose products are distributed and recognized across the country.

As one of India's most industrialized states Gujarat operates a diverse range of industries. In post-Independence India, between the 1960s and 1990s, the state made rapid progress in establishing itself across various industrial sectors such as textiles, general and electrical engineering, chemicals, petrochemicals, drugs and pharmaceuticals, and jewellery. In the post-liberalization period spanning from the mid 1990s until the early 2000s Gujarat's State Gross Domestic Product (SGDP) rose at an average growth rate of 14 *per cent* per annum ("Who really developed Gujarat, when and how much - trends in economic growth" 2012). The Gujarat government has a longstanding record of co-operation between capitalists, politicians, and bureaucrats (Jaffrelot 2015) evidenced recently, for example, in the lucrative subsidies and secrecy around tax concessions and land prices offered to Tata, the Indian multinational conglomerate holding company, in order to locate its Nano manufacturing plant in the state (see Hensman 2014, Sud 2008).

As Sud (2014) notes, the Gujarat state is a leading proponent of "Brand Gujarat"; inviting private investment, providing concessions, and participating in a race to the bottom with other Indian and international competitor regions. The biennial "Vibrant Gujarat" summit held by the Government of Gujarat brings together investors, corporations, and policymakers in order to promote business opportunities across the state. In January 2015 I was living for several weeks in central Ahmedabad during the build up to the 7th Vibrant Gujarat Summit, which was being anticipated across the city with the same level of fervor as a major Hindu festival. In taking this approach the state has been instrumental in allying with and actively pushing the biggest winners of liberalization. As per the case of India as a whole, this trend has been termed "business-friendly" rather than a "market-friendly" liberalization (see Kohli 2006, Rodrik and Subramanian 2004). This momentum gained considerable traction under the political leadership of Narendra Modi, who was Chief Minister of Gujarat for four terms spanning 2001 to 2014.

**Caste, Politics, and Hindutva**

Politics in contemporary Gujarat is characterized by centralized decision-making and the systematic exclusion of historically, socially, and economically marginalized groups. It is closely entwined with caste in India, which remains "the principal category around which any discussion of social identity traditionally takes place" (Froerer 2010:134), as well as Hindutva, the ideology that supports Hindu Nationalism. This section traces Gujarat's political history from the years immediately after Indian Independence in 1947 up until the present day. Focusing

on the emergence of India's two major political parties, the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), I highlight the intersection of politics with caste, religious nationalism, education, and employment in Gujarat. Understanding this intersection forms the backdrop for the sections that explore Gujarat's development model and its implications for the education and employment opportunities for young men and women from socioeconomically marginalized populations.

Following Indian Independence in 1947, the Congress party was unchallenged for a decade and a half. In Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Gujarat had generated two of India's post-Independence leaders, and they built a party oriented around principles of pragmatism, discipline, and social work (see Ludden 1996). Congress' pre-eminence during these years saw it win 144 out of 156 seats in mainland Gujarat and Saurashtra combined in 1952, 100 out of 132 in 1957, and 112 out of 154 in 1962 (see Sud 2012). At the national level, Congress had been held together by the united aim of achieving independence. The party finally split in 1969 following a series of internal discrepancies. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, set up a rival organization called Congress (R). With its political platform based on the nationalization of banks, secularism, and socialism, and the removal of poverty, Indira Gandhi's Congress could only appeal for support to dissidents, lower and backward castes, and religious minorities (B.Chandra 2000). The 1972 elections saw an oppositional alliance between several parties including the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS), which represented the Hindu Right. Notwithstanding these efforts, Indira Gandhi reached out to the poor

via her *garibi hatão* (remove poverty) slogan, receiving strong favour from the electorate once more.

Thus, by the early 1970s, Gujarati politics had come to reflect the aspirations for socio-political mobility of several castes. During this time the Patidars, an economically prosperous Forward Caste (FC) who controlled many district-level Congress institutions and accounted for 12 *per cent* of the population, also came to the fore as significant forerunners in Gujarati politics. In an attempt to stabilize the turbulent political climate of the early 1970s, Indira Gandhi assented to the KHAM (Kshatriya-Harijan-Adivasi-Muslim) political electoral formula created by 1970s Congress. This was her attempt to assemble a winning coalition of the most populous and backward groups of the Gujarati population, it also sought to include the socially and economically backward "Other Backward Classes" as identified by the 1976 Report of the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Commission (Bakshi 1976). The 1980s witnessed increasing instances of caste-based violence incited against SCs in response to reservations in postgraduate government colleges (see Shani 2007:65). Despite this, in 1985 Congress announced 28 *per cent* reservations for OBCs, which in turn engendered further protests against SCs and OBCs. This time protests were backed by the Hindu Right, with violence directed increasingly at Gujarat's Muslims. 220 people were killed, coupled with severe damage to Muslim homes and businesses.

In the late 1980s the right-wing BJP were gathering strength, attempting to undermine KHAM with alternative identity-based coalitions. They engaged in an explicit pursuit of appealing to Gujarat's Hindu population, the state's biggest

ethnic coalition. The close of the decade saw KHAM and other inter-religious coalitions waning, while Hindutva, the ideology that supports Hindu nationalism, was on the rise. Hindu upper castes, feeling alienated from the Congress, supported the rising BJP and Janata Dal. These two parties also reached out to former members of KHAM which, whilst at its peak, had benefitted primarily elites within these groups explaining intra-caste splits in political allegiance during proceeding elections. These shifting political planes crystallized toward the end of the decade when the BJP came to power for the first time in the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation in 1987.

The 1990s witnessed the BJP steadily gain ground in Gujarat, and was a period marked by a continuation of caste and religious violence. In 1990 India's upper caste urban youth instigated nationwide protests against the national government's move to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendations for introducing reservations in centrally-funded higher education institutes and central government employment for OBCs (the Bakshi commission made similar recommendations for state governments). The BJP's core support base constituted a substantial proportion of the anti-Mandal agitation. At the same time, the BJP continued to pursue its political agenda along powerful Hindutva lines, focusing its constituency's attention from internal caste divisions to external Hindu-Muslim ones via popularizing the cause of the Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya, which revolved around generating religious tension around the medieval construction of the Babri Mosque (*masjid*) on the alleged birthplace of the Hindu Lord Ram. The BJP almost doubled its tally of seats between 1990 and 1995.

Since 1998, the BJP has held power continuously in the state, maintaining its position through an active programme of "aggressive economic growth coupled with Hindu nationalist jingoism and a violent 'othering' of Muslims and Christians" (Sud 2012:8). Narendra Modi, the current Prime Minister of India, began his political career as a member of the RSS. Between 2001 and 2014 Modi held office for four terms in Gujarat, yet his leadership has not gone unquestioned. During this time he has been criticized by opposition parties at the national level, and by international observers and civil society organisations for his government's role in actively endorsing communal violence. Perhaps the most publicized and remembered instance arose in 2002 where, under controversial circumstances, a passenger train travelling from Ayodhya to Ahmedabad caught fire. 59 Hindu pilgrims burned to death, triggering a three-day period of inter-communal violence across the state (see Spodek 2010).

The consistent political success of the BJP over the last two decades is widely acknowledged as the product of a Hindutva wave that the BJP has ridden to power (Shani 2007). This was the result of the decades-old, organized efforts of the RSS, the shift in FC and OBC, and middle-class support away from the Congress in the KHAM years, and the building of a viable pan-Hindu alternative aided by mass Hindu nationalist mobilization. To this, Sud (2012:34) argues, we can add a critical point about political economy and cultural change. Scholars have seen little coincidence in the ascendance of Hindu nationalism at the same time as the opening up of the Indian economy to the forces of liberalization and globalization (Basu 1996, Corbridge and Harriss 2000). In a time of economic change, the BJP's

core constituency has sought a cultural roundedness in an essentialized form of religion and an exaggerated, often violent distrust of the religious "other".

The way in which politics, caste, education, and employment intersect in the everyday lives of rural youth in contemporary Gujarat is neatly articulated through recent protests across the state that saw communities congregate around caste-identities as they sought to lay claim to quota-based affirmative action. Most notably, from July 2015 onwards young men from the Patidar caste community – a Hindu Forward Caste whose economic prosperity has its roots in agriculture - began holding public agitations across the state. Led by Hardik Patel, a 23 year old young man from a village in central Gujarat, they were demanding inclusion in the OBC category in order to gain access to reservations in public sector employment and higher education (for a short journalistic piece I wrote at the time see "Hardik Patel claims to speak for 18 million Patels. Does he, really?" 2015). Central to their argument was that Patidars must pay high fees to attend private colleges because government-aided institutions have stagnated over time, coupled with an increase in the number of self-financed colleges.

Rather ironically, the Patidars were the first community in India to launch anti-reservation movements against the Dalits and Adivasis, and later against Gujarat's OBCs in 1981 and 1985. They now find themselves campaigning for inclusion in OBC status in order to secure their share of government jobs and places in government colleges. Writing on the issue in *The Indian Express*, Shah notes how Gujarat's youth from poorer backgrounds seek difficulty in securing urban employment, and find themselves unable to attain their "dream of joining the

urban middle class" (see "The Shrinking, The Rage" 2015). This, he argues, is a result of two key issues: the *quality* of available employment does not meet the expectations of young people, and employment growth in the informal sector provides no social *security* as even in the formal sector employment is commonly casual or contractual - "insecurity haunts most [of the] young" (*ibid.*). The next section examines Gujarat's growth trajectory over the last two decades, paying particular attention to notions of social polarization the ways in which Gujarat's politics and development model manifests in the everyday lives of marginalized populations.

**Growth without development? The "Gujarat" model**

Having risen through the ranks of the RSS rather than an electoral democracy, Modi has few supporters to carry with him while making economic decisions. As Sud (2012:40) notes, "with no experience of government before 2001, he has little compunction about passing orders quite heedless of rules or procedures". His style of functioning may be far from democratic but he still operates in a procedurally democratic polity. In the sphere of policy he has pushed rather than initiated infrastructure-led growth, economic alliances with key businesses, and the race to project Gujarat as the number one liberalizing state. As per its politics, the state's development trajectory is entwined with relations of caste and class, and serves to perpetuate enduring ties between the state and dominant groups vis-à-vis the corporate sector, which is evidenced statistically by its successively high growth rates. As a consequence Gujarat's poor factions, including SCs, STs, and various OBC communities, have been a residual category throughout. This section focuses

on Gujarat's growth trajectory during Modi's leadership, and considers its implications for the precarious everyday lives of young men and women from low caste and lower class backgrounds.

In the years immediately preceding Modi's appointment Gujarat's annual growth rate was at 7.41 *per cent*, notably higher than second placing Maharashtra's 6.39 *per cent* (see Ranade and Sharma 2012). However, and as Table 3.1 illustrates, Gujarat's growth gained considerable traction during the decade spanning Modi's leadership, demonstrated by high growth across every sector. Whilst individual states performed highly in certain sectors, these were mostly smaller states where slight growth resulted in a large percentage change ("Gujarat's Growth for Growth's Sake" 2014).

| | Percentage Change between 2001-02 and 2011-12 | Rank among 29 States |
|---|---|---|
| Agriculture | 100.36 | 4 |
| Industry | 210.34 | 5 |
| Manufacturing | 249.94 | 5 |
| Services | 174.95 | 4 |
| Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) | 166.89 | 3 |

**Table 3.1** Growth performance in terms of the percentage increase in output (I.e. Value added) in different sectors and aggregate Net State Domestic Product (NSDP), 2001-02 to 2011-12, *Kotwal and Chaudhuri (2014)*

Yet in Gujarat's case, what has long been a point of heated debate within political and academic circles alike has been the seeming incongruity between economic growth and human development, where "development" can be defined as "an improved quality of life for people" (Jaffrelot 2015:821). Hirway and Shah (2011),

focusing on labour and employment, argue that the state's rapid growth was not reflected in an equitable distribution of labour; according to the National Sample Survey of 2011 Gujarat has some of the lowest average daily wages for casual labourers in both urban and rural areas and is consistently outperformed by states considered "backward" such as Bihar, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh (see Rajan 2009). This translates across into poor performances in poverty reduction and human development; casual labour is the mainstay among SCs, STs, and numerous OBC communities (see also Hirway et al. 2014, but see Dholakia and Sapre (2011) for a rebuttal). In a collection of essays on the trajectory of development in Gujarat edited by Sood (2012), scholars analyse official data in order to argue that goals around sustainable livelihoods, health, and access to education have been disregarded in favour of "growth in the high-speed lane" that privileges a select few whilst exacerbating social inequalities.

These debates reached a peak in the build up to the 2014 Indian General Election held to constitute the 16th Lok Sabha. Modi, who became the BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate, adopted the "Gujarat model" as one of the main mantra's of his national campaign ("How did Gujarat Emerge as a Model For Development?" 2011), placing Gujarat's credentials under the spotlight in national media (e.g. Ghatak and Roy 2014, Panagariya and Mukim 2014). In Modi's words, the model embodied "development oriented governance where the people were made active partners and stakeholders in the development journey" ("The Gujarat Model" 2014). In this vein, the state's model of development was depicted as a major success of neoliberal economic policies in ensuring growth and social welfare, and a model that was well placed to revitalize the Indian economy following the 2008

economic crisis. This claim drew attention from statisticians and economists such as Jean Drèze who, writing in *The Hindu*, provided a statistical rebuttal of some of the grander claims made by the Modi campaign at the time (see "The Gujarat Middle" 2014).

Jaffrelot (2015), in his critique of this disjuncture between growth and development, argues that rather than fostering inclusive growth, Gujarat's model engenders inequality and actively cultivates social-political polarization. The primary casualties of this political economy, he argues, are Muslims, SCs, and STs, whose situation compares poorly with levels achieved by some other state governments across India. In addition to the state's failure to enact policies of affirmative action effectively, its misallocation of funds has reinforced the marginalized positions of these demographics. STs and SCs, for example, who represent 17 *per cent* and 7.1 *per cent* of the state's overall population, live rurally and are considered the weakest sections of Gujarati society. For this marginalized demographic, access to land is a significant issue. Despite the state government passing laws such as the 2006 Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers Act (see Perera 2009) which outlined provisions for at least four hectares of forest land for families, it has been slow to allocate these allowances and STs have encountered considerable difficulty in acquiring land. Similarly, the government has come under repeated scrutiny from the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) for failing to ensure that development funds allocated to SCs and STs were in proportion to their populations as per guidelines set out by the Planning Commission (see Table 3.2). Such neglect for marginalized populations translates into poorer literacy levels and higher dropout rates among

SC and ST populations as compared to Forward Castes and Other Backward Classes (see MHRD 2011).

(₹ in crore)

| Year | Outlay | | | Expenditure | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Share of ST (percentage) | Share of SC (percentage) | Total | Share of ST (percentage) | Share of SC (percentage) |
| 2007-08 | 1,216.76 | 133.97 (11.01) | 17.10 (1.41) | 1,140.77 | 126.52 (11.09) | 14.72 (1.29) |
| 2008-09 | 1,468.86 | 206.51 (14.06) | 57.78 (3.93) | 1,393.16 | 202.71 (14.55) | 50.00 (3.59) |
| 2009-10 | 1,821.36 | 239.37 (13.14) | 82.09 (4.51) | 1,732.90 | 247.00 (14.25) | 57.84 (3.34) |
| 2010-11 | 2,125.05 | 270.54 (12.73) | 77.55 (3.65) | 2,030.41 | 269.37 (13.27) | 73.57 (3.62) |
| 2011-12 | 2,414.90 | 398.07 (16.48) | 77.33 (3.20) | 2,208.48 | 275.57 (12.48) | 68.81(3.12) |

**Table 3.2** Disparity between funds allocated for SC and ST development and actual expenditure, 2007-08 to 2011-12, (note: 1 Crore = 10,000,000 INR), *CAG (2013)*

Muslims in Gujarat occupy a specific place, Jaffrelot argues, given the communal violence from which they have repeatedly suffered (2015:826). The Sachar Committee, commissioned by the Government of India to report on the social, economic, and educational conditions of India's Muslim community, identified an underrepresentation of Gujarati Muslims in the manufacturing and organized sector when contrasted against the all-India level - 13 *per cent* in Gujarat compared to the 21 *per cent* India average (see NCAER 2011). Gujarati Muslims were also identified as having a much higher likelihood of being self-employed when contrasted against Hindus living in the state.

Despite this, the Modi government's focus on the middle class and, in particular, what Jaffrelot (2013) terms the "neo-middle class" (those who aspired to join the urban economy), facilitated electoral success. The affinities between the middle class and the Hindu nationalist movement in Gujarat are well articulated by Ashish Nandy who, writing in *The Times of India*, notes how this class "has found in militant religious nationalism a new self-respect and a new virtual identity as a

martial community" ("Blame the Middle Class" 2008). While the BJP is known for its expertise in religious polarization, Jaffrelot contends that this is clearly a case of social polarization in which the ethno-religious identity quest of the middle and neo-middle classes continues to play a role.

**Higher Education, Schooling, and Privatization**

The "minimal state" and, correlatively, business-friendly ethos of the governments of Gujarat can be traced back to the Licence Raj era (see Sinha 2005) and is clearly reflected in the state's education sector. Across India, post-Independence liberalization has been accompanied by reduced spending on higher education (Thachil 2009, Tilak 1999). The National Policy on Education in 1986 brought about the centralized regulation of higher education. Prior to this higher education came under the remit of state governments, whose issue of permits to local power-holders to establish private colleges often led to privatization via patronage at the local level (Krishnan 2014:63). During this time, with few exceptions, India's universities were affiliating institutions on the University of London model. Accordingly, university departments themselves were relatively small, serving the needs of postgraduate students at the master's and doctoral levels, while almost all undergraduate teaching took place in colleges affiliated with the university. Under government policies encouraging the use of private resources at the undergraduate level, a large proportion of the colleges were founded and operated by private managements, albeit with substantial grants-in-aid from the government. However, examinations and curricula content are administered by

the university in order to standardize criteria for success and degrees are awarded by the university.

Higher education has expanded rapidly in Gujarat since Independence, as per elsewhere in India (see Rudolph and Rudolph 1972, Altbach 1974). A first wave of privatization occurred between 1950 and 1970-71. During this time college and university enrolments in Gujarat witnessed an increase of nearly tenfold, accompanied by a growth in private affiliated colleges from 31 to 235 over the same period (Inter-University Board of India 1973). This rapid growth of the private sector in higher education, Jones and Jones (1977) argue, served both political and commercial ends. In the years preceding and immediately following Independence, colleges were founded either by cooperative educational societies or family-dominated private trusts. Managements of these institutions prided themselves on a high quality of educational provision, favoured by small size (Jones and Jones 1977:460). These values were initially reflected in Gujarat University regulations that placed a ceiling on enrolment, which later began to slip into the 1970s owing to financial pressures. This ceiling constrained the enrolments of urban colleges, one consequence of which was an urban surplus of families seeking to invest in higher education. This created "a ready market for entrepreneurs able to found new colleges" (*ibid.*). Thus, rather paradoxically, the concern for quality in education in the decades immediately following Independence contributed to the proliferation of educational institutes and an accompanying decline in the quality of educational provision.

Occurring in parallel with this entrepreneurial approach toward education has been a weakening state expenditure on its education sector. In a 2016 report, a budget report released by the Reserve Bank of India highlights Gujarat's consistently low expenditure. Across decade spanning 2003-4 and 2013-14, the state spent 13.4 *per cent* of its budget on education, compared to a national average of 14.8 *per cent* (Reserve Bank of India 2016). More recent figures for the period 2014-2015 indicate a similarly below-average performance, with Gujarat spending 14.7 *per cent* of its budget compared to the national average of 15.9, ranking twenty-first of all twenty-nine Indian states (Reserve Bank of India 2016). Indeed, of the budget allocated to education, Prakash (2007) notes how the implicit policies pursued by both central and state governments since the 1990s to promote school education at the cost of higher education has "almost put the brakes on the expansion of public institutions" (Prakash 2007:3249). Gujarat's persistently low expenditure on education pairs with a steady increase in the number of private institutions set up in the state. A provisional All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) report for the period 2014-15 released by Central Ministry of Human Resource Development highlights the rate of growth of Gujarat's private institutions, which has been increasing at a rate greater than the national average (see Table 3.3). The state government has actively endorsed this proliferation of private institutes, actively passing legislation such as the Gujarat Private Universities Act 2009 in order to nurture the growth of private educational provision.

| Period 2010-2011 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Private Un-Aided | Private Aided | Total Private | Government | Total | % Private |
| **Gujarat** | 623 | 372 | 995 | 562 | 1557 | 63.9 |
| **All India** | 9735 | 2344 | 12079 | 4420 | 16499 | 73.2 |
| **Period 2014-2015** | | | | | | |
| | Private Un-Aided | Private Aided | Total Private | Government | Total | % Private |
| **Gujarat** | 1058 | 530 | 1588 | 317 | 1905 | 83.4 |
| **All India** | 18012 | 4432 | 22444 | 7062 | 29506 | 76.1 |

**Definitions:**
*"Aided"* = receives government funds for infrastructure development and academic activities. Fees charged to students are in line with those stipulated by government.
*"Un-Aided"* = not in receipt of any financial support from government. No guidance or limits to chargeable fees.

**Table 3.3** Number of private and government colleges in Gujarat and India, 2010-11 and 2014-15, *data collated from MHRD (2013,2015)*

Gujarat's schooling sector has experienced a similar shift toward private delivery. A 2015 report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) set out to appraise the state government's implementation of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, the Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education. The CAG reported that across the year 2013-14 Gujarat had not ensured availability of teaching staff, with 64 government-run schools in the state being run without any teachers at all ("CAG report slams Gujarat govt." 2015). Districts in South Gujarat fared particularly poorly in not maintaining an appropriate Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR). This poor provision of education ties to more broader observations across India wherein scholars have argued that, whilst state governments have in many cases focused their resources on schooling, this development has "largely ignored the quality of provision" (Härmä 2011:350), resulting in families increasingly shirking government-run schools (Srivastava 2006, Kingdon 2005).

Scholars have noted a related rapid and ongoing growth of private schooling across India (Kingdon 2007). In particular, studies have acknowledged the India-wide rise of the "low-fee private" (LFP) school: those whose management, financing, ownership is independent of the state, and whose fees are charged within a range accessible to poorer groups (Srivastava 2013:15). Observations in Gujarat support this broader trend. In 2014 the CAG reported a rapid growth of private-unaided schools over government-run schools in the state. In the five-year period spanning 2008-09 and 2012-13, the number of private-unaided, private-aided, and government-run schools rose by 56 *per cent*, 7.7 *per cent*, and 1.3 *per cent* respectively. This was accompanied by an increase in student enrolment in private-unaided schools of over 80 *per cent*, as compared to a growth of merely 13 *per cent* and 3 *per cent* in private-aided and government-run schools. The CAG (2014) notes how the "[l]ack of all-weather buildings, classrooms, toilets, drinking water, playground, compound walls [and] teachers]" all played a factor in families enrolling their children in private schools ("Children in Gujarat Finding Their Way to Private Schools: CAG" 2014). Importantly, whilst scholars continue to debate the extent to which these schools are "pro-poor" (e.g. Härmä 2011, Kingdon 2007), it has been asserted that LFP schools widen the scope of access for the poor in providing a higher quality education for their children (Tooley and Dixon 2007), while having negligible impact on gender equality in educational attainment. This is reflected in studies that link private schooling to increasing, though still discouragingly low, levels of literacy among SC and ST communities (e.g. Pal and Kingdon 2010).

A closer look at the schooling sector in rural Gujarat reflects a particularly strong surge in both provision and uptake of private education. A 2014 Annual Status of Education Report highlights how, in the years spanning 2006 to 2014, the percentage of children aged 6 to 14 years enrolled in private schools across rural Gujarat grew by over 160 *per cent* compared to an all-India average growth of 64 *per cent* (ASER 2014). This changing landscape of educational provision in Gujarat constitutes a key manifestation of the Gujarat model at the scale of the everyday. As this section has highlighted, development and policies of liberalization trickle down in divergent ways to different segments of Gujarati society. In addition to stark contrasts in literacy levels between FC, OBC, SC, and ST populations, what has emerged as significant in recent years is a growing disjuncture among marginalized populations in terms of educational attainment across generations. Analyzing these changing educational experiences of young men and women provides a key insight into the variability of the Gujarat model.

**Summary**

This chapter has outlined the state-level context for my research, providing an overview of Gujarat's political economy in which my empirical research is located. Gujarat's statistical picture is, at first, rather puzzling. Yet it proves logical from the point of view of the state's elite groups and is consistent with the Hindutva ideology perpetuated by the politically dominant BJP. Climate and the state's geographical location encouraged its early growth in various industrial sectors which, following policies of economic liberalization in the early 1990s, saw an average growth rate in SGDP of 14 *per cent* per annum. While the rise of Net State

Domestic Product has been remarkable over the Modi years spanning 2001 to 2014, many social indicators have been out of step with the state's economic success. It has performed poorly in poverty reduction and human development, topics that remain hotly debated among policymakers and academics.

Despite the disparities between economic growth and human development the Modi government's focus on Gujarat's emerging urban middle classes facilitated electoral success, which neatly illustrates the alliances between the middle class and Hindu nationalist movement (see also "Blame the Middle Class" 2008). The BJP's focus on an emergent urban "neo-middle class" fares well in Gujarat, which registered not only the highest rate of urbanization in the decade spanning 2001 to 2011, but also tends to have a consistently strong voter turnout in urban constituencies (see Jaffrelot 2013). Importantly, the Gujarati government has been accused of actively engendering inequality and cultivating socio-political polarization by way of failing to address this disjuncture between economic growth and human development. Gujarat, Jaffrelot argues, is a case of "growth without development for all" (2013:84). The main casualties, he suggests, are Muslims, SCs, and STs, whose situation compares poorly with levels achieved by some other state governments across India.

The "minimal state" and business-friendly ethos of Gujarat's governments is reflected in its education sector which, since Independence, has been characterized by reduced spending on higher education and an active endorsement of privately managed and operated affiliated colleges. The state's education sector is also reflective of the variability of the Gujarat model, and the ways in which it manifests

differently across Gujarati society. This variability became evident during the early stages of my fieldwork in Gujarat, and spurred my interest in socially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged OBC, SC, and ST communities. As my own observations attest to, this demographic is increasingly prolonging the formal education of male and female offspring (see also ASER 2014), which is both in response to, and as a result of, the rapid growth of both low cost private-unaided secondary schools and colleges across Gujarat. These increases have engendered a wave of first-generation private secondary school students and college-goers from marginalized backgrounds, whose everyday lives, experiences, and aspirations form a stark contrast to that of an older generation of parents who typically lack the same level of formal education. The following chapter introduces the case study for my empirical research and critically appraises the ethnographic methodology I employed throughout the research.



**Photo 4.1** Young, urban middle class college youth celebrate outside BJP Headquarters in Ahmedabad city following Modi's victory in the General Election of May 2014, *author's own*

# Chapter 4. RESEARCH DESIGN

## Unpacking Ethnography: Method and Methodology

"Methodology", Brewer (2010:2) notes, is the broad theoretical and philosophical framework under which fits a series of technical rules, or methods, that define proper procedures. My research approach constitutes an ethnographic methodology, wherein I undertook long-term participant observation of young men and women aged between 16-30 living in a case study village, Kota, in South Gujarat. Ethnographic research and analysis emerges from the interpretive, phenomenological, and hermeneutic traditions within the social sciences. It takes account "of the reflexive and highly variable nature of human existence and seeks to understand the motivations, thinking, and ideas that generate the patterned mosaic of social life" (O'Reilly 2012:16). Ethnography is arguably less exploitative than other methodologies given that it is long-term, engaged, involves careful access, and requires the establishment of long-term reciprocal relationships built on trust and rapport.

In pragmatic terms, ethnography lacks a standard and well-defined meaning (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Several scholars describe it as a style and perspective as opposed to a straightforward means of data collection (e.g. Woollcott 1973). My definition aligns with Brewer (2010), who delineates ethnography as "a style of research that is distinguished by objectives, which are to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given 'field' or setting" (2010:11). In this view, ethnographic work encompasses an array of methods including participant and non-participant observation, semi-structured and

unstructured interviews, collecting documentary material, and focus groups (see Yates 2004:140, Taylor 2002). During the fieldwork period itself I employed semi-structured and unstructured in-depth interviews, participant observation, photographic and audio recordings, and an iterative-inductive approach toward field notes (Glaser and Strauss 1967). In broader terms, ethnography has several unifying features: a focus on everyday contexts, use of a range of sources for data collection, a small-scale focus in order to facilitate in-depth study, and an approach toward data analysis that involves interpretation of meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:3).

My understanding of, and approach toward, ethnography is guided by three outlining principles established during an Ethnographic Portraiture methods training module I undertook during Hilary Term 2014 within the Social Sciences Division at Oxford that was run by Professor David Mills and Dr. Jane Dyson. The first principle considers ethnography as a way of being, seeing, thinking, and writing; it is a manner of "thinking about social research that brings together a range of methods under a shared disposition" (Mills and Morton 2013:4). Taking this stance acknowledges ethnography as an embodied process that permeates all stages of the research process. That is to say, rather than straightforwardly entailing a series of methods during my time spent "in the field", the ethnographic process permeated both my preparations for fieldwork and the subsequent post-fieldwork phases of research. This ties to Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) suggestion that, unlike methods such as questionnaires or observation schedules, our interpretations of what people say and do during ethnographic work are not

built into the data collection process but are instead generated prior to, during, and following research fieldwork itself.

The second principle approaches ethnographic work as being necessarily unsettling. I consider ethnographic work to be unsettling in two ways. Firstly, it is unsettling in the sense of being "unstructured". Hammersley and Atkinson suggest that the process of data collection "does not involve following a fixed and detailed research design specified at the start" (2007:3). A relatively open-ended approach toward fieldwork facilitates an exploratory orientation toward examining some particular area of social life, thus addressing one or more of what Malinowski (1922) termed as "foreshadowed problems". The foreshadowed problems underpinning my fieldwork emerged out of reviewing empirical work pertaining to youth, education, and employment in South Asia, in addition to a broader set of contemporary theoretical debates around social-scientific studies of childhood and youth. Secondly, ethnography is unsettling in the sense of being an "uncomfortable science" (Firth 1951). In this vein the subjective understanding striven for by ethnographers should engender a degree of emotional dislocation. This ties to the third principle, wherein ethnography requires an epistemological and methodological empathy. A central tenet of ethnographic work rests in the need for ethnographers to demonstrate a sensibility to the feelings of another on their own terms; it is "an embodied practice that uses all our senses and emotional sensibilities" (Mills and Morton 2013:5). Moreover there is a need for ethnographers to appreciate a diversity of approaches toward the analytical process, ranging from the grounded theory approach advocated by Glaser and

Strauss (1967) through to more unstructured and cyclical processes utilized by postmodern scholars (Denzin and Lincoln 2008).

Anthropology has been accused of ignoring the power structures within which the discipline was able to take shape (Gell et al. 1994) and a great deal of traditional ethnographic work has been subjected to accusations of "othering" and exoticizing. Thus it is crucial to remain attentive to issues of power, agency, and positionality in both the production and dissemination of knowledge in the study of social relations (see Denzin and Lincoln 2011, O'Reilly 2012). Throughout the course of my fieldwork I remained mindful of interpretivist critiques of positivism, and was influenced by philosophies of interpretevism in my approach toward understanding the daily interactions of informants within the wider cultural context of their everyday lives. In this sense, the immersive experience of participant observation and living among the village community directly lent itself to understanding through co-construction of the social world (see Holy 1984, Charmaz 2006). My epistemological perspective thus considers ethnographic fieldwork as an intersubjective process that entails an interaction of various subjectivities (Rabinow 1977, Geertz 1971, Briggs 1970). It involves being actively situated between powerful systems of meaning, posing questions "at the boundaries of civilisations, cultures, classes, races and genders" (Clifford and Marcus 1986:2). A degree of self-reflexivity on these issues enables researchers to critically consider their own cultural biases and "negotiate various ways of seeing while investigating and 'translating' cultures" (Jacobs-Huey 2002:791).

Notably, these ideas also permeate the analytical and writing process; the last two decades have seen changing styles of ethnographic writing as discussions of ethnographers' own interactions, their relationships formed, and emotional states during time spent in the field become increasingly foregrounded in the ethnographies themselves (see Angrosino 2005). As O'Reilly notes, the "more one tries to remove…the voice of the author, the more authorial he or she becomes in determining how something is portrayed, and the more dishonest the inevitable representation of the 'other'" (2012:172). In this sense throughout my papers I attempt to locate myself within the research process and describe, to some extent, the ways in which my own interactions and relationships with informants impacted the research process. Specifically, I invoke the genre of "ethnographic portraiture", in which the researcher remains a present and important aspect of the written product (see Jeffrey and Dyson 2008). As Jeffrey and Dyson (2008) note, this approach toward writing reflects an appreciation of the contribution of postcolonial and feminist approaches to knowledge construction and research. It entails a constant critical reflection on the part of the researcher regarding how one's position shapes the outcomes of the research (Jeffrey and Dyson 2008:2, see also Mills and Morton 2013).

**Case Studies, Generalization, and the Village (*gāma*)**

A case study approach is often linked to a Weberian approach toward examining phenomena in context (Gregory et al. 2009). The phenomena being examined can include a person, group, event, institution, or a process. Yet, as O'Reilly (2012) notes, whilst ethnography typically takes the form of a study of a given case, a case

study is not necessarily ethnographic; the key difference between them "is that ethnography is defined by its methodology, whereas a case study can be highly quantitative or statistics and use no ethnographic methods at all" (O'Reilly 2012:23).

Flyvbjerg (2006) provides a comprehensive rebuttal of some of the main critiques surrounding case study research. Specifically, he challenges the following five misunderstandings: (1) Theoretical knowledge is more valuable than practical knowledge; (2) One cannot generalize from a single case, therefore the single case study cannot contribute to scientific development; (3) The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses, while other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory building; (4) The case study contains a bias toward verification; and (5) It is often difficult to summarize specific case studies. Ethnography, I argue, is well placed to address these concerns. In line with Flyvbjerg's (2006) conclusion, my research approach supports the Kuhnian perspective that a scientific discipline void of a large number of in-depth case studies is "a discipline without systematic production of exemplars" (2006:1) and, consequently, an ineffective one (see also O'Reilly 2012, Stake 1995, Ragin and Becker 1992, Christensen and Hansen 1987). Of course, not all case studies allow for generalization. Rather, a conscious attempt to identify and select what Flyvbjerg (2006) terms a "paradigmatic case" - that which highlights more general characteristics of the society in question - can prove useful in drawing generalizable conclusions.

This thesis adopts a case study approach in its in-depth study of a rural village (*gāma*) of South Gujarat, India. In taking this approach it seeks to build context-specific, situated knowledge from the arena of everyday life (Longhurst 2009, Flyvbjerg 2006). In making this decision I was mindful of anthropological critiques of "the village" as a unit of enquiry. Scholars have questioned the notion of the village in India as a natural sociological unit. It could be argued that the village is largely a male construct; patrilocal norms dictate that a woman will relocate to their husband's village following marriage (see Derné 1994, Mukhopadhyay and Seymour 1994, Sharma 1986). Dyson (2014) argues that an analytical focus on "the village" could convey a false sense of isolation from wider networks of social relations and flows of goods and people. Yet, the village remains an important social and spatial construct in contemporary India. References to their own *gāma* emerged as central to villagers' everyday discourse, and were most often invoked when making distinctions between rural and urban everyday life. Additionally, the *gāma* held social and geographical significance as a base from which villagers migrated for work and education. It was thus useful as a physical base from which to conduct my research, in addition to providing a comparative framework for examining the everyday lives of socioeconomically marginalized young men and women relative to youth from other caste communities in the village.

Whilst in a sense "bounded" analytically to a discrete village community, my methodological approach encompassed a much broader set of social relations across space. It began with this group of individuals, before working outward in order to understand the scalar social, cultural, economic, and political complexities that define young people's everyday lives. This approach is well suited to

multiplicity of young people's everyday identities, particularly the way that "individuals identify and identify with other groups, how one category is used to differentiate another in specific contexts, and how particular identities become salient or foregrounded at particular moments" (Valentine 2007, see also McCall 2005). Methodologically, this involved tracing young people's physical movements across space, both within and beyond the village as they circulated between rural and urban Gujarat. Taking this approach reflects a growing body of scholarship on the phenomenon of globalization, which describes an increased awareness of the world characterized by complex interconnections and mobilities typified by a language of fluidity, flux, and flow (see Urry 2007, Bauman 2000).

A discerning critique levelled at ethnography and qualitative case studies questions the underlying presumption to objectify lived histories in cases that conceal the local into "expert knowledge" (see Chari 2003). The extent to which the subaltern is able to "speak" in research has long been a topic of debate, beginning in the late 1970s by a collective of Indian and English historians critical of "colonialist and bourgeois-nationalism elitism" in the writing of Indian history (e.g. Guha 1994, Chakrabarty 1992, Guha and Spivak 1988). In addition to a commitment to the longevity of ethnographic fieldwork, I address these concerns through attention to debates about positionality, reflexivity, representation, and ethics, each of which I discuss in this chapter.

In the following sections I outline the processes by which I came to settle on Kota, a medium sized village in the Navsari district of South Gujarat and highlight some

of the pragmatic considerations I encountered whilst conducting ethnographic fieldwork.

**Pilot Study and Language**

Fieldwork for this thesis was conducted across two main periods in Gujarat: a pilot trip across April and May 2014, and a main fieldwork period between August 2014 and May 2015. Prior to the pilot trip I had previously conducted both quantitative and qualitative research in various districts of Gujarat. My first independent research trip to Gujarat was in 2010 whilst studying as an undergraduate at the University of Cambridge. Since then I have returned as part of a larger research project with Architecture Sans Frontières, and most recently in late 2012 for MSc fieldwork whilst studying at the School of Geography, University of Oxford. As such, when embarking on my pilot trip I had an initial network of contacts with whom I was in touch, based mostly in Gujarat's former capital and largest city, Ahmedabad (see Map 3.2).

Over the course of these two months my primary aims were to establish, gain access to, and test potential field sites, and trial a series of research questions and broader themes prior to the main fieldwork period. In order to facilitate this, prior to travelling I actively sought to forge new networks by email and telephone with a broad range of organizations and individuals with whom I met in the early stages of the pilot trip. These included academics based out of the Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT) University, Gujarat University, the Central University of Gujarat, and the Human Development and Research Centre at

St Xavier's College (Ahmedabad). Between April 2014 and May 2015 I was formally affiliated as a Visiting Research Fellow at the Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research (SPIESR), a research institute recognised as an institution of Gujarat University and funded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). In addition to engaging academics at SPIESR and beyond, I was also interested in gaining a broader insight into Gujarat's land rights issues and the role of farmers' cooperatives. In the early months of fieldwork I was in contact and spent time with *Jameen Adhikar Andolan Gujarat* (Land Rights Movement Gujarat), a coalition of farmers' cooperatives seeking to claim their rights to the commons, including agricultural land, common property, fishing areas and pasture land.

During this phase, open and exploratory conversations with this broad network around the overarching goals of my research led to a series of individuals playing "gatekeeper" type roles whereby they were able to direct me to potential areas and communities across Gujarat with whom they had previously worked and were in contact. I eventually settled on trialling four potential areas in Sabarkantha, Navsari, Ahmedabad, and Anand districts (see Map 3.2), each with several potential village communities. In total I spent a little over three intensive weeks spread across these four locations. My eventual settling on a rural village, Kota, in Navsari district emerged for several reasons. In addition to its caste distribution being more reflective of Gujarat than other districts such as Sabarkantha (which was heavily populated by STs), the village's historical mainstay was agriculture with a gradual and ongoing shift toward non-agricultural forms of work in urban Navsari. Moreover, the village's schooling and higher educational context reflected Gujarat's privatising educational sector. In these respects, I conceived of Kota as

something of a paradigmatic case in Flyvbjerg's (2006) terms; it was reflective of many of the more general characteristics of the rural Gujarati society that I sought to examine.

Most significantly, though, was the level of comfortability and receptiveness of the village community to my presence, more so than other potential sites I visited. Gaining an early trust and rapport with informants is key to building longer-term reciprocal relationships. During my initial days in Kota I made a conscious effort to interact with informants from differing socioeconomic backgrounds so as not to locate myself among one particular social group. The almost immediate ease of interaction in Kota gave rise to several productive conversations and led naturally to my focus on generational relations and education among OBC, SC, and ST communities. Following a brief return to Ahmedabad city for a set of scheduled meetings I returned to spend the final two weeks of my pilot trip in the village.

Given the intimate, long-term, and multi-sited nature of my planned ethnographic fieldwork it was impractical to procure a research assistant over the course of my time in Gujarat. Moreover, recruiting a local research assistant can, at times, add another set of power relations to the interactions between researcher and researched. I was conscious of how this might affect the nature of, and data produced through, my everyday interactions, especially those with young women. Following this decision I became reliant upon my own Gujarati language skills. As Jacobs-Huey (2002:793) notes, linguistic familiarity is a central aspect of ethnography and, when conducting fieldwork, language is a mediator of a speaker's cultural identity and cultural credibility from the perspective of research

participants (see Basso 1979, Ochs 1992). Having been raised in a Gujarati-speaking household in the UK, I have fluency in conversational Gujarati. Whilst my fluency in Gujarati served to facilitate a degree of cultural legitimacy, I found that I often lacked some of the more nuanced colloquialisms used by local youth in their everyday discourse (see also Clifford 1992). This communicative competence and associated fluency in multiple discourses developed steadily throughout the course of my fieldwork, and was often a point of reference in conversation which, in many instances, facilitated a degree of learning through my being taught local slang and colloquialisms by my informants.

**Navsari District**

Navsari is an administrative district of South Gujarat located just south of the Purna river, and covers an area of 196,024 square kilometres. As Map 4.1 indicates, the district consists of five sub-districts (*talukas*) with a collective population of 1,330,711 (Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2011a). According to the latest official figures of the 2011 Census of India just over 30 *per cent* of Navsari's population lives in urban regions, whilst the remaining 69 *per cent* live rurally. These figures neatly reflect India more broadly, where 68.8 *per cent* are living rurally (Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2011b). In terms of the distribution of religions across the district, Hindus comprise a little over 92 *per cent* of the district registered in the 2011 Census, whilst 5.9 *per cent* registered as Muslim. One *per cent* registered as Jain, with less than one *per cent* registered Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and other religions each. Table 4.1 outlines

key data pertaining to Navsari's literacy rates and sex ratios as per the 2011 Census of India.

| | Navsari district | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | **Rural** | **Urban** |
| Population (%) | 69.23% | 30.77% |
| Total Population | 920,535 | 409,137 |
| Male Population | 464,749 | 213,416 |
| Female Population | 455,786 | 195,721 |
| Sex Ratio | 981 | 917 |
| Child Sex Ratio (0-6) | 946 | 874 |
| Child Population (0-6) | 92,466 | 42,704 |
| Child Percentage (0-6) | 10.04% | 10.44% |
| Literates | 676,083 | 325,826 |
| Average Literacy | 81.65% | 88.92% |
| Male Literacy | 86.98% | 92.62% |
| Female Literacy | 76.23% | 84.91% |

**Table 4.1** Demographic data for rural and urban Navsari, 2011, *Registrar Commissioner and Census General of India (2011a)*

The district has an average elevation of 9m above sea level and has an average maximum and minimum temperature of 40 and 18°C, respectively. With an average annual rainfall of 122cm each year (Chandulal et al. 2013), Navsari is one of the most fertile agricultural regions of South Gujarat (Streefkerk 1985, see also Tambs-Lyche 2010) and makes a substantial contribution to the state's production of rice, sugar cane, and various crops (Government of Gujarat 2012). Of the district's 220,077 hectares, 64 *per cent* is agricultural land (*ibid.*). Reflecting the district's rich agricultural past and the significant contribution it makes to contemporary Gujarat's broader agricultural output, Navsari is home to one of Gujarat's four dedicated public agricultural universities, Navsari Agricultural University. The university was established in 1965 as part of Gujarat Agricultural

University under its collegiate structure, but gained independence as an individual State University in 2004.

**[OMITTED IN LINE WITH ANONYMITY AGREEMENTS]**

**Map 4.1** Map of Navsari district detailing location of Kota village and key transport links, *author's own*

With a population of 160,941, the district's administrative headquarters - Navsari city - is Gujarat's 16th most populous city (Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2011a). The city is one of Gujarat's oldest cities and has experienced considerable growth and transformation since before Independence. Between 1618 and 1687 Navsari's neighbouring town, Surat, was the headquarters of the British East Indian Company in western India. During this time Navsari, in addition

to being a centre of shipbuilding, was known for its fine textiles and heavy cloth used for sails (see Streefkerk 1997). It became one of the first towns located south of the Tapi River and Surat city with machine industries. Around 1900, a small number of cotton ginning and pressing factories were built, following which two textiles mills and a distillery were set up in the 1930s (see also Kapadia 1966). This early industrial development in the region allowed local entrepreneurs and wealthier castes to build a solid financial base for industrial careers later on, based on the industrial production of wooden spools and bobbins used in the textile industry (Streefkerk 1997). Textiles and related products constituted the core of industrial growth in Navsari in the mid 20th century, owing partly to the town's strong rail links to Bombay, Surat, and Ahmedabad, and its proximity to natural resources along Gujarat's eastern belt. From the late 1950s onwards, engineering remained the base of industrial development, changing from modelling wood to processing metal. As Streefkerk notes, "[s]ome of the most successful enterprises belonged to families who started manufacturing bobbins in the 1940s" (1997:M-5).

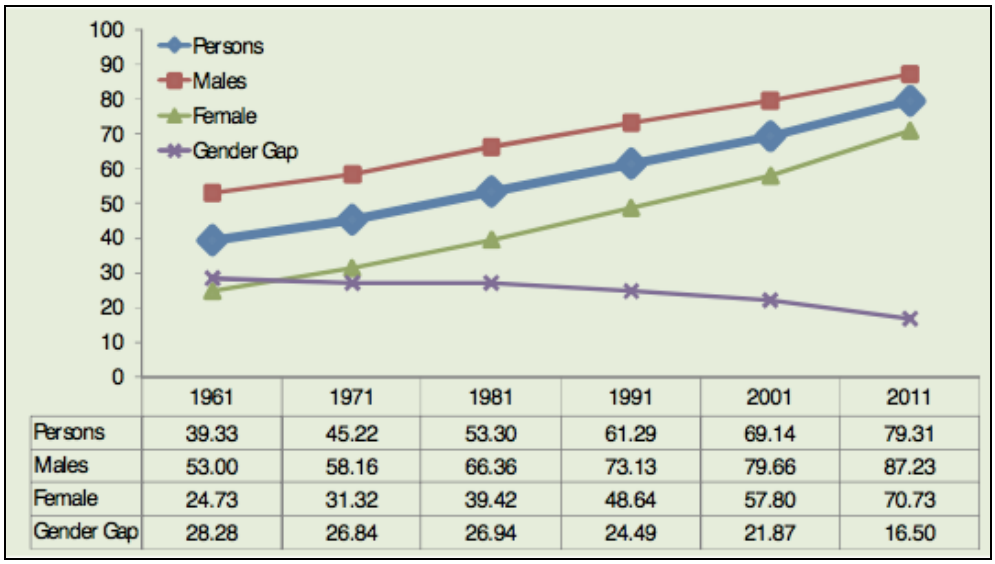
During the 1960s and 1970s, Navsari's industrial expansion related closely to its location as one of the most fertile regions of South Gujarat. The 1970s and 1980s saw canal irrigation expand in the region, with farmers switching to cultivating sugar cane. Moreover, industrialization in southern districts was supported by the Government of Gujarat, owing partly to the need to provide an attractive environment to those Gujarati businessmen who had remained in Bombay following the bifurcation of the Bombay state into Maharashtra and Gujarat in 1960. The Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) played a fundamental role during these years in promoting and implementing

industrialization policies, engendering the mushrooming of small-scale industries in the district. In October 1997 Navsari district was separated out from the neighbouring Valsad district.

In more recent years, and following the Government of Gujarat's broader business-friendly economic policies, drugs, pharmaceuticals and vegetable oils have emerged as key sectors in the district, having attracted significant investment across 1998-2011 (see Government of Gujarat 2011). Also significant is the South Gujarat region's role in the diamond trade. Around 80 *per cent* of India's diamond cutting and polishing occurs in Gujarat (see Hirway 2009). This involvement in diamond work began in the early 1900s when Gujarati diamond cutters emigrated from East African countries to establish the industry. Navsari's neighbouring district, Surat, is a major industrial centre with units such as those engaged in diamond cutting and polishing, brocade and embroidery, power looms and textiles, and food processing. Surat registered the fastest GDP growth across India for the seven years spanning 2001-2008 at 11.5 *per cent* ("GDP growth: Surat fastest, Mumbai largest" 2008). The government has played an active role in this economic growth through easing regulations and establishing a Special Economic Zone in the district with tax benefits for traders (see "Surat to have India's first diamond SEZ soon: Saurabh Patel" 2014). Navsari has actively benefitted from this geographical proximity; a small amount of diamond work occurs at small factories in the city itself, in addition to the vast swathes of labourers who commute daily by train to various factories in the neighbouring district (termed colloquially using the English phrase "up-down").

**Kota Village**

Following the pilot trip in April and May 2014 I based my research in Kota, a case study village in Navsari. With a population of 1704 living in 422 houses, Kota is a medium-sized village located 12km south-west of Navsari city (see Map 4.2). The village has a roughly equal sex ratio of 871:833 (male:female). Though the gender gap in literacy has decreased over recent decades in line with the Gujarat-wide trend (see Figure 4.1), an imbalance toward male literacy remains.




| | 1961 | 1971 | 1981 | 1991 | 2001 | 2011 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Persons | 39.33 | 45.22 | 53.30 | 61.29 | 69.14 | 79.31 |
| Males | 53.00 | 58.16 | 66.36 | 73.13 | 79.66 | 87.23 |
| Female | 24.73 | 31.32 | 39.42 | 48.64 | 57.80 | 70.73 |
| Gender Gap | 28.28 | 26.84 | 26.94 | 24.49 | 21.87 | 16.50 |

**Figure 4.1** Literacy rate and gender gap in literacy, Gujarat, 1961-2011, *Registrar Commissioner and Census General of India (2011b)*

In addition to reflecting the gendered nature of everyday labour, Table 4.2 highlights the split between men and women's roles in agricultural and non-agricultural forms of work. As the data demonstrates, men in Kota play a much more significant role in non-agricultural forms of work, while the proportion of women engaged in forms of agricultural labour is, although imbalanced, in greater proportion. The village self-government organisation (*panchāyata*), in Kota constitutes 9 elected officials: one village head (*sarpanca*), one deputy village head

(*āp-sarpanca*), and seven board members. During 2014 and 2015, as per previous years, these posts were held by numerically larger Forward Castes and OBCs (see Table 4.3 for a breakdown of the Kota population according to classifications used by the Government of India); as far as elder villagers could remember, a Garva, Halpati, or Muslim had never held leadership.

**[OMITTED IN LINE WITH ANONYMITY AGREEMENTS]**

**Map 4.2** Kota village map, *author's own*

| | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Agriculture:** | | | |
| **Cultivator** | 52 | 5 | 349 |
| **Labourer** | 198 | 94 | |
| **Non-Agricultural work** | 291 | 97 | 388 |
| **Working Population** | 541 | 196 | 737 |
| **Non Working Population** | 358 | 609 | 967 |
| **Definitions:** A labourer is defined as a "person who works on another person's land for wages in money or kind or share. She or he has no right of lease or contract on land on which she/he works" (Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India 2011c). This pairs in contrast to cultivators who own the land themselves. | | | |

**Table 4.2** Breakdown of agricultural and non-agricultural labourers in Kota by gender, *data collected from village panchāyata*

| GoI Classification | Caste/Community | Percentage of Kota Population |
|---|---|---|
| **Forward Caste** | Vania | 15 |
| | Desai Brahmin | |
| | Kadava Patidar | |
| | Leva Patel | |
| **Other Backward Classes** | Koli Patel* | 45 |
| | Khatki (Muslim) | |
| **Scheduled Caste** | Garva | 25 |
| **Scheduled Tribes** | Halpati | 15 |
| * The Government of India classified Gujarat's Koli community as Scheduled Caste in the 2001 Census of India. In 2012, various communities bearing the Koli name began to appear in the central lists of OBCs maintained by the National Commission for Backward Classes. | | |

**Table 4.3** Kota population according to Government of India classifications, *data collected from village panchāyata*

In Kota, then, caste was a significant form of social, economic, and political difference, manifesting physically through the clustering of communities throughout Kota, in a manner typical of rural Gujarat and India more broadly (e.g. Still 2014, Froerer 2010, Fuller 1996). Map 4.3 highlights how Hindu FCs and OBCs

in Kota reside in the centre of the village, with SC, ST, and the Muslim Khatki caste particularly isolated along Kota's periphery. Castes rarely interacted with one another publicly in the village; it was rare to see a Vania visiting the Halpati colony (*vās*) in Kota. In the unlikely event this did occur, it was strictly business-related, for example if a cultivator was seeking to procure new agricultural labourers. Similarly, this lack of inter-caste communication and contact prevented information and resources filtering down to lower castes from the *panchāyata*.

**[OMITTED IN LINE WITH ANONYMITY AGREEMENTS]**

**Map 4.3** Approximation of caste-driven stratification in Kota, *author's own, based on fieldwork mapping conducted across 2014-2015*

Over the course of my fieldwork lower castes, especially STs, regularly levelled accusations at the village panchayat of excluding them from village proceedings; several conversations revolved around the village *panchāyata* knowingly holding meetings during the early afternoon when the entire ST community was out working in manual or agricultural labour, resulting in their inability to participate in any democratic aspects of village governance.

Within households themselves age, gender, and generation were all important factors defining the nature of familial relations in Kota. The vast majority of OBC, SC, and ST households followed a patrilineal and patrilocal structure; their lineage was based on the father's family, and women were expected to relocate to their husband's household following marriage. Under this set of norms, all male members (in their roles as husbands, fathers, and male siblings) within the household assumed position as decision-makers for the rest of the family, including decisions around physical and moral protection (see also Kapadia 1966). It is worth noting, though, that the FC and wealthier OBC families that were increasingly investing in business, education, and residential property within Navsari city were practicing a more egalitarian style of family roles. This was reflected in the greater number of women pursuing urban-based salaried work among this demographic.

Under these patrilineal norms it was common for several generations to be living within the same household. Households were typically iterations of a "supplemented collateral joint" family in Kolenda's (1987) terms: two or more married couples among whom there is a male sibling bond (normally brothers plus

their unmarried children) in addition to unmarried, divorced, or widowed older generations. A common sight among families was that of small annexes built adjacent to existing houses in order to accommodate growing families. Whilst for poorer SC and ST families these were often more makeshift, wooden-framed structures, for wealthier families in Kota these were more permanent concrete structures with terraces.

Among communities in Kota the average size of landholdings largely mapped on to caste hierarchies, as has been noted previously among research in South Gujarat (e.g. Rutten 1986). Forward Castes such as Leva Patels and Kadava Patidars were by far the principal landowning castes, with typical landholdings being between 2 and 8 hectares in size. This wealthier class in Kota were engaged primarily in capitalist agriculture requiring large amounts of capital. They typically used sophisticated laser land levelling techniques (see Kumar et al. 2014) to level their large tracts of land in order to facilitate optimal irrigation to grow crops such as sugarcane and cotton that they then sold on to agents from nearby factories. Several of these families were also heavily involved in Navsari's seasonal mango trade, with a full harvest of mangos grown over 0.3 hectares selling to agents from the city for around 30,000 INR (350 GBP). These cultivators were rarely seen on the farms themselves, instead hiring labourers and small contractors to oversee their agricultural businesses.

Following this richer class of agriculturalists were OBCs and some Scheduled Tribe families who owned much smaller tracts of land of various sizes, generally less than 2 hectares. Landed OBC and ST families typically lacked the necessary capital

required to farm their land profitably; they were unable to afford the irrigation systems required to grow cotton and sugarcane as per their wealthier counterparts. As such they engaged primarily in subsistence agriculture, growing small batches of vegetables throughout the year and selling or trading any surplus. A common sight among this grouping was a growing investment in on-site wells for irrigation; families would pay to have wells dug on site before installing petrol-powered pumps that they then used periodically during the summer months. Sitting at the bottom of Kota's social and economic hierarchy, Scheduled Castes and various Scheduled Tribe families typically owned no land and were typically employed by wealthier caste families as agricultural and manual labourers. Their employment was not limited to Kota; it was a common sight to see adult SCs and STs walking or cycling to neighbouring villages and on the long journey in to Navsari city to find work. Typical daily wages for these labourers were around 100 INR (1.20 GBP) for women and 150 INR (1.80 GPB) for men.

In terms of education, Kota has a local school established by the government in the mid-1960s. Initially this was a school covering primary education across Standards 1 to 8 (ages 6 to 14 years), before being extended in the late 1990s to the secondary and higher secondary level across Standards 9 to 12 (aged 14 to 18 years). When first established primarily wealthier caste families in Kota populated the school, a fact reflected in the low levels of adult literacy among SCs and STs, but also among various OBC families. A major shift in elementary and secondary education provision in Kota arose in 2006 when a private school teaching in both

English and Gujarati mediums of instruction, which I call Shiv Jyoti School[7], was established 3.5km away in a neighbouring village. Over the past decade the school, set up by businessmen in Surat and managed by a board of trustees, has expanded organically to cater to increasing demand among both the surrounding villages and communities further afield. Its reputation and proximity to Kota make it an attractive prospect within reach of the vast majority of families in Kota. Additional to this are the school's low fees; in 2015 the annual fees for English medium instruction ranged from 2100 INR (25 GBP) for a Nursery student through to 2800 INR (33 GBP) for a student in 11th Standard (see Table 4.4 for a comprehensive list of fees charged by the school). These fees equate to a monthly fee of 175 and 233 INR, respectively, which can be seen as reasonable when compared against the daily wage rates for landless agricultural and manual labourers of between 100 and 150 INR.

Whilst neither schools nor neighbouring villages offer any form of extra tuition, a minority of wealthier OBC families in Kota send their children to regular tuition classes in Navsari city. These observed increases in educational attainment among historically disadvantaged caste communities in contemporary rural Gujarat mark a fascinating comparison with previous sociological research conducted in Central and South Gujarat by a collective of Dutch scholars working out of the University of Amsterdam, who identified increasing investment in education as one of the off-farm diversification strategies among landed FC families that had been some of the main beneficiaries of agrarian modernization (see Rutten 1986).

[7] The name of the school has been anonymized throughout this thesis.

| 2015 Fees | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **English Medium** | **Gujarati Medium** |
| **Nursery** | 2100 | 1700 |
| **Junior/Senior Kindegarten** | 2300 | 1900 |
| **Standard 1 - 3** | 2500 | 2000 |
| **Standard 4 -7** | 2700 | 2100 |
| **Standard 8 - 11** | 2800 | 2400 |
| **Standard 12** | 2900 | 2500 |

**Table 4.4** Fees for English and Gujarati mediums of instruction at Shiv Jyoti School (in INR)

Understanding the disparities between Kota's caste communities in terms of social networks, average landholdings, income, job security, and educational levels highlights how social and economic inequalities between FC, OBC, SC, and ST young men and women manifest at the village level.

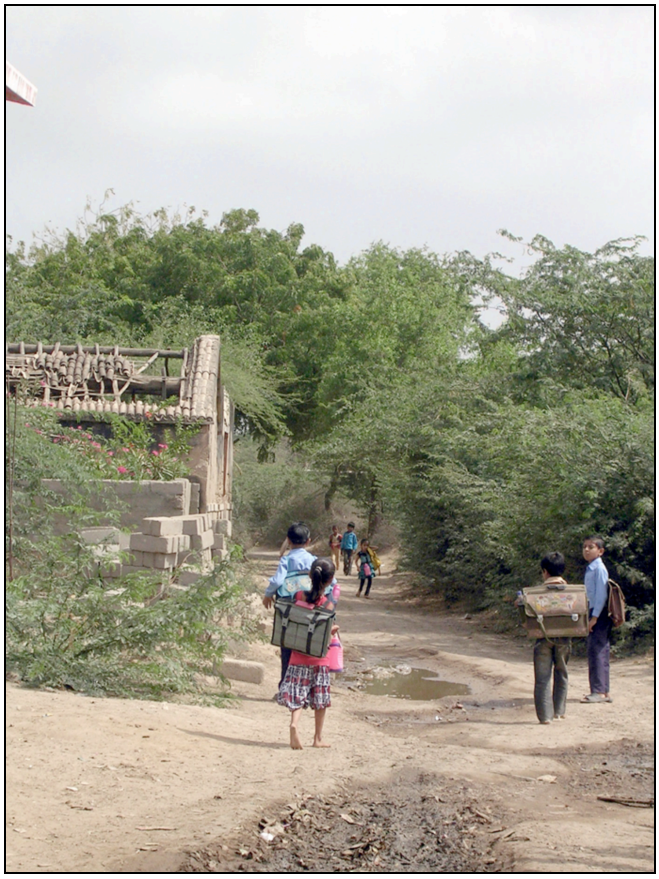


**Photo 4.2** Dirt footpath running adjacent to Scheduled Tribe locality along periphery of Kota village, *author's own photograph*



**Photo 4.3** Front veranda running along cluster of OBC houses in central Kota, *author's own photograph*

**Ahmedabad City: College Selection**

In addition to the village itself, I spent considerable time in Ahmedabad city where a large proportion of college-going youth from Kota were studying. The study of young people's experiences of higher education in the city necessitated an analytical shift away from kinship groups and communities and toward the peer group (see Krishnan 2016, Nisbett 2007). My decision to focus on young men and women from Kota studying in Ahmedabad arose for several reasons. Firstly, with 5.58 million people Ahmedabad is Gujarat's largest city and has the state's highest concentration of educational institutes. Its role as a hub for higher education in Gujarat dates back to the pre-Independence era as introduced in the previous chapter. Secondly, I had spent considerable time making new contacts in the city

during my pilot trip, several of whom were based out of higher educational institutes where Kota youth were studying. Thus these contacts were well placed to facilitate on-site accommodation and facilitate the permissions required to be on-campus during college hours and interacting with college youth. Thirdly, the city itself was regularly invoked by both young and old villagers when making comparisons between "the village" and "the city"; a common refrain among informants was that of Ahmedabad, specifically, as being a place distinctly different from the village and which functioned as a repository of government jobs and educational institutes.

Owing to the city's distance 280km north of Kota, young men and women spent several hours travelling to and from the city. Young men commonly travelled alone on the train, or organized with Kota peers to travel up together. Contrastingly, young women were commonly accompanied by their parents and families who would travel up to Ahmedabad early in the morning and drop their daughters off in their hostel (women's accommodation) rooms, before travelling back down to the village. In conversation some young women expressed their dislike of the train; in instances where the women-only passenger cars were full they were required to use mixed carriages and were acutely aware of sexual harassment which commonly took place. Accordingly, several young women with whom I spent time preferred to take lengthier journeys by bus, which were perceived by many as less stressful and safer, despite adding on several hours of journey time.

On several occasions I accompanied young men and women on the direct train journey between Navsari and Ahmedabad stations. It was most common to travel

with young men in General Class, with a one-way ticket costing around 80 INR (0.95 GBP). As we sat crammed together on mezzanine-style benches that fold out along the carriages, I found that this transitory environment and the activities that typically took place (such as the sharing of food and listening to one another's music) formed a convivial environment for productive conversation.

**Logistics: Access and Accommodation Arrangements**

Splitting my time between Kota and Ahmedabad raised several issues of access and accommodation. Given that I was reliant upon living with host families in Kota, my travel plans to and from the city needed to be made well in advance in order to coordinate with families about my living with them. The use of mobile phones was particularly helpful in coordinating accommodation logistics; in the instances where families felt unable to accommodate me until a later date I found myself adjusting my fieldwork schedule and prolonging my stay in the city, or alternatively attempting to engage an alternative household with whom to stay. Spending time with young men, especially, in the city, served to build a valuable rapport that often translated into productive introductions to family members back in Kota. From an analytical perspective, this proved useful in locating young people's perspectives against those of their families. In particular, conversations held independently with young men and women, and their families, often brought to light conflicting perspectives on post-educational trajectories.

In order to converse with parents, grandparents, and younger siblings independently I regularly returned to Kota whilst informants were still studying

during term time. In several instances it was perceived as peculiar that I had returned from the city alone, without their college-going children or siblings. In these instances my return to the village was often framed in terms of experiencing day-to-day life in the village whilst young people were off studying, with my interest being in how households coped with one less family member contributing to the domestic economic portfolio.

When in the city I resided in an on-site men's hostel at an autonomous college. This was productive in interacting with young men and observing the peer group in an everyday setting for college-going male youth. In contrast, my being a male researcher made it impossible to engage with young women in a similar manner as it was impractical to enter women's hostels. Indeed I quickly realized it was inappropriate to be seen interacting alone in public spaces with young women. Accordingly, I often interacted with young women as part of larger groups of young men and women on campus, and in public spaces across the city such as large shopping malls. This group context served to address their concerns of being seen alone, whilst also facilitating opportunities to engage in lengthier conversations.

## METHODS

### Participant Observation and Field Notes

My core ethnographic methods centred around participant observation of young men and women aged between 16 and 30 years. As Adler and Adler (1994) suggest, an awareness of cultural rules for verbal and non-verbal engagement can be essential to negotiating cultural legitimacy and trust. Having been raised in a Gujarati-speaking household, and having conducted qualitative research in Gujarat periodically since 2010, I feel as though my familiarity with Gujarati culture served to cultivate effective long-term relationships with the Kota community. The term "participant observation" could be seen as oxymoronic; it appears to have an inherent tension in that it involves trying to "live as a human being among other human beings yet also having to act as an objective observer" (Middleton 1970:9). However, as O'Reilly (2012) suggests, this tension need not be resolved and indeed is what gives participant observation its strength. The balancing "of involvement and detachment, being both insider and outsider…is in fact a very creative and distinct way of being in and learning about the world" (2012:106).

In its contemporary form, participation ranges from spending some time within a community being studied in order to obtain access, through to full immersion in the culture of the group. My approach toward fieldwork in Kota involved spreading my time across six host families representative of the social and economic diversity in the village. In addition to spending time with young men and women, when living in Kota I spent time with their siblings, parents, grandparents, and wider caste communities. I often accompanied young people on their daily tasks

and routines, participating in various forms of household work that varied starkly according to gender and socioeconomic background. This involvement, in addition to providing opportunities to directly observe young people's behaviours and the types of social interactions characteristic of their daily lives, afforded me crucial opportunities to engage in focused conversation, often out of earshot of other family members or peers in the village.

As discussed earlier, Kota formed the core unit of analysis for my ethnographic case study but my fieldwork was not bound to the physical site of the village. The purpose of participation revolves around "sensitizing yourself to the world of others through experience and through the construction of that world" (O'Reilly 2012:111, see also Estroff 1981) and as such participant observation often took me to spaces outside of the village, most commonly in to neighbouring villages and the nearby city of Navsari. This occurred especially in the case of young men; reflecting the gendered inequalities in access to urban space, young women rarely ventured into the city unaccompanied unless on specific tasks considered to be feminine in nature such as the purchasing of vegetables from the city market. These inequalities were reinforced through physical means of mobility; young women lacked access to the forms of personal transport such as motorbikes and mopeds that were commonly used by young men. By contrast, young men of various backgrounds would often venture in to the city on a whim, often to loiter or simply catch up with acquaintances. Accordingly, during time spent in the city with young men I became familiar with their urban social networks; not only who these male youth interacted with, but the types of social relations these encounters entailed.

**Interviews and Field Notes**

In addition to participant observation, semi-structured interviews are a methodological tool commonly employed by ethnographers. In practice, though, there is no clear distinction between *doing* participant observation and *conducting* an interview, given that participant observation involves simultaneously observing, listening to, and engaging with individuals (Hochschild 2012). I found that, given the sustained engagement I had with the Kota community over the course of several months, to try and arrange predetermined interviews in set times with individuals was problematic. This was because - in addition to interrupting daily routines in order to schedule interviews, which goes against the social and cultural immersion intrinsic to participant observation - the arranging of formal interviews would have reinforced my positionality as a researcher collecting data (see O'Reilly 2012:116). As such, during the early months of fieldwork in the village my approach toward interviews was very much informal and unstructured. This involved conversations that occurred organically while accompanying informants on their daily routines or simply "hanging out" in and around the family home, or in public spaces throughout the village. As fieldwork progressed and I reflected critically on field notes and conversations with informants, I developed a series of open-ended questions around a set of core research themes that were refined and updated for the remainder of fieldwork.

Given the consciously unstructured nature of conducting interviews in Kota, it became important to ensure that participant observation was representative of the village's social and economic diversity. This raised several issues. I found that my

being a male researcher was a major barrier to interacting independently with female informants from lower castes, an issue considered by ethnographers working elsewhere in the region (e.g. Deuchar 2014). Whilst I was able to observe these young women's behaviours and interactions in familial spaces, opportunities for direct conversation were limited. Yet I felt that to omit the perspectives of young women in Kota would have been detrimental to the overall project, especially given the increasing levels of SC and ST female educational attainment across rural Gujarat (ASER 2014) and India more broadly (Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India 2011). Thus, my strategy often involved an opportunistic seizing of moments alone with young women in order to converse more freely. Examples of this involved accompanying them on the bus journey to Navsari city's vegetable market (Photo 4.4), or when they were carrying out agricultural labour in fields (Photo 4.5). Whilst these conversations often proved particularly insightful, I was conscious of normative gender roles. In a village where news spread very quickly, with very real implications for people's lives, I remained wary of the potential stigmas attached to young women for having been seen conversing alone with a foreign male researcher of a similar age.

In contrast, when in Ahmedabad city and in the college context, my approach toward interviews was much more structured. Unhindered by domestic tasks and familial responsibilities, informants had college schedules and were largely free on weekends. Accordingly, arranging times to meet with young women and men was much more straightforward. Popular meeting spots included street side tea stalls located immediately outside of colleges, college canteens, and a large shopping mall commonly frequented by Ahmedabad youth. Being located away from family

spaces meant that young people, young women especially, spoke much more freely and at length. My being a male often encouraged young women to make direct comparisons between their own experiences and those of young men in the village, and I found that I quickly became a sounding board for family- and village-based anxieties. In these instances our relationships were predicated on a requisite reciprocity; young women were as interested in my own perspectives on and experiences of education, employment, and personal relationships as I was with theirs.

For reasons outlined above it is difficult to determine an absolute number of interviews conducted over the course of my fieldwork in Gujarat. In order to determine a figure I have bounded my count to 86 repeat informants (47 men and 39 women), which relate to six case study families in Kota: one FC, two OBC, two SC, and one ST. I consider these families as having constituted the core of my informant base (see Table 4.5 for a breakdown of key informants by gender and Government of India classification). In total I conducted 260 interviews with this set of "key informants", additional to which were a series of conversations with other family members and their wider social networks. These included acquaintances in neighbouring villages, peers and friends at college in Ahmedabad, "contacts" encountered during regular trips to Navsari city, members of the village *panchāyata,* and low-level political officials. These conversations provided a broader social and cultural backdrop for key informant interviews, forming an invaluable broader context for my analysis and observations. It is useful to note at this stage that, as indicated in the table below, I also spent time with FCs in order to contextualize my observations of OBC, SC, and ST young women.

| Government of India Classification | Gender | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | |
| **Forward Caste** | 6 | 8 | 14 |
| **Other Backward Classes** | 20 | 14 | 34 |
| **Scheduled Caste** | 11 | 9 | 20 |
| **Scheduled Tribe** | 10 | 8 | 18 |
| **Total** | 47 | 39 | 86 |

**Table 4.5** Breakdown of key informants by gender and Government of India classification

Taking field notes whilst on fieldwork was central to building up an understanding of young people's everyday lives. I found that as fieldwork progressed and my research aims became more focused, this was reflected in the level of detail and specificity of my notes (see Mackinem and Higgins 2007). When conducting participant observation and semi-structured interviews I avoided using a voice recorder so as not to come across impersonally. Instead, when in the village and when opportunity permitted I jotted down notes immediately afterwards. In other cases, most commonly when with young men and women in the city, I found it productive to type up brief jottings, or "scratch notes" (Emerson et al. 2001) on my mobile phone. These constituted aid-mémoires and commonly included locations, names, quotations, and dates. Following this, each evening I would typically spend two to three hours typing up interviews and comprehensive supplementary notes on people's dress, speech, and bodily comportment on my laptop. I organized these field notes using Scrivener, a word-processing program capable of organizing and managing multiple notes, PDFs, and other formats in one central database.



**Photo 4.4** Early morning vegetable market in Navsari city



**Photo 4.5** ST female and male agricultural labourers working on land of FC villager

**Positionality and Reflexivity**

Debates about positionality have been ongoing since the 1980s, particularly among feminist geographers (e.g. Rose 1997, Moss 2002, Twyman et al. 1999). Aitken and Valentine (2014) describe as a key focus of this literature the "analyses of the complexities of power, privilege, oppression and representation, with gender foregrounded as the primary social relation" (2014:361). A researcher's social, cultural, and subject positions affect the questions they ask, how they frame them, the theories they are drawn to, and their relations with informants (see Gregory et al. 2009:556). Thus a reflection upon the conditions and power relations through which the research is produced, or reflexivity, is central to rigorous and ethical research (Kvale 2006, Shurmer-Smith 2001).

When thinking through issues of positionality, Johnson and Duberly (2003) acknowledge and use two forms of reflexivity: methodological and epistemic. Epistemic reflexivity focuses on researchers' belief systems and is a process for analysing and challenging metatheoretical assumptions. On the other hand, methodological reflexivity is concerned with the monitoring of the behavioural impact on the research setting as a consequence of conducting the research. The research process thus always has to be contextualized with the social relations of both the researcher and the researched, as well as with those between them, including aspects such as gender, nationality, race, and social status.

During my fieldwork I endeavoured to practice a degree of reflexivity around how my positionality impacted on various stages of the research process. I was

particularly aware of debates within anthropology surrounding binaries of insider/outsider and native-non-native (e.g. Forster 2012, Kerstetter 2012, Narayan 1993). My positionality as a young, British-born male with Gujarati ancestry did not neatly fit into these categories in a straightforward manner. Rather, and as I discuss in the proceeding section, I found myself mobilizing and foregrounding various aspects of my ethnicity, religion, and ancestry as I negotiated interactions with informants of different social profiles across various spaces throughout the course of fieldwork in Gujarat. This ability to mobilize particular aspects of identity had both its advantages and disadvantages; whilst serving as a firm foundation upon which to build trust and rapport with informants, it often meant that I was expected to abide by particular gender and age-related expectations derived on the basis of my cultural familiarity. Contrastingly, a researcher bearing no cultural or ancestral similarities may have been better positioned to avoid these and pursue a series of more targeted questions with members of the opposite sex.

Throughout the course of fieldwork, rather than passively observing these aspects play out, I quickly established the need to consciously construct and perform identities in across different spaces, depending on whom my interactions were taking place with. This constant negotiation of identity raised several concerns around ethical encounters during long-term participant observation.

**Negotiating the field: Identity, Power, and Ethics**

Given its intimate methods and long-term nature, ethnography raises important ethical issues. Prior to undertaking fieldwork I gained full ethical clearance from the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) at Oxford. This process is designed to "ensure that...research on human subjects is conducted according to the established principles and good practice" (University of Oxford 2016:1). In following CUREC guidelines I ensured informed and willing consent on the part of all informants (see Appendices 1 and 2 for the oral information provided to informants and a sample "Participant Consent for Research Project" form). In order to respect informants' requests for anonymity and at the request of several members of the village *panchāyata* I have anonymized the village and informant names in this thesis. Further to this, all field notes in electronic format were password protected whilst on my laptop and uploaded to a secure internet-based server for storage. As my doctoral research has been funded by the ESRC, I also took heed of the Council's Framework for Research Ethics (ESRC 2016).

Whilst these frameworks are useful in covering issues of data protection, accountability and conflicts of interest, the CUREC process explicitly acknowledges that it does not cover "satisfactory methodology". Rather, it is geared toward broad ethical clearance across the social sciences. As Pryke and colleagues (2003) note, research committees "attempt to render the ethical outcomes of research encounters predictable" (2003:119). As such, ethical frameworks do not account for the risky relationship one has with "data" (see Whatmore 2003) and therefore

cannot dictate the particular ethical stances a researcher must actively negotiate during the research process (see also Rabinow 1977).

The scalar and spatial diversity of qualitative research impacts upon the nature of individual relations with informants (Bachmann 2011) and researchers constantly negotiate and perform identities throughout the course of fieldwork (Cook and Crang 1995). As Stuart Hall (1996:222) posits, "we should think...of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted with, not outside, representation". For ethnographers, especially, the postmodernist critique emphasizes the importance of understanding the ethnographer's "situation" - that is, his or her gender, class, ethnicity, and so on - as part of interpreting the ethnographic product (Angrosino 2005). Central to participant observation, for example, is the development of relationships between researcher and participants through everyday events and interaction (Burgess 1984, Van Maanen 1995) and, as Richard Sennett argues, "getting along with those that are different" begins with finding out about them (2012:230).

In Gujarat I became acutely aware of the ways in which my identity was produced and reproduced as my interactions with informants changed across various contexts and in scale; from embedding myself within the micropolitics of family spaces, through to locating myself within the peer group on college campuses. My background as a Non-Resident Indian (NRI) of Gujarati ancestry, of a similar age to those being researched, with a fluency in conversational Gujarati, were all commonalities that served to facilitate a certain degree of legitimacy among informants (Adler and Adler 1987). Through appropriating various aspects of

these commonalities I sought to develop relationships based on mutual characteristics and "open up the setting for further participant observation" (Jorgensen 1989:61). Yet, as I established during my pilot study, certain aspects of my identity served to both facilitate and constrain opportunities for interacting with informants from various backgrounds. I found myself undergoing a continuous process of identity construction as I sought to mobilize various identities on the basis of ethnicity, caste, class, age, gender, and religion. In doing so it became rapidly apparent that this delicate performance of identity in order to facilitate productive ethnographic relationships was accompanied by its own set of ethical dilemmas. The most pressing ethical negotiations centered around having to embed myself within a context of stark caste- and religious-based difference. Forging productive relationships with high caste Hindu males, for example, often meant entertaining certain social and cultural norms and beliefs that inadvertently perpetuated a derogatory discourse toward Kota's SC and ST communities. This typically involved higher castes mocking their behaviours and customs, and the types of work they conducted. Whilst one's positionality can never be fully transparent (Rose 1997) I became acutely aware of (and uncomfortable when in) situations that actively reinforced discriminatory social relations, and made conscious attempts to avoid such situations. Such processes reflect the problematic of ethnography and the inherent cultural immersion: a degree of mimicry and appeasing individuals is central to successful social interactions.

These ideas around performing identity raise further ethical and pragmatic issues when considering the longevity of ethnographic fieldwork. In seeking to elucidate the perspectives of a diverse range of socioeconomic groups within the same

village community, my fieldwork strategy entailed living with six case study families that were selected on the basis of their reflecting Kota's social and economic diversity. In order to achieve this, during the earliest stages of fieldwork I invested time in cultivating relationships with young men from FC, OBC, SC, and ST households. The subsequent families were selected rather straightforwardly on the basis of whether or not they were amenable to the idea of accommodating me during my stay in Kota. The likelihood of this acceptance was typically derived on the strength of the relationships I was able to forge with male offspring, and the sway these young men held regarding household decision-making.

The spatial movements I undertook as I lived among FC, OBC, SC, and ST communities in the village had clear implications for existing power relations; to live with an FC family in the village immediately after having lived with an ST family, for example, was viewed as disrespectful. It spurred a series of questions as to why I had been interacting with those of lower socioeconomic status when the higher caste families, being better educated, insisted they were better placed to provide the "answers" to my research questions. Simultaneously, to transition the other way from spending time and residing with a higher caste family to then locate within the ST locality at the periphery of Kota was treated as suspicious, engendering mutterings about spying for the higher castes and village *panchāyata*. Brackette Williams (1996) notes similar observations on the ways in which her identity as an educated African American scholar served to bolster her host's affluence and social status. She reflects on the persistent need to negotiate the differing sets of loyalties and expectations held by her lower class informants and middle class hosts during fieldwork.

These were issues I took note of during my pilot study in April and May 2014, and I sought to mitigate these as best as possible upon my return in August 2014. Central to my strategy was a periodic migration to Ahmedabad city to spend time with those Kota youth and their peers studying in colleges in the city, before returning to Kota and shifting my analytical focus to a different household and community. Given the physical stratification in the village and lack of inter-caste socializing, this served to facilitate a degree of social and temporal separation from my previous encounters. I also made conscious efforts to return to Kota having spent time with the male youth from that particular caste community who were respected and well-placed to make introductions.

Related to these pragmatic concerns around conducting fieldwork in a context of existing social tensions, the task of negotiating one's identity is further complicated by the fact that participants may attribute particular identities and cultural roles based on their particular gender, caste/class, educational status, age, family relations, marital status, and so on (Harrison 1991, Smith 1999, Whitehead 1986). I found that certain "inherited" aspects of my identity were not concealable and served to inhibit my research approach despite my best attempts. This most commonly occurred along religious lines; for example, initial encounters with members of Kota's Muslim community were frequently met with the same series of initial questions around my surname, caste, and family history. Among older generations especially, informants quickly became cold and reticent - a reflection on broader Hindu-Muslim communal tensions across Gujarat (see also Heitmeyer 2009).

**Analysis and Writing**

My analytical approach was guided and mediated by coding as a tool for extracting and coordinating key themes (Emerson et al. 1995). Yet I did not employ this analytical method in the sense of undertaking "explicit coding" as advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Rather, my analytical process involved an iterative movement between personal reflections, field notes, and analytical writing (Mills and Morton 2013:87). As O'Reilly notes, "the collected data will then realize questions about theory, which in turn leads to more data collection, analysis, writing, and the ongoing development of ideas". Thus analysis becomes intrinsic to every stage of the research process such that it becomes difficult to outline any one particular phase. To a large extent this approach is consistent with the theoretical and epistemological perspectives constitutive of interpretivism upon which qualitative approaches generally, and ethnographic study specifically, are predicated. The aim of this iterative-inductive approach (see Glaser and Strauss 1697) is to narrow the scope of enquiry to salient issues, while "constantly retracing our steps where something of interest becomes evident and where greater exploration might provide dividends" (O'Reilly 2012:16).

In Gujarat I underwent a continual process of reflecting on field notes, making "analytical memos" and revising a set of core question areas accordingly. This process continued upon returning from fieldwork. Given that working with an extensive mass of field notes can be overwhelming, I took heed of Emerson and colleagues (1995) who suggest a process of systematic open coding on some of the field notes, followed by a period of more focused coding, before returning to open

coding on new sections. This approach "ensures a balance between inductive and deductive theorising and is similar to the techniques described in grounded theory" (O'Reilly 2012:37).

# Chapter 5. [Article 1]

## *Utāvala* (Haste): Temporal Tactics and Educated Unemployment Among Marginalized Young Men in Rural Gujarat, India

This article nuances broader accounts of the relationship between economic reforms and the temporal and spatial insecurities of marginalized young men in the Global South. Drawing on eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork, I examine the everyday temporal subjectivities of educated young men from marginalized backgrounds in rural India. Through appropriating time in creative and subversive ways, these male youth are carving out crucial opportunities for social, cultural, and economic distinction, challenging a dominant culture of simply passing time (colloquially termed "timepass") circulating among their more affluent peers. Drawing on the work of Michel De Certeau I conceptualize these temporal practices as everyday tactics of resistance. My central argument is that increasing educational attainment among marginalized rural populations is transforming the nature of youth sociality; a cohort of educated young men in rural Gujarat enact a shared set of dispositions centered around the Gujarati notion of *utāvala* (haste). Through enacting this exclusionary culture, young men seek to challenge the sensibilities of more affluent youth, engaging with a broader middle class cultural discourse across India. My analyses signal the heterogeneity of temporal experience among educated young men, addressing recent calls among geographers for a conceptual focus on performative social practices.

**Keywords**: *education, rural, young men, time, tactics, India*

## 1. Introduction

Broad-scale processes of economic globalization and state restructuring, combined with the weakening global recovery and a decline in public spending, are transforming the lives of young people in many parts of the world (see Stiglitz 2009, Dyson 2014, Jeffrey and McDowell 2004, Bucholtz 2002). The International Labour Organization recently noted the "prolonged jobs crisis" (ILO 2013:1) faced by the current and future generations of youth, highlighting the ways in which young people find themselves "stuck" in precarious forms of work. Consequently, a growing body of scholarship has begun to examine the ways in which young people experience and respond to the growing crisis of educated youth unemployment in which they find themselves, both in the Global North (e.g. Carmo et al. 2014, Bradley and Devadason 2008) and the Global South (e.g. Jeffrey 2010a, Cross 2009, Mains 2007). Much of this research explores the creative cultural and political practices of young people in the face of economic adversity, as well as making valuable contributions toward problematizing the idea of a linear "transition" from education to work, and from youth to adulthood (e.g. Newell 2012, Ralph 2008, Hansen 2005); in addition to few opportunities for salaried work, increasing aspirations and investment in education result in young people struggling to obtain the '"social goods" traditionally associated with adulthood such as marriage and family formation, and housing (Berlin et al. 2010, Cross 2009, Ruddick 2003).

A notable collection of scholarly work has built up around educated underemployed and unemployed[1] youth in the Global South. Focusing largely on the subjectivities of young men (but see Still 2011, Chant 2009, Klenk 2003), these studies have begun to explicate the discourses and experiences of unemployed youth through a particular focus on their everyday temporal and spatial practices (e.g. Jeffrey 2010b, Weiss 2009, Mains 2007). A common theme running through these studies is that of young men's temporal insecurities when faced with an abundance of unstructured time. Mains (2007), for example, researching in Ethiopia considers discourses of shame among youth who imagined themselves as "chickens…just eating and sleeping" (2007:660). Jeffrey (2010b) notes similar observations in metropolitan India where educated unemployed lower-middle class young men imagined themselves surrounded by "an expanse of featureless time" (2010b:470). For his informants just passing time, or doing "timepass", was a common practice which often demonstrated their inability to find more meaningful ways of engaging with the world (2010b:471, see also Gooptu's (2007) research in the city of Kolkata).

This article develops and extends these accounts of educated unemployed youth through a focus on young men from socioeconomically marginalized backgrounds in rural India. The Indian Constitution outlines four classifications in detailing quota-based affirmative action in the form of reserved places in government run colleges and public-sector employment. Of these, Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) are indigenous peoples considered to be the lowest

[1] In the remainder of this article the term "unemployed" refers to both those who are unemployed and those who are underemployed.

socioeconomically ranking groups and have been the recipients of policies of affirmative action since the Constitution was written in 1950. Of the remaining two classifications, Forward Castes (FCs) are considered socially, educationally, and economically advanced, whilst Other Backward Classes (OBCs) are considered socially and educationally disadvantaged. Since the 1990s and 2006 OBCs have received quotas in public sector employment, and higher education institutes, respectively.[2] My analysis in this article focuses explicitly on young men from SC, ST, and economically poorer OBC communities.

Recent years have seen increasing enrolment among upwardly mobile OBCs, SCs, and STs across Gujarat (ASER 2014, Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2011a) and India more broadly (Cross 2014, Nakassis 2013). Over the course of my research I noted similar observations of a timepass culture circulating among educated male youth from more well-to-do backgrounds in the village; young men idly passing time by the local bus stop as though "fixtures in the village landscape" (Gidwani 2000:145). My intention is not to rehearse these accounts. Rather, my interest in this article is in unpacking the temporal subjectivities of a first generation of college-educated young men from low caste and lower class backgrounds. Among these young men, despite similar structural conditions of educated unemployment, perceptions of and engagement with time and temporal disruption were marked by a starkly contrasting language of rushing and acceleration. This was typified by their pervasive use of the Gujarati word *"utāvala"*, which translates literally as "haste". *Utāvala* was used variably by young

[2] For a more detailed overview of caste in contemporary India, and its relation to politics and the economy see, *India Today*, written by Corbridge and colleagues (2012.)

men to convey a sense of speed, urgency, and productivity. My central argument is that increasing educational attainment among marginalized rural populations is changing the nature of young people's everyday sociality; young men creatively appropriate time in nuanced ways in their attempts to challenge and subvert discourses of marginalization.

In elucidating the ways in which time was mobilized both as a discursive structure and cultural resource, I highlight these kinds of action as being tactical in nature (De Certeau 1984); based on situated knowledge and learning over time, marginalized male youth in rural Gujarat are carving out new opportunities for social, cultural, and economic distinction predicated on shared knowledge of what I term as hasty (*utāvaliyo*) culture. In developing these points, I locate my research at the intersection of literature on time, space, and modernity, in addition to relevant regional scholarship on the Indian middle classes.

Fieldwork for this research was conducted in Kota[3], a medium sized village in South Gujarat with a population of around 1700 living in 420 houses. I draw on participant observation and semi- and un-structured interviews conducted with 86 key informants (47 men and 39 women) over the course of eleven months. The Kota population constituted a spread of social and economic profiles, whereby economic wealth mapped largely on to caste; Hindu FC and affluent OBC households had greater landholdings and strong urban-based social networks, whilst poorer OBCs, SCs, and STs typically engaged in precarious forms of unskilled

[3] In this article I have changed the names of all informants, and of the case study village, in order to maintain anonymity.

casual agricultural and manual labour. Of the 47 male key informants, 6 were Forward Caste, 20 were Other Backward Classes, 11 were Scheduled Caste, and 10 were Scheduled Tribe. Interviews were conducted in Gujarati, which I speak fluently, and were supplemented by frequent conversations with a range of people including fellow students, city shop-owners, and members of the village local self-government organisation (*panchāyata*).

In Kota, gender was an important axis of social difference reflected in young people's formal schooling and work. Among SC and ST families, women were typically involved in agricultural labour such as sowing seeds in the fields of wealthier villagers, whilst men would engage in unskilled manual labour such as building and construction work. In the poorest of these families, children had often been withdrawn from schooling between the ages of 14 and 16 and sent to work with their mothers and fathers. Among upwardly mobile SC and ST populations, families were increasingly sending their sons and daughters to a recently established private secondary school located in a neighbouring village, often followed by continued enrolment in higher education at private and government-run colleges across metropolitan Gujarat. Caste-based difference was also reflected in literacy levels of an older generation; adult SC and ST populations had particularly low levels of formal education, typically having withdrawn from schooling at an early age in order to join their own parents in unskilled forms of labour.

Gendered notions also influenced young people's post-educational trajectories. For SC and ST young women in Kota, education was commonly envisaged by parents as

a route toward marrying upwards (see also Still 2014, Dyson 2014). For young men, however, it was seen as a route toward securing salaried work in the city. Yet owing to their lack of financial resources and urban social contacts SC and ST youth in present-day Kota find themselves struggling to make this transition into secure employment (see similar observations noted elsewhere in India by Deuchar 2014, Cross 2014, Jeffrey 2010a).

The following sections locate the article within relevant scholarship before introducing the case study for my research in Gujarat. In the empirical sections that follow I outline a set of temporal tactics employed by marginalized male youth in rural Gujarat, interrogating the everyday articulation of hasty culture and its relationship to a broader middle class discourse of modernity. I conclude by considering my findings with reference to the wider literature on educated unemployed youth in the Global South, and geographical literature on space and time.

## 2. Time, Space, and Tactics

Recent theoretical work in human geography has complicated philosophical dualisms of time and space. May and Thrift (2003), in their book *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality*, argue that the standard narrative of time-space compression is overstated. Whilst scholars differ in the underlying processes giving rise to these changes (see Harvey 1989, Kern 1983), the narrative centres around the occurrence of a radical restructuring in the nature and experience of both time and space from around the middle of the nineteenth century to the

beginning of the First World War, and again at the close of the twentieth century (see May and Thrift 2003, Stein 2003). These periods engendered a significant acceleration in the pace of life, accompanied by a collapse of traditional spatial coordinates. In their analysis, May and Thrift instead direct attention to the heterogeneous and multiple experiences of social time, calling for a conceptual focus on performative social practices. Importantly, they acknowledge that these practices, in part, vary according to a person's social and spatial positioning (see also Thrift 1988).

Harvey (2009) makes a parallel point, outlining absolute, relative, and relational ways of understanding space and time. Whilst *absolute* space is fixed, independent, and immovable, and *absolute* time is linear, *relative* space-time emerges from the viewpoint that all modes of measurement depend upon the frame of reference of the observer (see also Rogaly and Thieme 2012). Under this formulation it is impossible to understand space independent of time, mandating a critical shift of language from space and time to space-time, or spatiotemporality. What Harvey outlines as *relational* spacetime emerges from a similar perspective whereby specific processes over time serve to internalize external influences. In this view, events or objects in space can only be understood in relation to those surrounding it. None of these spatial frames, Harvey argues, is preferable to another. Rather, the decision to employ one conception is dependent upon the nature of the phenomena under investigation. As such, he stresses the need to keep absolute, relative, and relational ways of understanding space and time in "dialectical tension with one another and to constantly think through the interplay among them" (2009:141). In seeking to interrogate the heterogeneity of young men's

experiences of, and engagements with, time and temporality, my interest is in developing a grounded interpretation of Harvey's *relative* and *relational* understandings of space-time in which "the standpoint of the observer plays a critical role in establishing perspectives" (2009:135).

Recent postcolonial research has employed Harvey's framework in order to highlight the relations that produce differentiated experiences. Writing in this journal, Rogaly and Thieme's (2012) study of low-paid and insecure migrant manual workers in East India examines both the material and subjective dimensions of workers' spatiotemporal experiences. For these migrant workers time and space "reshaped themselves" in response to both political economy operating at multiple scales, as well as locally and regionally specific gender and interethnic relations (Rogaly and Thieme 2012:2097). Reflecting on the "standpoint" of the observer in Harvey's relative space-time, they stress the need to locate individuals' agency and subjectivities within broader structural inequalities. Outside of the Indian context, postcolonial scholarship has used time as an analytical lens in order to examine the effects of liberalizing processes on marginalized populations, focusing primarily on urban spaces (e.g. Till 2012, Simone 2008). Lombard (2013) for example, interrogates residents' resistance to marginalization in urban Mexico. She explores perceptions of time in the context of informal settlements, illustrating how residents construct narrative of individual and collective identity as a thread through time, both physically and in terms of place identity. In doing so, residents understand themselves as integral to the city itself, a perception which offers "the possibility of resistance and solidarity in the context of specific constraints" (Lombard 2013:814). In demonstrating the ways in

which the context of scarce urban resources offers space to develop tactics and strategies to cope with the city's "constitutive unknowability", her work highlights the possibility of alternative perspectives and resistance through a closer focus on time.

In this paper, I reflect on time as both a discursive structure as well as a cultural resource, engaging with the work of theorist Pierre Bourdieu (1986). Following Cheng (2014), my analysis considers time as a distinctive form of cultural capital that can be used and converted into other advantageous forms of capital within a cultural environment that acknowledges specific ideas and practices of time as symbolically valuable. Bourdieu (1986) argued that education and work are key "fields" in which individuals compete over forms of social and cultural capital in order to (re)produce distinctions, privilege and class advantage. Within Bourdieu's analysis temporality is "woven into people's ability to navigate fields of power on an everyday basis" (Jeffrey 2010a:20). Advantaged classes are typically able to micromanage complex fields in order to act in a timely manner. This routine success means that advantaged classes are able to imagine alternative futures and plot their hypothetical responses. Bourdieu's notion of fields is congruent with the relational view of space-time that advocates the heterogeneity of social practices based upon social and spatial positioning (see May and Thrift 2003). Yet, as scholars have noted (e.g. Jeffrey 2010a, Savage et al. 2005), implicit in Bourdieu's analysis is the idea that the poor are routinely disadvantaged and lack the creative capacity to confer advantage in situations of everyday struggle. Whilst his work is suggestive that individuals can transform the operation of everyday social fields, it

does not fully account for the possibility that marginalized populations might engage in creative practices that challenge class logics.

As such, following studies of informality and marginalization elsewhere (e.g. Hackl 2016, McFarlane 2011), I argue that this reading of time as a resource of change among marginalized youth can benefit from a conceptual engagement with De Certeau's (1983) writing on strategy and tactics. In his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), De Certeau made the distinction between strategy and tactic through differentiations of power and place. Whilst strategies are actions of those with the privilege of power and place, tactics are "an art of the weak" (De Certeau 1984:37) and refer to "the kinds of action that are possible once people have been marginalized by different strategies" (McFarlane 2011:266). Tactics are inherently temporal; they are reliant upon a creative appropriation of time, both of "the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduces into the foundations of power" (De Certeau 1984:39). Placing De Certeau's notion of tactics alongside the work of Bourdieu provides a framework for apprehending the multiple and subversive temporalities circulating among educated unemployed young men in rural Gujarat.

## 3. Time, Modernity, and the Indian Middle Classes

Aspects of time and temporality are intrinsic to theories of modernization. As Adam notes, the 14th century emergence of rationalized "clock-time" catalysed the replacement of seasonal temporal rhythms with quantification and universalization (2006:123). This growing use of chronometer time to order lives

and interactions (Thrift 1981) led to a different and more intense awareness of time (Dodgshon 2008). Framed through a historical association with industrialization and capitalist development, efficiency and profitability became linked to maximizing output in the minimum amount of time and, within this view, speed and efficiency became valorized (see Rosa 2003:3, Rosa and Scheuerman 2009).

Whilst some scholars continue to debate the heterogeneity of non-Western modernities and their differences vis-à-vis the Euro-American template (e.g. Kaviraj 2005, Rofel 1999), others have pointed toward modernity as a singular, global phenomenon which is both multicentric and locally nuanced (Osella and Osella 2006a:570, see also Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal 2003, Prasad and Breckenridge 1998). What emerges strongly from these debates is the idea that aspects of modernity, and by association temporal subjectivities, are experienced differently across space. Ciotti (2010), drawing on fieldwork in North India, articulates these points clearly in her discussion of the messy boundary between metropolitan and urbanizing areas. These boundaries are not mutually exclusive and separate, but instead "represent a web of juxtaposed fields of power, economies, and identities" (Ciotti 2010:16). She adopts Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal's (2003) framework of "regional modernity" in order to capture "the geographical plurality of the production of modernity in its temporal and institutional variations" (see Ciotti 2010:17). The utility of this framework, she argues, is that it "renders fluid the frameworks within which the study of modernity is inscribed (constrained in terms of time, space, and culture) to allow

the possibility for different modes of agency and structural entanglements" (Ciotti 2010:17).

These ideas concerning the space-time of modernity link to geographical work on the temporal values assigned to particular spaces. Urry (1990), for example, considers the "fast pace" associated with UK city districts, which helps maintain their economic value. This conceptualization embodies the popular account of metropolitan life as one of increasing pace (see also Crang 2003). In the Indian context parallel observations have been made regarding the fast pace associated with urban middle class culture versus a slower and insecure world of low-paid informal work (Rogaly and Thieme 2012). Jeffrey's (2010b) research, drawing on fieldwork conducted in 2005, highlights how young men's experiences of temporal disjuncture were intensified by "the buzz of metropolitan India" (2010b:471). His analysis elaborates on young men's performances of a youth culture built around the notion of "timepass", which reflected their disappointment in being unable to acquire salaried work or travel and start a family, in addition to the "sense of loss that accompanies being removed from spaces associated with modernity and development" (2010b:477).

The Indian middle classes are often considered to be the "leading proponents of modernisation" (Prakash 1999:235); attributes commonly deemed characteristic of being middle class in India - such as technology, education, and spatial mobility (see Donner 2012, Fuller and Narasimhan 2007, Srivastava 2006) - are also implicit in theories of modernity. While there is now a detailed literature examining the impacts of neoliberal transformations and emergence of a "new"

urban middle class in India (e.g. Fernandes and Heller 2006, Sridharan 2004, Corbridge and Harriss 2000), its plurality has been noted "not only in terms of economic position and consumption practices but also in terms of status and values" (Donner and De Neve 2011:3). Being "middle class" evokes a discourse of modernity whereby individuals are imagined as cosmopolitan urban citizens whose success ties to their accumulation and deployment of several forms of cultural capital, including educational credentials and fluency in English (see Belliappa 2013:51). Additional to this are a set of more embodied attributes such as the ability to successfully interact with people outside of one's caste group, exposure to metropolitan lifestyles, and familiarity with a broader range of cultures and languages (Ciotti 2012:14).

Indian youth are often the most ambitious pursuers of a middle class consumerist lifestyle, embodying the hopes and desires of the sub-continent as they "struggle to obtain the requisite consumer products and enter the new forms of labour which enable this consumption" (Nisbett 2007:936). Tracing back to the rise of liberalization, images of white-collar middle class success gained traction; those of "the affluent consumer, who has finally achieved the ability to exercise choice through consumption" (Fernandes 2000:88, see also Jeffrey 2010a). Young people are increasingly exposed to these idealized cultural discourses, which proliferate across rural contexts by way of print and social media, television, and cinema (Chakraborty 2015, Dwyer 2010, Fernandes 2000). This correlates to a much broader heteronormativity associated with Indian modernity - in particular the emergence of a post-20$^{th}$ century "man of substance - the man with financial

resources, earning power, a network of dependents" (Osella and Osella 2006b:3, see also Young and Jeffrey 2012, Jeffrey 2010a, Nisbett 2007).

In examining the ways in which young people navigate these idealized types of masculinity scholars have engaged productively with Connell's (1987) notion of "hegemonic masculinity", which theorizes the plurality of masculinities whilst maintaining an appreciation of the power relations in which identities are constructed and performed (see also Hopkins and Noble 2009). Hegemonic masculinity is defined as a set of practices of dominance that coalesce around an idealized type of masculinity as the desirable goal (Osella and Osella 2006b), and which are constructed "in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women" (Connell 1987:183). Connell outlines masculinities that are complicit with hegemonic masculinity, marginalized by it, or subordinated to it. The masculinities that an individual or a group of men perform intersect with, but are not reducible to, other dimensions of identity such as class, sexuality, and race.[4]

This framework has been applied to research on educated Indian youth. Jeffrey and colleagues (2008), researching in North India, examined how young men invested in hegemonic visions of "educated" and "civilised" manhood, which were neither straightforwardly "hegemonic" nor "oppositional" in Connell's sense. Rather, they sought to demonstrate the value of mainstream schooling outside markets for government jobs; "to be educated was to be on the side of modernity,

[4] Connell's conceptual framework has received criticisms for its apparent implication of a typological structure which are identified by a series of traits or attributes (see, for example, Moller 2007, Whitehead 2002, and a subsequent response by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005)

development, and progress" (2008:73). Connell's framework, and the consequential critiques (see Hopkins and Noble 2009), are useful for thinking through how young men in rural Gujarat might reproduce, undermine, and transform masculine discourses circulating at various scales; from a local micropolitics defined by social axes of caste, class, and gender, through to the ways in which they embody particular gendered visions of modernity and "middleclassness" circulating at the regional level across India.

In contemporary India, the last decade has seen dramatic shifts in educational enrolment among rural populations. Young men and women from lower class and low caste SC and ST families, and upwardly mobile OBC families, especially, are increasingly enrolling in and completing higher education as diverse social groups pursue projects of social reform (see Cross 2014, Nakassis 2013, Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India 2011a). Attributed in part to policies of affirmative action in India, between 2001 and 2011 the gross enrolment ratios of SCs and STs in higher education grew by 133 and 167 *per cent,* respectively (MHRD 2015). These broader trends are reflected in the case of rural Gujarat, where this demographic is prolonging the formal education of male and female offspring in secondary and higher education (ASER 2014). I now turn to a discussion of empirical material collected in rural Gujarat across 2014 and 2015.

## 4. Distinction and Temporal Tactics

> [Gesturing toward a group of young men] They just sit all day, revving their bikes. The engines give that *chut chut…chut* sound. Every *chut* you hear is like them printing the receipt in the city [super]market. Every *chut*…is like the bike coughing out 1 Rupee!…They keep ripping up money. For them it's just *timepass*…but not boys like us. Today, I am in a rush (*āje, māre tori utāvala che*).[5]
>
> Parthiv, 25 years (Field notes. February 2015)

In Kota it was common to encounter large groups of males engaging in relaxation (*ārām*); both elderly farmers and village youth sat sharing shade together underneath the dilapidated concrete bus stop at the centre of the village. Whilst the farmers would usually be seeking refuge from the afternoon heat before an early evening stint in their fields, for many of the young men from well-to-do backgrounds in Kota, *ārām* was a full time occupation. For the best part of the day they would lounge about with their peers (see also Gidwani 2000), smoking *bidī* (local cigarettes) and chewing *pān* (wrapped betel leaf with condiments), occasionally venturing into the nearby city to check in on the family business whilst refilling on salty snacks from stalls near Navsari train station.

"They ride [Royal Enfield] Bullets but they are not *going* anywhere", Parthiv grumbled over his shoulder to me as we passed through Kota on his scooter. He gestured over to a group of OBC youth passing time by the bus stop. "Their money comes from land left by older generations (*pedhī*) and family businesses in the city.

[5] All quotations constitute the author's own translation of conversations in Gujarati. Use of italics indicates a verbatim account. Square brackets indicate editing for anonymity, or behavioural notes.

They do not do much work. For them, life is easy." Parthiv is a Koli Patel, a Hindu OBC population living in the village. Aged 25, he has a Bachelors of Commerce degree from a government college in Ahmedabad city. Typical of upwardly mobile OBC, SC, and ST families, Parthiv's parents had invested heavily in his and his brother's school and college education only to find that their offspring were unable to enter into salaried work (see also Mitra and Verick 2013). As Parthiv's disgruntled elder brother expressed to me one evening, "if you want government employment (*sarkāri nokrī*) it's all about who you know. Even if you are clever you need to know big men (*motā mānaso*) to obtain employment work like that."

Parthiv is part of a much larger cohort of educated young men in Kota from marginalized backgrounds whose formal educational had not translated into secure work in Navsari city, a result of which was an abundance of spare time common to studies of unemployed men in the Global South (e.g. Mains 2007, Katz 2004). Whilst this observation of temporal disjuncture is nothing new, what emerged as intriguing was that, despite being faced with the overabundance of surplus time common to many of their peers in Kota, these educated youth persistently engaged with symbolic registers of time in order to express a sense of speed, urgency, and productivity. Among this cohort, use of the Gujarati word for haste (*utāvala*) featured prominently in everyday conversation, so much so that a set of shared dispositions emerged strongly around what I describe as a hasty (*utāvaliyo*) culture in Kota.

In the context of the village these *utāvaliyo* dispositions manifested in two key senses. The first revolved around marginalized young men seeking to distinguish

themselves socially from the idleness of youth from economically wealthier FC and OBC families. These were often perceived as idle and commonly described using derogatory phrases; one SC young man drew out the long "ohh" sound of the Gujarati word for "no" (*koi*), telling me "they have no sense of urgency (*enā koi utāvaḷa natī*)", whilst sailing a flat hand slowly through the air to imply a type of coasting. Instead, *utāvaliyo* young men imagined themselves as productive and enterprising, typified by the following statement from one young man: "My friends and I are always thinking ahead to the next job and the job after. Others in the village? They only think about filling their belly, that's it! (*bas!*)." This inherent rejection of "timepass" cultures was predicated strongly on a sense of familial obligation. In conversation, *utāvaliyo* youth commonly acknowledged the considerable economic investments parents and siblings had made in their higher education (see also Cross 2014:140). It was a common sight, for example, to see female siblings working in casual labour in order to contribute toward college fee payments, a form of gendered subordination reminiscent of household-based gendered sibling power relations elsewhere in India (e.g. Anandhi *et al.* 2002:4404). In addition, among these OBC, SC, and ST households, young men's enrolment in higher education and the secondary costs of education had often fully depleted their families' economic portfolios and, as a result, young men commonly felt pressured to contribute.

Second, and relatedly, the everyday performance of *utāvala* when moving through the village entailed making overt references to busy schedules and paid work in the future. These performative social practices entailed young men's conscious efforts to acquire a reputation in and around the cluster of villages of being able to

"get things done". Whilst more affluent youth in Kota often projected ideas of shameful employment, valorizing their educated identities, *utāvaliyo* young men in Kota actively shed notions of certain shameful types of work. One informant expressed disdain toward those more idle than himself, telling me "work is available, it is just that you should not feel ashamed to do it (*kām to male, khālī sharam nī hovu joi*)". The example of Ashwin is instructive. Ashwin, a 26-year-old educated ST youth, had gained a Bachelors degree in Commerce from a government college in Ahmedabad. Unable to find salaried work in the city he had returned to his natal home in Kota where he was now engaged in a range of infrequent semi-skilled work, which required a straddling between rural and urban spaces. Ashwin proudly used the English term "all-rounder" in describing his versatility as "a building *contractor*, land agent, private *driver*, business *dealer*, and illicit alcohol (*dāru*) trader", types of work that were actively shunned by more affluent FC and OBC young men.

Young men's performative social practices were therefore derived from their socially and economically marginalized positioning. As the examples of Parthiv and Ashwin highlight, despite similar structural conditions of educated unemployment young men's discursive engagement with time were not homogeneous and varied according to their structural positioning within the village: a situated example of relative space-time in Harvey's (2006) terms. Their utilization of temporal references to speed and futurity were underpinned by interlinked economic and social factors at both the individual and familial levels. These practices, I argue, are usefully conceptualized as being tactical in nature; marginalized young men engaged creatively with temporal disjuncture in order to challenge the idle

*timepass* discourse circulating among more affluent OBC and FC young men and garner social advantage. In constructing time as an advantageous and productive resource, their temporal tactics sought to "manipulate events in order to turn them into 'opportunities'" (De Certeau 1984:xix). This reading of young men's everyday practices reflects the subversive and opportunistic nature of young men's temporalities in Kota.

What was particularly striking about young men's temporal references were the ways in which, in addition to economic and social factors at individual and familial scales, they actively appropriated and engaged with a middle class cultural discourse circulating more broadly across metropolitan India. As well as cost-effective attempts to acquire the latest fashionable clothes from retail outlets in Navsari (see also Nisbett 2007), *utāvaliyo* young men in Kota punctuated their everyday conversation with distinctly urban linguistic references. This included phrases such as "jumping the *queue*" and "[ticket] *numbers* coming early", idioms that conveyed a temporal familiarity with urban, middle class spaces such as shopping malls, restaurants, and coffee houses (see Gilbertson 2014:138). These observations are distinctive, I argue, as they held little pragmatic utility in the rural context. Rather, they were conscious attempts to cultivate distinction by way of deploying a specific cultural identity by way of using the English terms "queue" and "number", in addition demonstrating to a familiarity with metropolitan lifestyles.

Such pervasive references to the pace of life associated with metropolitan and middle class India recollect Urry's (1990) theorization of the spatiality of time.

Examining tourism in the United Kingdom, Urry conceptualized the "zoning" of spaces according to the particular quality of their time. He argued that new social divisions emerge around the temporal scarcities associated with particular spaces, using commuter villages as an example of how "the fast pace of an 'urban lifestyle' helps maintain the prices of the gentrified city district" (Shaw 2003:130, see also Urry 1995). Urry asserted that different spaces are valued based on their subjective and temporal qualities. In Kota, young men appropriated the temporal qualities of metropolitan India in order to enact a cosmopolitan urban sensibility characteristic of a middle class cultural discourse in India (see Belliappa 2013, Ciotti 2012). A middle class linguistic register emerged as crucial temporal tactic for social and cultural distinction. *Utāvala*, therefore, constituted both objective and subjective components and, as a construct, was produced through the relationship between individuals and their wider social, cultural, and economic environment.

## 5. The spatiality of *utāvaliyo* culture

Importantly, whilst broadening the scope of types of work that were conceived of as being acceptable, *utāvaliyo* young men in Kota maintained the value of their formal education by way of refraining from specific forms of casual agricultural and manual labour. This approach was derived on the basis of maintaining both a social distinction from those uneducated peers in the village, who were often from the same caste communities, as well as a refrain from following in the occupational trajectories of their parents' generations. Instead, opportunities for work and economic independence were brokered internally among their network of best

friends (*khāsa mitra*). Although formal education was common among members of this network, rather than institutionalized educational credentials themselves young men placed emphasis on the cultural versatility that they had acquired through formal education in metropolitan Gujarat; the ability to creatively navigate between rural and urban circuits of knowledge and capital was valued and underpinned aspects of positive sociality among these male youth (see Author, In Preparation [Article 2]).

Accordingly, and resonating with Urry's (1995) own analysis, the space of the city was conceived of and valued differently by young men in the village. For youth from FC and affluent OBC families who were not involved in running city-based family businesses, Navsari city was typically a place for "*enjoy*"; somewhere to purchase cheap snacks, top-up mobile phones and an occasional trip to the cinema. For poorer, uneducated youth it was commonly depicted as an unfamiliar territory where the conviviality of the village broke down and hostility was rife. In contrast, *utāvaliyo* young men valorized the city for its socioeconomic opportunities. Far from being the place of the unknown they would use the English word "*local*" when referring to their mobility within the city, implying a sociospatial familiarity and self-identification with the urban and the associated middle class spaces.

The spatiality of *utāvala* manifested in two interrelated ways: the productive investment of an abundance of spare time, and the acquisition and performance of a cosmopolitan sensibility. These ideas were most clearly evidenced in a conversation one afternoon with Anoop, a 27-year-old SC youth with a Bachelors degree in Economics who lived with his parents and younger sister along Kota's

periphery. “Some people don’t want to leave Kota”, he told me, motioning his head toward an OBC young man sprawled over a motorbike, his eyes fixated on his mobile phone. “He is educated but he is a village man (*gām no mānas*), time passes slowly for him. But it is wasted and he has no urgency (*utāvala*). It does not occur to him it is good to make some new connections, spread out his friends circle, meet people, you know?” Anoop shook his head and continued, “If you are *local* like us you can get new business in Navsari and make new *contacts* for work, but they do not care.” His perspective articulates very clearly the ways in which *utāvaliyo* young men prided themselves on their broad social networks within the city. It also speaks to the perceived inefficiency of his educated peers from wealthier OBC and FC families, recalling the notion implicit in theories of modernity that in order to be socially accomplished one must use one’s time productively (Cwerner 2004).

Among young marginalized men like Anoop, therefore, a productive utilization of time served to facilitate an expansion of their social networks in urban spaces, as well as new opportunities for work that they could then broker among their peers. Through investing their time carefully, they sought to obtain valuable forms of embodied cultural capital in Bourdieu’s (1986) terms; a person’s demeanour, mannerisms, and speech. Unable to invest in Bourdieu’s institutionalized or objectified cultural capital by way of prolonging their formal education or investing in material possessions such as flamboyant motorbikes and expensive mobile phones, among marginalized male youth time constituted a crucial resource in defining their ability to straddle Gujarat’s rural and urban social landscapes. Indeed in Bourdieu’s words, the acquisition of embodied cultural capital involves “an effort that presupposes a personal cost, an investment, above

all of time" (1986:48). Faced with an overabundance of time, marginalized Kota youth sought to acquire the requisite skills to traverse geographical and cultural boundaries. A conversation with a friend of Anoop's, a 26 year old Muslim OBC youth named Ibrahim with a B.Comm degree, neatly illustrated this tactical acquisition one afternoon. "If I am in a restaurant with a businessman in Navsari", Ibrahim coached me:

> I take time and let them eat first. Then I *act* like they do. I watch how they eat [motions as if using cutlery]. They should not think, 'Look this man is starved, look how much or how fast he eats.' You should have a *balance* of how you are and how they are - you need to *act* like the big men do or they think 'who is this little man coming to do business here?'

In this manner young men like Anoop and Ibrahim cultivated a social and spatial competency in urban settings (see also Worth 2013), developing something of a middle class habitus in Bourdieu's terms: a set of ingrained dispositions acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life. This ongoing appropriation of middle class behaviours embodied a forward-looking mentality whereby social and economic opportunities in the city required the cultivation of interpersonal skills over a longer period of time, thus contrasting the perceived short-termism of their village peers. The cultural sensibilities embodied in *utāvaliyo* culture among these youth was predicated on an awareness of the temporal qualities of urban spaces and the set of imaginaries and practices that constitute these spaces (see also Gidwani 2006), embodying a sensitivity to difference characteristic of subaltern cosmopolitanism (e.g. Jeffrey and McFarlane 2008, Mitchell 2007, Gidwani 2006).

Yet to make these points is not to suggest that young men's *utāvaliyo* masculinities in Kota were unproblematically hegemonic in Connell's (1987) sense, entailing a straightforward deployment of heteronormative middle class cultural dispositions. Rather, owing to these young men's social and economic marginalization, their ability to procure work and contribute to their family's economic wellbeing meant that young men selectively engaged with the cultural performance of middleclassness. This selectivity is usefully illustrated through the ways in which they mobilized their educational credentials and fluency in English, social practices that are commonly conceived of as distinguishing features among the aspiring Indian middle classes (Cross 2014, Donner and De Neve 2011). Studies have documented how educated young men from middle class backgrounds, who find themselves unable to secure employment, opt instead to invest in visions of "educated" manhood as a means of protection from the threat of "feminization" and as a strategy that allows men to continue their search for "respectable" work (e.g. Jeffrey et al. 2008). In Kota, unable to secure salaried work, marginalized young men sought to dismiss the "educated unemployed" identities of wealthier OBC and FC youth in the village, often actively eschewing their educated identities. Their cosmopolitan performances, for example, extended not only upward toward "big men" from whom they often secured work opportunities, but those "smaller" than themselves whom they often engaged as manual labourers.

This selective construction and performance of educated identities reflects a relational understanding of space as "an ever-shifting social geometry of power" (Massey 1994:3). In spaces within Navsari city itself, young men performed educated identities selectively depending on the nature of their social interactions

with “big” and “small” men, whilst back in Kota educated identities were often invoked as means of dissociating oneself from poorer families and associated forms of unskilled labour. Young men regularly articulated these ideas with pride, commonly invoking the English word “*adjust*” when describing these spatial aspects to *utāvaliyo* culture. Anoop, for example, used the example of his work as a small-scale building contractor in and around the city, telling me:

> It is important to pay attention to little little ways that outsiders speak in the city, especially if they are from different states. Meaning, when I talk to outsider casual labourers or businessmen from UP, Mumbai, other states, it is good if I speak like they do, because then they think I am one of them. You have to *adjust*. They treat you differently.

The ability to *adjust* - in this case using linguistic colloquialisms in Hindi and Marathi - resulted in what Anoop termed as a “better *balance*” between himself and the workers, facilitating a reduction in their daily labour rate and higher quality of work. Acquiring and exercising this broad range of embodied cultural capital held one key aim among young men in Kota; to protect their reputation and, by association, their long-term economic prospects. In the words of one informant, if people are well connected socially and hold a strong name, “their *number* comes early (*enā number jaldī lāgijāi*)” with respect to work opportunities, and administrative and political favours.

Whilst my analysis in this article has focused on the temporal and spatial aspects of young men’s performative social practices, it is necessary to include the caveat that not all young men from OBC, SC, and ST backgrounds subscribed whole-heartedly to *utāvaliyo* culture. This was primarily a result of economic diversity within these classifications. Particularly among the numerically-dominant OBCs in

Kota, a wealthier minority actively sought to emulate the *timepass* lifestyles of higher FC castes, much to the dismay of their older generations (see also Gidwani 2000). A scattering of others resigned to various forms of low-paid casual labour, such as in the diamond factories of Navsari and Surat cities, expressing melancholy at the devaluation of their educational achievements and familial investments (see also Cross 2009). Accordingly, caste was invoked in multiple ways as a means of distinction among *utāvaliyo* young men: in addition to distinguishing themselves from wealthier FC and OBC youth, the same young men also inferred negative references when speaking of their own caste brethren, as illustrated previously through Parthiv's reference to many of his fellow OBC Koli Patel young men as "not *going* anywhere". In addition to differences borne out of caste, the pervasiveness of religious conservatism (and the subsequent tensions) between Kota's Hindu and Muslim communities, especially among older generations, affected the ways in which young men's everyday sociality was performed within and beyond the village (see Author, In Preparation [Article 2]).

## 6. Conclusion

Young men in rural Gujarat perceive of, and engage with, time and temporal disruption in different ways. A focus on young men from socially and economically marginalized Other Backward Class, Scheduled Caste, and Scheduled Tribe communities highlights a culture of speed, urgency, and productivity, typified by pervasive use of the Gujarati word *utāvala*, which translates literally as "haste". The heterogeneity of young men's temporalities supports calls for a focus on performative social practices as a means of unpacking the multiple experiences of

social time (see May and Thrift 2003). Within this view, Harvey (2009) argues that each social formation constructs conceptions of time "sufficient unto its own needs and purposes of material and social reproduction" (1990:419). He recognizes the potential for struggles over the reconceptualization of particular spaces and times, acknowledging these struggles as a source of social change (see also Dodgshon 2008). Importantly, whilst this approach directs attention to young men's subjectivities and agency, this is not to obscure the role of structural inequalities in India; in addition to young men's engagement with a set of middle class dispositions it was their socioeconomic marginalization that served to define their everyday performance of *utāvaliyo* culture.

A focus on the spatiotemporalities of rural young men in India supports the case for further conceptualization of marginalized populations' capacity to confer advantage in contexts of limited opportunity and social exclusion. Drawing on De Certeau (1984) I have conceptualized these performative social practices as a set of temporal tactics - that is, the kinds of action enacted once individuals have been marginalized by various strategies (see McFarlane 2010:366). Educated marginalized male youth in rural Gujarat appropriated time in creative ways in their attempts to challenge and subvert discourses of marginalization. In making this argument the article has highlighted a series of key tactics of resistance to marginalizing discourses, contributing a nuanced perspective to studies of educated unemployed young men in India (e.g. Jeffrey 2010a, Jeffrey et al. 2008, Nisbett 2007). Young men emphasized the intrinsic value of time in their everyday lives, so much so that references to accelerated time constituted a prominent feature of their discourse. Despite being faced with a similar set of structural

conditions of educated unemployment, time was mobilized by these young men both figuratively and literally in their everyday lives. They actively invested their time in cultivating a cosmopolitanism reminiscent of Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan's (2003) circular migrant: "someone who transmits through movements in geographic space not just sensibilities and ideas, but also…the techniques that enable the transformation of social space" (2003:339). In doing so they bolstered their economic opportunities in and around the village and city. I have argued that these temporal tactics aim to reconstitute "the fields of power that regulate their spaces of work, pleasure, habitation, and everyday life" (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003:362).

Simultaneously, young men's language of *utāvala* appropriated temporal aspects of a middle class cultural discourse in order to engender cultural distinction and bolster economic prospects. I have considered this language within the context of the space-time of modernity whereby, through a historical association with industrialization and capitalist development, notions of efficiency and speed became linked with profitability (see Rosa and Scheuerman 2009). The everyday references young men made to "queue-jumping" and "numbers coming early" link to important geographical work on the temporal values assigned to particular spaces (see Urry 1990); despite having little pragmatic utility, young men's social practices constituted an attempt to deploy a specific middle class cultural identity. Geographers of contemporary India have noted the fast pace associated with urban middle class culture in metropolitan spaces (see Rogaly and Thieme 2012, Jeffrey 2010a) and the Indian middle classes are often considered "leading proponents of modernisation" (Prakash 1999). In rural Gujarat, marginalized youth appropriated

the temporal qualities of metropolitan India in order to enact a cosmopolitan urban sensibility.

Held collectively, these temporal tactics hold empirical and theoretical significance when placed alongside current studies of educated unemployed youth in India. Among this scholarship, studies of middle class youth in metropolitan settings demonstrate how cultures of simply passing time ("*timepass*") are often imagined as transitory fun and leisure (e.g. Nisbett 2007), or as something of an inevitability (Jeffrey 2010b). The ethnographic data presented here depict the changing nature of young people's performative social practices that, I argue, reflects a transforming and rapidly privatizing educational landscape across contemporary India. One of the significant demographic aspects of this ongoing privatization has been a growth over the last decade in formally educated young people from rural, lower class, and low caste backgrounds in Gujarat (ASER 2014) and India more broadly (see Nakassis 2013, Cross 2014). In Kota, young men's social practices attested to the significance of this increasingly educated demographic, wherein they sought social, cultural, and economic distinction through a shared set of temporalities predicated upon a shared but exclusionary culture of *utāvala*.

The suggestion that an emphasis on the heterogeneity of temporalities can help us understand the resistive practices of marginalized youth directly addresses the preoccupation with time in scholarly debates over educated unemployed youth, suggesting potential themes for further research among those living rurally. It becomes pertinent to then interrogate the temporality of young people's sociality itself, paying close attention to the ways in which these social practices are

understood and performed by young men. In Kota, aspects of sociality commonly manifested through a language of friendship, yet involved a complex negotiation of multiple and intersecting gender, caste, class, religious, and other social identities. Foregrounding the geographies of friendship among educated unemployed rural youth from marginalized populations could provide a deeper reading in the nature of these solidarities that traverse caste and religious divides and the relationality underpinning these practices, as well as further extending the scope of scholarly work on the everyday social practices of educated unemployed young men.

# Chapter 6. [Article 2]

## The Business of Friendship: Unpacking the Changing Nature of Sociality Among Educated Young Men in Rural Gujarat, India

Friendship continues to occupy a marginal position within human geography. This article responds to calls within the discipline for a greater empirical and conceptual focus on friendship as a form of interpersonal relationship analytically separate from kinship and affinity, through an examination of everyday friendship among educated young men in rural India. Drawing on eleven months of ethnographic research conducted across 2014 and 2015 in Gujarat state, in western India, my primary focus is on the lived realities of a first generation of college-goers from socially and economically marginalized backgrounds. My analysis demonstrates the networked yet highly exclusionary nature of friendship, and the ways in which young men's friendships are deeply embedded within social, economic, and cultural aspirations at various scales. Young men appropriate friendship in order to engage with a middle class cultural discourse circulating at the regional level across India, whilst simultaneously enacting locally normative identities in relation to age, gender, caste, and religion that serves to appease intrafamilial intergenerational relations. In performing these dynamic and multiple identities, young men's friendship practices both traverse and reinforce exclusionary practices emanating from older generations. Illustrating its fluidity, this article highlights the ways in which a greater conceptual focus on friendship serves to enrich our understanding of the complex geographies of human lives.

**Keywords**: *India, youth, education, employment, sociality, caste, kinship*

## 1. Introduction

Friendship plays a central role in processes of socialization and social ordering, casting light on individual emotion and social and cultural well-being (Bell and Coleman 1999). Yet until relatively recently, with a few notable exceptions (e.g. Pahl and Pevalin 2005, Adams and Allan 1998, O'Connor 1998), friendship as an analytical concept featured sparsely across the social sciences. This analytical marginalization was in part due to a preoccupation across the social sciences with more vertical, hierarchical relations of power rather than social bonds that have affirmative dimensions (Bartos 2013, Dyson 2010); a fixation that arose because competition, autonomy, and hierarchical relations contribute to the formation of the neoliberal subject (Brown 2012). In addition to this has been an inclination to consider friendship as floating free of "external" conditions of social and economic life, therein questioning its structural significance (Eve 2002). As anthropologists Desai and Killick (2010) argue, there has long been a tendency to presume that friendship has little chance of flourishing in societies where kinship structures remain strong. Recent work has problematized these notions, instead arguing for friendship as a form of social relation that may be differentiated from, and traverse, kinship and affinity (e.g. Dyson 2010, Froerer 2010, Santos-Granero 2007).

Only over the last five years has friendship begun to gain empirical and conceptual traction within human geography (e.g. Phillips and Evans 2016, Wilkinson 2014, Bunnell et al. 2011). As Bunnell and colleagues (2011) note, geography underpins the formation, maintenance, and dissolution of friendships as well as "the types of

friends that are important within particular space-time settings" (2011:2). Friendships correlate with, but are not reducible to, broader structural categories such as class, gender, and sexuality. As such, human geography's attention to spatialized patterns of diversity places it well to understand the ways in which intimate relationships are embedded in wider social and political formations. Notable foci within this emerging geographical scholarship include attention to the intersection of friendship with sexualities and masculinities (Gorman-Murray 2013), environmental politics (Bartos 2013), and labour migration (Bunnell and Kathiravelu 2016). Within this strand of enquiry studies have identified a dearth of research linking young people's geographies with friendship, in particular its formation, significance, and spatiality (see Bunnell et al. 2011:11). This article develops these geographical themes through a focus on everyday friendship among educated young men from socioeconomically marginalized Other Backward Classes (OBC), Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) backgrounds in rural West India. These are three of the four classifications used by the Government of India in outlining quota-based affirmative action in the form of reserved places in government run colleges and public-sector employment. OBCs are considered socially and educationally disadvantaged, and SCs and STs are indigenous peoples in India considered to be the lowest socioeconomically ranking groups. OBCs, SCs, and STs in contemporary India receive quotas in public sector employment and higher education institutions. By contrast Forward Castes (FCs) are considered socially, educationally, and economically advanced.[1]

[1] For a succinct overview of caste in contemporary India, and its relation to politics and the economy, see Corbridge et al. (2012).

The liberalization of Indian higher education has engendered a wave of first generation college graduates from low caste, lower class, and rural backgrounds. This demographic, comprising primarily OBCs, SCs, and STs, is increasingly investing in education in pursuit of social reform and upward mobility (see Nakassis 2013, Cross 2014, Still 2014). This is both a result of an expanding education sector across India, in addition to a persistent and increasing exposure to media images of education as a key commonality of India's globalizing middle classes (see Donner and De Neve 2011, Fernandes 2000). Yet, among rural populations especially, young people lack both the social connections and economic resources required to secure salaried work (Jeffrey et al. 2008). Thus at the very moment educational enrolment among historically disadvantaged populations has increased, the economic value of education has diminished. As a result, educated young men and women from this demographic typically return to their natal contexts across rural India following their graduation.

The vast majority of studies on the social and cultural practices of educated youth in India focus on middle class young men in college contexts (e.g. Deuchar 2014, Jeffrey 2010a). These studies highlight the egalitarian, albeit temporally and spatially constrained, social practices of young men; among their middle class male peers, the college constitutes a space where young men enact social practices devoid of external logics of kin and caste (Nakassis 2013:256, see also Osella and Osella 1998). As a result what is often suggested in these studies, implicitly or otherwise, is that young men's transgressive social practices have little chance of flourishing in their post-educational landscapes (see Jeffrey 2010b:477, Nakassis 2013), a perspective that accords with the sociological notions of friendship as an

informal and dyadic (see Eve 2002). Moreover, this focus on college settings means that young men's post-educational lived realities risk being neglected.

My intended contribution in this paper is twofold. First, I make an empirical and conceptual contribution to the geographical study of friendship. My analysis foregrounds the ways in which young men's intimate relationships are located within wider social, economic, and cultural formations. As they navigate a post-educational employment landscape, young men's friendships involve the continuous negotiation of multiple and intersecting age, caste, class, religious, and gendered identities. In unpacking this dynamic process of performing identities, I highlight friendship as a series of both transgressive and exclusionary social practices, observations aligning with those who conceptualize friendship as a "contradictory resource" (e.g. Gorman-Murray 2013, Dyson 2010). Second, I advance a body of scholarship on the social and cultural practices of educated youth across South Asia through a focus on the post-educational landscapes of marginalized young men. I argue that increasing educational enrolment among historically disadvantaged populations is changing the nature of young people's everyday sociality. These practices differ from, and must be negotiated across, older generations. My analysis speaks to ongoing debates about education and marginality, turning critical attention to how education among marginalized populations engenders forms of both *inter*- and *intra*-caste differentiation.

Drawing on eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted across 2014 and 2015 in India's westernmost state of Gujarat, I focus my analysis specifically on the

friendship practices of educated young men. This is due to the gendered norms that governed young people's movements in Gujarat; back in their natal context young men maintained the freedom of movement in and around the village required to cultivate friendships freely (see also Frøystad 2005). This is not to say young women were unable to forge friendships. Rather, following their college graduation they returned to the village where their social behaviours and physical movements were once more policed by the family in line with the notions of obedience and domesticity that typically underpin ideas about family prestige, honour, and respect (see Still 2011:1122, Gilbertson 2014). As such, they were unable to maintain the types of cross-class and cross-religious friendships that were enacted during their time in metropolitan Gujarat (see Author, In Preparation [Article 3]).

## 2. Youth, Friendship, and Space

Despite wide-ranging empirical and theoretical work around its multiple forms and parameters (e.g. Roach 2012, Derrida 2005, Giddens 1992), there exists a lack of consensus around a definition of friendship (Spencer and Pahl 2006). Among sociologists, friendship has generally been assumed to be a private and dyadic relationship. As such, it has typically been considered largely to float free of "external" conditions of social and economic life and is therefore deemed to have little or no "structural" significance (Eve 2002). In contrast, studies in anthropology have traditionally seen friendship to be subsumed by kinship, which is often "made to encompass the entire field of sociality" (Santos-Granero 2007:10) with friendship as a subsidiary relation. In India these ideas are further

complicated by the existence of caste, which occupies the primary category around which discussion of social identity traditionally occurs (see Froerer 2010). The privileged position held by caste in the anthropology of India, and the consequential subordination of kinship to caste, has meant that "any consideration of ordinary, non-kin relationships like friendship that may occur beyond (or in spite of) the domain of caste has been largely neglected" (Froerer 2010:134). Yet, relationships of friendship do not necessarily map neatly onto local conceptions of kin and non-kin. Foucault (1997) points out that friendship is an important social formation as it signifies the possibility of functioning outside normative discourses that are not readily located within other social relationships such as marriage (affinity) or the nuclear family (kin). The way in which "friendship acts to express fixity and fluidity in diverse social worlds" (Desai and Killick 2010:1) therefore necessitates the consideration of friendship as a social relation standing in contrast to other forms of social relationship (see also Bunnell et al. 2011).

Accordingly, there as been a recent growth in social-scientific enquiry seeking to afford friendship greater prominence. In thinking through friendship in emotional and affective as well as practical or material terms, there has been a surge in empirical and theoretical geographic work taking a core interest in everyday friendship and intimate relations (e.g. Phillips and Evans 2016, Wilkinson 2014, Bartos 2013, Bunnell and Kathiravelu 2016). Geographers have begun to engage with these efforts, highlighting several important aspects to friendship as a social relation, including the ways in which friendships can go some way in reconfiguring gendered subjectivities (Gorman-Murray 2013), transform unequal structures of power (Featherstone 2008), and the empowering role of friendships among

marginalized groups (Gorman-Murray 2013, Skelton 2000). What emerges strongly from this body of work are the ways in which friendship as an expression of convivial sociality can transcend entrenched boundaries and discrimination (see also Sennett 2012, Johnson and Werbner 2010). Yet this is not to suggest that friendship straightforwardly overcomes difference; as a social relation friendship is bound up with notions of race, class, and sexual and gender dynamics. These studies similarly stress the need to hold in tandem both the boundary-crossing sociospatial relations engendered through friendship, and the ways in which they may reproduce geographies of exclusion (Bunnell et al. 2011:6). Accordingly, friendship plays a key role in the reproduction of broader processes of social ordering and transformation, providing a window into social change and continuity.

Friendship is also a growing focus among several recent studies of childhood and youth, where it "is becoming more important as a basis for social action among children and young people" (Dyson 2010:494). As Bartos (2013) notes, a focus on young people's friendships is highlighted in the ways that young people learn, perform, and resist certain cultural norms across various spaces (see, for example, Blazek 2011, Dyson 2010, van Blerk 2005). These studies foreground the spatiality of friendship, wherein young people's entry into certain spaces may be enabled or constrained by friendships (Skelton 2000); friendships are "produced of lived spatialities that can confer or deny particular freedoms, fears and possibilities" (Bunnell et al. 2011:2). In this vein several studies have examined the ways in which young people narrate and enact boundaries by way of a range of identity markers derived on the basis of the use of space (e.g. Skelton 2000, Morris-Roberts

2004). Morris-Roberts' (2004) study of British schoolgirls, for example, highlights the practice of both inclusionary and exclusionary tactics of friendship enacted through particular spatialities (c.f. Bunnell et al. 2011). This scholarship also highlights the role of friendships in providing non-normative spaces within sites of strong socialization, which can provide space for individuality whilst also reinforcing social ordering.

These ideas of friendship's contradictory implications resonate with recent accounts of children's and young people's everyday friendships in the South Asian context. Perhaps the most comprehensive contemporary account of young people's friendship in the region emerges from Jane Dyson's (2010/2014) ethnographic research on children's everyday work in the Indian Himalayas. Dyson conceptualises friendship as having contradictory implications for marginalized segments of rural Indian society. Among her informants, friendship was primarily imagined as a relationship of trust and affection that simultaneously facilitated effective labour and was formed through that labour. Whilst young girls conceived of friendships as engendering a sense of social freedom whereby they could experiment with identities, friendships were relatively fragile and tended to reproduce broader ideas about social difference predicated upon caste hierarchies in India (see also Froerer 2010). High caste girls did not befriend lower caste girls owing to the physicality of everyday work, as well as the work routines of different caste groups. What also emerges as significant in Dyson's research are the ways in which gendered ideas about age and maturity circulating among family networks structure the nature of young girls' friendships. Attention to these normative discourses and the ways in which they are appropriated by young people is central

to thinking through the nature of young people's friendships; as Bartos (2013) notes, children in some ways practice a "pre-reflexive politics since they do not occupy the same rights and responsibilities as adults" (Bartos 2013:20). Given that the social relations significant in the lives of children and young people tend to be positioned close by - in the form of family, friends, and sites of schooling and leisure (Hopkins 2015) - it becomes pertinent to critically evaluate the impacts of familial relations upon the formation of young people's friendships (see also Hopkins and Pain 2006).

In the Indian context, studies of youth college cultures and the peer group in spaces of higher education offer valuable insights into the spatiality of young people's sociality and its contradictory implications (e.g. Nakassis 2013, Jeffrey 2010a). Whilst not overtly expressing an analytical focus on friendships, this body of scholarship highlights several important aspects of young men's sociality. In particular, they stress the college space as being located geographically away from the family; college emerges as a space "where transgression and experimentation with alternate norms of status and authority [unfolds]" (Nakassis 2013:256). In these spaces, affirmative social practices among young men depended upon the bracketing, and consequential traversing, of kin and caste hierarchies. The emergence of caste among the peer group "was always as a disruption to what these young men understood as how youth sociality in the college was *supposed* to work" (*ibid.,* emphasis in original, see also Jeffrey 2010a, Nisbett 2007). Thus young people's college education is envisaged as a duration for the creation of, and experimentation with, new modes of sociality (Lukose 2009, Parameswaran 2002). This draws far-reaching parallels with research on youth in higher education

further afield; a study on a British university campus by Andersson and colleagues (2012), for example, highlights the role of "contact with difference" (2012:503) during college years as having the potential to reshape social behaviours. Yet in India these ideas are complicated by the existence of caste as the principal structure of social identity (see Lambert 2000), and studies emphasize the temporality and spatiality of these affirmative forms of male sociality; cross-caste and cross-religious solidarities lacked a durable form and were assumed to have broken down once young men returned to their respective homes in rural areas (Jeffrey 2010b).

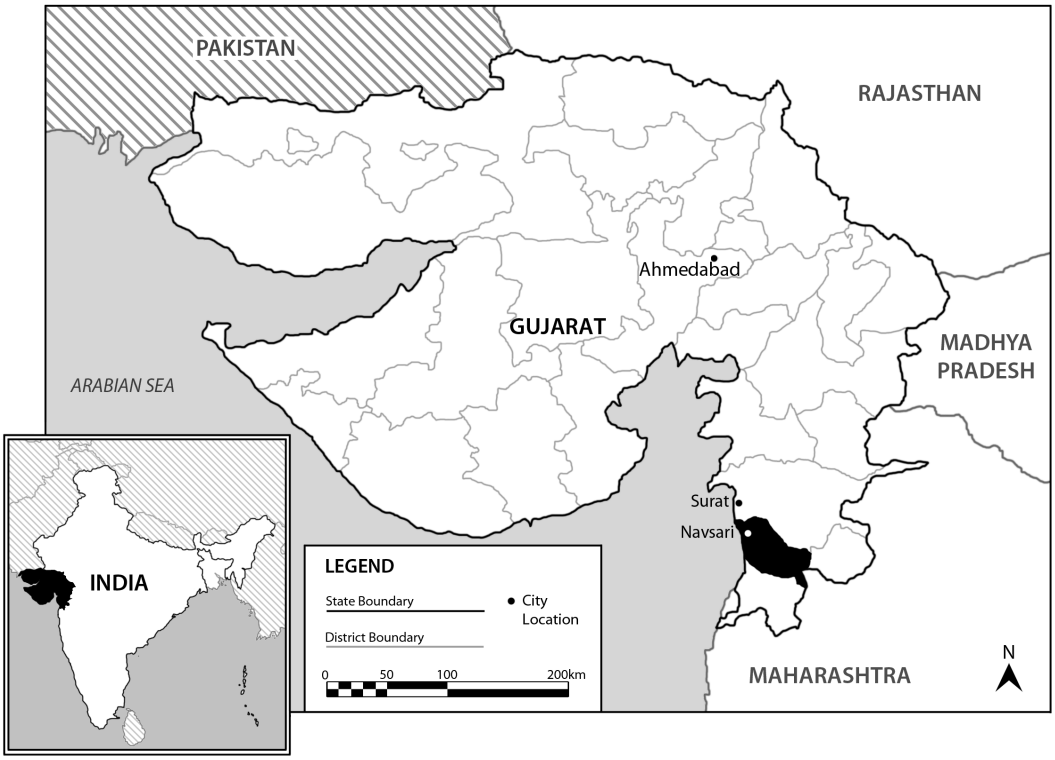
A focus on the friendship practices of college-educated underemployed young men from marginalized backgrounds that have returned to their natal contexts thus constitutes an important contrast to the relative spatial and temporal isolation within studies of youth and the peer group in college spaces (Deuchar 2014, Nakassis 2013, Jeffrey 2010a). The last decade has seen increasing rates of educational enrolment among young men from rural, lower class, and lower caste backgrounds (see Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India 2011, Nakassis 2013), a trend reflected statistically across rural Gujarat (see ASER 2014). Yet the social practices of this demographic in post-educational settings remains under-examined. What is the nature of everyday friendship among educated marginalized young men in rural India, and to what extent does a return to the natal context influence the formation of these friendships? In seeking to answer this question, this article adopts a relational approach to experiences and negotiations of friendship, caste, and kin. My particular interest rests in examining the *intra-* and *inter*-generationality undergirding young men's practices of

sociality; that is, the relations and interactions within and across age and generational groups (Hopkins and Pain 2007:289). Understanding the nature of young men's sociality and the ways in which these might contravene kin and caste logics circulating among older generations addresses calls for critical ethnographic work that aims to understand how broader social and economic change manifests at the level of the individual (Jeffrey and Dyson 2008, Jeffrey et al. 2004). In the next section I introduce the case study and methodological approach for my research. This is followed by a discussion of empirical material on the nature of young men's everyday friendships and the intergenerational transmission of social identity.

## 3. The Study

My analysis draws on eleven months of ethnographic research in rural Gujarat, India. In particular, the project focused on aspects of education, employment, local politics, and personal relationships among young men and women in the South Gujarati district of Navsari (see Map 6.1). The Indian state of Gujarat has taken an entrepreneurial approach toward education since Indian Independence in 1947, legislated most recently in the 2009 Private Universities Act (Government of Gujarat 2009). This ongoing liberalization of higher education has seen a shift among students from higher-class families into engineering institutions and, consequentially, an influx of first-generation students from rural, lower class, and low caste backgrounds into liberal arts colleges (see ASER 2014), a trend reflected more broadly across India (see Nakassis 2013, Lukose 2009).

My methodological approach was based on ethnography, an approach well placed to interrogate the formation of new bonds of trust, reciprocity, and sociality (see Dyson 2010, Mills and Morton 2013). For several months across 2014 and 2015 I lived in Kota[2], a medium sized village with a population of around 1700 living in 420 houses. In establishing this case study I wanted to settle on a village in which agriculture was the primary means of livelihood, and which constituted a representative mix of FCs, OBCs, SCs, and STs. Whilst living in the village I engaged in participant observation with young people and their parents, grandparents, and siblings. I also conducted 260 interviews in Gujarati, with 86 repeat informants: 47 men and 39 women. Of the 47 male informants, 6 were FC, 20 were OBC, 11 were SC, and 10 were ST.




**Map 6.1** Context map locating Navsari district and Gujarat state in India, *author's own*

[2] The name of the case study village has been altered to maintain anonymity.

In Kota, livelihood strategies were largely homogeneous across caste communities, from casual agricultural labour among poorer unlanded ST and SC families, through to subsistence agriculture among middle-ranking Hindu castes with small-medium landholdings, and owning and running small city-based business such as internet cafes and clothing stores among wealthier Hindu castes. Primarily a Hindu village, Kota also had a small Muslim population in the form of an OBC caste whose livelihoods revolved around herding livestock and butchery. These caste and religious distinctions also manifested physically through a spatial hierarchy across the village whereby the wealthiest Hindu families lived in large concrete houses in the centre of the village, whilst SC and ST communities lived in smaller wooden-framed makeshift homes along Kota's periphery.

Across different caste communities, educational strategies constituted an important marker of social difference. Formal schooling was introduced in Kota in the mid-1960s. During this time, SC and ST populations were largely excluded from schooling and viewed it as being largely unnecessary. Indeed many poorer SC and ST families still discuss schooling in terms of the "opportunity costs" involved; that is, the sacrifice of unpaid domestic labour (Mukhopadhyay and Seymour 1994:9). These ideas are reflected in Kota's largely illiterate adult SC and ST population, and the types of unskilled manual labour constituting their livelihood strategies. Among numerous upwardly mobile SC, ST, and OBC households, however, secondary and higher education is increasingly envisaged as a crucial social and economic strategy. As such, over the past decade families have been increasingly investing in the continued education of both male and female children in the local

and nearby private secondary schools, as well as colleges located in Gujarat's metropolitan centres of Navsari, Surat, and Ahmedabad.

Following the completion of their degrees the vast majority of SC, ST, and OBC young men and women found themselves returning to Kota. For young men this was often a result of their inability to acquire salaried work in the city, combined with a lack of economic capital within their family that was required to fund their city-based search for employment. In the case of young women, female education was often conceived of by parents as a matter of status rather than economic benefit (see Author, In Preparation [Article 3]) and commonly envisaged as a strategy for improved marriage prospects (see also Still 2011, Dyson 2010).

## 4. Friendship, Business, and Reciprocity

The most salient characteristic among the social practices of marginalized young men in Kota was the equating of friendship to business. In navigating a post-educational landscape marked by social and economic uncertainty and insecurity, as well as pressing familial demands, numerous educated male youth have come together to enact an exclusionary friendship network. The case of Ilesh[3] is illustrative. 27 year old Ilesh is from an economically poor Hindu OBC family living in Kota. Having gained a BA (Economics) degree from a government college in Ahmedabad, and unable to find secure employment, in 2011 he had returned to his natal home where he was currently living with his parents, grandmother, and older

[3] All informant names are pseudonyms.

brother. He was now engaged in infrequent semi-skilled forms of work, including work as a building contractor, private driver, and land agent. Ilesh's predicament was common to the vast majority of educated male youth from SC, ST, and OBC families in Kota. One afternoon we were walking out along the periphery of Kota when a friend of his, an ST youth named Kishor, rode past on his bicycle. After a brief jovial exchange Kishor cycled off. Motioning to a now distant Kishor, Ilesh turned to me and expressed gravely:

> I am always testing my best friends (*khāsa mitra*). You have to remember what they were like in the past and imagine what they will be like in the future. I remember everything, and if I pass them some work or help them, they should help me too…If not then I confront them. Why? Because it's business, you know?

At first brush this highly pragmatic conception of friendship appears to overlap with observations on friendships elsewhere across India that friendship encapsulates a reciprocal relationship. Ciotti (2008), for example, invokes the North Indian expression *len-den* (take and give) in her discussion of a cross-caste and cross-religions friendship between two men in central India. She outlines a system of reciprocity inscribed "in an intricate web of social relations which are ever reinforced by the exchange" (Ciotti 2008:9). Friendship in this instance "is characterized by the emotional support that the two individuals gain in their everyday activities" (Ciotti 2008:10), which leaves little room for the influence of hierarchical principles along the lines of caste or religion. Yet a closer look at young men's sociality in Kota reveals a much more nuanced set of intersecting "vectors of relationality" (Hopkins and Noble 2009) - notably caste, religion, gender, and age-identity - which serve to define the varying ways in which educated young men articulate their everyday friendships in Kota.

Over the course of my research I moved across different spaces between the village and city. This included individual households, smaller public spaces within different caste localities, and the larger public expanse of the local bus stop. What emerged as intriguing were the ways in which young men's friendship practices were articulated variably across these spaces. Their social practices paired in stark contrast to observations on affirmative youth cultures circulating among middle class youth in metropolitan India, in which young men's social practices are described as egalitarian, openly traversing caste and religious divides (e.g. Nakassis 2013, Jeffrey 2010a). A common reference invoked among these studies is of young men's appropriation of urban public spaces, such as tea stalls, where they enact social relations in a similar fashion to that of the Bengali *adda. Adda* is both a space of male social exchange and "a practice of friends getting together for long, informal, and unrigorous conversations" (Chakrabarty 1999:110). These social practices involve the sharing and circulating of material possessions and economic wealth, often referred to as "treating" (Nisbett 2007). *Adda* as an institution, Chakrabarty (1999) suggests, supersedes all ideas of need or utility and in its modern form of public life. It is "oblivious to the materiality of labour in capitalism; and, in its middle-class form, it is usually forgetful of the working classes" (Chakrabarty 1999:111). In this way, we might conceive of the practices of sociality circulating among young men in metropolitan, educational settings as being an ostensible manifestation of middleclassness among youth who are in a position of relative social and economic privilege (Nisbett 2007, Jeffrey 2010a).

In contrast, cross-caste and cross-religious friendships among young marginalized men in Kota were deeply entwined with their everyday economic lives. Given the significant economic investments their families had made in their education, marginalized young men typically felt under great pressure to contribute toward their family's economic portfolio. Friendships, and the economic opportunities they presented, emerged as a key source of economic gain whereby young men's acts of sociality were often underpinned by a strong sense of utility; a strong disinclination toward the institution of *adda.* This idea of the utility of friendship came across especially strongly during individual conversations with male youth. The case of Ashwin is instructive. Ashwin, aged 26, is the eldest of three siblings to an ST family living along Kota's periphery. Having gained a B.Comm degree at a college in Ahmedabad, he had returned almost immediately following his graduation to live once more in his natal home. Resisting pressures from his father to join him in manual labour, Ashwin had initially relied upon occasional but better-paid pieces of infrequent work offered to him by a friend, a fellow ST graduate living in the same cluster of houses. As time progressed, Ashwin gradually began to build up his "*friend circle*", making his own "*contacts*" in the city and neighbouring villages and was now engaged in a range of infrequent semi-skilled work such as illicit alcohol (*dāru*) trading, working as a small scale project manager for construction work, and acting as a private driver. For Ashwin, friendship was the key to economic prosperity. He told me

> My *friend circle* is solid. Everyone has my mobile number, if they call I will answer. My name is strong like that, because they know I will help them. But I have to keep them sweet (*modu mitu karvā pade*) by giving work too. If there is some piece of work I cannot do or which is of a lower value (*kimmata*), I give it to them.

This foregrounding of the utility quotient of young men's friendship stands in contrast to studies elsewhere, in which adult males stressed how utility was not a motivating or perpetuating factor (e.g. Frøystad 2005). In observing conversations among Ashwin and his friends, what emerged strongly was both the plurality and exclusivity of these friendship networks. Whilst young men like Ashwin and Ilesh spoke of broad friendship networks across SC, ST, and OBC communities in Kota, invoking strongly affective linguistic idioms such as "best friends" (*khāsa mitra*) and "my boys" (*mā poirā*), these networks were derived upon the basis of a communal reciprocity and were only open to those who were able to contribute effectively. There was a stark difference between being identified as a friend (either by invoking the English word itself or its Gujarati equivalent (*mitra*)) and being merely a "*contact*" – an impersonal term of acquaintance. Most commonly, effective contribution to one's friendship network was characterized by the ability to circulate opportunities for short term and semi-skilled labour, which required an existing network of "*contacts*" in surrounding villages and the city who could offer such work. Ashwin, for example, told me "I have to give work back too or they think, "he takes, but does not give?". If I keep my *friend circle* sweet by giving work, everyone is happy and I also find work." His reflection articulates very clearly the networked nature of young men's friendships in Kota, challenging preconceived ideas of friendship as straightforwardly dyadic relations (e.g. O'Connor 1998) and instead supporting the significance of friendship clusters or groupings (Eve 2002, see also Bunnell et al. 2011). Moreover, the paradigmatic sociological perspective considers friendship as having little structural significance (e.g. Werking 1997); my analysis here directs attention to friendship as embedded within, and integral to, the broader economic life of the village.

In seeking to maintain the exclusivity and economic value of friendships, Ashwin and his peers actively policed those within this social network. Whilst networks were broad, a common refrain among young men was that a larger set of friends resulted in the dilution of opportunities for work. As such, the effective maintenance of a useful and functional friendship network required an active policing on the part of young men; commonly, those who were deemed unable to contribute were actively excluded from networks. This policing took place as a collective; rather than the social bond of friendship being cut between two individuals, those unable to fulfil the social or economic requirements of friendship in Kota were progressively ostracized from the friendship network as a whole. Over the course of my fieldwork I witnessed the policing of several individuals from this friendship group - young men such as Imran. Imran, aged 27, was an only child to an OBC Muslim family in Kota. One evening I was sat with Ashwin and several of his friends at the bus stop area in the centre of Kota. Having previously been a prominent member of their friend circle, Imran's friendship status was now precarious and at risk; there were reports of abrasive behaviour when dealing with another young man's contacts in Navsari city and he had been monopolizing his own contacts in favour of personal gain rather than the friendship network's requisite economic reciprocity. In voicing his concerns Ashwin used a culinary metaphor to convey this lack of mutuality, telling me "[Imran] comes to eat from our plate (*thālī*), but nowadays he does not bring any food."

Over the following weeks Imran was progressively excluded both socially and economically from the grouping of friends in Kota. Ashwin pivoted his flat hand dismissively, telling me, "I told my contacts not to deal with him anymore, he is

spoiled now (*bagarigayo*)." When asked if Imran was still a friend, he replied, "What friend? (*Friend kyā?)*. He is just a man." This descriptive demotion from "friend" to being "just a man", used collectively by Ashwin's friend group when conversing about Imran, signalled in linguistic terms Imran's removal from this friendship circle. Imran's case also highlights the social and cultural significance of young men's friendships. When discussing his waning friendship, Ashwin and friends constantly lamented Imran's inability to behave appropriately when dealing with contacts in the city. In Ashwin's terms, Imran had repeatedly demonstrated a lack of the correct "*balance*" when conducting business with contacts in urban spaces; a distinctly middle-class sensibility predicated upon a set of social and cultural dispositions cultivated during their experiences of higher education and duration of time spent in metropolitan India (see Jeffrey 2010a, Author, In Preparation [Article 1]).

One of the consequences of this exclusionary nature of friendship practices was young men's constant need to maintain their value within the group. Raju, for example, was a 27 year old from a Hindu OBC family. On our way into the city to meet a contact of his one evening, he reflected on the fragility of friendships in Kota.

> I do not share these *contacts* with my *friends* in Kota. If I do then what is my own value? You call that bad *business*.
>
> Why*?* (*Kem?*)
>
> Why? Because next time maybe my friends will take my *contacts* and they cut me out.

This constant precarity and, subsequently, the persistent need among young men like Raju to maintain a level of self-interestedness pairs in contrast to studies of adult male friendships elsewhere which denote friendship as being characterized by selflessness in the form of an "unquestioning willingness" to stand up for another (Frøystad 2005). In Kota, age-identity emerged as a salient factor underpinning this self-interestedness among friends. Raju and his friends commonly reflected on their positioning as young males within the family and the overwhelming sense of familial obligation that accompanied. Specifically, young men regularly referenced the economic investments their parents had made in their higher education. These ideas circulated most pervasively among marginalized youth; among those young men who were unable to secure government support, higher education often fully depleted their family's economic portfolio. Thus the friendships among educated young men in Kota intersected with a strong sense of familial obligations.

Given their relocation back to the natal context following the completion of their college education, young men in Kota found themselves constantly negotiating a set of logics of kinship, caste, and religion emanating from older generations (Beteille 1992, Sharma 1986). It is these to which I turn in the next section.

## 5. Friendship, Family, and Performing Identities

What was striking in Kota was that, despite being embedded within their natal context, young men like Ashwin, Raju, and Ilesh engaged in friendship practices that openly traversed caste- and religion-based markers of social difference. These

practices of positive sociality are common to studies of the peer group in metropolitan India where, experimenting with notions of status and hierarchy, young men enact a set of social behaviours imagined by the peer group as egalitarian (Nakassis 2013, Jeffrey 2010a). This work stresses the temporality of these encounters; in Jeffrey's (2010b) research in North India, young men's cross-caste and cross-class social practices "lacked a durable social form" (2010b:477), with friendships breaking down when young men left college spaces and returned to their homes.

Elsewhere, studies of everyday social relations have noted the ways in which adult male's practices of sociality can and do traverse caste divides in a sustained manner in India (e.g. Frøystad 2005). Williams (2015), researching on Hindu-Muslim relations within the silk sari industry in North India, examines the spaces of everyday life - such as neighbourhoods, streets, markets, and buildings - in and through which "peaceful relations find expression across difference" (Williams 2015:179). A shared sense of economic fate, she argues, underpins the sari market as an arena of cooperative intercommunity relations whose existence critically rests upon the perpetuation of local peaceful dynamics. Her work usefully directs attention to the social, cultural, and political contexts within which these peaceful relations were embedded. Notably, whilst not its overt focus, her study does acknowledge the disparities in generational perspectives toward the specific nature of intercommunity relations; in one instance, for example, an older and younger man disagreed over the need for a police presence at a Hindu street procession. Whilst the elderly man suggested the police presence created fear among the communities, a young and more apprehensive bystander suggested that

security was required to prevent intercommunity agitations (Williams 2015:129). Despite parallel notions of economic interdependence underpinning affirmative social practices, what is significant about these studies is their analytical focus on adult males. In the case of Williams' research, informants were often members of "old business families" (2015:97) whereby everyday intercommunity harmony spanned across familial generations. The context of marginalized youth in Kota forms an interesting contrast to this setting, where young men like Ashwin persistently resisted pressures from their parents, most commonly their fathers, to join them in manual labour and in which young people's friendships commonly eschewed the religious- and caste-based conservatism emanating from older generations.

The significance of my own observations in Kota are made clear when young men's friendship practices are located against the perspectives of an older and much more socially and culturally conservative generation of parents and grandparents. Conversations with an older generation of OBC, SC, and ST parents and grandparents made it clear that Kota's caste-based distinctions stemmed from historical patron-client labour relations, known across southern Gujarat as the *haliprathā* system, between the landowning and landless castes in Gujarat (see Breman 1985). One afternoon, for example Mohan, Ashwin's fifty-eight year old father proceeded to reminisce of how for several decades his forefathers, possessing no land, had engaged in a permanent service relationship with a landed FC family in the village. In this historical context, caste as a normative principle of defining collectivities was much more readily apparent, and served to maintain a cultural fragmentation.

Religious difference also resonated strongly throughout conversations with this older generation, and it was most common for a strong sense of religious conservatism to centre around anti-Hindu and anti-Muslim sentiments within the village. Among Hindu castes especially, older generations evoked a deep-seated sense of mistrust toward their Muslim counterparts, often contextualizing their mistrust within regional discourses; a common point of reference was the burning of a train carrying Hindu pilgrims in Gujarat in 2002, which was largely considered the catalyst for several months of inter-communal violence that followed (see Varadarajan 2002).

Young men were acutely aware of these caste and religious-based tensions circulating within their kinship groups and wider caste communities. As a result, they consciously negotiated and performed multiple and intersecting identities as they moved through various spaces within the village. Given the physical stratification of communities in Kota young men like Pritesh, a 27 year old only child to an ST family, felt conscious of discourses of appropriate caste and religious identities circulating within their locality. Pritesh cautioned against causing unnecessary "tension" with his family and community, telling me "I don't bring my friends to the Adivasi [ST] area because it causes *tension* with other families. They see us together and they do not know it is business, so everyone gossips (*badhā vātcit kare*). It is bad for my family name." In this sense, he avoided the performance of intercommunity friendships in the immediate vicinity of his own home, instead strategizing around the "dominant spatial orderings that define who is in place/out of place, who belongs and who does not" (Valentine 2007:19).

Within family spaces, too, young men placed overt emphasis on enacting and maintaining caste and religious boundaries. The everyday policing of their friendship networks constituted a key strategy toward pacifying intergenerational tensions; when Imran, introduced in the previous section, was removed from the friendship cluster, this was appropriated by Ashwin in order to gain legitimacy within the familial context. One evening, as I sat down with the family to eat, Ashwin boldly brought up the topic of Imran's recent expulsion. "I've peeled him away (*Me ene cholikādyo*)", he told his family. He turned to address his father directly. "The Khatkis in [Kota], they have no sense of balance, you know? They are bad people, always dealing in "black money"." Ashwin's father nodded in agreement, "You can't trust them. They act friendly but they only look after other Muslims." Ashwin's behaviour demonstrates the ways in which young men appropriated their transgressive friendship practices in order to reinforce notions of difference within the familial space, thereby appeasing older generations and reinforcing a normative discourse of friendship as business. This performance of identity paired in stark contrast to the public space of the village bus stop, a large expanse of roughly 20 by 25 metres where male villagers often congregated in the early afternoons and evenings. This space, located at the intersection of two main roads cutting through the village, was defined by a much more egalitarian set of social relations among OBC, SC, and ST young men. Whilst not devoid of caste or religious hierarchies, it emerged as a comparatively transgressive space where new identities and modes of sociality could be enacted (see also Lukose 2009, Parameswaran 2002).

Young men's friendship practices also tie to important ideas about age-identity and maturity. Having returned to Kota as graduates, male youth no longer held the same set of social and economic freedoms as they once did and, consequently, found themselves negotiating an age-identity with a much stronger sense of familial responsibility. These ideas came across strongly during conversation with Ilesh, introduced in the previous section:

> When we were in school we never used to go home. We could play with our friends, just roam around. In college we were the same. Even when we came back to [Kota] for Diwali, Navratri, all of that. But now…now we are men in the family, we are a little bigger. We have responsibilities, and in the future we will have *more* responsibilities. My father expects that I will earn money for the family. I can't waste time.

Like Ilesh, other SC, ST, and OBC graduates demonstrated a similar awareness of their familial responsibilities which, given their families' economic standing, bore down most heavily on youth from marginalized backgrounds. His comments demonstrate the intergenerationality significant to young men's transgressive friendship practices. In Kota, the economic benefits of friendship among young men vis-à-vis the semi-skilled work opportunities gleaned enabled young men like Ilesh to make a sustained economic contribution to the household that both appeased parental expectations whilst simultaneously facilitating a refrain from various forms of manual labour.

These gendered age-identities of young men like Ilesh occupy a somewhat liminal space when placed against the transgressive social practices of college-going male youth, who "are not yet prepared to take on their full, casted social identities" (Osella and Osella 1998:191), and adult males who, conceived of as the

mainstream "householders" that focus upon accumulating and consolidating capital for the family group, typically remain distant and formal with "outsiders", limiting social and physical distance (*ibid.*). Young and unmarried male college graduates like Ilesh occupy a space somewhere in-between these age-identities; they lack both the social, economic, and temporal freedoms commonly associated with college youth (see Nisbett 2007), whilst their unmarried position marks them free of any direct dependents. These liminal qualities reflect Turner's (1974) notion of *communitas*, which has been used by geographers in thinking through ideas about the shared experiences that emerge through groups of people experiencing liminality together (see McConnell (2016) writing in this journal). Moreover, Ilesh's parents, like many other marginalized parents who were largely uneducated and illiterate, commonly expressed their inability to comprehend their offspring's ability to consistently gain semi-skilled work opportunities in and around Kota and the nearby Navsari city despite not being in salaried work. Thus young men's everyday friendship practices embodied something of a playful engagement with discourses of appropriate caste and religious identities circulating among their locality in the village, and within the family home. A strong economic contribution to the household economic portfolio afforded them a subversive agency in their embodiment and performance of caste and religious identities in line with familial expectations.

## 6. Educational Transformation and Middleclassness

Thus far, I have considered how young men produce, maintain, and dissolve their everyday friendships across different spaces, and the ways in which these

practices facilitate or constrain the performance of a series of intersecting identities at various scales. In this final section I will take a step back from the micropolitics of young men's everyday friendships to explore how these changing forms of sociality across generations relate to broader social, cultural, and economic transformations occurring in India. Scholars across South Asia examining social relations among marginalized populations have considered the ways in which a shared sense of marginality might underpin adult male's conviviality (e.g. Kathiravelu 2012, Khalaf 2010). Ciotti (2008), in her analysis of Hindu-Muslim friendships, dismisses the idea that adult males' friendships developed purely on the basis of renewed modern forms of untouchability, illiteracy, and a lack of resources, instead stressing the role of mutual exchange and reciprocity. Williams' (2013) research in urban North India highlights how everyday peaceful relations among Hindu traders and Muslim weavers are infused with political and cultural factors operating across different sites and scales. Among young people especially, sociologist Karl Mannheim (1956) famously argued that young people are often located closely to pressing socioeconomic transformations and, consequently, are more likely to engage in novel social and cultural strategies.

In Kota, rather than being united by mutual feelings of exclusion or inferiority, friendships were predicated on a system of reciprocity which went beyond being purely economic in nature and were strongly articulated around social and cultural factors. The policing of young men like Imran, for example, was commonly derived upon their inability to conduct business appropriately with "big men" within new spaces of commodified leisure in the city such as shopping mall, cafes, and

restaurants (see Gilbertson 2014:123). Such deficiencies were often described using the English word "balance", a notion of interstitiality which permeates studies of the cultural politics of the Indian middle classes (e.g. Gilbertson 2014, Donner and De Neve 2012, Radhakrishnan 2011a) as well as those focusing more explicitly on the spatial practices of educated young men (e.g. Young and Jeffrey 2012). This ability to strike a "balance" between rural and urban circuits of knowledge and capital underpinned the successful maintenance of young men's friendships in Kota; beyond straightforwardly carrying out work, male youth who were unable to enact this set of middle class dispositions were socially and economically excluded. Collectively, these social practices recollect a dominant and heteronormative middle class ideal of masculine success predicated on an urban sensibility, salaried work and earning power, and economic independence (e.g. Nisbett 2007, Jeffrey 2010a, Osella and Osella 2006b).

Broader educational trends offer some insight into these changing cultural aspirations among marginalized youth. Since their parents' schooldays, the average SC and ST literacy rates across Gujarat have grown dramatically - from 39.79 and 21.14 *per cent* respectively in 1981, to 79.18 and 62.48 *per cent* respectively in 2011 (Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India 2011a/1981). This bears correlation to increasing educational attainment among marginalized populations across Gujarat (see ASER 2014) and India more broadly (see Nakassis 2013, Cross 2014, Lukose 2009), as historically disadvantaged populations increasingly invest in their offspring's education in pursuit of social mobility. Increasing periods spent in education and metropolitan spaces engenders a constant exposure among rural youth to urban middle class cultural

discourses by way of print and new media, and television and cinema cultures (see Jeffrey 2009, Fernandes 2000). Given their inability to attain the social and economic goods associated with male adulthood characteristic of these middle class discourses (see also Jeffrey 2010a, Cross 2009), the ethnographic data presented highlights friendship as a key site upon which these ideas and aspirations that are constitutive of middleclassness are articulated in the everyday lives of marginalized male youth. Rather than being derived on a straightforward economic basis, friendship becomes a cultural strategy among young men who are unable to realize their aspirations for urban transitions into salaried work.

Moreover, the case of young men's friendship practices also informs wider debates about education and marginalization in India. Studies have highlighted the ways in which education can reproduce inequalities in situations where disadvantaged populations are unable to convert education into formal employment (Jeffrey et al. 2008). More recent research has highlighted the nuanced ways in which education can contribute to new forms of differentiation (e.g. Rao 2010). Higham and Shah (2013), researching among ST youth in East India, consider the ways in which the combined effects of education and affirmative action can produce new class- and caste-based distinctions. Their work acknowledges the "politics of difference" implicit in education whereby, rather than caste dissolving, its salience is maintained through political mobilization and identity politics (see also K.Chandra 2000). Notably, they demonstrate the *intra*-caste differentiation implicit in the ways educated ST youth sought to emulate the behaviours of local elites, thereby subordinating women, older generations, and poorer members of their own caste (2013:736). The data presented here highlights a similar process of internal

differentiation occurring wherein young men's dynamic performance of identity across village spaces engender a form of *intra*-caste differentiation. Those uneducated youth from similar caste backgrounds who were considered to lack the set of dispositions required to cultivate and conduct forms of semi-skilled work in and around the city were actively excluded from these networks.

## 7. Conclusion

Friendship has traditionally occupied a marginal position within human geography research. This paper contributes to recent and ongoing efforts within the discipline to afford friendship greater empirical and conceptual prominence (e.g. Phillips and Evans 2016, Wilkinson 2014, Bartos 2013, Bunnell and Kathiravelu 2016). In focusing on everyday friendship among educated young men from socioeconomically marginalized backgrounds in rural Gujarat, India, I have sought to address calls for further attention to the ways in which young people's friendships "can create new ways of doing identity and challenge social expectations but be subsumed within kin relations and normative gender and age roles" (Bunnell et al. 2011:13). Young men in Kota form broad yet highly exclusionary friendship networks with youth from different caste and religious backgrounds once they return to the village following the completion of their higher education. Rather than epitomizing the Bengali institution of *adda*, which supersedes ideas of need or utility and which is commonly invoked among studies of middle class youth in metropolitan India (e.g. Nisbett 2007, Jeffrey 2010a), a closer examination of friendship practices among marginalized rural youth highlights the utility quotient in young men's everyday friendship. That these

social networks explicitly intersect with everyday social, cultural, and economic life in the village challenges sociological notions of friendship being reducible to dyadic and informal relations (see Eve 2002).

The analyses presented in this article signal the social, economic, and cultural factors underpinning the exclusionary nature of young men's everyday friendships. The everyday circulation and undertaking of semi-skilled work opportunities among young men's friendship networks enabled young men to meet normative ideas about age and maturity at the family level, whilst practices of policing friendships served to pacify powerful notions of caste- and religious-based difference circulating within family and community. At the same time, friendship allowed young men to engage with a middle class cultural discourse circulating more broadly at the regional level in India. They attached considerable social value to the notions of earning power and economic independence implicit in their friendship networks, in addition to an ability to demonstrate a familiarity with urban social and spatial practices derived from experiences of higher education. Accordingly the analysis presented supports a view of friendship that, whilst founded upon a type of reciprocity that goes beyond being purely economic in nature (see Ciotti 2008), is also attuned to the particularities of hierarchical principles borne out of caste and religion. Central to the success of young men's economic and cultural pursuits is an increasing number of first-generation college graduates from marginalized backgrounds.

In considering friendship as a wider series of relationships, the article makes three interrelated contributions toward geographies of friendship. First, it brings into view spatial locations, casting light on the ways in which intimate relationships are

embedded within wider social, economic, and cultural formations. This focus warrants comparison with observations on the social and cultural practices of youth in metropolitan and college settings (e.g. Jeffrey 2010a, Nisbett 2007). Unlike these metropolitan spaces that are often considered as being detached from kin and caste logics (Nakassis 2013), in the rural context what emerged as significant were the dynamic strategies young men invoked in constantly negotiating discourses of appropriate caste and religious identities circulating among their kin and caste locality. My focus has been on a first-generation of educated youth in the years immediately proceeding their college graduation. During this interstitial phase of life they remain unmarried, appropriating an age-identity with a very specific set of familial expectations. My study raises longitudinal questions surrounding whether these forms of transgressive sociality might continue through into the phase of "adulthood" these young men enter upon marriage, as well as their own perspectives on the social practices of their own offspring. Second, in unpacking this continuous process of identity-construction my analysis highlights the range of "vectors of relationality" (Hopkins and Noble 2009) present within friendships in different places and at different times. Young men's everyday friendship entails the dynamic and ongoing negotiation of multiple and intersecting age, caste, class, religion, and gendered identities. This focus on a dynamic performance of identity across different spaces and at different scales of the household, village, and wider city serves to explain the heterogeneity of observations on friendship practices elsewhere in India (e.g. Frøystad 2005, Dyson 2010).

Finally, my analysis supports those who conceptualize friendship as a "contradictory resource" (e.g. Gorman-Murray 2013, Dyson 2010). Young men's

friendship practices both transgress caste and religious boundaries in Kota, whilst simultaneously reinforcing normative ideas about exclusion circulating among their kin and caste communities. Deriving from the economic and cultural value placed on education, young men's friendships engender forms of *intra*-caste differentiation as male youth seek to distinguish themselves from their uneducated (and thus "unskilled") peers. Combined, these observations on the fluidity of friendship practices signal the value of holding friendship as a form of interpersonal relationship that may be differentiated from kinship and affinity (Desai and Killick 2010, Bunnell et al. 2011). A closer focus on non-kin relationships such as friendship, paying attention to notions of scale, space, and identity-formation, can help enrich the complex geographies of human lives.

# Chapter 7. [Article 3]

## Parents, Permission, and Possibility: Young Women, College, and Imagined Futures in Gujarat, India

This article advances critical geographies of youth through examining the spatiality implicit in the imagined futures of young women in rural India. Geographers and other scholars of youth have begun to pay more attention to the interplay between young people's past, present, and imagined futures. Within this emerging body of scholarship the role of the family and peer group in influencing young people's orientations toward the future remain underexamined. Drawing on eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork, my research focuses on a first generation of college-going young women from socioeconomically marginalized backgrounds in India's westernmost state of Gujarat. I draw on the "possible selves" theoretical construct in order to deploy a flexible conceptual framework that links imagined post-educational trajectories with motivation to act in the present. In tracing the physical movement of these young women as they navigate and complete college, my analysis highlights the ways in which particular kinds of spaces and spatial arrangements facilitate and limit *intra*- and *inter*-generational contact, and the extent to which this affects young women's conceptions of the future. I conclude by considering the wider implications of my research for ongoing debates surrounding youth transitions, relational geographies of age, and education in the Global South.

**Keywords:** *youth transitions, India, gender, education, friendship, imagined futures*

## 1. Introduction: Hidden Talents

Sushila is in her early twenties and currently lives in a women's student hostel in Ahmedabad city, Gujarat, where she is a finalist studying for a B.Com degree at a government college. Despite having an elder sibling, she is the first in her family to enrol in higher education. Her migration 280 kilometers away to study in the city was her first prolonged period away from her Scheduled Caste (SC)[1] family back in Kota, a medium-sized village in the Gujarati district of Navsari. Sushila's situation is reflective of a broader trend in Kota in recent years whereby poorer but upwardly mobile OBC, SC, and ST communities have increasingly been investing in the education of their children, especially their daughters.

We first met in mid-2014 after my arrival at the home of a host family in Kota, where I was conducting doctoral research on the nature of social and generational transformations occurring in rural India. Living in a neighboring home, Sushila had returned from college for the Hindu festival of Diwali. Over the course of her three-week vacation our conversations were scarce and impersonal; stringent gendered norms in line with familial and societal expectations meant that she was mostly confined to the immediacy of our housing cluster. She became particularly reticent during group conversations that included her parents, often relegating herself to the shadows and avoiding any direct eye contact. It was only when we later began

[1] The Constitution of India outlines four classifications in implementing policies of affirmative action. Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) are indigenous peoples in India considered to be the lowest socioeconomically ranking groups. Other Backward Classes (OBC) are considered socially and educationally disadvantaged. OBCs, SCs, and STs in contemporary India receive quotas in public sector emplоment and higher education institutions. By contrast Forward Castes are considered socially, educationally, and economically advanced. For a succinct overview of caste in contemporary India, and its relation to politics and the economy, see Corbridge et al. (2012).

to meet up in Ahmedabad that conversations became much freer. One Wednesday afternoon, after a few months had passed, we were sat in the dusty canteen on her college campus. We were joined by three of her female friends including Meena, an only daughter to an SC family also from Kota. Sushila stared frustratingly at the surface of her hot chai, before turning to me and picking up on a recurring topic of conversation:

> "In India if you are a man.. then every man will get a job and earn money. That's it. Nobody will tell them not to. For us, what is it like? We must seek *permission* from our families if we want to work in the future, after our degree. When we marry, there are problems in *married life* and so we will have to throw away our jobs. Men will work in the *police*, *engineering lines*, *banks*, but women will not work. That's how it is after *college* -"
>
> *"*- so whatever *talent* us girls have*,"* interjected Meena, *"*it does not come out (*bahāra ni nikalatum)*"

This article examines the imagined futures of college-going female youth in rural Gujarat, India. Formal schooling constitutes a significant driver in the ambitions of young people and their parents, and is an important aspect of globalization (Jeffrey and McDowell 2004). Yet, despite a growing scholarly focus on higher education in India and increasing female enrolment in Indian undergraduate colleges (World Bank 2016:104) there is a dearth of research examining the lived experiences of young women themselves (Deuchar 2014:144, but see Krishnan 2016, Lukose 2009). This is significant given the multiple forms of subordination faced by young women, especially those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as they navigate formal education. Salient norms around gender shape parental decision-making; in addition to key considerations around economic investment, marriage alliances, and the associated "opportunity costs" (that is, the sacrifice of unpaid domestic labour) (Mukhopadhyay and Seymour 1994), education is often imagined as a

basis for consolidating feminine accomplishments and "improving their capacity to be effective mothers, wives, and household workers" (Dyson 2014:58). Notwithstanding these observations, the perspectives of young women themselves rarely form the centre of analysis in studies of youth and higher education in India. This article seeks to address this deficit, tracing the ways in which young women's pursuit of a college education, and the subsequent temporary migration away from their natal context, influences their orientation toward the future. Rather than focusing intimately on a type of classroom ethnography, I aim to develop a spatial theorization of a social-scientific strand of scholarship on youth transitions concerning young people's imagined futures.

Over the course of eleven months I traced the everyday lives of young people and their families from Kota, encountering numerous young women like Sushila and Meena from marginalized backgrounds. Conversations would often turn into heated discussions surrounding personal anxieties regarding the gendered nature of post-educational employment and marriage. What emerged powerfully throughout my research were informants' varied conceptions of the future; the type of salaried work they would like to obtain, the possibility of continued education, migration to the city, and hopes for personal relationships and marriage. This was paired with a distinct appreciation for the sociocultural and generational realities that served to both enable and constrain their future pathways. Drawing on fieldwork conducted in Gujarat state across 2014 and 2015, my analysis directs attention to the ways in which particular kinds of spaces and spatial arrangements facilitate and limit gendered and generational contact, and the extent to which this affects young women's motivational capacity to pursue

certain conceptions of the future. My central argument is that, whilst educational migration to college exposes rural young women to potential occupational pathways and post-educational trajectories, young women's internalized perceptions of parental support toward their post-educational transitions to work defines the extent to which they are motivated to specify and pursue specific post-educational trajectories. In developing this argument I engage critically with scholarship on youth transitions and imagined futures, and relational geographies of age. My analysis focuses on young women from socioeconomically marginalized OBC, SC, and ST families.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. In the next section, I locate this study within relevant theoretical work on youth. After outlining the context and methodological approach toward my research, the fourth and fifth sections consider the role of friendships cultivated during college in providing new social and spatial experiences and the extent to which these influence young women's conceptions of the future. I examine the socially differentiated nature and extent of family support as perceived by young women, relating this to the perspectives of parents themselves. In the conclusion I consider the wider implications of my research on the gendered realities of young women's education, reflecting on the merits of affording space greater conceptual attention within imagined futures scholarship in order to widen the scope of empirical and theoretical enquiry into youth transitions.

## 2. Theorizing Youth: Transitions, Futurity, and Space

Scholars working within the social sciences have built up a large body of research around children, young people and the life course (e.g. Butcher and Wilton 2008, Wyn and Woodman 2006, Hopkins 2006, Valentine 2003). The concept of "youth transitions" has been problematized for its implication of a linear progression through the life-course toward independence and adulthood. Instead, studies point to the fragmented, complex, and contested nature of these transitions (see Wyn et al. 2011), the complexities of which have been in part attributed to changes in education, family structures, and the labour market (Furlong and Cartmel 1997, Wyn and Dwyer 1999).[2] Recent years have seen a particular growth of research on youth in the Global South, for example in Asia (Jeffrey 2010a, Morrow 2013), Africa (Porter et al. 2010, Chant 2009), and Latin America (Punch 2014, Crivello 2011). This perhaps reflects a much broader concern for the ways in which modern ideals of "youth" and "childhood" that became hegemonic in the West over the past century are being exported to non-Western contexts "in which resources to adequately reproduce these forms are sadly lacking" (Ruddick 2003:334). Accordingly, several studies have questioned the assumption that "adulthood" as a social status can be achieved for some young people at all (e.g. Ralph 2008, Hansen 2005), demonstrating the difficulties experienced by young people in obtaining the "social goods" traditionally associated with adulthood such as marriage and family formation, housing, and secure salaried work (Berlin et al. 2010).

[2] Following scholars of youth elsewhere (e.g. Punch 2014, MacDonald and Marsh 2005), I acknowledge its criticisms yet agree on the benefits of the term "transition" as a holistic notion for examining key changes among young people in social spheres of education, family, and work.

An emerging area of enquiry within the youth transitions literature focuses on young people's imagined futures (e.g. Boyden 2013, Crivello 2011, Vigh 2009). Hardgrove and colleagues (2015a) identify two key themes of imagined futures literature. One strand highlights the links between young people's imagined futures and their structural positioning within society (e.g. Vigh 2009, Christiansen et al. 2006). Vigh (2009), in his research with Guinea-Bissau youth, describes a "global awareness from below" (2009:93) whereby young people imagine themselves in relation to spaces and social options with varying levels of access. Focusing on would-be migrants in Guinnea-Bissau and illegal migrants in Lisbon, his work signals the link between social context and imaginaries, and individual motivations and trajectories. A second strand centres around observations on the internalized sociocultural values young people hold as they break from the lived experiences and values of their parents' and grandparents' generations (see Cole 2011). Collectively, this scholarship highlights the ways in which young people and older generations are constantly thinking ahead and planning for the future with respect to social spheres such as employment (e.g. Heggli et al. 2013, Mains 2007), education (e.g. Crivello 2011), and health (Ansell et al. 2014). Transitions, then, are "experienced in the immediate, but they are also about movement towards the futures" (Hardgrove et al. 2015a:164). As such, a growing strand of geographic work has focused on developing approaches toward theorizing the interplay between young people's past, present, and imagined futures (e.g. Worth 2009, Ansell et al. 2014, Hardgrove et al. 2015a).

Drawing on Allport's (1955) work on the psychology of personality and Grosz's (2005) work on the openness of time to futurity, Worth (2009) directs attention to

the futurity of youth transitions. Focusing specifically on change and the future, she employs the concept of "becoming" in order to highlight transition as a dynamic and fluid experience, one that necessarily incorporates a multiplicity of futures. The central tenet of becoming, she argues, is its focus on change and the future, which further serves to complicate notions of adulthood. Elsewhere, Ansell and colleagues (2014) suggest that "future-orientation offers only a partial perspective" (2014:399), arguing instead for conceptualizing transitions as drawing constantly on pasts and futures in constituting the present. In making this argument they theorize a temporal dimension to De Haan and Zoomers' (2005) concept of livelihood trajectories, putting forward a conceptualization of youth transitions as produced through the iteration of present and future. Young people, they contend, consider the implications for future livelihoods when acting in the present. Livelihood trajectories, then, are "produced in response to interwoven present and future needs and aspirations that are complexly bound to wider contexts that are social, cultural, political, and economic" (Ansell et al. 2014:390).

Hardgrove and colleagues (2015a), writing in this journal, offer a different perspective to theorizations of youth agency and imagined futures, suggesting the relative merits of "possible selves", a theoretical construct first developed by psychologists Markus and Nurius (1986). The authors take issue with the concept of "aspirations", noting how within youth scholarship aspirations are often invoked in general, unspecific terms, and "can appear significantly detached from the social and economic landscapes in which their lives are embedded" (2015a:165, see also Heggli et al. 2013). Instead they seek to theorize an approach which pays greater attention young people's' motivation to pursue particular

visions of future possibilities. Possible selves, they argue, are based on individual and social experience, blending notions of both "self-concept" (the idea of one's self constructed from the beliefs one holds about oneself) and "opportunity structures" (exogenous factors such as class and gender). In drawing connections between historical context, social relations, and broader structural factors, the concept of possible selves offers a theorization of transitions grounded in both past experience and present circumstances, and which are open to a multiplicity of potential futures. Hardgrove and colleagues apply this conceptual framework to the study of young men in the UK labour market. Their analysis illustrates how, while young people's imagined futures do not cause certain outcomes, they can motivate young men to pursue "known routes to desired [occupational] ends" (2015a:165). This theorization of motivated and goal directed action on the part of young people is, I argue, particularly useful for locating young women's subjectivities within broader structural inequalities in rural India.

Whilst Hardgrove and colleagues make a valuable contribution in introducing the possible selves construct to geographies of youth, they state that their intention is to highlight how the "construct opens the scope of empirical and theoretical enquiry into youth transitions and trajectories toward future possibilities" (Hardgrove et al. 2015a:163). What remains underdeveloped in their work is a spatial theorization. Specifically, their analysis omits an exploration of the ways in which young people's movements in and through space, and the social interactions these movements entail, influence the formation of possible selves. Existing geographical scholarship is well placed to develop this theorization; a significant strand of geographical work on youth focuses on the particularities of young

people's experiences in the city (e.g. Skelton 2013, Katz 2004, Holloway and Valentine 2000). In particular, studies focusing on young people in higher education settings highlight how colleges and university campuses constitute complex sites of empowerment and exclusion that have the potential to be transformative in the re-shaping of attitudes and values (Andersson et al. 2012:502, Hopkins 2011:158).

In seeking to spatialize possible selves I extend understandings of space as relational, wherein space is produced through, and productive of, social relations (Massey 1994:254). In this view the identity of particular spaces - the home, the school, or the workplace - and the subsequent extent to which young people's imagined futures are influenced by the sets of social practices constituting these identities, are "produced and stabilized through the repetition of intersectional identities of the dominant groups that occupy them" (Valentine 2007:19). Taking this theoretical approach necessitates a detailed examination of the everyday social relations young people encounter as they move through space, which ties to a broader acknowledgement across youth studies that transitions constitute more than simple "school-to-work" transitions and should instead be examined in relation to other social spheres such as education and relationships across the family and peer group (see Punch 2015, Thomson et al. 2002:334).

A review of my ethnographic data suggests that young women's possible selves that possess a motivational capacity are underpinned by a combination of exposure to known routes to desired ends, and a strong perception of familial (specifically, parental) support. Whilst not the explicit focus of their research,

Hardgrove and colleagues do take note of the role of intergenerational relations vis-à-vis familial support in shaping youth transitions (see also Crespo et al. 2013). Yet, as the authors have argued elsewhere, youth scholarship "has not theoretically or empirically understood (for the most part) how youth are embedded within relational networks of support in families" (Hardgrove et al. 2015b:1059, but see, for example, Crespo et al. 2013, Heggli et al. 2013); the vast majority of this work considers youth making individual transitions or as a "generation in transition" (Wyn and Woodman 2006), and the nature of familial support (and constraint) often remains an underdeveloped area of enquiry.

In foregrounding the broader relations that bear down upon young people's everyday lives recent geographical work that has begun advocating for a more relational approach toward examining geographies of age (e.g. Hopkins and Pain 2007, Maxey 2009, but see Horton and Kraftl, 2008). This scholarship usefully directs attention to the social relations both within and beyond the family that impact on aspects of young people's everyday lives (e.g. Smith and Gergan 2015, Smith 2013, Hopkins et al. 2011). Smith (2013), researching in Ladakh, North India, considers the tensions between young people and their parents as they "grapple with the future" (2013:573). She argues that older generations envisage young people as a means to access the unknown future, and as such their bodies become sites of intense anxiety and regulation. Elsewhere Hopkins and colleagues (2011), researching with young Scottish Christians, signal the role of *inter-* and *intra*-generational relationships in influencing young people's religiosity and spirituality. The diverse influences on the religiosity of young people mean that intergenerational relations involve "multiple and complex subject positions"

(Hopkins et al. 2011:314). Held collectively, this work stresses the need to hold both *intra*- and *inter*-generational relations as significant to young people's subjectivities - that is, the connections within and across age groups and generations, and the contingency they have for each others' social, political, and economic lives (see Hopkins et al. 2011:314).

Social-scientific studies of youth often focus in great detail on individualized youth transitions, emphasizing the attainment of individualized autonomous adulthood (see Jeffrey 2009). Yet a growing body of work, primarily covering the Global North, indicates the significance of the family and peer group in influencing young people's social, economic, and political transitions (e.g. Hopkins et al. 2011, Russell et al. 2011, Irwin 2009). As Hardgrove and colleagues (2015b) argue, there remains a great deal to explore with regards to the role of family relations and supports in youth transitions (see also Hartas 2016, Rubie-Davies 2010). The remainder of this article applies the possible selves construct to the study of rural young women's college education in order to draw grounded conclusions regarding the spatial aspects of imagined futures. For these young women, enrolment in college constitutes the first prolonged period located geographically away from family spaces that "carry the danger of surveillance, where the performance of 'youth'…is often policed" (Krishnan 2016:70). Understanding how their temporary spatial migration to metropolitan India impacts upon their conceptions of the future is central to understanding the social effects of structural and cultural transformations to India's educational landscape.

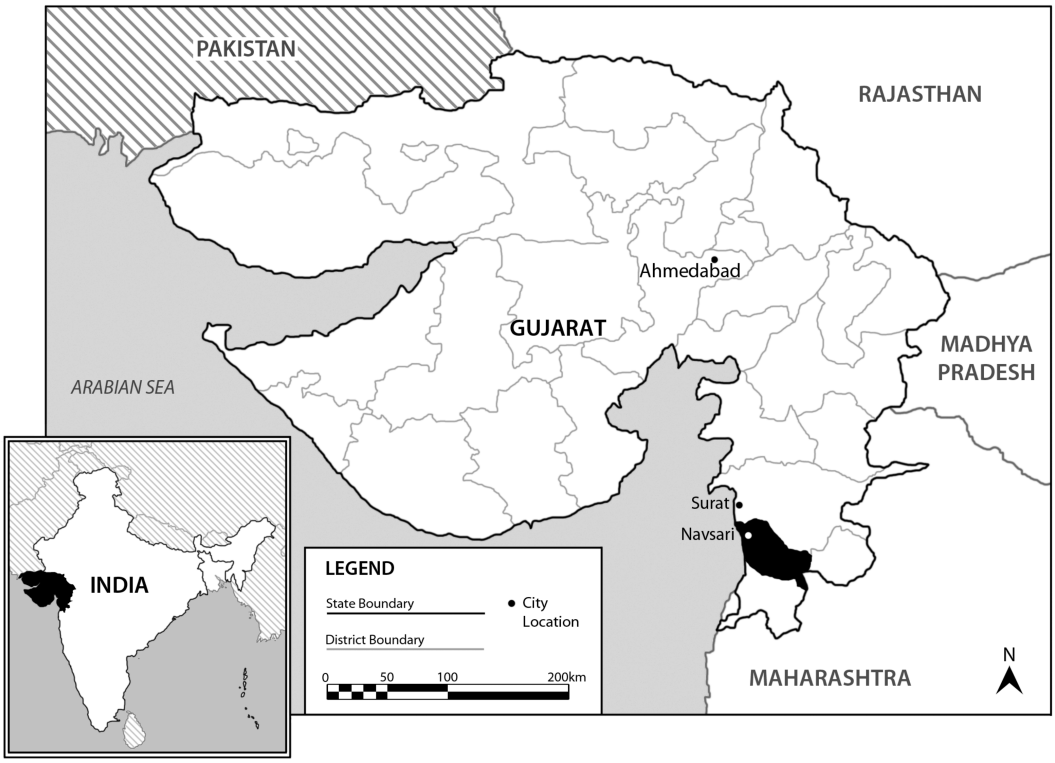
## 3. Locating Young Women in Kota

My interest in the imagined futures of young rural women from socioeconomically marginalized backgrounds was spurred by two observations that have emerged from recent research. First is a trend of increasing educational enrolment among students from rural, poorer and disadvantaged families across Gujarat (see ASER 2014, Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India 2011a), reflecting a much wider trend across the country whereby the liberalization of higher education has engendered a similar increase in attendance among students from rural, lower class, and low caste backgrounds (see Nakassis 2013, Cross 2014). This links to a second observation of increasing female enrolment in secondary and higher education across India (World Bank 2016:104). Whilst more young women from SC and ST communities than ever are being educated, there has been very little in the way of substantive ethnographic analysis from the perspectives of young women themselves.

India's westernmost state of Gujarat makes for a compelling study of young women's higher education. The state ranks second across all twenty-eight states in terms of average annual growth rate of Net State Domestic Product (Drèze and Sen 2013:298), yet has been accused of engendering growing inequalities by way of its neglect for the social sector (Jaffrelot 2015). State expenditure in health and education, for example, has declined more than the average decline in other high-growth states such as Haryana and Maharashtra, and sits well below the national average (Sood 2012). This ties to the state's entrepreneurial approach toward education since Indian independence, particularly with regards to higher

education (see Jones and Jones 1977) the privatization of which recently received further formal endorsement by way of the Private Universities Act (Government of Gujarat 2009). A focus in western India also serves to address a regional imbalance; the majority of scholarly work on youth and higher education is focused in central and northern (e.g. Jeffrey 2010a) and southern India (e.g. Nisbett 2007, Nakassis 2013).

Across 2014 and 2015 I conducted ethnographic research in Kota, a medium sized village in the north-west of Navsari district, South Gujarat (see Map 7.1). With a population of around 1700 living in 420 houses, Kota constituted a spread of FC, OBC, SC, and ST households. Caste formed an important axis of social and economic difference. Livelihood strategies were largely divided along caste lines, from casual unskilled agricultural and manual labour among poorer SC and ST families, through to subsistence agriculture among middle-ranking Hindu OBCs with small-medium landholdings, and owning and running small city-based business such as internet cafes and clothing stores among FCs.




**Map 7.1** Context map locating Navsari district and Gujarat state in India, *author's own*

Over the course of eleven months I conducted semi- and un-structured interviews with 86 repeat informants: 47 men and 39 women. Of the 39 women, 8 were FC, 14 were OBC, 9 were SC, and 8 were ST. I also conducted participant-observation with rural youth, and their younger siblings, parents, grandparents. Interviews were conducted in Gujarati, covering key topics relating primarily to experiences and expectations surrounding education, employment, marriage, and local politics. Additional to this were frequent conversations with a range of people with whom I came in to contact with during time spent with informants, such as their neighbours and wider caste communities.

Since a number of young women were full time college students 280km away in Ahmedabad city (see Map 7.1), I often accompanied them on the tiresome 6 hour

long train journey to the city, residing in a college-owned men's hostel whilst spending time in and around the campuses, hostels, and other spaces across the city where they studied and lived. I primarily spent time in two colleges: a medium sized autonomous college (constituting a heavier weighting of FC and OBC students), and a larger government college (constituting a much broader mix of OBC, SC, and ST students). In this urban setting, caste- and gender-based discrimination manifested clearly on college campuses. Female students were reluctant to linger in particular areas or take shortcuts along alleyways between buildings on campus for fear of harassment and intimidation by male students, an observation resonating with their access to public spaces back in the village.

My analytical focus when city-based shifted from kin and community to the peer group, reflecting anthropologies of youth elsewhere (e.g. Krishnan 2016, Nisbett 2007). In addition to providing crucial observational material, campus-based interactions proved invaluable to conversing with young women free of the persistent gendered norms of obedience back in Kota. Moreover I found that, as per my interaction with Sushila and her friends at the beginning of this article, being a male researcher from outside of the village community often resulted in my becoming a sounding board whereby young women were able to vent frustrations without the fear of being reprimanded. Similarly, I spent time back in Kota when these young women were in the city, interacting with their families and siblings. In the following sections I share the perspectives of selected young women and their families in order to highlight the role of space in influencing young women's possible selves. My analysis centres on two analytical subsets of young women: those from higher caste but economically poor OBC families, and

those from SC and ST families. Whilst there were overlaps between the analyses I make, I draw these distinctions on the basis that, due to the physical and social clustering of communities in line with caste- and religious-based difference in Kota (see Map 4.3), families and parents from similar communities tended to share similar perspectives on their daughters' education. I elaborate on these perspectives in the sections that follow.

## 4. Influential Encounters and Possible Pathways

This first section focuses on the experiences of a first generation of college-going young women from upwardly mobile Other Backward Classes (OBC) families in Kota. I aim to demonstrate the influential role of college-based friendships in providing exposure to desirable occupations, alongside highlighting the critical importance of perceived familial support. The relationship between friendship and viable occupational pathways came across most strongly during participant observation. The example of Jital is instructive.

Jital is a Koli Patel; a numerically median, but economically diverse, Hindu caste OBC community living in Kota. When I first met her in October 2014, she had just begun her final year studying for a B.Com degree at a government college in Ahmedabad, where she was living in a college-owned women's hostel. In line with the growing trend across families in Kota over the previous decade, her parents sent her to the city so that she might gain a college degree. What emerged powerfully over the course of our conversations was the influence of the social

network Jital had cultivated in and around the space of the college campus. During a discussion about spare time, she explained:

> When I am in Ahmedabad and college is not running, I will usually just *timepass* [pass time] with them [gesturing to a nearby group of five girls]. Some of us live in the hostel but on Saturday and Sunday the canteen at [college] is closed and mostly we will go to Alpha One [large shopping mall] and sometimes the cinema there. We always go together to pass time. There is a big food court, you know? But [Hema] is not living in the hostel, she is Ahmedabad *proper* [born and raised]. Sometimes I go just with her, we go alone. She brings her scooter and comes to get me. And then we go to the mall or her house.

Of Jital's six closest friends in the city, two are from villages in North Gujarat, one is from a small village just outside of Surat city, and the remaining trio are from Ahmedabad city itself. One of these, an FC young woman named Hema, is daughter to a city businessman working in the telecommunications industry. As Jital reflected in conversation, it was her friendship with these young women that had widened the scope of her social and spatial encounters. As her best friend (*khāsa mitra*), Hema quickly emerged as having played a particularly central role in providing exposure to viable occupational pathways by way of her family members in the city. Jital often reflected on these :

> *What about during holidays, or festivals? Do you go home, or stay in Ahmedabad?*
>
> For long holidays, *Diwali*, *Navratri*, I will return to [Kota], but if it is short.. one day.. two days.. I stay in Ahmedabad and I can go to [Hema's] house. We are best friends, you know? Last year, In some holidays, I met her female cousins. One is living out in *Bopal*, have you been?
>
> *No.*
>
> In that area they live in the tall apartment buildings with their families. It is outside of the city but if you take a bus you can get there. You must go and

> see…[Hema] says [her cousin] is even learning to drive and her husband will buy a car soon.

Over the course of their degrees, young women in Kota like Jital were not only acquiring a socially diverse set of friends in the city, but were also gaining a wide exposure to broader social networks by way of their friends' older female family members. Many of these women were married and working in the city, embodying a sense of balance between "traditional Indian gender roles" and "Western modernity" commonly invoked in scholarly work on postcolonial Indian femininities (Daya 2009, Munshi 2001). As a result, among young women like Jital these women were often idealized as role models. In Jital's case these ideas were evidenced by way of her overt familiarity with Hema's family, especially a set of elder female cousins living and working in the I.T. and commerce sectors the city with whom she regularly came into contact. Jital conceived of these women as both empowered and ambitious, yet traditional and cultured at the same time (see also Romani 2015), and regularly drew upon these examples in conversations about her plans for the future:

> [One of Hema's older cousins] also completed a B.Com, she is now working for [a finance company] over in Thaltej [West Ahmedabad]. There are other women doing the same thing here. They have salaried work and *confidence*, but their *family* is also working properly. They have *balance*…I can do this too. Sometimes I speak with [Hema's cousin] and she is saying to me "There are these forms, and there is this interview" and this and that. She teaches me so I can know too.

As indicated by Jital's use of the English word "*confidence*", young women's recollections of their experiences in the city were replete with notions of empowerment and ambition when describing their friends and acquaintances. This spatial exposure was critical in the formation of their possible selves. When

asked about their self-conceptions in future states, these young women commonly recollected examples of successful women they had encountered in the city who had provided an example of a viable pathway to a future outcome. In outlining her possible self in the finance sector, for example, Jital invoked the example of Hema's older cousin, drawing the direct parallel of her having studied for the same degree and having made the successful transition in to full-time, salaried work (*nokrī*) in the city; a perceived occupational route that appeared accessible. This link between exposure to viable pathways and young people's imagined futures constitutes one of the key benefits of theorizing youth transitions using the possible selves construct.

Rather than being detached from their everyday lives, then, young women's post-educational possible selves were in fact grounded in relation to the dominant social identities they encountered over the course of their college education. This occurred most evidently through an active exposure to older women who had made successful transitions into secure work and married life. In this sense, Jital's possible self is highly contingent and situated in relation to her spatial location in the city and the subsequent exposure to the "dominant spatial orderings" (Valentine 2007:19) she encountered. Yet, and as Valentine (2007) notes, these identities are "done" differently in particular temporal moments; identity "is both read and performed differently across space" (Worth 2015:346). Thus it would be misleading to assume that these spatial relations unproblematically engender a sustained motivational capacity in young women to pursue particular imagined futures.

The possible selves construct proves analytically useful here in directing attention to the role of social structures and familial support. Young women from OBC backgrounds in Kota had scarce prior exposure to females in salaried work or in continuing education, yet demonstrated a motivational capacity to pursue occupation-specific possible selves. Underpinning this motivational capacity was the perception of a strong level of familial support in both social and economic terms; in addition to possessing the requisite economic capital to support their daughters, their parents were encouraging of their transitions into work. Conversations with parents themselves highlighted an uncertainty as to how these college-to-work transitions might play out in practice. On the one hand many parents from poorer OBC communities, who themselves typically had low levels of formal education, considered education itself as a threat to sexual purity, speaking in general terms of promiscuity and lack of supervision in the city. They were also acutely aware of their daughter's personal safety and issues of sexual assault, with many citing the rape and fatal assault of a young woman in Delhi in 2012 as the basis for their anxieties. At the same time, post-educational employment was often imagined as a desired path to modernity by way of the socioeconomic mobility of their daughters and their families (see also Smith 2013). In outlining these positions they would commonly reference the economic successes of affluent FC families from Kota who had progressively diversified their agricultural profits, investing in the formal education of their offspring and establishing small businesses in the nearby cities of Navsari and Surat (see also Rutten 1986).

Walking through the family's small orchard just outside of central Kota, Jital's father weaved both acceptance and compromise through his response to my enquiry about her life after college, acknowledging the potential benefits (*fāidā*):

> College is expensive. If she can find whatever salaried work and earn money then fine. Maybe some benefits will also come to us. I have been to Ahmedabad once before, it is very far and away from family. Navsari and Surat [cities] are also growing now and people will do *up-down* [a daily commute on the express train] from [Kota] and other villages.
>
> *So maybe she could still live here in [Kota] and find work?*
>
> Yes. If she does that and is working close to home, then good.

Other OBC parents spoke similarly of their daughters making steady transitions into some form of salaried work in the city, often pairing this preparedness to support their daughters with the compromise of having to commute from home. One major caveat that often arose in conversation was the parental expectation that upon marriage their daughters would have new responsibilities (*navī javābdāriyo*), which would likely entail a physical relocation in line with patrilocal conventions. Moreover, salient gendered norms meant that where economic assets were available to support young people's transitions, parents made it clear that priority would be given to male siblings over females with respect to aiding and assisting migration to the city in search of salaried work, a fact that both young women and men in Kota were aware of (see also Author, In Preparation [Article 2]).

Despite these potential post-educational intergenerational conflicts, what my data stresses is the centrality of *perceived* support. It was young women's perception of this broad level of parental support that underpinned their motivation to detail

specific possible selves and actively conceive of these as viable. Given my focus on college-going young women my data does not reflect longitudinally on how this analytical subset of young women negotiated their post-educational trajectories. Harvey (2005, 2009), in thinking through a relational understanding of space-time, argues that a relational notion encompasses the idea of internal relations that can traverse physical space: "influences get internalized in specific processes or things through time" (Harvey 2005:95). He substantiates this through the example of one's mind absorbing all manner of external information and yielding both dreams and fantasies, as well as attempts at rational calculation. Harvey states that these influences, in practice, are "usually within only a certain range of influence" (*ibid.*) on an individual at any given time. In this way, and as the case of Jital and other young women demonstrated, a relational spatial theorization of possible selves signals parental support as an internalized influence significant to young women. In detailing their occupation-specific possible selves, young women like Jital rationalized the perspectives of their parents and the perception that their families would support their post-educational urban migration and desired occupational trajectories.

The significance of these internalized perceptions of parental support came across most evidently through conversations with those young women whose parents had differing sets of expectations surrounding their post-educational lives. These young women were primarily from SC and ST communities. I turn to these young women's perspectives in the proceeding section.

## 5. Seeking Permission: Parental Support and Structural Constraints

Female youth from SC and ST backgrounds in Kota were reluctant to detail specific possible selves pertaining to marital and occupational life, and demonstrated a much weaker motivation to pursue these desirable post-educational trajectories. In detailing the nature of parental support and structural constraints, this section demonstrates the ways in which these social and economic barriers bear down upon young women's willingness to articulate specific conceptions of the future. Avinashi's story is indicative.

Avinashi Chaudhury, aged 22, is the eldest daughter to an ST family in Kota and is the first female in her family to attend college. Prior to her college enrolment she had very rarely ventured to, or travelled alone in, the nearby cities of Navsari and Surat. Reflecting the perspective of numerous other young ST women in Kota, Avinashi would often marvel at the sheer scale and socioeconomic diversity of Ahmedabad; in her own words, "This [city] feels like it is in a different country (*ā bijā deshmā hoy, tevu lāge che*)". Her comment highlights the city as a space markedly different to the village, and ST and SC young women commonly balanced this sense of a vast social and spatial expanse with the pressing need for heightened personal safety and security of possessions. Indeed, Avinashi conceived of the space of the college itself as having an important spatial politics of which it was crucial to be aware for reasons of caste and gender-based violence and sexual harassment (see also Rogers 2008). One afternoon she went into great detail in outlining the areas, such as thoroughfares between campus buildings, considered dangerous and which her friend circle would steer clear of. Such perspectives were

often generated through stories circulated among the peer group. Notwithstanding these important aspects of college life, my focus here is on the opportunities for inclusion in new social and spatial spheres that emerged as being influential to young women's conceptions of the future. In line with their social and cultural subjugation back in Kota, young women from ST and SC communities like Avinashi often lacked social confidence. In contrast to OBC young women like Jital, Avinashi's friendships with other young women on campus had been cultivated over a much longer period. She reflected on this during a conversation about women, fashion, and style in the city:

> Those girls who were born in the city, they have no *problem*. Whatever clothes they want to wear, jeans, shorts, t-shirts, they can… whatever spaces they want to go, *cinemas*, *malls*, *restaurants*, they do. They have lots of *confidence*, you know? Girls like [Dipika], they do not worry like us. But - we are also learning from them. [Dipika], [Rashmita], [Gita]. When I first came to the city I wasn't going out with them. I stayed in the [women's] *hostel*, that's it. But now I go to places, go to the *mall* too, sometimes just to roam. They do not go everywhere in the city because there is not *safety* everywhere, but they have *confidence*, you know? And so I get *confidence* too.

As Avinashi indicates, her experience and exposure to these new spaces were a result of friendships forged with young women such as Dipika and Rashmita, and the "confidence" this had helped instil in her over the course of her college education. More often than not these friendships had been formed with other young women living in the same hostel accommodation. Among ST and SC young women it was clear that their friendship networks were smaller than OBC young women like Jital and, as a result, they tended not to have had a similarly broad exposure to occupational pathways. As a result their college friendships went some way in cultivating a broad, but vague, set of goals around economic stability and

urban migration. They would ordinarily speak in general terms of some vague route toward obtaining a salary (*pagāra*), with an attached desire for urban migration and family. When asked about what she might like to do following her graduation, for example, Avinashi responded hesitantly:

> I had no thoughts about doing this or that when I first started at [college], but I speak to my friends here and [clicks fingers] immediately they know what they want to do. One wants to work in *commerce*, another wants to do *marketing*. So I want a job in the city too…maybe in an office building.

Avinashi's possible self was vague in the sense of lacking any occupational specificity; she spoke in broader terms of working "in the city" and having "a salary". This was far less defined than young women from comparatively more well-to-do OBC families in Kota like Jital, whose perception of parental support and stronger exposure to viable occupational pathways undergirded her motivation to form desirable a possible self and envision a viable pathway toward it. Underpinning the lack of specificity in conversation with young SC and ST women like Avinashi was a stark appreciation for the role of parents in supporting these transitions. A common refrain was that of the English word "*permission*"; young women would speak of the need to "seek *permission*" from parents and future partners in order to pursue salaried work in the city following their graduation. Avinashi articulated this neatly during a conversation about her migration to the city:

> Maybe I would live in the city, but *Ahmedabad* is a long way to do *up-down* [commute] from *Navsari*. Sometimes trains are also dangerous, they are more dangerous in the evenings. I do not know anyone here and my parents are not sure…*Adivasi* people [Scheduled Tribes] do not come here alone. You have to seek *permission*, you know? My parents would not give this.

Permission here involved not only a social approval, but also economic support. As another young ST woman suggested:

> If you find just one job then you become *set*, but to get a job you have to stay in the city and live there. For this you need support and money if you want to search. From your parents you must gain *permission*.

This predicament marred young women's motivation to detail specific possible selves to orient themselves toward the future. Avinashi, for example, had internalized her parents' expectations in the relational sense Harvey (2004) considers, the outcome of which was a lack of motivation to pursue specific occupational trajectories following her graduation.

The notion of gaining permission also came through strongly in conversation with ST parents who, having invested significant family resources in their daughters' college education, had clear intentions for their daughters. With Avinashi studying in the city, one afternoon I returned to her family's wooden-framed hut on the outskirts of Kota. "[Avinashi] will make a good wife after college", her father nodded to me, pulling out a carefully folded sheet of paper from his trouser pocket. On the photocopied sheet was a C.V.-type marriage advertisement for a female youth currently being circulated around the ST community among nearby villages. He squinted, running his finger down the sprawled Gujarati writing as he skimmed across the girl's name, age, height, and village before stopping on languages spoken, education level, and her grade history. "[Avinashi] will be stronger than this –" he smirked, before being interrupted abruptly by Avinashi's mother as she tended to a simmering pot of water. "-but she will be *much* older," she interjected

dismissively, reflecting observations on the anxieties surrounding over-aged brides common to SC and ST parents (see, for example, Still 2011).

A constant refrain of SC and ST parents was that they in a predicament whereby, without the requisite forms social or economic capital required to pursue salaried work, their primary objective in educating their daughters was that of marriage to a worthy groom. Of course the ideas of SCs and STs, specifically, using female education to bolster marriage prospects is nothing new (e.g. Froerer 2015, Still 2011). Rather, what my analyses foreground are the disparate ways in which parents and daughters imagined education as a tool for social mobility. Whilst her parents envisaged her degree as boosting her "marital C.V", Avinashi's possible self entailed urban migration and salaried work, central to which was her education. A focus on the inter- and intra-generational relations that influence Avinashi's conceptions of the future thus highlights the powerful ways in which perceptions of parental support were internalized by young women.

Significantly, these perceptions bore down so heavily upon a minority of young SC and ST women that they conceived of their campus-based personal relationships as offering simply a temporary respite from their expected duties back home. These female youth spoke of broad expectations placed upon their female peers from similar caste backgrounds. One responded sullenly when asked about her ongoing relationship with a fellow student on campus:

> Us girls have to peel away [from personal relationships forged in college] and return home when we graduate, but you get a little *time* here. And,

> what else? You are getting some *experience* in the city…if not, then immediately you would marry back in [Kota].

For these female youth the pursuit of college education might usefully be conceived of as a "patriarchal bargain" (Kandiyoti 1988); a calculated opportunity of three years' "time" and "experience" at college before returning to their homes in order to live out the gendered expectations of their families and the wider caste community. The spatiality of this bargain is neatly summed up in the perspective of one informant, Sushila, mentioned at the beginning of this article. During a conversation surrounding her experiences of personal relationships on campus, she spoke of the temporary freedoms afforded by college in spatial terms:

> Here in [college], when I am with my friends in the city I can have a little *independence* and whoever I want to talk to, that can happen. In the *hostel* I live with everyone, and when we eat, talk, roam, everyone can go together. Us young people talk together on campus, go to the *mall*, go places. Back when I return to [Kota], we cannot have these conversations about boys, or any talk about *love*, or who is going [in an active romantic relationship] with who. Girls who live in the city will go with, and marry, whoever they want. They have *choice*.

Sushila's perspective on the spatial transition from the village to city and college highlights notions of both freedom and anonymity that pervaded conversations with other young women. College was conceived of as a period momentarily free from the temporal, spatial, and financial constraints of being back in the village; their weekends and evenings were largely unstructured, unrestricted, and they could use small living allowances of money from their parents to buy books and tickets to the cinema. This paired with my observations of a set of much more conservative behaviors back in the village, not only in terms of a reversion to social

identities performed in line with normative ideas about caste, kin, and religion, but also stringent gendered norms around spatial mobility.

For this minority, then, despite a geographical location away from family and an exposure to potential occupational pathways, the perception of a lack of parental support curtailed SC and ST young women's willingness to outline detailed possible selves. Gendered and caste-based norms had been internalized in such a strong manner that their possible selves entailed a return to the village and suitable marriage within their caste community. In addition to a fundamental lack of perceived relational support, young women internalized cautionary tales circulated among their peers of young women whose marriages had been arranged following their graduation, typically arriving at the same despondent conclusions: in deviating from "typical" family life by way of arranged marriages, "educated girls (*bhaṇeli chokāriyo*) make *problems* in the household with their husbands."

The examples of Sushila and Avinashi presented here highlight how, despite educational migration providing exposure to certain types of work and viable occupational pathways, possible selves that possessed a motivational capacity and occupational specificity emerged as being heavily dependent upon the perceived level of familial support. This was often spoken of in terms of gaining "*permission*" from parents and partners, an observation recollecting Allport's (1955) idea of affiliative needs; namely that young people who imagine themselves as having strong support networks are confident in discussing plans based on a strong sense of their own agency (c.f. Worth, 2009). Unpacking both young women's and parents' perspectives signals the value of a relational approach in developing a

spatial theorization of the possible selves construct. For some young women, the prevalent gendered norms in Kota and the associated intergenerational politics had been internalized to the extent of rendering any transitionary pathway completely inaccessible, leading inevitably to a return to Kota.

## 6. Conclusion

In Kota, young women imagined their time in college as a critical duration in which multiple imaginings of the future were contested, transformed, and began to play out. Reflecting these recurring ideas of futurity I have employed the "possible selves" theoretical construct recently introduced to the youth transitions literature by Hardgrove and colleagues (2015a) in this journal. The findings of my research attest to the utility of possible selves in offering a theorization of youth transitions grounded in both past experience and present circumstances, and which are open to a multiplicity of potential futures. Whilst the construct directs valuable attention to identity construction and motivational aspects as well as the structural contexts implicit in young women's imagined futures, its spatial aspects remain undertheorized. This article has sought to address this theoretical gap, taking a relational approach toward spatializing the possible selves construct. A relational approach directs attention to the social relations significant to young people's everyday lives as they move in and through the everyday spaces such as the home, college, and workplace. As such, it signals the need to examine both empirically and theoretically the role of the family and peer group in the formation of young people's possible selves. The role of familial relations, in particular, remains under examined in studies of youth transitions (see Hardgrove et al. 2015b).

In advancing this spatial theorization of possible selves my analysis foregrounds a series of key points. Firstly, it illustrates the significance of affinity-based friendships young women cultivate within and beyond the college campus over the course of their college education in metropolitan Gujarat. As Bunnell and colleagues (2011) note, young people's friendships can be empowering and can broaden their spatialities as they gain self-esteem and a sense of belonging. This comes across strongly in the case of Avinashi, wherein her college-based friendships instilled in her the confidence to enter new spaces across the city such as shopping malls, cinemas, and coffee shops. The friendships young women cultivated across the college campus and women's hostel temporarily subsumed differences borne out of caste and religion, and the subsequent exposure to a secondary network of family members in the city exposed young women like Jital to a secondary network of older females who were invoked in conversation as important role models.

Secondly, it foregrounds the significance of familial relations, particularly the role of parental support, in the construction of young women's possible selves. Youth studies often focus primarily on individualized youth transitions or on youth as a "generation in transition" (Wyn and Woodman 2006, but see, for example, Cole and Durham 2008, Biggart and Kovacheva 2006), obscuring the role of the family and peer group in young people's social, economic, and political transitions. Hardgrove and colleagues (2015a) acknowledge the role of family support in young people's transitions to work in pragmatic terms. They illustrate this through linking those informants with specific possible selves to a stable socio-economic

situation. For one of their informants, Jeremy, living at home with his parents "provided a safety net of stable housing and economic security" (2015a:167). It was this supported experience that enabled him to take work as and when it was available. A relational approach toward conceptualizing space highlights the ways in which parents' support (or lack thereof) can traverse physical space to be internalized by young women as they navigate college and impress upon the formation of their possible selves (see Harvey 2005). In Gujarat, young women vocalized this internalization through the notion of "seeking permission", which reflected both the social and economic support required from parents whilst also linking to powerful caste-community ideas about morality and family reputation. In the most severe cases, parental expectations had been internalized by a minority of young women from SC and ST backgrounds to the extent that they were unable to conceive of possible selves that entailed a post-education urban migration or any form of school-to-work transition.

The likelihood of parental support largely correlated with the caste profiles of families in Kota. I have argued that, in addition to a lack of social and economic capital required to aid their offspring's transitions into work, the social and physical clustering of communities in Kota led parents from similar caste communities to share similar perspectives surrounding their daughters' education. These perspectives were strongly underpinned by normative gendered employment strategies among these families; social and economic priority was typically given to male siblings in the search for work. The analyses presented here demonstrate how a series of intersectional influences on young women - in the form of gendered and caste-based expectations, and their perception of familial

expectations and experiences – all combine to determine their motivation to define and pursue possible selves.

Thinking more broadly, the article contributes to debates around young women's education in the Global South. Against a backdrop of rising education levels among youth in South Asia, few studies have paid explicit attention the ways in which education is experienced and valued by young women themselves. Tracing rural young women's movements across space as they pursue college education highlights how education is differentially conceived of as a vehicle for social mobility among young women and their parents. As the case of Avinashi illustrated, whilst many young women envisage education as a route toward urban migration and salaried work, an older generation of parents who are largely lacking in formal education imagine education straightforwardly as a marital strategy. Collectively, these observations serve to highlight the ways in which young women's college education can be at odds with the notions of both empowerment and participation that permeate a wider development discourse in India, in addition to a much more local set of expectations emanating from within their own families.



**Photo 7.1** *Garba* (folk dance and song) conducted by Hindu villagers at local bus stop in celebration of Navratri (Hindu festival), *author's own photograph*

# Chapter 8. [Article 4]

## "College for the village kids": Secondary schooling and gendered youth mobilities in rural Gujarat, India

The mobility turn across the social sciences is affecting how we understand young people's experiences of, and movements through, the life course. This article advances this nascent body of scholarship through an examination of India's rapidly transforming secondary schooling sector. Recent years have seen significant expansion of the low-fee private schooling sector across rural India, coupled with an increasing pursuit of social reform among diverse caste communities as they make long-term investments in the education of their children. Despite this, there has been very little substantive ethnographic analysis that critically examines how young people understand and value secondary schooling. Situated within interdisciplinary debates about youth transitions and mobility theory, as well as South Asian approaches to youth research, this article examines the everyday mobility practices of young men and women from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds in 11th and 12th Standard (aged 16-18) at a recently established private school. Drawing on eleven months of ethnographic research in the western state of Gujarat I consider how young people's mobilities are bound up with locally normative ideas about age, youth, caste, and gender. My analysis points to the differential and relational nature of young women's and men's mobilities, and the ways in which young people's mobilities and age-identities are recursively produced as they seek to become competent spatial actors. I conclude by foregrounding young people as actors and agents within the mobile world that warrant further theoretical attention within the "new" mobilities paradigm.

**Keywords:** *youth, India, gender, secondary education, private schooling, mobilities*

## 1. Introduction

Recent years have seen a shift from seeing age and life course stages as linear and independent variables, to socially constructed categories which are produced within and across age and generational groups (see Wyn and White 1997, Hopkins and Pain 2007:289). Hörschelmann (2011) suggests that the social relations that constitute the life course must be understood in the context of both temporal and spatial contingencies, which involves recognising "the vital nature of space itself" (2011:379). A more recent call from Wyn (2014) reiterates this need to interrogate the spatiality of youth:

> Although the idea of youth transitions remains central to youth studies…there is an emerging consensus that this spatial concept of youth may need to be expanded. In order to fully theorize age as a social relation, and to understand how the nature and quality of connections with people, resources, and places contribute to young people's quality of life, a relational approach is needed. (2014:9).

In theorizing young people's experiences of and movements through the life course, an emerging strand of theoretical geographic work is engaging with the mobility turn across the social sciences (e.g. Skelton and Gough 2013, Holt and Costello 2011, Barker et al. 2009). This work has begun to mainstream young people's mobility into the "new" mobilities paradigm, recognizing "the roles of young people as actors and agents of the mobile world" (Skelton 2013:469). This article complements and extends these theoretical and empirical efforts through examining young people's everyday mobilities as they navigate private secondary school in rural India. In doing so it foregrounds the social relations implicated in the gendered mobility practices of young men and women. The article is also a

challenge to the lack of attention afforded to young people in rural Non-Western contexts; the vast majority of nascent scholarship on youth mobilities takes an empirical focus on urban contexts in Western capitalist societies (e.g. Skelton 2013, Worth 2013, Barker 2009).

Formal education in India has undergone major shifts since policies of economic liberalization initiated in the early 1990s and is broadly characterized by an ongoing reconfiguration by way of increased deregulation and privatization (see Chakravarti 2013), as well as the emergence of an "international" educational ethos, actors, and practices (Qureshi et al. 2013). At its core, the flourishing private sector and the accompanying English-medium of instruction is associated with aspirations of social mobility and improved employment prospects (Woodhead et al. 2013); it forms part of a broader cultural aspiration by families toward recognition as being "middle class" (see Ciotti 2012, Donner and De Neve 2011).

India's secondary schooling sector has witnessed a particularly accelerated growth in recent years (see ASER 2014, Kingdon 2007). Across rural populations especially, the last decade has seen enrolment in private schooling double (Wadhwa 2014:19), as families increasingly shirk government schools despite free textbooks, uniforms, and mid-day meals (ASER 2014:4, see also Ashley et al. 2012, Härmä 2011). This increase in private enrolment has been linked to increasing literacy levels among historically disadvantaged Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Pal and Kingdon 2010:19, but see Härmä 2011), though scholarship has noted the reproduction of social inequalities in line with the diversity of choice across the private sector (see Sancho 2015, Jeffery et al. 2005). Many of these are

"low-fee" private (LFP) schools (Srivastava 2013); in addition to ownership, financing, and management being independent of the state, their charges are within a range accessible to disadvantaged populations. These campuses are often purpose-built with on-site accommodation catering to large and socially diverse student bodies; they "[grow] organically as more rooms, floors, or side-buildings [are] added to accommodate increased demand" (Tooley 2015:228). Yet, despite this mushrooming private sector and increasing enrolment among socio-economically disadvantaged rural populations, there has been little substantive ethnographic analysis from the perspectives of rural youth that critically addresses their understanding and experiences of schooling (Froerer 2015).

This article seeks to make two key contributions. First, I make an empirical contribution to studies of young people's schooling in India. Recent scholarship on young people's schooling often foregrounds parental perspectives (e.g. Still 2011). In contrast, the values young men and women place on formal schooling, and the strategies they take in negotiating these experiences, remain a nascent area of enquiry (but see Sancho 2015, Froerer 2015). Drawing on eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork in a village of South Gujarat, I examine the values young women and men place on a recently established LFP school. I focus in particular on students from Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs). These are three of the four classifications outlined in the 1950 Constitution of India. SCs and STs are indigenous peoples in India considered to be the lowest socioeconomically ranking groups. OBCs are considered socially and educationally disadvantaged. In contemporary India all three classifications receive quotas in public sector employment and higher education institutions. By

contrast Forward Castes (FCs) are considered socially, educationally, and economically advanced.[1]

Second, I aim to think explicitly about the co-implication of mobility and age-identity. Young people's everyday mobilities into and around the school are produced through interactions with an older generation of college-educated young men and women in the village. My analysis highlights the multiple relationalities that underpin young people's everyday mobilities. I am interested in not only the types of mobilities characteristic of particular generations of young people, but how socially constructed categories of age and "youth" are (re)produced, undermined, and transformed as LFP students move across and through space. I demonstrate how a closer theoretical engagement with mobility theory provides valuable insights for interrogating the construction and performance of young people's identities within broader processes of social change.

In the following sections I locate this study at the intersection of scholarly work on youth transitions and mobility theory, before introducing relevant South Asian approaches toward youth research. I then introduce the case study for my research in rural Gujarat before drawing on ethnographic material to consider the nature of young people's everyday mobilities. In the conclusion I return to broader debates about young people's movements through the life course, reflecting on the contributions mobility theory can offer in developing a conceptualization of the life

[1] For a succinct overview of caste in contemporary India, and its relation to politics and the economy, see Corbridge et al. (2012).

course which appreciates the "complexity and non-linearity of situated lives" (Hörschelmann 2011:379).

## 2. Mobilities: Youth, Space, and Identity

Mobility is movement imbued with knowledge and power (Adey et al. 2014, Cresswell 2006). All forms of mobility, Cresswell (2010) notes, have a physical reality, are encoded culturally and socially, and are experienced through practice. Importantly, "these forms of mobility (walking, driving, etc.) and these aspects of mobilities (movement, representation, and practice) are political - they are implicated in the production of power and relations of domination" (Creswell 2010:20). Following this, mobilities must be understood both as corporeal practices that are experienced, and representations that (re-)iterate meaning. These materials and meanings are "constantly in the process of intersecting and interacting, leading to dynamic and contingent mobilities" (Harker 2009:12). Mobilities are therefore positioned in relation to someone or something, and are thus embedded within relations of power. Adey (2010) extends this point by considering the notion of "relative immobilities", a phrase that emphasizes not only the relational, but also the differential ways in which mobilities interact. He argues that mobilities are contested and contest one another, with certain mobilities requiring other relative *im*mobilities to function.

Within the "new" mobilities paradigm[2], the social "has been reconfigured as mobile, with many aspects of social life, civil society, and political participation

[2] See Adey et al. (2014), Cresswell (2010), Gough (2008) for a useful discussion regarding how "new" the paradigm actually is.

increasingly understood as being performed through mobilities' (Adey et al. 2014:3, see also Cresswell 2010, Urry 2009). Cresswell (2010) in his paper "*Towards a politics of mobility"* argues for the development of a geographical understanding of mobility that can in turn inform theorizations of social relations. By politics, he refers to "social relations that involve the production and distribution of power" (2010:21), including power relations between classes, genders, religions, and, in India, castes. A politics of mobility therefore refers to "the ways in which mobilities are both productive of such social relations and are produced *by* them" (*ibid.,* author's own emphasis).

Yet within theorizations of mobility (e.g. Adey 2010, Cresswell 2010, Sheller and Urry 2006), there has been little mention of young people themselves as actors and agents (but see, for example, Skelton 2013, Holt and Costello 2011, Barker et al. 2009). This marks a theoretical gap within the mobilities literature. Following Skelton's (2013) recent assertion that young people and their mobilities "actively participate in the persistent production, creation, and alteration of spaces and places" (2013:469), my interest in this article is in enriching our understanding of the politics of mobility through a geographical focus on young people's mobilities. In doing so I focus my analysis on two interrelated concepts from this paradigm that intersect with ongoing theoretical geographic work concerning the spatial aspects of youth transitions: identity formation and relationality.

Conceptualizations that connect movement and mobilities with the formation of identities remain a nascent area of mobilities literature (Adey 2010) and, as Skelton (2013:471) notes, identity formation and its link to mobility is an

important strand for further research in mobility studies. Young people, Skelton (2013) argues, are mobile in all sorts of ways either independently or in the presence of others. They experience geography and spatialities differently from adults, and differentially within the range of these younger age groups (see for example, Aitken et al. 2008, Jeffrey and Dyson 2008, Holloway and Valentine 2000). Geographers of childhood and youth offer productive theoretical insights into how young people's everyday spaces and their identities are co-constitutive (e.g. Ansell and van Blerk 2007, Horton and Kraftl 2006). Hopkins (2006), for example, demonstrates how young men's masculine identities develop in relation to the masculinities of other young men who inhabit the same local spaces and institutional contexts. His analysis stresses the range of identities inhabited and performed by his informants. Young people have different access to, and experiences of, places on grounds of their age identities and, as such, will actively create and resist particular age identities through their use of space and place (see Hopkins and Pain 2007).

This relational view whereby space is constituted through social relations (Massey 2005) resonates with recent geographical conceptualizations of the relationship between mobility and identity production (e.g. Worth 2013, Barker 2009). Worth (2013), for example, focusing on visually impaired young people's engagements with the city as a social space, examines the mobility strategies they invoke in order to gain recognition as "competent spatial actors". Spatial competency is conceptualized by her informants as characterizing a type of independent physical mobility with which they associate a progression through the life course. Her study demonstrates how young people's physical mobilities are contingent on their

ability to appropriate and enact particular social identities. In focusing on young people's social experience of moving through the city, Worth's conceptualization is oriented around young people's developing sense of independence. Paying greater attention to young people's everyday social interactions can develop and extend this theorization on the co-implication of age and mobility in order to better understand the strategies young people invoke in gaining spatial competency as they encounter and negotiate the age-identities characteristic of particular spaces. Rather than age simply being a "structuring" social category, then, I am interested in unpacking how age and mobility are "constantly produced in and through the experiential plane(s) of everyday life" (Barker et al. 2009:5), and how the boundaries of "youth" as a socially constructed category are contested and defined.

Mobilities are contested and simultaneously contest one another, and attention to subaltern mobilities and *im*mobilities have become crucial to the field of critical mobilities research (Adey et al. 2014:49, see also Ahmed et al. 2003). Foregrounding the differential and relational nature of mobilities is particularly significant for the study of youth mobilities (see Oswin and Yeoh 2010, Harker 2009). For young people especially, axes of social difference such as age and gender mediate the capacity to move (see Dobson 2009, Holt and Costello 2011). Reflecting this, geographers of youth have begun to conceptualize young people's *im*mobilities, focusing closely on urban spaces. Harker (2009), for example, examines the relative immobilities of university students in Birzeit, Palestine. He argues that the immobilities students experience are relative "not just to other peoples' mobilities (e.g., Israeli settlers), but also to prior experiences of mobility (an '*else when'*) and to experiences of mobility in other spaces (an '*else where*')"

(Harker 2009:31). Skelton (2013), examines the contrasting context of young people's experiences of urban mobility and immobility in Auckland, New Zealand. Focusing on aspects of young people's car ownership, she argues that those with cars are able to form relational connections across neighbourhoods, which they actively reinforce through sport and social activities. As such, they "[practice] their identities as emerging urbanites through the city spaces" (Skelton 2013:480). The relational nature of young people's mobilities remains under-examined within the mobilities paradigm (Harker 2009, Oswin and Yeoh 2010) and is central to understanding the gendered mobility practices of young men and women in rural Gujarat.

## 3. Youth, Space, and Identity in South Asia

Studies across South Asia offer important insights into the spatiality and gendered nature of identity formation among young people. This section introduces relevant regional work, highlighting its relevance to the study of young people's mobilities in rural Gujarat. For analytical purposes it is useful to separate out two broad strands of scholarship: studies of youth cultures in metropolitan contexts, and studies of young people's everyday work and schooling in domestic, rural settings.

Research on the social and cultural practices of educated young people, primarily middle class young men, highlights several key aspects to the interplay of space and the formation of distinctive sets of masculine identities (e.g. Chakrabarty 1999, Walle 2004). First, are the ways in which young people from different caste and class backgrounds appropriate public spaces based on shared experiences.

Jeffrey's (2010) research in metropolitan Uttar Pradesh, India, demonstrates how educated unemployed young men create and enact affirmative youth cultures around urban public spaces. These public spaces are sites in which the performance of youthful masculine identities plays out (see also Nisbett 2007); rather than a spatial legitimacy being predicated straightforwardly upon shared structural conditions, those unable to enact certain social and cultural sensibilities are often spoken of derogatorily. In this sense, spatial competency emerges through the performance of social identities associated with the dominant groups that appropriate these urban spaces (see also Valentine 2007). Walle (2004), researching in Lahore, Pakistan, makes a more explicit note of the ways in which young men enact masculine performances in order to gain credibility among their peers. In breaking certain social, juridical, or religious norms, his informants sought to acquire legitimacy and prestige among their peers.

Often these practices of young men's sociality intersect with and reproduce exclusionary ideas about gender; not only in terms of access to public spaces (see Lukose 2005, Osella and Osella 2002), but also ideas about the objectification of women and dominance over women's bodies and social spaces (see Rogers 2008). This was evident among Nisbett's (2007) middle class young men in Bangalore, whose circulated stories of illicit relationships with young women served an essential role in the formation of a shared set of masculine identities within the peer group. In this regard, his analysis draws parallels with geographical work on identity as a process of continuous departure whereby "the capacity for one to move in and out of different subject positions depends a great deal on the recognition of multiple identities and an ability to see from one's perspectives as

well as others" (Adey 2010:25). These masculine performances are often characterized as something of a "hypermasculine bravado"; the (re)assertion of masculinity imagined as "a struggle between men for power and dominance over women's bodies and social spaces" (Rogers 2008:80). Importantly, pervasive ideas about caste and class can fracture generational unity, such as when inter-religious or cross-caste sexual relationships become a matter of public knowledge. Among Jeffrey's (2010b) college-going young men, for example, fighting, disputes, and accusations were banded around upon revelations of SC and Muslim youth courting Hindu FC young women (2010:474).

What emerges as central to the cultivation of these youthful solidarities is the space of the college itself. Nakassis (2013), in his study of youth masculinities in South India, notes how the urban college is a space where transgression and experimentation with alternate norms of status and authority unfold (2013:256). Its removal from kin and caste logics (Beteille 1993, Sharma 1986), and the consequential anonymity, enables the creation of, and experimentation with, new identities and modes of sociality (see Lukose 2009). In these instances young people turn inwards toward the peer group (Osella and Osella 1998, Krishnan 2016), activities among whom are "a primary outlet for the performance of masculinity outside the family environment" (see Nisbett 2007:940). Contrastingly, family spaces, for young women especially, "carry the danger of surveillance" (Krishnan 2016:70) where young people's behaviours are policed.

It is analytically useful to separate out a second strand of scholarship which considers young people's everyday work and schooling in primarily rural and,

crucially, domestic contexts (e.g. Froerer 2015, Dyson 2014, Nieuwenhuys 1994). These studies highlight how locally normative constructions of gender and age identity constitute important axes of social differentiation. Dyson (2014), in her ethnography of children's lives in the Indian Himalayas, links growing enrolment in formal education to the emergence of the category of unmarried "youth". She explores notions of capability and morality (see Dyson 2015:53), whereby youth were positioned somewhere in between locally salient ideas about "children", who were seen as physically able but with a tendency to be wild and hot-headed, and "adults", who were considered "responsible, judicious, and civilized" (2015:53). Moreover, gendered constructions of childhood linked strongly to how parents conceived of their offspring's futures. Young girls were socialized early to view housework as a female activity and are imagined by their parents to be conscientious and obedient (see also Parry 2005). In contrast, young men were often imagined as wayward and detached from daily tasks. These observations are significant as they highlight how normative age and gender identities influenced the types of work and, consequently, the competencies with which young people moved through spaces. Niewenhuys (1994), researching in a fishing village of Kerala, South India, notes similar observations on how powerful ideas about age and gender mediate the expectations placed on young people's work. Men, for example, begin a "long process of socialization" from a young age, with particular fishing tasks being linked directly to ideas about social maturity circulating within the community (see Niewenhuys 1994:101). I develop these ideas about youth, gender, and space in order to advance a geographical understanding of the complexities, fluidities, and dynamism of young people's mobilities and social identities. I direct attention to the ways in which young women and men encounter

and appropriate identities both within and across generational groups, and the fluidity with which these identities are negotiated and performed against normative ideas about gender, caste, kinship, and community in a rural village of South Gujarat.

## 4. Young people's schooling in Kota, Gujarat

Gujarat, India's westernmost state, ranks second across all twenty-eight states in terms of average annual growth rate of Net State Domestic Product (Drèze and Sen 2013:298). Yet the state has been accused of engendering growing inequalities by way of its neglect for the social sector (Jaffrelot 2015). State expenditure in health and education, for example, has declined more than the average decline in other high-growth states such as Haryana and Maharashtra and reflects the state government's active endorsement of private-led delivery (Sood 2012). In the case of secondary education, a recent report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India in 2014 highlights a fast-flowing dispersal of private unaided secondary schools - that is, those whose ownership, financing, and management is independent of the state - across rural regions of Gujarat in 2014 ("Children in Gujarat finding their way to private schools" 2014). This has been accompanied by a remarkable growth in student enrolment - an increase of 84 *per cent* across 2008-13 - as compared to a mere 3 *per cent* increase in student enrolment across government schools over the same period (*ibid.*).

This article draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted across 2014 and 2015 in Kota, a medium sized village with a population of around 1700 living in 420

houses, located in Navsari district in South Gujarat. Across eleven months I engaged in participant observation with young people and their parents, grandparents, and siblings. Acknowledging the diversity of Kota's social composition, I conducted 260 interviews in Gujarati with 86 repeat informants: 47 men and 39 women. Of these 86, 14 were FC, 34 were OBC, 20 were SC, and 18 were ST. Additional to this were frequent conversations with a range of people including fellow students, school faculty members, local shop owners, members of the village local self-government organization (*panchāyata*), and low-level political officials.

Among Kota's SC and ST households, women were typically involved in agricultural labour such as sowing seeds in the fields of wealthier villagers, whilst men would engage in unskilled manual labour such as building and construction work. In the poorest of these families when women were not employed to work in the fields they would often join their husbands working on-site in physically exhausting work. Typical daily rates for SCs and STs were 100 INR (1.50 USD) for women and 150 INR (2.21 USD) for men.

Strategies around schooling also emerged as a significant marker of social difference in Kota. Formal schooling was first introduced in the village in the form of a state primary school established the mid-1960s. Initially this was populated primarily by wealthier caste families; "The Adivasis weren't attending then (*Tyāre Adivāsi loko nati āvtā*)", an elderly FC villager told me dismissively. This is reflected in the high rates of illiteracy among the SC and ST adult population of present day Kota. By the late 1990s the school had been extended to the secondary level to

accommodate a small number of students through Standards 9 to 12. The most noticeable transformation in elementary and secondary education provision came in 2006 when a large LFP school, which I call Shiv Jyoti School, was constructed in a neighbouring village 3.5km away. This establishment, teaching in both English and Gujarati mediums of instruction, was initially met with high rates of English-medium enrolment among wealthier families.

Yet, in the decade since its inception, private schooling has created a divide between caste communities in Kota and this trend has reversed. Wealthier, high caste families in Kota are now seeking distinction through enrolling their children in private schools 15km away in Navsari city where they also undertake private tuition classes (see also Sancho 2015), whilst an upwardly mobile population of SC, ST, and poorer OBC families are increasingly enrolling their children privately in Shiv Jyoti as they pursue projects of social reform (see Cross 2014). In 2015 the annual fees at Shiv Jyoti for an 11th Standard English-medium student was 2800 INR (41 USD), which equates to just over 230 INR (3.40 USD) per month. When considered alongside the daily labour rates for SC and ST men and women, Shiv Jyoti constitutes a "low-fee" school by Srivastava's definition in that at the higher secondary level it charges a monthly tuition fee not exceeding two days' earnings (Srivastava 2013:15), and is thus conceived of as "accessible" to marginalized groups.

In recent years Shiv Jyoti has also expanded physically, building an on-site hostel as it caters to an increasingly large and socially diverse student body; it now accommodates young men and women not only from the neighbouring cluster of

villages in Navsari, but also students from villages and, notably, caste communities further afield across Gujarat. From an initial intake of 82 students in 2006, by early 2015 the school was catering to over 450 young men and women. In conversation villagers invoked the school's academic reputation, its low fees, and its location as central reasons underpinning growing enrolment levels among Kota's poorer households. As a result, recent years have seen an increasing number of marginalized youth completing their schooling and joining their wealthier peers in pursuing higher education in urban centres across Gujarat's major cities. Yet, these increasing levels of investment in education are marred by heavily gendered notions. Among higher caste families, both male and female education is largely envisaged as a now-common route into college and salaried work, predicated on the requisite forms of economic and social capital. Whilst a small number of lower caste parents have similar aspirations, the vast majority commonly envisage female education as a route toward marrying upwards whereby education forms the basis for becoming mothers and housewives (see also Still 2011, Dyson 2015). In contrast, and despite a lack of social contacts, young men's schooling is seen as a stepping-stone toward either college or directly into paid employment.

The fieldwork data presented here formed part of a larger research project examining young people's everyday sociality in rural Gujarat. In this article, however, my focus is on the mobility strategies of young men and women from ST, ST, and OBC backgrounds, and the generational relations undergirding these mobilities. I accompanied several young men and women from Kota on their daily journeys before and after school. During these periods, I grew familiar with their routes through the village, observing their interactions with their peers and other

Kota youth. In what follows I use the genre of ethnographic portraits (Jeffrey and Dyson 2008), drawing on the perspectives of two individuals in order to provide insights into the broader experiences of a wider demographic of which they are also part (see also Arnold and Blackburn 2005). Through actively locating myself within the text, ethnographic portraiture facilitates a critical reflection on my own positioning within the research process and makes explicit the nature of my relationships with informants (see also Romani 2015, Kunnath 2013). I depict the schooling experiences of one ST young woman whose experiences were broadly representative of ST and SC young women, and an OBC young man whose practices reflect the experiences of young men from OBC and upwardly mobile SC and ST families. In introducing these vignettes, I draw on wider observational material in Kota in order to highlight how young people's everyday mobilities are transforming in response to broader educational transformations occurring in India, reflecting on what this means for age and youth as socially constructed categories.

**5. Madivi**

When we first met in October 2014, Madivi had recently turned seventeen and was halfway through her penultimate year at Shiv Jyoti. She was the younger of two siblings in an ST household located along the periphery of Kota. Our encounter was brief; as she returned back home from school one afternoon I was stood with her elder brother, Tipu, outside the family's small wooden-framed hut. Madivi paused to direct a suspicious glance in my direction before moving hurriedly into the house. Moments later she emerged, having changed out of her bright blue school

uniform, only to scurry off again. Noticing my expression of wonder, Tipu explained with one word - *majurī* (manual labour). Madivi had rushed off to help her mother complete an afternoon of paid agricultural labour in the field of a wealthier villager. Over the following months I spent time with Madivi and other young women and men from Kota studying at Shiv Jyoti, most commonly after school on their journey home where they would often linger in and around public spaces whilst passing through the village.

My time spent with Madivi highlights a series of broader aspects of young SC and ST women's mobilities in Kota. Firstly are the ways in which young women were subjected to greater gendered constraints as a result of their continued education. Like other young women, Madivi's daily routine involved waking early in the morning to prepare food and start a fire to make sweet tea (*chāi*) for the rest of the family, before heading off to collect water from the nearby pump. From the mid-afternoon onward, following school, they would either return home to carry out various domestic chores in relative isolation or, as Madivi often did, head straight out again to assist their mothers in completing their work. As a result, girls like Madivi were typically exhausted. Their continued enrolment in secondary education and the mobility this afforded them provided no respite from gendered expectations within the household. Rather the opposite - reinforcing a kind of *im*mobility within the household it drew them more tightly in to gendered roles, compounding their daily tasks and placing them under greater strain.

Despite this, young SC and ST women like Madivi commonly perceived schooling as affording them a degree of independence and autonomy. A common refrain

among young women was that of the expanded temporal and spatial opportunities it offered young women. Prior to her enrolment in Shiv Jyoti in early 2011, Madivi had studied at the local government school in Kota. "At first, [Shiv Jyoti] was too big," she told me one afternoon as we followed a trail of uniformed youth back toward Kota. "At [the local school] there were only 16 or 17 of us. Here there are very many. In Standard 8, I started speaking more to those students who were studying back in Kota too, because they were new here too. They were the same. After school we walk back together. We have fun, and we have "time". In [the local school] we did not speak much. We used to go straight home (*Ghare tarataja jāta hatā*)." During the several after-school journeys I made with students, Madivi and her friends often walked the 3.5km trek back toward Kota with a cluster of male and female ST, SC, and OBC students enrolled in Shiv Jyoti. Whilst it was most common to see friendship groups clustered according to gender, what became noticeable was the degree to which friendships across this peer group subsumed caste-based differences manifesting locally in Kota. Madivi, for example, regularly strolled back toward Kota with a group of six or seven girls of whom only one other was from the same ST community. This sociality was predicated on their shared experience of schooling; conversations made clear that this social and spatial context had made possible these types of interactions and, outside of village spaces, young men and women of different caste communities often described one another using kinship terms such as *bhāi* (brother) and *bahena* (sister).

Similarly, Madivi and her peers also valued Shiv Jyoti for its provision of crucial opportunities for personal relationships beyond their communities in Kota itself. Prior to enrolling in the school, Madivi's interactions had been confined to the ST

locality in Kota and the small cohort of students at school. The larger and more diverse student body attracted students not only from neighbouring villages, but also students from further afield who lived in annexed male and female hostels. Owing to my being an older male youth, and the fact that several of my female informants were initially accessed through their male siblings or parents, it was common for young women to keep private the nature of their personal relationships on campus. Rather, the conversations which were had were often "friend of a friend" type stories as the basis for discussion. Madivi was a rare exception. Having lived with her family over the course of several months our conversations were founded on the need for respect and a distinct reciprocity; she was equally as intrigued about my life, education, and personal relationships as I was with hers. By December 2015, Madivi had grown close to another student, an OBC boy from a village 30km east of Kota. In her own words, they were "going" (*chālta hatā*) in a platonic relationship. Given her domestic duties and the fear of being seen by villagers outside of the school gate, Madivi explained how their relationship was restricted to school time during breaks and early in the morning, whilst simultaneously appreciating that Shiv Jyoti itself was significantly removed from the village in both social and spatial terms. In this way, and reflecting my wider observations among Kota youth, Madivi's mobility was produced through a distinct awareness of the normative ideas about caste, religion, and gender that ordered particular spaces within and beyond Kota (see also Valentine 2007).

The example of Madivi also highlights the opportunities for discussions and informal learning that friendships with other young Kota women provided, central to which was Shiv Jyoti's geographical location away from the village. One of

Madivi's friends, Puja, stood out as has having had particular influence on her social strategies at school. Puja lived at the other end of Kota, and was the younger of two daughters to a middle-caste Hindu OBC family. Each day after school, Madivi would detour past Puja's house. On days where she had time, she strategized to linger for a few minutes, chatting to Puja's older sister, Chaki, who would often sit at the front of the house whilst completing household chores (see Photo 8.3). Even after several months, my positionality as a male researcher made it impossible to participate in these types of conversations but Madivi often hinted at the topics discussed, which were of a personal and intimate nature. "[Chaki] has been to college," Madivi told me. "She has had very many relationships. She knows how to behave, what to say, how to act. She teaches me (*Te mane shikāve*)." The fleeting conversations and momentary whispers Madivi had with older female youth in Kota were crucial sources of informal learning, and served to define her interactions with young men and women at school. This older generation were often described by young SC and ST women using terms of fictive kinship in a similar manner to their Kota peers also studying at Shiv Jyoti; to Madivi, Chaki was like an older sister (*moti bahena jevī*). Reflecting this, my conversations with Chaki and other college-educated youth suggested a simultaneous sense of pride and self-worth gained from being able to impart their experiences to younger villagers.

Madivi's ability to carve out these opportunities for informal learning was underpinned by a stark awareness of familial expectations. When asked about the family decision to continue her education in secondary school, her father told me, "*Ājkal* (These days), people like us require more *education*." He went on to explain how they had withdrawn Tipu from school at the age of fifteen and now, aged

twenty-four, he was still unmarried and in insecure work. "[Tipu] is like me", he responded sullenly, "The next generation should be a little bigger (*torā motā hovu joi*), you know?". Yet, investment in female education was not thought of solely in terms of benefits; concerns over sexual purity often led families to withdraw their daughters from formal education. In contemporary India these concerns manifest most strongly among marginalized communities who, engaged in competitive strategies for upward social mobility, are often those who are most preoccupied with the protection of female modesty (Still 2011:1129). Madivi's father expressed a distinct weariness of Shiv Jyoti's student body, its distant location, and the associated lack of supervision this entailed. "Back at [the local school in Kota] she was close. We knew where she was and who she studied with. At [Shiv Jyoti] not all students are from [Kota]. When she is talking about school we do not know anything." He went on to narrate a well-circulated rumour among Kota families of one young female student who had become besotted with a young man and, following their "love marriage", had eloped all the way to the Maharashtra border. The perspective of her father highlights the ways in which young women's mobilities were diffused with power relations by way of parental decision-making around educational investment.

In line with these concerns, young OBC, SC, and ST women were extremely perceptive of this politics of mobility, consciously strategizing within the household to prolong their educational enrolment. Like other young women, Madivi was acutely aware of her parents' apprehensions about schooling and was keen to maintain her ongoing friendships and enrolment at the school. A common understanding among Madivi and her friends was that schooling came with the

price of heightened parental policing within the household. “If us girls want to go to school then we have to do *more* work”, Madivi told me on a walk back one afternoon, whilst her friends nodded in agreement. “For boys, they can roam free. Before school, after school, they have no worries (*enā koi vāndo nāhi*). For us, we have to go straight back. We have to do housework or manual labour (*Gharakām ke majuri karvā pade*). So, our family gets money. If not, your parents tear you away from school.” Madivi’s reflection articulates a very clear understanding of the need to navigate a set of gendered power relations circulating within the family in order to maintain her opportunities for mobility. As per stories from other young women, she strategized very carefully to ensure conformation to familial expectations and the inherent physical *im*mobility this entailed, whilst also carving out precious opportunities for mobility in her daily routine. Take, for example, Madivi’s lingering outside of Puja’s house to converse with Chaki, which was balanced with other days when family members, especially her mother, were engaged in paid labour during which she would dash back and get straight to work.

These observations develop analyses drawn from recent studies of young people’s everyday work in India. Dyson (2014), researching in the Indian Himalayas suggests that young people’s agency, rather than involving an opposition of established structures, can be consciously strategic. She uses the term “active quiescence” to reference how children and youth fulfil work demands because it is in their interest to do so rather than by virtue of social conditioning (2014:137). The practices of Madivi and other young women suggest that, whilst they actively quiesced to gendered expectations within the household, they also sought to exert a measure of agency which went beyond this. Most commonly they seized upon

opportunities to demonstrate their educational capital, thus proving the pragmatic utility of their schooling in an effort to prolong their enrolment at Shiv Jyoti. In doing so, young women consciously constructed and performed identities in order to facilitate everyday mobility. This typically involved carving out new opportunities to contribute to the household beyond their straightforwardly gendered roles. In many cases I became a sounding board for these achievements. Madivi, for example, lauded her own ability to assist parents within the household. Much to Tipu's resentment, she had recently taught her father to navigate the set-up menu on his new mobile phone, seizing on her opportunity to apply her English language skills and technological capacity. Other SC and ST youth recollected parallel instances of assisting parents, among whom there were high levels of illiteracy, in order to demonstrate their educational capital. Similar observations have been noted elsewhere in the Global South, whereby a younger, often better educated generation, are well-placed to reposition themselves within the family; Porter and colleagues (2015), researching in sub-Saharan Africa, discuss the repositioning of young people as family information hubs, arguing that this shift can also endow significant power. In Kota, SC and ST young women enact these skilful demonstrations outside of their typical domestic roles in order to carve out a measure of self-worth. Producing new identities within the household derived on the basis of their education capital, they become active agents within the mobile world (see Skelton 2013).

The values young women placed on schooling and the strategies they invoked for everyday mobility were strongly differentiated by caste in Kota. In addition to their enrolment in urban private schools, young women from FC and affluent OBC

families typically anticipated pursuing higher education in metropolitan Gujarat. As such, on-campus personal relationships did not emerge as an aspect of significance during conversations about their secondary schooling. Contrasting this, SC and ST youth like Madivi were often of the common understanding that, following their completion of schooling, they would likely undertake an arranged marriage and relocate patrilocally[3]. Thus for them private schooling was imagined as a temporally-bound duration of relative freedom and autonomy where they could construct and perform identities as youth (*yuvā*) that were produced through interactions with an older generation of college-educated young women.

What emerges powerfully through the stories of Madivi and other young OBC, SC, and ST women is the centrality of transformations characteristic of LFP schools - larger campuses located further away, increased size and social diversity of the student body, and on-site hostel accommodation - to young women's emerging mobility practices. This pairs contrastingly against observations on peer relations in the context of local, village-based schooling. Froerer's (2010) research, for example, focuses on aspects of friendship among young people attending a local, village-based school in Chhattisgarh, central India. She highlights how gendered restrictions on movement result in the inability of young women to associate with those beyond the proximity of their immediate caste communities (Froerer 2010:146). The significance of Shiv Jyoti, then, centres around both its geographical location outside of Kota as well as its large and socially diverse student body. The case of Madivi clearly illustrates how these factors serve to engender cross-caste, village-based friendships among marginalized young

[3] A pattern of marriage in which the couple resides with, or near, the husband's parents.

women, in addition to affording them new opportunities for personal relationships that young women value for the provision of a college-like experience (*college jevu anubhav*). Madivi's everyday mobility practices reflect an acute awareness of gendered and caste-based power relations, and the ways in which these manifest differently across space. In thinking through Cresswell's (2010) "politics of mobility", then, the example of Madivi illustrates the ways in which these power relations produce and are transformed by young women's mobility practices in Kota.

**6. Mahesh**

Marginalized young men valued private secondary schooling for vastly different reasons than those of young women, as illustrated by the example of Mahesh. Mahesh was seventeen and from a Hindu OBC family in Kota with a small landholding used for subsistence farming. His older sister had married in 2010 and moved to a neighbouring village in line with patrilocal norms, so for several years Mahesh had been the only child living in their natal home in central Kota. Despite this, his household responsibilities did not deviate from those typically considered masculine and carried out by husbands or young men of at least sixteen years. These ranged from occasional visits to the butcher to collect meat (see Photo 8.1), through to visiting Kota's Fair Price Shop selling staple food grains at subsidized prices to households below the poverty line. As per other marginalized male youth, a common sight was that of Mahesh zooming through the centre of Kota, carefully balancing large sacks of grain on the handlebars of his rickety, second hand scooter. Unlike their female counterparts, young men found these tasks irregular

and undemanding, made easier for the fact that families from OBC, SC and ST are increasingly investing in second hand scooters, use of and access to which is itself gendered.

Having transferred to Shiv Jyoti from the local government school in 2010, Mahesh was now in his final year. Similar to young women, a prominent theme among male students who had made this transition was a keen reflection on how an enrolment in private schooling had widened the scope of their social encounters. Yet what became rapidly apparent was the rationale underpinning these values, which contrasted starkly with those of young women like Madivi. Mahesh told me, "Back at [the local school] everyone knew each other. The class was small. At [Shiv Jyoti] when we started, there were students from *everywhere*." One afternoon I returned to this topic when sat on the roadside with Mahesh and three of his friends. When asked about the significance of students at Shiv Jyoti being from other villages, one of his friends turned to me, smirking. "Look, brother (*Jo, bhāi*)," he said coolly, "at [Shiv Jyoti] there are so many girls, they attend from all over (*e loko badi bāju ti āve*). If you want to, it is easier to go [be in a relationship] with a girl there. I'll tell you why…" "…because," Mahesh interrupted, "they are not from Kota. To those guys", he said, gesturing the entire village with his hand, "they are not sisters or family, so there is no *tension*." OBC, SC, and ST young men like Mahesh placed considerable value on their ability to cultivate personal and intimate relationships with young women at Shiv Jyoti. Whilst he envisaged them as only fleeting and temporary - "They will come and go," he told me one afternoon - Mahesh valued these experiences for his ability to engage in locally dominant masculine discourses circulating among older male youth, with whom he sought to gain

credibility. Specifically, male LPF students sought to construct and perform identities as college youth (*yuvā*).

In Kota, these ideas played out most clearly at the bus stop; a large expanse of public space, roughly 20 by 25 metres, located at the centre of the village (see Map 4.2). The stop was a heavily gendered space; unless passing through during the day time, or as vehicular passengers during the evening, it was rare to see young women entering except to call upon their male siblings. Throughout the year, a common sight was that of clusters of young men of various castes passing time here in the early evenings after their meals (see Photo 8.2). The bus stop was a prominent space in which normative identities of youth and masculinity were constructed and performed. Young men would ride up and park their motorbikes, before lounging around sharing jokes and heckling one another in loud masculine performances. As per discussions of "youth" in other Indian contexts, their discussions were punctuated with notions of style, culture, and respect (see Jeffrey 2008) and, ranging from sixteen up to thirty years, they actively described themselves as *yuvā* or *youngstārs* (a distinct transliteration of the English term "youngster"). Competency within this masculine space was characterized most notably by the performance of a hypermasculine bravado (c.f. Rogers 2008); the enactment of positive sociality among young men was predicated upon their ability to share stories and boast about their sexual conquests. Such discourses are perpetuated through public culture such as TV and cinema (see Rogers 2008, Osella and Osella 1998). For the last year or so Mahesh and several other students attending Shiv Jyoti had become a regular feature of this evening landscape. Viewing these older, mostly college-educated OBC and FC young men in Kota in

high regard they had seized upon their enrolment at Shiv Jyoti as a means of reproducing these hypermasculine identities and, subsequently, had come to imagine themselves as members of this generation of youth.

"Come. Let's go and meet my boys (*Chāl. Mā poirā ne marvā āv*)," Mahesh told me one evening after dinner, beckoning me over to his scooter. As we pulled up to a cluster of youth at the bus stop a heated discussion was already underway. "No! That's too quiet. You want to head down toward Onjal [a large village along the nearby coast]." "Where Onjal! (*Onjal kyā*!)", another ridiculed, "You want to head the other way. It's much quieter. I've been that way before". They were boisterously debating the best strategies for engaging in sexual liaisons with young women; private spots along the nearby coast where they could take young women to engage in intercourse. Two of Mahesh's schoolfriends from Shiv Jyoti were active and vocal participants in the debate. The argument was soon settled by an older OBC youth, and a friend of Mahesh's, named Natwar. "Look," he told the group, "If you go there it is too close. Go in the other direction, it is quiet and you can have *time*." As we left that evening, Mahesh made it clear that the diversity of their social experiences at school had provided a clear basis for engaging with and learning from older youth. Shouting over his shoulder as we rode home, he told me: "They teach us, because they realize that we have *experience* too. Natwar, he is like an older brother (*E lok āpne batāve, kem ke ene kabhar ke āprā pāse bi experience che. Natwar motā bhāi jevo lāge*)".

This idea of pedagogically positioned older kin was reinforced through conversations with older youth in Kota, who conceived of themselves as playing a

crucial educatory role toward this younger generation of students enrolled at Shiv Jyoti. Mahesh's friendship with Natwar, for example, had only come to develop over the last year or so. Unable to find salaried work having completed a BA in Economics at a private college in Ahmedabad, Natwar had returned to the village and now conceived of himself as having had an important set of social experiences which he was now imparting to those back in Kota. "For these guys studying at [Shiv Jyoti] it's like *college* for the village kids. We did similar things at *college* in *Ahmedabad*. With girls we went to parks, the *mall*, places like this. Here, they do not have those so they do not know where to go. You have to be smart (*Toru mind hovu joi*)," he boasted. "I show him. (*Me ene batām*.)" As per Natwar's own stories of sexual liaisons back in Ahmedabad, anonymity was a prerequisite for the performance of these hypermasculinities. Young men like Mahesh only recited tales of personal relationships and sexual intimacy pertaining to young women located outside of the Kota community which, in Mahesh's own words, served to ensure there was no "tension".

A common understanding among male informants was that these opportunities had only been made possible by way of the social opportunities afforded to them by way of LFP schooling. Significantly, these masculine performances among OBC, SC, and ST young men went beyond being a boastful rhetoric whereby derogatory terms, such as "fast" or "loose", were used to describe young women. Rather, the performance of youth was enacted physically through increased practices of sexual intimacy with young women. Mahesh, for example, consciously engaged in living out these strategies for sexual liaisons. On several occasions I accompanied him on his scooter out to the nearby coast where, speaking freely in the absence of his

peers, he would point out various areas he had "passed time" with young women. Indeed this reflected a broader trend among young men attending Shiv Jyoti; a common sight after school was that of male youth riding their scooters on the highway out toward the beach. Young females wearing their school backpacks sat behind, with both passengers wearing a shawl or handkerchief wrapped carefully around their face to protect themselves and their identities.

The case of Mahesh demonstrates very clearly the co-implication of young men's age-identities and mobilities. In seeking a spatial competency among older male youth and the associated physical mobility within the public space of Kota's bus stop, young men actively constructed and performed a set of social practices associated with college-going male youth. Considering the bus stop as a space whose identity is produced and stabilized through the repeated intersectional identities of the college-educated youth that occupies it (see Valentine 2007) further highlights the changing nature of youth sociality in Kota. Since Shiv Jyoti's inception in 2006 there has been a gradual shift in the age demographic of those frequenting the bus stop area in the evenings. The space was once populated primarily by college-educated youth of higher castes and newly married young men. An increase in private educational attainment among marginalized male youth from OBC, SC, and ST backgrounds like Mahesh is facilitating the construction and performance of certain masculinized identities. As they gain spatial competency with a generation of older, college-educated youth, young men from socially and economically marginalized backgrounds are becoming more visible in these public spaces. In doing so, young men's mobilities actively produce

and perpetuate the hypermasculine cultures commonly associated with youth cultures in urban public spaces (see Jeffrey 2010a, Rogers 2008).

OBC, SC, and ST male youth enrolled at Shiv Jyoti like Mahesh placed considerable value on the school's large and diverse student body constituting young women from villages and communities further afield who were objectified and commonly described using a lurid language of disposability. The anonymity associated with these students outside of the Kota community was central to young men's ability to engage in this discourse; male youth studying in Kota's local secondary school lacked the ability to perform similar identities and rarely engaged in bus stop discussions with the same level of participation or spatial legitimacy. In turn these ideas were perpetuated by a self-styled older generation of college-educated youth in the village, like Natwar, who imagined themselves as playing a crucial educatory role.

## 7. Conclusion

In rural western India a transforming secondary schooling sector is providing socioeconomically marginalized young people with new opportunities for everyday mobility. These young women and men valorize low-fee private schooling differently for the social and spatial opportunities it affords them by way of its large campus size, increased size and social diversity of the student body, and on-site male and female hostel accommodation. Drawing on the genre of ethnographic portraits (Jeffrey and Dyson 2008), this article has examined the everyday mobilities of young men and women, advancing a geographical

understanding of mobility that can inform theorizations of social relations. Specifically, it complements and extends ongoing efforts to mainstream young people's mobility into the new mobilities paradigm. My contributions are threefold.

First, my analysis demonstrates the multiple relationalities underpinning young people's mobility practices, signalling the importance of understanding mobility relationally. A relational approach is well suited to understand young people's "connections with people, resources, and places" (Wyn 2014:9) in order to advance a theorization of age as a social relation. What emerged as significant in my analysis were the ways in which gendered and age identities within the familial context influenced young people's mobility strategies. These influences bore down most heavily upon young women, who found themselves navigating a set of strongly gendered expectations within the household. Notably, whilst a broad body of social scientific work necessarily examines these intergenerational aspects through a focus on family, *extrafamilial* intergenerational relationships remain substantially under-researched (Vanderbeck 2007:201). The ethnographic data presented here highlights the significance of extrafamilial intergenerational relationships; central to the everyday mobility strategies of marginalized young men and women like Mahesh and Madivi is an older generation of college-educated youth in the village who commonly play the role of pedagogically positioned older kin. These older male and female youth are valued for the experiences they have had in college settings and, simultaneously, derive a sense of self-worth through the knowledge they impart upon younger male and female villagers.

Second, in highlighting the gendered nature of young people's schooling my analysis points to the differential and relational nature of young men's and women's mobilities. Young people's mobility practices are defined by social axes of gender, caste, and age which, whilst facilitating certain mobilities, can also reinforce various *im*mobilities. Among young men like Mahesh, the mobilities they perform by way of enacting masculine identities reinforce a set of relative and gendered *im*mobilities, reinforcing exclusionary discourses concerning dominance over women's bodies and social spaces (Rogers 2008, Lukose 2005, Osella and Osella 2002). Simultaneously, the mobilities young women gain by virtue of their secondary schooling reinforce a relative set of *im*mobilities within the family space. Acutely aware of parental anxieties surrounding female education, particularly around notions of family honour and respectability (see Still 2011, Gilbertson 2014), young women "actively quiesced" (Dyson 2014) to a heavily gendered set of familial expectations centring around domestic chores and contributions toward agricultural labour. My analysis extends this theorization through demonstrating how young women strategized for everyday mobility, thereby seeking to engender more subtle forms of transformation beyond straightforward resistance (see Katz 2004). Like other young women, Madivi sought to consciously demonstrate her educational capital and exert some measure of agency within the household in order to prolong her enrolment in education. Highlighting these active and conscious mobility strategies signals young women like Madivi as "actors and agents within the mobile world" (Skelton 2013:469), very much embedded within what Cresswell (2010) terms "politics of mobility".

Third, my analysis intimates the co-implication of age and mobility. The ethnographic portraits presented illustrate how young people's mobilities and age-identities recursively produce one another. Young men like Mahesh seek to become "competent spatial actors" (c.f. Worth 2013) as they move through public spaces within the village. In doing so they actively produce and perform normative gendered age-identities circulating among older college-educated male youth. As my analysis illustrates these identities are co-produced across an older generation of male youth from wealthier OBC and FC families in the village. These observations speak more broadly to the impacts of rural Gujarat's changing educational landscape on the nature of young people's sociality. Specifically, they signal the ways in which a transforming schooling experience goes some way in facilitating a set of social practices that engender a traversing of more conservative kin and caste relations circulating more strongly among older generations in Kota. Central to this spatial competency were the diverse opportunities for personal relationships and sexual intimacy young men associated with their LFP secondary schooling. Notably, numerous male students at Shiv Jyoti went beyond engaging in straightforward masculine "bravado" in the sense of intention, instead practicing sexual intimacy in line with the strategies learned from older male youth.

Taken collectively these observations signal the conceptual contributions mobility theory can offer a theorization of the life course that appreciates "the complexity and non-linearity of situated lives" (Hörschelmann 2011). The emphasis placed within mobility theory of people and things being in flux (Adey et al. 2014) resonates with ethnographic, cross-cultural research that recognises the "fluidity and fleetfootedness that seems to be the way of life courses" (Bailey 2008:413).

Young people, I argue, encounter "youth" differentially according to their positioning within society and the sets of social practices they find themselves able to perform. For a young Adivasi woman like Madivi, youth can imply a fleeting, year-long experience in 11th Standard before marrying and relocating in a nearby village, whereas for a young OBC man like Mahesh, it could span several years entailing secondary schooling and college, followed by a more prolonged period of educated unemployment back in the village. The ways in which these age-identities are constructed within and across generations highlights youth as a relational achievement rather than individual choice.



**Photo 8.1** Muslim and Hindu villagers of different castes cluster around Muslim butcher in Kota*, author's own photograph*



**Photo 8.2** Young men in Kota begin to congregate around bus stop area in early evening*, author's own photograph*



**Photo 8.3** Young woman from Hindu OBC family sits sifting through dried chillis outside family home in early afternoon*, author's own photograph*

# Chapter 9. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

## Introduction

The four articles preceding this chapter examine the everyday lives of young people through a focus on the social spheres of education and work. Collectively, the articles signal how the broad economic and cultural effects of globalization in contemporary India are transforming the everyday social lives of rural young men and women. Among youth from historically disadvantaged backgrounds especially, educational and occupational outcomes are increasingly uncertain; reduced state funding for social reproduction, as a constitutive element of globalization, bears down most pressingly upon marginalized segments of society (see Jeffrey and McDowell 2004, Ruddick 2003). My aim has been to unpack how young people's social practices are transforming in response to rapid increases in educational attainment. Taken individually, each article takes a geographical approach toward developing a set of distinct but interrelated debates around: educated unemployed young men's temporal subjectivities, geographies of friendship, youth transitions and imagined futures, and young people's mobilities.

This chapter reflects on the arguments developed across each of the papers in order to draw out a series of conclusions regarding young people's sociality in contemporary rural Gujarat. I forward three broader arguments. Firstly, a focus on everyday social relations offers productive insights into how the political and economic changes associated with liberalization in contemporary India manifest at the scale of the everyday. The multiple difficulties young people face are not discrete "issues" but instead are complexly bundled together, such that addressing

young people's hardships requires attention to changes occurring in the fields of education, work, health, and politics (Bourdieu 1984), as well as differences between young people on the basis of class, caste, gender, and other dimensions of social identity. Focusing on young people's education and work, this thesis has examined the everyday spaces that constitute, and are constituted through, social relations. In unpacking these relations my analysis foregrounds the socially differentiated nature of young people's strategies and the extent to which they negotiate varying levels of personal, familial, and societal hopes and expectations. This approach necessitates examining the changing forms of social relationships that articulate these social spheres: both relationships built out of solidarity (kinship, friendship), and those built out of power (hierarchy).

Second, my analyses support the case for greater empirical and theoretical attention to young people's movements within and across space in order to fully theorize age as a social relation. Each paper foregrounds how the nature and quality of connections with people, resources, and places contribute to young people's everyday lives. Accordingly, space becomes significant in the processes of subject formation whereby identities are produced and stabilized through power-laden spaces. Amin (2002:969) uses the term "micropublics" in outlining situations of encounter and engagement, such as the college, where encounters are compulsory and ongoing; individuals interact with those different from themselves on regular basis. This shared use of space and the prolonged contact it entails, Amin argues, can "destabilize dominant notions of difference with longer-term, progressive implications" (c.f. Williams 2014:13). The sociological and anthropological study of young lives in contemporary India typically focuses on

particular contexts - such as the college, the workplace, or the village (e.g. Froerer 2015, Deuchar 2014, Still 2011). These studies have direct valuable attention to the nature of social relations within these settings, and the ways in which identities are negotiated and performed. Yet what is often lacking in existing scholarship is an understanding of the sustained implications of these experiences on young people's sociality as they move within and across space. This is particularly pertinent in the case of educated rural youth from socially and economically marginalized backgrounds who, having experienced difficulty in making transitions into work, typically find themselves returning to their natal context following their college graduation.

Thirdly, and relatedly, in adopting a relational approach to the study of young people in rural Gujarat, the thesis highlights the significance not only of intrafamilial intergenerational relations (between parent and offspring) in defining the gendered nature of young people's everyday lives but also the significance of *extra*familial relations both within and across generations. The methodological approach undertaken reflects this relational approach, wherein I conducted extensive participant observation with young men and women, their siblings, parents, wider families, and caste communities, in addition to their peer groups in school and college settings. This empirical and conceptual focus on *intra*- and *inter*-generationality is useful in interrogating the processes by which the boundaries of social categories - such as "youth" and the "middle class" - and the normative behaviours that constitute these categories, are produced and performed as young people move through space.

The chapter begins by revisiting the research problem and questions I sought to address throughout the thesis. This is proceeded by a discussion relating the articles back to these initial questions. I then reflect on broader scholarly debates about education and inequality in India. Following this I propose a series of recommendations for further research and outline a concluding argument.

## Research Problem and Questions

In order to provide a situated account of the relationality implicit in young people's everyday lives, I conducted eleven months of ethnographic research across 2014 and 2015. During this time I lived among a rural community in the southern Gujarati district of Navsari. This long-term engagement with the field seeks to develop and extend a rich body of scholarly work on young lives in India employing ethnographic methods (e.g. Froerer 2015, Krishnan 2015, Sancho 2015, Dyson 2014, Nakassis 2013, Lukose 2009). My fieldwork began with an open aim of understanding the social relations significant in the everyday lives of young people; I entered fieldwork with a set of open-ended themes through which I sought to co-produce a series of significant research questions by way of unstructured conversations with informants. In this sense my methodological approach embodied an intracategorical approach toward understanding the complexity of intersectionality in social life (see McDowell 2008, McCall 2005).

The project settled around one central question:

*- How are the everyday social and cultural lives of young men and women from socioeconomically disadvantaged OBC, SC, and ST communities changing in contemporary rural Gujarat?*

The project was guided by two related sub-questions:

*- How do educated youth engage with and appropriate normative ideas about age and "middleclassness" as they pursue particular education- and employment-oriented goals?*

*- To what extent is increasing investment in formal education affecting how social relations built out of solidarity (kinship, friendship) and power (hierarchy) are articulated both within and across generations?*

In addressing these questions I took as my unit of analysis the rural village. Rather than as a physically bounded space, I considered the village as a social network located within broader networks of social relations and flows of goods and people. In doing so I sought to embody a methodological appreciation for the metaphors of mobility, fluidity, flux, and flow which pervade theories of contemporary global society (Urry 2007, Bauman 2000). In practice, this entailed moving with young men and women across space over the course of their daily lives. In addition to spaces in and around the cluster of villages surrounding Kota, I spent a significant amount of time in Gujarat's largest city, Ahmedabad. With Gujarat's highest density of higher education institutes, it was here that the bulk of Kota's students were enrolled in higher education "colleges". In Ahmedabad I spent time with young

men and women in colleges, student hostels, shopping malls, cafes, and parks, as well as the more private spaces of young men's rooms or gathering spaces in the homes and neighbourhoods of their college-going peers.

**Relational Geographies of Young People**

In seeking to foreground spatial aspects significant to young people's everyday lives this thesis has adopted a relational framework in the study of educated youth in rural Gujarat. Thinking relationally entails considering space "as being contained in objects in the sense that an object can be said to exist only insofar as it contains and represents within itself relationships to other objects" (Harvey 1973:13). This conceptualization of space as being constructed through social relations correlates with a wider recognition among feminist geographical scholarship of identities as fluid and constantly (re)produced and performed through everyday life (Hopkins et al. 2015, McDowell 2008, Valentine 2007). An emphasis on identity as being socially constructed, and done and undone differently across space, links to a shift in youth geographies that recognizes the importance of considering youth within broader geographies of age. Geographers have called for a theorization of age wherein age is produced and performed in the interactions between different people (see Hopkins and Pain 2007). This view is predicated on individuals' differential access to, and experiences of, places on grounds of their age; the spaces associated with particular age groups influence who uses them and how (see Valentine 2004, Pain et al. 2001). In this way, young people's social identities are not fixed or discrete. Rather, they are fluid and

dynamic, and are affected by the social relations between and across age and generational groups (see Hopkins and Pain 2007, Edmunds and Turner 2002).

An important contribution of this thesis, then, rests on its theoretical and empirical attention to the social relations which serve to produce young people's everyday lives. Taken broadly, the thesis has employed the concept of intersectionality in order to locate young people within broader social relations and categories of social identity. I have adopted McCall's definition of intersectionality as "the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations" (2005:1771). My approach reflects McCall's intracategorical approach toward understanding the intersectional influences on young people's everyday lives. That is to say, it acknowledges the stable and durable relationships that normative social identities such as "middle class" and "youth" represent, whilst also interrogating the boundary-making processes as young people engage with and (re)produce these identities, and the ways in which formal education influences these processes of identity formation.

Taken individually, each article provides a more-specific empirical focus on the extent to which social categories intersect and reproduce one another. "The Business of Friendship" interrogates the boundary-making and boundary-defining processes of locally normative ideas about middleclassness. The article advocates an understanding of how caste- and religious-identities are negotiated and performed differently across space, highlighting their spatially-situated and highly contingent nature. Focusing on young men's friendship practices, the article signals the analytical value of an empirical and theoretical focus on non-kin forms

of sociality such as friendship in understanding how young men form connections and ties with one another, and how these practices of sociality enable them to skilfully negotiate and pacify intrafamilial intergenerational tensions whilst engaging with a broader middle class cultural discourse characterized by economic independence, earning power, and an ability to mediate between rural and urban spaces with a degree of cultural versatility (see Gilbertson 2014, Donner and De Neve 2012, Radhakrishnan 2011b, Osella and Osella 2006). Relatedly, "College for the village kids" takes a closer focus on age-identity as a socially constructed category, highlighting the manner by which young men and women enrolled in private secondary school construct and perform locally normative identities as youth (*yuvā*). The article signals how young women's and young men's identities are produced across generations as they appropriate and reproduce the social practices of an older, college-educated generation in the village. For young men, this entails reproducing exclusionary ideas about dominance over women's bodies and access to public spaces as they seek to acquire a spatial competency in the bus stop area of Kota. For young women this entailed reproducing the types of personal relationships enacted by college-going young women across city spaces.

This critical and grounded approach toward developing a spatial theorization of young people's everyday lives is threaded throughout the other articles in this thesis and comes across strongly in "Parents, Permission, and Possibility"**.** This article directs attention to how particular spaces and spatial arrangements facilitate and limit intra- and inter-generational contact, and the impacts upon young women's conceptions of the future. In tracing the physical movements of young women as they navigated college in Gujarat's largest city of Ahmedabad my

analysis applies the "possible selves" theoretical construct and draws grounded conclusions from it. Employing Harvey's (2005) relational notion of space-time, the analysis foregrounds the ways influences "get internalized in specific processes or things through time" (2005:95). Highlighting the internalized influences that young people rationalize when contemplating and detailing their conceptions of the future, I have directed attention to how generational influences can traverse physical space and impact upon the formation of imagined futures. Additionally, the article directs attention to the questions of power and social inequalities that figure into the construction and performance of identity. These ideas come through strongly in "Temporal Tactics and Educated Unemployment", which focuses closely on notions of time and temporality. The article introduces young men's appropriation of time as both a discursive structure and cultural resource as they deploy a set of temporal tactics to challenge marginalizing discourses. Through constructing and performing an exclusionary culture of haste (*utāvala*), a cohort of upwardly mobile male youth seek to challenge the sensibilities of their more well-to-do counterparts. Drawing out these conclusions stresses the spatiality of temporal experience among educated unemployed young men, signalling the role of social relations across different spaces that serve to produce differentiated experiences.

One key contribution of this thesis has been its simultaneous focus on both young men and women. As the data presented here demonstrates, upwardly mobile rural, low caste, and low class families are increasingly investing in the higher secondary and college education of their sons *and* daughters (see also ASER 2014, Cross 2014, Still 2014). Yet what is often underrepresented in studies of young people

and education in India, particularly in rural contexts, are the perspectives of young women themselves (but see, for example, related work from Krishnan 2016, Chakraborty 2015, Dyson 2014). This is perhaps reflective of the parent-centric nature of decision-making around educational strategies, a focus on which risks obscuring an understanding of young women's own agency over their daily lives. In locating young women's perspectives within the context of the caste communities, kinship groups, and the peer group, "College for the village kids" develops theorizations of young women's agency, highlighting the strategic mobilization of educational capital within the household in order to prolong enrolment in secondary schooling, and the fragility of young women's independence and autonomy. Foregrounding young people within Cresswell's (2010) "politics of mobility", the article highlights young women as actors and agents within the mobile world. "Parents, Permission, and Possibility" reflects specifically on generational influences that bear down upon young women as they orient themselves toward the future. The article signals the structural factors that bear down upon young women's imagined futures, as well as revealing affective attachments to cultural ideas revolving around middle class equalitarianism in marriage and post-educational employment in the city, thus supporting those who conceive of imagining mobility as an agentic feature (see Cuzzocrea and Mandich 2016:555).

A lack of empirical focus on young women is also reflective of the prevalence of "male breadwinner" norms in India, and among rural low caste families in particular. These considerations often direct the analytical gaze of studies focusing on the relationship between education and employment (e.g. Deuchar 2014, Jeffrey

2010a, Jeffrey et al. 2008). This is, in part, reflected in the structure of the four articles; the male-centric focus of "Temporal Tactics and Educated Unemployment" and "The Business of Friendship" emerged out of the highly gendered nature of everyday life in Kota and, in particular, the gendered nature of access to public spaces within and beyond the village. Importantly, these exclusionary ideas about gender were perpetuated by way of generational learning between male college-educated youth and LFP secondary school students as per "College for the village kids", whereby derogatory hypermasculine performances were reproduced across generations. Young women, even those who had gained college degrees prior to their return to Kota, were unable to engage in the types of sociality prevalent among young men. This contrasted against those enrolled in college who gained valuable opportunities to socialize in large groups with young women and men in metropolitan Gujarat's middle class public spaces such as coffee shops and shopping malls, as illustrated in "Parents, Permission, and Possibility"**.** In these contexts, young women acquired valuable strategies for personal relationships that were then transferred to school-going young women back in Kota.

**Education, Contradiction, and Inequality**

Education has become synonymous with ideas about "progress" and "development" in both academic and policy discourses, particularly the ways in which it can draw marginalized individuals and communities "more fully into the modern state and its increasingly globalized economy" (Froerer 2016:376). Education, Drèze and Sen (1995, 2002) note, plays a central role in promoting "substantive freedoms" such as political participation and employment, and serves

to counter historical inequalities such as class, gender, race and, in India, caste. In the years proceeding Indian Independence, the role of affirmative action and education in improving the status of India's marginalized populations was foregrounded on the political agenda, with the Constitution of India making provision for socially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged OBCs, SCs, and STs to benefit from a fixed quota of vacancies in the public sector, reservations in State Assemblies and Parliament, and reserved places in state-run higher educational institutions. Tying to broader perspectives on education as a major catalyst for human development (UNESCO 2009, DfID 2000), free and compulsory education to all children up until the age of fourteen is a constitutional commitment in India legislated in the 2009 Right to Education Act (Government of India 2009). Supplemented by several large-scale programmes these active steps have sought to increase access to, and enrolment in, formal education among historically disadvantaged sections of society.

Yet these policy measures fail to reflect the on-the-ground scenarios that continue to burden marginalized populations, especially those living rurally. As scholars have noted, the benefits commonly depicted as accompanying education are impeded by structural inequalities that govern the everyday lives of these populations (e.g. Cross 2014, Majumdar and Mooij 2011, Jeffrey et al. 2008). A now well-rehearsed argument conceives of education as a "contradictory resource". Jeffrey and colleagues (2008), for example, problematize Drèze and Sen's ideas around the substantive freedoms associated with education, arguing for a greater appreciation of the role that power and culture play in mediating an individual's access to these freedoms. Studying a generation of young men born in the 1970s

and 1980s in Uttar Pradesh, India, their research foregrounds the role of social and cultural capital in securing desirable forms of work among those from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. Whilst men from higher castes and classes mobilized family networks in order to secure lucrative forms of work, young men from poorer backgrounds typically failed to do so, instead engaging in forms of unproductive idleness or becoming "self-style politicians" by way of perpetuating caste-based networks. In this sense, they argued that education both improved individuals' ability to obtain substantive freedoms, whilst also reproducing social hierarchies borne out of class, caste, religion, and gender. Jeffrey and colleagues' argument accords with reflections on policies of education and affirmative action as engendering a "politics of difference" (Corbridge 2000), whereby caste becomes even more important in identity politics and political mobilization. In Gujarat these ideas are reflected clearly in ongoing agitations in which younger members of the Patidar caste are calling for recognition as OBCs in order to access educational and employment quotas in the public sector (see "Hardik Patel claims to speak for 18 million Patels. Does he, really?" 2015).

In the 15 years since Jeffrey and colleagues conducted their research with an educated minority of low caste young men, there has been a significant shift in the social profile of rural India's educated demographic. Across rural India especially, policies of liberalization have aided increases in educational enrolment and attainment among historically disadvantaged communities by way of widening the spectrum of educational provision. In Gujarat, a mushrooming low-fee private schooling sector across rural India, alongside a proliferation of higher education colleges located primarily in metropolitan centres, has been actively endorsed by

state government. In Kota these demographic shifts were evidenced by a visibly large first generation of young men and women who were enrolled in, or had recently graduated from, college in Gujarat's metropolitan centres of Ahmedabad, Surat, and Navsari. Rather than being affluent Hindu Forward Castes or the "creamy layer" of economically more well-to-do OBCs, these were young people from historically disadvantaged groups whose parents' generation are characterized by low levels of literacy and who engage in unskilled casual agricultural and manual labour. What is significant, I argue, is that this emergent generation of SC, ST, and OBC youth no longer find themselves as an educated minority. Equipped with experiences of metropolitan India and with a degree of cultural versatility, they are (re)articulating forms of everyday sociality as they appropriate new spaces and challenge the social, cultural, and economic sensibilities of youth from higher caste, and higher class, families.

The observations presented in this thesis develop and extend discussions surrounding education, affirmative action, and inequality. A focus on the social aspects of education - in particular, how rural young people encounter the spatial transformations associated with private secondary education and higher education in metropolitan India - highlights how young people undermine and reproduce aspects of sociality both within and across caste and religious communities. My observations, in part, support scholarly analyses such as those of Jeffrey and colleagues (2008) in which marginalized youth lack the requisite forms of social and economic capital required to make successful transitions into desirable forms of work. However, the ethnographic data presented also goes further to suggest that formal education is engendering more nuanced forms of

*intra*-caste differentiation. “College for the village kids” signals the ways in which a transforming rural private educational landscape engenders intra-caste differentiation as privately enrolled young men find themselves able to cultivate a spatial competency in their engagements with college-educated youth, distinguishing themselves from their caste peers attending the local government school in Kota. Importantly, this novel set of social practices reproduces exclusionary ideas about gender, particularly ideas about dominance over women’s bodies and public space. A similar level of intra-caste differentiation occurs at the level of college education where young men seek to engage with a middle class cultural discourse that embodies attributes such as exposure to metropolitan lifestyles, and familiarity with a broader range of cultures and languages, as highlighted through a discussion in “Temporal Tactics and Educated Unemployment” (see also Belliappa 2013:51, Ciotti 2012:14). Crucially, this middle class cultural appropriation served an economic goal in cultivating opportunities to contribute to the household economic portfolio.

A focus on young people’s spatial movements emerges as central to these forms of intra-caste differentiation. Rather than the formal educational credentials themselves, when distinguishing themselves from their uneducated low caste peers, marginalized youth mobilize social and cultural identities cultivated both in and around the rural private secondary school, and metropolitan college campus. These forms of intra-caste distinction are highlighted through an analytical focus on friendship in “The Business of Friendship”. This article articulates the exclusionary nature of sociality among these educated youth whereby those unable to practice a form of “balance” considered characteristic of a set of middle

class dispositions (see also Gilbertson 2014) are actively policed within social and economic networks. These observations attest to the value of examining young people's everyday practices through a relational conceptual framework. The changing nature of everyday sociality among young people did not constitute a straightforward rejection of low caste customs or behaviours. Rather, as young people move through spaces both within and beyond the village they encounter and skilfully negotiate the "intersectional identities of the dominant groups" (Valentine 2007:19) that occupy these spaces; those of caste- and religious-communities, kinship groups, and the peer group.

**Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

This thesis has presented a series of findings surrounding the nature of everyday sociality among young men and women in rural Gujarat. Whilst not feasible given the scope of doctoral research, the findings presented would benefit from a longitudinal perspective in order to examine both the durability of the social practices examined, as well as the extent to which these practices are reproduced across a subsequent generation of rural youth. Studies of friendship in other Indian contexts have expressed the intergenerational nature of friendships that bridge notions of difference across caste and religious communities. Ciotti's (2008) research in central India, for example, elaborates on the nature of a Hindu-Muslim friendship between two adult males. Her work highlights the ways in which friendship extends to their respective families vis-à-vis their sons and grandsons. What is particular about my observations on the nature of young men's friendships is their location in the life course as young, educated, and, unmarried. They

typically lacked the social responsibilities held by an older generation of married adult men from their own communities and thus, in their capacity as a first generation of college-goers, occupy a somewhat interstitial generation of future college-educated parents. Further research could examine the longer-term implications for these transgressive social practices. Specifically, I am interested in understanding the extent to which these practices are then transferred to a subsequent generation of rural youth that enrol in college in metropolitan Gujarat, following in their parents' footsteps, or whether these practices simply constitute a moment of temporary defiance of locally normative ideas whilst young men live out identities as "youth".

Similarly, longitudinal research with the same subset of young men and women would shed light on the extent to which the particular articulations of a middle class cultural discourse are reflected in a subsequent generation of OBC, SC, and ST youth. This bears particular significance for the changing nature of livelihoods in rural India. In Kota, the subsistence agriculture and casual agricultural labour practiced by the vast majority of families was often rejected by educated young men as a defiling form of work. Instead, they valorized forms of semi-skilled work through which they sought to earn a living to contribute to their families' economic portfolios. It becomes pertinent to critically examine the extent to which these class-based practices are sustained as young men enter social "adulthood" through marriage. Among those who inherit land from their parents' generations, in particular, longitudinal research would usefully shed light on the nature of labour relations in the village and the role caste and class play in these processes.

The field of youth studies in South Asia could benefit from ethnographic research into the specific nature of rural young women's interactions with other youth in metropolitan Gujarat. Whilst this thesis contributes to understanding various social aspects of young women's college education, my positionality as a male researcher presented its limitations. As outlined in "Parents, Permission, and Possibility" I often found myself as a non-kin sounding board for young women's anxieties with relationships being founded on a similar level of reciprocity. Yet my being male also proved methodologically problematic in gaining access to particular spaces such as the space of the women's hostel itself and, consequently, the specific nature of social interactions within these spaces. Recent ethnographic work has shed valuable light on these intimate spaces of female sociality. In a fine-grained ethnography of urban middle class young women's college education Krishnan (2016), for example, highlights the significance of the hostel space itself as a "safe space" that plays a crucial role in the formation of friendships. Further research within these spaces among rural young women from marginalized backgrounds would shed light on the specific nature of young women's friendships, enabling a more complex understanding of practices of female sociality in a similar vein to the analysis I have presented for young men in "The Business of Friendship".

Relatedly, and reflective of religious divides within Kota, whilst I was able to converse freely with Muslim young men, my inherited positionality as a researcher from a practicing Hindu family made it difficult to engage an older generation of Muslim parents with the same level of ease as Hindu families in the village. This inevitably affected the nature of the research process and generated a set of

observational data different to that which may have been gathered should I have entered fieldwork without the same "baggage". As a result, despite reflecting India's and Gujarat's Hindu majority my research is somewhat Hindu-centric. Of the Muslim informants I did encounter throughout fieldwork, the majority of these were educated young men who were active participants in the friendship networks studied in "Temporal Tactics and Educated Unemployment" and "The Business of Friendship". Consequently, my analysis is rather void of the perspectives of Muslim parents, young women, and the wider Muslim community in Kota. Further research could focus more explicitly on the perspectives of Muslims and other religious groups, paying close attention to how these communities figure into the social hierarchies articulated within the rural community in addition to a detailed focus on any differing perspectives among parents, young women, and the religious community itself.

As stated explicitly in Chapter 1, this research has been an ethnography of everyday life, rather than one of educational spaces. Whilst I did conduct research in the classroom setting more closely, my focus on private schooling in "College for the village kids" focused on young people's experiences of the social and spatial transformations characteristic of low-free private (LFP) schools themselves. As such my analyses focus on the ways in which young people engage with, value, and appropriate these educational transformations in their daily lives, rather than processes occurring within the educational institutions themselves. This, I have argued, is significant for understanding the gendered and changing nature of young people's sociality. Yet it also obscures the significance of dynamics within the classroom spaces that inevitably bear significance on the construction of young

people's subjectivities, not only in terms of their interactions with fellow students but also the role played by privately employed teachers. Further research might usefully involve a detailed classroom ethnography of the LFP sector across rural India which, at present, remains a significantly under-examined yet flourishing area of India's education sector that figures prominently in the investment strategies of upwardly mobile caste communities.

## Conclusion

The past decade has witnessed rapid changes to the social composition of rural India's educated demographic. The observations presented in this thesis attest to a growing cohort of first-generation, college-educated young men and women from marginalized backgrounds. This constitutes a distinct contrast to the context of much of the prominent ethnographic research on youth in India (e.g. Jeffrey et al. 2008, Nisbett 2007) and warrants further enquiry. This thesis has sought to advance an understanding of how the broad transformations to India's education sector wrought by post-1990s policies of economic liberalization are impacting the everyday lives of young men and women in contemporary rural India. Drawing on eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork in Gujarat, India's westernmost state, I have focused empirically on an analytical subset of young men and women from socioeconomically marginalized but upwardly mobile Other Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes. My focus has been on "the everyday", addressing wider calls for critical ethnographic work that seeks to locate socioeconomic transformations at the scale of the everyday strategies and subjectivities of marginalized populations (Jeffrey and Dyson 2008, Jeffrey et al.

2004). I have specifically sought to counter the spatial fixity of much existing research on Indian youth, which often takes an empirical focus on young people in one particular setting such as the college campus, hostel accommodation, or the village. Through adopting a multi-sited approach, the thesis traces young men's and women's everyday movements through space, critically examining the ways in which they undermine, transform, and reproduce the social identities they encounter.

Taking this approach, this thesis has made a series of specific contributions to existing scholarship on youth, by way of four scholarly articles written for academic journals. The first article highlights the heterogeneity of temporal experience among educated unemployed young men, nuancing observations on the temporal subjectivities of educated unemployed young men elsewhere in India in which young men imagine themselves as engaging in passing time (*timepass*) as an inevitability or as transitory fun (e.g. Jeffrey 2010a, Jeffrey et al. 2008). Rather, I have conceptualized young men's performative social practices as a set of temporal tactics, contributing to literature that seeks to use time as an analytical lens to critically examine populations' resistance to marginalizing discourses (e.g. Lombard 2013, Rogaly and Thieme 2012). My analysis then proceeds to examine these social practices more closely through a scholarly focus on non-kin forms of sociality. In the second article I make an essential contribution to a nascent body of geographical work on friendship (Phillips and Evans 2016, Bunnell and Kathiravelu 2016, Bartos 2013, Wilkinson 2013), bringing into view spatial locations and the ways in which non-kin forms of sociality are intricately embedded within wider social, economic, and cultural formations. In doing so the

research highlights the dynamic interplay of social identities as young men negotiate locally normative discourses of caste and religion. These observations contrast against observations on friendship and the peer group in metropolitan and college settings, which are often considered as being somewhat detached from kin and caste logics (e.g. Nakassis 2013, Jeffrey 2010a, Nisbett 2007).

My work also makes a critical contribution to current theorizations of youth transitions. I theorize college education as a critical duration of uncertainty and potential in which multiple imaginings of the future are contested, transformed, and begin to play out among young women. In advancing a spatial theorization of the "possible selves" construct (Hargrove et al. 2015a), the third article highlights the familial intergenerational relations significant to the imagined futures of young women; their internalized perceptions of familial support bear direct influence on their willingness to detail occupation-specific future selves. The fourth article, in focusing also on a first-generation of entrants into India's mushrooming low-fee private schooling sector, advances ongoing efforts to mainstream young people into the new mobilities paradigm. Examining the social and spatial implications of a transforming secondary schooling sector I offer a grounded theorization of youth as a category of social experience, highlighting the co-implication of age and mobility.

What is threaded through the conclusions drawn from this thesis is the relational nature of young people's everyday lives. Taken as a coherent whole, the analyses offered unpack the multiple and interrelated social identities young people construct and perform in their everyday lives in different places, and at different

times. Rather than categories of identity as being fixed and rigid, my analysis has signalled the dynamic social processes through which ideas about age and class are understood and performed by young women and men. Central to young people's being able to (re)produce the intersectional identities of dominant groups that occupy different spaces is, I argue, the ongoing increase in formal educational attainment among young men and women from marginalized backgrounds. No longer an educated minority in the village, these young men and women find themselves able to engage in a broader set of social, cultural, and economic practices. In beginning to examine these emergent practices, this thesis signals a vital set of observations surrounding the changing contours of sociality within young people's everyday lives in rural India.

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# Appendix 1. Oral Research Informatio

**[OMITTED: CONTAINS PERSONAL CONTACT DETAILS]**

# Appendix 2. Participant Consent for Research Project

Viresh Patel, Oxford University Centre for the Environment,
(Dyson Perrins Bldg.)University of Oxford,South Parks Road,
Oxford,OX1 3QY.United Kingdom.

viresh.patel@ouce.ox.ac.uk

***Participant Consent for Research Project***

**Research Title:** 'Youth strategies and generational change among rural agricultural families in Gujarat, India

**Researcher:** Viresh V Patel: DPhil Candidate – School of Geography

The University of Oxford and myself attach high priority to the ethical conduct of research. We therefore ask you to consider the following points before signing this form. Your signature confirms that you are happy to participate in the study.

1. Your contribution to the research will take the form of an extended interview. This will be either tape-recorded or have handwritten notes taken on. These will then be transcribed.
2. Any tape-recording / notes will be stored safely and securely.
3. The transcriptions will be retained for this research and analysed as part of the study.
4. Quotations from the transcript may be used within this research work write-up. Your transcript will be kept anonymous, and names and other identifiable details will be removed from the transcript.
5. The findings of the research will be written up in my DPhil submission, and will be used for the purposes of academic work and publication. It will also be given as feedback to you, and may have use for policy makers and for others interested in this work.
6. Over 50 people are taking part in this work. Your contribution is immensely valuable. However, if, at any point during the course of the project, you wish to withdraw from the study, we will respect your decision immediately.

**Confirmation and consent**
I confirm that I have freely agreed to participate in this research project, and understand that I can withdraw my interview transcript from the research by contacting Viresh Patel. I have been briefed on what this involves and I agree to the use of the findings as described above. I understand that the material is protected by a code of professional ethics. I hereby assign the copyright in my contribution to the University of Oxford.

**Participant Signature:** _____ Name:_____ Date: _____

I confirm, for the project team, that we agree to keep the undertakings as outlined above.

**Researcher Signature:** _____ Name:_____ Date: _____