GENDER, CLASS AND MODERNITY: REPRODUCTIVE AGENCY IN URBAN INDIA

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Dedicated to my parents

My mother late Mrs Rajmurti Kohli

My father late Mr Ramesh Chander Kohli

You gave me everything! I owe this PhD and everything to you! Both of you will be missed beyond measure. Wish you were here!

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Glossary

Ahoi: A fast observed by Hindu women in some regions of North India to ensure the long life of their sons.

Ayurveda: The ancient indigenous Indian system of medicine.

Balika Samriddhi Yojana: A government scheme started in 1997 as an initiative to raise the status of the girl child.

Bhaiya dooj: Festivals of Hindu in which sisters pray for the long life of their brothers and in return their brothers promise to take care of them.

Bhakatas: A religious devotee

Dai: Traditional Indian midwife

Hukumnama: An order given to Sikhs

Kanyadan: A Hindu wedding ritual which entails giving away the virgin daughter to the groom.

Karvachauth: A fast observed by Hindu women in some regions of North India to ensure the long life of their husbands.

Laadli scheme: A government scheme that aims to alter the position of the girl child in family and society.

Paraya-dhan: Girls in India are considered their affinal families' property, and parents are their care-takers until they are married.

Pindas: A Hindu ritual of giving away food and other material donations to the priests and/or poor for the ultimate departure of the souls of dead-beings from materialistic world. This ritual is usually performed by the male family members.

Rakhi/Rakshabandhan: Festival of Hindus in which the sister ties a sacred thread (called Rakhi) around the wrist of her brother and prays for his long and happy life, and in return the brother promises to be a life-long protector and supporter of his sister

Rishi-Munis: Sages

Shradh: A Hindu ritual where food is donated to the priests and/or poor in the remembrance of dead ancestors. This ritual is usually performed by the male successors.

Sufis: Sufis are members of the mystical, ascetic branch of Islam.

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Abbreviations

AIIMS: All India Institute of Medical Sciences

ARHP: Association of Reproductive Health Professionals

BPO: Business Process Outsourcing

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

DAWN: Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era

ICMR: Indian Council of Medical Research

ICPD: International Conference on Population and Development

ILO: International Labour Organization

INR: Indian national rupee

IT: Information Technology

FASDSP: Forum against Sex Determination and Sex Pre-selection

MTP: Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

OCHCR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

PGN: Practical gender needs

PCPNDT: Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act

PNDT: Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act

RCH: Reproductive and Child Health Programme

SGN: Strategic gender needs

UN: United Nations

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF: The United Nations Children's Fund

WHO: World Health Organization

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Abstract

The decreasing female child sex ratio in contemporary India is often linked to the small family norm. However, the decline of sex ratio has raised interesting questions regarding women's involvement in decision making in the context of female-foeticide and managing family size. Are women victims or actors while making their reproductive choices? What are their reproductive interests, and how do they achieve them? This study investigates how urban-middle class women from Delhi and Haryana make reproductive decisions in regards to family formation in modern urban neoliberal society. Motherhood, abortions, and gender relations are discussed with reference to the main themes of son-preference, increasing social status of daughters, family planning, family building strategies, reproductive health and well-being.

Further, because of the prevalence of son-preference it is crucial to understand what kind of status daughters are accorded in contemporary urban Indian society. This study addresses this by looking at participants' differing perceptions and expectations for their daughters and sons, and in particular how daughters are treated. The status of daughters is documented through an examination of current forms of gender discrimination against them, and also the different kinds of opportunities that they are provided by their parents.

These issues are explored through a qualitative study of the reproductive decision making of 45 educated married urban middle-class mothers from Delhi and Yaumuna Nagar (region of Haryana), India. Snowballing was used to recruit participants, and the fieldwork was carried out during two visits to India. I chose Delhi and Haryana because both of these regions have collective and patriarchal family structures. For instance, in these regions joint families are quite common among the middle-class and fathers or a male family member are often the head of the family. Furthermore, Delhi and Haryana have a low female child sex ratio, as recorded in the 2011 census, but have shown slight improvement in comparison to 2001 figures. Therefore, this study will provide insights into how women practice their reproductive agency in highly collective and patriarchal settings of their affinal families. These families are in the process of rapid socio-cultural changes, including change in gender roles and opportunities for daughters. I will examine women's decision making process, including practices of negotiating and resistance strategies they develop.

I will then discuss how women engage with different forms of modern, spiritual and traditional technologies in order to maintain their reproductive health and well-being, and how they attempt to give birth to a son while maintaining the norm of small family size. This will suggest that society and technology are mutually constitutive. Finally, I will explore how social transformation has influenced the gender relationships which are discussed in relation to daughters' improving status and also the different forms of discrimination currently used against them. However, throughout the research the patriarchal nature of urban neoliberal Indian society and the idea that a man is needed to support a woman and for her protection has been highlighted.

Chapter 1: Women's bargaining strategies in urban modern India

Different socio-cultural and legal reforms in colonial and post-colonial India have led to increased status of women. Modern values have allowed women to achieve high education, work in the paid sector, and they can now inherit parental property. Despite these modern shifts, women's positioning in India is very much embedded in tradition, for instance, working women pay immense importance to their families and its common for them to sacrifice their career for the sake of their families (Krishnaraj, 2010). This contradiction is evident in the daily lives of urban middle-class married women who are part of the change and continuity being explored in this study.

An important modern marker of changing women's status in India is the literacy rate. Indian government departments run various programmes to increase female literacy rates such as elementary education, functional education, and the national literacy mission (Balakrishnan et al, 2008). Literacy rates have sharply increased for women in India (Navaneetham & Dharmalingam, 2011) indicating their increasing status and ability to participate in the neoliberal economy. An increase in female literacy is recorded in the census report of 2011 while the male literacy rate is now 82.14%, and the female literacy rate is 65.46% (Census, 2011). Female education is also gradually gaining popularity in the rural areas, even though it is still a distant dream for many girls to go to school, or to pursue higher education. Despite the difficulties of obtaining education for girls, there is a growing awareness of the importance of education for girls. For example, in the rural area of the North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh a man from a working-class background tied his daughter to his motor bike to take her to school to complete an exam. The eight-year-old daughter had refused to take the exam. Onlookers took a photo and the man was later arrested for manhandling the daughter (*BBC,* 2015). The father replied later, "My daughter will not die if I take her to school. But she will surely die if she does not study" (*BBC*, 2015, para.10). The father's comment highlights the rising awareness among parents of different classes and regions regarding the importance of female education for their daughters' survival and social and financial independence in the future.

Further, female literacy is often linked with lower fertility rate, better nutrition and health. Family planning programmes started by the Indian government in the 1950s did not only aim to curb poverty and population problems but intended to focus on women's reproductive health.

Female education and family planning after independence in 1947 became an integral part of the development plans, and in 1952 India became the first country in the world to adopt family planning programmes (Shweta & Singh, 2010). Family planning was introduced by government in reference to nationalism to address women's health issues and to reduce population for poverty control and financial development. This allowed family planning advocates to link "nationalism and traditionalism to an image of modern India" (Schoen, 2005, p.352).

Small family has gained immense popularity among the urban middle-class. The small family is a means to prosperity within the modern neoliberal economy as it allows people to give quality upbringing to their children and become a part of a consumer based economy (Basu & Desai, n.d.). The 1990s liberalisation reforms[1] which began in the 1980s in India, provided multinational companies with the opportunity to invest in India (Fernandes, 2015). This led to the development of modern infrastructure and modern industries such as Information Technology (IT) industries, software industries, Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), shopping malls and multiplexes, and new housing sub-divisions in many parts of India (Dupont, 2011). The members of the middle-class are viewed as the major beneficiaries of neoliberalisation as they participated in the global economy and their buying capacity increased.

However, modern neoliberalisation reforms have not led to the erosion of traditional family values, family building strategies and gender relations. For example, among the urban middle-class ideal mothers these days are expected to put the interests of their children above their own interests; it is acceptable to be career-oriented, but not at the expense of their families (Radhakrishnan, 2009). Even multinational companies situated in India internalise this traditional ideology and accommodate the family needs of middle-class mothers working in their offices (Radhakrishnan, 2009). Urban middle-class mothers are actively involved in providing good schooling and upbringing to their children, and for this they make all the necessary sacrifices (Donner, 2006)[2]. Respectability, morality, dedication to family and children, and carrying traditional cultural values are all part of modern rapid cultural change among the urban middle-class (Radhakrishnan, 2009).

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[1] Chapter Two discusses the expansion of middle-class and how it is shaping modernity in a neoliberal economy.
[2] Donner's work is focused on urban middle-class women in Calcutta, India. However, many of the features of middle class mothers that she discussed are similar to those of my participants.

Neoliberal and development reforms have led to multiple modernities[3] in India where both tradition and modern are in a complex web of interaction. This complex interaction among the urban middle-class is strongly evident in the reproductive sphere where women's decisions are influenced by both modernity and tradition. For instance, female foeticide, a result of traditional son-preference practice, is linked to the modern capitalist development goal of small family size (Unnithan-Kumar, 2010). With the introduction of modern reproductive technologies infanticide has been replaced by foeticide (Patel, 2007). Gender hierarchy and gender-based violence have undergone changes in modern times because girls are now being discriminated against before birth. Educated and employed women from affluent families form a large proportion of consumers of foeticide services (Patel, 2007). Couples aspire to smaller families, but with at least one son, and this is achieved through practising foeticide (Unnithan-Kumar, 2010).

This complexity of women both adhering to modern and traditional patriarchal values makes empowerment a highly-contested terrain. Challenging patriarchal ideology is an important aspect of women's empowerment (Batliwala, 1994). Yet modern education, access to modern reproductive technologies and paid employment are being used to meet traditional patriarchal needs of son-preference. Women's agency is influenced by traditions in modern settings where women might not choose to empower themselves in order to meet their particular interests. This study seeks to understand the complexity of urban educated married middle-class mothers' engagement with modernity in regards to gender relations, gendered perceptions and family building and planning strategies. This is a qualitative study of 45 urban middle-class mothers from the states of Haryana (Yamuna Nagar district) and Delhi.

Multiple modernities: An overview

Traditions are often seen to be static, conservative, bound, non-western, communal, uncivilised, backwards, and ahistoric (Eisenstadt, 1972 p. 1; Spiegel & Boonzaier, 1988, p. 41-44; Wolf, 1997, p. 12). On the other hand, there is no universally accepted definition of modernity. However, modernity[4] in the 1950s articulated the notions of "imperatives of change and progress" and "universal norms and the promise of a better life" (Misa, 2003, p.5). Indeed, the

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[3] The concept of multiple modernities is discussed in the next section. For in-depth discussion please see Chapter Two.

[4] It is important to mention that in popular speech modern refers to the latest, and that is how my participants described it.

classical theories of modernity prevalent in the 1950s, such as those of Weber and Marx, stated that over time western European modernity would become universal by replicating western social forms throughout the world (Eisenstadt, 2000, p.1). This dichotomy suggests the Eurocentric view that tradition is inferior and modern is superior (Wolf, 1997).

By contrast, S N Eisenstadt (2000) proposed the theory of multiple modernities that rejects the idea of Western universal modernity taking over. By advocating this, Eisenstadt argues that these dominant classical theories of modernisation tend to ignore the huge variations within the West as well (Casanova, 2011; Eisenstadt, 2000; Kaviraj, 2005). Similar to the west, non-western countries also reveal distinctive modernities because non-western societies have adopted some components of modernity within their local context without giving up all of their own specific elements of cultural tradition (Casanova, 2011; Eisenstadt, 2000). Kaviraj (2000) and Qayum & Ray (2011) discuss multiple modernities within the Indian context both at a macro and micro (day to day lives) level in regards to the urban and middle-class population. They mention that the modern in India is not simply Western and takes multiple meanings within different socio-cultural settings.

In urban India, for example, the changing family structure is an important feature of India's modernity (Kashyap, 2007). Traditionally patriarchal joint families[5] were the classical form of family system in most parts of India. The joint families in urban India are rapidly changing to nuclear families or small joint families consisting of a married couple, their children and husband's parents these days (Kumar, 2001). Nuclear families are becoming popular, but extended family is also vital, as people continue to support each other in various ways such as financially and emotionally (Kashyap, 2007)[6]. This allows couples to have their own space, and all members of the extended family stay connected and supported. Therefore, the changing pattern has not completely eroded traditional collective values.

Further, Eisenstadt, (2000) also notes that contemporary agendas such as gender issues and environmental issues will shape modernities in novel ways. A similar pattern is evident in regards to feminist and gender issues in India. Feminists' demands in India, for example, to eliminate practices such as dowry and female foeticide have been framed according to the

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[5] In these families, a bride joins her husband's family. Usually in these families, different generations are living together, they share same hearth and have common finances.

[6] Analysis chapters widely discuss the importance of extended family support in women's daily lives.

contemporary patriarchal nature of Indian society (Gangoli, 2007). Rape protests in India, for instance, were focused on the brutality of Indian police against women, unlike in the West where the focus largely remained on the "interpersonal nature of sexual assault" and family relationships (Gangoli, 2007, p. 6-7). Unlike the West the abortion debate in India did not emerge from the pro-life and pro-choice debate or women's right[7] over their bodies, instead it focused on sex-selective abortions and sex-determination (Khanna, 1997; Menon, 2004). The western feminists' concept of gender equality inspires Indian feminists; however, they aim to borrow from and contribute to western feminism, and not to copy (Gangoli, 2007). Middle-class activists such as Professor Lotika Sarkar (activist for impetus of anti-female foeticide act) and social activist groups such as Saheli NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) have played an important role in anti-female foeticide movements. This exemplifies the distinctive nature of modernities and rejects the uniformity of the western model of modernity, and illuminates the vital role of the urban middle-class in regards to multiple modernities within everyday lives.

The Indian family planning programme also sheds light on the interaction of modern and tradition. The idea of family planning for women to enter the workforce was imported from the West but its modernity (not challenging gendered hierarchy and traditional gender roles) was domesticated since patriarchal gender roles and collective family values were never challenged in the family planning programmes (Chatterjee & Riley, 2001). However, family planning has helped urban middle-class women to achieve several milestones in regards to their sexual and reproductive health (Basu, 2005), and allowed them to pursue their careers in the neoliberal economy.

The complex web of interaction between tradition and modernity highlights the continuation and shifting dimensions of class and gendered based practices. These changes are the result of development and neoliberal reforms which forms major pillars of modernity in urban India.

Gender inequalities: Women contesting and submitting to gender inequalities

Despite several socio-cultural and legal reforms different forms of gender inequalities are still quite persistent in urban India; female foeticide is one such example of gender inequality. The

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[7] The 1971 Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act in India which legitimised procuring an abortion within the first trimester was not the result of feminists' initiatives. The 1971 MTP was enacted by the state in order to curb the population explosion.

practice of female foeticide and infanticide is a strong expression of gender inequality and women's subordinate position. The problem of female foeticide/infanticide is not only limited to India, but also appears in other countries such as China, South Korea, and Vietnam (George, 1997). China has the lowest female child sex ratio in the world, followed by India. There have been substantial numbers of studies conducted at the global level and particularly within Asia over this imbalance in female-male sex ratios (Goodkind, 1999; Miller, 1987; Pande, 2003; Unnithan-Kumar, 2005a). These studies have been carried out within different fields such as sociology, anthropology, demography and so on. In the literature attention is often drawn to the North India-South India dichotomy in regards to the child sex ratio (Dyson & Moore 1983; Miller, 1998 & 1997; Pande, 2003). Sex ratios are more favourable towards males in Northern and Western parts of India in comparison to Southern and Eastern parts because of repressive patriarchal cultural practices there. For example, in North India female infanticide, female mortality, and other forms of discrimination are more prevalent than in South India (Dyson & Moore, 1983; Kishor 1995; Miller, 1987, 1997)[8]. Barbara Miller (1987 & 1997) argues that female infanticide is common in societies where dowry is practised and only a few women are employed in the agriculture sector.

According to Miller (1997) during the British colonial era in India, female infanticide was widely practised in North West India because of dowry practice. On the other hand, in South India this practice was not as prevalent because of women's participation in agricultural activities. Dyson & Moore (1983) explained that North Indian women enjoyed less autonomy than South Indian women because they were expected to observe the veil, married strangers in an arranged marriage, were less likely to be in paid jobs and might have shared residence with their in-laws. Dyson & Moore's work was influential but has also been critiqued by different researchers. For example, Visaria (1996) and Rajan et al (1996) found that women from the Southern state of Kerala enjoyed the same level of autonomy as women in the Western state of Gujarat. Further, women who marry within their kin and are able to visit their parents, as mentioned by Dyson & Moore (1983) are not a good indicator of women's autonomy (Jeffery & Jeffery, 1997). Sabu George (1997), a popular South Indian demographer, has reported on the

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[8] Lower prevalence does not mean that female infanticide/foeticide or discrimination against daughters is not practised at all in South India. Instead the state of Tamil Nadu has the lowest female child sex ratio in India and the government has also initiated schemes like 'Cradle Babies'. For more information, see: George (1997) & Rajan (2005).

historical existence of female infanticide, which has now been replaced by foeticide, in his ethnographic work in the Southern state of Tamil Nadu. George argues that female infanticide is not a new practice in Tamil Nadu; instead it is poorly documented, and has existed for more than fifty years.

With the introduction of modern technology, the practice of female foeticide has largely replaced female infanticide (Luthra, 2007), and is also gradually becoming more popular in South India (Rajan, 2005). It is easy to practice sex-selection because of the availability of reproductive technologies, and foeticide is often deemed to be less inhumane in comparison to infanticide. Patel (1988) comments that technology has allowed female foeticide to be a modern method of massacring female foetuses on a large scale.

The extensive use of foeticide services to abort female foetuses is evident in the census figures as well.

Table 1 National and regional child sex ratio figures (2001 and 2011)

Sex ratio	Census figures 2001	Census figures 2011
National female child sex ratio	927	914
Urban child sex ratio	906	902
Rural child sex ratio	934	919
Haryana child sex ratio	819	834
Delhi child sex ratio	868	871

In India sex ratio is defined as the number of females per thousand males, and the female child sex ratio indicates the number of female children per thousand boys in the age group of 0-6 years. It is an important and useful indicator to assess the relative excess or deficit of men or women in a given population at a given point in time. In 2011, the census figures revealed that the national female child sex ratio has declined further in comparison to 2001 from 927 to 914 in 2011, suggesting that son-preference has not declined markedly (Census, 2011; Navaneetham & Dharmalingam, 2011)[9]. In 2011 urban regions recorded a female child sex ratio of 902, a

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[9] However, overall, female sex ratio has increased to 940 females per 1000 males in 2011 from 933 females per thousand males in 2001. This is the highest sex ratio has been since the 1971 census.

decrease from 906 in 2001. It was lower than rural areas where it was 919 in 2011, but it used to be 934 in 2001 (Chandramouli, 2011; Indian Census, 2001). Both urban and rural regions have witnessed a further decline in the female child sex ratio, while the rural sex ratio has recorded a swifter decline, the urban areas still have a lower sex ratio than rural areas. Further, in North India the female child sex ratio is worse in comparison to South India; for example, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Rajasthan (North Indian states) have the lowest child sex ratios. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that in many north Indian states such as Delhi and Haryana an increase in female child sex ratio has been recorded. For instance, in 2011, the female child sex ratio in Haryana witnessed an increase of 15 points, rising to 834 from 819 in 2001 (Census, 2011). In Yamuna Nagar (my research area), the female child sex ratio increased from 806 in 2001 to 826 in 2011 (Census, 2011, p.18-19). However, despite this increase Haryana still has the lowest female child sex ratio in India.

Delhi has also witnessed a small increase of three points in its child sex ratio, from 868 in 2001 to 871 in 2011 (Census, 2011, p.20-21). It is important to note two significant implications of a low female child sex ratio. First, it demonstrates the prevalence of son-preference and women's lower status, and second, that even this marginal increase signifies people's changing attitude, and daughters' gradually increasing status in these regions. Social transformations and continuations are clearly highlighted in these figures within contemporary Indian society. This illuminates the paradox of the urban population of Delhi and Haryana where women's status is increasing but at the same time women's agency and status is still embedded in tradition.

The present study

This thesis is a qualitative study conducted from a feminist perspective on the everyday bargaining strategies of Indian educated married urban middle-class mothers from Delhi and Yamuna Nagar, a district in Haryana, India. These women adopted different strategies to meet their family formation and family planning interests in a rapidly changing urban neoliberal society. Some of the interests that women aimed to achieve that are discussed in this study are: having a son, arranging child-care and domestic help, educating children, choosing motherhood, procuring abortions, family planning, and securing old-age support. Achieving these interests allows women to gain social status within their families and networks, and an ability to accommodate to contemporary gender roles by maintaining family harmony. At a wider level,

this research will shed light on everyday social transformations and the continuation of gender roles, gendered perceptions, and family formation strategies among the urban middle-class in urban Indian collective and patriarchal society.

The concept of bargaining strategies in this study has been borrowed from Kandiyoti's concept of patriarchal bargaining proposed by her in her article '*Bargaining with Patriarchy'* (1988). In this work Kandiyoti explains that women's bargaining strategies are cultural and class-specific. Women, in order to meet their goals, resist, accommodate, adapt and engage in conflict within the patriarchal system. Because of their subordinate position in patriarchal settings, women bargain from a weaker position; however, these bargains have the potential to renegotiate gender relations (Kandiyoti, 1988, p.275 & 286).

In the context of this thesis, bargaining refers to different negotiation and resistance strategies that urban women develop within modern patriarchal and collective family settings. In this process gender relations are being renegotiated to accommodate to rapidly changing contemporary urban modern settings. Rising consumerism, female education, females entering into the paid workforce, and the increasing popularity of nuclear families are some of the contemporary factors that have led men and women to support each other by performing each other's traditional gender roles. That is, men supporting women in domestic and child rearing work and women earning to support their families.

Why urban middle-class women of Haryana and Delhi?

After the introduction of neoliberal policies, different transnational companies invested in South Indian states such as Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and North Indian states such as Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Haryana. My research focuses on two highly patriarchal North Indian states, Delhi and Haryana, which were highly attractive regions for foreign investors to set up their industries and offices.

Delhi (New Delhi) is the capital of India where all important government buildings and headquarters are located, including Parliament House, President House, and the overseas embassies of many countries. Delhi is cosmopolitan and people from different classes, castes and religions live there. There are slum areas, aristocratic residential areas, middle class residential localities, and different trading areas throughout Delhi (Gihar, 2003). Delhi has an area of 1,483 sq. km, and a population of 16 million (Census, 2011).

The state of Haryana is well connected to Delhi, and it shares its capital Chandigarh with the state of Punjab. In 1966, Haryana was formed out of Punjab. The population of Haryana, according to the 2011 census is 25,351,462. It is important to note that Haryana is one of the richest states in India and has an agricultural-based economy (Lerche, 2014). However, after the introduction of neoliberal policies it is no longer only an agricultural economy; it is experiencing rapid urbanisation and economic growth, with an increase in BPO and IT industries (Chatterji, 2013). Urban regions such as Gurgaon, Faridabad, and Yamuna Nagar are undergoing rapid socio-economic changes, such as an increasing number of educational institutions, industries, transnational companies, and the building of new shopping malls and modern housing sub-divisions. All these changes are making Haryana, like Delhi, an important marker of global modern India. My research took place in the district of Yamuna Nagar, one of the 21 districts of Haryana, which is well-known for its industries. According to the 2011 census (District Census, 2011) the population of Yamuna Nagar is 1, 214, 205 and expanding because of an increasing number of immigrants who come for employment opportunities.

I am familiar with both Delhi and Yamuna Nagar because I have paternal and maternal family connections resident in them. Prior to my research, I had observed middle-class women's daily negotiation and resistance strategies within rapidly changing modern patriarchal collective settings. These observations created a driving force to conduct this research. In contemporary urban modern India, social transformations cannot be studied without studying the middle class because they play a vital role in social transformations and defining what is modern (Joshi, 2001)[10]. These factors served an important reason to choose the urban middle class population sample from Delhi and Haryana, since both of these states are examples of the presence of multiple modernities in contemporary India. These states simultaneously manifest a blend of development, capitalism, patriarchy, rising gender equality and women's oppression. For example, these states have recorded an increase in the female literacy rate accompanied by a low female child sex ratio. However, a gradual increase in female child sex ratios is evident although the child sex ratio is still lower than the national average as discussed earlier. The female literacy rate is still lower in the rural areas at 58.8% whereas in urban areas it is 79.9% (Chandramouli, 2011). The literacy rate of Delhi according to the 2011 census is above the national average of

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[10] The role of urban middle-class in defining modernity has been discussed in depth in Chapter Two.

74.04 %, that is, 86.34%, male literacy is 91.03% and female literacy is 80.93 % (Census, 2011). The literacy rate in Haryana is also above the national average, 76.64% according to the 2011 population census. These figures include a male literacy rate of 85.38% while female literacy is 66.77% (Census, 2011). The Haryana figure reveals that the male literacy rate is similar to Delhi's male literacy rate, but the female rate is much lower than Delhi's female literacy rate. This partly reflects Haryana's women's subordinate position and lack of opportunities in comparison to those of Delhi's females. Another possibility for this difference could be that often the educated class migrate to Delhi and other cities for employment purposes.

The link between a rising female literacy rate and a declining child sex ratio with some improvements recorded in the sex ratio in North Indian urban areas is an important driver for choosing an urban middle-class sample. Affluent women with education and financially well-to-do status are likely to access reproductive and health services on a larger scale than other women (Sharma et al, 2007). Both Delhi and Haryana have a complex interaction of modern development and patriarchal forces which is reflected in a low female child sex ratio (even if a gradual increase is recorded) and increasing female literacy rates. Similar to Delhi, not even a single district in Haryana is above the national average of 914 females to 1000 males. In Haryana, for example, according to the 2011 census, districts with high female literacy rates such as Gurgaon and Yamuna Nagar have a low female child sex ratio. Ironically, Mewat district, a rural area, has the lowest female literacy rate, but the highest female child sex ratio of 906 among all the districts in Haryana, (Census, 2011; Talwar & Meenu, 2014)[11]. Urban women have easier access to education, employment opportunities, and reproductive services compared to rural women. Urban women's decision-making has demonstrably improved with their literacy and education levels (Mukherjee, 2007, p.69) a trend which will be explored in this thesis.

Research questions

The above discussion sheds light on the rapidly modernising nature of urban India in economics, consumer behaviour, family and gender relations. However, many traditional beliefs and practices still stand strong such as son-preference and collective values. In light of this it becomes very interesting to examine how women bargain in order to meet their different

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[11] Though Mewat's sex ratio is still below the national average, it stood at the top in the whole state of Haryana.

interests in regards to reproduction and within their families. This research is informed by a key research question and several sub-research questions.

Key research question:

In what ways are urban middle-class women's reproductive agency and family negotiations in an engagement with multiple modernities in urban India?

Sub-research questions:

1. How do women bargain while making their reproductive choices within modern and traditional patriarchal and collective family settings to empower themselves and to garner support to juggle work pressure?

2. How have family planning, development and neoliberal reforms influenced middle-class values and aspirations around gender and reproduction?

3. What effects has modernity had on the traditional gendered division of labour, gendered perceptions, and gender hierarchy among the urban middle-class?

4. In what ways have modern reproductive technologies expanded middle-class women's ability to exercise choice?

Sub-research question one is explored in Chapter Five, where I will examine how women contest and submit to different patriarchal social structures within collective family settings in a modern neoliberal society. In this process women try to acquire social status and prestige, and also to garner support for child-care and domestic chores from their husbands and mothers-in-law.

The second sub-research question will be examined in Chapter Six. I will discuss how government sponsored family planning and development reforms have influenced middle-class reproductive and gender values and aspirations in the wake of the neoliberal economy. In order to meet contemporary aspirations women are widely engaging with modern reproductive, spiritual and traditional technologies on a regular basis to meet their reproductive goals.

The third sub-research question will be answered in Chapter Seven. This chapter's analysis will shed light on changing gender relations, gender hierarchy and gendered division of labour within urban middle-class families. These changes are redefining the practice of son-preference, and daughters are gaining importance in a novel manner.

The last sub-research question is touched on widely throughout the thesis. Not only will development interventions be discussed in all analysis chapters, but Chapters Two and Three, which focus on theories, will also address this.

Theoretical Underpinning

This section will provide an overview of the theories used in this study. In this thesis I have mainly employed Bourdieu's, Hays', and Kabeer's theories to analyse issues around modernity, gender, family relations, class and reproduction. The study highlights the insights of the ongoing interaction of modernity, gender and class. Some recent Indian studies such as Belliappa (2013), Mishra (2011), Radhakrishnan (2009), and Thapan (2009), have focused on this interaction among educated urban Indian middle-class women. Mishra (2011), Thapan (2009) and Radhakrishnan (2009) have used Bourdieu's work on habitus and capital to explain gendered respectability, femininity and reproduction and transformation of social structures. Similarly, I have constructed feminist links with the work of Bourdieu, particularly with his concepts of habitus, capital, field, and symbolic violence. This aids in understanding that women are not a passive monolithic category and they have the capability to gain various advantages even while operating within patriarchal constraints.

Bourdieu's work (Bourdieu, 1974, 1984 & 1985) provides a good medium to analyse the data since his work focuses on power relationships, hierarchy, and inequality in everyday practices. Bourdieu's theory proved beneficial in this aspect. His work has been employed by different Indian scholars to study class from a gendered perspective in the wake of neoliberal economic reforms (Mishra, 2011; Radhakirshnan, 2009; Thapan, 2009)[12]. His theories of habitus, capital, field and symbolic violence provided strong insights into analysing power relations between men and women, gender hierarchy, maintaining social status, and reproduction and transformation of structures in day to day life in patriarchal and collective cultures (Mishra, 2011; Radhakrishnan, 2009; Thapan 2009). Bourdieu's work allowed me to reveal the strong interweavings of structure, agency and culture, and how these interweavings impacted on the micro aspects of participants' daily lives in modern urban settings. I will also analyse how power constantly shifts among family members depending on the situation, how gender hierarchy is both

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[12] For in-depth discussion on feminist integration with Bourdieu's theory for class-based analysis please see Chapter Three.

maintained and challenged by the women, and how gender roles are quite fluid these days as women tend to perform traditional masculine roles and men are also performing some traditional female roles, as mentioned earlier.

Bourdieu's habitus focuses on social, collective, and structural reproduction and helps to understand how certain dispositions are internalised and reproduced. Bourdieu drew a connection between agency and structures such as class and how they both influence each other. He asserts that transformation of structures is possible, as habitus is an open system of dispositions and does not completely determine or limit agency as it is constantly subjected to experiences (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.133; Thapan, 2009). Thapan (2004) further develops the theory of habitus in her work on embodiment among urban middle-class Indian women and found that women both contest and submit to popular body images. Thapan demonstrated that modification of structures is possible which means that agency is both reproductive and transformative[13].

This transformative and reproductive nature of agency is well explained by Hays (1994), the second theorist who informed this thesis. Hays' (1994) concepts of reproductive and transformative agency provided insights into how and why women tended to resist and negotiate within patriarchal collective settings while making their decisions in order to achieve their desired outcome. My analysis sheds light on the constant reproduction and transformation of structures. This illuminates the ongoing interaction of certain aspects of tradition with modernity in contemporary urban India. In order to understand this interaction, I have used the theory of multiple modernities proposed by S N Eisenstadt (2000).

Applying the theory of multiple modernities I argue that Indian modernity does not signify complete Westernisation: development, patriarchy, equality, oppression, and empowerment coexist and structures are transformed and reproduced. This is evident in my research. I found, for example, that son-preference is practised before a baby is born and gender equality after the birth even if a girl is born. Female education is increasing but the institution of marriage is becoming more consumer-based with rising demands for dowries and great pomp and spectacle. I have endeavoured to lessen belief in a monolithic Western modernity by relating Eisenstadt's work to my findings. I have examined the interrelation of modernity, gender, class, development,

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[13] Chapter Three discusses transformative and reproductive nature of agency in depth.

capitalism, consumerism, patriarchal and collective social and family settings in light of the phenomenon of multiple modernities in urban India among the middle class.

Further, I have employed the concept of Kabeer's (1999) three interrelated dimensions resources, agency and achievements. This concept will help to understand how women garner support in modern urban settings within their affinal families to achieve their interests. While meeting their interests, women might or might not empower themselves. Kabeer's model is important in relation to my study as she lays emphasis on access to resources and ability to make decisions to understand the process of women's empowerment. My middle-class participants living in modern urban settings have access to different resources so it becomes quite important to study how their ability to access these resources influenced their ability to make decisions and their actual choices.

I will then discuss benevolent patriarchy (Kilmartin, 2015; Roald, 2013) and bargaining with patriarchy (Kandiyoti, 1988)[14] to analyse the reproduction and transformation of structures and how women negotiate and resist within their cultural and class-specific environment. Using Hays and Bourdieu, I will explain how gender and class intersect in the process of bargaining in which women make their decisions to meet their interests. This further highlights the interrelation of structure, agency and culture.

Methodological Issues

This is a qualitative study and I conducted semi-structured face to face individual interviews with my participants in 2010 and 2011. My research questions guided me in recruiting my participants. To recruit my participants, I employed snowballing technique to recruit 45 educated married middle-class mothers from the urban areas of Haryana (Yamuna Nagar district) and Delhi, India. I gave preference to class and recruited 43 Hindus and two Muslim participants. Despite being from diverse religious backgrounds the Muslim participants shared the same ideas around son-preference, family-size, treatment of their daughters, and gendered perceptions and expectations for their daughters and sons. Further, I chose to interview two groups of women: those whose first child was female and those women who had had at least one abortion in their lives; a few fell into both these categories.

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[14] Both of these theories are discussed in depth in Chapter Three.

I operated within a social-constructionist epistemology and employed the concept of the romantic interview. True and authentic models of the self are advocated in romantic interviews in which researchers come closer to a respondent to apprehend the authentic self (Dingwall, 1997). The romantic approach views interviews as a conversation where stories are shared from both sides (Schultze & Avital, 2011). In this approach reality is not discovered rather "interpreted and constructed, and interviews are served as a site for the construction of meaning rather than the elicitation of facts" (Schultze & Avital, 2011, p. 4). In contrast, social constructivists reject the idea of a true and authentic self. They argue that personality exists between people and not within them (Burr, 1995).

However, through the romantic interviews I did not aim to apprehend the true or authentic self of the participants. Instead I used it to conduct my interviews from a feminist perspective. The romantic approach is highly recommended in studies conducted from a feminist perspective. Romantic interviews help to obtain revelations and confessions of the interviewees by intimacy and rapport.

Further, my unmarried status and being an urban middle-class female positioned me both as an insider and an outsider among my participants. I identified myself and was identified by some the participants both as an insider and an outsider on different occasions. The shift in my position was typically articulated by the participants during the interview process. I was a partial outsider as I did not belong to a similar educational background, or caste; nor am I married or a mother. Because of this some of the participants found it hard to establish strong empathetic bonds with me. Hence, I faced challenges, as well as enjoying the privileges associated with both positions.

For example, because of my insider's positioning I had some assumptions which influenced my analysis. Rather than viewing things from their perspective I initially made meaning of their stories from a subjective point of view. In order to diminish the effects of researcher bias, I decided to tell myself my own story, to be able to address the influence of my own subjectivity. I wrote an intellectual autobiography, a popular research tool in feminist studies.

Intellectual autobiography allows the researcher to discover the biases which affect the way the researcher treats and analyses the data (Haynes, 2006). Autobiographical writing provides a space to express and explore different complexities, and helps to analyse the knowledge claims that we possess (Stanley, 1993). While writing my autobiography I told myself my own stories in

order to understand my prejudices to understand the things taken for granted. This helped me to decipher the ways that my subjective experiences were influencing the analysis process. Autobiography allowed me to view how I had internalised particular social expectations.

Organisation of chapters

This introduction has provided an overview and rationale for the research. I have explored the complex web of interactions between tradition and modernity which shapes modernity in contemporary urban India. In this introduction, I have provided a brief overview of the research questions I have investigated in this thesis and outlined why I chose this topic, people and places to conduct my research. I have introduced the idea of multiple modernities as applied to my educated urban middle-class sample from Delhi and Haryana and briefly pointed out the different status of women in cities and agricultural communities in North and South India. The different status is implied in female child sex ratio and female literacy rates as recorded in the 2011 Indian census. These figures also shed light on the paradox of women's continuing subordinate status which is occurring simultaneously with their increasing status. The prevalence of son-preference is ubiquitous in contemporary India aided by modern technology which has enabled female infanticide to be replaced by female foeticide.

Chapter Two focuses on the multiple modernities theory and discusses it in relation to the emergence of the old and new urban middle class in the context of neoliberal reforms, and development interventions from a gendered and historical perspective. I define urban middle class for the purpose of this research. I explain that in urban India, social changes and continuation of gender roles, social expectations, and cultural values indicate the complex web of interaction between the modern and the traditional. At a micro-level, this interaction is influencing women's choices. The middle class is discussed in relation to urban areas, and how women from middle class background have practical gender needs (PGN) and strategic gender needs (SGN) distinct from other class-groups. However, PGN and SGN are fluid and interrelated and also shed light on how population policies have mixed effects on women's lives. Even if women's bodies remain the target of these policies, these policies still provide women with an opportunity to become empowered and capable of regulating their fertility. All this helps urban middle-class women to accommodate their contemporary gender roles within patriarchal and collective settings.

Chapter Three discusses various theories undergirding my analysis such as habitus, capital, field and the relationships between structure, agency and culture. This chapter locates these theories within the Indian context from a feminist perspective. I discuss how having a small family and having a son confer symbolic, social and cultural capital on urban middle-class women. I also discuss how women's reproductive agency is both influenced by, and influential on, structure and culture which indicates that structure, agency and culture are interrelated (Hays, 1994).

Chapter Four outlines the methodology used in this research and provides a description of the snowballing process used in order to recruit participants from the urban areas of Delhi and Yamuna Nagar. The interviews are discussed in relation to front and back stage performances delivered by the interviewees and the researcher. Reasons for choosing the concept of multiple selves and discussing it in relation to the concept of romantic interviews, are disclosed. I discuss how interviews could be understood as a form of performance within the participants' habitus. This chapter then describes how and why the data was analysed using thematic analysis, and why other analytical methods were not used. It also provides a reflexivity section, which critically analyses how the personal characteristics of the researcher have affected the analysis process. It also outlines what measures were further taken by the researcher to view and understand her own assumptions.

Chapter Five is the first data analysis chapter and provides a description of how decision-making is a complex and a multi-layered process. Different social structures and practices such as marriage, family, child-care and domestic help arrangements are undergoing social transition in urban India. In a rapidly changing neoliberal society women develop bargaining strategies to suit patriarchal and collective social fabric of their family settings. Patriarchy is discussed in relation to women's lower status, the gendered division of labour, increased social pressure on women to perform traditional and new gender roles such as gaining paid employment and performing outside chores and women's subordination within their affinal families. Collective cultural values provide a sense of belonging within wider groups particularly in affinal and maternal families and their social networks, and participants negotiated their own choices while considering the needs of other people. In this chapter I look at how women develop different strategies to negotiate and resist patriarchal structures to meet their own interests, and how through this process they both reproduce and transform patriarchy. This chapter claims that

women are not without agency. Rather they develop different strategies in the modern neoliberal society to meet their goals through which they might or might not empower themselves.

Chapter Six extends the analysis and discusses how urban middle-class women's values and aspirations around gender and reproduction are influenced by family planning, development and neoliberal reforms. In order to meet their aspirations women engage with modern, spiritual and traditional technology. The issues such as son-preference, small families and women's reproductive health and well-being are discussed. Women used modern reproductive technologies for the prevention of conception and birth[15] and prenatal diagnosis for sex-selection. The modern reproductive technologies that participants used were: contraceptive technologies, ultrasound technology, and medical termination of pregnancy. In addition, the participants also practised spiritual beliefs by seeking help from spiritual healers[16] and traditional practices such as specific sexual behaviour or fasting or specific diets in order to prevent conception or to practise son-preference. Women's engagement with technology is mutually constitutive as both technology and society shape each other.

Chapter Seven focuses on changes and continuation within gender roles, gender perceptions, and gendered division of labour among the urban middle-class in neoliberal India. This chapter discusses how son-preference is widely practised for different reasons such as old-age support for parents, and the desire to provide a brother for their daughters. Despite this, parents' traditional trust in, and reliance on, sons is declining since they believe that sons might not look after them in their old age. This is largely due to male migration, both within India and overseas for employment purposes in the wake of the neoliberal economy. The popularity of a small family norm has resulted in parents now often relying on their daughters for social, emotional and financial support, especially if their sons do not want to support them, or if they do not have a son. Male migration has worsened this situation. This is leading both to changes and continuation of gender roles especially in cases where parents invest the same amount of money and time in their daughters' education, career and their overall upbringing as they do in their sons'. These changes are suggestive of daughters' increasing status accompanied by an

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[15] Although reproductive technologies are also used for assisting reproduction and for genetic purposes, this chapter only discusses them in relation to prevention of birth and conception, and prenatal diagnosis.
[16] 'Spiritual healers' is the term used for people who were deemed to possess spiritual powers, and helped women in having a son, as discussed by the participants. This has been discussed in depth in Chapter Six.

increasing burden on them in a realm where son-preference is still widely practised and challenged at the same time. Therefore, there is evidently a direct connection between entitlements and expectations.

Chapter Eight discusses the main findings of my research, and the wider implications of different socio-cultural transformations happening among the urban middle-class family in contemporary India. This chapter offers recommendations for future research, and suggests measures to increase daughters' and women's status and also support for parents so that the problem of female foeticide and infanticide will be curbed.

Chapter 2: Multiple modernities among the urban middle class in India

I briefly touched on the aspect of multiple modernities among the urban Indian middle-class in the Introductory Chapter. This chapter will further elaborate on multiple modernities and will discuss how this has become a fundamental aspect of contemporary urban Indian middle-class modernity. I will first discuss how the neoliberal economic reforms have resulted in the rise and expansion of the urban middle-class group in India. Second, I will highlight social and economic participation by the urban middle-class which has shaped contemporary modernity where both traditional and modern elements interact and co-exist. This co-existence and interaction will be discussed using the theory of multiple modernities conceived by S N Eisenstadt (2000) which has also been used by various academics within the Indian context.

In contemporary modern urban middle-class Indian society consumerism has become an integral part of peoples' daily lives. Consumerism also reveals people's financial status and their buying capacity. This consumerist ideology will be discussed providing relevant contemporary examples such as small family size, the practice of female foeticide, providing big weddings, and achieving higher education. Finally, the modern small family norm and female foeticide will be discussed both in a contemporary and historical context. This will further emphasise contemporary modernity and neoliberal aspects of the urban middle-class. The consumerist modern economy has not only led to the rise and expansion of the urban middle-class, but also the shifting and shaping of new gender roles is evident. These shifts in gender roles among urban middle-class have influenced women's lives. Family planning has proved an important component of these changes. As mentioned in the previous chapter, family planning was introduced by government to address women's health issues, to reduce population, control poverty and for financial development and because of this the government was able to link development with nationalism. In addition, family planning policies have allowed urban middle-class women to achieve both practical gender needs (PGN) and strategic gender needs (SGN) in regards to their new gender roles and socio-cultural expectations in the wake of a neoliberal economy.

Defining the urban middle class

Joshi (2001) claimed that one cannot understand modernity in contemporary India without studying the middle-class. Ignoring the middle-class means ignoring dominant contemporary

discourses on modernity and gender in urban India (Belliappa, 2013). Now the question arises who is actually a member of the middle-class? How can this category be defined and on what basis? Rapid urbanisation, economic growth, and higher education are three important structural changes in the last three decades that have led to the expansion of the middle classes (Kapur & Vaishnav, 2015). The 1991 economic liberalisation has made the middle-class one of the major groupings of the Indian nation (Deshpande, 2003a; Varma, 1998). Because of their educational skills, the urban middle- class form a significant portion of the global workforce and contribute to the economy through their earnings (Maitra, 2007). Nevertheless, the middle-class does not form a majority segment of the overall population (Saxena, 2010).

The middle-class is placed between the rich and poor, and they constitute 30% of the urban population (Maitra, 2007 & Saxena, 2010). However, there is no universally accepted definition of this group, and it is often defined on the basis of earning, consuming, owning, occupation and educational levels (Lama-Rewa & Mooji, 2009; Sridharan, 2004). Most of the attempts to identify the middle-class quantitatively come from private research conducted for marketing purposes since the Indian census does not provide class-based data (Belliappa, 2009)[17]. Recent research conducted by a private company, Goldman Sachs Group, gives data on occupation type of Indian urban middle-class (Lu et al, 2016):

> India has a small 'Urban Middle' class, relative to its population, comprising largely of 10mn[18] government employees (including state-run enterprises), 0.85mn small/medium enterprise (SME) owners and 16mn working professionals (with post-graduate or technical degrees) (p.7).

This suggests that in urban areas the middle-class are diverse in terms of occupation, and consist of public sector middle-class or government employees, professional middle-class who are employed in the technical industries or private sector, and small enterprise middle-class who have their own small business. Sridharan (2004) also discusses different occupational types among the middle-class. He classified them as working in the public sector (wage earners), the

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[17] Indian census provides occupation types, but it is not possible to use it as a class proxy. For example, number of people involved in the agricultural sector represents all those involved with the land, be they a farm labourer or a land owner. Therefore, for occupation type one has to rely on private research reports rather than government sources.

[18] mn means million

non-agricultural private sector (including self-employed) and agricultural middle-class (Sridharan, 2004, p.41).[19]

Further, Sridharan (2011) classified middle-class groups into three categories based on income earnings. These include the elite middle-class earning more than INR 140,000 per annum, the expanded middle class earning from INR 105,000 per annum and the broadest middle-class group earning from INR 35,000 per annum. Since the 1990s economic reforms the lowest income groups started shrinking and other groups started expanding, and with increasing income the buying capacity of the population expands (Sridharan, 2011). The new middle-class has broken the hegemony of the old middle-class. The emergence of the new middle-class means the group itself is quite diverse in terms of income, occupation, caste, and regional diversity. Because of their increased buying capacity consumerism has become an important component of middle class lives and traditional practices.

Being middle-class in India is not related only to belonging to a specific income bracket or occupation and buying capacity but also to people's ability to accumulate and maintain different forms of cultural capital[20]. People's ability to speak fluent English and their aspirations to receive higher English medium education are also important markers of middle-class status in urban India (Lama-Rewa & Mooji, 2009). The liberalised economy has made English medium education, private schooling and coaching classes important markers of urban middle-class status (Donner, 2011; Jeffery et al, 2005). Education helps the urban middle-class to secure a place for themselves in the globalised market by meeting market demands. In addition, family unity, gendered respectability and morality, nationalism, providing quality education to children and being self-sacrificing parents are also key features of the urban middle-class (Kumar, 2005; Radhakrishnan, 2009; Thapan, 2009).

My participants belonged to the expanded middle-class group, and the working participants were either self-employed, or were working in public or private sectors in the field of education, medicine and law. They held the above mentioned cultural values, and provided quality

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[19] Similarly, my middle-class sample consists of people from different occupations such as self-employed and working in the public sector.
[20] Bourdieu introduced the concept of cultural capital. Cultural capital refers to knowledge, education, and taste which indicates class and status. For further discussion, see Chapter Three. The concept of capital has been used to analyse the data.

education to their children, were self-sacrificing mothers, and believed in maintaining family harmony and unity. Therefore, in this study I refer to middle-class as those who belonged to the expanded middle-class group and had more than the basic necessities of life (food, clothes and shelter) such as a car or mobile or laptop or air-conditioner or fridge (Sridharan, 2011). They held strong collective family values, were sacrificing parents and placed immense importance on the education of their children for their career success (Radhakrishnan, 2009; Thapan, 2009).

Rise of the urban middle-class

The emergence of the middle-class in colonial India is linked to the nationalist movement, and in academic discussions this group is often referred to as old-middle class. Old middle-class rose in the late 18th and 19th century during the colonial period when the British wanted to create a class of public servants of Indian origin with English moral values and sensibilities (Varma, 1998). The upper-caste and rich males were largely able to take advantage of this opportunity because of their knowledge of the English language and their education. Further, the old middle-class group was also actively involved in the nationalist movement which allowed them to "speak on behalf of the nation" about what is good and what is not good for the nation (Deshpande, 2003, p.130).

Old middle-class women were also closely associated with the nationalist movement, and were viewed as carriers of national culture. This influenced their everyday lives in terms of bringing up their children or being an ideal wife (Chatterjee, 1989). Through women the nationalist project reconciled the modern public world such as the knowledge of modern Western science and technology, with keeping private homes spiritual. Women, even though they possessed knowledge of modern Western culture, controlled the spiritual and domestic spheres in such a way that it would protect their homes from the polluted and inferior materialistic Western values, and this kept the middle-class women socially pure (Chatterjee, 1989). This idea of social purity is still viewed to be superior to Western thought which dominates the economic and political spheres. Good and pure women among the middle-class are symbols of national esteem (Radhkrishnan, 2009), and also the family's and community's prestige at a micro level. However, at this time, women also held knowledge through Western education. This education was mainly employed to make women educated ideal mothers and wives; however, it also

allowed them to step outside the domestic sphere, without undermining the importance of their families.

For new middle-class women family remains very important and motherhood remains central to their identity even today. The progress of a nation depends on how these women raise the future generation of educated elite citizens who would work for the country's economic and overall development. It is important to mention that the nationalist movement is associated not only with the emergence of the middle-class, but also that the popular and glorified image of self-sacrificing motherhood among the middle-class can be linked to the movement. Women themselves act as cultural reproducers because it helps them gain and maintain prestige and power within their society (Yuval-Davis, 1997). That is why the ideology of self-sacrificing mother is most popular among the middle-class as it brings them recognition and prestige within their networks.

The old middle-class group mainly consisting of upper strata of society continued to dominate administrative and technical functions prior to the neoliberal economic reforms (Belliappa, 2009). After neoliberal reforms, unlike the pre-independence and early post-independence periods, the middle-class group is not limited only to elites and upper caste Hindus and Muslims, and their hegemony is no longer taken for granted (Donner & Neve, 2011). The old middle-class generally consists of people whose parents were employed in government jobs or in reputable private firms, grew up in urban areas and studied in English medium schools (Belliappa, 2009). On the other hand, new middle-class also consists of people from lower rural castes who have now moved upward by entering the urban educated professions such as IT or computer sectors (Belliappa, 2009).

The newness of the middle-class is not limited only to the expansion of the group to include wider sections from different religions. "Rather its newness refers to a process of production of a distinctive social and political identity that represents and lays claim to the benefits of liberalization" (Fernandes, 2011, p.69). In the liberalised economy of the new middle-class, employment in the public sector is not the main source of deriving prestige and recognition within their personal settings (Fernandes, 2000). Many of the new middle-class are part of the global market and are employed in the IT sector, computer industry, software industry, and BPO sector. This new urban middle-class is the "central agent for the revisioning of the Indian nation

in the context of globalisation" (Fernandes, 2000, p.89). The new middle-class group is deemed to challenge Western hegemony in economic and technological aspects, and is capable of maintaining traditional values (Belliappa, 2009). It is important to note that the new urban middle-class group is diverse in terms of caste and religion, and may not share the same roots as the old middle-class, but it does share some of the same practices and values (Donner & Neve, 2011). Similar to the old middle-class, the new middle-class continues to admire some Western values, and at the same time distances itself from other Western aspects in their life styles (Belliappa, 2009). This is particularly so around female respectability. Women among the urban middle-class these days are expected to be modern in regards to pursuing higher education, and work at influential positions, but are not expected to be Western by smoking, drinking, and believing in individualistic values (Oza, 2007). There is a social expectation to be modern, but not to be Western.

This sense of the changing role of urban women and the expansion of the middle-class signifies the prominent role of the urban middle-class in defining modernity in urban India. Middle-class values are influenced by both tradition and modernity. Contemporary urban Indian modernity is a product of both modern and traditional practices, and the modern and the traditional are in a complex web of interaction. The next section sheds light on this interaction using the concept of multiple modernities.

Multiple Modernities in India

Eisenstadt (2002) explained multiple modernities as repudiation of the homogenizing and hegemonic model of Western modernity in non-Western modernising societies. The European model of modernity spread to the world through military, technological and economic expansions; however not all aspects of this model of modernity were accepted by non-Western societies which responded differently (Eisenstadt, 2000). Thus, modernity is not homologous to westernisation, nor is Western modernity the authentic modernity, even if it enjoys historical precedence (Eisenstadt, 2000, p.3). Modern practices are plainly not new, but they are situated in a historical and social context as modernity is not written on a "clean slate" (Kaviraj, 2000, p.138).

Often modernity in different settings is the product of ongoing interaction between traditional and contemporary cultural traditions, including pre-existing socio-cultural arrangements, and it is

historically specific (Deshpande, 2003, p. 84; Eisenstadt, 2000; Kaviraj, 2000; Kaviraj, 2005; Thornton, 2001). India had a different colonial experience from Latin America and other Asian countries because of different socio-cultural settings and histories (Kaviraj, 2005). Likewise, contemporary social movements in non-Western countries are anti-western, and yet still modern since they address current concerns (Eisenstadt, 2000). They are culturally specific and shaped in a given society by the traditional values and historical experiences of that society. For example, various institutions such as family, education, urbanisation, mass communication, and economic and political structures are shaped in the process of modernisation within their given socio-cultural and historical settings. Such institutions express modernities differently, both at the local and national level (Eisenstadt, 2000, p.1 & 2).

In urban India, the multiple modernities phenomenon is evident as modernity took on a much different shape from that of the West. However, Dipankar Gupta (2002), in his book *Mistaken modernity: India between worlds,* claimed that India has still not achieved modernity even though there are definite moves away from tradition. Mistaken modernity suggests that in India patriarchy and oppression coexist, and true modernity could not be achieved without adhering to Western universal norms and ideological change (Basu, 2005; Gupta, 2002). This theory of mistaken modernity is contrary to the idea of multiple modernities, and provides a rigid idea of modernity as it stresses replicating the Western homogenous model of modernity. It ignores the fact that each society experiences and reproduces modernity in a distinctive way and its socio-cultural structures and history cannot be completely eroded while achieving modernity. As discussed in the Introduction, values that emerged during the nationalist movement regarding female respectability are still important among the middle-class even though women in this group have adopted many Western values (Radhakrishnan, 2009). Therefore, I disagree with Gupta, and assert that Indian modernity is distinctively modern even though it appears to be greatly influenced by traditional cultural values and historical experiences. My claim is supported by others such as Fuchs (1994), Ogborn (1999 as cited in Willis, 2005) and Chaudhuri (2012).

Fuchs aptly argues, "Even if modernity can be regarded as a global phenomenon, it does not constitute a common project" (Fuchs, 1994, p. v), and Ogborn noted that "the idea of modernity situates people in time" (Ogborn, 1999, p.153 as quoted in Willis, 2005, p.2). Modernity in India,

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therefore, cannot simply be understood as countering patriarchal norms, nor is it simply Western and alien (Chaudhuri, 2012, p. 284). The traditional and modern cannot be simply understood as two distinct parallel categories; instead they are in a complex interaction both at macro and micro levels.

Multiple modernities suggests that local concerns and interest are being reconstituted, and transformation is not happening at the macro level of nation-state, politics and democracy alone, but also shaping various institutions as well (Eisenstadt, 2000). In India changes are evident at both the macro and micro levels; the transformation at the macro level is political modernity (Kaviraj, 2000 & 2005). This political modernity in India is different from Western equivalents of modernity because of the combined impact of respective historical traditions which were different from those of the West (Kaviraj, 2000). For example, caste politics in India is a feature of the modern politics of democracy, and not a throwback to traditional behaviour because:

> traditions, when faced with the challenge of entirely new structures like industrialism or electoral democracy, might seek to adapt to these, altering both the internal operation of traditional structures like caste or religious community and the elective institutions themselves (Kaviraj, 2000, p. 156).

Kaviraj (2000) also highlights changes within education institutions which have the potential to affect people's everyday lives at the micro level. In India, English education was traditionally limited to high class males, but now, to a large extent, males and females from the urban middle-class and to a lesser extent the working class, also have access to higher education. Moreover, in the traditional Indian Brahmanical education system emphasis was laid on memorising rather than analysing the content. The modern education system introduced during the colonial period has raised awareness of the importance of developing critical capacities, in addition to the memorising that is still emphasised (Kaviraj, 2005, p.517-18).

Drawing on Kaviraj (2000) and Eisenstadt (2000) to explain that modernity in India is not simply homologous to that of the West, Qayum & Ray's (2011) work in Kolkata city highlights multiple modernities among the urban middle-class at the micro level of their households through domestic servitude practices. They suggested that projects of modernity are not simply limited to the public sphere or institution, such as education or politics, but have affected people's lives at the micro level by reaching into households (p.251). The domestic servitude in Kolkata is rooted in the city's feudal past and within contemporary times it still remains popular and part of

everyday lives. Some changes have been recorded, however, in servant management techniques and the recruitment of part-time workers because urban middle-class houses are getting smaller in size, and both husband and wife are working within the paid sectors.

On the other hand, multiple-modernist theorists give immense importance to the roles of elites in shaping multiple modernities (Casanova, 2011, Eisenstadt, 2000; Kaviraj, 2000). As Kaviraj (2000) explained, Bengali elites in India, who had a modern education during the colonial period shaped the process of political modernity by choosing appropriate Western values and retaining certain traditional Indian values. During the colonial period elites could be understood as people belonging to the upper strata of society such as upper-caste or class, having a modern education, and having an ability to apply that knowledge within their socio-cultural context (Kaviraj, 2000). These features are quite common among the urban educated new middle-class in contemporary times with increasing literacy rates and modern life-styles (Thapan, 2001). As stated earlier, unlike the old-middle-class the new middle-class group does not simply consist of people of upper-caste only, and constitutes 26% of households in India (Baviskar & Ray, 2011, p.2; Sridharan, 2011, p.36). However, similar to the old elites this group does not constitute a majority, but plays a vital role in the process of social transformation through their every day practices. Some of these practices are new forms of commodity consumption, leading luxurious lifestyles, (Brosius, 2010), pursuing modern English education, and distancing itself from the poor section of society (Gupta, 2000; Varma, 1998). Thus, it could be suggested that the shaping of multiple modernities in India is no longer limited to specific groups of elites. Rather the educated new middle-class is also capable of shaping multiple modernities. Further, multiple modernities cannot be viewed only at the macro level. Rather, the changes occurring in institutions have shaped people's everyday lives at the micro level.

Consumerism, family formation and multiple modernities

Neoliberal economic reforms have increased consumerism among the urban middle-class in India and consumerism has become an important way to show one's socio-economic potential and to gain cultural capital. The contemporary Indian middle-class is the largest consumer group in the world (Mazzarella, 2003). Consumerism has become an important way to show one's socio-economic potential and to gain cultural capital. A new consumerist touch in traditional practices and other aspects of daily lives is widely evident among the urban middle-class. For

example, demands for dowry are increasing, and brides' families are providing a modern big Indian style wedding to maintain their social status (Brosius, 2011). The big Indian weddings are based on the modern model of consumerism which highlights the interaction of modernity and tradition (Chaudhuri, 2012). Wedding planners, for instance, are often involved in urban middle-class marriages and they provide a blend of traditional and modern marriage themes. The bride is expected to be a perfect blend of the modern and traditional by being ethnic, cultured, seductive, and chaste (Brosius, 2011). After marriage, often there is a constant expectation from the educated working women[21], within Indian society, that they would perform all household chores and would look after their families as well (Radhakrishanan, 2009).

Middle-class women often end up performing both traditional and modern gender roles in a complex interaction which is redefining social structures and practices in a novel fashion in contemporary Indian society. For instance, urban Indian middle class women who uphold son-preference often use ultrasound to detect the sex of the child which is another consumerist[22] example of multiple modernities. In fact, sex-detection is very popular among the middle-class and educated groups in contemporary Indian society. Traditionally in India sex-detection was done through popular local beliefs, such as using recommended "copulation postures", examining the eating habits of pregnant women, the times and days of pregnancy (FASDSP, 1994; p. 78), hair style of the previous born child if any, position of the foetus in womb, and last date of women's periods. Other beliefs were also drawn on such as if foetal movement is weak it is a girl, if the mark from the navel down is straight then it is a boy, if the left side of the woman's pregnant belly is bigger then it is a boy, and if it leans to the right then it is a girl. Also, certain rituals are performed to ensure the birth of a male child, such as observing fasts, chanting or offering of prayers, taking medicine from a traditional healer, engaging in reproductive activities at certain periods or times, or consuming certain food prior to establishing sexual

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[21] This phenomenon is quite common in contemporary India where matrimonial ads in the newspaper under the 'Bride Wanted' section are full of advertisements asking for brides who are a perfect blend of modern and traditional values. By modern they mean educated, working women who speak fluent English, and know how to conduct themselves in different social settings. Traditional indicates that the bride should have basic knowledge of how to perform routine domestic chores, and should respect and look after her in-laws. These advertisements are usually taken out by middle class families.

[22] Although I have outlined a consumerist model as it forms an important component of the new middle class my aim is not to analyse consumerist habits or practices, I mention this quite briefly to highlight the social transformation within patriarchal and collective settings.

relationships[23]. Similarly to modern reproductive services, women are the primary participators in these traditional practices as their bodies and minds are targeted. These practices serve as a rite de passage for women to achieve motherhood (the primary reproductive role), and often to have a son.

With the acceptance of medical science Indians now largely resort to fully qualified doctors (Duggal, 2003). Earlier, dais (midwives) and traditional healers were the traditional maternal care providers. While there has been a constant decline in their services for delivering babies, especially in urban areas, traditional midwives have not completely disappeared. Their services are still available to provide post-natal massage to women and infants or in order to get infertility problems treated (Unnithan-Kumar, 2005b), or to assist when a son is desired.

Prior to the introduction of ultrasound, and its use to promote female foeticide, female infanticide was practiced to get rid of unwanted female children. For example, starving the girl child, crushing her under the bed, administering poison or applying opium to the nipple while feeding the baby are some of the methods used to carry out female infanticide. The British first documented the practice of female infanticide in India in the late 18th century, chiefly among the upper castes in the Northern and Western parts (Bumiller, 1990). Nowadays, the practice of female foeticide has largely replaced female infanticide under the umbrella of modern technology (Luthra, 2007; Kohli, 2009). Patel (1986), as mentioned in the Introduction calls female foeticide a modern method to massacre female foetuses on a large scale.

The replacement of traditional sex-detection and birth practices with modern reproductive technologies in order to accommodate changing social needs is an example of multiple modernities. This is leading to alteration of social structures in family size, gender roles, desires and expectations, primarily among the urban middle class. The commercial underground use of ultrasound in the backstreet market is done to serve consumerist traditional patriarchal needs by having a son while maintaining the modern small family size.

It is important to highlight that as a result of female-foeticide gaining popularity, following the increased rate of female foeticide, the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act 1994was framed, criminalising sex-selection tests, and advertising for sex-

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[23] This is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

determination services was banned. As mentioned in the Introduction the framing of this law did not follow an easy trajectory as earlier the Indian government had refused to ban the amniocentesis test (Patel, 1988, p. 181). A plea to curb population growth through sex-selective tests was put forward by some doctors (Kotwal, 1982 cited in Jeffery et al, 1984, p.1207). This plea was supported to achieve the "Net Reproduction Rate of One[24]" in order to achieve the seventh five-year plan of the Indian government by 1990 (Patel, 1988, p.181).

The Act aimed to eliminate violence against female foetuses and women by preventing women being forced to procure sex-selective abortions. It provided women with legal protection from violence, and an opportunity to register their complaints. Interestingly, despite popular ideas of women being pressurised to bear sons, under the PCPNDT Act 1994 women were also viewed as active decision makers able to procure a sex-selective abortion. Women procuring sex-selective tests are not exempted from punishment as in some cases either they can be required to pay a monetary fine or to serve a prison term from three to five years (Allahbadia, 2002, p.411). This Act holds them responsible for their actions, and demands made by feminists for a ban on female foeticide for women's empowerment might be different from the needs of laywomen meeting their own interests (Kohli, 2009). Women activists are themselves aware of this disparity of interests (Kumar, 1993, p.5 cited in Luthra, 2007, p.156), arguing that some of the legal reforms will not be widely accepted within society or by women. The PCPNDT Act is a good example of this situation where women willingly or unwillingly do not use this Act in the majority of cases[25]. Therefore, despite the 1994 Act female foeticide remains prevalent.

The PCPNDT Act remains poorly implemented and the conviction rate is quite low; Rajasthan has the highest number of reported cases with zero conviction rates as the cases are still pending (Female Feticide, 2012). Backstreet sex-selective abortions are another demonstration of the poor conviction rate for this Act. In practice, women often opt for backstreet sex-selective abortions at the cost of their lives and health. According to government estimates 8.9% of maternal deaths i.e. around 15,000 annually, are caused by unsafe abortions (Sharma, 2008). These backstreet services have also resulted in increased corruption and have encouraged illegal

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[24] "Replacement of a mother by only one daughter" Patel (1988; p. 181).
[25] Low reporting of these incidences has already been discussed.

relationships between doctors and police (Kohli, 2009) and the service providers remain well known to the users and local authorities (John et al., 2009, p.18).

Despite a range of feminist reforms, son-preference is practised widely, and has a deep-rooted history in agrarian society (Bandarage, 1998, p. 171). Son-preference, after the introduction of amniocentesis, is practised even in those parts of India where earlier it was not evident (Mahabal, 2009, p. 50). Furthermore, female foeticide remains quite popular amongst women themselves whereas reporting of cases of domestic violence and dowry abuse and murders are increasing. In 2007, for example, 8000 cases of domestic violence were registered and it is important to note that the specific provision for domestic violence was implemented only in 2005 (Kasturi, 2008), and 1,165 cases of female foeticide have been filed in the whole country since the PCPNDT Act was implemented (Female Feticide, 2012). Female foeticide cases, unlike other women's abuse cases, are not often reported by women, but come to light because of the police raids or sting operations conducted by the media channels (Female Feticide, 2012). This demonstrates how modern technology is being used to serve traditional patriarchal purposes, highlighting the complex interaction of modern and traditional. Significantly this takes us back to the point that modernity is not completely alien or new to societies; instead it is located within socio-cultural and historical settings.

Likewise, female education and employment are also being used to participate in consumerism and are shaping modernity. Female education, for instance, is promoted as it often accompanies a decline in the fertility rate, child mortality and for the reduction of poverty (Jain, 2006, p.43; Heward, 1999, p.1). Paradoxically the increased female literacy rate and employment rate have coincided with a declining female child sex ratio, reproducing the patriarchal structures (Census, 2011; Sharma et al, 2007), because educated and employed women have better access to reproductive technologies to obtain sex-selection tests and sex-selective abortions. Women's earning capacity and educational knowledge are supporting the popularity of consumerist consumptions to meet patriarchal needs. This demonstrates that traditional preferences are still prevalent and are redefining gender roles and practices especially among the middle classes where a son still holds great socio-cultural importance.

However, women's education and employment in India have also brought structural changes by making women independent and knowledgeable to some extent. Now girls from urban middle-

classes have access to all forms of modern education which was denied to them earlier (Thapan, 2001). The traditional dominant ideology confined women to traditional gender roles by denying them the right to education (True, 2012, p.60) or by providing education to serve domestic needs (Chaudhuri, 2012). This phenomenon has been apparent since the twentieth century in India when male social reformers encouraged female education on the grounds that education would aid women to perform their gender roles efficiently. It was argued that the ameliorating measures would help women to be better wives and mothers, and "better carriers" of traditional values (Chaudhuri, 2012, p. 286; Thapan, 2001). Leonard (1976) argues that in colonial India female gynaecologists and physicians were required to attend female patients and that led to the admission of girls to medical schools rather than any desire to make them independent or emancipated. Female education and employment are part of modern value systems and have some similar characteristics. For instance, education up to Bachelors for urban middle-class women is an important prerequisite to finding a good marriage alliance and employment to ensure their basic financial survival. In addition, however, their education is also preparing women to compete in the neoliberal marketplace. The interweaving of modern and traditional values has resulted in middle-class women carrying both traditional and modern gender roles in a novel manner in contemporary India, demonstrating that gender roles are socially constructed to meet contemporary needs, and are not static. Educated women who enter the workforce, after child bearing, often demonstrate this by continuing to prioritise their families' needs while juggling their employment commitments. They find ways of maintaining both their family ties and their employment responsibilities (Belliappa, 2013),

Increasing rates of female literacy and employment cannot be solely equated to achieving autonomy or individualism in India. Modernity also cannot not be simply understood as progressive, generating equality or liberating, but a modern process of change that suits the contemporary nature of society. The interaction of contemporary and traditional practices has led to the alteration and reproduction of elements of social structures with gender inequality being redefined. Male domination of women remains a lived experience; what differs is the nature of domination. At the same time, a few improvements in women's status are also evident where they have access to education which provides them with access to different resources and make them capable of sustaining themselves financially. It is argued that education in India is leading towards modernity (Inkeles & Smith, 1974, cited in Deshpande, 2003, p.74) and female

education and female employment in paid sectors are modern discourses (Heward, 1999, p.1) with the central aim of altering women's subordinate position. Surprisingly, the increase in female literacy rate and subsequent increased employment have resulted in a strong demand by the brides' families to find suitable grooms for the young brides. Educated grooms are valued highly and considered to be a good catch in the market. This paradoxically, leads to increased demands for dowry for the educated and employed bride's family to pay (Dalmia & Lawrence, 2005; Munshi, 2012). Dowry practice has not only increased significantly, it is now rapidly spreading in those areas and communities where it was not prevalent before or where bride price was practised (Agnihotri, 2003; Anderson, 2003; Self & Grabowski, 2009; Srinivasan & Lee 2004). Women are now entitled to inherit their parents' and grandparents' property, but dowry now seems to be a price for a good match, rather than a compensation or a form of financial support unlike to prior times. Previously dowry was practiced by the high caste as a form of financial support for daughters as women were restricted from working outside or as form of compensation given that daughters were not allowed to inherit property like their brothers (Dalmia & Lawrence, 2005, p.73; Srinivasan & Lee 2004).

Another development of modernity in India is the entrance of consumerism into the spiritual sphere. Worldwide, the popular view of India is that of a spiritual country and in popular discourses spirituality is often articulated to be traditional. However, the way it is meeting the middle-classes' contemporary needs is based on a modern Western consumerist model (Carrette & King, 2005; Veer, 2014). Spirituality in India is directly connected to the nationalist movement and plays a key role in understanding Indian modernity (Veer, 2014, p.48). There is no single equivalent term for spirituality even in Sanskrit, the most ancient Indian language (Veer, 2014, p.35). Brosius (2010) in her book *India's Middle Class: New Forms of Urban Leisure, Consumption, and Prosperity*, focuses on the transformation of consumption models in neoliberal India. She specially focuses on Delhi in regards to religion and spirituality among the urban Indian middle class. Brosius argues that India continues to remain religious and spiritual in a modern way, and that urban middle class Indians aspire towards a flexible and easy-to-apply spirituality which is being redefined to make it compatible with the modern lifestyle. For example, modern media technology is used to spread spiritual messages among the younger generation and the new middle-class showing that consumerism has permeated every aspect of urban middle class life. Reproduction is one of the most important spheres of urban middle-class

life where technology has made its prominent presence. The replacement of female infanticide by foeticide thanks to technology, the mushrooming of private sex-determination clinics, and the use of education to meet patriarchal needs, all illuminate the web of today's consumerism-commercialisation where modernity incorporates both development and patriarchy.

Modern small family norm and female foeticide

India has a collective culture[26] where relationships and family values play a crucial role in determining social behaviour (Guess, 2004; Konsky et al. 1999). Collective culture could be understood as a culture where socialisation from birth onwards consists of being "integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups" (Hofstede, 1991, p.51) where parents continue to play a key role in their children's upbringing, career and married lives. Although nuclear families with their small family size, have recorded a progressive increase in urban areas (Chadda & Debb, 2013) according to the National Family Health Survey 2005, urban middle-class collective values have not been eroded as discussed in the Introduction. A small family norm is often linked to female foeticide because couples want to be modern by aspiring to achieve consumerist family goals, but by having at least one son. Son-preference is based on collective values as parents expect sons to provide them old-age care support as daughters continue to join their husbands' families after their marriage.

Further, different traces of collective values are evident in small urban middle-class families. By having small families people are able to achieve their dreams for their children by delivering them quality English medium education, private schooling and quality upbringing to their children (Basu & Desai, n.d). The children in these families are highly advantaged and have a consumerist mind set (Basu & Desai, n.d; Lenka & Vandana, 2015). There is a rising impulse of buying increased spending among Indian children from financially well off families and small family sizes (Singh & Kaur, 2011; Lenka & Vandana, 2015). Despite this, Indian children in middle and upper class families are financially dependent on their parents till their adulthood (Lenka & Vandana, 2015)

However, what appears to be a contemporary development of the increasingly popular small family norm in India, actually has a long history which can be traced back to the colonial period.

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[26] My participants were situated in collective settings and collective values played key roles in influencing their decision-making. The analysis chapters shed light on this phenomenon in depth.

Family planning was a matter of concern even during the British period. The idea of planned parenthood was first initiated in colonial India to improve the quality of life among the educated and urban sections of society (Shah, 1998). The first family planning clinic was opened in Poona, Maharashtra in 1923 and in 1930 Mysore, a state in Karnataka, South India, was the first to start government-sponsored family planning clinics (Visaria et al, 2004).

The Indian National Congress Party during the colonial period made the link between family planning and economic development for the nation and individuals (Shah, 1998). These policies gave increased impetus to limiting family size among the urban upper and middle-class population (Shah, 1998), and large families were viewed as a burden on women and the nation. Western educated urban Indian men and women were the primary benefactors of the family planning policies (Visaria & Ved, 2016). Prior to Indian Independence nationalists were concerned with an overpopulation problem and wanted to adopt measures for its control to aid the country's development (Viasaria & Ved, 2016). The educated and the elite were involved in the initial family planning campaign. Female middle-class Indian feminists such as Sarojni Naidu, Lakshmi Menon, and Rani Laxmibai Rajwade were advocates of birth control and associated it with nationalist and feminist development (Nadkarni, 2014). Women activists in the 1930s started participating in the public fertility discussion and supported the use of contraception in the context of nation building and to improve female and infant health (Chatterjee & Riley, 2001). National development, the prospect of a better life, and women and infant's health still remain the main focus of the government's programme. Family planning for economic and national development appealed to the urban elite. Couples were encouraged to use birth control to preserve maternal and infant health which linked "nationalism and traditionalism to an image of modern India" (Schoen, 2005, p.352).

After Independence in 1947 family planning became an integral part of the development plans of the country and steps were taken during the first five-year plan (1951-56) to promote demographic attitudinal studies in order to gather some basic information regarding knowledge and attitudes towards family planning among the people. During the second five-year plan (1956-61) a few centres were opened to impart training in family planning and a small beginning was made to promulgate family planning through mass media. The use of contraceptives and sterilization was approved by the government as a family planning method. It was recommended

that there should be at least one family planning centre for a population of 80,000 in rural areas, and one for every 50,000 people in urban areas.

The move towards legalising abortion had several strands. In 1965 a United Nations' mission evaluating India's population policy recommended legalizing abortion. The Shantilal Shah Committee had been appointed by the Indian government in 1964 to study and report about the rise in illegal abortions. On the basis of the committee's report, submitted in 1966, the Indian Parliament approved the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act 1971. It is noteworthy that the impetus to legalize abortion was suggested by the West as a way to curb increasing population in India and not over concerns for women's rights and wellbeing.

Abortion has been practised in India since antiquity, but abortion as a woman's right is a modern concept. Unlike the West, the legalization of abortion was part of population control imperatives rather than a result of feminist struggle and politics (Mazumdar, 1999; Menon, 2004). By 1971 abortions were already legalised in India, but abortion was not considered a woman's right at that time (Mazumdar, 1999). Most of the supplies of contraception came from abroad (Basu, 2005). Government sponsored programmes and private clinics like Marie Stopes, explicitly advocated the use of abortion as a way of controlling population (Chhachhi & Satyamala, 1983). In addition to abortion, the use of contraceptives, vasectomy, and tubectomy and other means of scientific and technological birth control were also made widely available in order to curb the growing population. The primary focus of government programmes was to stabilise the population through the use of such methods to promote economic development leaving the morality of abortion generally unquestioned because of widespread poverty (Menon, 2004), and the desire to meet the small family norm.

Throughout these processes family planning was not promoted on the basis of women's autonomy (Ramusack, 1989). Although the government's programme and measures were pro-poor, family limitation did not become popular among the working class since children were viewed as a source of income. Most of the advertisements were written in English which working class and the illiterate would not understand (Chatterjee & Riley, 2001). The programmes largely had an urban middle-class orientation where the lifestyle depicted was neither completely traditional nor completely Western (Chatterjee & Riley, 2001). As family planning was not widely accepted by working people the government introduced incentives for

sterilisation. The State also imposed targets that medical officials needed to meet (Schoen, 2005). Later this turned into aggressive forced sterilisation.

It is important to note that practices and policies that do not challenge the social division of gendered labour are the safest for those proposing them (Moser, 1989). For example, it is often argued that the forced sterilisation of men[27] in India in 1977 was one of the key reasons for the defeat of Indira Gandhi's government (Bandarage, 1998, p. 75). On the other hand, family planning policies and programmes where women remain the primary participators are the safest to launch and have high success rates in India because the gendered division of labour is envisaged as natural. Any changes in this division are deemed to be a severe threat to feminine and masculine gender identity (Moser, 1993, p.43).

Family planning came to be associated with development and in the 1980s family planning became an integral part of development (Chatterjee & Riley, 2001). Nadkarni observed that "Development is not just about developing nations into fully modern entities, it is also about developing people into fully modern subjects" (Nadkarni, 2014, p16). This is borne out when, thanks to family planning couples can have a modern and developed life style in conjunction with a small family as a small family is a means to prosperity within the modern capitalist economy. The idea of family planning to enable women to enter the workforce was imported from the West but its modernity was domesticated. Patriarchal gender roles and collective family values were never challenged in the family planning programmes (Chatterjee & Riley, 2001). Women as mothers are associated with nationalism, however, the role of mothers remains unchallenged. It was modified so that, having a small family to aid the nation's development, procuring a better life for their children and creating less of a burden for themselves (Schoen, 2005), became part of the small family norm. Both tradition and development of the modern nation state were affirmed which resulted in family planning becoming a success among the urban middle-class. In addition, the legalisation of abortion inadvertently allowed couples to use ultrasound for the purpose of sex-selective abortions. The reproductive technologies were used to serve consumerist patriarchal desires as discussed in the earlier section. In 1975, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) initiated experiments in using amniocentesis for detecting

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[27] In a patriarchal country like India where the idea of masculinity is embedded in men's reproductive capabilities sterilisation is deemed a threat to patriarchal structures.

foetal abnormalities. Interestingly the use of amniocentesis to obtain the sex of the embryo spread rapidly. The technology was first used by an eminent scientist from the AIIMS, New Delhi (Jain, 2006). Scientists justified the need for sex determination tests by claiming they were for the treatment of sex-specific diseases, although it has since degenerated to being used in conjunction with abortion to produce sons. A doctor at the institute involved in genetic research into sex-specific diseases had obtained access to this technology, and was offering clinical services to certain patients. To her horror, she discovered that in most cases couples aborted the foetus as soon as they learnt it was female even without any evidence of genetic disorder. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) directed the AIIMS to stop offering clinical services, and limited the use of the amniocentesis technique for research purposes through an order (Jain, 2006). However, this did not prevent the use of the technique for sex-selection purposes. In 1982, Professor Lotika Sarkar picked up a handbill being distributed in railway compartments by a clinic in Amritsar, Punjab, offering amniocentesis tests to expectant parents with (no mention of genetic disorders). The arguments in the handbill claimed to offer clinical services for sex-selective abortions stating that the birth of a daughter was a threat to the family, economy and to the nation (Jain, 2006). This reflects on the popular culture of son-preference, and how it was connected to national development to which the middle-class identifies. The National Women's Organization condemned the use of these tests for sex-selective abortions and recommended that they be permitted only at teaching and research institutions for the purpose of preventing genetic diseases. The resolutions were conveyed to the Health Ministry by the Joint Secretary in charge of the Women's Bureau, and it brought forth loud condemnations of the foeticide practice from the union health minister (Mazumdar, 1999). A campaign against the practice of pre-natal sex determination was launched by women's groups as well as by civil liberties and health movements, with an aim of controlling and regulating the misuse of technology to ascertain the sex of the foetus which then led to sex-selective abortions.

However, in addition to the Act there have also been many ground-up initiatives to curb the problem. There were many widespread campaigns in communities against sex selective abortions even after the implementation of the law. More than 250 religious leaders including the Archbishop of Delhi, Shankracharya of Kanchi, Abdullaha Bukhari, the former Chief Minister of Delhi, Sheila Dikshit and Health Minister A K Walia discussed ways of ending practices of female foeticide on 26th June 2001 in New Delhi. 'Akal Takhat' leader Joginder Singh Vedanti

issued a hukumnama (order) condemning the practice of female foeticide and people guilty of practising this should be outcaste from the religion (Alhuwalia, 2001; Singh, 2001; Yadava et al, n.d., p. 102).

Further governments have also made initiatives to increase daughters' status. The Haryana government launched the Laadli scheme on 28th August 2005 and later extended it to 2015-16 (Nanda, n.d.) but the Delhi government did not adopt this policy until 2008. Laadli means pampered or loved girl. This scheme aims to protect the girl child whilst increasing girls' enrolment in schools and to counter truancy. The programme also empowers women economically by providing money and socially via education. The states have different eligibility criteria. In Delhi parents with an income less than 1 Lakh rupees a year are entitled to register under this scheme. Only two girls from a family can be the beneficiaries under this scheme. The girl child is entitled to 10,000 or 11,000 rupees at the birth (10,000 rupees if the delivery took place at home; 11,000 rupees if it was an institutional delivery) and then 5,000 rupees when admitted to classes I, VI, IX, X and XII. The money will be deposited in a bank account in the name of the beneficiary child who will be entitled to Rupees 1 Lakh at the age of 18 provided the beneficiary passes class XII (Nanda, n.d.).

In Haryana, annual income is not a criterion; however, the scheme is not popular among the urban population and upper classes (Nanda, n.d.). The scheme applies to two daughters in a family who are studying at a school and who have a proper immunization record (Nanda, n.d.). Rupees 5,000 per year is given to parents on the birth of a second daughter born on or after 20th August 2005 provided that there is at least one live biological sister of the second girl child (Nanda, n.d.). Moreover, even if the family is receiving any other benefit under a scheme such as Balika Samridhi Yojna, the parents are still entitled to be a beneficiary under the Laadli scheme.

Schemes like Laadli are focused on working class and economically deprived people and the chances are very low that the elite and middle-class who are reported to be the primary population that practise female foeticide will access these schemes (Ahlawat, 2013). However, there was a social media campaign to increase the status of daughters to which high, middle and urban-middle class people related #selfiewithdaughters. This campaign was publicised on Twitter by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and this campaign and its relevance is elaborated on in Chapter Six.

Son-preference and the small family norm are both quite popular among the educated urban middle-class. Son-preference remains important at the micro level in a desire to be looked after in old age. The interaction of small family with son-preference has resulted in a skewed sex ratio forcing the state to take measures at both the macro and micro level to curb the problem. These schemes to improve the situation have been only partially successful. This interaction of small family and son-preference is a highlight of modern consumer aspirations, traditional patriarchal and collective values, in a nutshell features of urban middle-class modernity in India.

Family planning: A PGN and SGN for urban middle class women

In general terms, the women's empowerment approach addresses the various experiences of being a woman in different socio-cultural settings. This experience is specific to one's cultural history and social and cultural structures (Moser, 1989). For example, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), a network of Southern feminists, provides various development alternatives to Southern women according to their specific regional needs. They demonstrate that women living in Southern countries have different needs and challenges to women living elsewhere. For example, at the time of DAWN's inception African women's lives were affected by the food crisis in Africa, Latin American women's lives were affected by debt, and poverty in the South Asian countries and the militarization of the Pacific Islands affected the lives of women living there (Sen & Grown, 1985). Moreover, women in the South not only face social and economic problems but they also have the pressure of organising the family and communities in any kind of social disruption.

The different experiences of Southern women from those of Western women encouraged Southern feminists to introduce a model of women's empowerment which is different from that of Western feminism. The women's empowerment model was introduced in the South during the 1980s to improve gender relations and eliminate gender inequality. There is no universally accepted definition of women's empowerment but efforts to transform social structures by altering gender relations, structural inequality and patriarchal dominance are an important component of it. Women's empowerment is a process of making women capable of accessing material, human, social, and intellectual resources, gaining control over decision making, altering structural inequalities, self-reliance (as no one can empower you), and changing the patriarchal

ideology (Batliwala, 1994). It is important to note that women need to empower themselves and this cannot be done from outside (Sen & Batliwala, 2000, p.19).

Similar to focusing on culturally specific requirements for women's empowerment model, Maxine Molyneux (1984) introduced the model of gender needs for development planners. She argued that women in different societies are situated differently according to their class and ethnicity and it is impossible to generalise about their needs. However, women tend to have certain common interests by virtue of their gender, and these common interests are called gender needs. Molyneux discusses two forms of gender needs, strategic gender needs (SGN) and practical gender needs (PGN) to address the needs of women in the third world (Moser, 1993, p. 37).

SGN demands are seen as feminist demands, and focus on changing women's subordinate position, including issues of power and control (Moser, 1993, p. 39). SGN require women to overcome their subordination to men and relate to women's empowerment as they involve challenging traditional patriarchal structures (Taylor, 1999).

These needs are aimed towards emancipating women by altering their subordinate position in areas such as gaining control over one's body (Moser, 1993). Molyneux (1984) argues for the need for [the]

> abolition of the sexual division of labour, the alleviation of burden of domestic labour and childcare, the removal of institutionalised forms of discrimination, the establishment of political equality, freedom of choice over childbearing, and the adoption of adequate measures against male violence and control over women (Molyneux, 1984, p. 62).

SGN challenges male domination and aims to alter unequal gender relations (Bhasin, 2003). This eventually leads to women's empowerment by changing women's social positioning.

PGN, on the other hand, are identified by women within their socially subordinated roles (Molyneux, 1984, p.63). These needs do not challenge the gender division of labour or women's subordination although these needs arise out of this division and subordination (Molyneux, 1984), and are a response to immediate necessities within a specific context (Moser, 1993, p.40). These needs may improve women's condition and aid them in carrying out their current gender roles effectively and efficiently, but necessarily do not alter their subordinate position nor do they challenge power relations (Bhasin, 2003). Water provision, health care, and employment are a few examples of PGN (Moser, 1993, p.40) which help women to carry out their regular chores

efficiently, but will not necessarily help women to challenge gender hierarchy. The majority of gender development programmes focus on PGN as they address women's concerns without challenging the traditional sexual division of labour, such as women's roles of mothers and wives (Moser, 1989).

Originally, PGN and SGN were introduced in the context of working class women since they play a triple role: community-managing work, productive work (secondary earner women in rural areas are involved in agricultural work and women in the urban area are working in the public sector or self-employment) and reproductive work (child bearing and rearing) (Moser, 1993). Class and socio-cultural settings influence women's SGN and PGN (Molyneux, 1984; Wiegers, 2008), and urban middle-class women are largely involved in productive work to support their families and reproductive work as they give immense priority to their families (Radhakrishnan, 2009). Rural working-class women might need to resolve water issues, fodder issues and their labour work for their daily survival whereas an urban middle-class woman needs to be educated to find a good job and/or to get a good marriage alliance and/or to teach her children. Therefore, middle-class women will have different SGN and PGN compared to working-class women. Even though my research will discuss the lives of advantaged urban middle-class women it cannot be denied that this group of women also have their challenges, and questions of access to jobs and education cannot equate to having no gender needs or gender equality (Belliappa, 2013). In this thesis PGN and SGN are discussed in relation to urban middle-class women and their family building and planning strategies.

The welfare approach in 1950-70 aimed to bring third world women into development as efficient mothers. Women entered into the development debate through reproductive issues (Nadkarni, 2014). This approach recognised the PGN of women within their reproductive roles through family planning (ILO, n.d.). Family planning in India is argued to be a PGN because it was introduced for population control rather than reproductive rights or as part of a framework of choice (Visaria & Ved, 2016). With modern capitalist changes women were encouraged by the state to be involved in development by entering paid jobs and achieving a high level of education in addition to the domestic and child-care work they traditionally do. In order to meet these objects family planning served as an important medium for urban middle-class women.

With changing attitudes towards women's education and their participation in the paid employment sector small families would help middle-class women to participate in paid work (Visaria & Ved, 2016). Working-class women play three roles, and women from financially well off families were earlier limited to carrying out only the reproductive role. As discussed earlier, in contemporary times urban middle-class women in North India have become economically active, and now they play a double role: reproductive and productive (Dutt & Sill, 2014). Because of these dual roles the burden on women has increased and is gradually resulting in reorganisation of the traditional structure at the socio-cultural level. In this scenario, a smaller family will help women juggle the work pressure better giving quality time to children and family (Dutt & Sill, 2014). In addition to their new roles household work and family care continue to be a social obligation for urban middle-class women (Dutt & Sill, 2014). Even if they are not doing physical household labour it is their responsibility to ensure smooth functioning of the household (Dutt & Sill, 2014).

At first glance it seems that family planning does not meet women's SGN as it does not challenge women's subordination. Small families were advocated to enable women to become better mothers but their roles were not challenged, even when they entered the paid workforce. Women were encouraged to use the contraception of their choice which would enable them to join the paid workforce, pursue their career and education choices since a small family requires less time than a large family. Women have been aided to meet PGN for their basic survival but they are also provided with an opportunity to meet SGN by being economically independent, able to practise control over their sexuality and body this has subsequently led to transforming the traditional gendered division of labour (Moser, 1993).

In this way PGN and SGN are interactive as achieving one need helps women to achieve other needs. This is the approach I am adopting in this thesis for urban middle-class women. Many feminist scholars have highlighted the link between PGN and SGN (Datta, 2006, Disney, 2008; Moser, 1993; Taylor, 1999). PGN and SGN can also be fluid as addressing one can help in achieving other (Moser, 1993; Taylor, 1999). This helps women in challenging patriarchal authority over some aspects of their lives.

In the family planning context, along with the introduction of population policies in modern capitalist society women have more reproductive choices such as abortion, contraception, and

motherhood. It is of significance that the small family norm was not forced on Indian women like China's one-child policy. Urban middle-class women are the main adopters of small family size as these policies and programmes have alleviated women's domestic chore burden and the reproductive work of childbearing and rearing which aids women's continued participation in the paid work force. Middle-class women's new gender roles such as educating their children while working in the paid sector, the increase in nuclear families, and daughters receiving education are long-term results of family planning in the process of modernisation. Through family planning women are able to negotiate new roles and their traditional roles got modified in the process of modernisation.

The idea that fertility control and population stabilization are prerequisites for women's empowerment and reproductive freedom was transplanted from the North to the South (Bandarage, 1998, p.6). Women's empowerment and reproductive freedom remain central objectives in various family planning programmes run by the Indian government and myriad NGOs. Most of the health services provided in public hospitals or by NGOs are free or at very low cost and are widely available to the poor sections of society (Visarai et al, 2016) to encourage the poor to practise family planning and to enhance their ability to look after their reproductive health. On the other hand, urban middle-class tend to resort to the private health sector to access any form of family planning or reproductive health services (Donner, 2004; Souter, 2008). This difference is mainly because of the greater purchasing capacity of the urban middle-class, and is a way to maintain social status. Urban middle-class women also adhere to state-run family planning goals by accessing private health services.

In addition, fertility control is widely expected to achieve gender equality and better reproductive health and child health for Indian women (Bandarage, 1998, p. 53). Although, these population policy programmes claim to empower women and promise socio-economic progress, multiple scholars and feminists have criticised these policies as women's bodies remain central targets in these programmes (Bandarage,1998; Unnithan-Kumar, 2005a). Petchesky (2003) argues that feminists advocate for women's control over their reproduction and sexuality so they can be free from abuse while practising the right to control their bodies. She further proposes that women "must be treated as principal actors and decision makers over their fertility and sexuality – as the ends and not the means of health, population and development programmes" (p.228). Similarly,

Shiva (1994) criticises the consensus of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 1994 arguing that it leads to the disempowerment of women rather than their empowerment. It is important to highlight that ICPD was also a landmark conference since issues around women's empowerment, reproductive health and rights were discussed (Simon-Kumar, 2006). As a result of this conference the Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare reformulated its family planning programme by introducing the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) programme in 1995 in order to provide quality services.

The RCH programme was launched by the Indian state with the following aims: safe motherhood, family planning services, child survival, reproductive tract/ sexually transmitted infections, safe abortions, use of 'Manual Vacuum Aspirator' for safe abortions, and other issues of women's sexual health. Simon-Kumar (2003) appreciates the gender sensitive nature of the RCH programme but highlights the poor implementation of the policy, emphasising the issue of women's bodies as the primary targets of these programmes (p.81-82). The importance of men's responsible sexual behaviour such as using contraception is not paid attention. Moreover, motherhood remains the central dominant ideology for married women in the programmes due to which different sexual and reproductive issues of adolescent girls largely remain ignored (Simon-Kumar, 2003). This highlights a major gap in the programme as there has been a constant rise in teenage abortions in India. A study conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research found that 17% of 1.4 million teenage abortions in developing countries happened in India (Kohli, 2008). This suggests that these policies have had mixed impacts on women's lives.

Therefore, if we follow a rigid distinction between PGN and SGN it could be argued that these policies merely address PGN since the need to employ these technologies and practices are identified by women within their socially subordinated roles[28], such as, performing their traditional gender roles of a good wife and a good mother, especially a son's mother, effectively and efficiently.

On the other hand, if PGN and SGN are viewed as fluid categories then it is understandable that these policies have addressed both PGN and SGN. Thanks to small family size women can perform their new and traditional gender roles efficiently and are in a better bargaining position

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[28] Women do perform and participate in these practices as they understand the importance of being a mother and having a son within the Indian context.

to access resources and make their decisions. Furthermore, women also have an opportunity now to regulate their fertility and bodies within collective and patriarchal settings. The move from large families to small families illuminates a major change within the social structure where women's capabilities are no longer confined to producing a large family. Thus, social structures have been altered and have provided more alternatives for women. At the same time, while women are making their reproductive choices, societal structures are being renegotiated. This helps explain the popularity of these programmes as a constant decline in fertility rate since the1970s, especially in the last three decades, has been recorded (Ram, 2012, p.22).

Family planning has helped urban middle-class women to achieve several milestones in regards to their sexual and reproductive health, for example, ability to control their sexuality, reproduction, and to regulate the spacing between children (Basu, 2005). Family planning programmes in India have empowered women and enabled them to make decisions regarding reproductive issues using different available resources, such as contraception. Family planning methods are crucial to women's empowerment. In some developing countries women are still denied the basic liberty to make independent choices. For instance, the use of certain family planning methods is prohibited within many countries, or women require their husbands' approval prior to using those methods (UNFPA, n.d.). In India women do not experience this patriarchal authority over their choices at a public level. Thus, in spite of several limitations, the advantages of these programmes for women's empowerment, especially among urban Indian middle-class women cannot be completely discarded.

Conclusion

There are several factors in urban India that define middle-class such as income, buying capacity, education, family unit, collective values and female respectability. Neoliberalism broke the hegemony of the old middle-class and led to the expansion of this group to people with different religions, castes and social status. Further neoliberal reforms have also increased consumerism which is not only related to the nation's development but also is an important way for middle-class to gain cultural capital. All these changes are an important aspect of contemporary modernity in urban India.

Modernisation in different societies is played out in different ways. Urban middle-class in the wake of the neo-liberal economy is playing a vital role in shaping modernisation and bringing

social changes. The complex web of interaction is evident while studying the urban middle-class in India exemplifying that contemporary urban modernity in India is distinctive from Western modernity.

In the light of multiple modernities PGN and SGN can be understood as an important concept to study urban middle-class women's practical and strategic needs. The neoliberal reforms have increased work pressure and social expectations of women where they are carrying both traditional gender roles and new gender roles. Urban middle-class women's role is no longer confined to reproductive work as they have vital presence in public sectors mainly through their paid employment and increased mobility. Middle-class women have their own distinctive needs and their better economic conditions in comparison to poorer women do not mean that they do not have any challenges. Women, while addressing their PGN, are also able to meet their SGN which means that SGN and PGN are quite fluid and interrelated in the case of urban middle-class women. This sheds light on the multiple modernities concept because both performing traditional gender roles and challenging gender hierarchy and inequality are closely linked in the case of urban middle-class women. For instance, in order to perform domestic chores (PGN) women might practice complete control over their fertility (SGN) as a small family means less domestic and child-care responsibility and it is easier to perform domestic and child-care work efficiently, and it is not a complete erosion of collective family values.

Multiple modernities illustrates that in India both modern and some aspects of traditional are complexly interrelated, where structures are being revisited, reshaped and redefined. Structures are transformed according to contemporary needs of the society where liberation, progress, equality, inequality, patriarchy and suppression all exist simultaneously.

Chapter 3: Conceptual framework

This chapter discusses some of the theories which I have incorporated into my analysis chapters such as concepts of capital, field and habitus provided by Bourdieu. I will then examine issues of agency, structure and culture and how they are interlinked using Hays' (1994) model. I have used Kabeer's concept of three inter-related dimensions: resources, agency and achievements to explain women's decision-making process. Further I will explain how structure, agency and culture are interrelated, and how this interrelation can be applied to examine women's empowerment and transformation and the reproduction of social structures. I will argue that agency is complex and is influenced by various socio-cultural variables such as class, gender and socio-cultural practices all of which shape the ability of individuals or groups to make choices.

After considering these theories, I will locate them within the Indian context with a specific focus on urban middle class northern Indian women. This will give a clear idea how these theories have been incorporated into the data analysis. I will build feminist links with Bourdieu's work .Various feminist scholars such as Mishra (2011), Thapan (2009), Radhakrishnan (2009), Lawler (2000) and Skeggs (1997) have used Bourdieu's theories for feminist class-based analysis. I will also provide a definition of women's agency used in this research.

Bourdieu: Different forms of capital

Bourdieu discusses four types of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986)[29]. These capitals are accumulated through labour (Bourdieu, 1986, p.46). Labour in this context can be understood as including social work or action, such as practising a socio-cultural belief or gaining and/or providing educational opportunities to children that will help in accumulating economic capital. Bourdieu's use of the term 'capital' is much broader than monetary gain and he employs the term 'capital' in the wider system of socio-cultural exchanges. He insists that capital cannot be limited only to economic gains, such as material forms of wealth like income, property, and other financial assets that indicate one's financial class and status. He argues that capital is also accumulated through social, cultural and symbolic gains (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu asserted that cultural habits and dispositions help in accumulating symbolic profits, and can be monopolized by individuals and groups; and, under appropriate conditions,

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[29] Bourdieu's concept of capital: economic, social, cultural and symbolic are discussed in depth in Chapter Seven where I use the concept of capital for analysis purposes.

they can be transmitted from one generation to the next (Lareau & Weininger 2003). Bourdieu explained that beyond economic capital, cultural habits and dispositions play a crucial role in determining one's class and status (1986).

Economic capital

Economic capital refers to monetary gain in the form of wealth, income, assets, and property and also includes the participants' material comforts and economic investments that they made for a better future for their children. Economic capital determines one's class and status in society, and is an important requirement in neoliberal economy where one must position oneself as a part of consumer based economy. My participants' financial status allowed them to become part of a major consumer group in the neoliberal economy, and allowed them to organise big weddings, and access to the private health sector for reproductive technologies to manage their family size to ensure their reproductive health and to practice son-preference. Furthermore, different forms of support from children, mainly sons who were able to use their economic assets, also helped the participants to gain prestige, honour, and recognition within their networks and families (Kumar, 2011; Thapan, 2001).

Cultural capital

Cultural capital includes forms of knowledge of different cultural practices, education, intellect, knowledge of religion, traditional rituals and customs which indicates one's class and status, and simultaneously provides status within their networks (Weininger & Annette, 2007). Educational achievements may lead to the accumulation of institutionalised cultural capital for the participants. Educated children are more likely to have secure financial lives by having access to good and highly paid jobs.

Cultural capital is acquired within one's socio-cultural settings and class, and it exists in three states: embodied, objectified, and institutionalised (Bourdieu, 1986, p.48). The embodied state refers to long-lasting dispositions such as knowledge of cultural values, cultural practices, traditional rituals, and gender roles. In the objectified state, cultural capital exists in the form of cultural goods such as books, paintings, and instruments (Bourdieu, 1986). Another form of cultural capital is institutionalised capital. An example of this is educational qualifications or academic credentials. Education helped my participants and their children compete in a

neoliberal global economy. Therefore, one can convert institutionalised capital into economic capital by gaining highly paid employment.

Embodied cultural capital cannot be transmitted directly from one generation to another. Rather different forms of knowledge of practices, rituals and gender roles are acquired through the process of socialisation within one's socio-cultural settings. "Embodied capital enacts values and tendencies socialized from one's cultural history that literally become part of the individual" (Pazzaglia & Margolis, 2008, p.185). In regards to this thesis embodied cultural capital could be understood as a set of learnt class and gendered social values, such as being caring and supportive parents, having supportive and caring children, performing certain socio-cultural rituals such as festivals, funeral rites, and having knowledge of cultural values and practising them.

Social capital

Bourdieu viewed social capital as a resource within one's social networks that is used by social actors to achieve their interests and to position themselves (Ihlen, 2005). Social capital signifies having good networks, social connections, relationships, and support from family, friends, and acquaintances, strong bonding, and love between siblings. All these enhance the quality of people's lives at different levels such as professional, social, and individual (Bezanson, 2006).

Some studies such as Coleman (1988), Parcel & Pennell (2012), Winter (2000) have also drawn attention to the accumulation of social capital within family settings, especially children's socialisation. Therefore, in light of the collective nature of the Indian families researched in this thesis, having good, strong, and supportive relationships between siblings, parents and children, and within their extended families and networks, could be understood as social capital.

Symbolic capital

Economic, cultural and social capital further lead to the accumulation of symbolic capital. Symbolic capital could be understood as the prestige, honour, and reputation that people gain once all their valuable assets get legitimised within their socio-cultural settings (Bourdieu, 1986). Swartz extends this to include attention and personal authority and refers to the available resources that provide social positioning and recognition to individuals and groups within a society (Swartz, 2012). Symbolic capital "functions as an authoritative embodiment of cultural

value" (Swartz, 2012, p. 648). It is a socially constructed process (Bourdieu, 1986) which leads to a common understanding and shared beliefs of "valued, legitimate, valid and useful" resources or practices within a society (Doherty & Dickmann, 2009, p. 303). Symbolic capital brings cultural advantages and reproduces the fundamental structure of inequality and hierarchy where some acquire prestige in comparison to others. It is enhanced by economic, cultural and social capital.

The participants acquired symbolic capital within their class-based social networks such as families and social acquaintances. In this thesis having a son, caring children, being loving and self-sacrificing parents, small family size and female education also helped the participants to accumulate symbolic capital. These processes confer social status, prestige and honour to the urban Indian middle class as they often signify symbolic capital for the whole family, although primarily women benefit from them.

Thus, different social structures such as class and gender "provide the relations in which capitals come to be organized and valued" (Skeggs, 1997, p.9). This recognition of capital happens with a particular culture whereby a person gains symbolic capital within their socio-cultural setting. Furthermore, symbolic capital is gendered and class based, for example, among the urban middle-class in India. Being educated and professional while upholding certain traditional family values helps women gain symbolic capital (Radhakrishnan, 2009).

Habitus

Bourdieu's concept of habitus explains that social structures such as class, gender, sexuality and race contribute to habitus (Lawler, 2000). Bourdieu developed the concept of habitus in his book *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977). Through this concept he drew connections between agency and structure and expanded on how actors determine their action according to their socio-cultural settings. In simple terms, it could be understood as a "socialized subjectivity" where socially learnt dispositions are acquired through everyday practices (Meisenhelder, 2006). These dispositions are in turn internalized, generative and durable; in other words, they shape social actions (Meisenhelder, 2006). Some aspects of habitus are shared by all the members of society and others are confined to groups with similar interests or struggles and typically derive from class (Meisenhelder, 2006), while others are quite specific to the social experience of the individual.

Habitus is constituted in people's practices, and lived experiences that affect their dispositions based on different social aspects such as class (Bourdieu, 1974). Some aspects of socially learnt dispositions and skills are shared by all the members of social groups, and some are extended to individuals with common early experiences owing to similar locations, such as class (Meisenhelder, 2006) and/or gender. Habitus demonstrates that the meanings of cultural values and rituals are "located in a set of class-based predispositions that are fostered and reinforced in the experiences and opportunities that women encounter in their daily lives" (Talukdar, 2014, p.142). For instance, for urban middle class Indian women multiple modernities may be an important and paradoxical aspect of their lives. They are highly educated high earners and they might practice female foeticide.

> "The individuals born into a particular historical society incorporate that society into their habitus through their practice with the social world in which they live, think and act. Everything that is passed down and incorporated within them, they carry on, change and vary…" (Krais, 2006, p.129).

However, changes in socialised norms can influence structures of participants' class-based habitus because habitus is not fixed and permanent, and can be changed over a long historical period (Navarro, 2006, p.16). This signifies that habitus is an "*open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences" where modification of structures also happens (Thapan, 2009, p.7). That is, agency can also influence structure and bring social transformations.

Field

Field is an important concept introduced by Bourdieu. Different forms of capital, as discussed earlier, play a vital role in determining the different social positioning of different social actors in different fields. Swartz (2010) explains field as:

> Fields denote arenas of production, circulation, and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate and monopolize these different kinds of capital. Fields may be thought as structured spaces that are organized around specific types and combinations of capital. (Swartz, 2010, p.46).

This suggests that fields are structured systems in which different social actors are located at different social positions, and are struggling to achieve and retain dominant positions through achieving different forms of capital. Fields are sites of practice where networks of interdependency, competition and power are at play and this aids in maintaining the hierarchy which means people possess subordinate or dominant positions within a field. This hierarchy is

maintained by them through their acquisition of capital within their class-based habitus (Bourdieu, 1984 & 1985) since capital is both gendered and class-based. "[A]capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.101).

Using Bourdieu's capital, habitus and field in feminist studies

Bourdieu is often criticised by feminist researchers for not paying special attention to gender and feminist issues in his work. However, since the 1990s Indian, Western and other feminist writers have started using his work to analyse class issues from a feminist perspective. This includes women's bargaining strategies, prestige and honour (Moi, 1991; Radhakrishnan, 2009; Skeggs, 1997, Thapan 2009). Gender and class inequalities can be analysed and understood by studying everyday practices (Moi 1991). Feminist researchers have used Bourdieu's work to fit their own analysis. Moi in this regards gives an idea of appropriation and she mentioned that Bourdieu's theories should be critically analysed so that scholars can use it for feminist analysis (Moi 1991, p.1017).

Bourdieu's work did not deal extensively with gender issues, however, in his works such as *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972), *Logic of Practice* (1980), *Masculine Domination* (2001) Bourdieu focused on gender inequality, gender hierarchy, and gender differences. Bourdieu's work about the Kabyle in Algeria explains how different gendered practices bring different forms of capital. Women, by performing gender roles, can gain cultural and symbolic capital whereas men can gain cultural and symbolic capital by adhering to masculine norms, which indicates that capital is gendered. Lovell (2000) has argued that women are capital bearing objects rather than capital accumulating objects, they often accumulate symbolic and cultural capital for their families by having a happy and united family and by adhering to notions of female respectability (Radhakrishnan, 2009; Thapan, 2009). Bourdieu's work provides a broad platform for feminists to engage with his theories as he challenges the essentialist construction of the category of women and talks of the possibility of social transformation. He also defines gender relations as socially constructed (Moi 1991) which provides a space for feminists from different parts of the world to employ his theories according to the particular sample of women being studied.

Bourdieu's work has also been useful for feminists to conduct a class-based analysis. Class is "structural" and "involves institutionalization of capitals which implies that capital plays a vital

role in class formation (Skeggs, 1997, p.94). Skeggs (2004) argues that while Bourdieu has not taken up a feminist agenda his work "has been particularly useful for enabling feminists to put the issue of class back onto the feminist agenda" (p.20). Bourdieu's model of capital allows space for women within class analysis, by theorising social class as an integral component of gendered identity (Reay 1998). Further Bourdieu's model of cultural capital is also beneficial to study class from a gendered perspective in a neoliberal society. For example, McCall (1992) states Bourdieu's concept of capital is "a powerfully elaborate conceptual framework for understanding the role of gender in the social relations of modern capitalist society" (1992, p.837). Feminists have used Bourdieu's theories flexibly to suit their work be it class analysis, sexuality, female respectability or managing family and gender relationships in a neoliberal capitalist society (Skeggs, 1997; Radhakrishnan, 2009; Thapan, 2009).

Bourdieu himself mentioned that his theories are flexible (Bourdieu & Waquant, 1992). Moi (1991) argues for the strength of Bourdieu's work. She states:

> For a feminist another great advantage of Bourdieu's micro theoretical approach is that it allows us to incorporate the most mundane details of everyday life in our analysis. It *is* possible to link the humdrum details of everyday life to a more general social analysis of power (pp. 1019–20).

Bourdieu theorised capital, field and habitus as concepts interpreting social life and different forms of hierarchy operating within the social arena. McNay (1999) claims that habitus is an important aspect of socialisation and an important place to study gender, including hierarchy, inequalities and roles and class, as they are learnt through socialisation. The concept also illustrates how, by operating within certain norms in class-based habitus, women gain cultural capital. Cultural capital has become very important for feminism as women are viewed as carriers of cultural traditions.

The concepts of habitus, field and capital provided useful tools to discuss daily practices of urban middle-class Indians, and how women adhered to notions of respectability within their settings (Mishra, 2011; Radhakrishnan, 2009; Thapan, 2009). For example, Mishra (2011) in her study of middle-class women employed in call-centres uses Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus. She highlights the relevance of Bourdieu's work when she states that "Taken together, the notions of habitus, capital and social field help us to understand the agency of women in the construction of their own identities on the basis of their changing lived experiences" (Mishra, 2011, p.44). These concepts applied to those of my participants who negotiated within their

families using a variety of strategies to secure a satisfactory outcome for themselves. Thapan (2004) has also used habitus in the context of urban middle-class women within rapidly changing Indian society. She explains that historical and social conditions and family socialisation play an important role in shaping the habitus. It is important to keep this in mind within a collective society where historical practices and modern discourses are influencing women's habitus. Thapan (2004) further argues that "Bourdieu's notion of habitus is critical for understanding the influence of structures in shaping our decisions as well as our response to them" (p.412).

Bourdieu's work provides insightful analytical tools for my research. Within a highly collective and patriarchal society the engagement of women's resistance and submission to social structures cannot be ignored. Concepts of habitus, field and capital allow me to explore the old and new dilemmas participants faced.

Field, capital and habitus within the Indian context

In this thesis, based on my participants' accounts, I will discuss two types of fields: domestic and social[30]. Both of these fields are highly patriarchal and people are closely connected to each other because of collective values. The domestic field includes participants' personal family lives, and their relationships with their children. Men head the families, and sons are considered more important than daughters. Sons can support their parents and sisters in different ways, such as old-age care or protection, whereas daughters will live with their husbands' families after marriage. For these reasons men as brothers, husbands, and fathers hold the dominant positions of supporters and protectors. They are considered to be physically and emotionally strong. Women are believed to be subordinate and vulnerable, emotionally and physically weaker, and in need of protection and support. However, in some cases a power shift is possible when a woman can take a dominant position in the absence of a potential patriarch. If there is no son, for example, a daughter might support or protect her parents in old-age and accumulate cultural and symbolic capital. This demonstrates that gendered roles are not static and can change based on the accumulation of capital. Unfortunately, if parents have no child to care for them then they are unable to accumulate any form of capital in the domestic field in this context.

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[30] Chapter Seven will discuss field in depth.

In contrast to the domestic field, the social field denotes social positioning of participants in the wider community. In this field participants are in constant interaction within their social networks, and the details of their lives are not completely private. People are under constant scrutiny from different members of the field. In the social field the knowledge of cultural rituals and their practice play an important role in accumulating cultural, social and symbolic capital. Men play a vital role in performing different social cultural events. For example, funerals in India are a social event in which different people participate. Performing funeral rituals for parents by sons is a significant way of accumulating social, cultural and symbolic capital. Women can also perform rituals in this field, usually in cases where there is no son, but women performing the same rituals and ceremonies will confer capital on their parents as well. Yet this is not valued to the same extent as when sons perform the rituals because of the traditional gendered division of labour which expects men to perform funeral rituals.

It is important to note that domestic and social fields are closely interconnected. For example, where the participants in my research did not have a son, but had educated and/or professionally well-established daughters they were able to accumulate capital in both fields[31] through their daughters. These daughters supported their parents financially and socially and would perform funeral rites, but it is possible that people are not able to accumulate as much legitimate gendered capital in both fields as if they had a son. Legitimate capital here refers to the social, economic, cultural and symbolic resources which are socio-culturally sanctioned as appropriate as per to different rules of different fields. Capitals are valued differently in different fields. Because fields are a "a competitive system of social relations which functions according to its own specific logic or rules" (Moi 1991, p.1020-1021). For example, in India among the urban middle-class women's higher education is greatly valued in academic, professional and social fields (Mishra, 2011). But in the domestic field taking care of family and looking after the family members is valued. Similarly, a caring son in domestic and social fields will be valued more than having a supportive and caring daughter because of traditional socio-cultural patriarchal norms.

Receiving support from daughters will not affect the benefits that parents are receiving, but can affect their positioning within their social networks. Similarly, if, unknown to many people, a son does not treat his parents well at a personal level, but continues to act as an ideal son in

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[31] This is phenomenon will be extensively discussed in Chapter Seven.

public, for instance, by performing funeral rituals, the participants and their families will be able to accumulate cultural and symbolic capital. Outsiders believed that the participant and their family had healthy and strong relationships with each other within their networks. Many participants referred to this. This signifies that different fields require different socio-cultural skills for social actors to acquire different forms of capital in order to maintain their position in the hierarchical settings. Different fields have their own rules, and these rules define who is at the higher position and who is at the lower position in the field (DiGiorgio, 2009). Therefore, among the middle-class those who are dominant in their society do not achieve this merely through possession of economic capital. Their dominance is also maintained through cultural, social, and symbolic capital.

I argue that the four capitals are socially constructed, organised and valued through processes which embody gender and class relations within specific cultural settings. For example, gender roles and practices are socially constructed in various ways among different classes in different cultures. In some patriarchal communities daughters are valued more highly than sons and having a daughter brings symbolic, cultural and economic capital for the family. Traditional prostitution, for instance, is practised among the Banchara, Rajnat Dommara and Bedia tribes of Madhya Pradesh, India (Agrawal, 2014; Pradeep, n.d.), but frowned upon in other regions of India. Lack of education, poverty, and marginalisation of these tribes by higher classes and castes led to the continuation of traditional prostitution practices[32] (Agrawal 2014). This makes a girl child more valuable in these communities as women are the primary earners,[33] in addition to the household chores they perform. Furthermore, in some matrilineal societies of India such as in Meghalya, there is a strong daughter preference, which in some cases might result in higher fertility rates than if the family only had sons (Narzary & Sharma, 2013). Traditionally son-preference[34] is far more widespread than daughter-preference in India as men are deemed to be the primary earners and caretakers of their family. The birth of sons reduces the birth rate, and the birth of daughters increases the fertility rate because often women get pregnant multiple times in in attempts to produce a son (Alfano, 2013, p.2). Educated and professional women

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[32] Women from these tribes perform prostitution primarily for the rich landlords of their villages.

[33] Hindi serial "Phir Hogi Subah" on Zee TV was based on the story of a girl from the Bedia tribe who did not want to practise traditional prostitution. She was criticised for bringing shame to the family by not following the tradition and not being a good role model for her younger sisters.

[34] Son-preference is the dominant theme of all the analysis chapters.

from middle and upper classes often have better access to and knowledge of, different reproductive technologies which they can access to maintain small family size and gender composition.

As a result, urban middle-class usually have small families (one or two children), and provide quality education for those children (Basu & Desai, n.d.; Gupta, 2010, p.192). In contrast, the working class in India generally have large families due to lack of knowledge about family planning and also because children offer a source of income through child labour (Arokiasamy, 2009; Traeger, 2011, p.87). These children are usually deprived of an education and are either employed in housework (especially girls) or are put into the child labour force (especially boys) (Bhasin, 2003, p.13). Hence, financial class and educational status play a crucial role in determining access to different resources which help people to control different spheres of their lives such as regulating fertility.

Drawing on this connection of class and access to resources and knowledge of modern reproductive technologies, Beck-Gernsheim (1995)[35] argues that such technologies are "socially biased" where educated and middle class women remain at an advantage as they have better access to reproductive services (p.26). Urban middle-class women often use modern reproductive technologies such as ultrasound, contraceptives, and medical termination of pregnancy to manage their family size and to practice son-preference (Gupta, 2000). This interaction between small family size and son-preference has been discussed in different studies (Jain, 2006, p.55; Unnithan-Kumar, 2010). Family planning in India has become the norm these days among the urban middle-class which motivates couples to plan their family size and is often accompanied by decisions to achieve the desired sex-composition through the help of reproductive technologies. The preference for small families in India is seen as increasing the number of female foeticide cases as couples want their offspring to include at least one son (Unnithan-Kumar, 2010) and is an important way of gaining symbolic capital nowadays.

It is important to mention that the interconnection between son-preference and the small family norm among the urban middle-class is a contemporary phenomenon. For example, prior to the enactment of the Female Infanticide Act 1870 the British government in India discovered some

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[35] Beck-Gernsheim draws her discussion on middle class and educated women's access to pre-natal diagnosis, rather than women from marginalized groups (women of colour or working class women).

villages in the Gujarat peninsular and the North-Western provinces without a single daughter (Croll, 2000; Vishwanath, 2001). Female infanticide was widely practised to manage gender composition within families in certain parts of India in this period in contrast to the more usual prevalence of large family sizes throughout India. Having only sons helped the families to gain cultural, economic and symbolic capital. As families with a son would receive dowry, have old-age support and a family heir who would perform the funeral ritual.

Similarly, son-preference and small family size, create symbolic capital in different contexts for urban middle-class couples, especially women's experience of motherhood[36] in contemporary times. I will first briefly examine the process of how having a son is a matter of symbolic capital for women then I will address the issue of small family.

In India married couples tend to gain symbolic capital through their fertility: childbirth removes "the stigma of barrenness of a couple, especially that of a wife" (Kapoor, 2007, p.233). A delay in pregnancy after marriage often leads to worries and embarrassment (Croll, 2000, p.92). Biological reproduction is said to be influenced by different socio-cultural processes in order to acquire symbolic capital (Köverová 2010, p.27). Motherhood is seen more as an integral aspect of a woman's fertility than a social construction. Terms like 'barren', 'unlucky' and 'unfortunate' are used to stigmatise women in cases where they are unable to reproduce. These terms position them as unworthy, unwanted and useless. In addition, son-preference and small family size (usually two children), among the middle class are the crucial fertility behaviours that confer symbolic capital upon couples and bestow social worthiness on motherhood.

The birth of a son is deemed indispensable to making motherhood meaningful. Being a son's mother led to women's greater control over household resources and participation in decision making (Kabeer, 1999). The status and happiness of married Indian women in their affinal families often depends on their ability to produce sons (Visaria, 2003). Furthermore, it is a common experience in India that parents often face humiliation and taunts if they only have daughters. A son carries symbolic capital especially in patriarchal societies where women's status is associated with her ability to produce sons. On the other hand, daughters are usually socially viewed as burdensome because of the need to protect their virginity until they are

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[36] I have already discussed the social importance of motherhood in India for women in Chapter One and Chapter Two.

married as they are considered to be 'paraya dhan', that is they belong to their husbands' family (Jain, 2006, p.17; Sen, 2009).

The other important way to gain symbolic capital for women is to achieve the small family norm[37] which is a modern fertility behaviour. This behaviour is also influenced by the state's family planning programmes with popular slogans like "Hum do humare do," (A family of two children is ideal), and "One is fun," which means a one child family means less burden for parents. Despite the son-preference, families do not prefer large families with sons only (John et al, 2008). Societal aspirations are more easily achieved in a small family as having fewer children allows parents a greater possibility for investment in their education which helps parents to gain symbolic, cultural and economic capital. For example, by providing English medium schooling and private tuition children are able to compete in the neoliberal market (Basu & Desai, n.d.).

Female education is important for urban middle-class families to gain prestige and recognition in society (Basu & Desai, n.d.). Education allows women to secure good jobs; therefore, education provides symbolic, cultural and economic capital. But, women often use this education to gain further cultural and symbolic capital by having small families. It is often argued that in developing countries like India educated women have a lower fertility rate than the illiterate women (Basu, 2002; Croll, 2000, p.18). For example, the World Bank, in the year 1995, identified women's education as central to its welfare programmes to lift poverty, empower women in making their own decisions, and as a way to curb family size in the context of population explosion (Heward, 1999). Small family size often reflects the educational background of the couples or women at a social level as it suggests they are capable of planning their families effectively and intelligently. This explains why women's education reduces the fertility rate (Sen & Batliwala, 2000). Furthermore, it is often argued that educated women are more likely to practise son-preference using reproductive technologies (Indian Census, 2011; Sharma et al, 2007) because they are more capable of achieving their reproductive interests. Ironically, in doing so they reproduce patriarchal structures. Different factors such as having caring children, especially a caring son, being caring parents, small family size, and providing education to children are some of the factors that help women to gain different forms of capital

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[37] This is analysed in depth in Chapter Six.

within different fields. In this process women both reproduce and transform structures which is discussed below through Hays' (1994) model of transformative and reproductive agency.

Hays: Reproductive agency: Transforming and reproducing social structures

Hays (1994) in her article *'Structure and Agency and the Sticky Problem of Culture'* criticised the contrast between structure and agency saying that structure is neither merely collective, constraining and static nor agency is merely individual, freedom and active (p.57). Hays explains that while using structure and agency as contrast terms one neglects the interconnection between them, and focus is only laid on structure's constraining effects and not on the empowering aspects of structure. Similarly, limiting agency to individual choice is problematic. Hays further states that the link between agency and structure is an "antagonistic and mutually dependent relationship" (p.65). Social actors, while practising their agency create, recreate and transform social structures (Hays, 1994, p.62). Hays further argues that:

> Since social life is fundamentally structured, the choices made by agents usually tend to reproduce those structures. That reproduction process, however, is never fully stable or absolute and, under particular circumstances, the structured choices that agents make can have a more or less transformative impact on the nature of structures themselves. (Hays, 1994, p.65).

This means structure is both constraining and enabling and people through their choices are capable of both reproducing and transforming structures. Therefore, agency is both structurally reproductive and structurally transformative as structure and agency shape each other[38]. Transformation and reproduction were discussed above in relation to women practising son-preference, accepting a complete family with daughters, and regulating fertility which might involve challenging patriarchal authority over their bodies.

Choices are always socially shaped (Hays, 1994, p.64) and choices of creation, recreation and transformation are made within women's available cultural settings. In her work, Hays (1994) sheds light on the complex interaction of structure, agency, and culture. People make choices within given cultural settings, and these choices may in turn transform and/or reproduce social structures. She then redefines the concepts of structure, agency and culture to highlight that they are interrelated and none is more influential than another. Instead they interact and shape each

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[38] I have also used the same term *reproductive agency* when referring to women's reproductive decision making process. But here it is discussed in relation to the reproduction of social structures. The use of this term in this thesis is contextual since it refers to both the reproducing of structures and making choices around reproduction regarding abortions and motherhood.

other. Hays further argues the need to consider culture as a social structure, both the product and producer of human interaction. In this regards Hays mentions:

> Culture is a social, durable, layered pattern of cognitive and normative systems that are at once material and ideal, objective and subjective, embodied in artefacts and embedded in behaviour, passed about in interaction, internalized in personalities, and externalized in institutions. Culture is both the product of human interaction and the producer of certain forms of human interaction. Culture is both constraining and enabling. Culture is a social structure with an underlying logic of its own. (Hays, 1994, p.65).

Further, Hays (1994) focuses on two elements of culture which are interconnected (p.65): "systems of social relations" and "systems of social meanings". The system of social relations refers to a "pattern of roles, relationships, and forms of domination" which further creates sets of categories such as "class, gender, race, education." (Hays, 1994, p.65). The system of social meanings refers to the beliefs and values of social groups, their languages, forms of knowledge, rituals and so on (p.65). It is important to understand that women practise their reproductive agency within particular social settings, where systems of social relations and social meanings play an important role in influencing their decision-making process. For example, as mentioned earlier urban middle-class educated women in patriarchal settings may practice son-preference using ultrasound or traditional practices because they have knowledge and access to these resources. During this process they would generally consult with their husbands and other family members because collective values prevail in such circumstances. However, structures and systems of social relations and systems of social meanings are also influenced in the process of reproductive decision making, and this will be shown below in my analysis chapters.

Further it is important to mention that Hays in her work discussed the concept of transformative agency in regards to women from lower socio-economic conditions. However, Hays work has been used by different researchers of women's responses to hierarchical relations. For example, Hays concept of interplay between structure, agency and culture has been employed to study different gender issues such as a Black feminist perspective (Sule, 2008) and to study practice of son-preference in India (Larsen, 2011). Larsen (2011) in her work studied the practice of son-preference in eight villages of Himachal Pradesh, India. She finds contradiction in contemporary practices around son-preference because traditional socio-cultural norms still maintain dominance of son-preference. At the same time, socio-economic changes have increased the values of daughters and is leading to gradual challenge of son-preference practice. In her study,

Larsen (2011) employs the concept of Hays briefly while examining decision-making of couples to explain the continuation and transformation of structures in relation to son-preference. She argues that structure is both enabling and constraining and people through their decisions both transform and reproduce the practice of son-preference within their cultural settings. This transformation and reproduction can be linked to the concept of multiple modernities, discussed in Chapter Two, as interaction of modern tradition is evident in regards to son-preference and increasing status of daughters in urban India. Similar to Larsen I have employed the concept of Hays' structure, agency and culture to study son-preference, gender relations, family building strategies, rituals and knowledge based on class structures, but in urban India among the middle-class.

Kabeer: Women's agency within the Indian context

This thesis examines women's agency in relation to their bargaining strategies of negotiation and resistance while making decisions within patriarchal and collective settings. In order to understand bargaining strategies and decision making process I have employed the concept of three inter-related dimensions: resources, agency and achievements. These were discussed by Kabeer (1999) in her article *Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment.* Access to resources is the first dimension and one of the crucial components for empowerment[39] within the decision-making process, and is a necessary precondition for women to be able to challenge patriarchal ideology. Resources include the access that women have to different material, social and human resources within their socio-cultural environment (Kabeer, 1999). Material resources could be understood as access to safe contraception, abortion, and maternity services which I discuss in Chapter Six. However, this thesis will focus on access to social and human resources[40] in the form of the family support participants received from husbands and mothers-in-law. This family support has assisted them in making their choices, and also alleviated their work burden both at the professional and domestic levels.

The second dimension is agency. Kabeer (1999) explained the second dimension as negotiation, resistance, subversion, manipulation and deception. Similar ideas of agency are also discussed by

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[39] Women's empowerment has been discussed in Chapter Two.
[40] Access to social and human resources has also been discussed in Chapter Six.

other feminist scholars (Kandiyoti, 1988; Unnithan-Kumar, 2005b & 2010). In my research, I will illustrate that women practise their agency in similar ways. Further I will examine how women use and develop their strategies of negotiation, manipulation, and resistance while accessing their social and human resources such as support from their husband, mother-in-law and children.

I have employed three concepts theories to analyse women's resistance and negotiating strategies, namely covert and overt resistance (Agarwal, 1994; Thapan, 2009) bargaining with patriarchy (Kandiyoti, 1988), and benevolent patriarchy (Roald, 2013). These concepts add nuance to the concept of agency. Agarwal and Thapan explains how women in India resist at a covert level in their families as they might not always prefer to openly resist against their families. Kandiyoti explores some mechanics of how women bargain within patriarchy while Roald analyses the hidden power dimensions of seemingly benevolent patriarchy.

Resistance can also be performed covertly. For instance, Scott (1985) in his book, *Weapons of the Weak,* based on his work in a Malaysian village, noted that disadvantaged groups resisted even in the most oppressive conditions. This resistance could be expressed through passive noncompliance, manipulation, deception, evasion, ignoring, and so forth. Similarly, feminist studies have also mentioned women resisting secretly, for example, women on the Indian subcontinent often practise their choices secretly from their husbands or in-laws (Agarwal, 1994; Thapan, 2009). Agarwal (1994) argues that absence of overt protest does not mean "an absence of questioning inequality" (Agarwal, 1994, p. 431). And, regardless of whether resistance is covert or overt it provides women with a feeling of self-worth (Thapan, 2009, p.162). Moreover, "Both silence and words can be a means of resistance and protest" for women will not always show their resistance openly (Agarwal, 1994, p.427). Within their habitus women would have certain social practices which reflect the ideals of gender roles (Krais, 2006), therefore, the class-based predispositions of maintaining family image and harmony often prevent women from resisting overtly. Habitus is also a generative structure and allows for the possibility for change, and these changes are the product of everyday practices (Thapan, 2001). Through their covert choices women are able to transform patriarchal structures in a culturally appropriate way, and would feel empowered once they have made their choice.

Deniz Kandiyoti (1988) in her article *Bargaining with Patriarchy* highlighted that under patriarchy women strategize their choices within patriarchal constraints. She called these constraints 'patriarchal bargains' where women maximise benefits within an oppressive system. She also highlights how women can be oppressed by social constructs and what they find unappealing or appealing in the face of oppression. A "patriarchal bargaining framework, highlights the issue of agency as women strive to achieve their goals within the constraints of family and culture" (Chaudhuri et al, 2014, p.141).

Benevolent patriarchy, on the other hand, portrays men as loving, self-sacrificing[41], and benevolent protectors, and women as dependents (Kilmartin, 2015; Roald, 2013). Male power is disguised under cover of love, care and virtue, but is no less powerful than dominating power (Kilmartin, 2015; Roald, 2013). For instance, Roald (2013) has discussed benevolent patriarchy in the context of Muslim husbands and wives and polygamy. In her work she has focused on the image of young Muslim boys and Muslim men who protect women within their families and network. Men claim this act of benevolence as their social duty towards women who need to be protected because of their lower status in society. Benevolent patriarchy sustains the idea that women are in need of men's protection as they are incompetent to take care of themselves. And, if women behave with deference men will use their dominance to protect them and not to hurt them (Kilmartin, 2015). Benevolent patriarchy is reproduced in everyday practices in family relations (Kilmartin, 2015) where male family member hold dominance over female members even if men are younger in age than women (Roald, 2013).

This ideology of benevolent patriarchy even if it appears to be benefitting women is based on unequal power and gender relations which supports women's subordinate position. Like Roald (2013) I use the concept of benevolent patriarchy which undergirds women's daily lives within their affinal families to discuss their relations with their husbands, brothers and sons. These concepts covert and over resistance, benevolent patriarchy and bargaining with patriarchy, will illustrate how power and control operate within patriarchal social relationships and how women employ strategies while practising their agency within patriarchal settings.

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[41] The self-sacrificing trait is not exclusive to women, but also applies to men in their different masculine roles.

I argue that women, in the process of negotiation and resistance, tend to transform and reproduce social structures. This could be understood as transformative and reproductive agency[42] as suggested by Hays (1994) and discussed above. Another important point to note here is that agency, structure and culture are interrelated in such a way that they cannot be separated (Hays, 1994). Women's choices in their culture will not only be influenced by social structures: these structures will also be influenced by the choices that women make.

Achievement as outcomes of decisions is the third dimension discussed by Kabeer (1999). I will discuss the outcomes of the decision-making process in relation to women being able to achieve their goals through their decisions. Decision-making is an important indicator of women's empowerment, as discussed in Chapter Two, if women are to transform patriarchal structures through the choices they have made (Batliwala, 2013; Batliwala, 1994; Elliot, 2007; Kabeer, 1999). Transformative agency plays a vital role in women's empowerment. However, empowering themselves might not help women to fully meet their PGN, and while achieving their PGN women might reproduce patriarchal structures.

I will explore the extent to which women are able to empower themselves by transforming or challenging patriarchal ideologies through their decisions despite being unable to meet their interests every time, as discussed in the above section. Negotiation could be understood as women's bargaining skills within the affinal patriarchal settings. Resistance can be understood as women's ability to empower themselves through challenging and transforming patriarchal structures. There are different indicators of women's empowerment such as economic independence, education, living independently, and ability to make decisions (Kabeer, 1999). However, the ability to transform patriarchal structures is the indispensable aspect of women's empowerment. In collective cultures like India women, even in the process of empowering themselves, do not challenge the collective fabric of their societies. For instance, economically independent women do not leave their husbands except in the worse scenarios such as extreme domestic violence. Economically independent women focus on maintaining their family harmony and unit. They do not usually consider living independently from their affinal families

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[42] I have also used the same term reproductive agency while referring to women's reproductive decision making processes. But, here it is discussed in relation to reproduction of social structures. Therefore, the use of this term is contextual.

(Kabeer, 1999). Therefore, empowerment for women is a search for greater equality and not greater independence (Kabeer, 1999).

For the purpose of my research I will define women's agency as a process of decision making in which women practise and develop their bargaining strategies, including both negotiation and resistance within given patriarchal and collective[15] socio-cultural settings in order to meet their interests. In the process women try to accumulate different forms of capital within different fields within their class-based habitus. This leads to the reproduction and/or transformation of different socio-cultural structures in which women attempt to empower themselves despite some failures. Agency includes women's empowerment and different aspects of field, habitus, capital, and transformative and reproductive agency in the light of bargaining strategies within patriarchal and collective settings. This definition also highlights the complex interrelation between agency, structure and culture which will be referred to throughout the analysis process.

Conclusion

This chapter examined different theories such as capital, habitus, field, structure, agency and culture, women's empowerment, bargaining with patriarchy, and benevolent patriarchy that will be expanded in the following analysis chapters. My thesis mainly focuses on women's bargaining skills within the decision-making process. Hays and Bourdieu explain well how gender and class intersect in the process of bargaining where agency, structure and culture are interrelated and influence each other. Habitus explains how certain dispositions are internalised and reproduced. Through this concept, Bourdieu drew connections between agency and class. He also discussed how open systems of dispositions are constantly subjected to experiences. Therefore, modification of structures can also happen which means that agency is both reproductive and transformative as suggested by Hays.

Kabeer's concept of three interrelated dimensions is an important tool to understand women's decision-making at a broader level where their bargaining skills, access to resources and aspirations to achieve desired results are in play. I have explained how women's choices, such as having a son and a small family are largely influenced by socio-cultural factors in order to gain capital within their social settings. Education helps women to achieve these reproductive interests, as they have knowledge of and access to different resources. By having a small family and having a son women adhere to both modern and traditional norms. This suggests that in

contemporary urban settings both traditional patriarchal ideologies and development coexist as discussed in the last chapter.

Further, the process of women's empowerment also needs to be viewed as class-based and influenced by socio-cultural settings. This sheds light on the transformative and reproductive nature of agency which is the very basis of this thesis.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter outlines the different aspects of my research methodology and fieldwork. This is a qualitative study and I conducted semi-structured face to face individual interviews with my participants in 2010 and 2011. I was interested in exploring how social transformation and continuity of social structures in contemporary India has affected urban middle-class women's everyday lives in the context of their reproductive and family lives (mainly in the role of mothers). I initially aimed to carry out a comparative study among the Indian community in New Zealand and Indians in India. However, I later focused my attention solely on Indians in India and did not carry out my study among the Indian community in New Zealand. My information sheet, which was drawn up before the changes, referred to a comparative study with the original thesis title which was later changed because of the change in focus.

My research questions guided me in recruiting my participants, 45 educated married middle-class mothers from the urban areas of Haryana (Yamuna Nagar district) and Delhi, India, found by snowballing technique.

I will begin by discussing my research objects and profiles of my participants. I will then outline my epistemological framework and discuss the combination of two different approaches used in this research: a social-constructionist epistemology and the of interviewing. I will then discuss how the snowballing technique helped me in recruiting participants and building rapport with them. Then I will discuss how as a researcher I was both an insider and outsider which created both opportunities and challenges for me while conducting interviews.

I will discuss how both my participants and I "performed" for each other during the interviews. I will discuss these performances using the concept of front and back stage performances (Goffman, 1959). Moreover, I will highlight the power relations at play, and what implications can result from these interviews for me and my participants. I then discuss the transcribing and analysis process and address reflexivity and intellectual autobiography (Stanley, 1993). I then examine the limitations of my study, and conclude the chapter by suggesting how employing a qualitative approach with an emotional perspective was a beneficial experience for my research.

Research objects

This study explores links between gender, class and agency within modernity among urban middle-class North Indians**.** Married educated urban middle-class women's agency is examined to understand their values, aspirations, and decision-making processes in relation to reproduction and gender issues within a rapidly changing urban modern patriarchal and collective society. An important point to note is that I focussed on class in urban Indian settings because class has been identified as one of the most under theorised areas in analyses of gender and agency in urban areas (Skeggs, 1997). Studying the middle-classes is a significant aid in understanding the social changes of modernising Indian society, as discussed in Chapters One and Two, and urban middle-class women's lives are the most affected by modern neoliberal changes (Belliappa, 2013; Radhakrishnan, 2009). Class in contemporary urban India remains important as people tend to share similar values and practices within their class-groups even if they belong to different castes (Kapadia, 1995). For example, urban middle-class families, irrespective of their caste and religion, would provide quality education for their children (Paik, 2014). Moreover, class plays a vital role in shaping women's reproductive choices in India as discussed in Chapters One and Two (Donner, 2008; Unnithan-Kumar, 2010).

My research involved interviewing educated married urban middle-class female participants from two urban regions Delhi and Yamuna Nagar district. Both Delhi and Haryana are highly patriarchal states with low female child sex ratios, and interestingly both have recorded a gradual increase in the child sex ratio in 2011 census as discussed in Chapter One. As mentioned in the introduction the areas with low female child sex ratios have recorded an increase in female literacy rate. The link between higher female literacy rates and lower female child sex ratios suggests the possibility that educated women may be the major actors and decision makers in son-preference practices. On the other hand, many scholars reject this notion of women being the major actors in son-preference and female foeticide practices. I recruited women who had received at least some form of formal education. Considering the dilemmas of higher and lower female literacy around female child sex ratio, the second preference was given to the women's educational background. I recruited participants from both higher and lower educational level.

The middle-class in India is the group that occupies a space between the aristocracy and the working class, and are often educated professionals, entrepreneurs, and business people (Dwyer,

2000)[43]. In urban areas, middle-class groups are no longer limited to upper-caste Hindus, but consist of people from different religions and castes which was also reflected in my sample as discussed in Chapter Two.

Forty-five participants from an urban middle-class background were recruited through the technique of snowballing: 43 were Hindus and two were Muslims. Despite being from diverse religious backgrounds the Muslim participants shared the same ideas around son-preference, family-size, treatment of their daughters, and gendered perceptions and expectations for their daughters and sons. Religion and caste were not prioritised while recruiting participants as different studies have suggested the prevalence of sex-selection and son-preference exists within different religious communities and caste groups in India (Sharma et al, 2007; Unnithan-Kumar, 2010).

I chose to interview two groups of women: those whose first child was female and those women who had had at least one abortion in their lives; a few fell into both these categories. The contemporary modern notion of the small family[44] limits the number of children, usually no more than two, among the Indian middle class. Because of strong son-preference women having a daughter as their first child are quite likely to receive family and social pressure to procreate again to produce a son. These participants' experiences would explain their negotiation and other strategising they implemented to have a son and simultaneously keep the family size small. Negotiations and strategising around son-preference also helped in examining middle-class values, aspirations and changing gender relations, and the different forms of social pressure they faced while doing so. I also examined how women's reproductive agency when choosing motherhood or abortions was influenced by family relationships with husbands or mothers-in-law or other family members. This thesis will also explain participants' gendered perceptions and expectations for their daughters and sons, and how they treat their daughters.

The fieldwork was completed in two visits to India where the interviews were conducted in 2010 and 2011. The study was approved by the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Canterbury, Aotearoa/New Zealand, prior to fieldwork commencing. In my first visit 22

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[43] For further discussion on middle-class please see Chapter Two.
[44] In Chapter Two I have already discussed the popularity of small family norm among urban middle-class Indians.

participants were recruited and interviewed and in the second visit 23 participants were recruited and interviewed.

Profile of Participants

The table below provides a brief overview of the participants' profiles. It shows their educational background[45]. Some of the participants fitted both requirements for recruitments as they had a daughter first and also an abortion.

Table 2 Participants' educational profile

Primary school	Secondary School	Senior Secondary	Bachelors or Diploma	Post-graduate
3	12	4	6	20

Primary schooling in the table refers to formal school education up to year five. Secondary school means formal education until year ten. The majority of the participants had a post-graduate or a graduate degree.

Table 3 Participants' details on first child, abortions and working status

First child a daughter	Total number of participants who had abortion/s	Currently not Working	Currently Working
33	25	16	29

Among the 45 participants only 16 belong to the non-working group and have never worked in their lives and were housewives. The remaining 29 were doing some form of paid work or were formerly employed in the public sector or private sector in the field of education, law, or medicine, or running their own businesses. It is important to note that the working status shown depicts the employment status of the women during the period when they were interviewed.

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[45] No participant in my study mentioned obtaining a sex-selective abortion.

In regards to the family size the majority of the participants met the modern small-family norm of one or two children. For instance, 30 participants had small families: 19 participants, at the time of interview, had two children. Of these 11 had both a boy and a girl, five had only two sons, and three had only two daughters. Eleven had only one child, a daughter, at the time of interview[46]. The remaining 15 participants had a family of three or more children, both boys and girls.

It is important to mention that all the participants having more than two children themselves mentioned their family size as large. Twenty-one participants lived in a nuclear family, and 24 participants lived in a joint family on a regular basis, at least in some phase of their lives. Joint family is a common term in India to signify a household consisting of more than a couple and their children. Usually the couple live with the husband's parents or unmarried sisters, or married/unmarried brothers and their families. It is important to note that the participants who lived in a nuclear family were visited by their extended family members and they also received different forms of support such as moral support or help in child-rearing from them. This signifies the importance of extended family and collective values in the participants' lives.

Table 4 shows the age group of my participants. All participants were from the age-group of mid-20s and above most were less than 50. They began their reproductive lives from the 1980s or after that, and had access to safe and legal abortions and contraception. Furthermore, they all were aware of the use of ultrasound for sex-detection purposes. Participants who had their children prior to 1994 were able to access ultrasound for sex-detection purpose without facing any legal repercussions since sex-selection was criminalised only after 1994.

Table 4 Details of age-group

Mid 20s	30s	40s	50s	60s
10	12	13	7	3

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[46] There was no family of one child with a son.

Epistemological framework

Epistemology is the nature of knowledge, its justification and methods used to obtain it (Burr, 1995, p. 84). I operated within a social-constructionist epistemology; at the same time, I used the romantic conception of interviewing. At first glance, this approach appears decidedly paradoxical. How could I combine these two approaches: social-constructionism and romantic interviews? I wanted to employ a feminist perspective with interviews built on feminist principles of empathy, minimization of power difference, trust, openness, reflexivity, care and sensitivity (Dickson et al, 2008) and I interviewed women with the aim of collecting and articulating their life experiences (Finch, 1984, p.86). Social-constructionism combined with some aspects of romantic interviewing enabled me to carry out these goals. The interviews were based on constructionist approach, but I used some aspects of romantic approach to build rapport with my participants.

The romantic approach views interviews as a conversation where stories are shared from both sides (Schultze & Avital, 2011). In this approach reality is not "discovered rather interpreted and constructed, and interviews served as a site for the construction of meaning rather than the elicitation of facts" (Schultze & Avital, 2011, p. 4). In contrast, social constructivists reject the idea of a true and authentic self, and I did not aim to apprehend the true or authentic self of the participants through the romantic interviews. They argue that personality exists between people and not within them (Burr, 1995). Burr (1995) explains that a particular emphasis is laid on the notion of the "multiplicity of different selves" each of which are argued to be equally real. She further states:

> But in saying that you have no 'true' self, it does not imply that the selves we inhabit are therefore false. 'True' and 'false' become inappropriate ways of thinking about selfhood. It is possible to say that we have no 'true' self but that we have a number of selves which are equally real. (Burr, 1995; p.29)

Qualitative research often acknowledges the notion of multiple realities and truths (Daly, 2007 cited in Dickson et al. 2008)[47]. In romantic interviews this acknowledgement of multiple-selves is usually missing. The romantic approach is highly recommended in studies conducted from a feminist perspective because they help obtain revelations and disclosures by the interviewees through establishing intimacy and rapport (Brinkmaan, 2013). Indian women are socially

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[47] I will discuss in depth shortly regarding my choice of qualitative research over quantitative.

considered to be emotional and good at building sisterly bonds with other women and this is promoted in romantic interviews. This provided me an opportunity to build rapport with my participants as I am Indian myself. Furthermore, aspects of romantic interviews are appropriate for the Indian community because the acknowledgement and establishment of emotional bonds in India with non-family members is quite common, especially by women[48].

Romantic interviews allowed me to conduct the interviews from a subjective position, where I participated in the co-construction of knowledge (Alvesson, 2011). Romantic interviews help you to be aware of your own subjectivities. I was aware of mine: gender, sexuality, class and my partial insider status, and I do not claim to be objective. I was aware of my own personal assumption that people who believe in gender equality might be lying to me, and the participants will look down at me if I make any disclosure regarding my sexual life as I am unmarried. Because of my middle-class values I am completely aware of female respectability in regards to sex before marriage so I did not pose any direct question on their sexual life as I knew that I would hesitate to share such stories.

As mentioned earlier, many versions of social constructivism advocate the notion of a multiplicity of different selves (Burr, 1995). Erving Goffman (1959) developed a model of impression management model using the concept of front and backstage performances. I have drawn on this model to claim that the participants built multiple-identities using front and backstage performances.

Erving Goffman (1959) in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* explains that people as social actors perform for audiences in order to build particular identities and to create a particular impression. During this the actors indulge in the art of impression management. Front stage indicates a place where a performance is delivered and actions are visible to the audiences; these actions are the part of the performance. Whereas, the back stage offers a space to prepare for the front stage. It is informal and the performer behaves casually. In general, back stage performances are either limited to a very specific number of audience members or to the performer only.

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[48] As an Indian I have a basic knowledge of the culture. I discuss the issue of sharing the membership of the same community later in the chapter, and I explain how I was an insider (only partially not completely).

I would like to suggest that the interview process is a front stage. It was a formal performance and required a lot of impression management as the interview was being recorded. By back stage I am referring to the conversations we had off the record, the chats I had with participants over tea and snacks. However, I understand that there was a further back stage from which I was completely absent.

Impression management was going on during my entire visit, but the level varied. During the interview process the impression management centred on the role of being a participant. Before and after the interview the impression management shifted to the role of warm host. Not a single participant allowed me to leave without having some snacks or drinks. I was delighted to receive such a warm reception from all the participants because it indicated an interest in me and demonstrated that participants were interested in my research.

Snowball sampling and rapport building

Snowball sampling is also known as chain referral sampling. It is a useful and popular recruitment technique as it generates a good number of purposeful participants for the study (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). Snowball sampling is not a novel method and it has been employed as a recruitment technique since the 1960s and before. Both qualitative and quantitative researchers have used snowballing where the former aim to recruit interviewees and the latter to recruit participants for a survey (Cohen & Arieli, 2011, p. 427). The snowball sampling method has been used widely by different researchers in different types of studies, though this technique is highly recommended for sensitive topics (Biernacki & Waldrof, 1981; Cohen & Arieli, 2011, p. 424) such as reproductive issues, reproductive health, son-preference and female foeticide (Collumbien et al, 2012; Mann, 2016).

Lee & Renzetti (1993) define sensitive research as an intimate, discreditable or incriminating topic, which poses a substantial threat to the involved people (p. ix). The areas of son-preference and reproductive decision making touch on legal issues, moral concerns, socio-cultural issues, family issues, every day negotiations and resistance, and sexuality. Therefore, it was likely that it would be an emotionally intense experience for my participants where they would share highly intense and emotional stories. I chose a qualitative approach as it is one of the best ways to examine people's experiences using sensitive research aids and developing rapport with participants (Dickson et al 2008; Liamputtong, 2007). The interviews provided participants with

a safe space to share their stories, as it might be the first opportunity for them to do that (Dickson et al 2008; Lee, 1993).

Considering the sensitivity of the issue, it was indispensable to establish contacts through social networking. Otherwise, it would have been difficult to build contacts. Moreover, it is highly likely that I would have been turned down by the prospective participants if we had not shared any common acquaintances. However, despite these advantages a few potential participants declined to participate in the research.

Being an insider, I used my social networks to recruit participants. Son-preference, female foeticide and abortions are sensitive issues which people usually do not share outside their families and acquaintances. Indian society is highly collective and close knit so it was easy to find participants among my acquaintances through this technique to begin the snowballing process. Some degree of trust is required to initiate contact since I was referred to the participants by their acquaintance or friends it was not difficult for participants to share their life stories with me. The researcher is not a completely unknown stranger to potential participants as she is known throughout the web of acquaintances.

All my acquaintances and social networks were like me, also from the urban middle-class group and they knew of other women from the urban middle-class group who were potential participants. I actively networked with my established contacts to develop new contacts for recruitment purposes. I started by asking my acquaintances whether they would be interested in participating (if applicable) and asking them to spread word of my research within their networks. I easily recruited participants who were willing to share their private and everyday life stories with me. Without snowballing the recruitment process would have been a huge challenge.

Some of the participants offered to participate if they met the criteria whereas some others referred me to their friends who were willing to participate. Cohen and Arieli (2011, p. 429) suggest that snowballing often involves referral through interviewees. I got referrals through interviewees, and some of the participants made the first contact and expressed interest in participating in my study. I did not contact any referred participant directly. I requested that the involved middle person first explain my research to the participant using an information sheet. This was to ensure that participants got a clearer picture of my position and the perspective of the research. I only contacted prospective participants after they confirmed their willingness to

participate. In this way, I tried to respect their confidentiality. In addition, this approach meant that they did not feel obliged to participate; nor did this expose them to me prior to their granting approval to participate.

I was not a complete stranger to interviewees as I was referred by an acquaintance. In some of the cases I was known to their contacts. I explained to the participants prior to the interview that their story would not be shared with anyone, and especially not to the person who referred them. Furthermore, as a precaution I suggested they not discuss their interview experience with anyone if they did not want to.

Considering the sensitivity of the topic I added a reference to a psychologist based in India in my information sheet, who had agreed to assist anyone who wanted to talk further about any issues arising in the interview. The confidentiality issue was highlighted to assure the participants that their privacy would be protected. I explained to them how I would use pseudonyms and would alter any details which could lead to their identification. I have made various changes in any possibly identifying details to ensure that participants' confidentiality remains protected. Since I recruited used the snowballing method, failure to change these details may have rendered some respondents identifiable to others involved in the project. Therefore, when sharing highly confidential and sensitive stories in this thesis I would just refer to them as participants and would not provide anyone even their pseudonym or any changed identification details.

Due to the sensitivity of the topic, I chose one-to-one interviews and a qualitative approach rather than focus groups or quantitative surveys. Since one-to-one interviews can be held privately, it provides a setting that facilitates intimate talk. The complexities of practising reproductive agency and child bearing practices could not be articulated in quantitative research. The majority of participants would not have been able to disclose their personal accounts in front of other people due to shame, vulnerability, and a feeling of exposure. Thus, a lot of privacy was required where their accounts were to be heard. The interviews were semi-structured, conducted in Hindi and usually lasted from 30 minutes to an hour or so. The majority of the interviews were conducted at participants' houses as almost all of them preferred to be interviewed at home. Usually, other family members were present at home, but the interviews were held in a room where only me and the participant were present. Participants' preferences in regards to the venue

and time for the interview were always given priority. Considering the sensitivity of the issue I believed that the stories could be best narrated within participants' comfort zones.

Some of the research questions were as follows:

Could you tell me about a time when you made an important decision of your life?

How long after your marriage did you and your husband decide to have a child?

How are you spacing out your family?

How did you decide which contraception to use?

How did you decide the number of children in your family?

Did you ever have an abortion? If yes, how and why was that decision made?

Did you ever have an ultrasound to detect the sex of the child?

Did you face any kind of pressure to have a son?

What were the different mechanisms you adopted to have a daughter or a son?

Why are sons preferred over daughters?

Do you believe your daughter is your son?

In which ways are daughters are equal to sons?

Can a daughter perform funeral rituals for her parents?

Why is it when women are beaten or when they are tortured for dowry they report it to the police? But, when they are forced or tortured to have a son then they do not report it to police?

These questions provide an idea of the nature of discussion of the interviews. Because of the semi-structured nature of these interviews the questions were not all asked in a uniform manner. Rather the discussion emerged on similar topics in different interviews. Participants' preferences in regards to the venue and time for the interview were always given priority. Considering the sensitivity of the issue I believed that the stories could be best narrated within participants' comfort zones.

All this facilitated the rapport building process with my participants. Rapport building is highly encouraged during the data collection process on a sensitive topic (Dickson et al, 2008; Lee,

1993; Liamputtong, 2007). Romantic style interviews provided the opportunity to further increase bonds by reducing the hierarchical gap (Currie & Kazi, 1987, p. 81) between me and the participants which ensured that the participants felt comfortable while sharing their stories, values, and understandings of different issues and ideas with me.

As the interviews were a one-off encounter I had only a brief period in which to establish bonds with my participants. This rapport building usually happened before or during the formal part of the interviews. By formal interview, I mean when I was recording participants' responses on a digital recorder, and only the participant and me were present on the scene. Sometimes it took place after the interviews, when I shared laughs, experiences and views on different issues with them without recording it on a recorder and asking them any formal questions. Many of the participants were more comfortable sharing their experiences after the interview while we had tea and snacks. For example, one participant narrated the real reason behind having a son, after the interview:

> Neha: You know everyone is jealous of us, how both husband and wife are living happily. My husband is calm and I many times get angry with him. Then he would make me calm and would pamper me. My daughter was once playing with her cousin brother and he bit her. Then I said to my elder sister-in-law that you never scold him for anything. She said "I will not, I will give him whatever he should ask for". Then I said "if he would ask for stars" she said "yes", and then she defied me by showing her thumb pushing it downwards and said "you will not be able to have a son". That really hurt me, pinched me. At festivals like Ahoi (fast for the long life of sons observed by Hindu women in some regions of India) they used to go downstairs and say prayers so that I could not hear any prayers. On Hoi, they would go alone and would never take me with them. Then I told this to my husband and he told me to have patience and that I would not get anything before time. Then we went to Vaishno Devi (a very famous Hindu pilgrimage) where I begged for a son and then I got pregnant and got my son. I was so happy that I could not sleep for two nights. Also, I thought of this because my father-in-law wanted a son. Now, I have told you the real reason that I have a son.

This suggests that rapport building makes a friendly and comfortable environment for the participants to candidly share their everyday experiences with the researcher. However, in some cases it happens gradually by the end of the interview. Moreover, this also highlights the back stage performance of the participants where they shared the humiliation they had to face, and expressed their strong desire to have a son.

The concept of romantic interviews is not unique in feminist studies. However, many feminists have questioned this strategy of developing sisterly bonds (Alvesson, 2011) and the effectiveness of the reciprocity (Cotterill, 1992). On the other hand, some have argued that emotionalist

interviews are built on feminist principles of empathy, minimization of power difference, trust, openness, reflexivity, care and sensitivity (Dickson et al, 2008). Several feminist researchers advocate for in-depth interviews where they can build rapport to gain an understanding of people's experiences. The insider's status of sharing the same gender remains central to these interviews. Finch, for instance, states "there is still an additional dimension when the interviewer is a woman because both parties share a subordinate structural position by virtue of their gender" (1984; p. 66 quoted in Mercer, 2007, p.9). Likewise, Oakley (1981), while conducting her fieldwork used the insider's approach where she shared her own stories and experiences with her participants as a part of the rapport building process.

A level of self-disclosure and reciprocity are crucial for rapport building in a sensitive research (Liamputtong, 2007). Reinharz and Chase (2001) suggest the importance of self-disclosure for female interviewers to establish rapport with their interviewees. Oakley (1981) explains that the sharing builds a rapport by reducing the power imbalance and results in obtaining more in-depth information. In the context of self-disclosure, I often opened the interviews by sharing my own decision making stories. This approach of employing our own personal selves during the interview process, through an active participation via sharing experiences and knowledge eventually leads to long term (Oakley, 1981) and non-hierarchical relationships. Oakley (1999) mentions when a researcher and participants share the same gender this creates a gender script where both perform and work towards construction of femininity.

While suggesting this, Oakley overlooks the issue of cultural settings and marital status; "age, class and status" (Cotterill, 1992, p.600). Deriving from my own experiences of self-disclosure and rapport building I will argue that cultural settings cannot be ignored by a researcher. Cultural and class-based values also pose some restrictions and limitations because of the researcher's social position; especially, when she is not one of them despite sharing the same gender. As discussed earlier, I shared only the common experience of womanhood and class, and not parenthood and married status with my participants.

The level of self-disclosure from the interviewer must be limited due to our own positionality and the given cultural settings. Since, I was only a partial insider I was aware that it would not be appropriate to discuss my sexual experiences because of the cultural and social taboos attached to the sexuality of an unmarried girl in India. I received a few intimate stories, but did not share

mine. In this context Edwards has commented how social characteristics can increase and decrease the sensitivity of the issue: "Researchers need to recognize that their own sex, race and class, and other social characteristics, in interaction with the interviewees' own social characteristics and experiences, can increase or lessen the sensitivity of their research topics" (Edwards, 1993, p. 195). Measor (1985) endorses the view that shared gender affects the researcher and researched relationships; but this is also shaped through different social statuses. As mentioned earlier, my unmarried and childless status raised some issues for me in terms of having rapport with the participants, for example, in relation to a lack of common understanding regarding biological reproductive experiences, social dilemmas while making reproductive choices, personal experiences of being a mother and a wife, and sexual experiences.

At the beginning of this section I emphasised my insider's position[49] which allowed me to make the best use of my established networks. Being an insider and outsider is an omnipresent, crucial, and inescapable part of the interview process (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Nevertheless, the core essence of being a good researcher is to generate an honest, open and interactive interview process, and I was able to do this to a great extent.

Multiple identities: Being an insider and an outsider

There are several models of identity. For the purpose of my research, I view identity as a resource that people "use, do or claim" (Grad & Rojo, 2008, p.5). In a social constructionist perspective, identities are created and maintained through social interactions (Grad & Rojo, 2008). Identity is a two-way construction where people construct their identity, and on the other hand people recognize each other's identity (Paltridge, 2006). People bear multiple identities and different identities are visible or prevalent depending upon the social settings (Paltridge, 2006).

As an interviewer, I was in a complex position, with identities as both an insider and outsider in the various social interactions and settings I took part in during the course of my fieldwork. There are disadvantages and advantages inherent in being a researcher who is both an insider and an outsider. However, no research can capture the entire experiences of the researched and both have their own limitations (Foster, 1994, p. 144).

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[49] Insider position, however partial as discussed earlier.

A researcher is identified as an insider if she belongs to the similar socio-cultural background, speaks the same language, and shares similar experiences (Asselin, 2003) with the researched. These similarities provide the researcher with easy access to participants (Costley et al, 2010, p. 3) and a rapid and largely complete acceptance of the researcher by the participants, since she recognises their specific cultural preferences (Ganga & Scott, 2006). Yet the insider faces challenges as well. Participants have a higher level of awareness in regards to the social division between themselves and the researcher (Ganga & Scott, 2006). This awareness raises greater concerns around the notion of shame, and the fear of being judged by the researcher as the researcher is a member of the same community (Mercer, 2007).

When an outsider attempts to study a population of which he/she is not a member (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) there is a lack of common experiences and knowledge. This raises impediments while recruiting participants and can be a barrier to the researcher achieving complete acceptance by the participants. It also may lead to a lack of understanding of participants' experiences. Paradoxically, being an outsider can lead to an adequate conceptualization of these experiences (Fay, 1996) as fewer issues of shame and comparison arise for the participants. In a nutshell, both scenarios have positive and negative aspects.

In their article *'The Space between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research'* Dwyer and Buckle (2009) reject the idea of a strict divide between an insider's and an outsider's position. They explore the notion of space which allows a researcher to be positioned both as an insider as well as an outsider. Further, they shed light on the researcher's ability to shift between these positions. The researcher may lack similar experiences and ideas; or it may not be feasible to gain access to the participants all the time. This is echoed by various authors: Naples (2003) suggests that outsiders and insiders are not fixed positions and are expressed and experienced differently (p. 49). Deutsch affirms that we all are "multiple insiders and outsiders" (1981; p. 174, as quoted in Mercer, 2007., p. 6); "moving back and forth across different boundaries" (Griffith, 1998, p. 368), "as situations involving different values arise, different statuses are activated and the lines of separation shift" (Merton, 1972, p. 28).

In keeping with the aforementioned argument, I identified myself and was identified by the participants both as an insider and an outsider on different occasions. The shift in my position was typically articulated by the participants during the interview process. I was a partial outsider

as I did not belong to a similar educational background, or caste; nor am I married or a mother. They would often refer to me as an outsider in the context of a mother's and wife's position. The participants explained how I could not understand their emotions, sacrifices and labour pains as I was not a mother and a wife. For instance, Anu said to me "You cannot understand it now because you are not a mother".

Yet, at the same time, they positioned me as an insider (only partially) and mentioned "You know, right? How it goes in our culture and society?" I was a partial insider as I shared the membership of same community; in terms of my gender, class, nationality, and especially as a North Indian. I have knowledge of basic cultural etiquette, class values, and socio-cultural settings - this led to my identification as an insider. It was visible in my greeting and communication style. I, for example, addressed my participants as *bhabi* (sister-in-law) or *didi* (elder sister[50]), or as *Auntie* to the older women. This informal address is quite common within the Indian cultural arena. It often symbolises an emotional bond and respect towards non-family members. Furthermore, most of the participants invited me to their homes which is an essential part of being recognised as an insider by participants (Foster, 1994).

Riessman (1993) states that "the story is being told to particular people; it might have taken a different form if someone else were the listener" (p.11). Hence, a participant's sharing can be proportional to a researcher's position. For instance, if I were a complete insider to them, then it would have been much easier for the participants to share their experiences with me. Often the participants would giggle, or would look at the ceiling, or would lose eye contact, or their body language would change when they shared stories about their sexual lives. This relayed my identity as other quite clearly. Moreover, no participant ever asked any question in regards to my sexuality. Their questions focused on issues around my marriage plans, studies, and career. I accept my status of a partial insider was one of the limitations of my research. Because of this some of the participants found it hard to establish strong empathetic bonds with me. Hence, I faced challenges, as well as enjoying the privileges associated with both positions.

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[50] This was the part of the performances that I delivered. The performance section deals with these issues in depth.

Performances

Interview is a performance, where people provide stories that may or may not be strategically calculated and enacted; however, these stories provide rich data. Interviewees swiftly grasp what a researcher is looking for and perform accordingly in an interview (Collins et al, 2005). The participants were often concerned to know the particular set of information that would be useful for my research. They would ask me whether they had provided the content that I was looking for or not. It was a two-way performance. My participants and I were both performing and building multiple identities within different discourses.

Burr (1995) has emphasised the role of language in the social construction of identity. She further explains that language and thoughts are inseparable and language provides a basis for all thoughts. Paltridge (2006) argues that identity is not natural and it is socially constructed. It is a process; identity is constructed, reconstructed, and expressed in social interactions through the use of discourses. He further argues that particular acts are repeated by the use of gestures and the use of language to manifest a particular identity.

Impression management plays a pivotal role in identity building. It was being practised on both sides of the interview through use of verbal gestures, body language and the particular sets of performances which may or may not be the part of our daily performances. A particular impression is pictured through controlling the verbal gestures the way one wants (Goffman, 1959). For example, the following participant performed herself to be a loving and caring mother who treats her daughters and son equally. This may or may not be the part of her regular front and back stage performance. She at the very beginning of the interview replied:

> Researcher: Could you tell me of a time when you made an important decision of your life?
> Neha: About children and husband?
> Researcher: Yes, about this.
> Neha: I made a decision regarding my children that I do not want to keep any differences between my daughters and son. I have two daughters, and after a long time I had a son. And, I believe all of my three children are equal.

Although Neha strived for years to have a son, throughout her interview she was presenting a particular impression of a woman who believes in equality of boys and girls through her language.

Similar to this participant's account, the narration around the concept of motherhood remained central in other participants' accounts. They often highlighted a mother's sacrifices, her feelings, and her special love towards her children irrespective of their gender.

Gender remained eloquent in the performances. Another set of discussions focused around the issue of womanhood. In this, participants brought up dilemmas around the roles of being a wife, and her dependency and love towards her husband. While narrating their stories, interviewees covered their hesitation, uncertainty, and the seriousness of the issue with a laugh. This was a tool for impression management where the women wanted to reveal only certain expressions before me. Goffman states, "When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them" (1959, p.17). The following extract will illustrate this:

> Kiran: I want to tell my heart feelings (an uncertainty in her sound), [laughter]!
> Researcher: I just want to reaffirm that whatever you will tell me I will not share that with anyone.
> Kiran: I do not know whether he [husband] wants this or not, or he just says that in front of me. I want to live separately. It is not that we have any problems with our in-laws we just want to have our own personal life. We do not get to live independently. We want to see how that experience is. This is what I want, that we live separate. I do not have any problems in living with my parents-in-law, but I do not want to live with my sisters and brothers-in-law. Because living together creates tensions and fights, not physical really, but still a tension remains inside. This is why I want to live separately if I ask him shall we live separately then he asks me, "What problem do you have here?" He is out all the time [at work] he cannot see the problem, and we have to be at home for the whole day. That is why I want to live alone to have peace, [laughter].

In addition, this also suggests that building a safe and confidential environment helped participants sharing their internal feelings, their everyday negotiations, and desires with the researcher. This suggests that the researcher is able to build rapport and gain the trust of the participants.

Another form of performance that was delivered by the participants was performance on behalf of others, for example, on behalf of their family members such as husbands, mothers-in-law, mothers, and community and society. These performances were often elucidated as "we [her family] are not like that", "my husband is very nice", "people are like that", "I do not believe in this, my mother-in-law does", "our neighbours are like this", and "society is like that". Through this, distinctions were being created and people situated themselves at the top of the social hierarchy by claiming to be more modern and open-minded than others.

Participants delivered various performances in modern and traditional discourses congruently and built multiple identities. Blommaert (2005) explains this expression of multiple identities. He mentioned "people can (and do) shift places frequently and delicately and each time, in very minimal ways, express different identities" (p. 224).

These shifts were evident in the back-stage performances, as well. I read tarot cards for some of my participants as a way to thank them for their time. However, I did not offer this to anyone and I read only for those who requested it. I felt obliged and I did not want to say no to anyone. All tarot readings were kept confidential and were not shared with anyone else. I clearly mentioned to my participants that tarot was my hobby and I do not claim to predict 100% accurate future. One of the participants, for instance, during her interview presented herself a strong believer in women's equality. She insisted that she was happy with her daughter and was not keen for a son. Incongruously, she was quite interested in discovering whether she would have a son or not[51]; as this was her first question in the tarot card reading. The possibilities are that she asked this casually. However, she asked this question when the back stage of the interview was opened up.

Despite the casualness and restriction on audiences, performers continue to build multiple identities back stage, where they tend to be their own audience (Goffman, 1959). Thereby, they monitor their own behaviour; due to the concern regarding the invisible audience who might punish them for any deviation. This manner of identity building was expressed by the participants as: "*log kya kahege*" (what people will say), "*samaj kya kahega*" (what society will say), and "I did it because of social pressure so that no one really says anything". At all these levels the presence of an unseen audience was felt by them which affected their decision-making process.

I mentioned earlier that the interviews were a two-way performance where I also performed as an attentive and non-judgemental researcher. However I was not free of judgement making and had various reflexive thoughts. Reflexivity is widely acknowledged by constructionist and feminist researchers (Liamputtong, 2007). The concept of reflexivity largely centres on the notion of subjective involvement of the researcher during the research (Alvesson, 2010, p. 106). It also raises the awareness level of the researcher, that the self affects both the process and the

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[51] Here I am not trying to claim that she does not love her daughter or provide her equal resources as she would have done for a son.

results during analysis (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003) and reporting the work (Alvesson, 2011; Dickson et al, 2008).

Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (2005) highlight the importance of reflexivity during the course of research. They said:

> reflexivity forces us to come to terms not only with our choice of research problem and with those with whom we engage in the research process, but with ourselves and with the multiple identities that represent the fluid self in the research setting (2005; p. 210).

I had my multiple selves in the field, and also built multiple selves during the fieldwork. Initially, I was not aware of my reflexivity and was unaware that it was affecting my reflexive performance. With reflexive performance I am referring to the performance that was only limited to me, and was the product of my assumptions, judgement, habitus and personal scrutiny of participants' responses. Reflexive performance was completely a backstage performance delivered and viewed by me. This performance was guided through reflexive thoughts which were shaped together through the intersection of my class, gender, education status, social location as a researcher and my own personal experiences.

My own judgements were subjective of my own experiences, for example in India son-preference is a dominant practice among urban middle-class. One of the participants, for example, who only had a daughter, was pregnant. She emphasised a lot that despite a lot of social pressure she did not opt for a sex-selective test and would be happy even if she had a daughter. I promptly made the conclusion in my mind that she was performing this for the front stage where I was her audience. Later on I discovered she delivered a daughter. Then I realised that there was a divide between my front and back stage performances. Back stage I was not completely non-judgemental, nor were my thoughts free from subjectivity. However, this performance remained back stage as it was never shared or expressed in front of participants.

Power relations

Power relations are an integral part of the interview process; however, the sharing between the researcher and participant builds a rapport by reducing the power imbalance (Oakley, 1981). The feminist approach aims to generate a non-hierarchical research relationship (Currie & Kazi, 1987, p. 81) between the researchers and the participants.

It is often argued that researchers exercise power over their participants during the research process (Fontes, 1998). Kvale (1996) claims that researchers are more powerfully placed and exercise their power through a warm, empowering and caring attitude which is used as a cover. This traditional view signifies that power "within such a context is constructed as one directional and unitary, stemming from a single source: flowing from the researcher down to the research participant" (Reynolds, 2002, p.300). In fact, power relationships between the researcher and the researched are fluid "as each of them moves to occupy a position of power and authority during interview" (Reynolds, 2002, p.303). For instance, the researcher chooses to ask a specific question, but the interviewees choose what to answer and the extent of information they will provide in their answer (Reynolds, 2002). In this section I will touch on this power shift between the researcher and the researched.

Deriving from my own fieldwork experiences I will argue that my warm, caring and empowering attitude was not merely used as a cover. I was genuinely concerned about the well-being of the participants, and would always ignore sensitive topics which I sensed could raise emotional turbulence for the participants. During the interviews if participants' body language changed while talking of a particular topic, for example if they cried or showed that they were feeling uncomfortable, or their voice became heavy or their eyes became watery I preferred not to continue the discussion on that topic. These caring and warm gestures aided in building bonds with the participants by creating a comfortable and respectful environment. I believe that it provided them with a sense that I was not there merely for gathering data, but I was also concerned for their well-being.

Brinkmann and Kvale (2005) profess the advantageous positions of researchers as they are the ones who decide the questions, topics, and the time to end the interview. However, it is noteworthy to mention that structured or semi-structured interviews do not take away the space for expression from the participants. They can limit or expand their expression's space as per their preferences. For example, some of the participants said "I have nothing more to tell", or "I have to go somewhere", or "I do not have more time". Thus, it was not always me who would terminate the conversation, nor I would always initiate a specific discussion. The power balance could be maintained by not interfering in the participants' expression space. For example, I not only respected the participants' decisions to end the interview; but also stayed back after the

interviews, or talked before the interviews and even during the interviews when they wanted to talk to me.

Despite all the rapport building strategies, power relations exist that are affected by different social structures (Gottfried, 1996 cited in Das, 2010 p. 5). Interviews are "fluid encounters" where power shifts between the researcher and the researched (Cotterill, 1992, p. 53). It is not static and is not confined to one person as mentioned earlier. Once the interviews are over and the data analysis process begins, the researcher regains all the power to choose how to present the data (Miller et al, 2009, p. 283). I agree that power relations do exist, but a balance can be maintained by respecting, caring, and empowering the participants. For instance, I did not contact participants directly (in snowballing) until they had agreed to participate, I had informed them about their rights, and made an appointment, giving preference to their choice of venue and time. I checked back with all participants who requested to see the transcript later. It is important to realise that power relations might exist despite various rapport building strategies. However, it is a researcher's duty to assure a non-hierarchical, respectful and empowering environment for the participants.

Implications for participants and researcher in sensitive research

Sensitive interviewing in qualitative research is emotional work (Dickson et al., 2008) which can lead to a feeling of emotional burden. Therefore, it is quite crucial to address the different emotional issues faced by researchers and participants respectively during fieldwork. This emotional work signifies management of one's own emotions (Hoschild, 1983), and ways to deal with people's emotions (James, 1989, p. 16 cited in Dickson et al, 2008).

The rapport building process led to emotional involvement on my part during the interview process. In terms of emotional involvement, I am not only referring to bonds, but also to several emotional concerns that arose for me. For instance, I wondered: What views did the participants have of me after the interview? Did they think I am not a virgin? Did they think how does she know this much about contraceptives and sexual practices? Did it affect my social status in their eyes? Would they ever like to see me again? In addition, to my own perceptions I was also posed several questions by the interviewees usually at the end of the interview. For example, how did you end up doing a PhD? What are your future goals? Why are you doing your research? How could your parents send you to study all alone?

Often researchers have a specific strategy to deal with their emotional stress such as shopping, keeping a journal, or talking to their supervisors (Goodrum & Keys, 2007) in order to ease this emotional load. However, I did not have any specific strategy. Due to the sensitiveness involved in the issue I was concerned that my presence might disturb the participants. On the other hand, my interviews were one-off encounters (Dickson et al. 2008), so the chances that I would see the researched in the near future were low. I politely rejected the invitation for a lunch by some of the participants. However, none of them avoided me later, or said anything that displayed their disturbance due to my presence.

Implications also arose during the transcribing. The transcribing process can lead to similar emotional implications to a researcher that would happen during the fieldwork (Dickson et al., 2008). The transcribing process was quite nostalgic. This experience of travelling back to the interview venue is often discussed by the researchers in their studies (Birch, 1998). I will not claim that it affected me emotionally, but I did experience living in that time, having the same laughs, being critical about myself and the responses and the questions I did not pose.

Transcribing and analysis

All of the interviews were conducted in Hindi. Transcribing is an excellent way to get familiar with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In my case, it required much more concentration as I had to translate it simultaneously. Initially, I translated word for word from Hindi to English. This translation was not legible enough. The following quote is an example of the word for word translation from one of the interviews:

> Researcher: Could you tell me of a time when you took an important decision in your life?
> Rita: A time when I took a decision.... [thinking pause]. Like to continue my studies Bachelors, Masters, professional course, so in further studies it was my decision. When the time came to get married means match was fine so it was all my decisions.

It was clearly urgent that I make the transcripts legible. Hence, I translated the interviews into fluent English keeping the central ideas and facts the same. The following is the above quote in fluent English:

> Rita: A time when I made a decision... [thinking pause]. Regarding my studies, it was my decision to do Bachelors, Masters, and the professional course. Regarding my marriage, it was also my decision. The alliance was good, so I decided to get married.

The other important issue was to explain the cultural facts and practices. Hence, I have kept the original Hindi words in some places and have explained the meaning in parentheses or in footnotes.

I performed a thematic analysis and used NVivo9 software. NVivo is an analysis software to work with interviews, open-ended survey responses, articles, social media and web content. NVivo serves as an important tool for coding the data by creating categories (Siccama & Penna, 2008). NVivo can organise the data into case files called nodes, and these nodes are then used for coding (Siccama & Penna, 2008). A node is a collection of references about a specific theme. Information is gathered by coding sources such as interviews, focus groups, articles or survey results. For example, while exploring sources (documents, datasets, pictures, video or audio) one could code any content related to abortions at the node *abortions*. Nodes can also be organised in hierarchies moving from general topics at the top (the parent node) to more specific topics (child nodes). Then when the node is open all the references can be seen in one place. All this makes handling data very easy and manageable in an organised way.

Thematic analysis is a relevant method for qualitative inductive inquiry; it helps to locate themes and patterns within the data and describes both implicit and explicit ideas within the data through those themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest et al, 2012). In this analysis, the researcher analyses and reports patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It reports experiences, reality and meanings of the participants' lives, and how these can influence their lives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, using thematic analysis allowed me to observe all these issues around social construction, important social practices and influences of them, especially when this focuses on relations between structure, agency and culture.

Boyatzis (1998) cites thematic analysis as a process to be used with the qualitative method. It is a process that consists of different phases. Braun & Clarke (2006) discuss six phases of thematic analyses which I also followed while conducting the analysis. The first is to get familiar with the data; this happens in the initial phase of reading and transcribing the data. For me the transcribing and translating phase was quite long and required intense concentration, but it led me to become very familiar with the data.

The second phase is coding, and NVivo9 was quite beneficial in this phase. I mainly used NVivo for creating case nodes and then to code them. These nodes were re-read to look for themes. For

instance, under the node, decision making, I had different themes such as abortions, marriage, and use of contraception, among others.

Searching for themes is the third phase. "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82). Different themes emerged while analysing the data: these guided the development of the research.

The fourth phase is reviewing these themes to make sure they tell a convincing story of the data, and the research questions. After this, in the fifth phase, I decided on appropriate titles for these themes, and performed a detailed analysis of the data. The final phase is writing the data and applying data appropriately.

However, during the fifth phase of doing detailed analysis I discovered that my own subjective experiences and knowledge hindered my analysis of the data in depth. For example, I had strong views regarding women's emancipation and empowerment; therefore, I viewed my participants to be mere victims of patriarchy. I failed to view their strategies to empower themselves and to resist, to negotiate, and to make independent choices. Of course one reason for this was, as already stated, that I was not married. Therefore, I suspended the analysis process for a short time, and decided to be reflexive to overcome my emotional issues.

Reflexivity encourages a researcher to reflect on issues of how a researcher's own perceptions and understanding can influence the interpretation of participants' accounts (Parahoo, 2006). This helps the researcher to realise that she is also part of the research and plays a crucial role in producing the meanings of the data (Green & Thorogood, 2005). Reflexivity in this research was important in order to gain an understanding of how my subjective experiences and knowledge could affect the analysis process as I was an insider and had too many things taken for granted and had prejudices and strong notions of them.

Rather than viewing things from their perspective I initially made meaning of their stories from a subjective point of view. Lawler (2000) suggests we tell stories about our lives, to ourselves and to others; and it through these stories we can decipher ourselves and our relationships to others. Therefore, in order to diminish the effects of researcher bias, I decided to tell myself my own story, to be able to address the influence of my own subjectivity, and I wrote an intellectual autobiography, a popular research tool in feminist studies.

Intellectual autobiography allows the researcher to discover the biases which affect the way the researcher treats and analyses the data (Haynes, 2006). Autobiographical writing provides a space to express and explore different complexities, and helps to analyse the knowledge claims that we possess (Stanley, 1993). Moreover, this writing process helps us to understand how something was experienced and why (Stanley, 1993). Therefore, being reflexive here is to treat oneself as subject for an intellectual inquiry (Stanley, 1993). While writing my autobiography I told myself my own stories in order to understand my prejudices and to understand the things taken for granted. This helped me to decipher the ways that my subjective experiences were influencing the analysis process. For example, I wrote:

> I am a girl who herself had to experience different gender inequalities, and I was very keen on rebelling directly, direct confrontation that was my only strategy.

Autobiography allowed me to view how I had internalised particular social expectations. Owing to this I thought everyone should resist in a similar manner to me in order to be understood as empowered or able to negotiate. However, in India women develop different strategies to resist at both an overt and a covert level (Agarwal, 1994; Thapan, 2009) which I tended to ignore at that time. Being an insider led me to take things for granted.

Gibson and Brown (2009) argue that "The contexts in which people speak are fundamental to the meaning which they are creating. By removing that context from the analysis, researchers remove the resources that would enable them to understand why the speakers said what they did or, perhaps more accurately, 'why they said it how they did'" (p. 189). Therefore, after doing intellectual autobiography I was able to diminish my researcher's bias. I did analysis and ascribed paramount importance to participants' perceptions, feelings, their socio-cultural settings in which those stories were delivered and were made, and to their everyday experiences and negotiations. This helped me to analyse the data from a wider perspective.

The journey of transcribing and analysing data was quite challenging. I learnt how subjectivity could influence the analysis and experienced the way that clearing up of emotional issues through being reflexive can help a researcher to view things from a very different and meaningful perspective. My experiences demonstrate the challenges inherent to being an insider.

Why not Critical Discourse Analysis?

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a popular analytic method. CDA has a very broad approach used by different researchers in different fields such as poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, ethnomethodology, speech act theory and conversation analysis (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p. 338).

CDA has its origins in textual and linguistic analysis, and aims to examine the complex relationship between language, power and ideology (Morley, 2004). Fairclough (1995) is one of the major practitioners of CDA. He discusses discourses in three ways: language use as social practice, kind of language used within a specific field, and a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002 p.67). Ruth Wodak (2006) mentions that:

> CDA [is] fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control when these are manifested in language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, and legitimized by language use. (p, 53)

This approach views language as a primary medium for social control and power (Morley, 2004). I wanted to employ a feminist perspective with interviews built on feminist principles of empathy, minimization of power difference, trust, openness, reflexivity, care and sensitivity (Dickson et al, 2008) and I interviewed women with the aim of collecting and articulating their life experiences, embodied experiences and practices (Finch, 1984, p.86),

Furthermore, I had to translate my interviews from Hindi to fluent English, and in the process a lot of words lost their original sense and meaning. It is a common problem in the process of translation especially when Indian language texts are being converted to a Western language as there is a huge difference in cultural values, practices, and ideologies which need to be interpreted rather than translated exactly. Many Hindi words used to convey the participants' words and concepts were not available in English. Further there is no body of work on translation in CDA's proponents' works. Fairclough basically provides examples of textual analysis but my analysis was not textual. It was not a good idea to do CDA, a linguistic based analysis when I was interested in women's life experiences and decision making in a modern collective society.

One of the major weakness of CDA is the weak understanding of structure and agency (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Since my whole thesis is about decision-making, agency and structure, this approach would have been inappropriate for me. I am using Bourdieu and Hays' work to study the interrelation between structure, agency and culture, and how agency is both reproductive and transformative. Bourdieu has been criticised by CDA analysts for underestimating the role of discourse in his theory of fields (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 114). Further the CDA approach fails to explain how Bourdieu's macro social concepts can be linked with the micro critical analysis advocated within CDA approach (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999).. All schools of CDA draw on Foucault's discourse theory to explore the role of language as a medium to maintain and change power relations. I am not using Foucault's approach for my analysis purpose so this approach would not have supported my theoretical framework (Morley, 2004).

Different theories provide different forms of knowledge which have their own advantages and disadvantages. Because even if CDA provides a different perspective of reality it is still criticised for claiming reality is a social construct and discarding the idea of authentic reality (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Therefore, I argue that I have produced a different form of knowledge by using thematic analysis, and through this analysis I was able to decipher different valuable themes.

Limitations of my study

Although the data I gathered is rich data, it also contains certain limitations. Because of the short time I visited India for my research and the sensitive nature of my research it was not easy to recruit a large number of participants and to interview them. I did not have enough time to perform multiple interviews with all participants, a practice which would have allowed me to gain much richer data. As mentioned earlier, one of the biggest drawbacks was that I was not a complete insider because I was not married, which in Indian culture also implies that I would not have a child or a live-in-partner[52]. Participants in some cases clearly gave me a message that for this reason I could not understand their struggles and challenges. Furthermore, because of my unmarried status many of the participants did not share any stories of their sexual lives with their

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[52] Though in India live-in-relationship in urban areas are getting common, still these de facto relationships largely remain unacceptable at a socio-cultural level.

husbands, which might have shed light on some other interesting aspects of women's lives, and negotiation and resistance strategies.

Because of the clandestine nature of sex-selective abortions and the legal and morality issues associated with it, only one participant shared her story of sex-selective abortion. However, participants did share the stories of sex-determination because they mentioned they did not obtain a sex-selective abortion, a term which sounds less inhumane and immoral than sharing actual female foeticide stories. Their responses may also have been mediated as they knew I was a feminist. The research is also highly likely to be missing crucial information because these issues are highly sensitive and related to morality and misogyny.

Conclusion

One of the advantages associated with insider's research, as I discussed earlier, is an easier access to the participatory population. Although it is not a panacea, my insider's position helped me in recruiting the participants through the technique of snowballing. It also raised a few ethical issues which were dealt with in a subtle manner.

This chapter has profiled my research journey. The research has been challenging, interesting, and has provided me a great learning experience, especially in regards to gathering the data from the field and then presenting it at an academic level. My research demonstrates that qualitative interviews with an emotional approach can be a fruitful way to explore sensitive issues.

Furthermore, my research demonstrates the inherent advantages and disadvantages to an interviewer being both an insider and an outsider. Being subjective can enhance the quality of data, but it can also hinder the objective research process to an extent. These issues need to be considered during the course of sensitive qualitative research.

Chapter 5: Bargaining with modernities: Decision-making within collective and patriarchal settings

The present study explores two key issues: how different socio-cultural factors in urban modern India influence middle-class women's reproductive choices, values and aspirations and how these women's perceptions and expectations differ towards their daughters and sons. In this chapter, the complexity of the decision-making process that women experienced prior to their marriages and after their marriages within patriarchal and collective settings is discussed. I argue that the urban middle-class women in a rapidly changing society have developed new bargaining strategies to meet their objectives, be it marrying or having a child or pursuing education or taking or leaving a job or garnering support for child-care or domestic work. In the process of meeting their interests women both resist against and negotiate with patriarchy in ways through which they might or might not end up empowering themselves.

Decision-making in this chapter is discussed in relation to participants' marriage, performing contemporary and traditional gender roles, and their reproductive choices. While making their choices the women considered different socio-cultural factors such as: family values, collective values, collective needs, family honour, and support from their husbands and in-laws. I have employed the concepts of patriarchal bargaining (Kandiyoti, 1988), benevolent patriarchy (Kilmartin 2013; Roald, 2013), women's empowerment (Batliwala, 1994), and Kabeer's (1999) model of three inter-related dimensions: resources, agency and achievements, as discussed in Chapter Three.

My research took place in patriarchal settings where gender socialisation is based on biological explanations that position men as superior and stronger than women and effectively naturalise gender inequality and women's subordination (Abraham, 2001; Mathu & Jain, 2008; Patel, 1999). This often leads to victimisation and social oppression of women in different spheres (Abraham, 2001; Kohli, 2012). Social oppression of women in Indian feminist literature is often documented as women possessing low decision making power in their families and societies (Jan & Akhtar, 2008, p.50). Similar views exist around Indian women's reproductive choices where their oppression is closely linked with patriarchy, through son-preference, the patriarchal family system, or different patriarchal ideologies advocating in-laws and husbands taking control of women's reproductive choices in regards to family size and sex-selection (Gupta, 2000). One of

the most common beliefs is that Indian women in general are pressured by their husbands or by their affinal family members, especially female in-laws, to become pregnant in the hope of having a son (Barge et al. 2003, Gupte et al, 1997; Puri & Adams 2011, p. 1169). Moreover, it is usually argued that the men make the final decisions on reproductive matters such as family size, sex-distribution, obtaining abortions, and fertility control (John et al. 2008; Visaria, 2007). Therefore the in-laws' and husbands' influence over women's choices affect or constrain women's personal preferences (Gupta, 2010).

These depictions of women being oppressed while making reproductive choices are problematic as they portray women as victims, sufferers and repressed, without agency, powerless and homogenous. It is important to realise that such portrayal of women presents a monolithic and simplified version of women's experiences (Cornwall, 2003; Patel, 1999).

However, not all Indian women are oppressed and many of them enjoy high social status and they play crucial roles at the religious, political, social, economic, national and international level. Indian women cannot be simply deemed as being without agency (Patel, 1999). This phenomenon of academics viewing Indian women as without agency is not just contemporary, and similar views of women were also held during the colonial period in India.

The treatment of Indian women as being without agency was raised by Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1984) and Gayatri Spivak (1988). Mohanty (1984) mentioned that most of the Western feminists and scholars tend to take a reductionist approach and consider third world women as a monolithic category and categorise them as victims of patriarchy. This view tends to overlook religious, class and ethnic differences among the third world women and places an overemphasis on gender as the only site of difference.

Spivak, another post-colonial theorist, similarly to Mohanty, criticised the issue of Indian and third world women as agencyless in her article *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988). She criticised historians for presenting Indian women's experiences as oppressive and homogenous, and argued that a culturally competent approach was needed to examine different cultural practices and issues. Spivak says that subalterns are irretrievably heterogenous and cannot be presented in one voice (Tripathy, 2010).

Forbes (1999) raised a similar issue of colonial historians and many academics misinterpreting and wrongly documenting Indian women as simply oppressed. Forbes stated that:

not all Indian women were behind veils, although certain ideas about modesty and respectability were widely shared. It is equally false to define women's world as one which totally suppresses female agency. To go one step further and declare that Indian women, secluded and not secluded, had no voice is the third act of silencing. (Forbes, 1999, p.5).

Mohanty, Spivak and Forbes addressed the issues around homogenisation of third world women. This view of women as monolithic category turns a blind eye to women's capabilities to negotiate within their families or/and public sphere, and their ability to challenge power structures (Belliappa, 2013).

It is important to examine women's agency within their socio-cultural settings. Patel (1999), in regards to Indian women's agency, highlights the interrelation between agency, structure and culture and stated that:

> A woman's negotiation and resistance is in no way an antagonistic exercise that can potentially overturn her household apple cart, it is maneuvered with full knowledge of societal structures and normative constraints, which however do influence and also get influenced in the process (p.447).

Women make choices that take into account different socio-cultural factors, gauging their advantages and disadvantages. Moreover, even if patriarchal relations are expressed through the kinds of choices women make, they cannot be documented as without agency or not possessing any autonomy; instead, it could be argued that their decisions did not signify empowerment. Because empowerment, as discussed in Chapter Three, might not help women to achieve desired interests. This could also be linked to the ideas of women deriving socio-cultural benefits and strengthening their position within patriarchal constraints.

It is important to realise that as women are not a homogenous group, patriarchy equally cannot be considered universally uniform. It takes different forms within different social spaces (Hunnicutt, 2009). Significantly, women can also be dominated in a physically non-violent way where power and hegemony is masked beneath the virtue of love and care, and this can be understood as benevolent patriarchy.

I initiate my analysis by discussing the collective and patriarchal structure of Indian society, as both patriarchal and collective values played a vital role in influencing participants' decisions and vice-versa. There are four major findings of women's bargaining strategies with modernity in this chapter. The first is the complexity of the decision making process: to marry or not to marry. The second is the husband's support and shared responsibilities. The third is receiving support from mothers-in-law who were labelled as bad mothers-in-law and good mothers-in-law.

And, the final finding is siblings' relationships. All these findings shed light on how women resist and negotiate within modern patriarchal and collective family settings in rapidly changing urban India. Women within their decision-making process aimed to meet their interest while accumulating maximum social support for themselves within their families and networks.

The first finding serves as a platform for this research as it discusses the importance of collectivist values within patriarchal settings. Moreover, it also reveals the complexity and multi layered nature of the decision-making process where women subvert, resist, negotiate and manipulate rather than giving a simple yes or no. The importance of collective values within patriarchal settings and the complexity of the decision-making process are widely evident within participants' accounts. This is also addressed in Chapters Six and Seven. In addition, this section will shed light on how marriages provide an important space to exercise patriarchal power and control over women's choices, including their sexuality and reproduction. Furthermore, endogamy, familial and community ties, class, caste structure and religion are reproduced through the very institution of marriage.

In the second finding, I will focus on how women gather support for child-care and child rearing tasks from their husbands. This is usually done by articulating the utopian ideology of mutual respect, love and care in a couple's relationship. These tenets could be understood as women's negotiation strategies. Having a supportive husband helped women in easing their work-burden which can be seen as an act of patriarchal benevolence.

The third finding addresses the fact that women are quite capable of accepting assistance for child-care and domestic tasks from their mothers-in-law irrespective of whether they are living in a nuclear or a joint family. Again it will be highlighted that power and control within mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law's relationships can be concealed under the virtues of love and care. I noted that mothers-in-law are also capable of influencing participants' reproductive choices in most cases.

The last finding illustrates how women's decisions about their family size [53] are influenced by their children's demands to have a sibling. Many of them have had more than their desired number of children even when they did not want to because their child/children demanded a

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[53] The importance and prevalence of the small family size are discussed in depth in the next chapter.

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sibling. While making these decisions collective values and needs played an influential role in women's decision making.

The complexity of decision making process: To marry or not to marry

The ideas of collective identity, emotional dependence, sharing and performing duties and considering others' needs are quite prevalent within the decision-making process within collective cultures (Hui & Triandis, 1986). Similar ideas were discussed by participants in their accounts while making important life decisions, such as reproductive choices and marriage. The majority of the participants mentioned marriage to be the most important decision of their lives, and almost all of them played a crucial role or had some sort of involvement in finding partners for themselves.

Marriage in India is a social event dominated by the collective interests of both family and community (Desai & Andrist, 2010). Indian marriages are one of the greatest family and social events and often reproduce traditional socio-cultural and religious values, caste and class structure (Heitzman & Worden, 1995). Because of these socio-cultural obligations marriages in India are not only a personal, but also a social need, and are viewed as an essential part of everyone's life (Heitzman & Worden, 1995; Vanita, 2005). Urbanisation and contemporary social changes in India such as women gaining higher qualifications and entering into paid employment have resulted in increasing their marriage age slightly in recent years (Caldwell, 2005; Fuller & Narasimhan, 2008). For instance, in a study conducted within the urban areas of Delhi, the fathers of daughters mentioned that girls should only be married after 21 years of age. The usual age of marriage in India for girls in urban areas is from their early 20s to mid-20s (Rathor, 2011). Marriage remains an important aspect of modern urban culture as women, and even their families usually have to face a great amount of social pressure and criticism if the women decide to remain unmarried or to marry at a late age (Rathor, 2011). Participants' decisions were shaped and informed by these social ideas of marriage.

A few participants, whose marriages were delayed (usually around 30s), mentioned that they and their parents experienced lots of anxiety and social pressure to get married as soon as possible. It may become hard to find potential grooms for women over the age of 30, and women might be considered too old to get married. Another reason to avoid late marriages is that there are high chances of women losing their virginity prior to getting married, and in India traditional

patriarchal ideas hold women's sexual purity to be an important part of their being an ideal wife and daughter-in-law (Abraham, 2001; Caldwell, 2005; Rathor, 2011). Women's sexuality, even today, remains confined within the institution of marriage (Abraham, 2001, p.134). For example, one participant narrated the story of her pre-marital abortion because it would not have been socially and culturally appropriate for her to be a mother out of wedlock. In contrast, men's sexuality often extends beyond marital relations by engaging in extramarital affairs or visiting commercial sex-workers (Abraham, 2001, p.134). This shows that marriage serves as an important site to define female sexuality and to practise control over women's sexuality, bodies and choices. An important point to make here is that these ideas around female sexuality are dominant and popular among the middle or upper class and these views differ from some tribal and lower class and caste communities (Abraham, 2001; Rao et al, 2003). This popular ideology of middle-class women's chastity could be linked to female respectability and morality and the nationalist project that was discussed in Chapter Two. Women's sexuality and chastity are still important elements of gaining respectability in urban neoliberal India (Radhakrishnan, 2009). Educated and working women are still expected to adhere to norms of collective family values and are discouraged from practising Western individualistic values.

Pressure to get married is not only experienced by unmarried girls, but could also be experienced by widows, usually younger ones (Heitzman & Worden, 1995) as there might be a chance of engaging in sexual activities outside of wedlock[54]. Also it is believed that single adult women need a male companion who will provide social and financial protection. For instance, Sheetal, a widow and a mother of a girl, in her early 30s, shared her story in which she challenged the social necessity of marriage for women:

> I did not make any decisions in my life [referring to life before her marriage]. My parents made all the decisions for me [prior to marriage]. The only decision I have made till now is not to remarry after my husband's death. All of them [maternal family] insisted on me getting remarried. But, I did not listen to them in this context. I did what I wanted to do.

This is an interesting illustration of both her activeness and passiveness in regards to making choices prior to and after her marriage. She clearly stated that her family exercised control over

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[54] In the medieval and British regimes, widow marriage among Hindus was socially prohibited within many communities and classes. Widow's remarriage was later legally allowed during the British regime; however, within many communities, widow remarriage is still a social taboo although these days it is becoming more common.

her choices before she got married. After losing her husband she made her choices on her own. This act of decision making could be viewed as empowerment: Sheetal acquired the capability to make strategic choices which was earlier denied to her. Getting access to making strategic life choices is viewed as a crucial component of being empowered (Kabeer, 1999). It is common for widows in the patriarchal communities to replace a patriarch in the absence of a potential male one (Moser, 1993, p.16). For Sheetal, it was not a simple case of taking the role of a patriarch, but she needed to stay firm on her decision of giving birth and staying unmarried. Widowhood ironically brought an opportunity for Sheetal to empower herself by making strategic choices. She took on the role of a patriarch after her husband's death by performing masculine gender roles such as being the key earner and financially bearing responsibility of her daughter's upbringing. Despite being financially independent her social positioning as a widow still relegates her into a socially disadvantaged position to negotiate within patriarchal constraints. Widows in India are often considered as "inauspicious dependents" (Malik, 2013, p.23), and are usually treated as inferior to married women with living husbands. They might have to face social ostracism during various auspicious occasions such as marriage, festivals or prayers (Lamb, 2000; Malik, 2013). In contrast, no such socio-cultural mores exist or existed for widowers.

In earlier times widow remarriage among Hindus was not socially acceptable in many parts of India and widows were forced to live a sexually inactive life with restrictions on their mobility, eating and dressing (Abraham, 2001; Lamb, 2000). Widows' remarriage became legal after the Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act 1856 (Malik, 2013). Widowers, on the other hand, have always been allowed to remarry even prior to this act. This indicates patriarchal control over women's sexuality, desires and choices, and their subordinate position in a male biased society. In other words, women's lives in general and their positioning are based around men's existence more than their own and through these patriarchal restrictions male superiority is easily maintained at the socio-cultural level.

This masculine superiority is usually maintained and reproduced through the institution of marriage. A woman needs a man for social protection and financial support and in return is expected to look after all domestic responsibilities. Moreover, traditional beliefs ensure that a young girl is dependent on her father, an adult woman needs support from her husband, and an

old woman is dependent on her son (Byreshwar, 2014). Sheetal's parents wanted her to get married so she could have financial and social protection, a safe and secure future for her remaining life rather than staying on her own. This idea of having a male protector could be linked to 'benevolent patriarchy' which portrays men as loving self-sacrificing benevolent protectors and women as dependents (Roald, 2013). Despite these social pressures and her disadvantaged social positioning Sheetal remained firm on her decision not to remarry and was able to challenge this patriarchal ideology. Through her decision she rejected the idea of having a male protector for her support and protection. She said that she felt capable of earning and supporting herself and her daughter in the future especially since the contemporary neoliberal and development reforms in urban India have provided women with an opportunity to financially support themselves (Mishra, 2011). Women are nowadays employed in different sectors in the globalised economy. These opportunities boosted Sheetal's confidence she could look after her daughter without her parents' support.

When Sheetal returned to her parents' house she was pregnant with her late husband's child. Her family wanted her to terminate her pregnancy as that would make it easier for them to remarry her as a man might find her unsuitable to marry with a child. Sheetal, on the other hand, insisted on continuing with her pregnancy. She mentioned that she would not even take any medicine or any food item from her family members as she suspected that they might force abortion on her by giving her an abortion pill deceptively. For her it was important to have her child:

> Researcher: You mentioned your parents would make all decisions for you. So, what happened this time that meant that you did not listen to them and made your own decision?
> Sheetal: I made my own decision because of my daughter. Because my parents considered my future [safe and secure life], and made decisions for me. Similarly, I did it for my daughter's future. That's why I did it.

Her positioning as a mother allowed her to bargain and make her own choices. She possessed better bargaining skills as a mother than as a daughter so Sheetal chose widowhood over marrying for her daughter's sake as she feared that the stepfather might not provide her daughter proper love and care. Sheetal made her decision against the patriarchal ideology of men as women's protectors. Simultaneously, she operated within the dominant Indian ideology around motherhood discourse where the mother and child relationship is viewed as "sacrosanct" (Krishnaraj, 2010, p.vii). Importantly, she adhered to one of the crucial ideological constructions of motherhood among the middle-class. This portrays women as relishing their life by nurturing

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their children, and sacrificing their desires and needs for them (Byreshwar, 2014; Krishnaraj, 2010).

However, the changing social structures of urban societies, such as women receiving higher education and entering into paid employment, have challenged the essentialist ideas of motherhood for Indian women to some extent (Krishnaraj, 2010). For example, these days it is common for urban middle-class women to work full time and this indicates significant social change (Radhakrishnan, 2007). This transformation is still not predominant, and being a self-sacrificing mother remains central to Indian middle-class values (Radhakrishnan, 2009). My research sample, for instance, consisted of urban middle-class women, and many of them were working at influential positions, but they still viewed motherhood as an essential part of their lives. They ascribed vital importance to their families and children, and took breaks from their jobs or left their jobs when their children needed their attention. Although Sheetal was not working, she conformed to the middle-class values of motherhood which have patriarchal origins; this helped her to resist patriarchal pressure to procure an abortion and to remarry.

Sheetal's decision could be well analysed through the patriarchal bargaining framework which explains how women both negotiate and resist from within their patriarchal constraints in order to maximize their control over their choices and to access opportunities. Sheetal stayed with her maternal family where she supported her parents, brothers and sisters-in-law by performing household chores. Because of her performing domestic chores she was not merely a burden for her family and she managed to receive financial support from them during her early pregnancy period.

Through making her own decisions Sheetal was able to empower herself by exercising control and autonomy over her choices, body, reproduction and sexuality. She mentioned that she was no longer interested in practising her sexuality, but just wanted to dedicate her whole life to providing a good upbringing to her daughter. By avoiding marriage, she could also easily avoid sex which she was not interested in. This decision by a widow or a single woman to be sexually inactive is an acceptance of the patriarchal norms (Abraham, 2001). Also she felt that being sexually active outside of wedlock could undermine her decency and her motherhood. However, making the choice to be a single mother provides her with an opportunity to live an independent life on her own terms, something which might not be possible after being married. The choices

have been made within different patriarchal constraints, and are influenced by collective values but choosing what was most appealing to her is an important feature of bargaining with patriarchy (Kandiyoti, 1988).

Jaya, another participant, was in her mid-20s and was a mother of a daughter. She discussed a similar experience of her parents' involvement in deciding about her marriage.

> Researcher: Could you tell me of a time when you made an important decision in your life?
> Jaya: Yes, my marriage is the most important decision of my life. My parents asked me about marriage [her views on getting married]. At that time, I told them they could find an alliance for me according to their wish.

Jaya had an arranged marriage, and these marriages are quite common in India (Cox & Demmitt, 2013, p.13). These marriages are different from forced marriages as the prospective bride and groom have the ability to say no to the marriage. Arranged alliances are based on collective values and parental and family involvement are evident from the beginning of such alliances and play a crucial role in making up these unions (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Neoliberal shifts in contemporary India are evident in important institutions like marriage; however, these transformations have not eroded collective values and the parents' role in arranging children's marriages remains central (Desai & Andrist, 2010; Shah, 1998). For example, one of the most common sayings in India is "A marriage happens between two families and not simply between two individuals". Arranged marriages form an important institution within collective culture and love between two individuals does not form a popular social basis for marriage.

Changes in arranged marriages are prevalent within urban settings these days where children practise their agency in choosing their partners in collaboration with their parents' choice (Fuller & Narsimhan, 2010). In earlier times strict notions existed around establishing no form of contact between prospective husbands and wives prior to their marriages but it is now common among urban middle-class men and women to spend time with their potential partners. Indian arranged urban middle-class marriages are no longer a sign of sole agreement between two families, but it has also become a matter of a couple's choice of "arranged romantic love" (Brosius, 2011, p.263). Contact between the potential bride and groom may be by phone, through sporadic meetings or on social media so they can decide to marry or not to marry.

Another important change in urban middle-class marriages in a neoliberal economy is the increasing pomp and show which demonstrates one's status (as mentioned in Chapter Two).

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Western style food-courts and bars serving alcohol are an important feature of urban middle-class marriages (Brosius, 2016). Both bride and groom adhere to the notions of Western style beauty and fitness (Brosius, 2016). For instance, Jaya and another participant Mahi both expressed their regret at not being able to have a grand wedding, and being unable to have good professional make-up on their wedding day unlike their other friends.

Jaya operated within the wider needs of her community and family, a setting where arranged marriages reproduce endogamy and where religion, class and caste structure are reproduced (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2008). The social background of potential marriage partners such as caste, class, and financial status are quite important among the urban middle class in India (Thapan, 2009, p.117). The participant mentioned her marriage to be the most important decision she made and she located herself within the dominant ideology of patriarchal family honour. Through arranged marriages patriarchal notions of family honour, which is associated with women's modesty, by controlling women's sexuality, are maintained and reproduced (Derne, 1994; Mukhopadhyay & Seymour, 1994). As discussed earlier, family honour remains quite crucial among middle class families (Derne, 1994).

This patriarchal ideology of honour is directly related to controlling women's lives, including women's sexuality and is often used to justify their restricted mobility. Girls in India are considered to be 'paraya-dhan' meaning someone else's wealth (her husband's and affinal family's) (Sen, 2009). Parents need to conduct 'kanyadan' which means giving away of a virgin daughter in marriage. This forms the primary social basis of Hindu marriages in India (Fuller & Narsimhan, 2010). Similar ideas of daughters belonging to affinal family and of sexual decency and sexual inactivity before marriage are shared by other religious groups in India. Moral norms around female sexuality, such as not being sexually active before marriage, or not establishing emotional or physical intimate relationships with any man outside marriage define the social worth of a woman as a future wife, and the reputation of her family, especially of male family members (Byreshwar, 2014). This puts social pressure on parents to protect their daughters' sexuality for their future husbands. Marriages in India serve as a socio-cultural trajectory which provides social sanction for women to practice their sexuality and biological reproduction. If women experience pre-wedding pregnancies or if their pre-marital sexual contacts come to public attention, it could lead to honour crimes such as social ostracising or honour killing.

Honour crimes are often carried out by females' male family members and these crimes are viewed as a medium to restore the lost honour (Deol, 2014). Female honour in India is viewed as passive in nature, centring on qualities such as subordination, modesty, and endurance, whereas male honour is active and dynamic, centring on qualities such as self-assertion, dominance and social status (Byreshwar, 2014, p.259). "Woman is the repository of the family honour as a daughter, wife, and mother while man regulates it" (Vishwanath & Palakonda, 2011, p.386-87).

Owing to such a patriarchal ideology love marriages are not very popular in India. Such marriages provide greater space for couples to be intimate and practice control over their bodies and choices prior to their wedding. Love marriage is an Indian English term referring to a romantic union based on individual preferences (Vanita, 2005, p.22). The bride and groom in such marriages are the primary decision makers, and parental and family involvement within these marriages remains minimal. These marriages are in a minority in India, and are often criticised on the basis "that love is really a cover for desire, therefore marriages based on it are unlikely to last, while family-arranged marriages, based on cultural compatibility, are more likely to last" (Vanita, 2005, p.22).

The dominant view persists that love marriages are "the westernised practice of an urban deracinated elite" (Mody, 2008, p.1), and are usually viewed as a threat to Indian traditional collectivist values. Similar to the nationalist era, the majority of urban middle-class people view their own culture as superior to the West.

By letting her parents be the key actors in making up the alliance Jaya did not pose any threat to the parental authority and masculine social structures. Moreover, she did not describe it to be something forced upon her, but rather an acceptance of ideas around parental authority, responsibility and bodily honour issues. Her decision did not lead to empowerment, but by making her choices within the patriarchal constraints she was able to ensure family and community support for herself in the future.

The parental authority to which Jaya was referring to is common in South Asia but this is unlikely to be experienced as a form of power, unless such authority is questioned (Kabeer, 1999, p.483). This authority is questioned in love marriages. That is why couples who opt for love marriage usually experience a great amount of criticism and disapproval from their parents and family and can experience honour crimes, as discussed earlier. Love marriages are viewed as

an alliance based on an individual's choice and often a union between two incompatible groups (Mody, 2008, p.49) as these marriages pose a threat to the endogamous structure. For instance, Tara, in her early 40s, a mother of two children explained when she decided to marry her husband from a different caste it came as a huge shock to her parents and parents-in-law, as they both belonged to different cultural groups. After long negotiations with her parents and in-laws the families agreed to them getting married; however, none of the family members was happy and they were socially cast out for a time. Her decision to marry was an act of empowerment as she resisted the patriarchal authority over her choices (Batliwala, 1994). As Kabeer (1999) argues women acting against these patriarchal norms might have to pay a high price for their autonomy. In Tara's case this price was losing family support, and in some cases this price might extend to them falling victim to honour crimes.

When Sia was in her mid-20s she wanted to get married to her boyfriend who belonged to the same caste, class and religion. But, the whole idea of choosing her partner on her own was not acceptable to her family and they rejected it saying that she was too young and immature to make such crucial decisions for her life. The supremacy of parental authority around marriage and sexuality and unmarried daughters' choices, irrespective of their age, predominates among the urban middle-class. Sia further stated that she agreed to marry in accordance with her parents' choice. She explained her decision making as an act of caring for her family. She said "anyone can make his/her decision. It is not a big deal, but because you love them [family] that is why you listen to them!"

Sia practiced her agency by by hiding her relationship from her family for a long time, which is a common practice in India, explaining that resistance can take place in daily lives through a variety of different tactics. This act of Sia having a boyfriend without her parents' knowledge could be viewed as her demonstrating resistance against the patriarchal structure which motivates women to curb their sexuality and feelings before marriage under the name of family honour. Sia challenged the patriarchal ideology over women's bodies and choices even if it was for a certain period of time and without her parents' knowledge and despite their pressure not to have a boyfriend. As discussed in the conceptual framework resistance can occur both at covert and overt level, and challenging patriarchal ideology is quite a vital aspect of women's empowerment (Agarwal, 1994; Batliwala, 1994). Later she enacted the ideas of women protecting family

honour and making decisions based on collective values rather than individual preference. She mentioned that making decisions that take into account other people's needs require more skills and is more challenging in comparison to decisions based solely on one's individual desires. In both instances she negotiated her agency within patriarchal constraints first by hiding her relationship, and later by abiding by her parents' wishes in order to protect herself from social criticism by keeping her parents happy.

Sia's and Tara's cases elucidate that the act of making up an alliance in urban middle-class India is largely viewed as a collective act that must be done by adults "who legitimately represent the family" (Mody, 2008, p.9) or it might create social tensions. Sia followed this ideology and managed to keep her family support whereas Tara lost her family support temporarily when she challenged the patriarchal ideas. But Tara and her husband tried to make up with their families and eventually after 4-5 years they managed to re-establish contact with them. Tara's and Sia's cases exemplify how women make different shifts while trying to maintain a balance or negotiate between modern individual based values and traditional collective family values. In both cases negotiation with family members in order to get married with the partner of personal preference was evident. The importance of family was unchallenged not only in Sia's case but Tara, even after her love marriage, kept on trying to rebuild her relationship with her family. This is because individual achievements in urban India do not mean alienation from the collective. Instead these achievements only gain social respect, or in other words symbolic, cultural and social capital, with the approval of family members (Belliappa, 2009).

Another collective and patriarchal aspect in arranged marriages can be viewed in relation to female education. All 45 participants agreed that female education is very important and it affords women independence[55]. In the wake of the neoliberal economy and government sponsored development reforms, female education has gained immense popularity among the urban middle-class, as mentioned in Chapters Two and Three. This gaining of higher education by women is linked to their financial security and independence, finding a suitable groom for them, and the hope that they will be better mothers and wives. Women's education is a key medium to serve current patriarchal needs, that is, to allow women to be better wives and mothers, and not only to emancipate them (Chaudhuri, 2012). For instance, Yamuna mentioned

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[55] Female education will be discussed in depth in Chapter Six.

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that her daughter was working and she supported her to receive higher education so that she could also be a confident wife, and an educated mother who could help her children in their studies. In the neoliberal economy investment in education is an important way to gain cultural capital as it brings prestige among one's community and family. Women's education plays an important role in the neoliberal economy. It enables women to get paid employment and later to teach their children and/or to focus[56] on their education (Donner, 2011).

Another interesting case is of Ria, in her late 20s, a mother of a girl, who was working in the public sector. She mentioned that her parents had encouraged her to do her post-graduate study so that she could have a good job and become independent. But after that she was not allowed to pursue a PhD as it would have been quite difficult for her parents to find a suitable groom for her. She managed to find a job based on her Masters' qualification. She said that:

> My professor called my parents and said that I should do a PhD as I was quite good at studies. He also said that he would help me in getting my papers published. I had a dissertation in masters, and I did very well in that. My professor was quite impressed and he tried to convince my family. But, it was not possible as it would have been hard to for my parents to find a husband for me.

This statement illustrates parental control, authority and responsibility in regards to searching for a potential groom for their daughter, and the participant accepted it. I have earlier discussed how parents are key decision makers within arranged marriages. Education in contemporary times does help women to financial independence, but that is not considered enough to lead a happy life. Ria's career was ultimately not decided based on her abilities, but on the basis of her being able to find a potential groom. Finding potential grooms can be a challenging task for parents (Heitzman & Worden, 1995) as educated women need educated grooms and for educated grooms parents might have to pay a higher amount of dowry. If people could not find suitable grooms for their daughters, this could lead to delay in marriage which in turn leads to increased socio-cultural pressure on parents and their daughters. By making her decision according to her parents' wishes, Ria avoided the pressures of late marriage and the increased difficulties of finding a groom. The participant agreed with the traditional patriarchal ideology that she should be earning and should be educated, but not more than her man (Mody, 2008) since this can pose a threat to masculine structures and male authority. At the same time, Ria played a primary role in choosing her partner. Her parents introduced her to two men and she was in contact with both

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[56] Focus here means women spending quality time for choosing best school, coaching classes or other resources to ensure their children receive quality education.

of them for almost six months after which she decided to marry her now-husband. Although she dropped the idea of doing a PhD, it does not mean that she had no say in choosing her husband, even though it was an arranged marriage. Choosing a partner in this manner is quite common for educated urban middle-class women. They accommodate their individual needs while allowing some degree of parental control over their spouse.

Alliance making by parents while daughters are young is common among some groups in India (Heitzman & Worden, 1995). This is often done to control children's decisions at a young age and to allow endogamy where parents practice control over children's choices and sexuality. Early marriages or alliances are part of traditional practices where young brides are preferred as they are deemed to be docile, submissive, and more accommodating to the groom's family norms (Desai & Andrist, 2010). But some participants resisted these traditional arrangements. For example, Rama, who was in her 30s, challenged this patriarchal ideology of not being more educated than her husband. Rama was engaged by her parents while she was still a teenager. This participant's ex-fiancée did not complete his schooling whereas Rama finished her postgraduate studies. While finishing her studies she had lots of conflicts with her parents as they wanted her to get married and stop studying otherwise their alliance would become a mismatch. Finally, she ended up breaking that engagement and getting married to a man who had the same educational qualifications as her. Her parents found another match for her based on her preference, but also within the patriarchal framework where she was not more educated than her husband. Significantly, parental control was influential in match making throughout. I choose to deem this an example of parental control because even though her parents allowed her to marry an educated man they found that alliance based on their preferences, with regards to class, caste, community and religion.

The above discussion which cites the examples of Jaya, Rama and Sia highlights the fact that agency and power within a collectivist setting, cannot be understood in a unilateral or uniform fashion where the direct credibility or participation of a social actor would be visible in the entire decision making process. Decision making is a complex, multilayered and multifaceted process of choice making within the given socio-cultural settings. Through this section I have elucidated the complexity of decision making which will be visible throughout my analysis of the participants' accounts. In India, the marriage of a daughter is quite vital for parents. It is a

process where different socio-cultural factors such as honour, finding a suitable groom, and endogamy are at play. One of the things that could be derived from this discussion is that despite various socio-cultural transformations women are still expected to make their choices in accordance with their family's honour and traditions (Rana et al, 1998). These pressures can be traced back to the nationalist movement and the emergence of the middle-class. This practice of accommodation was expected by the participants, and only in rare cases such as Sheetal's and Tara's did women directly resist these notions.

There is significant transformation within the practice of arranged marriages among the urban middle-class. Women these days are able to negotiate within patriarchal and collective family structures while choosing their life partners. However, women instead of simply resisting the patriarchal family structures and collective values which might affect their family lives as suggested by Belliappa (2009) and Patel (1999). Despite transformations, arranged marriages still serve as a medium to control women's sexuality, procreative capabilities and choices. A link is evident between female honour and patriarchy where control over women's bodies, their choices and sexuality are inescapable; it is within these constraints that women negotiate through their own strategies.

On the other hand, marriage can also be an empowering event in women's life because even if marriage remains under the control of family, women may end up playing a primary role in finding their marriage partners be it through love or through arranged alliances. While strategising their choices within patriarchal constraints women are able to make choices that they find appealing. Participants such as Sia, Sheetal, Rama and Tara often resisted, accepted and negotiated with patriarchy in a way that could be linked to the idea of transformative and reproductive agency and which leads to the transformation and reproduction of social structures as suggested by Hays (1994).

Furthermore, this discussion explains that while decision making is not a simplistic process women's role in decision making process cannot be minimised. It is a complex and multi layered process in which women develop strategies to negotiate, resist, and manipulate.

Husband's support and shared responsibilities

The majority of women in India begin their married lives with the groom's parents where they are expected to conform to the lifestyle of their new family (Desai & Andrist, 2010, p.669)

because patriarchal and patrilineal families form the typical and traditional style of families in most parts of India (Handy & Kassam, 2004). As discussed earlier, girls belong to their in-laws and their husband's family and parents perform the role of caretakers until they get married (Jain, 2006, p.17). Parents bear all marriage expenses to get their daughters married to a good family. Receiving any social or financial support from daughters is often considered a taboo in India (Sandhya, 2009, p.76) mainly because within patriarchal and patrilineal family structures women are expected to prioritise the needs of their in-laws and husband after their marriage: maternal family should be their secondary preference. This is changing gradually, and increasingly daughters are supporting their maternal families. This phenomenon will be discussed in Chapter Seven in depth.

In this section, I have highlighted how women use this popular sense of belonging with their affinal family to gain support and make their lives easier in regards to performing domestic chores and different reproductive and child rearing and nurturing matters. The process of gaining support from husbands and in-laws, mothers-in-law mainly, were widely articulated within participants' accounts. I will now turn to looking at the discussion of participants receiving support from husbands.

Indian mothers are often the primary care givers and socialisers in their child's infancy. I asked my participants:

> Do you think it should be a woman's sole decision when to have a child and when not to, as it is the woman's body that is affected? She is the one who performs all primary nurturing, child bearing and rearing responsibilities such as breastfeeding, looking after the child and giving it a bath.

Only two out of forty-five participants agreed that it should be a woman's sole decision even though her workload increases. All other participants insisted on collective values and ideas of love, care, and mutual respect while making reproductive choices, and stated that the husband should be consulted while making such crucial decisions. For instance, Kitty, a mother of a girl said that:

> I agree that it is the woman's body and she is the one who plays a major role in a child's life from birth to all primary care. Yet, I believe that the decision to have a baby has to be mutual, because, before becoming parents, the two individuals had tied the knot to become one. They should be one spirit dwelling in two bodies.

Women discussed the utopian view of marriage where both husband and wife make decisions based on collective understanding and mutual respect. Furthermore, within patriarchal settings this is a culturally appropriate way of admitting that the husband should be consulted in all decisions. For example, Silberschmidt (1992) reported that women among the Kisii in Kenya formally admitted that their husbands made all decisions and they should be consulted in all sorts of issues; however, in reality many women made independent decisions without consulting their husbands (p.248). Similarly, even the participants in my study who made independent decisions especially in any of their pregnancies insisted on the importance of mutual decision making in their accounts. They explained that because of their personal circumstances such as financial issues, family planning or health issues they had to make independent decisions. Only one participant proudly admitted that she is the key decision maker in her family and that she dominates her husband, and everybody within their acquaintances calls her husband henpecked. This participant was happy that she able to exercise her autonomy and did not need to make her decisions under anybody's influence.

This suggests that women are able to exercise their autonomy, and become empowered to resist patriarchal authority (Agarwal, 1994; Patel, 1999; Thapan, 2009). However, while doing so they often manipulate things in such a manner that they fit within the patriarchal settings and this could be viewed as a part of their bargaining skills. For instance, Kanu, who made the individual decision to abort her first pregnancy, commented:

> Anyhow, the husband should have the right as well in the decision-making process. But, when I got married my situation was quite difficult and serious. I knew that I had to make that decision, and I made it. But, it should be a mutual decision.

Interestingly, while participants discussed the importance of consulting their husbands when making vital reproductive choices, they also highlighted the importance of giving preference and respect to women's choices. They insisted that reproduction should remain a force-free experience for women. For instance:

> Mahi: It is like two wheels of a vehicle; hence both need to adjust to each other. Also both should respect each other's views.
> Mira: This decision [to have a baby] should be made by both husband and wife together. Because only if he is capable of reproducing, then only can they have a child together. But, sometimes she might have some problems with her body and if he still pressures her [to bear a pregnancy] then it is wrong. If the woman's body is functioning well, only then should a couple have a child based on mutual understanding.

If the couple has the same personal goals this aids in achieving marital success (Sandhya, 2009). Mahi and Mira shared similar ideas with Kitty. The discourse of love, understanding and respect between the married couple that these women are referring to, is part of the colonial Indian modernity. These changes were enacted by feminist nationalist writers at the end of 19th and in the beginning of 20th century and the discourse is itself a part of colonial middle-class modernity (Sreenivas, 2003, p.59). "Challenging women's oppression within marriage and the family depended both upon asserting the primacy of conjugal emotion and invoking nationalist visions of freedom." Sreenivas (2003, p.78). Through advocating romantic emotions feminists tried to improve women's situation from that of obedient wives to negotiators.

Similarly, participants articulating these modern ideas of mutual understanding among the couples reject the traditional notions of women being obedient wives. For instance, like Mira, most participants articulated collective ideas about reproductive choices in such a way that their own role in decision-making would not be minimised. Mira, for example, clearly rejected the idea of pressuring a woman into forced pregnancy. She ascribed great importance to respecting women's bodies and views, but did not articulate similar ideas of ensuing men's physical well-being during reproductive decision-making. Interestingly, no participant stated that men's physical well-being needed equal respect. This could be because women viewed only their bodies to be affected in the physical reproduction process. Furthermore, these ideas of having the same goals and considering husbands in reproductive matters could be understood as women's strategies to maintain harmony within their families and to avoid conflict owing to challenging patriarchal structure, and also to obtain financial and social support from their husbands.

Participants viewed their husbands as equally responsible for their children's social upbringing, and not just as mutual decision-makers in the reproductive decision-making process. This expectation of receiving husband's support for child-care is the result of the increasing burden of responsibilities on women created by neoliberal economic reforms. Unlike in earlier times, women now participate in paid employment and also in their children's education. Women stated that, if both of them shared child-care responsibilities, then both should have the right to decide. An example is Tara, a mother of two children, who worked in a very high position in the public sector. She provided a clear exposition of these shared responsibilities:

> A woman's body is hers, but not all men are unsupportive. You need a lot of physical and mental support from men [husbands] as you cannot bring up the children on your own. One needs a husband's proper support because if we [wives] make decisions on our own then it won't work. It should be a mutual decision and not a woman's sole decision. Because they both have to live together and share responsibility together except for the physical [gestation period, labour pain and breast feeding]. Other things like money and psychological support are needed so the decision should be mutual. It shouldn't be a man's or a woman's sole decision only. Otherwise it will be difficult.

Tara clearly linked the point of mutual decision making with the ideas of shared responsibilities for children's rearing practices. She highlighted the difficulties women have to face in the absence of men's support, and criticised generic gender stereotypes regarding men's unsupportive attitudes. She further focused on men performing paternal responsibilities.

Transformation in social structures is evident in the families of dual-career couples as working women often face challenges in maintaining balance between work and family, especially where family responsibilities are viewed to be their primary chores (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Because of these changes men often support their wives, though this support is usually extended to childcare, and in a few cases it gets extended to domestic chores (Chandra et al, 1995). The support women receive is highly valued by them, and this leads them to view their husbands positively. Men's acts of performing domestic or child care tasks are often viewed as a favour to women owing to the traditional gender division of labour which places men as the key earners and women as the primary persons to look after domestic chores and family. In contrast, women supporting men by generating financial earnings is viewed more as their responsibility towards their families than as a favour to their husbands. Anu, for example, who is highly educated and working at a high position has one daughter. She mentioned, "One [a woman] should not feel that I have started working and now I can suppress my husband…". Anu's account suggests that women's paid work should be to contribute in the family and to support her husband. By no means should it be used as a medium to raise her above her husband or to challenge his authority. Increasingly, women these days in urban areas are expected to perform domestic chores in addition to the income generating activities they perform (Mathu & Jain, 2008). This has doubled the burden of responsibilities on women both within homes and public spheres, and this is referred to as 'double day' by feminist scholars studying the life of professional urban middle-class women (Lahiri-Dutt & Sil, 2014). Even if women have paid domestic help, which some of my participants had, women are still expected to supervise the servants, and it did not actually ease their work pressure.

This scenario could be understood as benevolent patriarchy: husbands provide support to their wives and in most of the cases working wives are seen as fitting within a benevolent patriarchal model. A good husband performs his duties towards his family (Kilmartin, 2015; Shepherd et al, 2010), and allows his wife to work (Ramu, 1987). Men whose wives are working enjoy economic benefits and the image of being benevolent and open-minded men (Ramu, 1987). In benevolent patriarchy power is masked by virtue and love (Roald, 2013). This is similar to pastoral power, as it might appear gentle and benevolent both to the patriarch and those who are under their sway, but is in no way less powerful than dominative power (Roald, 2013). Other participants shared similar stories of men supporting them in child rearing, while in other domestic tasks they mainly received support from their mothers-in-law[57]. Shalu, is in her mid-30s, living in a nuclear family, and working in a well-reputed government job. She shared similar ideas, and mentioned that her husband is benevolent and supportive as he shared child rearing responsibilities:

> No, it does not work like this. We have to consider the whole family. For example, I want to be a mother but my husband's whole schedule will get disturbed.

The educated and working middle-class women widely make decisions based on collective values and not on individual preferences. Shalu discussed the traditional discourse that child rearing is the collective responsibility of the whole family (Sharma & Chaudhary, 2009). Simultaneously she switched to the modern discourse of receiving support from husband and highlights that gender roles are shifting across the household since fathers are actively participating in daily parenting. The existence of traditional and modern elements are of course a result of neoliberal and development reforms which sheds light on the multiple modernity of urban middle-class India. Women, therefore, prefer to make those choices where they can easily receive family support.

Shalu and Tara both referred to the importance of financial support provided by men to raise children. Financial support from husbands was seen as of paramount importance even by the working participants as the traditional gendered division of labour in India situates men as the key breadwinner and women as the primary person to perform all domestic and child bearing chores (Devi, 2000; Mathu & Jain, 2008). Non-working participants supported this traditional

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[57] In next finding I have elaborated on supportive roles of mothers-in-law in depth.

ideology too. For middle class women work is not a matter of survival unlike working class women (Thapan, 2009). Therefore a few participants preferred to be a housewife. These participants were usually from the older generation and belonged to the age group of 50s and most of them have small families of two children.

Some of the non-working participants mentioned that their husbands, once they are home from work, would spend time with children and teach them, making it easier for them to do domestic chores. Both working and non-working participants mentioned that their preference was to be involved with their children and family

For example, Isha who is a house wife admitted that a job can be an empowering experience, but did not find it to be the best option for her. Rather she shared similar ideas with Neha that working would have been a challenging situation, making it difficult to maintain a balance between work and family. They prioritised their families over work. Neha touched on the job issue particularly in relation to her motherly roles. She suggested the importance of mother's quality attention in children's lives and like others she gave importance to men's circumstances and their ability to financially support children in the context of reproductive decision making.

Sonia was earning a handsome salary, yet despite this she discussed the idea of men being the primary financial provider and called it a "father's responsibility" to look after children's expenses and to provide them a good life such as good schooling and education. Despite her being in an influential position in her professional life, she eschews these responsibilities even though she could also provide these facilities to her children, and can also afford to do so on her own. It is important to highlight that strengthening women's economic status often improves women's situation as they can empower themselves, yet it simultaneously intensifies their work pressure (Batliwala, 1994; Brydon & Chant, 1989; Gupte & Borkar, 1987; Sen & Grown, 1985). Therefore, by having supportive husbands, the participants were able to compartmentalise their life into traditional gender roles and work responsibilities and were thus better able to juggle home and work pressures. Again, this is culturally appropriate as women giving too much value to their career can raise questions about the ideas around ideal motherhood (Roopnarine et al, 1992). Some of the participants even rejected promotions so they could balance their family and work lives more easily.

Sana shared a similar approach to Sonia, and she had her own small business. It is getting common for middle-class women in India these days to run their small business for additional income, but their family remains their priority (Porter & Nagarajan, 2005). Women turn the traditional gendered discourses to their advantage by considering men as the key earner and themselves as primary care taker of their children and family, and they. Sana mentioned that this was just to have an additional income and the main family earner is her husband. The small business allows her to perform her domestic chores efficiently as she is able to adjust her working hours according to her family's priorities. Sana and Sonia's cases demonstrate how women make different decisions to achieve modern consumerist dreams to maintain their class and to contribute by providing a good education to their children so that they can compete in the neoliberal global economy. At the same time, they adhere to traditional values to provide quality attention to their children and family.

Social transformation and reproduction are both evident as both men and women are supporting each other by performing each other's tasks, as represented in several accounts including Tara's and Sonia's. Despite making good money in their professional work, women still discussed their and their husbands' primary tasks according to the traditional gendered division of labour. Patel (1999) suggested that women are capable of managing a good balance between negotiation and family harmony. The concept of house husbands is not readily approved within Indian society (Sudha et al, 2010). House husbands or unemployed men are often looked down on and are a source of mockery within Indian society as they do not fit within the masculine ideals of being a responsible husband (Sudha et al, 2010). It is of paramount importance to highlight that most of the domestic labour done by women in India is largely invisible, undervalued and unrecognised (Kambhampati & Rajan, 2004; Trivedi, 2013). When men perform domestic tasks this also remains invisible and unrecognised, and they are looked down on as performing roles of women in a patriarchal society where women rank lower and are considered trivial. Therefore, women preferred to adhere to their traditional gender roles both in cases where they earn good money or where they are housewives, as discussed in Anu's, Neha's and Isha's accounts.

The above discussion explains how modern neoliberal structural and cultural changes have influenced the traditional gendered division of labour, women entering the paid sector, working at higher positions, and women being able to be involved in some ways in choosing their life

partner. These all have influenced women's choices. In turn women's choices are also influencing structural and cultural changes where they retain certain aspects of traditions and reject others. This is evident through specific changes and the continuation of certain traditional patriarchal structures in the family structure and relationships. For example, men have started supporting their wives in child-care activities as discussed by Shalu, Tara, and other participants. At the same time, with knowledge of, and access to, different resources women might make individual choices modifying or resisting the patriarchal ideology when needed, for example in Kanu's case.

Bad mothers-in-law and good mothers-in-law: Receiving support from mothers-in-law

Kandiyoti (1988) argues that older women in classic patriarchy can hold power within a household through their sons:

> In classic patriarchy, the subordination to men is offset by the control older women attain over younger women. However, women have access to the only type of labour power they can control, and to old age security, through their married sons (1988, p.279).

This power and control that mothers-in-law could possess through their sons later in life often leads to criticism of mothers-in-law as oppressive and exploitative towards their daughters-in-law (Gangoli & Rew, 2011; Shah, 1998; Veera-Sanso, 1999). For instance, both Kanu and Tanya, despite being in paid jobs, accepted support from their maternal family, their mothers-in-law and their brother's wives, as they were scared of receiving ill-treatment from their mothers-in-law. Kanu had given birth to her third daughter and Tanya to her second daughter. Tanya mentioned that her mother-in-law always gave her a hard time, and especially at the birth of both her daughters, she would taunt and curse her for producing daughters only. Despite this she managed to provide a good upbringing to her daughters. Similarly, Kanu, who was working, mentioned that her mother-in-law had always been quite rude and dominating towards her. She nearly killed her second daughter when she was an infant by giving her opium and also she was not given a nutrient rich diet post-natally (it is quite common for new mothers to receive this from their families post-partum):

> I was wondering if maybe my mother-in-law would not even give me food to eat, so I called my brother's wife. I did not call my mother-in-law the third time because I saw her reaction during the second time. She [mother-in-law] used to say that there was no point of putting desi ghee [clarified butter] and panjiri [a post-natal diet] should be made with Dalda [vegetable butter]. At

the third time [when her third daughter was born] I thought that it was a daughter again so they would treat me badly. I was scared that they might kill my daughter. Once she gave opium to my second daughter when she was quite young, but she [mother-in-law] would not even let me buy any medicine.

Conducting female infanticide by using opium is quite common in India (Mathur, 2008). The above account illustrates the dominating and exploitative behaviour of Kanu's mother-in-law towards her and her daughter. There is a clear indication that the participant was intended to suffer malnutrition as a punishment for not producing a son: lactating mothers' health is affected if no rich diet is given to them. In India, post-natal diets are different from the regular food menu and are rich in nutrients and help women to recover after delivery. These diets are culturally a sign of showing that the new mother and new born are being taken care of as the rich diet also helps women's breast milk to be rich in nutrients for the infant. When women are denied these diets it is not only violence and discrimination against them, but also against their new born daughters. Married women are deemed to derive status from having a son: women who give birth to female children only do not usually get any help from mothers-in-law at all and are ill-treated by them (John et al, 2008; Sandhya, 2009; Sudha & Rajan, 1999). Despite this, the participant resisted this dominance by buying medicine for her daughter, and eventually saved her. She also mentioned that she warned her mother-in-law that if her daughter died, then she would be responsible for that. Interestingly, she never spoke of this incident to her husband, as she was scared of her husband breaking off relations with his mother. This is another aspect of women considering collective family values, even when they are treated badly, in order to maintain peace and harmony in their families. At the birth of her third daughter Kanu did not ask for her mother-in-law's assistance in order to avoid incidents similar to the opium one. Furthermore, she did not abort her third pregnancy out of fear of her mother-in-law. She had the ability to save her second daughter, give birth to the third, and socially ostracise her mother-in-law, suggesting that women have the capability to challenge exploitative patriarchal authority over their lives and choices.

Another participant, Kirti, a mother of a daughter, often had conflicts with her in-laws, especially her mother-in-law as she overtly resisted their dominance over her life choices. After the birth of her daughter she never expressed any desire to have a son, nor did she express any grief at not producing a son. For these reasons, she was often criticised by her affinal family members and within her social networks as lacking collective cultural values and having an inability to respect

the elderly. By showing such behaviour Kirti was not able to garner much support for herself from her in-laws; however, they continued to pamper their granddaughter. Both she and her husband wanted to challenge the son-preference ideology by setting an example within society that daughters are equal. An important point to note here is that both Kirti and her husband mutually decided not to have more children, yet she had to face much criticism from her in-laws, and her relationship with them was affected, while her husband's relationship with them was not. This demonstrates that women are socially expected to adhere to the traditional gender roles of a submissive and obedient daughter-in-law. Women who adhere to traditional gender roles usually receive support from and are treated benevolently by their families and social networks, and women who do not often have to face resistance and criticism (Kabeer, 1999; Shepherd et al, 2010, p.2). Because of this support women hesitate to make empowering choices as they are the risk of losing support (Kabeer, 1999) which would increase their work burden. This is even worse if they are in paid jobs.

It is important to note that a few other participants expressed their dislike of their mothers-in-law, yet they still accepted help from them to bring up their children. Though many women had regular maids who would come to do domestic chores, this help from maids did not usually extend to childcare because there is a risk of maids running away with the children and asking for ransom or trafficking the children. Also in order to provide homely love and care, women resorted to their mothers-in-law for support even when they did not like them. Another participant Ruchi, a mother of two also mentioned that she disliked her mother-in-law. But she planned her pregnancy in such a manner that her mother-in-law would be able to provide her support. She stated that:

> My mother said to me that it would be an intelligent decision to have a child at that time as my mother-in-law would help me in raising my children which won't be the case after a few years. Because my brother-in-law would get married too, and she would have to look after his children as well. She said that if I would have my second child at that time then I would not have to do anything: not to give the child a bath or clean them, or to take them to the toilet as my mother-in-law would do everything for me.

Ruchi, on her mother's advice, planned her pregnancy according to her mother-in-law's availability. Significantly the suggestion from her mother indicates an expectation that the mother-in-law would look after Ruchi's children, and she would be responsible for providing post-natal care, rather than Ruchi's own maternal family.

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The few participants who were not able to enjoy this domestic and child-care support because either their mothers-in-law had passed away, or their mothers-in-law were not eager to provide any support expressed their frustration and grief. In contrast, participants who received this support, as discussed in the above accounts, explained themselves to be in a better negotiating position while making different choices. At the same time, it cannot be denied that receiving support from mothers-in-law influenced women's reproductive choices. This influence, however, cannot be treated as tantamount to submission.

On the contrary, a few other participants openly mentioned that they did not have feelings of love and care for their mothers-in-law; rather they mentioned using collective values to receive their support. Thus, Riya a mother of a girl, was working and living in a nuclear family. Because she was working she asked her mother-in-law to help her in bringing up her daughter, and invited the mother-in-law to her house. Her mother-in-law supported her in domestic chores and in bringing up her daughter. She clearly stated that she did not like her mother-in-law because of her attitude; nevertheless, she did not hesitate to accept support from her. All of her other sisters-in-law have sons. Because of this her mother-in-law discriminated against her. She said that:

> When my daughter was born our maid said congratulations to my mother-in-law. She [mother-in-law] said it would have been better if it had been a boy. I immediately interrupted her and said, "You do not say this to anyone because we have to bring her up". After that she has not said anything in front of me…

Riya resisted the patriarchal notion of son-preference by confronting her mother-in-law, but continued to take support from her. She also mentioned not being fond of her mother-in-law at all. This signifies the importance of support received from her mother-in-law even though she has a different set of beliefs and values from her mother-in-law.

Vera-Sanso (1999) in her research, within Southern urban settings, explains that daughters-in-law are not always submissive and argues that this dynamic is prevalent in South India only. However, a similar pattern is evident within the North Indian urban settings where daughters-in-law are not always submissive and can pose a challenge to traditional dominance of their mothers-in-law (Ahuja, 1996). Not only that, in some cases daughters-in-law can also be abusive towards their own mothers-in-law and can exploit them as full time nannies for their children without offering any payment (Ahuja, 1996; Krishnaraj, 2010, p. 33). They distance themselves

from their mothers-in-law and prefer not to ask or expect any support for them. Instead they look for other ways to garner support such as from their maternal families.

The above depiction of domination is a simplified and generic one-sided version of these relationships. Next I will explore the supportive nature of mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law's relationships where a constant shift of power occurs between them and where they both operate within patriarchal constraints. Mothers-in-law can be very supportive (most of the participants mentioned their mothers-in-law to be supportive most of the times) of their daughters-in-law even at the birth of their granddaughters. Many participants who gave birth to daughters received support from their mothers-in-law, and were treated kindly. In Kitty's case, unlike Kanu and Tanya, her mother-in-law showed her support by providing post-natal support to her and her daughter. Kitty was in her late 20s; she was working, and was living in a joint family. She explained that she and her family (in-laws) were expecting a son, as her elder sister-in-law already had a daughter. By having a son, the family would have been tension free as there would be at least one son in the family, but she gave birth to a daughter:

> I had my daughter by a caesarean operation, and my mother-in-law took very good care of my daughter and she never said anything. I said to her once "Sorry, mummy, you wanted to have a grandson, but I could not give you one". She kissed my forehead and said "no worries, daughter, our granddaughter is also very lovely."

Kitty presented herself as a concerned daughter-in-law by discussing her desire to produce a son in order to provide a successor for her family, and when she did not she felt guilty. Interestingly, she articulated that she was quite educated and so she was aware that the sex of the child is determined by the male chromosomes. Despite being aware of this she indulged in feeling guilty and holding herself responsible for not producing a son. This indicates the dominance of traditional popular views, and shows how they affect educated women too. Women continue to bear the social burden and pressure of reproducing male heirs despite it being scientifically proven that male chromosomes determine the sex of the child (Purewal, 2010, p.51).

Also, expressing this guilt could be viewed as a culturally appropriate way of maintaining harmony within the family. Resisting could have resulted in conflict between her and her in-laws, and she might have lost the post-natal support as well. Women often accommodate to the cultural norms of an ideal wife in an attempt to achieve power and security within joint families (Derne, 1994, p. 218-19).

Kitty by showing a culturally appropriate attitude was not only able to gain support for child care and for herself, but she also acknowledged the power that her mother-in-law held over her, and the reproductive responsibilities she had towards her affinal family. For example, both Kitty and her husband mutually decided to have a baby after a few months of marriage. But she stated that prior to her getting pregnant her mother-in-law had been keeping track of her period dates. This reveals some kind of control, at least insofar as her mother-in-law was privy to her reproductive cycles, and as-such pressured her to reproduce as soon as possible. There is often a pressure on women to conceive as soon as possible and prove their fertility (Mathur, 2008) in order to prove their worth for the affinal family. However, Kitty portrayed her mother-in-law as supportive, loving, and caring, suggesting that power relations within patriarchal and collective settings can be cloaked under love, care, and virtue. Therefore, accepting the mothers-in-law's dominance can be beneficial to the daughters-in-law in some cases.

Many other participants mentioned their mothers-in-law as loving, caring and supporting. Mahi, a mother of two sons said that she shared a strong healthy relationship with her mother-in-law, and she had always supported her. Both of them would make most of the decisions mutually and would hardly consult her husband. She also mentioned her mother-in-law supporting her in child-rearing tasks and domestic chores. Unlike husbands, mothers-in-law would usually support their daughters-in-law in domestic chores especially during their reproductive and post-reproductive phases (Pant, 2000; Radkar, 2003). It is quite common for working women to receive support from their mothers-in-law (Pant, 2000) which is considered quite beneficial for them as it allows them to look after their family and simultaneously re-join the workforce:

> Chetna: The most important decision I made was to have a child immediately when I got married. Because my mother-in-law also said that "I am alive now and I will help you in bringing up the child as you are working". So the decision was made to have one child at least…
> Anu: My mother-in-law is retired now hence she could give time to my daughter and look after her nicely. I have the full cooperation of my family. That is why I am able to work again.

In India, joint families are often termed to be oppressive, suffocating women's personal goals (Thapan, 2009, p.103). Nuclear families are viewed to be better for women as joint families in India are patriarchal and patrilineal, thus they are usually termed to be constraining their agency (John et al, 2008; Sandhya, 2009). Nuclear families, according to the National Family Health Survey 2005, have recorded a steady increase in the urban areas (Chadda & Debb, 2013). Liu (2012), on the other hand, argues that the nuclear family structure, which is popular in the West,

can hinder women's careers and increases the domestic burden on them; whereas support from extended or from within a joint family enhances women's career choices and lessens the burden on them. Indian studies among the urban middle-class also reveal that joint families provide better support system in various spheres for family members, and especially for working women as their children are looked after by the in-laws (Chadda & Debb, 2013; Donner, 2008). This pattern was quite common among my participants as the accounts illustrate that mothers-in-law proved to be a great support for these participants not only in looking after the children and domestic chores, but also in pursuing their career goals after the child's birth. This suggests that for the urban middle-class women support from mothers-in-law in child-care and domestic tasks benefits women (Donner, 2008). Particularly in urban India, people living in nuclear families continue to share strong bonds with their extended families, and support each other financially, emotionally, and in any way possible (Kashyap, 2007).

Chetna's account highlights the eagerness of her mother-in-law to give her a helping hand as she was working. But also it is a way of influencing women's reproductive choices that they reproduce as soon as possible, as mentioned earlier. In India, married women's status is associated with fertility and having an heir to take the family lineage further is important for the family. Participants who were working and living in nuclear families discussed receiving support from their mothers-in-law, in which their mothers-in-law would come and reside with them for a few years or would make frequent visits to help them bring up the child.

By supporting working daughters-in-law, mothers-in-law would enjoy economic benefits (most of the times finances are joint), and they would be considered as good, nice, kind, loving, supportive and liberal mothers-in-law. Women's earnings in the neoliberal economy among the middle-class play a vital role in maintaining family's class and achieving consumer based aspirations (Belliappa, 2013; Radhakrishnan, 2009). Furthermore, daughters-in-law are usually viewed as threats to the strong maternal-son relationship (Derne, 2006 & 1994; Rew et al, 2013; Sonpar, 2005). They are viewed capable of persuading their husbands to leave their parents and form nuclear households (Kishwar, 1997). Therefore, it becomes very important for mothers-in-law to maintain good relationships with at least one daughter-in-law (Vera-Sanso, 1999, p.587). By having a strong mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship both mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are securing support for themselves. For young women it is in their

reproductive and child rearing phase, and for older women it is security for their old age. In their interviews Rita and Kiran mentioned that they look after their mothers-in-law in a hope that they could set an example for their sons, who (with their wives) might look after them in their old age. Moreover, participants often mentioned their husbands' strong bonds with their mothers, so by being on good terms with their mothers-in-law they were also able to maintain harmonious and healthy relationships with their husbands.

Both mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law negotiate within patriarchal constraints in ways that allow them to fulfil their practical needs. Both of them are situated within patriarchal structures and their status is related to patriarchal ideologies such as controlling sons and their wives and maintaining a good relationship with mothers-in-law as women have to rely mainly on affinal family support. This is done under the banner of love, care, respect and support, often from both sides, where a constant shift of power between daughters and mothers-in-law is evident.

The importance of maintaining good relationships with mothers-in-law was highlighted in the stories of non-working women as well reflecting that this support was not exclusive to working women. Non-working women such as Radha explained that her mother-in-law supported all of her daughters-in-law during and after their deliveries. She said that:

> We used to live in a joint family and my mother-in-law helped me and my sisters-in-law, in total three deliveries, in a period of one short month. My mother-in-law never got tired nor did she ever complain. She helped in three deliveries within in one month and helped all of us (daughters-in-law). Yes, she did everything within a four day span. Even the nurses asked her, "Auntie how many more daughters-in-law do you have?" [Laughter].

This participant candidly highlights the supportive role of her mother-in-law towards all of her daughters-in-law. She mentioned that her mother-in-law never got tired suggests several things. One is that the mother-in-law felt responsible towards her daughters-in-law and wanted to maintain good relationships with all of her daughters-in-law. And the other is enjoyment and happiness her mother-in-law got as her daughters-in-law were providing them with their family heirs.

The above discussion explains that women develop strategies to negotiate and resist within patriarchal and collective constraints in a manner where they can fulfil their own interests. They can gain social support and respect within their families and social networks by carrying out a front stage performance as pretending to be good daughters-in-law and ideal wives. They aim to

keep their family together and maintain harmony, by being nice to their mothers-in-law even when they were not fond of them. This allowed them to receive support for themselves, and their children, alleviating their work burden in the wake of modern neoliberal reforms.

The discussion suggests the transformation and reproduction of the classic patriarchal family structure in which mothers-in-law traditionally gained power and control over their daughters-in-law through their sons. In general, mothers-in-law also had to be nice, loving and caring to get respect and maintain their authority (under the auspices of love and care); being rude and authoritative would not be effective since it is highlighted that women such as Kanu and Tanya promptly rejected their authority over their lives when they could not find any benefit from them. Participants such as Mahi and Kitty who spoke of having a very close and loving relationship with their mothers-in-law actually received maximum support and benefits from their mothers-in-law. Moreover, there were many participants who were not scared or oppressed by their mother-in-law's authority; rather they took support from them tacitly even when they did not like them. However, it must be acknowledged that mothers-in-law possess some kind of authority at least over the participants' choices which they may exercise tactfully through love and care.

Demands for a sibling

Often, out of a feeling of loneliness, single children felt the need for a companion of similar age who can provide social and emotional support to them. Because of this, children might demand a sibling, and in due course that demand has often changed women's decisions not to have any more children. The collectivist culture encourages sharing of resources and family harmony. In the joint family system sibling relationships are given immense importance and are maintained throughout life (Bomb, 2005). Because of this, couples often face pressure to have one more child from their family members and acquaintances.

Mothers in India, especially among the middle-class, are portrayed as self-sacrificing, and their main aim is to provide emotional fulfilment for their families and children (Almeida, 1990; Byreshwar, 2014; Krishnaraj, 2010; Radhakrishnan, 2009). In some cases, this fulfilment can also mean women changing their firm decisions not to have any more children for the happiness of their existing children. Participants in this study, for instance, mentioned that they considered their families complete and did not plan to have more children. However, their children's pressure to have a sibling had been a significant factor in changing their decision and having the

second child. For example, Chetna was in her late 30s when she had another child because her son wanted a sibling:

> After the birth of my son I did not want to have a second child. Because I knew it would be difficult to bring up the second child because of my age [getting old]. That is why I did not want to have the second child. But, when my boy was 3-4 years he started feeling very lonely, and because of that my husband always said that there should be two children. He also used to say a saying that a single child is neither happy at home nor outside. Once my son came from his school and started crying. He said that his class teacher asked how many of them had any siblings and he was the only one who did not raise his hand. He said that he wanted a brother.

Because of her increasing age and her job Chetna did not want to have another child. However, her son's emotional account in which he shared his feelings of loneliness due to the absence of a sibling influenced her to change her mind. Her son's account was based on a comparison with benefits that other children enjoyed as they had a sibling. Siblings often prove to be a good support for each other, which results in better development in different spheres of life such as education and socialisation (Lobato et al, 1988). They are expected to maintain solidarity throughout their lives, be it sharing happiness on auspicious occasions or sharing sorrows in adversities (Ramu, 2006, p.1).

Chetna's husband's preferred to have two children in order to provide a companion to their son. For this he used a saying which is indicative of popular social beliefs, highlighting the importance of sibling relationships within India.

These ideas of sibling solidarity and support are widely held in India as highlighted in Chetna's accounts. Chetna mentioned that when she wanted to abort her second pregnancy she visited several doctors. But all of them refused to provide an abortion to her, and suggested she continue with her pregnancy. They explained that a two children family was not a large family and two children are needed (again highlighting the importance of sibling relationship). One of the female doctors counselled her and explained the importance of having two children, such as the long lasting support that they will get from each other. Sibling relationships are often the "most long-lasting relationships" (Bomb, 2005, p.1) which provide support to the children even after the death of parents. This counselling session together with her son's pressure influenced her decision. She said the doctor told her that even though she would be paid to conduct the abortion she nonetheless recommended continuing with the pregnancy. Overall her son's pressure to have a sibling, accompanied by explanations from her husband and the doctors supported the importance of providing social and emotional support by providing a sibling to her son. In India,

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doctors' influence often plays a vital role in influencing women's reproductive choices (Gupta, 2010). However, within Indian collective settings this could cross professional boundaries and doctors might feel a cultural obligation to advise the patients along the lines of their socio-cultural benefits. Other participants also mentioned that their doctors provided them good advice for their benefits.

A similar story was shared by Priya who considered her family to be complete after the birth of her first son. But when she went to get her intra-uterine device replaced she was counselled by the doctor who suggested she should have one more child:

> I went to the doctor to get the intra-uterine device replaced then he counselled me very politely and said "see *beta* [child] you should have one more kid and you should have it now you still have the time [still young to conceive]". His words influenced me a lot. And also my elder son always kept on asking for a sibling. If he ever went to somebody's house he used to come and say "he/she has a brother he/she has a sister. I have no one with me. Who shall I play with? I do not have a brother or a sister." That also affected me that my *bacha* [child] was continuously asking for a sibling from me…

Her doctor did not follow the regular doctor or client's professional relationship and addressed Priya as "child". This is quite common in India where old people often offer advice to younger people.

Participants reported these suggestions as a selfless and kind gesture where doctors or other non-family members showed their love and concern towards participants. This often leads women to feel confined within the role of mother (Krishnaraj, 2012). If they do not follow this trajectory this could lead to questions from their families and social networks about their love and feelings of care towards their children.

Monika touched on this aspect, and mentioned when she and her husband decided not to have a second child, despite her daughter's continuous demands to have a sibling, their friends raised questions about their concerns of their daughter's needs and asked them what kind of parents they were:

> Our family members and friends were pressuring us to have a second child. They asked us why we were doing this to our daughter as she needed a sibling. Also, my grandmother taught my daughter to pressure us to have another baby. So she became more adamant to have a sibling. Then we changed our mind even after conceiving [her second pregnancy]. We were confused for few days, but then finally I had my son.

Ideas around what children want and what parents can do are socially and culturally expected as discussed in Monika's account. The participant and her husband were questioned by their

acquaintances for being uncompassionate towards their daughter's needs. The external pressure and suggestions indicate the idea of shared responsibility for others' welfare where people do not view it merely as the couple's personal affair, and try to influence or control couples' or women's reproductive choices. In this case the participant did not report their friends' pressure as any form of interference in their personal lives as such acts are often acceptable. In India, for instance, peer-pressure is often articulated as advice (John et al, 2008). These external pressures with children's pressure for siblings' act as a catalyst in influencing women's or couples' decisions.

This also signifies that ideas around completing a family are not stagnant and change according to women's changing socio-cultural circumstances. Preferences and family situations highlight the complex and inconstant nature of decision making. This explains women's ability to plan, negotiate and change their decisions based on their circumstances. Women's negotiations in relation to changing their decisions were based on their motherly roles. Kashi, a mother of two, a daughter and a son, shares a similar story in which she mentioned that she changed her decision because of her daughter's wish to have a brother.

Kashi thought her family was complete as she was not able to conceive a second time because of her medical condition. However, as her daughter grew older she insisted that Kashi should adopt a son so she could have a brother. Kashi said: "My daughter implored us to have a brother for her". Her husband agreed with their daughter's idea of adopting a son. She also stated that "we [she and her husband] considered her [daughter] as our son and daughter, but she insisted on having a brother then I adopted my sister's son." Her daughter's wish played a crucial role in influencing her decision.

As Kashi only had one daughter she articulated the idea of gender equality by considering her daughter to be her son. However, later on, the ideas around family size changed owing to her daughter's needs and her desires to have a male sibling. Here her social role as a mother, to cater for her daughter's needs, shaped her decision. This procedure also involved financial expenditure, but she did not hesitate as her daughter expressed a strong wish to have a brother. Owing to Kashi's medical condition her daughter suggested the option of adoption from her auntie. Here the participant's own sister turned out to be a great support to her and she continued

with her pregnancy when she earlier wanted to abort. This exemplifies how siblings should behave (Bomb, 2005).

However, in a few cases participants did not fulfil the wish of their children and did not provide them with a sibling. Most of these mothers who did not have a second child were from the younger generation in their late 20s and 30s, and were both working and non-working. It was mainly because women mentioned that it was too much work, responsibility, and expensive to keep on having children. However, this discussion has demonstrated the extent to which collective values play a vital role in influencing women's choices. Because of the way the society has been structured in India individual choices are often influenced by collective interests, which might or might not lead to women's empowerment. The examples of how the participants in this research navigate their decision-making within this collective society provide a portrait of them, as loving and caring mothers, with knowledge of collective values in considering their children's needs.

Conclusion

The above analysis illustrates that decision making within patriarchal and collective structures in a modern neoliberal society is a complex process requiring women to employ a great many strategies in order to achieve their desired interests. The Indian values system reinforces family values over individualistic choices (Rao et al, 2003, p.180). This was evident throughout the accounts of women in their pre-marital and post marital lives. The institution of marriage is undergoing significant modern changes among the urban middle-class such as the emphasis on grand expensive weddings, and providing the couples with the opportunity to establish contact prior to their marriage. However, collective values such as the role of families in arranging marriages remains unchallenged. Marriage remains a socio-religious institution between two families because women's individual choices often get sacrificed for patriarchal family honour and values. However, women are able to resist and negotiate, but this can pose challenges for them if they directly resist patriarchal structures and this may lead to them being an outcast as happened in Tara's case. Further, where women are unable to follow collective values, such as in Kirti's case, this can often lead to attraction of social criticism and a lack of support from family members. Collective values remain important and are also beneficial for women in most cases to gain support within their affinal families. The collective elements became more important for

women with neoliberal development reforms. Because increasing numbers of women are now in paid employment and have to spend time on their children's education they require support from their families for child-care and domestic chores. Interestingly, it has increased women's financial independence, made them more socially dependent, and influenced their decisions. The majority of the participants prefer to secure child-care and domestic support for themselves prior to having their children. However, this does not indicate that women's choices are only constrained, rather they often transform the structures through their choices as is evident in a range of different cases such as Kirti's, Sheetal's, and Tara's. This again highlights that agency is both transformative and reproductive (Hays, 1994).

In patriarchal families it is often argued that the eldest male family member has all the decision making authority and women are oppressed (Rao, 1982). Social transformation in the urban areas has challenged the strict patriarchal family structure and traditional gender roles. Husbands and mothers-in-law have become more supportive of the participants, whether working or non-working, in regards to child-care activities and domestic tasks. This help and support have influenced women's choices, and have also allowed them to develop negotiation and resistance strategies according to their situations to achieve their goals.

 At the same time, it is important to mention that these transformations have not completely evaded the traditional patriarchal structures. Rather the analysis supported the theories of bargaining with patriarchy (Kandiyoti, 1988) and benevolent patriarchy (Kilmartin, 2015), suggesting that power relations can be under protestations of love, virtue, and care in patriarchal settings. This was widely evident where women were receiving support from their husbands and mothers-in-law in order to meet their interests, for example, Shalu's, Chetna's Tara's and Kitty's cases. Moreover, a constant shift in power remained evident within relations, mainly between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. This illustrates the complex nature of power. Patel argued that "power is not a monolithic system, but a system of overlapping complexities and contradictions" (Patel, 1999, p.430). Furthermore, this also explains that structure, agency and culture are interrelated and are shaping each other (Hays, 1994). This is visible through specific changes and the continuation of certain traditional patriarchal structures in the family structure and relationships.

Moreover, unlike suggestions made in previous studies such as Barge et al. 2003; Char et al, 2010; Gupta, 2010 and Puri & Adams, 2011 that provided a generic view of women's oppressed and subordinated experiences, my research strongly shows that viewpoint should not be accepted as universal. I found that women acted as agents of both social transformation and the reproduction of social structures while practising their agency. My research showed that women played a significant role in making their choices within existing patriarchal constraints even where their choices were influenced by different socio-cultural factors. It was not a case of simply subordination of women. Subordination is linked to "authority, control and coercion" (Connell, 1987, p.96-97). Though patriarchal control over their reproduction and sexuality was evident to an extent, I observed that women were able to negotiate, manipulate, and even resist this control while exercising their choices.

Through a close examination of women's decision making I discovered that women have autonomy, ability to exercise their agency, meet their interests, and in some cases are capable of empowering themselves by challenging patriarchal ideologies. It is important to note that empowerment might not always be the best choice for them, and they prefer to meet their interests which might not lead to their empowerment. As suggested by Patel (1999) "Women are active agents in their own spheres and exert pressure, negotiate and resist in spaces they find and create within patriarchy" (p. 431) elucidating the complexity and multilayered nature of women's decision making in relation to important decisions in their lives.

Chapter 6: Technology, modernity and tradition: A complex interweaving

This chapter highlights urban middle-class contemporary practices, values and aspirations around family size norm, reproductive health, family planning strategies, and son-preference. These values and practices are influenced by neoliberal reforms and government sponsored family planning programmes for the purpose of socio-economic development as discussed in Chapter Two. The influence of neoliberalisation in regards to the middle-class is not limited only to employment opportunities but also extends into the reproductive arena. The participation of domestic and international companies in reproductive sectors has led to the easy availability of contraception, the mushrooming of reproductive clinics and hospitals, and an increase in caesarean deliveries among the urban middle-class (Donner, 2004; Simon-Kumar, 2007). At the same time family planning, which was once introduced as a nationalist and development discourse, has now become an indispensable part of middle-class values. Participants' interviews were analysed in view of this scenario of consumerism, health services, and family planning. Women, as discussed in this chapter, engage with different forms of technology within their social settings to achieve their reproductive interests. Throughout this process of securing their own interests technology can be seen as both shaped by social cultural settings and shaping social structures; that is, technology and society are mutually constitutive.

This chapter will discuss women's contemporary reproductive interests as they seek to maintain their reproductive health and well-being, aspire to bodily integrity, have a small family, regulate their fertility and have a son. Women used modern reproductive technologies to control conception and birth[58] and for the purpose of prenatal diagnosis and sex-selection. The modern reproductive technologies that the participants used were: contraceptive technologies, ultrasound technology, and medical termination of pregnancy. In addition, the participants also practised spiritual beliefs (i.e., seeking help from spiritual healers) and traditional practices or 'technologies' (specific sexual behaviour, fasting, specific diets) to control conception, and to practise son-preference.

Interestingly, achieving these reproductive interests was often an emotional experience for the participants who experienced happiness, love, feelings of achievement, being supported, anger

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[58] Although reproductive technologies are also used for assisting reproduction and for genetic purposes, this chapter only discusses technology in relation to conception, prenatal diagnosis and the prevention of birth.

and frustration, stress, embarrassment, feelings of subordination, discrimination, shyness and shame.

The use of both modern and traditional resources by women to meet their contemporary needs is illustrated through the concept of multiple modernities. Multiple modernities embraces the observation that contemporary social structures tend to shape women's reproductive agency in a manner where some aspects of traditional values are retained. This signifies the complex web of interaction between modern and traditional as modernity incorporates patriarchy and development, equality and inequality, liberation and oppression, as discussed in Chapter Two.

There are three main findings in this chapter. The first is about women's reproductive health. I found that reproductive health, well-being and aspiration to achieve bodily integrity as PGN which may also often lead to women meeting their SGN by challenging the patriarchal authority over their bodies.

The second finding is the popularity of small family size. My findings showed how participants used abortion and both natural and artificial contraceptive technologies to manage their family size. I uncovered how the participants' class based habitus and educational level shaped their everyday experiences in regards to strong norms on family size such as experiences of pride, honour, shame, stress, embarrassment, and anxiety.

The third finding was about ways in which participants engaged with different forms of technologies to have a son: medical technology, the services of spiritual healers and the practice of traditional beliefs.

Technology and society are mutually constitutive

Technologies can have both empowering and disempowering effects on women's lives (Everts, 1998; Mies, & Shiva, 1993; Sweetman, 1998). There is no universally accepted definition of technology. Different scholars, NGOs, and social programme developers have defined and employed technology differently. The word technology originated from the Greek term *techne*, which means the knowledge of how to produce things (Burkitt, 2002). Though technology in the popular sense these days is mainly understood as the use of artificial human artefacts, technology cannot be limited to machinery or production only (Burkitt, 2002, p.222). People engage with technology to reach their goals within their local socio-cultural, economical, and political

environment and the use of technology is embedded in socio-cultural elements. It encompasses artefacts, cultural knowledge, cultural skills, access to cultural resources, activities, cultural rituals and social relations (Matthewman, 2011). Therefore, technologies cannot be viewed in isolation from people's desires and socio-cultural settings.

Technology and society are mutually constitutive, and influence each other, because "Technologies interact deeply with society and culture, and this involves the mutual influence of substantial uncertainty, and historical ambiguity, eliciting resistance, accommodation, acceptance, and even enthusiasm." (Misa, 2003, p.7). Matthewman (2011) also sheds light on the complexity of technology:

> We structure our worlds with technology; we perform our reality with it. Technologies, in turn perform us. They are agents of social change and of social stability, helping to produce self and society. At such they are forms of order and forms of life (Matthewman, 2011, p. 175).

Therefore, in this chapter, technology is understood as an essential part of urban middle-class women's lives with which women engage within modern neoliberal and patriarchal settings. Importantly, technology is also gendered, and cannot not be viewed as gender neutral. In my research technology will be discussed as women possessing knowledge (modern, spiritual, and traditional) and the skills to apply that knowledge in order to meet their goals. These goals are met by accessing modern, spiritual and traditional technologies.

Because of their socio-cultural settings the participants in my research had the knowledge and ability to practise spirituality and traditional practices including fasting or consuming specific diets or engaging in sexual practices based on lunar calendar calculations. Women also used traditional contraceptive technologies, both non-material, and natural, to regulate their fertility and manage family size (Basu, 2005, p.304). Participants mentioned using the rhythm method, not having sex at all, or males ejaculating outside of the vagina during intercourse. Participants also had access to modern reproductive technologies because of their educational and financial advantages. These technologies were used to manage their family size, to practice son-preference, to regulate their fertility or to maintain their reproductive health.

Modern reproductive technologies can be understood as the new form of technologies that are designed to intervene in the process of human reproduction for a range of purposes (Gupta, 2000, p.15). These interventions are mainly carried out for prenatal and genetic diagnostic purposes, especially for sex-selection, the prevention of birth and conception, and also for assisting

reproduction (Gupta, 2000, p.15). Condoms, Copper-T, sterilisation, birth control pills, injections, emergency contraceptive pills (the morning after pill), ultrasound, and medical termination of pregnancy are all technologies that were cited by participants. These technologies allow women to empower themselves by exercising better control over their fertility and sexuality (Chapman & Gordon, 1998; Prabhu, 1998). Moreover, it is important to note that all of the participants in this research began their reproductive lives either after or during the 1980s. All of them had access to contraceptive technologies, safe and legal abortions, and ultrasound scanning which was introduced in India in 1975 and they had an extensive choice of technologies[59].

Technological development is an important component of modernity among the Indian middle-class (Qayum & Ray, 2011). However, as mentioned by Kaviraj (2000) modernity was not written on a "clean slate"; thus, it can never be homogenous, and takes multiple meanings in different spaces (p.137). Similarly, technology takes different socio-cultural meanings in different social spaces, and is often used for "purposes other than originally intended" (Gupta, 2000, p.16; Matthewman, 2011). The new reproductive technologies are not politically or socially neutral; instead these technologies are capable of transforming social relationships, and also get transformed "in their use and meaning" (Unnithan-Kumar, 2010, p.5) For example, in India the use of contraceptive technologies is not only employed for the purpose of individual fertility management; there is a strong political motive to control population as well (Gupta, 2000). The population control narrative gained stronger ground in India in the early years of neoliberal reform when the Indian government encouraged the notion of small families to eradicate poverty, and for the purpose of socio-economic development (Dutta, 2008). Participants in my research used new reproductive technologies for these very purposes: family planning to have a quality life, being able to afford different consumer goods and able to provide a good education for their children.

Technology helps women to meet their PGN and SGN (Everts, 1998) and this has increased women's dependency on, and engagement with, technology. Women engage in technological processes to meet PGN, and they can also subvert the culturally normative scripts of these

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[59] Participants who had children till 1994 were easily able to use ultrasound for the purpose of sex-detection. But after 1994 sex-detection became illegal, and women were no longer able to avail this service legally.

technologies to meet their SGN. SGN are identified by women because of their subordinate position in their society and they help women in gaining control over their bodies (Moser, 1993, p.39). In this chapter, SGN could be understood as women resisting patriarchal control over their bodies and fertility by obtaining an abortion or using contraceptive technologies without their husband's or family's permission.

PGN are the needs which women identify within their subordinated position, and these needs help them to perform their traditional gender roles efficiently[60]. Maintaining health and performing traditional gender roles are important examples of PGN since good health helps women to perform the domestic chores easily and efficiently (Moser, 1993, p. 40). Many feminist scholars have highlighted the link between PGN and SGN (Datta, 2006; Disney, 2008; Moser, 1993; Taylor, 1999). For instance, access to safe contraception, reproductive rights, reproductive health and well-being, living a violence free life, and achieving bodily integrity address both PGN and SGN (Disney, 2008). The participants engaged with different technological processes to maintain their reproductive health, to ensure their well-being, and to achieve bodily integrity and, in many cases, while doing so they fulfilled both PGN and SGN.

I will now turn to how reproductive health, well-being and bodily integrity are interconnected. Nussbaum (2000) defines bodily integrity as:

> Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction (Nussbaum, 2000, p.231).

This definition sets out what could be major goals for women that can help them in achieving control over their bodies and fertility practised their agency and be able to maintain their safety and overall well-being. Key concerns for the participants were controlling their own fertility, and maintaining their reproductive health and well-being, which accord with Nussbaum's observations.

An Indian study on women's reproductive health demonstrates its effects on their well-being, daily activities and chores (D'Souza et al, 2013, p.3). Well-being has been discussed from different perspectives such as happiness, life satisfaction, or an ability to perform different regular activities on a daily basis (Nayar, 2011; Pollard & Lee, 2003; Seligman, 2002; Sengupta,

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[60] For further discussion on PGN and SGN see Chapter Two.

2014). In this study, women's well-being, based on participants' accounts, will be conceptualised as women achieving happiness and satisfaction by being able to perform their regular activities, such as domestic chores, professional work, and looking after children and families, without experiencing any major reproductive health problems. The value of conceptualising reproductive health as a component of well-being is shown by participants who were unable to perform regular chores because of reproductive health problems and as a result experienced stress, anxiety, embarrassment and shame.

The urban middle-class women in this study discussed their reproductive health not merely in physical terms, but also in regards to their decision-making ability. They generally met these needs by engaging with various reproductive technologies as they possessed popular cultural and educational knowledge and skills to practice them. All of my participants, irrespective of their age group or educational status, were aware of contraception and other family planning resources. This highlights the popularity of family planning programmes, which originally started in the 1950s in India among the urban middle-class. Therefore, by being able to ensure their reproductive health and well-being, women will be able to achieve bodily integrity as they will have better opportunities to achieve greater control over their bodies and fertility as suggested in Nussbaum's (2000) definition.

Women's reproductive health

Bourdieusian feminists have argued that the body is both classed and gendered (Fowler, 2003). Gender and class are closely intertwined and affected the participants' experiences because "the gender classification, with its rigorous male/female dichotomy, comes to life via the habitus" (Krais, 2006, p.121).

The participants widely employed modern reproductive technologies to maintain their health, and to ensure their well-being with the aim of achieving bodily integrity. For example, the choice of contraception was based on the aim of maintaining healthy bodies and being able to enjoy their sexuality. Most of the participants played an active role in choosing contraception; many preferred Copper-T as it was cheap and easily accessible (Iyengar & Iyengar, 2000). On the other hand, some of the participants did not prefer Copper-T because of the various side effects like bleeding, cramps, or Copper-T slipping out of place (ARHP, 2009; Iyengar & Iyengar, 2000). Women mentioned that pills could affect their body negatively, such as weight gain problems, so

they were not very popular. In some cases women also had to suffer the unintended consequences such as the side-effects of the technologies such as cases of caesarean births, abortions, or contraceptive use and this affected their overall well-being. For instance, participants often mentioned that after caesarean deliveries it was not possible for them to perform their regular chores as efficiently as they did before the operation. Births by caesarean sections are lifesaving, but women often complain regarding health complications after these deliveries (Gibbons, et al, 2010; Sinha, 2010; Souter, 2008). This was borne out by my participants who had caesarean deliveries: all suffered some sort of health complications. For instance, during the interviews they mentioned that after their deliveries they experienced weight gain problems, weakness, pain or an inability to perform stretching or lifting tasks. Participants emphasised the importance of maintaining physically healthy bodies both pre-pregnancy and post-pregnancy, and viewed healthy bodies as ideal bodies. All of the participants wanted to maintain their health and well-being in order to perform the regular domestic chores, or professional chores. Women did not articulate the ideas of looking attractive or sexy showing that body image is not just about how others view us, but also how people want to view themselves (Thapan, 2009, p.106).

Caesarean sections have increased in India, according to a WHO report, and can have harmful side-effects on women's health (Gibbons, et al, 2010; Sinha, 2010; Souter, 2008). Caesarean birth has now become very popular among the urban middle-class Indian women and is also a sign of good financial status in neoliberal India (Donner, 2004). These deliveries are expensive in comparison to vaginal deliveries but middle-class women are financially able to afford them. These operations reduce labour pains, as well as being life-saving for many women (Donner, 2004; Souter, 2008). In contrast, poor Indian women in remote areas have limited access to reproductive health services and because of financial constraints have limited choices to ensure their well-being (D'Souza et al, 2013, p.2). Owing to their middle-class status, the participants in my research had easy access to caesarean services. Around one fourth of the participants had obtained a caesarean section, and the majority of these participants had had children after the 1990s.

Institutional deliveries are an important goal of Indian family planning and health policies (Bajpai, 2014; Shabnam, n.d). As a result of prolonged development policies institutional

deliveries have now become a norm among the urban middle-class and all of my participants had their deliveries in hospitals. With the popularity and acceptance of institutional deliveries among the affluent sections of society a high rate of caesarean deliveries has been recorded among them (Pai et al, 1999; Shabnam, n.d.). In India, the cases of caesarean deliveries are higher in private hospitals than in the government hospitals, since the private sector is more profit driven, an important feature of neoliberal reforms. It is possible that caesarean deliveries could have been performed even when it was not medically necessary. For urban middle-class delivering in private hospitals is a status symbol and almost all of the participants had their deliveries in private institutions.

Women themselves also request caesarean deliveries sometimes (MacDorman et al., 2008) particularly when they are hoping for a less painful experience. For instance, Jessica and Isha requested caesarean deliveries because they did not want to go through labour pains. Isha mentioned that she requested a caesarean delivery as soon as her labour pain started because she thought she would die of the pain. Similarly, other participants who had had caesarean deliveries explained it as either a life-saving or a less painful delivery experience.

Often participants whose first delivery was a caesarean found that their second and third pregnancies then had to be by caesarean delivery. They said that their health problems were further aggravated in their second and third pregnancies. These participants were warned by doctors not to have more than three pregnancies as they could be fatal, or could lead to serious health complications. Caesarean births both benefited and created problems for these women.

Achieving bodily integrity by maintaining well-being was quite crucial for the participants, and it was an important factor that they considered while making their reproductive decisions. For example, both Sana and Tara had their children in the 1990s, and were in their early 20s when they had caesarean operations. After their deliveries they planned their next pregnancies and took their health into consideration:

> Tara: I wanted to have an abortion. Also the doctor had already warned us to maintain at least two year spacing between children because of the caesarean surgery. So, for the sake of my health that was better, so I insisted on this. I had the abortion within the first month of my pregnancy.
> Sana: After having two caesarean deliveries there was no point in having more children. And, I already had this in my mind that I will not have more than two children in any case [Sana and her husband used condoms to plan their family].

These quotes suggest that the urban middle-class Indian women in my study placed immense importance on their health and well-being while planning to become pregnant. In so doing they were subscribing to the ideas of the small family norm, safe pregnancies and safe motherhood as encouraged in the state sponsored RCH programme[61]. Safe motherhood, pregnancy and family planning are usually attainable with modern reproductive technology. The wide availability of contraception and reproductive health services helped the participants to space out their children and avoid pregnancy and thus manage their health and control their fertility and choices.

People adapt, retain, adjust and reject certain bodily dispositions on the basis of the access they have to different resources (Talukdar, 2014, p.143). In this case, this applies to the access to different reproductive technologies that women have because of their financial, class and educational status.

Transformation was also evident in other participants' accounts. The participants did not want to have a baby unless they were physically healthy and mentally ready to have a child. All the participants who had caesarean deliveries mentioned having supportive husbands who did not pressure them to get pregnant, and respected their health and well-being. Because of this, these women felt happy and satisfied in their marriages. However, they stated that even if they were pressured by their husbands or family members to have more than three children, in no case would they ever agree with them. They viewed their own bodies as incapable of supporting subsequent pregnancies. With this understanding women were also prepared to resist the patriarchal control of their families and husbands, if required. This highlights the point that I mentioned earlier that women can subvert the culturally normative scripts technologies to meet their SGN.

The participants who had caesarean deliveries for their first and/or second child, and only had daughters, mentioned that they experienced stress and anxiety. These women were aware that they could not have more than three deliveries, but they wanted to have a son. This increased the pressure on them to bear a son with each successive pregnancy. One such case is of Isha who had her first child in mid-2000, and was in her late 20s. Though she mentioned that the caesarean operation was a lifesaving experience for her, she suffered weight gain and abdominal weakness problems after her caesarean deliveries. She articulated the inability of her body to bear

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[61] See Chapter Two for discussion on RCH programme.

subsequent pregnancies because she had already had two caesarean deliveries, and could only take one more chance, which she wished to do, as she had a strong desire to have a son. Isha expressed her frustration and worries as well as her concerns for her health and well-being that was adversely affected in subsequent caesarean deliveries:

It is your body and how many times can you cut it [for caesarean deliveries]?

Isha's account clearly suggests although a caesarean birth has been beneficial to her, the aftermath has constrained her choices.

Another use of technology by women to maintain their reproductive health is sterilisation. Sterilisation in India is still not a popular method of family planning for young couples, and is often conducted a few years after achieving a desired family size (Saheli, 2001). It creates hurdles in procreating later, for instance, if a child dies, and the parents want to have another child. Sana, for example, had a boy in her second delivery after which she wanted to undergo a tubectomy, but the doctor refused. The doctor mentioned that often people would come back to them to undo the operation when their sons die, but she did not mention anything about a daughter's death leading to the undoing of sterilisation. It is common for women who suffer child-loss to regret sterilisation (Singh et al, 2012). The doctor recommended Sana not to be sterilised until her son grows up. Son-preference, therefore, played a crucial role in regards to using technology as Sana did not obtain the operation on the doctor's advice.

Sterilisation was not popular even among the participants whose children were grown up. Only four participants in my study preferred obtaining a tubectomy as a birth control method, and only two obtained one. Vasectomy (male sterilisation), despite being simpler, safer and cheaper, accounts for less than two-thirds of the sterilisations performed worldwide, and is not popular in India (Char et al, 2009; Iyengar & Iyengar, 2000; Melville & Bigrigg, 2008; Saheli, 2001). Various popular beliefs such as that men would become impotent, or would get physically weak, or that their virility or masculinity will get affected are widely held (Char et al, 2009; Hussain, 2003, p.56; Saheli, 2001). Indira Gandhi's government in India in the 1970s was quite unpopular for forcing male sterilisation and this was also considered one of the important reasons for her defeat in the next elections (Bandarage, 1998; Saheli, 2001).

This patriarchal historic prejudice was strongly visible in my research as not a single participant reported that her husband had obtained a vasectomy nor did they talk about the idea of

vasectomy in their interviews. This signifies that strong patriarchal dispositions shaped women's choices, and technology interacts strongly with socio-cultural values. A similar patriarchal dilemma is also evident in Sheila's story as she did not mention asking her husband to get sterilised. Sheila, a mother of two was working, and her husband was using condoms. However, because of contraceptive failure she procured an abortion, but she suffered post-abortion complications, such as overall weakness in her body and pain in her joints. Frequent pregnancies and subsequent abortions affect women's health, and women having abortions often complain about weakness and pain in the body (Agarwal & Unisa, 2013). These health complications led to her experiencing mental stress as her ability to perform daily chores was affected. In order to avoid any other unwanted pregnancy, she wanted to procure a sterilisation. She mentioned that at first she used a Copper-T which did not suit her, and she suffered heavy bleeding. In the meantime her husband continued to use condoms but Sheila was scared of another contraceptive failure. Her husband and her own mother were not in favour of her undergoing sterilisation either. Sheila was quite confident that she would eventually be able to convince her husband for her tubectomy. She was adamant about not having any more children. She commented:

> Without his [her husband] consent I will never get sterilised because we need to be together and make it a mutual decision. It should not be an independent decision as he always supports me. But if he forces me [not to get sterilised] or wants another baby from me then I might go against his wish.

The participant's account is typical of the collective values discussed in the previous chapter where individual decisions only gain capital once they have been approved by other family members. Note that her husband's consent remained quite important for her.

Maintaining reproductive health and small family size are important features of India's family planning programme, and both features are the participants' primary concerns. Family planning programmes have raised awareness among women. For instance, Sheila's account explains her ability to meet her SGN, to challenge her husband's supremacy over her body, if needed, through modern reproductive technologies.

Once the desired family size is achieved pregnancy becomes a burden for women (Basu, 2005), so they use different contraceptive technologies to control their fertility and to enjoy their sexuality. Sterilisation, as mentioned earlier, was not a very popular method of family planning, and the majority of the participants preferred male condoms followed by Copper-T and birth

control pills. Laila had a large family and wanted to undergo sterilisation as she believed that having more children would further affect her health. She was already suffering pain in the body and was experiencing weakness which affected her well-being, her ability to perform regular household tasks and other chores. She was unable to be sterilised as her husband did not allow her to, nor did she ever ask her husband to get sterilised.

Although Laila's husband was using condoms, this was not effective: she fell pregnant two or three times because of the contraceptive failure. She commented "I did not get sterilised at that time, and, now I realise the ill-effects. My own body is suffering physically and mentally I am stressed." Laila knew that through having sterilisation she would be able to maintain her health but she failed to meet her SGN by being unable to challenge her husband's authority over her body in this particular matter. This also again illustrates the fluidity of SGN and PGN, and how a woman's aspiration to achieve bodily integrity might require her to address both PGN and SGN. Later Laila was able to maintain her health and well-being by addressing her PGN, and SGN, as she went against her husband's wishes and got a Copper-T before informing her husband:

> I thought to myself that I would have a Copper-T. No doctor or friend suggested it to me. I got it from a private clinic and I did not consult anyone. I knew that these things are available so I went directly and got it done. I told my husband later. He did not say anything. He just said it was okay that I got it done for my protection.

The participant's husband was not at all in favour of her getting a Copper-T, but after Laila resisted and got it done he could not do much, and accepted it as essential for her safety from unwanted pregnancies. Family planning development reforms have allowed women to easily regulate their fertility without their husbands' permission and consent. Getting a Copper-T provided Laila with a great sense of achievement and feeling of being able to regulate her fertility according to her wishes. As a result, she was able to maintain her health and well-being, and it made her feel happy as she was able to avoid unwanted pregnancies.

A few other participants had similar experiences to Laila. Jessica had a similar story of getting a Copper-T without consulting or informing her husband. She too had experienced unwanted pregnancies that affected her well-being and health:

> It was my personal decision to have a Copper-T, and I never told him [husband] or asked him. My husband did not say anything when he got to know. I had it because I already had two or three abortions. I had a feeling that every time my body has to suffer and I had to go through severe pain after abortion that is why I had a Copper-T.

Ruchi's case is similar to Jessica and Laila. Ruchi, a mother of two, achieved the desired family size by her late 20s so she wanted to undergo a tubectomy. She was at the risk of facing criticism from her affinal and maternal family so she obtained the tubectomy without informing her husband or any of her family members. Ruchi stated that:

> My friend had a tubectomy. I asked her if she felt any pain during the operation and she said no. I went for the operation [tubectomy] without telling anyone. I did not want more children. Also I could not afford to have an abortion after every six months [because of post-abortion side effects on body]. I was at my mum's place at that time, but I did not even tell her of the operation. Later when she got to know she got angry at me saying that my mother-in-law would be angry at her. I said to her "Now we cannot change anything. What has happened has happened. Do whatever you can do to me [laughter]."

Ruchi, like many other participants, had both knowledge of and access to modern reproductive technologies, and being of the urban middle-class status, she was able to afford and procure the tubectomy[62] without her family's and husband's support. The laughter at the end of her quote shows pleasure at having control over her own body and fertility.

The knowledge of and access to technological resources provided Laila, Jessica and Ruchi with an opportunity to restore their health by addressing their SGN by challenging their husband's and family's authority over their bodies. It is important to note that in order to prevent future unwanted pregnancies Laila, Jessica, and Ruchi used health as a tool to resist in a culturally appropriate way. They stated that their ill-health and suffering motivated them to resist their husband's or family's authority, rather than directly challenging the patriarchal authority in the name of individual preference and choice. In this scenario, health includes controlling their bodies and their fertility by challenging their husbands' patriarchal authority if needed, without portraying themselves as too self-centred and individualistic.

Laila, Jessica and Ruchi's cases demonstrate that their resistance is a significant step towards empowering themselves. However, participants' resistance at the beginning was covert to avoid direct confrontation. Resisting at an overt level, prior to obtaining the tubectomy could have led to their being prevented from obtaining it because of family opposition. This is a further example of women using strategies to resist within patriarchal and collective structures in a context where maintaining family harmony remains crucial (Patel, 1999; Thapan, 2009).

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[62] Tubectomy is often offered to women in Indian hospitals as a routine process for the purpose of family planning. Ruchi by procuring tubectomy is subscribing to the nationalist and development discourse of family planning.

Women on the Indian subcontinent often practise their choices secretly from their husbands or in-laws (Agarwal, 1994; Thapan, 2009). Those women who resisted covertly were able to empower themselves against patriarchal structure. Women realised that they were able to control their bodies without any constraints through their choice to use birth control by obtaining a Copper-T or getting sterilised without informing anyone. These women were thus able to challenge the patriarchal authority over their bodies and fertility. Agarwal (1994) argues that the absence of overt protest does not mean "an absence of questioning inequality" (Agarwal, 1994, p. 431). And, regardless of whether resistance is covert or overt it provides women with a feeling of self-worth (Thapan, 2009, p.162). Moreover, "Both silence and words can be a means of resistance and protest" for women will not always show their resistance openly (Agarwal, 1994, p.427). Through their covert choices women are able to transform patriarchal structures in a culturally appropriate way, and would feel empowered once they have made their choice.

Kanu's case provides an interesting illustration of covert resistance as she secretly procured an abortion by using abortion pills. She did this to avoid any form of conflict with her family and husband and to maintain family harmony. During her first pregnancy, in her late teens, the participant did not want to have a child because of her bad financial situation. She knew that nobody in her family would allow her to procure an abortion. One of her family members was a traditional healer who would give women abortion pills. She said she knew where the abortion pills were in his clinic and she took some pills without informing him or letting anybody know. Kanu ended up consuming an overdose of abortion pills to make sure that the foetus was aborted. After that she suffered long-term health effects, and it took a few months for her to recover physically. For a few days she suffered heavy bleeding, severe pain, and cramps. Despite that she had to continue doing regular chores as she never told anyone about her overdose of abortion pills. She felt ashamed and experienced severe pain as she bled in the public space and felt scared of returning home as everybody would have found out about the abortion. Instead, she went to her aunt's place. She narrated:

> When I was coming back home I started bleeding heavily. A man said to me, "Madam, your dress is all spoiled [with blood]". I said, "Okay, uncle." He was quite old. I was like what to do now. Then I went off the bus there was a tap on the road and then I washed my kameez [long Indian shirt] with the water. I was so scared of going home that what everyone would say that she is such an idiot so I had nowhere to go, nor there was any toilet [to place a pad in her underwear]. I then washed my shirt and dried myself; it got dried before I reached home. Then I used my handkerchief as a pad. I went in a corner and put it in my panty. Then I went to my auntie's place

there were many relatives at her place. I was very tired and was in pain but I had to give her a hand. I was in a lot of pain so I thought to drink sauf-ajwain [a homemade medicine syrup] for relief. I gave her a hand in the work. But I was in so much pain that I could not even lay down on the bed. Then I went to the room to change my dress and hide the one I was wearing quickly. Since I thought to wash them once everyone would fall asleep, and in the night my bed also got spoiled [with blood]. I did not know what to do then.

The medical technology aids women to achieve their goals, and practise their choices discreetly, but using it without proper knowledge could affect their health and well-being. Kanu, at that time, was inspired to achieve control over her reproductive choices. But, because of her incomplete knowledge she failed to achieve bodily integrity, and failed to meet her PGN, as she put her health at high risk. And owing to the fear of her family members discovering her abortion she did not receive any form of formal medical help. Therefore, complete knowledge of the technology in combination with access to reproductive technological resources are prerequisites for meeting PGN and SGN by women in a safe-manner.

Another participant who fell pregnant before her marriage also opted for medical termination of pregnancy in a private clinic. Her primary concern at that time was to get rid of the unwanted pregnancy at any cost as pre-marital sex and pregnancies in India are taboo, and raise questions about women's morality and chastity. This suggests how technology can be gendered and influenced by the social issues around social stigma and cultural taboos. However, she later suffered post-abortion effects and could not conceive without treatment after her marriage. Moreover, these two cases demonstrate that even educated urban middle-class women with access to reproductive technologies might fail to meet their goals because of lack of knowledge. Rather they end up risking their lives, health, and well-being.

The above discussion highlights that health and well-being are important tools for women to negotiate and resist within patriarchal and collective settings in order to achieve desired outcomes. Maintaining reproductive health and aspirations to achieve bodily integrity have become central aspects of urban middle-class women's reproductive lives. These ideas are the result of popular family planning programmes (Bandarage, 1998) which initially started as an aggressive state programme, but have now become the norm for urban middle-class. Institutional births and use of contraception are widely availed by the urban middle-class women to ensure their reproductive well-being. However, reproductive health has also become a part of consumerist society (Simon-Kumar, 2007). Neoliberal policies have resulted in easy access to

reproductive technology which is lifesaving and beneficial for women, but has also lead to health complications in the longer run in some women. Kanu, Isha and Tara, for instance had to suffer health complications as a side-effect.

The popularity of small family size

Among the urban Indian middle-class the small family size gained popularity in the 1980s in India because of the state-run two children policy which encouraged couples to have a small family, as discussed in Chapter Two (Chandar, 2016). The neoliberal reforms helped popularise the small family not only because contraception was widely available, but also job opportunities allowed women with a desire for a better financial life to enter the workforce (Dutta, 2008). Women are also socio-culturally expected to contribute to a nation's development by regulating their fertility to align with the state family planning policies.

All of the participants, both Hindus and Muslims, agreed that a family of one or two children is an ideal family size. The small family size has been internalised by urban middle-class women and the participants, irrespective of their age, used both modern reproductive technologies and traditional contraceptive technologies to manage their family size. Access to modern reproductive technologies reveals women's educational status and their knowledge. Access to traditional contraception highlights women's knowledge of popular socio-cultural traditional ways of managing family size. Interestingly, there was no difference in contraceptive used across participants of different age groups; all of them used modern and/or traditional contraception. The only difference was that women who had their children in 2000 and beyond were able to use emergency contraceptive pills, unlike the participants who had their children before 2000[63].

Participants with large families (more than two children) mentioned that they felt embarrassed and ashamed, and experienced anxiety and stress because they often faced criticism within their families and social networks for not meeting the small family norm. While talking of small families all of the participants, irrespective of which years they had their children, mentioned the term 'aaj-kal', in claims that "nowadays no one has a large family". However, some of the participants not only had to meet the societal pressure to have a small family, they also experienced the pressure to have at least one son. Both of these goals, small family and son-

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[63] I am not sure when these pills became available, but participants having children in 2000 used them. It could be because it was in that decade that the pills were advertised on television.

preference, are often met by the urban middle-class through the use of ultrasound, showing that increasing the fertility rate is not a popular way to practise son-preference. The small family norm has also resulted in increased female foeticide through the use of modern ultrasound[64] technology as couples try to be both modern and traditional by having a small family, and bearing at least one son (Sekher & Hatti, 2010b; Unnithan-Kumar, 2010). This illuminates the complex web of interaction between modernity and tradition, where modern technology is being used to serve traditional son-preference with modern small family size. As mentioned in Chapter Two, traditional practices are influenced by modern forces (Eisenstadt, 1972, p. 7; Spiegel & Boonzaier, 1988, p. 54). Often Indian women with more daughters are likely to have a higher fertility rate in comparison to those who have sons, reflecting their strong desire to have sons (Chaudhuri, 2012). For example, Rita is in her 40s, and had her children in the 1990s and early 2000s. She was highly educated and working and had four children in her desire to have a son. She mentioned that her life was difficult compared to those women who had two children. This was because she had to perform a large amount of unpaid domestic and childcare work, in addition to her paid work. Moreover, she faced criticism within her social networks for having a large family despite being highly educated. As a result, she felt embarrassed, discriminated against, and ashamed.

Kanu was also highly educated, and had four children with the wish of having a son. Though the participant had her children in early and mid-1980s, she had similar experiences to that of Rita, feeling ashamed, embarrassed, and shy because of her large family size. A person experiences shyness when they are aware that their behaviour could lead to criticism or embarrassment within their social networks (Scott, 2007). Embarrassment is one of the most common emotions experienced by people every day, and happens when we reflect on our social behaviour (Scott, 2009, p.39). Similarly, urban middle-class Indian women can experience feeling of shame for not having an ideal family size in India. Indeed, small family size is viewed as essential for the progress of the nation and for providing a quality life to a few children. For all these reasons small family size is a matter of pride among the urban middle-class. The participant quoted below signifies the popularity of small family size among the educated urban middle-class gained momentum in the 1980s, and gradually became part of their habitus. She stated that:

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[64] The issue of using ultrasound because of son-preference is discussed in the last finding of this chapter.

Kanu: I felt so ashamed to have four children. When I was pregnant the fourth time somebody in my office asked me was it my first baby. I was so ashamed to tell that it was my fourth pregnancy. So I ignored him. He repeated the question again then I said "No, I already have three daughters". But, I felt so ashamed I was not even able to tell.
Researcher: Why?
Kanu: Because people would have said that I was a mental case that is why I was having the 4th child as nobody has four children [these days]. I felt so ashamed.

Kanu internalised stigma and that led to feelings of shame and inferiority. Experiences of stigma are localised and take different meanings in different socio-cultural and class settings (Murthy, 2002; Yang et al, 2007). Concerns about others finding out, a perception of being looked down upon, low self-esteem, and shame are dominant manifestations of stigma in India (Koschorke et al, 2017). Inability to meet small family size was an important factor for Kanu's experiences of stigma and shame since among the urban middle-class a family size of two is ideal.

Many other participants experienced social criticism from their acquaintances for having more than two children, especially if they were educated. Educated women in India are deemed to have a lower fertility rate, and less educated women to have higher fertility rates (Basu, 2002; Chaudhuri, 2012). Through having small families, participants were able to present themselves as educated and having knowledge of and an ability to use contraceptive or reproductive technologies to control their fertility and bodies, unlike the working-class. For example, many participants commented that their housemaids or other women they know of who are from a working class background have large families. Thapan's (2009) and Hegde's (2009) studies on working class Indian women highlighted that women who had large families did not experience shame because of their family size, unlike those participants in my study who came from a middle-class background. This confirms that women's bodily experiences are both gendered and classed and a lived experience, often shaped by their class based habitus (Thapan, 2009).

Failure to meet the small family size norm also raised questions about participants' ability to use their educational knowledge. People would often mock their lack of educational knowledge and ability to access modern ultrasound, contraceptive technologies or abortion services to manage family size. However, this does not necessarily suggest that to have a large family people are expected to opt for different methods such as ultrasound and female foeticide. For example, Rita mentioned that in her desire to have a son when she had three daughters their acquaintances started mocking their lack of educational knowledge and made fun of them. She said that:

My husband's friends and other people used to say you are so educated and then also you made such a big blunder why did not you go for an ultrasound, and both of you [husband and wife] are so educated then also you did not go for a single ultrasound. How could you both be such fools, and these words pinched my husband. He said to me "see how these people are saying, these children belong to us, we have to bring them up and still people do not think before saying". So we were tense about that.

Rama was similar to Rita and Kanu and also experienced mockery for having a large family. She experienced name calling and was even compared to a goat for reproducing so frequently. Rama, is in her 40s, and both her husband and she were highly educated, and both of them were working. She mentioned that her first three pregnancies were unplanned and because of this she and her husband faced criticism for not being able to manage their family size properly.

Rama: When we had three children within three years of our marriage our acquaintances started taunting my husband. They said to him "buddy, you have crossed the limit. Is she your wife or a goat? She is giving birth like a goat again and again. Who knows how many children you both will have?" My husband told them that we will not have more children. Then they [acquaintances] replied that it was hard to believe him as we had three children in just three years. Then he [husband] came to me and told me to use a Copper-T. I told him that in no case would I use it as I knew the side-effects of it on one's health. Birth control pills also make one physically weak so I told him to use condoms as it will not affect any of us. Then we decided to use condoms.
Researcher: So did he get ready?
Rama: Yes, he agreed. I told him that in no case would I have an abortion, [laughter], ultimately he had to agree. I said to him that I was not ready mentally [to have another child].

People were taunting Rama's husband, but it was her body that was being targeted and compared to that of a goat, not her husband's. The participant's body was being degraded and became a source of discomfort to both her husband and her. Women's bodily experiences of sex and fertility are articulated and predisposed differently according to their habitus. For instance, in a patriarchal society, as evident from the quote, the subsequent pregnancies might be a sign of masculine potency, whereas for women they are a sign of their being submissive and merely a reproduction machine. This illustrates how the social experience of fathering a child is viewed differently from that of a woman bearing a child. However, Rama clearly mentioned that she was the key decision maker, and it was her decision not to have an abortion in her third pregnancy because of her pro-life views; however, her husband was in favour of her getting an abortion. After being criticised the husband directly approached Rama and told her to use a Copper-T; however, Rama negotiated to use condoms.

Rama and Rita were of same age group of 40s whereas Kanu was from the older generation of 60s. Despite this age difference they all experienced social stigma, shame and criticism for

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having large families. This in the long run can help to achieve gender equality because women will be able to focus on their careers, and couples will be more open in accepting daughters because of small family size preference[65]. For instance, small family size was so prevalent that in some cases it even transformed patriarchal structures, as a few women who have only one or two daughters, accepted their families as complete. Around 14% of the urban middle-class accept a family with one or two daughters, as the family size remains the primary preference (Basu & Desai, n.d.). Further, the couples with small families have a better living standard and will be able to provide equal educational and career opportunities to their daughters[66].

Son-preference is quite strong in Haryana and Delhi (Census, 2011; Ganatra, 2008), but despite this, participants did not want to have too many sons, and small family size remained their primary concern. Through the help of ultrasound, couples have greater control over the gender composition of their families and are able to manage their family size (Sekher & Hatti, n.d.). However, only one or two participants who had their children in the 1980s used ultrasound, but the participants who had their children in the 1990s and 2000s used it quite freely for the purpose of sex-detection. This might be because the use of ultrasound gained popularity by the end of 80s. For instance, two of the participants who had their children in the 1980s viewed the use of ultrasound for sex-selection purpose as contemporary, and a product of people's modern degraded moral values. The use of ultrasound in India became illegal after the 1994 Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act; however, the services are available underground. None of the respondents in my study mentioned obtaining a sex-elective abortion. They either mentioned that the sex of the foetus was detected as a male in the ultrasound, or that they accepted the daughter and changed their mind about having a sex-selective abortion. Only one participant, Ruchi who had her children in the late 90s and the early 2000s, tried to obtain a sex-selective abortion by consuming abortion pills, when, during her second pregnancy, she discovered the foetus was female. However, she failed to obtain the abortion through pills, and gave birth to a son, and not a daughter (it was a false sex-detection by the doctors). She said that after this she had lost faith on the ultrasound technology. She narrated:

> Yes, I had an ultrasound, and they [doctors] informed me that it was a girl and it would be a caesarean delivery. When it is the second daughter everyone gets so tense and troubled and would think "Oh my God, there will be two daughters in the family now!" Everyone remains happy

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[65] The issues around gender equality and equal treatment of daughters are discussed in Chapter Seven.
[66] See Chapter Seven for a detailed discussion on this topic.

when it is only one daughter but not for two. That was the reason I had abortion pills thinking that it would be better if I do not have this child, but actually it was a boy.

There were a few other participants who knew they were carrying a male foetus, but they preferred to abort as they had achieved the desired family size. Mahi, for instance, already had two sons in her mid-20s. When she went for an abortion during her third pregnancy the doctor suggested not to have an abortion saying that "it is all good [it is a baby boy]". Under the PCPNDT Act it is illegal to disclose the sex of the child or even to indicate the sex of child through any signs or hints to the mother or family members (Sekher & Hatti, 2010a, p.115). However, it is still common for doctors or sonographers to hint at the sex of the child, and both the clients and doctors involved in this process are often aware of the law (Padmanabha, 2010; Patel, 2010; Unnithan-Kumar, 2010). Many doctors claim to help women by disclosing or hinting at the sex of the foetus. Some doctors often argue that disclosing the sex of the foetus will help women in making their decisions and they will be able to protect themselves from any kind of domestic violence or criticism for producing daughters (Unnithan-Kumar, 2010). It is a common procedure to hint at the sex of the child through mentioning Indian male and female Gods' and Goddesses' names. The doctor did hint to Mahi, but she told her not to disclose the sex of the child as she did not want to pursue the pregnancy, and nothing would change her decision. She mentioned that after the abortion nurses came to her: "the nurses working over there came to me and said that "you are the first woman we have seen who has aborted a son"".

This highlights the importance of a male child in the Indian society among the middle-class. But, for Mahi maintaining a small family size was paramount, so she had an abortion. Similarly, other participants from a younger generation in their late 20s and early 30s, such as Jessica, Neha, Sia and Rashi, all gave primary preference to their family size and not to son-preference. For instance, Jessica's health provider hinted that she was carrying a male foetus which she aborted to maintain her family size. This exemplifies that son-preference is gradually being challenged by the now small family norm among the urban middle-class[67].

Furthermore, in order to meet the desired family size, similar to Mahi and the participants introduced in the previous section, many women I interviewed also used abortion as a family planning method mainly in cases of contraceptive failures or unplanned pregnancies. The

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[67] For an in-depth discussion on declining son-preference among the urban middle-class please see Chapter Seven.

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majority of the participants viewed abortion as a practical decision and a non-emotional process where they did not establish any feelings for the foetus. Only two participants described it to be an emotional and a tough decision. The majority of the participants used abortion as a way to plan their families in order to maintain spacing between their children or after they achieved the desired family size. For example, a few of the participants had an abortion when their existing children were quite young (between the ages of 0-3 years) in order to maintain spacing between children.

The morality of abortion remains undebated in India because of poverty (Menon, 2004) and the large population size. Unlike many Indian women the participants in my research belonged to the urban middle class, but in order to give their children a quality life in a period of inflation, an important feature of neoliberal economy, they wanted a small family. Among the middle class, as mentioned in earlier chapters, parents have great aspirations for their children and aim to provide them with the best schooling and education (Basu & Desai, n.d.). Women mentioned inflation to be an important reason to prefer small families as it makes it difficult to provide quality education and upbringing for too many children. The following quotes will throw light on this scenario:

> Sunita: My husband and mother-in-law both agreed with me having an abortion. As I already had so many children there was no point in having more children in a period of inflation. That is why I had an abortion.
> Sushma: I will not lie. I had an abortion as I already had three children. I had an abortion during my fourth pregnancy as nowadays people do not have large families; that is why I had a tubectomy after the abortion.

Prior to neoliberal economic reforms India was a country of financial savers, but after neoliberal and development reforms urban educated classes' salaries have increased and so has their expenditure (Shukla, 2010). Urban people are more likely to spend a big part of their income on consumer durables, food, health, and education unlike the rural population which usually spend on festive or other occasions (Shukla, 2010)[68]. Further urban middle-classes make savings for their old-age, children's education and for other forms of emergencies (Shukla, 2010) and spend large sums of money to fulfil other consumer based demands of their children (Lenka & Vandana, 2015), as discussed in Chapter Two. The term inflation mentioned in Sunita's account

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[68] This discussion is on contemporary spending habits of urban and rural population. It does not intend to focus on amount of money possessed by rural and urban population as in many cases many rural people are richer than urban middle class population.

signals changes in spending patterns. Middle-class aspirations to provide a good life and education for their children and their ability to buy consumer goods are accompanied by anxieties and insecurities in regards to maintaining their class by coping with the changing lifestyle patterns. Both of their families supported their decision to abort. In cases where women were scared that their husbands or family members would not approve of their reproductive choices they did what they wanted without informing them. For instance, Laila had a large family and did not want more children, but her husband did not agree to her obtaining an abortion so she obtained it without his permission:

> I went to procure an abortion on my own because he [husband] told me to not to have an abortion. But I said to him that I could not keep on having children in this period of inflation. Thus, I had abortion through my own choice.

Laila's case demonstrates the importance of managing family size and the ease with which she could obtain an abortion despite her husband's wishes.

Abortion provided many participants with a strong sense of control over their own bodies and their ability to make individual choices. Tulsi is in her 50s. She is a mother of three, and had an abortion during her mid-30s without telling her father-in-law as he would not have allowed her, and she mentioned she did not want to have a large family. The father-in-law did not encourage her to have a large family, but he was not in favour of an abortion either. Tulsi was living in a joint family, her father-in-law was the head of their family and all decisions needed his consent. The participant was aware that her father-in-law would never approve of her decision because of this she had an abortion without informing him. She said that:

> If I had listened to my father-in-law, then there would have been so many children. I already had three children [referring to her family size as large]. I told everyone at home that I was going for shopping. There is nothing complicated in this; you just need a bed rest for two to three hours, that is it.

Modern abortion services have allowed women like Tulsi to regulate their reproduction and manage their family size according to their preferences without hurting the collective fabric of their families. They do not even need to disclose this to anyone and can exercise their choices without any familial conflict. Women tend to practice individual control over their bodies when it is known that abortion could be denied by their extended family members or husbands.

In my research sample, modern contraception was the most popular way of regulating fertility, irrespective of their age. However, a few of them also reported using traditional natural methods

of contraception. In fact, the use of traditional methods of contraception by urban educated women is quite common (Basu, 2005). Many participants mentioned using both traditional methods and modern contraception, and they continued to switch between natural and modern methods, according to their preference. Both traditional methods and modern technology co-exist to meet the contemporary needs of modern family size. Therefore, modernity in India has not discarded traditional forms of knowledge; rather it is often used by women in their daily lives to meet their needs.

Traditional contraception is said to be ineffective in preventing pregnancy (Basu, 2005). On the contrary, like other educated middle class couples as discussed by Basu (2005), my respondents reported them to be quite safe and effective. This highlights their ability to use natural methods effectively with a proper knowledge of different sexual body functions such as ejaculating outside of vagina or monitoring menstruation dates. For instance, Isha was highly educated and used natural methods to manage her family size from the beginning of her marriage, as she found this to be quite effective. It was mainly because she was scared of having side-effects on her health from birth control pills, and wanted to have a healthy body. She was not interested in using condoms because they decreased her sexual pleasure. She stated that:

> Nor did I want to go for pills neither did he [husband] prefer. Both of us were not comfortable with condoms either. When there is a natural method then we should use it. Like during intercourse men get an idea at which time they should withdraw. We did not have any problem with this method nor did we experience any side-effects on our health. We spent three years safely that is why we never tried anything else.

Women did not report any side-effects from natural methods, as they did not involve any form of material invasion in the bodies. However, natural methods were not widely used on a regular basis by most of the participants, and Isha was among the few to use it regularly. But, both natural and modern methods are quite beneficial for women to manage their family-size and fertility.

My study provides a class-based experience of urban women who openly discussed the contraception of their choice with their husbands and discussed this without hesitation within their close networks. Basu (2005) makes a similar point that the urban educated women often discuss contraception issues openly with their husbands, and choose accordingly. This reflects on the success and popularity of family planning programmes among the urban middle-class. However, in some cases participants did not discuss contraceptive choice with their husbands as

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they did not find their husbands to be supportive and understanding. Kanu, for example, used a Copper-T to maintain the spacing between her children and managed her family size, but she never told her husband. She said that "I never told him about Copper-T. When I know he might say no, I just do not tell him anything, and I just do it".

Although the majority of the women used modern contraceptive technologies on a regular basis, their side-effects were more evident in the analysis. These forms of contraception are useful but can be invasive too.

The discussion in this section has been suggestive of the increasing popularity of the small family norm which is gradually challenging the son-preference practice. The younger generation, such as Mahi, Sia and Jessica, is more likely to challenge son-preference to maintain their small family size, unlike the older generation such as Kanu, Rama and Rita. Family planning that was once initiated by the government as an aggressive policy has now been embedded in urban middle-class values. Women do not hesitate to switch between traditional and modern contraception to maintain their family size and to practice a stress-free sexual life. Further because of the MTP Act 1971, women can easily access abortion services to terminate their pregnancy to manage their family size.

Small family size has become an important way to gain prestige among the urban middle-class as it allows a couple to provide quality education and other consumer comforts to their children and to themselves in a neoliberal economy. Modern family planning and neoliberal reforms have influenced reproductive and gender values among the urban middle-class. Even if women's bodies remain the central target of state run policies one cannot deny the empowering aspects of it for women. For instance, women's roles are no longer limited to the reproductive sphere and they are able to regulate their fertility without affecting their family harmony.

Son-preference: Spirituality and popular practices among the urban middle-class

The participants engaged with popular spiritual and traditional practices in order to have a son by their first or second or third pregnancy. Interestingly, participants used spiritual and traditional practices to influence the sex of the foetus, and ultrasound played a vital role in sex detection. They mentioned resorting to spiritual methods in conjunction with ultrasound. These spiritual methods are often viewed as an ancient form of science (Prakash, 1999). The Indian religious

and philosophical texts are revisited by many Indian and Western researchers in the light of scientific knowledge to decipher the scientific logic embedded within those texts (Prakash, 1999). Stem cells, IVF, and other forms of modern reproductive technologies are claimed by many researchers to be a part of the ancient Indian heritage which are discussed in ancient Indian scriptures like Mahabharata (Bhardwaj, 2006). In the scenario where superstitions are being replaced with logical and scientific reason spirituality is becoming quite popular among the urban educated middle-class in new ways.

In India, for the urban educated middle-class, resorting to spiritual pathways to fulfil one's desires is quite common, especially in reproductive issues such as infertility problems, or to have a son, and in rare cases to have a daughter. For instance, in order to combat infertility women did not only engage with modern reproductive technologies, but they often resorted to traditional practices such as going to temples, astrologers, traditional healers, wearing spiritually blessed charms, or observing tantric rites (Bhardwaj, 2006; Chhabra et al, 2012). Modern and traditional, sacred and profane, science and spirituality work together in India to solve reproductive problems (Bhardwaj, 2006, p. 451) which sheds light on the concept of multiple modernities. Modern new ways of thoughts and lifestyles have not abandoned the traditional, since both traditional and modern coexist (Ramanujan, 1989), of course in a novel way.

The replacement of female infanticide by foeticide under the umbrella of technology, and the mushrooming of private sex-determination clinics, illuminates the web of today's consumerism-commercialisation where modernity incorporates both development and patriarchy. Participants in my study largely obtained an ultrasound for the purpose of sex-detection. For example, Ruby was highly educated and had her three children because of family pressure in the 1990s in the hopes of having a son. She obtained an ultrasound during her third pregnancy; she said that "I went for an ultrasound in the fourth month because everyone wanted a son."

Ruby was the only participant who was not interested in having a son at all, but still took the chance to have a son because of her affinal and maternal families' pressure. On the contrary, the majority of the participants obtained ultrasound to actively detect the sex of the child as they were themselves interested in having a son. A shift in the family size is evident in India, but no major transformation in son-preference ideology can be recorded (Census, 2011; Visaria, 2007).

Ruchi described this whole experience from when she discovered the foetus was female until she gave birth to her son as an emotionally hard time. She suffered stress and anxiety because of the feeling of having too many daughters and caesarean deliveries. In addition, she also suffered body pains because of pregnancy complications.

Participants talked about local healers who were deemed to be blessed with spiritual powers and wisdom; and, through their powers they were deemed to help women in giving birth to a son. I will refer to these healers as spiritual healers the term used by Unnithan-Kumar (2005b, p. 62) in her work *"Conception Technologies, Local Healers and Negotiations Around Child Bearing in Rajasthan".* In her study on poor women in the urban area of Rajasthan, she discussed that these healers treated gynaecological problems. However, unlike Unnithan-Kumar's participants, my participants belonged to the middle class, were educated and contacted spiritual healers not because of infertility issues, but in their desire to have a son.

It is a common experience in Northern India to see advertisements on television, newspapers, in buses and trains by healers who claim to make barren women fertile and give a son to women who do not have one. These spiritual services are based on modern capitalist consumerism ideology where different spiritual providers are available to serve different needs. Many of my participants, despite being highly educated, had a strong belief in their spiritual powers. It is common for modern Indian educated women to opt for spiritual practices to reproduce the patriarchy (Talukdar, 2014). The majority of the young participants mentioned using spiritual methods when they had their children in the 1990s or 2000s. In contrast, only two participants who had their children in the 1980s availed themselves of the services of spiritual healers. This signifies the popularity of spirituality is more prevalent among the younger generation where educated people resort to traditional practices in a modern way to meet traditional patriarchal needs.

According to the Indian Ayurvedic[69] principles it is believed that till the third month of pregnancy, the sex of the child is not determined, thus it could be changed through medicines or different rituals (Oomman & Ganatra, 2002). Ayurveda also provides information on special diets and specific time for intercourse in order to have a child of specific sex (Gupta, 2000,

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[69] Ayurveda is the ancient indigenous Indian system of medicine.

p.512).[70] The traditional practices are discussed as a form of traditional science with its own logical reasoning rather than simply being superstitious beliefs (Prakash, 1999) which encouraged the women to seek spiritual assistance. Sheila, for instance, was working and highly educated. She shared her views in which she explained that these spiritual healers were spiritually blessed and give medicines to women to have a son and are actually rare to find:

> Researcher: Medicine means? One will give birth to a boy after having that medicine?
> Sheila: Yes, this is very common. These medicines are given by some ladies by which the gender of your child gets changed, this is what is believed. You have to take it with cow's milk. I know of one such lady she has given this medicine to 10-12 people and everyone had a boy after that. This is very common in India. Those kinds of people who give these kinds of medicine are very rare, but still they exist.
> Researcher: If you get that medicine in the market then what is the point in having a sex-selective abortion?
> Sheila: You do not get these medicines from the market. These medicines are only given by those aunties [elder women] who have God's grace. They give that medicine. It is like a powder I do not know how it is made. But you have to take it with cow's milk.

It is interesting to note that my participants were educated, and were aware of the scientific fact that sex is determined at the time of conception and cannot be changed after that. Moreover, they were also aware of that male chromosomes determine the sex of the child, yet they consumed spiritual medicine themselves. They strongly mentioned these Ayurvedic principles to be scientific, and as a form of traditional knowledge that modern western science lacks. Sheila's quote suggests that the spiritual healers' services are used by the urban middle-class women to reproduce patriarchy. In other words, these healers use their charismatic powers and spiritual knowledge to meet the contemporary patriarchal needs of the urban middle classes. This form of engagement of women with spirituality is modern in nature and individual's needs are met in the class-based habitus. Spirituality is influencing women's choices and women's choices are shaping spirituality in contemporary urban India. Sheila's account clearly illuminates that India is blessed with spiritual people possessing spiritual powers, and it is not a new thing to find them in India.

Traditional divine forms of knowledge did exist and were used in ancient and medieval India along with the ideology of possessing charisma and having certain spiritual and magical powers

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[70] The use of special diets and specific ways of having intercourse to conceive a son are discussed later in this section.

by certain blessed people such as Sufis[71], or Bhakatas[72] or Rishi-Munis[73] who helped and guided others. However, these spiritual powers have been commercialised and are being used to meet the modern consumer demands of different classes in modern ways in the neoliberal economy. For example, spiritual guidance in contemporary times has been commercialised and packaged to meet contemporary needs such as education, health, foreign visits, financial problems, infertility (Carrette & King, 2005), son-preference, love problems, and so on.

As discussed in Chapter Two Brosius (2010) mentioned that urban middle-class Indians aspire for a flexible and 'easy to apply' spirituality. This flexibility can be viewed in urban middle class Indians' daily lives as they hold both traditional and modern values, practising them at the same time (Brosius, 2010). Thus, spirituality can be viewed as an example of how multiple modernities are upheld in relation to family planning development where both modernity and tradition, development and patriarchy[74], co-exist to suit contemporary demands. Therefore, Indian modernity cannot be understood as ''victory of capital over community, modernity over tradition, West over non-West''. Rather ''one enables the other's reformulation'' (Prakash, 1999, p.234).

It is quite common for Indian people receiving assistance from modern reproductive technologies to rely on both modern technology and spiritual healers, and to have a strong faith in God or spiritual powers (Bhardwaj, 2006; Unnithan-Kumar, 2005b). Almost every participant, including two Muslim participants, used this phrase "God's wish." In India a majority, even the educated, believe that destiny and God control everything (Bhardwaj, 2006; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). The majority of the participants who practiced son-preference through resorting to spiritual means also procured an ultrasound to detect the sex of the child.

Radha's case exemplifies this. During her third pregnancy she used ultrasound and also received help from the spiritual healers at the same time in her wish for a son. She was highly educated and a mother of two daughters and one son. Radha had her children in the 1990s, and after the birth of her first daughter she had two more pregnancies in her desire to have a son. She gave

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[71] Sufis are members of the mystical, ascetic branch of Islam.
[72] Bhakatas were spiritual devotees who provided teaching s during the time of the Bhakti movement in medieval India.
[73] Rishi-Munis were sages with high education and spiritual knowledge during the ancient Indian period.
[74] Spirituality is often used by women to empower themselves by resisting patriarchy. In this research, however, the focus remains on reproducing patriarchy through spiritual means.

birth to her son in her third delivery. She consumed the medicine given by the spiritual healer and also obtained an ultrasound to be sure that she was carrying a male foetus in her womb. She stated that:

> Radha: No we did not do anything [ultrasound or took any help from a spiritual healer] during my first pregnancy. During the second pregnancy I consumed medicine but still it was a girl. Then during the third time I had the medicine and had an ultrasound as well.
> Researcher: You still trusted the medicine?
> Radha: Yes, I did because during my third pregnancy I took the medicine from a different person. This person who used to give this medicine only had daughters, but all of his daughters had sons. His medicine was a panacea. I also had an ultrasound and it confirmed a boy. So it was really hard to trust his medicines initially because he only had daughters, but his medicine was actually a panacea.

Spirituality is viewed as a panacea for modern problems (Carrette & King, 2005, p.1), and Radha's account sheds light on this where different healers are available to meet people's needs that are shaped by patriarchal structures. In availing themselves of these services, women themselves are reproducing patriarchy through their bodies and choices.

In addition, women who resorted to spiritual healers to produce a son mentioned that they experienced stress, anxiety, pleasure and hope because they were not sure about the success rate of these spiritual services. Kiran, was in her mid-20s and had her daughter in the mid-2000s. She shared similar views and raised issues about the authenticity of these spiritual medicines. She consumed these medicines though she did not get to know the sex of the child because she suffered a miscarriage. The majority of the participants who consumed these medicines viewed it as some traditional form of spiritual knowledge possessed by a very few divine souls. Unlike many other participants Kiran believed these medicines to be totakes (superstitious beliefs) with no scientific logic, yet she still consumed the medicine because she wanted to try everything that could help her have a son.

Isha, was in her mid-20s and was highly educated and a mother of a girl. She had similar views to Kiran's on spiritual medicine. She consumed spiritual medicine during her pregnancy, but she still delivered a baby girl. She said that after consuming these medicines if one delivers a son then everyone believes that it was because of the medicines. But, if a girl is born it is blamed on the mother and it is said that she might have not taken proper precautions, while consuming the medicine as advised by the healer. This shows the strong faith people have in these healers and their knowledge and power. Moreover, it also explains that women need to discipline their

bodies in certain ways so that they can receive spiritual blessings in order to procure a son. Furthermore, Isha's whole family including her was completely against sex-selective abortion and she never obtained an ultrasound to detect the sex of the child. She mentioned that in addition to consuming medicines she practiced some other traditional beliefs to have a son:

> I was told to take dry coconut from my husband's hand when facing towards the sun while I was pregnant in order to have a son. I tried that but nothing happened. But, my sister-in-law was also pregnant she did the same thing and she had a son, but I had a girl. So basically these things have no logic: it is like following each other blindly.

Although no spiritual and traditional beliefs were effective for her she practiced another traditional belief by engaging in sexual activities during full moon nights. Participants mentioned this to be a traditional knowledge as these beliefs are mentioned in Vedas (ancient spiritual books of Hindus).

Engagement in sexual activity during full moon nights was one of the most popular methods that the participants, both Hindu and Muslim, practised to produce a son. Thapan (2009) argues that "the social construction of "female need" constrains women to invest in maternity rather than sexuality." (p.99). However, different superstitious beliefs around engaging in sex in order to have a son provided women with opportunities to initiate sex chat and sex with their husbands and to experiment with and explore their sexuality without hesitation. Interestingly, no participant said they engaged in specific sexual activities to produce a daughter. Although I do not know much about the participants' sexual lives, nobody mentioned sex as a forced thing or having no interest in sex except Sheetal. They had sex on their own terms and used the contraception of their choice.

Rama, who faced criticism for having a large family also engaged in sexual activities in a particular way in order to have a son, after which she delivered a baby boy. She mentioned that her husband was never interested in having a son, and it was only after her prolonged negotiations that he got ready. After this they followed certain beliefs prior to engaging in sexual activities:

> Researcher: Many people engage in certain sexual activities or would take medicines from spiritual healers to have a son. Did you do any such things?
> Rama: No, no, we are not that orthodox [to consume medicines]. Yes, but somebody told me to make my husband consume dry dates with milk as this would provide energy. I do not know what the logic was, but we did this, other than this we did not do anything.
> Researcher: so was it before you getting pregnant or after that?

Rama: Before pregnancy I was told to give him dates and milk for a month as it gives energy, and we were told to maintain distance among us. This means not to have sex during that period, and to wait for a while. Even though we are quite broad minded still we were happy that it would be good if we could have a son through this. Because society is not capable at the moment of accepting girls. Girls are good, but only when accompanied by sons.

Rama referred to different forms of gender inequality while referring to society's reluctance to accept girls as equal to boys. Women in India have been provided with different civil and political rights by the state, but patriarchal ideology remains unchallenged at a wider social level (Hammad, 2016). The participant also raised her concern for her daughters' safety in the wake of various sexual attacks against women in India. Rama at an individual level expressed her inability to change patriarchal socio-cultural norms and expectation. However unlike her, many participants preferred to set an example for the society by having daughters only as discussed in Chapter Five. Social change is required at both the collective and individual level for transformation and gender equality. Her comment explains that a lot of changes in socio-cultural mind set are required in society to decrease gender inequality and hierarchy. This is an interesting point, as her husband, despite being situated within the same social structures, was not interested in having a son. Indian women have to face more social criticism for not producing a son, in comparison to men. It is a manifestation of how women not only use their bodies to reproduce patriarchy, but can also indulge their husbands' bodies in this process because of socio-cultural pressure. Further she discarded the idea of consuming spiritual medicines and dismissed these as being too illogical or orthodox or traditional. She instead followed a nutritional approach to make their bodies capable of producing a son.

Another popular belief that women engaged with was fasting to help them to conceive a son. Observing fasts for Hindu women is part of their daily lives (Pearson, 1996). These fasts do not only involve controlling natural body desires such as hunger and thirst, they also reinforce male domination by reproducing patriarchal structures as women are expected to perform these fasts for the well-being of their husbands or sons (Pearson, 1996; Talukdar, 2014). These include the Ahoi fast for the long life of sons and Karvachauth for the long life of husbands; in some fasts that supposedly promote the conception of a son, women do not even take a sip of water (Kohli, 2009). In contrast, no fasts are observed by men (Pearson, 1996). It is important to mention that many women who had only daughters or prior to having sons, and even after having sons observed Ahoi fasts for the well-being of their daughters as well. This was a fast traditionally

observed only for sons' well-being. This is a great sign of transformation, and signifies that people can also shape different traditions through their choices.

Observing fasts is based on the traditional idea of self-sacrifice, self-discipline, and receiving spiritual blessings by starving and causing pain to the body to achieve desired wishes (Thapan, 2009, p.62). Only one participant mentioned observing a fast to produce a daughter. Apart from her all the participants who observed fasts did so to procure a son. Rita narrated her experience in this context:

> I observed the fast on Thursdays. My mother-in-law said that Thursdays' fast suited her and it meant she was blessed with sons when she observed fasts on Thursdays.

Women's bodies are actively engaged in the process of procreating a son: this is evident in many participants' narration. The Hindu religious prayers women often recite during their fasts such as for Lord Ganesha mentions "Banjhan ko putra det nirdham ko maya" meaning that Lord Ganesha gives money to the poor and a child to a barren woman. A woman's body is degraded as barren and simultaneously needing to be blessed to cure her infertility so she can bear a son. At the same time, no participant mentioned their husbands consuming spiritual medicine or observing fasts. Their husbands' bodies were only involved in sexual activities. Sexuality and men's masculinity are often linked in patriarchal settings.

It is also common for women to accept help from astrologers in order to discover whether they will have a son or not. Astrology is considered to be a traditional scientific study of cosmic and planet positions and their effects on people's lives by its practitioners and consumers. Therefore, the participants visiting astrologers use the traditional forms of knowledge. However, astrology and fortune telling are a big business in India, and even high government officials or big movie stars regularly consult astrologers. (Holt, 1998). Kanu, also tried for a fourth time to have a son after guidance from a spiritual person deemed to be blessed with spiritual powers.

> Once an old man came to my office. At that time my hand got slashed by a blade by mistake. I was wrapping it with a band-aid. He asked me to show my palm to him and I did. Then he read my palm and asked me how many children I had. I told him three daughters, but I could not tell him about my first abortion. He said to me that I had a son in my destiny. I thought maybe the first one was but he was gone. I said that I already had three children and there was no point that I would have a fourth one. He said no I should try as my third daughter has a brother in her destiny. He looked so poor and illiterate he said, "No, your younger daughter she has a brother in her fate. No power of this world can stop you from having a son. You will surely have one." I said okay, then after 2-3 years I again met him. He asked me if I had three daughters and did I have a son or not. I told him not but he insisted on trying for a son, and that I will surely have a son, and if not

then he would stop telling these things to people. Then, I do not know how I made up my mind; I gave birth to 4 children like that. It is quite orthodox [to follow and believe such spiritual people], but I just did what he said. I also showed my daughter's birth chart to many astrologers and they all said that my daughter had a brother in her fate.

Visiting different astrologers to show her daughter's birth chart in order to confirm whether her youngest daughter has a brother in her fate or not suggests the modern nature of spirituality. This is a manifestation of consumerist ideas where different people who possess these powers are present to provide answers to the future questions.

The constant dominance of son-preference in women's lives is apparent in the above discussion. Women's bodies remain an important site to reproduce patriarchy, and the wish to have a son results in women engaging with different reproductive spiritual, and traditional technologies. These technologies are in constant interaction with different socio-cultural elements in their patriarchal social settings. This signifies that gender is a vital component of women's strong patriarchal dispositions within their habitus because "the way people treat their bodies reveals the deepest dispositions of the habitus" (Bourdieu, 1984, p.190). At first glance, spirituality might look quite ancient, but its contemporary engagement within urban middle-class social settings in the context of women's reproductive choices is suggestive of multiple modernities. Moreover, both spirituality and modern technology are forms of knowledge that women used to practice son-preference, as in Radha's case. However, while making these decisions, women are not fully empowering themselves as they are not transforming patriarchal structures to meet their desired outcomes.

Conclusion

Technology constitutes different forms of knowledge including spiritual, cosmic or traditional beliefs, knowledge, activities and rituals. In the context of my research, women were seen to be engaged with different technological processes within their specific class-based habitus and gender, operating within patriarchy, conforming to the idea of small family size, and the aspiration to achieve bodily integrity. These dispositions played a vital role in shaping women's engagement with different technologies. However, technology also had a major impact on women's choices as increased dependency on different forms of technologies has helped women to meet contemporary goals easily. Therefore, technology is not socially or politically neutral; it bears different socio-cultural meanings within different settings. Society and technology are

mutually constitutive, and women's engagement with technology in itself is quite modern in nature and is localised within patriarchal urban middle-class settings.

Aspiring to be modern by having a small family is quite common among the middle-class in contemporary urban India. This is the result of long term state-run family planning policies that advocated the advantages of a small family for couples, and was particularly directed at women. These programmes focused on safe motherhood, women's health, the reduction of child and mother mortality rate, and creating better families (Simon-Kumar, 2007). The programmes were not about encouraging individualistic values among women, but to advocate happy and healthy families. Small family size is an important way for the urban middle-class to gain social prestige among their class-based networks. Women tried to maintain their class within their daily lives by regulating their fertility, and ensuring their well-being and health through the use of reproductive technology, traditional practices and spirituality. Interestingly, women's bodies remain the primary site to apply different forms of spiritual, traditional and modern knowledge in order to meet reproductive interests. This had both empowering and disempowering effects on women's lives as they both transformed patriarchy, covertly and overtly; and in many instances reproduced patriarchy.

Moreover, it is important to note that small family size has not only increased son-preference but has also resulted in the decline of son-preference. For instance, young couples now prefer small family size over son-preference. This gradual change is evident some regions, including Delhi and Haryana, as discussed in Chapter One. Women experienced shame and anxiety when they had traditional large families, even if it consisted of sons. However, son-preference remains a dominant practice and women resorted to different methods in order to have a son and a small family. The adherence to both modern small family norm and traditional son-preference is among the major paradoxes of modernities in the urban middle-class. This can be understood in the light of the multiple modernities phenomenon where patriarchy, development, equality, inequality, collective and individual values, science, sacred and secular co-exist. Middle-class values and aspirations in the wake of the neoliberal economy have influenced the traditional spiritual forms of practices as well. Spirituality has its own commercial market these days to meet specific contemporary consumer demands, and people are in the process of flexibly

applying spirituality to meet their contemporary needs. Similarly, modern reproductive technologies are serving the traditional purpose of son-preference.

Chapter 7: Reproduction and transformation of gendered perceptions among the urban middle-class

This chapter examines how modernity has influenced gendered division of labour, gender hierarchy and gendered perceptions among the urban middle-class. The participants strategise to gain cultural, social and symbolic capital in order to maintain and improve their existing class status. I will begin by discussing the reasons participants offered for practising son-preference. I will then discuss how daughters' increased entitlement to maternal family resources among the contemporary urban middle-class has increased parents' expectations of reciprocation from their daughters. Expectations are discussed in relation to the performance of socio-cultural roles by children, such as supporting parents financially and emotionally during their old-age and performing funeral rites. Further, I will highlight how gender hierarchy and inequality operate within siblings' relationships and how this plays out in the practice of son-preference, in parents' treatment of their daughters, their perceived duties towards daughters and their daughters' obligations to fulfil social expectations.

To analyse the data, I will employ Bourdieu's three key concepts: capital[75], field and habitus. I will analyse how the participants gained different forms of capital in their daily lives in order to achieve dominant positions in domestic and social fields through bearing sons, through treating their daughters equally, and by the daughters supporting their parents when required. The participants accumulated social, cultural and symbolic capital by having a son, by being a loving and a caring mother, and by having responsible children, and this helped them maintain their social class and status. I will also use the concept of symbolic violence and will expand on theories already discussed in the earlier chapters: benevolent patriarchy (Kilmartin, 2015; Roald, 2013), reproductive and transformative agency (Hays, 1994), and interrelation between structure, agency and culture (Hays, 1994).

This chapter has four findings which shed light on increasing status of daughters, son-preference being reproduced and contested in urban middle-class India. The first finding is son-preference: both symbolic violence and symbolic capital. By having sons, women hope to gain status through acquisition of symbolic capital. The participants often accepted son-preference as natural

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[75] In the conceptual framework chapter, I briefly discussed symbolic capital. However, in this chapter I will discuss all four forms of capital, and how they are interrelated.

and legitimate, and this is a manifestation of women accepting their subordinate position. I will relate this internalisation of gender inequality to the concept of symbolic violence. The second finding refers to gender hierarchy in sibling relationships, and will explain that gender inequality, hierarchy and power-relations are masked by the virtues of love, care and support in siblings' relationships. Brothers are the caregivers and women are dependents. This was the reason women gave the most importance to in explaining son-preference. The third finding refers to the changing status of daughters. Even though sons are preferred by women because they take care of them in their old-age, participants treat their daughters equally. The participants in this study provided their daughters with the same educational and career opportunities, and in many cases allowed them to inherit parental property. Through bestowing these traditional rights of sons on their daughters, the daughters are able to gain different forms of capital, and this also suggests social transformation.

The last finding is the daughter as a virtual son in neoliberal urban India. I will shed light on how the increased entitlements accorded to daughters have resulted in increased expectations of them. Though capital remains highly gendered in regards to funeral rites, women can be bearers of the capital in the absence of a potential patriarch.

Son-preference: Both symbolic violence and symbolic capital

In my research, having a son was highly valued by almost all of the participants and their acquaintances. Women mentioned various socio-cultural and economic benefits that sons can provide, such as old-age support, financial support, and support to their daughters as brothers. Therefore, a son brought symbolic capital to women and their families and reproduced a gender hierarchy of sons being more socially and culturally advantageous for parents in general. Because of these benefits that a son can provide within patriarchal and collective settings women often misrecognised son-preference as natural and legitimate. However, I argue that the acceptance of son-preference as natural is a manifestation of participants internalising their own subordination within patriarchal settings. This internalisation of subordination, the imposition of gender inequality by women themselves, could be understood as a form of symbolic violence.

Symbolic violence is different from physical violence and denotes different modes of socio-cultural domination where the complicity of the dominated is a prerequisite (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2004). The dominated social actors accept and misrecognise the dominance of social

order as natural and just (Köverová, 2010; Swartz et al, 2012). Furthermore, symbolic violence legitimises this domination which subordinates social actors placed at the lower level of the social hierarchy (Trammell, 2011, p.307), and determines their different positions within different fields. The groups located at the higher positions in social strata are considered to be advantaged as they not only practice domination over dominated groups, but also deny them "access to the same opportunities and privileges." (DiGiorgio, 2009, p.917).

Symbolic violence is manifested in the way in which individuals internalise their own subordination to which they are subjected because of their race, class or gender. Gender domination is the paradigmatic form of symbolic violence that is part of everyday social life and is embedded in the socio-cultural fabric of many societies to such an extent that it looks natural. Bourdieu mentioned symbolic violence as a means of reproducing gender hierarchies, in a way that tends to benefit men more than women and this is done without coercion or physical force (Bourdieu, 1990). According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (2004) "the male order is so deeply grounded as to need no justification" (p.273). They further argue that:

> The case of gender domination shows better than any other that symbolic violence accomplishes itself through an act of cognition and of misrecognition that lies beyond or beneath—the controls of consciousness and will, in the obscurities of the schemata of habitus that are once gendered and gendering (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2004; p.273).

Women in patriarchal societies can be understood as the dominated groups as Bourdieu (2001) explains that women accept and misrecognise patriarchal domination (Clark, 2004). Thus they play a crucial role in their own subordination. For example, by misrecognising son-preference as natural, participants legitimised male-domination and their own subordination, which maintain male supremacy and domination within domestic and social fields. Symbolic violence is a process of the social reproduction of inequalities, even though women have equal legal rights. Popular culture also becomes a site of stabilising unequal gender relations (McRobbie, 2004 & 2009). As a result, women usually do not challenge their suppression by, and dependence upon, men.

However, despite son-preference being so prevalent, a few of the participants were not interested in having a son at all, and did not practise it despite family and social pressure. The majority of the participants practiced son-preference, and were even more eager to have a son than were their own husbands and families. Interestingly, all of the participants agreed that reproductive choices

should be free of any form of coercion or violent assault. The majority of participants did not consider pressure to have a son or to practice female-foeticide as a form of violence towards them or against their daughters or female foetuses. The acceptance of this domination was well articulated in accounts of many women. For example, both Sheila who is in a paid job and has two sons; and Tulsi, a house wife, with two daughters and one son, viewed son-preference and female-foeticide as natural. Their quotes are revealing:

> Sheila: Nothing is illegal or immoral [in practising female foeticide]. Everyone practises it.
> Tulsi: Son-preference is natural and you cannot stop that.

The women themselves played a key role in the legitimation of their own domination. They did not find anything wrong, either legally or morally, in practising female foeticide or son-preference. This suggests that women have internalised and naturalised their own subordination to a great extent. As a result, women will continue to be subordinated by holding a lower status than men and will continue to accept patriarchal structures even in contemporary urban middle-class settings where women are educated and have access to paid jobs.

The majority of the participants, whether they had sons or not, calmly stated that women themselves desire a son. Sonia, Monika and Tara were highly educated and were working in highly paid jobs. They had their first child, a daughter, and all of them had a strong desire to have a son. Tara's second child was a son, and she had had an ultrasound for sex-detection in her second pregnancy. All three exhibited son-preference, for example:

> Sonia: women practice son-preference because they also want a son.
> Monika: because they [women] do not think it is a big deal to practise son-preference.
> Tara: because from deep inside women always wish to have a son. I think women are actually more eager than men to have sons.

Kabeer (1999) argues that the practice of son-preference by women shows that women tend to internalise their own subordination within patriarchal societies. These quotes exemplify that urban educated and working women also adhere to traditional patriarchal practices by preferring sons[76]. Therefore, this acceptance of subordination could be understood as symbolic violence, and plays a crucial role in maintaining the gender hierarchy within domestic and social fields.

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[76] Preferring sons does not mean that women would discriminate against their already born daughters. Rather the discrimination is mainly against the unborn female foetus. This point is discussed in depth in the last two sections of this chapter.

This symbolic violence phenomenon in the context of son-preference is evident in different statistics as well. For instance, despite the constant decline in the child sex ratio in Indian census results, only 1,165 cases of female foeticide in the whole country had been filed by 2012, as mentioned in the conceptual framework (Female Feticide, 2012). Female foeticide is a severe form of violence against women (Jena, 2008, p8, WHO, 2011), and is deemed to be the result of women's subordinate position in India.

Ironically, both having a son and bringing dowry are beneficial for women as individuals and raise their status in their affinal family even though this highlights their socially subordinated position (Kabeer, 1999).

Participants explained that, unlike the demands for dowry, they did not view the demand or desire to have a son as oppressive or violent. There is a strong sense among the women that sons are more beneficial and secure their future whereas dowry is limited to financial security for only a short time. A son provides different advantages and security for the whole life-time. This signifies cultural, economic, and symbolic capitals are considered more valuable at a wider level of social and familial network when it is associated with a son. In contrast, dowry is viewed as exploitative and oppressive as the maternal family has to make financial contributions and women might be at the risk of losing family support if there are too many demands for dowry to be increased. Therefore, in the neoliberal economy among the urban middle-class symbolic and cultural capital in the context of son-preference hold immense importance. Symbolic dominations have not been overshadowed by economic capital instead it remains one aspect of converting economic capital to symbolic.

Physical, rather than symbolic dowry violence against women in India is quite common. Unlike female foeticide it is highly reported by Indian women. For instance, 8391 deaths were reported in India in the year 2010, which means one dowry death happens every 90 minutes according to the report of Indian crime statistics[77] (National Crime Records Bureau, 2011, p.195). There have also been many reports of misuse of the Dowry Prohibition Act by women and their maternal

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[77] It is important to highlight that it is a common experience to see that reports of dowry death are often made by the girls' family where the parents were pressuring their daughter to adjust in her affinal family even where she made complaints of repeated incidences of violence towards her for not bringing sufficient dowry. Or in those cases where women hid the cruelty they faced after their marriage from their maternal families.

families; for this reason, the government plans to amend the dowry law[78] (*Indian Express*, 2015). Interestingly, both forcing women to bring dowry and pressuring them to have a son or obtaining an ultrasound for sex-detection are illegal, but this has had little impact on these practices. The fact that women strongly report abuse about dowry has had little impact on the demand for dowry. This highlights the social transformation in regards to reporting dowry violence, but no major transformation is evident in regards to reporting pressure to have a son. I asked my participants, "Why is it when women are beaten or when they are tortured for dowry they report it to the police? But, when they are forced or tortured to have a son then they do not report it to police?" The replies that I received demonstrated that the legitimisation of the morality of son-preference mainly remains unquestioned at a socio-cultural level. For example, both Radha, and Kaveri practiced son-preference and used ultrasound, spiritual and traditional practices to have a son, as they put it:

> Radha: I understand this. See because she is not being tortured in this case [pressure to have a son]. Beating and demands for dowry is a form of torture.
> Kaveri: [laughter] in that case [dowry] she is being hurt that is why she is calling the police. In the other case [bearing a son] they are asking for the child and the child will remain with her [will look after the mother] that is why she does not report.

Radha and Kaveri, and almost all of the participants agreed and/or experienced son-preference as a torture-free and pain-free experience. While replying to this question many participants implied in their tone that son-preference is natural and legitimate, unlike dowry. The laughter in Kaveri's narration indicates this. Radha and Kaveri did not themselves experience any pressure to bring in dowry, but articulated that physical beatings or emotional pressure for dowry are a form of torture. Whereas, a son provides lots of socio-cultural and financial benefits to women, and he would stay with the women, unlike the dowry which is usually taken away from the daughter-in-law by the affinal families. Another participant, Mira commented that:

> This is because the woman has to bring dowry from her parents' family, but the son is born in the affinal house [no financial burden on maternal family].

Mira's statement explains that the dowry issue is not simply a private matter between husband, wife and the affinal family, but that it involves the women's maternal family and might make it challenging for them to bear the financial pressure. In the case of son-preference often there is no

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[78] It is often reported that women make false dowry allegations against their husbands and affinal family members when marital problems in fact arise because of me other reasons.

involvement of the maternal family, and women can themselves deal with the pressure and negotiate.

Interestingly, no participant reported receiving any kind of physical beatings by their husbands or affinal family members in regards to any matter, not even son-preference. Only one participant, Jessica, mentioned that her in-laws asked for dowry and for this reason she used to live in a nuclear family with her husband away from her in-laws. Dowry is often argued to be one of the most vital reasons for son-preference (Unnithan-Kumar, 2010). A few of the participants who had two or three daughters mentioned that it would be or was challenging to have a big wedding. But no participant other than Jessica mentioned dowry to be the principal reason behind son-preference, and once she had a daughter her views also changed as she was fond of her daughter. The absence of dowry as a reason behind son-preference in the participants' accounts could be because in North India dowry is an important means "of assessing and representing social status, honour and prestige" (Roulet, 1996, p.89). The participants did not consider giving a big wedding and presenting gifts to their daughters and their sons-in-law and their families as a form of dowry, rather it was an important way to show and maintain their status.

These experiences of participants in regards to son-preference could be viewed as a class-based experience because the failure to produce a son does not always lead to intimate partner violence (Jejeebhoy, 1998; Sabarwal et al, 2012; Srinivasan & Bedi, 2007). For instance, the rate of domestic violence against the urban educated middle class women is relatively low (Sabarwal et al, 2012). This could be because these women have access to and knowledge of ultrasound and female foeticide meaning that family size and gender composition are not an issue of discrepancy between the hopes of the couples (Sabarwal et al, 2012).

However, this epitomises gender hierarchy: women tend to derive benefits for themselves by being dependent on men and sons. Yet, having a son does not guarantee that this will increase women's social position in comparison to men within different fields because this does not challenge patriarchal authority. Rather it sustains it by demonstrating that women's status is dependent on the existence of men. For example, Sana, a mother of two, one daughter and one son, herself obtained an ultrasound during her second pregnancy in wish of a son. She stated that women themselves wanted to have sons because of the socio-cultural benefits.

> It is women and not men who actually have a strong desire to have a son, and I believe this. Because it has been embedded [son-preference] in our minds within our own cultural settings, women wish more strongly to have sons. So, that no one in society could say to them anything [criticism or taunts] that they only have daughters and no sons. It is changed now [views around son-preference] still these views persist.

One of the most important reasons behind son-preference that Sana raised was that by having a son, women can protect themselves from social criticism or from receiving inferior treatment.

A few of my participants mentioned receiving inferior treatment, such as taunts or not being allowed by their acquaintances to participate in certain festivals and rituals such as Ahoi[79] because they did not have a son. In the majority of these cases participants' desire to have a son increased after experiencing criticism. Because they tried to improve their status by having a son, they accepted inequality, rather than challenging it or transforming it. However, some of the participants who had only daughters, as mentioned in Chapter Five, challenged and transformed this son-preference practice although the majority of participants preferred to have a son. For example, Rama, after receiving lots of taunts within her family and social networks, decided to have a son, even though her husband was not initially ready, and only after prolonged negotiations did he accept the proposal. Rama had three children, two daughters and one son and at the birth of her second daughter her elder sister-in-law taunted her:

> At the birth of my second daughter my elder sister-in-law talked to me in a very strange manner. She said to me "Oh gosh, your second child is also a daughter, and I was thinking that if you had a son then I would give you a gold chain". Then I ignored her, and said that I did not want her chain.

However, when she had her son her sister-in-law did not give her anything. Gold is very expensive, and in India it is often gifted to women on festivals or during an auspicious event usually by family members or acquaintances. Giving away gold is an important way to express one's love, care and respect towards the women. This highlights how power relations operate within popular culture - that women without sons are unworthy of deserving anything precious. It is like a give and take relation where a woman provides a son[80] to the family and can receive precious or expensive items in exchange. A son's birth brings not only symbolic but also economic capital for women whereas a daughter's birth might bring humiliation for many

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[79] Many participants observed Ahoi for their daughters as discussed in Chapter Five.
[80] Son is considered as precious for the family socially as well as financially.

women. In such cases women's lower positioning both as mothers and daughters remained unchallenged and they in fact continued to reproduce patriarchy.

 In another case Kashi, who had a daughter, could not conceive for a second time, and after 14-15 years without a second pregnancy she adopted the new born son of her relative to increase her social status. It is common for Indian couples to adopt a new born in order to build emotional bonds, and often keep the adoption secret from the child in order to "pass him off as their biological child" (Kapoor, 2007, p.249). Kashi, her husband and daughter all wanted a boy child: their daughter wanted a brother and they wanted a son. However, Kashi also discussed that prior to adopting her son she faced a lot of social criticism within her networks for not having a son:

> Oh so many times people have taunted me, but what could I have done? Many said, "Oh, she is a barren". Then I said "how could I be a barren? I have a daughter; barren is the one who does not have any child. I have a daughter."

Social actors holding a dominant position in the field treat others as inferior. In Kashi's case she was socially derided as infertile by her acquaintances as she could not produce a son because women's worth in India is often associated with reproducing a male heir (Hegde, 1999; Thapan, 2009). Sometimes if women fail to produce a son they experience name-calling such as barren (Croll, 2000, p.91; Hegde, 1999). However, by rejecting the term "barren" Kashi indicated that she considered herself better off than infertile women because she had a daughter and experienced motherhood. She viewed herself in a dominant position within domestic and social fields, in comparison to infertile women who could not accumulate any form of capital in this context. On the other hand, the adoption showed that Kashi could improve her status both socially and at an individual level by having a son. She thus gained a legitimate form of gendered cultural, social and symbolic capital in the context of old-age support, protection and funeral rituals without challenging the patriarchal social norms around women's fertility and the importance of having a son.

In India it is predominantly infertile couples that opt for adoption (Kapoor, 2007), but in some cases people also adopt when they specifically want a boy or girl. Traditional practices of inter-family adoption are common in India (Kapoor, 2007, p. 245); however, parents now prefer to legally adopt a child, and Kashi also adopted her son legally. Under legal adoption a family is created legally, but it also receives social validation (Kapoor, 2007). A similar pattern was reported by Kashi as she mentioned that since she has adopted her son nobody has taunted her

and some of the people even apologised to her for earlier being rude to her. This confirms the idea that her son was socially accepted as her own and the adoption brought her socio-cultural validation.

Interestingly, many participants in similar situations to Rama and Kashi tried to have a son, usually biologically, after experiencing social discrimination. None of these women challenged patriarchal norms, nor did they accept their subordinated status as permanent. Instead they competed in domestic and social fields for a better social status. This competitive behaviour is an important aspect of neoliberal society where people access different resources in order to raise their social and economic status (Brosius, 2012). Women are important participants in neoliberal development and their personal lives are also influenced by it. They may compete to change their social positioning and raise their status by having a son through the use of reproductive technologies, adoption or spiritual methods. This highlights the complexity of son-preference, as it is both a form of symbolic violence and a sign of symbolic capital for women.

Another participant, Suchi, a mother of both a son and a daughter, also explained that women themselves feel honoured and respected by having a son, and mentioned that having a son is "woman's greed". Greed indicates an urge to accumulate as much socio-cultural and financial benefits as one can even by illegal or immoral means (foeticide or infanticide). In this process women actually aggravate their own subordination. Women struggle to acquire capital in the competitive arena of domestic and social fields through producing sons, and this provides them higher social status in comparison to those women who do not have sons.

This discussion shows son-preference is both a form of symbolic violence and symbolic capital. As seen in Kashi, Kaveri and Radha's cases I will argue that son-preference has become an important part of middle-class values and practices. Having a son has become an important aspect of competing for a dominant position in domestic and social fields where gender hierarchy and gender inequality are lived experiences for social actors. The benefits that women derived from having a son tended to obscure gender domination and power-relations. Symbolic violence suggests that power-relations are concealed and naturalised, and that through this, inequalities are reimposed within society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Köverová, 2010; Wacquant, 1998). This concealing of power-relations is similar to the idea of benevolent patriarchy where women as mothers, sisters, wives or daughters are largely dependent on men, and the men play the role

of benevolent protectors keeping women as dependents. This dependency often makes women a burden for their families. For example, the most important reason that women mentioned for having a son was in order to ensure a male protector and supporter for their daughters even after they are dead. This importance of having a benevolent patriarch will be addressed in the next section.

Gender hierarchy in sibling relationships

'Rakhi' and 'Bhaiya Dooj' are two popular North Indian Hindu festivals that celebrate the social and emotional bonding and duties between brothers and sisters. These festivals symbolise and are mechanisms to confirm that brothers are expected to support their sisters socially, physically, financially, and emotionally throughout their lives (Chowdhry, 1997, p.294). Brothers visit their sisters' affinal families on these occasions, offer them gifts, ascertain their sisters' well-being and support them in any way if needed after their marriages (Ramu, 2006).

In 'Rakhi', also called 'Raksha Bandhan', a sister ties a sacred thread (called Rakhi) on the wrist of her brother and prays for his long and happy life, and in return the brother promises to be a life-long protector and supporter of his sister (John et al, 2008). The festival of 'Bhaiya Dooj' is based on a similar bond of love and duty between brothers and sisters[81].

However, irrespective of one's religion, brothers in India are socially viewed as life-long protectors and caregivers of their sisters. Both Hindu and Muslim participants articulated the ideology of brothers as sisters' protectors in their interviews. This is part of the ingrained Indian cultural belief that brothers are benevolent protectors, whereas women are regarded as weak and needing to be protected. Having a son in order to provide a brother to their daughters was the most important reason that participants stated behind practising son-preference.

Sonia was highly educated, had one daughter, was in her late 20s, and wanted to have a son mainly to keep her daughter protected by providing her with a brother. Her reasoning highlights the importance of this benevolent protection:

> A son is not important to enhance a woman's status. The status gets enhanced even with the birth of a girl. But it surely creates a safer environment within a family, especially when the parents and sister grow old. It is like that this family has a son. It is the safety concern, rather than the status factor. A daughter does all the same things but the safety factor is better with having a son,

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[81] I have already discussed the importance of siblings in India in Chapter Four. This section touches on the relationship and bonding between brothers and sisters in India.

> nothing else. We cannot send the daughter out at night time, but a son can go out during the night. For daughters you have to depend on others [if there is no son in the family], but a son can perform chores more freely. These are the only restrictions for girls that we cannot send them out during the night because of safety concerns.

Gender privilege is highlighted here. Although Sonia mentioned that daughters are equal, at the same time she mentioned that daughters need protection as well as suggesting that they could be vulnerable victims of different crimes. The neoliberal reforms such as women entering into paid jobs and pursuing higher education have increased women's visibility and presence in the public sphere unlike in earlier times (Belliappa, 2013; Mishra, 2011; Radhakrishnan, 2009). When these neoliberal and development reforms intersect with traditional patriarchal ideology that women's place is to be confined to her house then it may eventually lead to increased violence against women such as rape, gang rape, and molestation (Kohli, 2012). Because of this parents often feel afraid for their daughters and are likely to follow the traditional patriarchal ideology that having a male escort, usually a male family member, might provide women with safety from these violent crimes. The majority of the participants, who had a strong desire to have a son, shared similar views regarding their daughters' protection. For instance, Tanu was in her mid-40s, and she shared similar views to Sonia, she explained that:

> It is a tradition that there should be someone to take care of the sisters. No matter how many cousin brothers you have, a real brother is real. She [daughter] ties Rakhi to her cousin brother as well and he would help her even in the middle of night if we asked for help from him, and he would always do this. Both of my sons [referring to her nephew] are good, but a real brother is real.

It is the reflection of popular middle-class ideology that good and respectable women do not go out at night, and if they do so they are themselves putting their security at risk. Within this scenario the socio-cultural role of brothers as a protector comes into play.

The discussion of Rakhi in Tanu's account contains a symbolic reference to the duty of brothers towards their sisters, and the social legitimacy of blood kinship. Other participants such as Neha, Sana, Ruby, and Kashi also had a son in order to provide a real brother to their daughters. This signifies that men are benevolent protectors, and the power relationship is masked beneath the virtue of love, care, protection, and duty (Kilmartin, 2015). The knowledge of socio-cultural tradition and abiding within it brings cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Having a protector to support the daughters highlights the strong support for girls. It is a form of social capital and the knowledge of the cultural values and traditions, and healthy strong sibling relationships bring

cultural capital. These cultural ideals and normative codes in India help in maintaining strong sibling relationships throughout the life-span (Ramu, 1987).

Women confirmed that brothers play a crucial role not only in arranging their sisters' marriages, but by attending to their sisters when they return to their maternal homes after their marriages, and giving gifts to them on different occasions (John et al, 2008). The participants also explained that brothers are regarded as their sisters' life-long protectors especially in cases where they suffer any kind of financial, physical, or emotional problems within their conjugal home (Chowdhry, 1997, p.299). Both husbands and brothers are deemed to be women's protectors, but the husband is popularly viewed mainly as a lover whereas it is only the brother who can protect his sister from her husband (Chowdhry, 1997, p. 299).

Kanu, in her 60s, mentioned that she had a son to provide a brother to her daughters in order to provide them with life-long support. She had three daughters followed by a son.

> One of my friends was one of three sisters and their parents died. After that my friend had no one else. She used to say that there was nothing in her life and she had to open the lock of the house herself and make tea on her own. I knew all three of them. The youngest one did not marry. She said it's important to be at home for the brother-in-law her sister and her children. And there had been so many cases where there was no brother so the sons-in-law sold the property and distributed it among themselves. So, I thought for them that there would be a brother for them where they could visit and they wouldn't have to feel sad on Rakhi that they did not have a brother. They would have at least a place to visit after their parents' death.

Kanu decided not to leave her daughters without any support. She also pointed out that sons-in-law are likely to sell the property in the absence of a son as they do not have any emotional attachment to the property, whereas a son would protect the sisters and maternal property as well. It is important to note that, at a social level, sons are still viewed as caregivers of parental property and are expected to inherit it (Chowdhry, 1997; Larsen, 2011)[82]. The support provided by brothers to their sisters, and the practice of these socio-cultural beliefs and traditional gender roles brought cultural and social capital for participants within their networks which was then converted to symbolic capital. These forms of capital are gendered and mainly stem from practising son-preference, and accepting male supremacy and women's subordination. Moreover, it allowed participants to have a romantic picture of their children supporting and taking care of each other when they were dead.

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[82] The issue of inheriting parental property is discussed in detail when I address the concept of the daughter being accepted as a virtual son in a following section.

Another interesting aspect to highlight in Sonia, Tanu, and Kanu's accounts is that they are all from different age-groups, but share the same ideology. Although their sons are younger than their daughters they are still regarded as protectors of their elder sisters whereas elder siblings, mainly girls, usually take care of their younger siblings and support them in different ways (Allendorf, 2012; Thelen et al, 2013). It is a common experience in patriarchal cultures to socialise young boys to take care of their sisters and mothers, and be responsible for their safety: they are benevolent patriarchs (Roald, 2013). This indicates that men, irrespective of their age, hold a stronger position in society, and are often viewed as socially and physically stronger than women. Furthermore, this also explains that women in this case are not capital accumulating subjects; rather they are capital bearing objects for their social groups (Lovell, 2000; Skeggs, 2004). In this research, these groups and individuals are women's families, husbands or brothers. Women are objects bearing symbolic and cultural capital for their brothers. This aids men (in this case, brothers) to retain their masculine domination and superiority in both fields. Whereas, women remain at lower positions in these fields and the gender hierarchy persists.

It was interesting that no participant mentioned that brothers might not always support their sisters, or that the siblings might not have healthy relationships with each other in the future. Rather all of them were confident that their children would have strong emotional bonds with each other, and they articulated high moral ideals of siblings' solidarity. "Sibling relationships are salient in all phases of one's life cycle but change in substance and quality as people grow older" (Ramu, 2006, p.6). Furthermore, women who are financially well off and are respected within their in-laws' family might feel neglected if their brothers do not show their support for them (Ramu, 2006).

The above discussion explains how gender hierarchy operates in sibling relationships among the urban middle-class. Gender differences in regards to male and female physical and social mobility are clearly defined among the urban middle-class. For example, women's or daughters' travel at night is still socially frowned upon and is viewed as dangerous for them. Further, women are believed to need to be supported both prior to and after their marriage by their brothers. I will argue that urban middle-class women's appearance in the public sphere is quite common these days, but this presence has not eroded the collective patriarchal family values. Gender hierarchy and patriarchal authority are reproduced and sustained in the daily lives of the

urban middle-class in the name of protection and life-long support for sisters by brothers in urban India. These socio-cultural norms enforce the belief that women, no matter how much success they achieve in their career or education, will need men for their protection in their daily lives. 'Benevolent patriarchy' which portrays men as loving self-sacrificing benevolent protectors and women as dependents hides the gender hierarchy (Kilmartin, 2015; Roald, 2013). The implicit power imbalance is performed with love, care and virtue but is no less insidious than dominative power (Roald, 2013). This explains how power and control operate within patriarchal and collective settings, and how within these settings women are making best decisions for themselves. Participants are deriving social and cultural benefits for their daughters through their sons. Women are concerned with securing their daughters' future and girls benefit on a long term basis by receiving long lasting support, protection, and having someone to take care of their affairs and look after them in the absence of their parents. However, it cannot be ignored that a strong gender hierarchy and inequality within siblings' relationship exists and that this supports women's subordination. If women were not discriminated against then they would not be dependent on their brothers or other male family members for protection.

Changing status of daughters

The second most important reason that participants mentioned for preferring sons was the desire to receive support in old-age. Elderly parents in India live with their sons because old-age homes are not popular and are culturally viewed as places for the destitute. Often participants considered 50 years of age as old-age. Almost 82% of parents over the age of 60 live with their children and are dependent on them financially, physically, and for other forms of support (Liebig, 2003; United Nations, 2005 cited in Mathur, 2007).

Old-age support provided by sons and sons staying with parents after their marriage are important reasons for son-preference in India (Singh, 2010) and were borne out by my participants. Neha had two daughters and one son. She specially tried for the third child because she wished to have a son, as she commented:

> We had this feeling that girls will go to their conjugal house, so at least there should be someone to live with us, somebody to support us in our old age. Thus, we took a chance after six years, and then I had a son. We always had it in our hearts that we should have a boy.

Neha's desire to receive old-age support from her son explains the importance of cultural traditions in her life. This is both social and cultural capital, which would eventually bring

symbolic capital for her within her social networks through her having a supportive and happy family, again an important indicator of prestige among the urban middle-class.

It is often argued that son-preference leads to inferior treatment of daughters, such as infant mortality, lack of education, lack of nutrition, and daughters will not receive the same resources as sons (Chaudhuri, 2012). My study showed that son preference may lead to women obtaining an ultrasound, sex-selection, and other traditional and spiritual practices[83], but this preference did not extend to the participants discriminating against or neglecting or treating their daughters badly. At the same time, a number of participants, despite practising son-preference widely, articulated that having a son did not mean that he would support them in their old-age; they mentioned that they only had a hope that their sons might look after them. For example, only three participants had married sons, out of which only two were living with their sons and their families. Out of these two one mentioned her son not to be very supportive. Similar to this, in a recent study conducted in rural North Indian settings parents mentioned old-age support to be the most important reason for son-preference (Larsen, 2011, p.128). Ironically, the parents highlighted declining trust in their sons mentioning that sons might not always support their parents in their old-age (Larsen, 2011, p.128). This sheds light on the changing social relations and bonding between sons and parents in contemporary India where sons also want to live independently of their parents.

Despite the fact that son-preference is widely practised in India to procure old-age support, elder abuse is quite prevalent among the families which have sons (Pathak & Raj, 2013). This has resulted in the Indian state suggesting legislation to punish children who abuse their parents (Pathak & Raj, 2013). Participants' narratives also reflected their understanding about this dilemma; however, they continued to practise son-preference because of the socio-cultural benefits of having a son. For example, Sana said that:

> For example, my niece got married, and now she is earning, but for her own family [affinal family], and not for us. This is the biggest difference between a son and a daughter: that the son will live with us, he will support us in our old age, and will serve us. This is the reason behind son-preference. However, nowadays sons also do not do anything for their parents, and they also get separated. They just leave with their wives [laughter]. Still we have this mentality that sons will look after us. However, son-preference is changing slowly, slowly.

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[83] These practices have already been discussed in Chapter Five.

Bringing up both sons and daughters is quite expensive (Patel, 2010), and both are an economic and social liability. But, a son can repay his parents through supporting them in their old-age, whereas expecting a daughter to support her parents, especially when there is a son, brings shame and ridicule for the family (Croll, 2000). Therefore, as reflected in Sana's account, daughters are an economic and emotional drain as they join their husbands' families after their marriages. The parents are not able to derive any forms of benefit from them in their old-age despite the amount invested in their daughters' education and upbringing. However, as stated above, sons might not always look after their parents. For instance, in India many elderly widows are not supported by their sons (Lamb, 2000; Larsen, 2011). Sana's explanation that sons can no longer be relied upon for support is based on the contemporary culture of the urban middle-class families where many sons live far away from their families. Other participants had similar experiences to those Sana. They mentioned that because of sons migrating to different countries or to states within India for employment, parents are left with no old-age support. Or in some cases sons may not look after their parents even if they are living close to them. At the same time, Sana highlighted the ways a son can bring economic and social capital by financially supporting the family and staying with the parents in their old-age, which daughters cannot do. So even if a son did not support his parents in their old-age, parents still hoped to receive at least some form of support from them.

Despite a strong realisation that sons might not support their parents in old-age, son-preference remained popular among the participants in my research. For instance, Kiran only had a daughter, she and her husband both had a strong desire to have a son. She commented that:

> His [her husband's] thinking is that when we grow old then no one will be with us. We should have a son who will live with us and who will support us. We cannot pin any hopes on our daughter. We will teach her, give her everything, but she will join her husband's family. We have heard that children do not respect their parents. Nowadays people who have sons, who even only have one son, they would not look after their parents. Maybe the son will not even care for us, but a hope rests in our heart that he might look after us one day. It is a hope!

This statement explains how gender bias is articulated through the experiences of insecurities around old-age, old-age support, and gender relations which produce greater reliance on sons than daughters, eventually influences parents' decisions around the gender composition of their children. Sons' support in old-age still remains unchallenged to a large extent even when participants are themselves witnessing and discussing that sons might not adhere to traditional

socio-cultural norms. Couples tend to follow traditional gender norms while parenting their children. Daughters are taught from childhood that they belong to their future husband's family whereas sons are taught to look after their parents and are expected to stay with their own families. Kiran's statement, like Sana's highlighted changing socio-cultural norms and fears that many sons in urban areas are not adhering to traditional collective values of taking care of parents[84]. This has led to the rise of cultural doubts and insecurities among couples regarding the authenticity of the benefits associated with having a son. Despite having this fear that son-preference might be futile couples prefer to have a son because of long standing traditional son-preference practice.

Interestingly, Kiran, despite having a strong son-preference explained that she and her husband provided quality education to their daughter, along with other opportunities such as extracurricular activities. No participants who had daughters discriminated against them when providing them educational and career opportunities, and they mentioned giving them love and respect equal to what they give to their sons.

It is often easier for the families to accept a girl when she is the first child. A few participants stated that they received very good treatment from their in-laws when their daughters were born. For example, Tara's first child was a daughter and she stated that "everyone was so happy and she [daughter] was welcomed warmly, but my son was not welcomed with such warmth". Some of the participants were quite depressed at the birth of their first daughter. All of the participants, whether they were happy with the birth of their daughters or not, be it first or second or third daughter, reported that they treated their daughters with love and care, and provided quality education and social upbringing for their daughters. Shashi, for instance, a mother of a girl, narrated that she felt sad at the birth of her daughter because having a son would have made her stress free. She mentioned that both she and her husband were shocked at the birth of their daughter.

> My mother-in-law told me that he [husband] was so shocked that he did not even make a body movement. But, nowadays there is not much difference between a girl and a boy. Now girls are ahead of boys. But he [husband] loves his daughter a lot.

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[84] This is discussed further in the next section.

Shashi's daughter was provided with love, care, affection, and was studying in one of the most expensive schools of her city.

Another participant Rita had three daughters and one son, and she was highly educated, and working. She stated that she provided the same education to all of her daughters as she has provided to her son. However, Rita mentioned she was extremely shocked and depressed when she had her third daughter. She stated that:

> When the nurse told me it was a girl, I got shocked because it was the third daughter. I myself got so shocked, and I could not believe it. Then I somehow managed to control my feelings. When I looked at the face of the lady doctor who did my caesarean then I thought maybe my daughters will become capable like her one day. After two to three minutes I controlled my feelings and prayed that my children become capable and have a good career. I also prayed for my children's health, and well-being. But my children were physically fit so I was happy. And, yes everyone else's reaction was not good, like my mother-in-law started crying and all my relatives were so sad. My husband also became depressed.

Rita's account sheds light on how gender construction in India assigns lower social status to daughters and the second or subsequent daughter is often unwanted. The social construction of gender is embedded in the interlocking of religious, economic, social and kinship structures which define the social worth of men and women (Patel, 2007). The lack of a son, a future patriarch, leaves the women or couple in a state of deep stress because of this gender construction as they will be unable to access various essential socio-cultural advantages that a son needs to fulfil. Son-preference influenced not only women's reproductive choices, but also their and their husbands' and family's emotional well-being.

Rita's case is an interesting illustration of how she calmed herself at the birth of her daughter by thinking that her daughter would have a good career like the lady doctor who performed her delivery. Education is an important conduit to gaining cultural and symbolic capital through children, both boys and girls, and in this case was a way to compensate for not having a son. Rita explained that both she and her husband provided the best education and upbringing to their daughters without discriminating against them, so their daughters could have a good career. Rita also had annual saving plans for her daughters' education, and she said that:

> You have to spend a lot on daughters' education. If you have to give your children higher education then you have to get prepared for that. Without planning you cannot provide education to them.

It is important to realise that the majority of the participants were themselves highly educated, and they themselves had educational cultural capital, and all of them had economic capital to provide the best schooling for their children. In their habitus education is vital, and is provided to children irrespective of their sex. As the parents are financially capable of providing all their children with quality education, it was a matter of maintaining their own educational status and class.

It is important to realise that in a neoliberal society nationalism is also associated with people's ability to contribute towards the development of society. Women in urban areas these days are actively contributing towards financial and social development of society by participating in the globalised market. They are in paid jobs and hold influential positions similar to their male colleagues (Belliappa, 2013; Radhakrishnan, 2009). The participants, by providing higher education to their daughters, are preparing them to compete in the global neoliberal market. Women are making the same contributions as men for the nation's progress in the neoliberal economy.

Motherhood, as discussed in the introduction and Chapter Five, is a glorified ideology associated with nationalism. But by being mothers who are educating not only their sons, but also daughters who can contribute towards the nation's development, women accumulated cultural and symbolic capital in both domestic and social fields. Participants' daughters would make them proud and could financially support the parents if needed. Moreover, the participants also accumulated cultural and symbolic capital by being loving and caring parents especially mothers who treat their daughters and sons equally. By being loving mothers and providing daughters with the same career opportunities women are able to engage with nationalist ideology.

In rural areas strong son-preference indicates intense discrimination against daughters (Sekher & Hatti, n.d.). In contrast, my data, taken from an urban region and middle-class sample, suggests that female education is the most important area where great social transformation is happening among the urban middle-class. This is an interesting aspect of how the use of technology has changed the patterns of discrimination. Previously girls were neglected and discriminated against after their birth, and now they are discriminated against through the use of sex-selection before the birth (Goodkind, 1996). This shift in the means of discrimination against girls is an important contemporary feature of urban middle-class reproductive practices. It cannot be said that

daughters in India are very likely to receive ill-treatment because women's status is also sharply increasing. For example, there has been an increase of female literacy from 54.2% in 2001 to 65.46% in 2011 (Census, 2011). Girls are now provided with the opportunity to study courses of their choice (Thapan, 2001). Earlier women were provided education mainly to look after their families and to hone their domestic skills (Waldrop, 2011), and they often did not join the paid workforce. Now female education is aimed at making women independent, educated and competitive in the job market.

The low female sex ratio is not a reflection of the status of women in society (Singh, 2010, p.630). For example, all 45 participants mentioned, irrespective of their own educational background, that female education is vital these days. They provided their daughters with English medium education and private tuition classes. In some cases, daughters were more educated than sons. It is common for Indian parents to invest in their daughters' education if they show academic brilliance (Bhatnagar, Dube & Dube, 2005). In this context Bhatnagar, Dube & Dube (2005) commented that:

> In a family where there are no sons, the daughters are treated as sons, and made into full partners in the production unit of the family. In a family in which one or more daughters displays academic potential, business acumen or talent, the family encourages, supports, and invests in the daughter in order to advance the ritual and cultural status of the family (Bhatnagar et al, 2005, p.97).

However, whether the daughters showed any potential or not parents aimed to provide the same level of education to them as to their sons. A few of them also said that they provided their daughters with the best education so no one could say that did not teach their child because it was a girl. This is because among the Indian middle-class gaining educational qualifications is an important way to maintain status and class (Puri, 1999). Educating children to graduate or post-graduate level is quite common among middle-class families these days, and children's educational career success helps parents gain cultural and symbolic capital and define the success and failure of their lives (Basu & Desai, n.d.; Kumar, 2011). Therefore, female education is also quite vital to accumulate symbolic capital within class-based social networks.

Contemporary urban middle-class women have much greater access to different educational and other resources than their mothers and grandmothers did. They have greater control over their lives, such as choosing their careers, their life partners and their life-styles (Waldrop, 2011). This transformation has only been possible because daughters are provided with education and career

opportunities by their parents which aid them to adopt an independent lifestyle (Waldrop, 2011). Earlier Indian women were completely dependent on their families for socio-economic support even in adulthood.

Interestingly, similar to Rita's aspiration, all other participants first aimed to provide quality education to their daughters to make them independent, and then to get them married. Paying dowry to find a good husband for a daughter by the family is also a form of cultural capital in India (Kodoth & Varghese, 2011) yet the participants were concerned to save and invest money for their daughters' education first, and not for their dowry. This is also because when the daughters start earning they can use that money to pay for their own dowries and marriage celebrations.

Radha, for example, mother of two daughters and one son, shared similar views on providing equal education and opportunities to her daughters rather than prioritising their marriage. Though she tried twice to have a son and used ultrasound and help from spiritual healers she still believed in gender equality for her daughters. She provided them access to higher education, and commented that:

> We provided the same education to our daughters and son and never differentiated. My eldest daughter graduated and got married. My second daughter has done a professional course and my son is doing the same course. Rather everyone said that why was I providing such a high qualification to my daughter, and it would have been better if I had spent the same amount of money on her marriage [dowry and marriage celebrations]. I said that she would get independent. Just because she was a girl this did not mean that she did not deserve education. She needs to be independent in the coming time. If she might have to face any kind of problem then her education will help her to face that situation. One should not think that nowadays girls cannot go to another place for a job or they cannot go anywhere. My thinking is not like this. I treat them equally.

Wedding celebrations in India are getting quite expensive and have become a status symbol where the quality of marriage celebrations is often compared to others within social networks (Patel, 2010). It is important to mention that girls' higher education and paid employment is actually not a substitute for paying dowry or wedding expenses. Rather, as discussed in the conceptual framework, with women getting more educated and having paid employment dowry rates have increased and not decreased; moreover, the bride's family is expected to organise a big wedding. Many of the participants said that they did not want to throw a big wedding or were not interested in throwing a big wedding for their children because it was a waste of money, but

only did so for the sake of maintaining their status. However, despite facing the social pressure to prioritise the money for her daughter's wedding Radha preferred to spend the money on her education. Other participants also gave primary importance to their daughters' education, and not their marriage or dowry[85]. Monika, for example, was concerned for her daughter's safety, but she did not prevent her daughter from travelling alone outside of the city to attend different educational conferences and seminars. Education not only enhances women's theoretical knowledge, but also makes them capable enough to gain practical experiences of life.

As a result of these structural changes, these days, urban middle class women are educationally advantaged, have a high degree of autonomy, greater control over their sexuality and have access to public spaces, and are no longer confined within the four walls of their houses (Lau, 2010; Thapan, 2001). This shows how opportunities have changed the social status of the urban middle-class women. It is important to note that a girl being educationally advantaged is a distinct feature of the urban middle-class.

The majority of the participants themselves mentioned female education to be more popular among the middle-class than among the working class. Riya, a mother of a daughter, mentioned that among the middle-class girls are equal, and receive education, whereas among the working class girls do not receive the same or higher education than boys. She said that:

> My maid has six children, four of them are boys, and two of them are girls. All of her four sons go to the school and both the girls are working in houses. They do cleaning, dusting, and mopping. Their children are in the slum cluster. Naturally their children have the same mind-set that boys should receive education and girls are useless.

Social classes are differentiated from one another in terms of the overall volume of capital, both economic and cultural, that they possess. On the other hand, female education is not a priority among those families and classes which have limited financial resources (Croll, 2000, p.163) and higher fertility rates. When family size is small people can provide enough resources for each child, which might result in a decline in the discrimination against female children (Allendrof, 2012).

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[85] Often women making good money are able to accumulate money for their own dowry after working for a few years. Therefore, the education benefits them by making them independent, ensuring their ongoing independence and allowing them to save money for their own wedding.

In middle-class Indian nationalist discourse women's higher status is a sign of upward mobility and lower status is a sign of social backwardness (Seth, 2013). Riya's excerpt has constructed a hierarchy of urban middle-class having a greater sense of gender equality in contrast to the working class. In a nutshell, urban middle-class is modern and avail themselves of gender equality discourses and development and family planning reforms. Urban middle-class adheres to modern and nationalist discourses of family building to gain symbolic and cultural capital, and to create a divide between the middle-class and the working class. Middle-class construct themselves as progressive, smart, educated and nationalist unlike the working class who are unable to plan their families and lives smartly and efficiently. The adherence to the modern nationalist and gender equality discourses highlights reformed and modern middle-class homes as an arena of nationalist mobilization (Donner, 2006).

Interestingly, the transformation is not only limited to girls receiving education, but it is also becoming socially acceptable for daughters to inherit the parental property or family business (Goel et al, 2011). Sana, for example obtained an ultrasound to detect the sex of her child during her second pregnancy in her desire for a son. But she still regarded her daughter as of equal status to any future son, and recounted that she would share all her properties and other material assets equally between her daughter and son.

> As it happens in our culture, once a daughter is married she does not have any rights [in the maternal home]. I do not have anything like this. For example, I want to distribute all my jewellery equally between both of my children, and I want to provide the maximum education to my daughter. Rather I want, as I only have one flat, to buy one more property to give it to my daughter. Whatever she wants to do in her life she should do and same for the son. In my mind I do not have any difference between them.

Under the Hindu Succession Act of 1996 daughters have the right to inherit parental property which was earlier denied to them (Sapkal, 2014). However, of the two Muslims participants one of them mentioned that in their family it was a social tradition, nothing to do with Islam, that only sons could inherit parental property. Daughters receive equal education, can spend money, but cannot actually inherit the property because of social traditions. Therefore she had a son. Socially it is still not common among different communities in India especially in rural areas to distribute property between brothers and sisters as it might adversely affect their relationship, and the son is expected to inherit the parental property (Chowdhry, 1997; Larsen, 2011). However, sharing property among daughters and sons is increasingly common among the urban

middle-class. It is important to mention that daughters' share of the inheritance is different from the dowry that they receive in their marriage. Sharing property is an indication of children being treated equally and women being deemed responsible enough to take care of their inheritance. Furthermore, parents allowing their daughters to inherit property is a strong indication of women's increasing status. Access to property increases women's participation in the decision making process, increases their knowledge, access to resources, and increases their socio-economic status and self-esteem (Datta, 2006).

In addition to this, my research looked at how daughters' births were celebrated. Though some of the participants were shocked at the birth of daughters, a number of them celebrated their daughters' births. This was commonly done by distributing sweets, throwing a party, and celebrating festivals. Another interesting aspect is that traditionally eunuchs would go to dance and bless the son, and in exchange take money, sweets and other gifts from the family (Polonovski, n.d.). However, now it is a common experience in the urban areas that eunuchs come at the birth of a daughter to bless her, and take money in exchange (Rao, 2015) although usually at the birth of daughter the demand for money and gifts remains lower in comparison to the birth of a boy. It is because of the low fertility rate that eunuchs prefer to perform at the birth of the daughters as well[86]. This indicates that fertility decline can result in the transformation of certain traditional gendered practices (Allendorf, 2012). This demand for money and gifts, albeit at a reduced rate, does represent significant social transformation as often traditionally the birth celebrations were performed only for a male child and sorrow was expressed at the birth of daughters (Hedge, 1999; Kujur & Pursuraman, 2013). It is interesting to note that the habitus is not permanent and is open to changes in dispositions within the given realm.

Some couples, for example, celebrated the birth of their daughter in similar ways to that of the boy: the traditions remained the same, but the pattern changed. Cultural symbols and meanings around collective family values, parenthood, and celebrations remain the same. People's choices are guided by structures of the field and people cannot be separated from their cultural context (Saran, 2014, p. 43). Birth celebration is an auspicious event previously limited to a son's birth, but with the rising popularity of gender equality discourses, the urban middle-class have started

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[86] Based on my personal experiences of talking to eunuchs about their practice of visiting at the birth of a daughter, they commented that they do this because these days, people have small families, so they cannot afford to make visits only at the birth of a son.

celebrating the birth of their daughters. By doing so my participants gained cultural and symbolic capital in different fields. They earned a positive reputation of being both traditional and modern as they adhered to cultural practices and treated their daughters equally. The following quotes bear out this argument:

> Monika: my father-in-law threw a huge party on her birth. She was so pampered, nobody even said a single word [that she did not have a son].
>
> Anu: I did Lohri [festival among the Punjabi community] for my daughter and it was a huge function in our family; it was quite welcomed. Lohri is for newly married couples and for the first boy. I was the first one in my family to celebrate it for my daughter and I invited everyone. What people think I do not know, but everyone in the family came and was happy. Everybody was surprised [laughter] that I did it for my daughter and they said it was good. My husband said as it was the first festival of our daughter so we had to celebrate it, and everyone came.

People are setting examples through these transformations. Furthermore, what was earlier confined to the birth of sons is changing, women are observing Ahoi fasts for their daughters' well-being as well.

All these transformations have also increased the burden on parents to provide good education, part of their property, a good wedding and dowry, and to be caregivers of their girls for life. Ironically, this increased expectation may result in girls being perceived as a burden. Therefore, it could be argued that the increasing status of women is resulting in more sex-selective abortion and son-preference among the middle-class. For instance, Rita, a mother of three daughters and one son, said that it was not easy to keep on having too many daughters nowadays as daughters need high education, a good wedding, and a dowry.

The above discussion suggests that the urge to accumulate capital through particular practices highlights the interests and benefits of particular groups based within a specific class and settings. Simultaneously, in order to maintain their educational and middle-class status parents provide their daughters with equal rights and opportunities. Because cultural capital is comprised of one's education, class, values, and beliefs, children's success in terms of career and education defines middle-classness (Saran, 2014). Education plays a vital role in accumulating cultural capital for Indian children, and their families (Saran, 2014). Moreover, celebrations at daughters' births and giving them access to maternal properties helped women in gaining cultural and symbolic capital. They were seen as being caring and loving mothers and believing in equality

for their children, despite having strong son-preference. It could be argued that transformation and reproduction of social structures are happening in a dynamic way.

The daughter as a virtual son in neoliberal urban India

Elder care in India was traditionally organised within joint families where sons and daughters-in-law would take care of the son's parents, but with nuclear families becoming popular in urban areas this system is witnessing a shift (Brijnath, 2012). The popularisation of nuclear families and small family norm are resulting in a significant shift in women's status with the emergence of career roles for women (Venkatesh, 1994). With women's changing status they are able to make themselves available for their own parents which they were not able to do earlier under their affinal families' pressure.

The lack of support from sons in old age has to a certain extent resulted in transformation in son-preference ideology. It is now becoming common amongst the urban middle class for daughters to support their parents in the absence of a potential benevolent male supporter, usually a son. Many participants commented on this:

> Isha: Nowadays even if you see the boys, they will grow up, and will go out to study, then they will go out for their jobs. So, they do not live with their families. Tell me when do they live with the family? Once they get a job in America or somewhere else they go and never come back to India. Then? And, in case if they get married there, then there is no point for them to ever come back. So, it comes out to be the same. Then who will be close to you? The daughter. Even though she is married, staying near or far, she will be the one who will be with you and not the son.
> Rita: This is true, we have seen so many examples around us that girls look after their parents these days, even when the parents have sons. And, sons they do not even care for their parents.

Isha and Rita both explain that daughters these days are more actively involved in looking after their parents. In contemporary times parents often have to live alone in their old-age without the support of a son, and may be supported by their daughters, even if they have sons (Larsen, 2011). Many of the participants proudly stated that they themselves support their parents because they either did not have a brother, or their brothers did not want to support the parents (Murti, 2006; Larsen, 2011). For example, Sana mentioned that her brother and sister-in-law did not look after her parents at all and she is looking after her parents as if she were a son.

Strong natal ties between married daughters and their parents are also increasingly common, whereas traditionally women were considered 'paraya-dhan' after their marriage, and usually would not bear any responsibility for their own parents. Some of the participants discussed how

they themselves received support even from their married daughters and sons-in-law. Radha, similar to many other participants whose daughters were married, shared that her daughter and son-in-law look after them as her own son was quite young. She commented that:

> See they support us through thick and thin. My son is quite young at this time. But, my son-in-law would come in just one minute, if we need him. He takes care of us like an elder son. My husband recently got hospitalised and my son-in-law came promptly, He said, "You call me son, and then you didn't even care to tell me that papa got hospitalized. Am I not your son?" I share every sorrow and happiness with my daughter and her husband, and I consider him as my son and not my son-in-law. In this regards nowadays girls are like sons.

A glimpse of the traditional socio-cultural notions of shame and dishonour attached with seeking help from daughters and sons-in-law is evident in the quote. Radha mentioned that because her son was young it was okay to accept help from her daughter and her husband, as they were playing the same role as their son would have. This comparison of daughter with the son allows people to separate themselves from the feelings of shame, and they are then able to gain cultural, symbolic and social capital by having a supportive daughter and son-in-law. The situation is quite fluid, the changes in expectations of daughters and sons are occurring gradually, but are a witness to socio-cultural transformation.

An important point to note is that the transformation does not imply the complete erosion of traditional values. Daughters have not stopped performing the traditional roles such as doing domestic chores. Rather, their roles are modified; providing education to the daughters is the priority. It does not indicate that girls are no longer trained to perform household chores which are still deemed to be inferior to the traditional masculine role of earning a living. Being supportive of parents by performing domestic chores does not affect women's position in the domestic field. However, among urban middle classes it is quite common for girls to practice a blend of modern and traditional values (Puri, 1999). For instance, gaining a high level of education enables women to work at high positions while effectively carrying out the roles of mothers, wives, and daughters (Puri, 1999). For all the participants their educated daughters were capable of doing at least some sort of domestic chores and they helped their mothers on a regular basis whereas the majority reported that no such help was received from their sons.

Radha elaborated on her thoughts by explaining why daughters are expected to, and should, look after their parents:

According to me daughters should fulfil their duties [old-age care, moral social and financial support] as well towards their parents. If the girls take their share of maternal property now, then they should look after their parents too. They do that or not. That is their wish. But, they should do it when they are taking their share of the property.

Expanding on the above discussion I will explain that there is a direct link between entitlements and expectations. The change in ideology has not only resulted in increased opportunities and entitlements for daughters, but has also increased expectations for girls. These expectations are traditionally viewed to be male gender roles within North India such as looking after parents, or performing funeral rites.

This view that daughters should also be responsible for parents' welfare because of their increasing entitlements was shared by many other participants. Daughters receiving equal treatment is resulting in modern socio-cultural expectations from them which signifies that social transformations are accompanied by reproduction of the structures. Interestingly these modern expectations are still based on the traditional collective family values and strong parents and children's bonding.

Kanu: When government has given equal rights to daughters in the property so, they should look after the parents also. And, many girls who do not have brothers or if their brothers are living far away in other countries keep their parents with them.

Tara: when we have considered our daughters as sons then they should look after the parents like sons. When parents are not discriminating daughters should not also discriminate [they should also look after parents]. Girls should look after their parents.

Expectations and entitlements in Indian families are usually linked quite closely. I will demonstrate this through a reversed example that shows that a decrease in performing responsibilities can result in daughters losing entitlements to parental property. Daughters supporting parents in their old-age in India was earlier largely confined to a few groups, for example, among the working class or matrilineal groups. Kapadia's (1995) study in South India among working class women reveals that the socio-economic changes have resulted in decreasing support from married daughters towards their maternal families. As a result, their entitlements to family resources have also declined. Furthermore, a study of the matrilineal community of Nairs in South India also reports on increasing son-preference because of social transformations with daughters joining husbands' families after their marriage (Sudha et al, 2010)[87]. Similarly, this pattern of entitlements being proportional to responsibilities is indicated

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[87] Son-preference is rising among the Nairs; however, they do not resort to female-foeticide for this.

in Radha's account. This illustrates that the increasing entitlements have increased expectations from daughters among the urban middle-class in patrilineal and patriarchal North Indian settings.

The participant highlighted the contemporary transformations where daughters are now inheriting parents' and grandparents' property, unlike in earlier times when daughters would only receive certain material assets in dowry at the time of their marriage. Therefore, as women are exercising these rights, a socio-cultural expectation to look after their parents and families is emerging. Daughters who receive equal treatment also find it possible for them to take on the traditional role of a son. This helps those parents who do not have a son or a caring son to accumulate social, cultural, and symbolic capital within their domestic field.

No major transformation in collective values is evident, and it was the strong bonding between children and parents that women highlighted and treasured. For instance, Sunita, who took a few attempts to have a son, made a very interesting point that a son's worth only comes into existence if he looks after his parents:

> When a mother gives birth then both boy and girl are the same for her and for the father. Sons are only preferred over daughters because daughters have to go to a different house [after marriage]. But at least after marriage they come and ask their mother "Mummy, did the brother beat you? Did he give chapatti to you?" At least they ask this. The son's importance only comes into existence when he earns and serves his parents. Only then will we know if he is worthy or not.

Sunita emphasises only when the son meets the socio-cultural expectations by supporting his parents are parents benefitted and able to accumulate capital within the domestic field. This exemplifies that having a son is not enough to gain capital; rather a lot of socio-cultural labour is required to be performed in order to acquire capital. And, when sons cannot provide this capital, parents try to acquire this capital through their daughters.

For example, if daughters were good at their studies or earned a good salary or if they were emotionally more inclined towards their mothers, or supported them in their happiness and sorrow then parents had more hope from them. Laila's sons were not very helpful to her, which is why she and her husband vested their hopes in their daughter to the extent of asking her to take them on a pilgrimage. In similar cases where parents lack the son's support they may try to gain support for themselves through their daughters if they can (Larsen, 2011) which could also lead to a certain level of social criticism for receiving support from daughters. But, due to the social

transformations it is getting more acceptable to get support from daughters, at least, in the urban areas.

This practice of treating daughters as sons is increasingly common among different patriarchal and patrilineal societies with low fertility rates as many families have only daughters, and parents have to rely on them (Allendorf, 2012; Zhang, 2009). The majority of participants in my research had small families, and some of them only had daughters. In some of the cases the sons were not supportive, but daughters were. And, some of them were already receiving different forms of support from their married and unmarried daughters. Therefore, many of them had expectations of their daughters rather than of their sons. My research showed that when parents do not have a son they encourage their daughters to take up the high status occupations that a son would (Allendorf, 2012). For example, Goel et al (2011) discussed the social transformation within Indian society in regards to an increase in daughters' succession in family business in India. They provide various examples of women inheriting and running their fathers' business, but they make an interesting point that in most of those cases either there was no son or the son was too young to look after family business (Goel et al, 2011, p.38). Some of these daughters were educated overseas, and in some cases the parents demanded they inherit the business and fulfil their responsibilities. This is similar to the above accounts where participants described how they provided opportunities to their daughters and had expectations from them in return. Therefore, girls can replace the benevolent patriarchs under certain circumstances, mainly in the absence of a potential patriarch. For example, in Bali among the Hindus Nyentana marriages take place when the family does not have a son. In these marriages husbands join their wives and their families after the marriage, and the daughter looks after the parents and inherits family property (Wulandari et al, 2013). This shows that it is not uncommon for daughters to perform traditional masculine gender roles in specific contexts.

It is in these contexts the daughters become virtual sons, and perform responsibilities or are socially expected to perform the duties of a son towards their parents and families. In this situation parents are able to accumulate social, cultural and symbolic capital by having educated and caring daughters in both domestic and social fields. Having a supportive child remains central to prove the worth of a child irrespective of their sex. The majority of the participants used the phrase "my daughter is my son". This was usually said by all the participants regardless

of whether they had a son or not, but women who did not have sons or whose sons were not supportive were more likely to have this view. However, no participant said that my son is my daughter. This signifies that daughters need to substitute for sons, and not vice-versa because a son is more valued and tends to bring more socio-cultural and economic benefits for his parents. Participants' accounts highlight that this transformative agency was often widely articulated by women who were in a disadvantaged position by being not able to resort to support from a son. For example, Tanya, mother of two daughters and two sons mentioned:

> When my second daughter was born then I said to everyone that both my daughters were my sons and not my daughters. Then my mother-in-law said "when people give birth to daughters then they call them their sons."

Treating the daughters as sons could be understood as the participants using strategies to gain symbolic and cultural capital through their daughters, which is otherwise unavailable to them. However, by criticising Tanya her mother-in-law tried to show her that she is not worthy of claiming that capital.

A funeral ritual is another social custom in which women could perform the role of a virtual son when a son is missing. It is important to note that the funeral ceremony remains an important social function which involves extended family, religious and social community, and different social acquaintances. People put aside their personal priorities to participate in and to attend funeral rituals. In India funeral rites among Hindus and other religions are usually performed by the son, or by another male family member or acquaintance, and this is also one of the most important reasons behind son-preference (Sekher & Hatti, 2010a; Hegde, 1999). In regards to funeral rites, only two or three participants rejected the idea of women performing funeral rites at all. Among these participants one was a Muslim, and she stated that in her religion only a son can perform these rites whereas the other Muslim participant did not share those views, and mentioned that women can also perform funeral rituals. All other participants were of the view that daughters should have the right to perform funeral rites. However, this was conditional on their not having any brothers or the brothers were not present at the time of performing the rites; the gender hierarchy and inequality of the sexes is clearly at play in regards to the performing of funeral rites. This shows that capital is gendered: a son is the primary bearer of capital in regards to performing funeral rites, even if he does not look after his parents. This suggests that all fields have a set of gender rules and that some rules are common to all of the fields, whereas some are

specific to a given field (Chambers, 2005). Therefore, these rituals play a vital role for participants and their families to gain symbolic and cultural capital within the social field. Actors often struggle to accumulate more legitimated and valued forms of capital in fields (Swartz, 2010, p.46-.47). When women perform traditional masculine roles and rituals they can gain capital (Adkins, 2000; Lawler, 2000; Thorpe, 2009). However, it is deemed to be of more value if performed by men because of the patriarchal dispositions of class-based habitus, and also men possess dominance in the field. For instance:

> Sunita: Whoever does not have a son he/she will have his/her daughters do the funeral rituals. If one has a son, then only he will do. Daughters will come to participate in the rituals, but the son will pyre. Daughters will only perform the cremation if there is no son. When we have a son then our son will do it. No matter if he is nice to his parents, or not he will perform funeral rituals at the end.
> Laxmi: If we did not have a son then this would be our daughters' right; if there is a son then this right is of the son.

It is important to note that death in India is a family and social affair (Murata, 2010), and giving the social right to cremate to the daughter if the brother is present could negatively affect the siblings' relations, and result in social criticism. When women move across different positions in different fields they can experience social criticism and it results in questions being raised on the "'naturalness' of established gender practices" (Krais 2006, p.131) within those fields. But in the absence of a man they can perform these roles much more easily with little or no criticism.

An interesting example to highlight a son performing funeral rites even where he has been less than an ideal son is that of Vijayaraje Scindia, a prominent Indian political figure and also the daughter-in-law of the royal family of Gwalior. She disowned her only son Madhavrao Scindia, who was also a famous Indian politician. Vijayaraje gave a large part of her financial assets to her three daughters and other beneficiaries. She wrote in her will that her son had rendered himself unfit to perform the last rite and cremate his mother (Iyer & Mishra, 2001) which is "the religious duty of every son" (*The News Today*, 2001). However, at her death the funeral rites were performed by her son and the will was not produced in the media until the funeral was over. This is an interesting example of a son's social duty expected from the society overriding the very preference of the mother who disentitled him. Also it highlights the collective social values where a son has to do something which he may or may not have wanted to do, or may or may not have performed if he were not under intense social pressure. But, in any case he is expected to

perform both his religious and social duty towards his mother and society. This highlights the interrelation between agency, structure and culture where all of them are influencing each other.

Further, Hays (1994) posed an interesting question that maybe people in a socially disadvantaged position are more likely to practice transformative agency. The above quotes highlight that the main bearers of cultural and symbolic capital in the case of funeral rites are sons, and daughters can only perform these rituals in the absence of a son. This supports Hays' (1994) argument that when social actors are in a disadvantaged position they tend to practise transformative agency. In other words, it could be understood as participants struggle as mothers to gain capital in social and domestic fields in order to achieve a dominant position. Changes in socialised norms can influence structures of participants' class-based habitus because habitus is not fixed and permanent, but can be changed over a long historical period (Navarro, 2006, p.16). These changes involving women performing traditional male roles are happening gradually, and are modern in nature for urban middle-class patriarchal and patrilineal society. However, even if people practise transformative agency their actions are likely to be influenced by social structures as agency is also reproductive and transformative.

For example, Pankaja Munde, a female Indian politician, daughter of a male politician Gopinath Munde, cremated her father (Perera, 2014). In the media it was pronounced to be an act challenging gender inequality and patriarchal biases within the Indian media (Perera, 2014). However, it is important to note that Munde did not have any brothers, and having a brother might have changed the situation. Another case is a recent example of three daughters who gave shoulder to their father's dead body (part of Hindu funeral rituals) and cremated it (*Punjab Kesari*, 2015). These girls live in the urban area of Rajasthan, India, and have been said to set an example that girls are equal and can support their parents and can perform every role (*Punjab Kesari*, 2015). However, these girls also did not have any brother who could perform the last rites[88]. Even among the Hindu community in Britain women perform funeral rites if there is no son or if women insist on participating (Firth, 2003). Usually the priests allow women to perform these rituals as it is argued that some of the scriptures grant this right to women, whereas many community members and priests do not sanction this (Firth, 2003, p.28). However, in my study

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[88] An interesting aspect is that these actions of women are transformative. That is why this news was published in local and national newspapers.

participants who discussed women's participation in funeral rites did not mention any form of religious or social criticism[89]. For instance, Rashi has three sisters; her eldest sister cremated her mother:

> We do not have a brother but we sisters have never felt that. All of us are very, very happy. The only thing is that our father is all alone and mother has expired, and everyone says like my mother-in-law says, "if there were a boy then he would have been living with the parents". But, what difference does it make? What if there were a boy and he has got his job somewhere else and his wife was living with him then also he [father] would have been completely alone. Even my sister lit the pyre of my mother and my father asked her to do this.

Another participant Sheila does not have a brother and stated that they will not allow anyone else to cremate their mother, and would perform the funeral rites themselves. Tara discussed her observations of changing practices, and insisted on the idea that women should have the social right to pyre:

> Yes, they should have and they do as well. When we went to Haridwar [famous Hindu place of pilgrimage] we saw a girl who was giving fire to a dead body. Now, these days these things are so common, and I do not agree with this that women cannot perform funeral rites. Girls can perform all funeral rituals for their parents.

These changes discussed by Rashi, Sheila, and Tara have a strong potential to transform patriarchal traditions and minimise gender inequality. It is often argued among Hindus that with the birth of a son a man is able to pay back his debt to his ancestors, and only he can perform 'shradh' for his ancestors and offer them 'pindas' which is important for their salvation (Kapoor, 2007, p.235). The importance of the son is associated with "beyond the life on earth" in order to obtain salvation (Jain, 2006, p. 16). However, none of the participants agreed with this, and they said if a son takes care of his parents then their life is already heaven, and if he does not then their life is already hell on earth. In contrast, a few of the participants mentioned that girls have the right to pyre, but because they are emotionally weaker than men they do not cremate, and it has nothing to do with attaining salvation or going to heaven. The following accounts explore this idea:

> Naina: I don't think girls should get permission to pyre from someone as they already have this right. But in our society we have seen this that boys have been doing it and after seeing the

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[89] I myself along with other male relatives in January 2017 in India cremated my father as my brother was not able to come to India from USA. My brother asked me to cremate my father in his absence and since my brother expressed this desire I did not have to face much social criticism. In the cremation ground I asked the priest can I perform the funeral rites, to which he agreed. The priest told me it is getting increasingly common for daughters these days to cremate their parents. He also said that sometimes parents express their desire to be cremated by their daughters before their death.

environment [in the cemetery] the girls may get frightened or a bit depressed. I have been there once or twice but after going there I became senseless for few days, meaning I mentally got lost somewhere. I think that men are stronger so they can bear the stress.

Other participants such as Juhi and Sana shared the same views that women are emotionally weak and get affected by attending a funeral. These ideas of the benevolent patriarchs' highlight the gender domination implicit in the idea that men protect women from the horror of pain and sorrow because they are stronger and superior. Acceptance of these roles often creates social hierarchies which make men more capable, efficient, valuable, worthy, strong, tough and exclude women from these institutions. Many of the participants, however, rejected the idea of women being weaker and explained that women are in no way less strong than men, and can perform the last rites.

> Mahi: In today's time it is very important that girls should cremate. There are many people who only have daughters then what would they do? They have to be dependent on their relatives for this. According to me a woman should get this freedom. Nowadays no one goes for a second child. It means that those people have to wander here and there that come and pyre us. I believe a girl should have this right. This is the only thing that they do not allow a woman to do. Otherwise there is nothing that a woman cannot do. But, nowadays there are cases where girls have performed these rituals.

The desire for small families means fewer children on whom parents can depend. The great material, social and emotional investment in children's futures means the parents may be drained of their resources in their old-age and may require somebody's support at that stage of their lives. These factors have resulted in discrimination against daughters through a belief that daughters cannot substitute for sons (Sekher & Hatti, n.d.). On the contrary, many other participants similar to Mahi explained that the trend towards small families has limited the number of children which has created an opportunity for women to enter traditional masculine sphere. Similar points are raised in other studies as well (Allendorf, 2012; Zhang, 2009).

It is important to highlight that the contradictory framing of women as weaker by some participants and by others as strong and capable of performing funeral rites, sheds light on both transformation and reproduction of women's weaker status. Gender hierarchy is being reproduced and challenged by different participants by their practices. Some of the participants have challenged the social norms of lower and weaker status of women whereas some tend to reproduce it. This reproduction and transformation of social structures is an important feature of urban middle-class India, as discussed in Chapter Five and Chapter Six.

With these social transformations daughters do not only have new opportunities and autonomy, they also have more responsibilities in some of the cases to look after their maternal families, in addition to the affinal family. Girls can be virtual sons in certain cases but collective family values remain the same. "New cultural forms do not arise at random: the pattern and the logic of existing culture and social relations both provide and limit the available possibilities" (Hays, 1994, p.68). The different advantages that a son can provide to the parents indicate that daughters cannot substitute for sons (Sekher & Hatti, n.d.). However, my study suggests that daughters can perform roles normally undertaken by sons when there is no son or when they are more academically proficient or socially adept than the sons of the family.

Miller (1997) in her work on rural North India states that in order to curb bias against female children girls need equal economic entitlements and equal health (p.214). Changes in equal economic entitlement and women's access to equal health are evident in urban areas. But these changes are limited to daughters that have already been born and do not affect son-preference or serve to curb female-foeticide. Cultural factors play a far more significant role in influencing female-foeticide and son-preference practice than economic factors do. Social, cultural, financial and symbolic gains through children shape people's choices and behaviour.

In order to enhance daughters' status, it is crucial to provide them with social opportunities that were traditionally denied to them. In fact, initiatives in Indian society are evident where people try to assign economic, social, symbolic and cultural capital to daughters in an attempt to curb the problem of female foeticide. For example, Piplantri village in India plants 111 trees at the birth of a girl (Singh, 2013). These trees are used to generate income by making plant products to sell with the income derived to be used for girls' marriages and for their higher studies in the future (Singh, 2013). This initiative is important to change the mind set by converting economic capital into symbolic and cultural capital so that girls no longer remain an economic burden in both domestic and social fields.

Another example of ascribing daughters as bearers of symbolic capital is the internet campaign SelfieWithDaughter# started by Sunil Jaglan who is the head of a Haryana village. It is important to mention that this social media campaign targeted mainly the middle-class, unlike the Laadli campaign (discussed in introduction) which focuses on financial remunerations. This SelfieWithDaughter# campaign went viral when promoted by Indian Prime Minister Narendra

Modi on Twitter (Pasricha, 2015). People were requested to take selfies with their daughters depicting daughters as a symbol of pride then to send them to the Prime Minister's twitter account. These campaigns and initiatives are an attempt to attach symbolic capital to the birth of daughters and to curb female foeticide and female infanticide, as well as discrimination against daughters.

With the low fertility rate and the increase in families comprising daughters only, sons are losing their singular importance in performing customary roles, and daughters are likely to be more like sons (Allendorf, 2012) through performing their roles such as in Rashi or Kiran's case. Families with all daughters have the potential to change the patrilineal and patriarchal family system (Chakraborty & Kim, 2010). However, the results of my study revealed this to be happening only in families of all daughters, and in cases where the sons are not interested in supporting their parents or the sons are too young to do so. Yet the significance of these transformations cannot be discounted.

 The above discussion also suggests that social structures are both constraining and enabling (Hays, 1996, p.65). The structured choices are not completely structured and have transformative effects. The reproductive process of structures is "never fully stable or absolute and, under particular circumstances, the structured choices that agents make can have a more or less transformative impact on the nature of structures themselves" (Hays, 1994, p.65). Social actors enact on "pre-existing ideas and available "styles of thought"" (Hays, 1994, p.68) within their given social settings. A similar thing is happening when girls perform sons' roles in the absence of a son. "[T]he new ways of thinking are always derived from old ways of thinking and respond to existing ways of thinking in a systematic fashion" (Mannheim, 1985, as quoted in Hays, 1994, p. 68). As stated earlier modernity is not written on a "clean slate" and modernity is specific to history and social settings (Kaviraj, 2000). The societal acceptance of women readily participating in funeral rituals is itself part of contemporary modernity in urban India. Structures do not simply constrain people's choices; rather they allow them to practice agency in a transformative and creative way (Hays, 1994).

Conclusion

This discussion argues that as forms of discrimination against daughters such as female foeticide, infanticide and neglect have changed over time parents in my study now treat their daughters in

the same way they treat their sons. This is true even in cases where the participants were disheartened at having daughters and they were economically and socially able to afford their upbringing. There is also social pressure to do so. Participants were aware that treating daughters badly would not give them a good name in the society as discrimination against a female foetus is more culturally acceptable than discriminating against living daughters among the urban middle-class. The social construction of men's superiority over women results in different forms of social inequality.

Despite social transformations some socio-cultural expectations in regards to having a son have not changed. The absence of a son allows family members and social networks to put pressure on women to have a son, affecting their choices, and making them feel inferior. Participants' agency in most cases is seen as reproductive and cultural values and practices are generally reproduced rather than transformed. Where transformation occurs it does so in a systematic fashion. Transformations are happening within given socio-cultural settings, and these social and cultural structures both limit and provide possibilities for change (Hays, 1994). Accumulating capital remains of vital importance for the middle-class and this shapes how parents treat their daughters, and what expectations they can have from them.

This is because people who possess particular forms of capital often occupy the upper strata in society and in their desire to maintain their dominant position people try to gain capital in different fields by adopting different strategies which both reproduce and transform the structures. For example, parents invest in their daughters by spending money on their daughters' upbringing and studies. This demonstrates that parents do not discriminate against their daughters, nor are daughters ill-treated among many of the urban middle-class. Women's education and employment, a result of development and neoliberal reforms, have modified traditional gender roles and expectations. Women are not only capable of supporting their maternal families, but are leaving an important mark in the neoliberal economy.

The problem is no longer that sons are afforded greater opportunities than daughters. Rather the problem is that girls are not being born and this is largely being done through the use of sex detection through ultrasound followed by abortion (Patel, 2010). Even if women's status has improved within Indian society, it has not changed the social order in a way that would prevent son-preference being prevalent. Perceptions of daughters are changing from their being seen

solely as liabilities. They are also being increasingly considered as caregiver, independent, hard-working, educated and successful in academic, professional and domestic spheres. An important reason behind the changing status of daughters is the popularity of the small family norm. Today couples often have small families so in the absence of a son they lay the same expectations on their daughters as they would on a son and provide the same opportunities they would provide for their son.

Women operate across different fields (domestic and social), and hold various positions within these fields such as being a caring daughter, a daughter looking after parents, performing rituals, and a sister that needs a brother for protection. Paradoxically the daughter as caregiver also needs to be taken care of which brings capital to both them and their families. It is important to note that women are performing these traditionally masculine roles in the absence of potential patriarchs. This is not to say that there is no resistance towards patriarchal values, but to point out that women performing these roles are accommodating traditional expectations, rather than attempting to transform the values system. Therefore, son-preference, that seems to be uncontested is being challenged in everyday life because of neoliberal and development reforms such as small family size, male migration for jobs, and daughters are earning and educated. These changes have strong implications for the family structure and traditional gender roles. With increased parental investment in daughters' education and career achievements, the likelihood of normalising daughters' equality is strengthened, which is, in turn, quite likely to increase women's status and value within Indian society. Furthermore, these changes have the potential to challenge masculine domination and superiority within urban middle-class settings.

Chapter 8: Conclusion and Recommendations

This thesis focused on urban educated married middle-class women's everyday family formation and family planning bargaining strategies in a rapidly changing patriarchal and collective society. The study explored how women's agency occurs in relation to gender, class and modernity in urban Delhi and Haryana. Women's roles and socio-cultural expectations laid upon them as mothers, wives, daughters, and daughters-in-law are explored in regards to three main socio-cultural aspects. The first is how socio-cultural changes in a neoliberal economy have influenced women's bargaining strategies in regards to marriage, reproductive issues, and child-care and domestic help arrangements. The second is family planning and development reforms that have led urban middle-class women to engage with different forms of technologies to meet their contemporary reproductive interests. The third is the increasing popularity of nuclear families and small family norms combined with neoliberal economic reforms which have influenced women's gendered perceptions of their sons and daughters. This has resulted in the increasing status of daughters and a gradual decline of son-preference.

All these aspects were examined at a micro level as the research examined these women's every day experiences of facing challenges and embracing opportunities to meet their interests. The first section of analysis dealt with the influence of patriarchal and collective values on women's decision-making processes, and how their decisions influenced these values. The second section of analysis looked at how family planning, development and neoliberal forms have influenced women's values and aspirations around reproduction and gender. The final section of analysis found that small family size, increasing numbers of nuclear families, development and neoliberal reforms are resulting in social transformations and the continuation of gender hierarchy and gender inequality.

The study has arrived at three significant findings which underpin this thesis. First, my research has shown that women are not mere victims within a patriarchal structure. They have developed new strategies in a modern neoliberal economy to accommodate their contemporary gender roles, and they both contest and submit within patriarchal and collective constraints. The second finding is the dominance of complex multiple modernities among urban middle-class Indians. Finally, in the contemporary urban middle class Indian family, the following are evident: the trend towards small family size, declining trust in sons, a gradual decline in son-preference

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practice, and an increase in daughters' education levels and paid employment. These significant changes have resulted in both an increased status for daughters and a greater parental reliance on them. Perhaps because of the increased value of daughters, a slight increase in the female child sex ratio is also visible in Delhi and Haryana[90].

Reflecting back on my field work

My research questions are framed around the socio-cultural engagement of family relationships, gender relationships, class, and modernity in urban neoliberal India. I uncovered insights into how educated married urban middle-class women in their everyday lives strategise while practising agency in their reproductive choices, and their perceptions and expectations of their children.

As discussed in Chapter Four I used a qualitative approach, and conducted semi-structured interviews with 45 women using the 'romantic' technique. I found this appropriate for such a sensitive topic because both the researcher and researched contribute to the richness of the data, as opposed to the participants being treated as objects in the study (Dingwall, 1997). Romantic technique is based on feminist principles of generating an interaction based on mutual respect, rapport, trust, and mutual sharing which served as a guide for me during my fieldwork. This helps in balancing the power hierarchy as the respondents are treated with respect and not merely as information generating objects. I used the snowballing technique to recruit the participants for my research. One of the important aspects of snowballing is asking your acquaintances and social networks to spread the word about your research and/or to help identify interested people for the research project. All my acquaintances and social networks were, like me, also from the urban middle-class group and they knew of other women from the urban middle-class group who were potential participants. Using snowballing also meant that there was a possibility of people identifying someone they knew in the thesis through recognising some of their details so I completely changed participants' identificatory details such as their occupation and/or study background to prevent this happening.

 If I were to conduct research on a similar topic in the future I would use the snowballing technique again because it leads to finding participants well beyond my own social networks.

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[90] See Chapter One to see statistics of the female child sex ratio from the 2001 and 2011 census (Census, 2011).

While snowballing does raise issues around maintaining confidentiality for participants, its overall effectiveness in recruiting participants in sensitive research such as on reproductive issues, reproductive health, son-preference and female foeticide is clear (Collumbien et al, 2012; Mann, 2016).

For instance, my research touched on sensitive and private aspects of urban middle-class women's lives such as reproduction, sexuality, family and gender relationships, and son-preference. I easily recruited participants who were willing to share their private and everyday life stories with me. Without snowballing the recruitment process would have been a huge challenge. Son-preference, female foeticide and abortions are sensitive issues which people usually do not share outside their families and acquaintances. Indian society is highly collective and close knit so it is easy to find participants through this technique. Some degree of trust is required to initiate contact but since I was referred to the participants by their acquaintances or friends it was not difficult for participants to share their life stories with me. The researcher is not a completely unknown stranger to potential participants as she is known throughout the web of acquaintances. Since she is recommended by someone who is known, this leads the researcher to be seen as authentic and someone with whom participants can discuss anything intimate if needed. In future, I would consider building on this loose acquaintanceship by featuring some unstructured interview time to chat with the participants to build rapport rather than going straight to business.

In this doctoral research, I chose to interview women only. In a future project the research could be expanded to investigate how gender and class intersect at a wider familial level in modern urban India by interviewing all family members. This could help unpack how, and to what extent, women's choices influence other family members and vice-versa. I would also focus on class, since class values in contemporary neoliberal India play a vital role in changing social structures in the urban areas, and people belonging to a certain class tend to share similar values and beliefs (Thapan, 2009). This would allow me to explore dynamics of gender and class at a wider familial level in a society undergoing rapid socio-economic changes.

Future research could use the concept of intellectual autobiography (Stanley, 1993) at the time when interviews will be held. This will help me to include a reflection of each interview and juxtapose them to examine how and what I felt and why, and how my subjectivity and

assumptions intervened and influenced the interview process. This style of reflective writing guided me in my approach both for data collection and analysis.

In this project, I conducted analysis from a feminist, class-based perspective. Bourdieu's theory proved beneficial in this aspect. Bourdieu's work has been employed by different Indian and Western feminist scholars to study class from a gendered perspective (Mishra, 2011; Radhakrishnan, 2009; Skeggs, 1997; Thapan, 2009). Thematic analysis enabled me to engage with the data and gather different themes on gender and class issues. It also allowed issues to emerge from the data, especially around social construction, important social practices and their influences. Thematic analysis highlighted relations between structure, agency and culture, gender inequality, and social transformation and reproduction.

 A possibility for a future project could be a discourse oriented analysis focusing extensively on social issues such as the rising value of daughters, the changing of socio-cultural rituals, perceptions around dowry, son-preference and domestic violence. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) could provide an effective methodology for such a project which could build on, extend, and develop my findings. CDA focuses on the role of discourse as social practice playing a vital role in constructing social structures and how these social structures construct discourses within specific socio and historical context (Fairclough, 1995; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Further CDA could be used to uncover issues around power relations, hierarchy, socio-cultural changes and privilege within private and public discourses (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; Mengibar, 2015;). This analysis allows exploration of dominance within different socially subordinated groups, and how unequal power relations are reproduced and transformed. Future research into social relationships such as gender hierarchy, dowry, domestic violence and the changing status of daughters could also prove fruitful using CDA. It will allow me to consider wider socio and historical context while examining the role of discourses in regards to socio-cultural changes.

Women's bargaining strategies in rapidly changing urban India

In India, a patriarchal society, motherhood is a source of legitimacy for married women, especially being a mother of a son. As discussed in Chapter Five, many studies have declared that Indian women are powerless, without agency, and victims of patriarchal structures. They are deemed to make reproductive and other choices under their husbands' and affinal families' influence (Barge et al. 2003). However, my findings demonstrated that urban middle-class

educated women are not powerless, nor are they without agency. Rather they operate within this patriarchal structure and develop a range of strategies to negotiate or resist and access different resources to meet their goals. Through meeting their goals participants are sometimes able to empower themselves by challenging patriarchal ideology.

However, unlike in the Western world, empowerment for Indian women is more about achieving equality than achieving independence or individuality (Belliappa, 2009 & 2013; Kabeer, 1999). Kabeer's (1999) model of agency, resources, and outcomes offered a useful tool to understand women's choice making processes as a means to empower themselves.

The concept of habitus helps to explain the relation between structure and agency, as it focuses on the idea of socialized subjectivity, and suggests that dispositions are internalized, generative and durable. In other words, dispositions shape social actions (Meisenhelder, 2006). It is important to realise that my participants' strategies were also largely shaped by their class and gender, and accommodated collective and patriarchal values, which are features of contemporary urban middle-class Indian society.

Social structures in urban areas as discussed in Chapters Two, Four and Seven, are undergoing rapid socio-cultural changes. These structures include family, marriage, education, and culture including cultural practices such as consumerist culture, son-preference, female foeticide, birth and death rituals. Other changes discussed in this thesis are: the rise of the new middle-class, the increasing popularity of nuclear families, increasing consumerism in the institution of marriage, increasing number of females achieving higher education and entering into paid jobs, son-preference being challenged, female infanticide being replaced by foeticide, and females performing funeral rituals. These changes are largely the result of long term family planning and education programmes run by the Indian government and neoliberal market changes after the 1990s.

These changes have brought new challenges and opportunities for urban middle-class women. Women these days face different challenges such as giving quality care to their families and children, doing domestic chores, facing pressure to pursue higher studies, looking after their maternal family if required and earning to contribute for their families' growth if needed. Many educated women now form an important part of the neoliberal economy instead of being confined to their family and homes. Increasing numbers are educated, employed, financially

independent, and enjoy greater mobility (Belliappa, 2013; Mishra, 2011, Radhakrishnan, 2009). Neoliberal and development reforms have influenced women's traditional gender roles owing to which they have developed new strategies to juggle their paid work and domestic work pressure. For example, women openly draw on the modern discourses of mutual decision-making and the need for assistance to raise their children and to perform domestic chores. However, women's bargaining strategies are still in line with the patriarchal and collective settings of their affinal families and they avoid direct confrontation with their husbands and in-laws. Their families continue to remain the primary preference for women, and their decision to take up employment, or to leave paid work is usually motivated by their family obligations.

Urban middle-class women in rapidly changing urban India have developed new bargaining strategies that can be examined through the lens of different theories. These include bargaining within patriarchy (Kandiyoti, 1988), benevolent patriarchy (Kilmartin, 2015; Roald, 2013) and covert and overt resistance (Agarwal, 1994; Thapan, 2009) which explain how women are resisting but also accommodating cultural values and practices. This further suggests that structure, agency, and culture are interrelated and influence each other (Hays, 1994) because women make choices within structural and cultural settings, and in this process they are not only reproducing structures, but also transforming them. Agency is both reproductive and transformative (Hays, 1994).

The majority of participants avoided direct confrontation with their husbands, in-laws and other family members because they wanted to maintain family harmony and avoid any form of familial tensions. Despite the importance placed on family image among the middle-class in contemporary urban India, women are not precluded from resisting patriarchal expectations. My findings clearly indicated that family and children remained women's central concerns while making their choices, and this concern was visible in most of their decisions. For instance, this was visible in changes and continuities of gender roles in accounts of both professional and housewife participants. Most of them had made sacrifices at both the professional and/or personal levels. These sacrifices included relinquishing their paid employment to give quality attention to their children and families, taking up paid employment, or developing a small business in order to contribute financially to their families. Professional women's choices were also primarily centred around their families and child rearing. To achieve this, they

compartmentalised their lives by conceptualising child-care and domestic tasks as their primary gender roles as they sought to juggle both domestic and professional pressures (See Chapter Five). This prioritisation of roles does not indicate that the participants followed traditional gender roles, or made sacrifices without considering their own well-being. In fact, they often negotiated an arrangement which worked for them particularly with their husbands and mothers-in-law.

Women also tactfully and skilfully articulated their choices within a collective framework in such a manner that it usually portrayed them prioritising collective values over individual choices. This was an important finding in my research and illuminated the strategy many participants used to bargain within patriarchy in modern urban India. At the same time, they were able to accumulate prestige within their social networks by maintaining family harmony. Importantly, they developed strategies to resist at both covert and/or overt levels. My findings reinforce those of Thapan (2009) who found that "women are able to perceive, develop and use strategies for ensuring their well-being and survival through acts of resistance in everyday life" (Thapan, 2009, p.170). I found that women in a patriarchal society are not always submissive to their husbands or in-laws, and could challenge their authority through both overt and covert resistance, especially when they could not find any benefits to them in certain proposals. For example, Tanya and Kanu overtly broke ties with their mothers-in-law when they realised they would not be able to garner any child-care support from them. However, in most cases urban middle-class women preferred covert resistance as family image and female respectability were important to them. In some cases, women's choices were also influenced by patriarchal values. For example, they had several pregnancies to try and produce a son, or adopted a son for example, Kashi's case, or preferred an arranged marriage over a love marriage. It is important to note that this constraint cannot be equated to women being agencyless. They preferred to make their choices within a framework of gendered respectability and collective family values rather than resist such cultural values.

It is also important to note that urban middle-class Indian women making decisions based on personal preference, as mentioned above, does not indicate the weakening of collective family values. When Indian women offer overt or covert resistance when negotiating childcare or other forms of domestic support, this does not indicate the weakening of collective family values. Even

if one claims increasing individualism among urban middle-class women it is not similar to the western understanding of individualism. My findings support Belliappa's (2009) assertion that individualism among urban middle-class Indian women is not the rejection of the collective nor alienation from it. Rather it is a form of negotiation to create a space for individual aspiration, needs and desires. According to Belliappa (2009) Indian individualism:

> is qualitatively different from the individualism that the late modernity theorists describe. It is an individualism wherein personal satisfaction results from the fulfilment of collectivist responsibilities, where individual achievements augment the financial security and the social prestige of the family and where the approval of the family and kin group boosts individual self-worth (Belliappa, 2009, p. 293).

Furthermore, women also displayed agency and individualism by playing a key role in making vital reproductive choices regarding family size, son-preference, motherhood, abortions, child rearing, and the use of contraception. They were also able to influence their husbands through their negotiations, for instance, in resorting to spiritual technologies or using ultrasound or choosing traditional methods in their desire to produce a son. They actively participated in choosing their preferred method of contraception and in many cases they made their choices independently without informing or consulting with anyone, and in most cases they were happy with those choices.

It is through these strategies that women acted as ideal mothers, wives and daughters-in-law which provided them with recognition within their class-based groups and networks. The use of such strategies signifies that urban middle-class educated women are not mere victims, nor do they sacrifice their personal choices all the time, even though they often give primary importance to their families and children. At the same time a greater quest for equality does not mean that an increasing western-style individualisation is preferred by Indian women (Oza, 2007). Urban families are undergoing changes where women conform to some traditional gender roles, and at the same time perform some modern gender roles in meeting their interests. The modern neoliberal changes have influenced urban middle-class women's everyday bargaining capacity within their families. My findings uphold Thapan's observation that "compliance and resistance are both central to women's everyday life experiences" (Thapan, 2009, p.169) in urban neoliberal modern India.

Paradoxes of modernities among urban middle-class Indians

The second finding suggests that modernity among the Indian urban middle-class is local, influenced to an extent by Western modernity, but specific to cultural settings and located in their historical and social context. Traditional and modern are not dichotomous, as the case may be in the West. Different social paradoxical concepts co-exist: for instance, liberty, equality, development, oppression, inequality, and patriarchy all exist together, as discussed in the Chapters Two, Five, Six and Seven.

The notions of tradition, spirituality, religion, cultural practices and collective values are being socially redefined. This further prescribes what is needed for members of the urban middle-class to gain cultural and symbolic capital. For instance, women often engaged with different modern, traditional, and spiritual technological processes to accumulate cultural and symbolic capital by having a son. The engagement of technology and social structures has transformed the nature of discrimination against girls from post-natal discrimination to pre-natal, from female infanticide to foeticide. Modern, Indian urban society has complex and paradoxical elements, for example, for gaining capital where a daughter is not preferred before birth, but after birth the same daughter is provided with opportunities equal to those of a son. Parents who have an educated daughter to whom they have provided all the opportunities they would have accorded a son, gained symbolic value through her within their social networks. In another paradox, modern reproductive technologies are serving traditional needs such as son-preference, and traditional technologies are serving modern needs such as small family norm and regulating fertility.

Technology and society are mutually constitutive which has provided women with greater opportunities to garner different forms of capital for themselves and their families such as by having small families or by having a son. Women's family building strategies at the micro level are influenced by macro level changes such as population policies, inflation, and pressure to provide quality social upbringing to children. The modern small family norm has been influenced by population policies, collective values and the traditional pressures on parents to provide a good upbringing for their children which in turn have influenced women's choices. For instance, to have a small family, women regulate their fertility, opt for both modern and natural forms of contraception, and in many cases even choose sex-selection in order to have a son while keeping the family size small. This is also because the cost of raising children has increased

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(Larsen, 2011), especially among urban middle-class families. The main reason behind rising costs in bringing up the children is the neoliberal reforms which have increased consumerism and have increased the urban middle-class spending capacity which they utilise to meet consumerist demands of their children (Lenka & Vandana, 2015). Neoliberalism has transformed India from a country of savers to a country of spenders (Shukla, 2010).

In some parts of India female foeticide and female child sex ratios are both declining, while in other parts child sex ratios are gradually increasing. These trends are all part of the broader process of change happening in India. They are also a result of the traditional patriarchal mind-set where daughters are often devalued in comparison to sons and also the increasing status of women because son-preference is concurrently being challenged by many couples. Women's education, and the fact that women increasingly participate in paid employment have also resulted in the transformation of gender roles. Again, this is an example of the multiple nature of modernities at play because both traditional and modern customs are shaping contemporary family negotiation strategies and gender relationships within families. Today men are also participating in child-rearing activities, and women are able to concentrate on their careers through which they contribute financially to their families.

In a nutshell, middle-class values and aspirations around reproduction and gender are influenced by neoliberal, development and family planning policies. Women who desire to meet their aspirations engage with modern and traditional values, which mirrors the paradoxical nature of modernities in urban India where certain elements of tradition co-exist with modernity. Tradition, like modernity, is not fixed; it is situated within social history and present events, and is in engagement with human agency. Traditions are "constructed, interpreted and used in the present" (Lamb, 2009, p.31) in a modern way. Modernity has drastically impacted upon, and is also being shaped by, women's reproductive choices, family building strategies and gender relations, which creates new challenges and opportunities for women.

Declining trust in sons and the increased status of and reliance on daughters

The third finding centres on changes in daughters' status as discussed in Chapter Seven. The status of daughters has improved remarkably but is still lower than that of sons in many respects. For instance, male superiority is still maintained when it comes to performing funeral rites or the role of the ultimate financial provider and protector for the family. Male superiority in urban

Indian society persists, there are strong distinctions in regards to what is socially expected from sons (old-age care, and physical, social and financial protection to the family) and what is expected from daughters (mainly domestic chores, and taking care of the family members). Interestingly, women themselves play a major role in maintaining male dominance as they misrecognise it as natural and legitimate. This phenomenon could be linked to the idea of symbolic violence where gender dominance and hierarchy are strongly evident. The concept of different capitals clearly explains how gender hierarchy is maintained in contemporary urban North Indian settings. Adhering to patriarchal values is an important way for urban middle-class women to gain social and cultural recognition around gender respectability within their networks. It is important to note that women generally prefer to observe patriarchal norms than to challenge them mainly because of the benefits they stand to gain through having a son. These take the forms of cultural, economic, social and symbolic capitals. Cultural capital, as discussed in Chapters Three and Seven, is earned through being seen as caring and supportive parents, having supportive and caring children, performing certain socio-cultural rituals such as festivals, funeral rites, and having knowledge of cultural values and practising them. Economic capital is the financial investment that parents make for their children's better future and financial support that a son and in some cases daughters can provide to their parents and family. Symbolic capital is the prestige and honour that the family gains because they have a son to look after them and to perform funeral and other socio-cultural rituals for them.

However, despite the fact that women and their families can gain all these capitals by having a son, the increasing status of daughters in urban regions is evident. Daughters are now being raised to pursue study and to choose their own careers. They can also inherit family property, something which is becoming more and more socially acceptable. This improvement in daughters' status is often linked with a declining fertility rate, the popularity of nuclear families, and daughters receiving higher education and entering paid jobs. Parents have a limited number of children, and if they do not have a son or if their son is not capable enough then they expect their daughters to perform traditional male roles (Croll, 2000; Larsen, 2011). Paradoxically this same demographic trend of small family size is also responsible for the prevalence of female foeticide since couples want a small family with at least one son.

In urban middle-class families, gradual changes in the perceptions and status of daughters are also visible, especially in the absence of a potential male patriarch in families with no sons, as discussed in Chapter Seven. A massive social transformation is evident in regards to female education and this has not only made girls independent, but has also resulted in increased parental expectations of daughters, as mentioned earlier. This is possible now because many daughters are educated, and are financially capable and independent enough to support their parents in different ways. Therefore, women's education is not only effective in opening financial opportunities for women, but also in transforming traditional gender roles and relationships both at the family and societal levels.

This provides women with socio-cultural opportunities which were completely denied to them in earlier times, and provides them with entitlements to traditionally male benefits such as inheriting property. Also, it allows parents and families to accumulate forms of capital through children of both genders, which hitherto they could only gain through their sons. So, as Indian society changes, opportunities are available for daughters to enhance their status, perform traditional masculine roles and gain new social entitlements. Parents can also have their interests fulfilled through their daughters if they do not have sons. The increase in women's status and the corresponding declining trust in sons could also be linked to the gradually increasing female child sex ratio in Delhi and Haryana as recorded in the 2011 census, which was discussed in Chapter One.

All these changes will have multiple social impacts on gender relationships and sibling relationships. For example, daughters performing traditional male gender roles in the absence of a son might pose a threat to the established notion of male superiority. This has the potential to challenge social assumptions of male superiority even in a family with sons. In future sons may not be seen exclusively as protector or financial provider. The wider implications of these transformations may in fact be beneficial to both sexes. Sons may shoulder less of a burden to provide parental care, and both sons and daughters may be able to share tasks while taking care of their parents. This will ultimately strengthen sibling relationships because this sharing of tasks is also based on collective family values. On the other hand, there is a possibility it could also negatively affect sibling relationships because male superiority and authority will be challenged if the traditional preference for boys gradually declines as is happening in some states such as

Haryana, Delhi and Punjab. This is borne out by a gradual increase in female child sex ratio in those states as was discussed earlier.

Son-preference was largely practised by the participants because different social, cultural and economic aspects of their lives are dependent on sons. Most of the participants themselves practiced son-preference, and only five women reported not having a personal preference for having a son at all. Of the five, one had to have a son because of family pressure, while others resisted the pressure, and had only one or two daughters. However, almost all of the participants appreciated the worth of daughters, and had expectations of them. The data gained in my research reflected these preferences as it shows an increasing reliance and dependency on daughters even by those participants who practised son-preference.

One of the most important continuities that is visible in the increasing reliance on daughters is that of collective family values as discussed in Chapter Seven. In India, children are old-age insurance, and require huge emotional and financial investment throughout their dependent years. In the absence of sons, daughters become the default old-age insurance for parents. One of the major reasons behind sons' absence is male migration within India or overseas in search of a job which is a result of neo-liberal reforms as discussed in Chapter Seven.

The continuing increase in smaller families and nuclear families has strengthened the daughter-supporting-parents ideology. In addition, the education and employment opportunities created by the neoliberal economy have allowed daughters and daughters-in-law to financially support both their parents and their affinal families at the same time. Through the daughters and daughters-in-law, the families gain access to consumer goods, a quality life style, and are able to provide quality education and upbringing to children. Through these moves towards offering daughters equal opportunities and receiving support from the daughters, urban middle-class families are displaying urban middle-class modernity and collective values. Therefore as long as women's education and career do not threaten collective family settings they are supported by their parents, husbands, and in-laws. However, in some cases, it might lead to increased burdens on daughters if they are busy looking after their in-laws or it might lead to conflict if the husband or in-laws do not approve of the daughter looking after her own parents.

Increasingly, sons are not the only source of symbolic, cultural, social and economic capital for mothers. Both sons and daughters are capable of conferring these capitals on their parents. New

forms of social networks are created by building strong ties with married daughters and by having expectations of them. The lower female child sex ratio, the increasing status of women, and the declining fertility are part of broader societal changes in India where myriad factors at both macro and micro levels are interacting.

Theoretical contributions

This thesis makes an important theoretical contribution in building the knowledge around women's bargaining strategies, reproductive preferences, gender relations, family building strategies, and middle-class values and aspirations in transitional neoliberal urban Indian society. My research shed light on the engagement of gender, class and modernity in urban India with a special reference to educated married middle-class women's agency and social structures (Hays, 1994; Kandiyoti, 1988). I have explored this engagement mainly through the work of Bourdieu, Hays and Eisenstadt.

Their theories were key factors in revealing the strong interweavings of structure, agency and culture, and how these interweavings impacted on the micro aspects of participants' daily lives. These theories sharpened my perceptions that urban middle-class women's choices are being shaped by modernity and modernity itself is also being shaped in this process. Some of these theories are not extensively used by scholars in the context of urban middle-class Indian women which provided me with the opportunity to use them in new ways. For instance, Larsen (2011) has used Hays' work briefly in the context of North India to study the reproductive and transformative nature of Indian women's reproductive choices in regards to son-preference. I have extended the scope of Hays' work in Indian studies by employing it to examine not only son-preference, but also to reveal changing gender relations, changes in socio-cultural rituals, the increasing status of daughters, and women's strategies when arranging child-care and domestic help. I have expanded Hay's work and demonstrated that it is a good instrument with which to study transitions in gender and the reproductive sphere of the urban middle-class. When middle-class women take hold of their agency they can both reproduce and transform structures.

Unlike Hays' work, Bourdieu's work has been used more frequently within the context of urban middle-class women by researchers such as Mishra (2011), Radhakrishnan (2009), and Thapan (2009) who explored embodiment and women's increasing paid employment in the wake of the neoliberal economy. But none of them have used Bourdieu's theories in the way that I did to

study transitional family building strategies or women's reproductive choices in modern neoliberal urban India.

All these theories have immense potential to contribute at a cross cultural level in studies of modernity, gender and class. With my work I have shown how these theories can be further used to study the most intimate and important aspects of married women's everyday lives. Bourdieu's work does not deal extensively with gender, nor did he apply it to India at all. I have shown that Bourdieu's work can be used to study Indian middle-class women's everyday lives in a modern neoliberal society. Further, I showed in Chapter Seven how the concepts of symbolic violence, field, and capital are advantageous in developing an understanding of the widespread use of certain gender based practices. Discriminatory and often violent practices such as son-preference are more popular and acceptable in urban modern societies than other non-violent but expensive practices such as dowry.

Further, by using the concept of capitals I have shown how symbolic and cultural commodities are used by the urban middle-class to gain prestige, recognition, and to maintain their dominant position in a neoliberal economy. For example, having a small family, a united family, caring parents and children, and educated children are all important means among the urban middle-class to accumulate cultural and symbolic capital. Neoliberal economic reforms have not eroded the importance of cultural and symbolic capitals. Rather, economic capital is being exchanged for other forms of capital such as giving a big wedding, providing children with expensive consumer goods, and expensive education. Neoliberal reforms have also shaped middle-class aspirations to gain other forms of capital in addition to the quest to earn money and make other monetary gains.

I examined the structural influences on women's reproductive choices and bargaining strategies and then proceeded to study the influence of agency on structure within a patriarchal and collective environment. Habitus emphasises the collective and the social and is critical for understanding the influence of structures on decisions and vice-versa (Thapan, 2009, pp. 6 & 10). For instance, neoliberal, family planning and development reforms were negotiated by women who operated within patriarchal and collective values. Women began or relinquished a job for the sake of their families, or they shaped their daughters' expectations based on collective values and so on. In my thesis I emphasised the importance of studying the socio-cultural

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context prior to examining women's agency and the influence of their choices. I was able to extend Bourdieu's theoretical framework which offers some insights into social and historical processes (Thapan, 2009) and also Eisenstadt's (2000) theory of multiple modernities into the case of contemporary urban Indian modernity.

The theory of multiple modernities, when applied at micro level, can be used to study contemporary lives of urban Indian women. It reveals the complexity of Indian modernity which does not mirror western modernity (Gupta, 2000). Multiple modernities also form a perceptive platform for a class and gender based analysis of women's lives. I demonstrated how the concept of multiple modernities could be applied to study everyday lives of urban Indian middle-class women and to reveal that it is a distinctive form of modernity in a postcolonial society with neoliberal reforms. Multiple modernities is definitely not a troublesome or mistaken construct (Gupta, 2000; Thapan, 2009).

Conclusion

Based on my research I conclude that gender-relations and collective values are being reshaped among the urban middle-class. Women are having greater say in their choices these days; however, the ideas of female respectability, united family image and collective values still stand strong. Urban middle-class women are one of the major beneficiaries of modernity. Neoliberal reforms and development policies have increased women's bargaining capacities and have provided women with greater mobility and career options than in earlier times. Women have access to better education, employment, financial independence, control of their fertility, and an increasing social acceptance around inheritance. But these changes have not radically challenged gender hierarchy and inequality. Rather, new gender hierarchies that could profit from future analysis have been created within women as a social group. For example, ideal wives and daughters-in-law should adhere to collective patriarchal family values, should not reject the essentialist idea of motherhood, should be educated, and be willing to financially contribute for their families' well-being. The ideal daughter is one who is good at studies, who provides a helping hand with household chores, maintains her sexual morality, and takes care of parents and in-laws (if needed) in their old age. A similar pattern is evident in regards to family size as women with small families are viewed as more efficient socially, being smarter, contributing

towards the nation's development, and responsible in comparison to those who have large families.

Further, this study has contributed to an understanding of the contemporary changes that have modified the traditional cultural values, perceptions, gender roles, and family building strategies among the urban middle-class in contemporary India. This research focused on various aspects of urban middle-class women's lives and highlights the connection between change and continuation in gender roles, generational roles, multiple modernities, women's perceptions of their children, and women's reproductive decision making. This thesis also showed the centrality of collective family values within urban middle-class women's lives, as these women make reproductive choices and face societal pressure and cultural expectations for their children.

Class remains an important factor influencing women's choices and generating different forms of knowledge, skills and practices. As demonstrated in the research, class is not a unified entity rather there are divisions based on income groups such as upper middle-class, middle-class and lower middle-class, material consumption, educational achievement and different occupation types between the old and new middle-class. Moreover, class differentiation was also evident in family building strategies, female respectability and morality, social expectations and entitlements, and families' treatment of their children. Middle-class behaviour was reflected in participants' reproductive decision making, negotiation and resistance strategies, including perception and expectations of their daughters.

The study has also shown that the small family norm has not only increased the cases of female foeticide, but is gradually also resulting in declining son-preference. Many couples are aiming to inspire others by having a small family of daughters. This will result eventually in achieving gender equality. However, this will be a slow and steady process which needs to be pushed with the state's development programmes.

I argue that a lot needs to be done to further enhance women's status. Deeply embedded social patriarchal values in regards to gender division of labour and gendered perceptions need to change. Change is particularly needed in the dominant socio-cultural notion of women being primary caretakers of family and children irrespective of their working status, the belief that women need a man for their basic survival, ideals of female sexual respectability and morality, and the essentialist idea of motherhood. These are some of the aspects of urban society that need

to change for the social betterment of women. Currently, entrenched gender roles and gendered expectations of women have not undergone a complete metamorphosis and meanwhile new ideals have come into existence which has put more pressure and social expectations on women. Failure to meet new and existing roles results in women being judged as showing inappropriate behaviour. They are then considered as not an ideal wife, daughter and mother. In India collective values have not yet diminished and this can exert more pressure on women and expose them to criticism. To achieve proper emancipation of women new social formations around the gendered division of labour, especially by lessening their work pressure and lowering social expectations and perceptions will be a significant achievement.

It is important to consider that women's contemporary challenges and increasing status are peculiar to the urban educated middle-class sample I studied. This might not be relevant for working class women or women situated in rural areas. Further, comparative studies need to carried out that can provide a better understanding of contemporary modernity and its engagement with gender, class and demography. This will provide a better insight for the government and NGOs about further needs to be addressed to provide a holistic approach for women belonging to different categories. Furthermore, it will also be interesting to study how gender and class interact among the Indian diaspora in the West in the neoliberal and globalised world.

Recommendations

During my research someone said to me: "There was a time when a small family was not in fashion, but now a small family is in fashion. So go and make a girl child in fashion". In order to make something in fashion we need to make a particular ideology popular. In fact, multiple initiatives are required to bring this change so that parents welcome their daughters without feeling sad or feeling them to be a burden. One recent initiative or trend that was apparent on Indian social media (Twitter and Facebook) during the 2016 Rio Olympics was to attach symbolic capital to Sakshi and Sindhu, the female Indian Olympic winners of India's only two medals. Social media was subsequently flooded with messages that daughters are the pride of the nation and their families. The point was thus raised and highlighted that daughters are not a burden to their families or nation so female foeticide and infanticide needs to stopped. This claim

was of more relevance as one of the athletes, Sakshi, comes from Haryana which has the lowest female child sex ratio in India.

However, it is important to realise that the reduction in family size, initially begun from macro level initiatives such as government and NGOs' family planning programmes was later taken up by couples and smaller families became popular. Ironically, the popularity of the small family led to an increase in female foeticide as parents wished to continue to have sons. This was despite NGOs running several educational and community programmes against female-foeticide and daughters' secondary social status.

Another interesting change that the current Indian government is planning to make now is making prenatal sex tests compulsory (*Zee News*, 2016). This is proposed with the aim of curbing the problem of female foeticide by keeping track of the numbers of cases and being able to determine who is practicing this. The government is planning to make a policy under which the pregnant woman and unborn child, together with the information of the sex of the child, would be registered. This would allow tracking of whether the female foetus was born or not, and if a couple underwent an abortion they would have to produce a certificate citing a medical reason for termination. At first glance, this looks both innovative and invasive, and may or may not be able to curb the problem. However, it cannot be ignored that this new change will once again provide opportunities to misuse this provision and will pose a range of different challenges in its implementation. First, doctors who are complicit in the practice of female foeticide would be able to register the wrong gender of the child, and are highly likely to produce false scan reports. Also, as women have to wait until the end of the first trimester to discover the sex of the child, this means they cannot provide the reason for the abortion as contraception failure, which is a provision under MTP Act 1971. This may mean that women will be more likely to resort to backstreet abortions, risking their lives and health. There is a high chance that women would be charged for aborting a female foetus, even if they had to undergo an abortion because of family pressure. This could also increase the rate of violence against women especially in those families who do not want a girl at all, or women may suffer malnutrition or starvation during their pregnancy as families refuse them rich diets as a punishment for giving birth to a daughter. Furthermore, the idea of registering the sex of a foetus has overtones of state policing in people's personal reproductive lives when each and every moment is kept track of.

On the whole, it is important to mention that female foeticide is not only a violence against women, but also against the whole of society as it is creating imbalance in the gender ratio, a phenomenon with wider social implications. At a micro level this practice might be benefiting couples, but at a broader macro level it raises a lot of tensions and problems. The wider implication of this is that violence against women can increase because of a lack of girls within society. Risks include further worsening the situation of bride trafficking and the sharing of wives among brothers as its already practised in some regions of India (UNFPA, 2007). For example, in some regions of rural Haryana brides are trafficked as no daughter has survived in those regions in the last 200 years; the participants in my research did not belong to such areas. The paradox of the social change is that as wider opportunities for women's development have arisen, different forms of violence against women such as female foeticide have also increased. The low female child sex ratio and the accompanying crimes against women bring a bad name for the nation at a global level. It is highly important to increase the status of the girl child to curb these many problems.

For further critical change it is important to convert social gender scripts so that daughters are treated equally and are not devalued. In India, especially considering the collective nature of the social environment, not only women, but the whole family also needs to be empowered. This could be done by running regular social educational programmes that focus on family empowerment, and are easily accessible by everyone. These programmes should be based on collective values otherwise they will be too threatening for people to accept them.

Furthermore, the introduction of old-age pensions for parents would also be a good alternative. However, as revealed in Chapter Seven, feeling socially and morally supported by their children were key concerns for the women in my research. Therefore, creating an economic solution for parents' old age is only part of the solution; economic capital on its own cannot be a substitute for children's support. In contemporary India old-age homes are still a taboo and only one participant out of 45 talked about them. So, if sons are to be supplanted as the traditional carers of parents in their old-age, new initiatives that do not leave people socially isolated will be required.
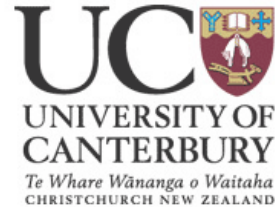
Appendix

Information Sheet

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Abortions, Motherhood and Decision-Making in India

You are invited to take part in a study of abortion practices and motherhood in India. Please read the following information carefully, and take some time to decide whether you wish to participate or not. You have a right not to take part in this study. This study has been approved and reviewed by University of Canterbury's Human Ethics Committee.

What is this study about?

This is a study about how Indian women and families make decisions about having abortions simultaneously choosing motherhood. I will also be looking at decision making around family planning. This study focuses on members of the Indian community in Indians living in India in Haryana and Delhi. As part of the research, I will be asking how you think about son preference, sex-selection, dowry, abortions and women's role in the family.

Researcher:

Ambika Kohli: an international PhD student of Sociology at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Contact Details:

Address: Department of Sociology, University of Canterbury, PB 4800, Christchurch 8020

Phone: 022 642 9185, 021 051 4538

Email: ako35@uclive.ac.nz

Supervisors:

Dr. Anne Scott: a sociologist of health and medicine teaching at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch New Zealand.

Contact Details:

Address: Department of Soicology, University of Canterbury, PB 4800, Christchurch 8020

Email: a.scott@canterbury.ac.nz

Dr. Nabila Jaber: a sociologist teaching at University of Canterbury. Her study areas are Development and gender in international relations; development and post colonialism, migration, diaspora, and national identity.

What am I asking participants in this study to do?

I will meet with you in a place of your choosing for a confidential interview that will take around 30-60 minutes. In this interview, I will be asking how members of your household make decisions about family planning, motherhood and abortions. If you have had a personal abortion experience, and want to talk about your decision making process, and the consequences of your abortion, you will be invited to do so. In the interview, I will also ask for your views on abortion, sex-selective abortions, and the importance of dowry and of a son in your life. I will give you a small confidential questionnaire to fill in, which asks about your age, educational qualifications, your origins, your caste and so forth. The interviews will be audio taped on a digital recorder.

You may choose to stop the interview at any time, and for any reason. You will have an opportunity to receive your interview transcript, if you wish.

Who may take part?

In New Zealand I am looking for people who identify as members of the Indian community. You must have New Zealand citizenship or New Zealand permanent residency and be over the age of 18. You may participate whether or not you have experienced abortion in any stage of your life for any reason.

Any Indian citizen over the age of 18 may take part, regardless of whether you have experienced abortion in any stage of your life.

If issues or concerns should arise:

Please contact:

Counsellor Manjula Bhagi

M.Phil Pshycology

Contact: 14/33, Shakti Nagar, Delhi.

What I will do with the data?

The information you provide will be used in the writing of thesis which will be a public document in the University of Canterbury library. It will also be used to write journal articles in Indian, New Zealand and international journals. Seven years after the study ends, I will destroy all of the data.

Confidentiality:

Your privacy is important to me. I will not use your real name in publications. All of your identifying details, such as your profession, and the region where you live, will be changed. Where there is any question about confidentiality, I will check back with you to see how you want your confidentiality protected. What you say might be shared with my supervisors, but will not be seen by anyone else. Any identifying information you provide will be kept in a locked office or on a password protected computer. Information without identifying details may be stored and processed on a password protected home computer. Transcripts will be stored for seven years, and then transcripts and digital recordings will be destroyed.

Information provided may be seen by my supervisors (prior to the publication), and after the publication of the research anyone reading it will have access to the data. As a PhD is a public document via the UC library database.

Checking your transcript:

If you would like to receive a copy of your interview transcript, just sign for this option on the consent form. The transcript will be sent to you by email or by post in an envelope marked confidential. If you want anything to be corrected please let me know, and I will make the changes.

Rights of participants:

You have a full right not to answer any particular question if you don't want to. You can withdraw from this project at any time, even after your interview (but, before the publication of the thesis). If you choose to withdraw, you may also choose to whether you want to withdraw any information you have already provided. If you choose to withdraw, you will not be disadvantaged in any way. Also, you have a full right to ask any question about the study at any point of time during your participation.

If you have questions:

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research project we can discuss them by telephone prior to any interview. See Ambika Kohli's contact details and Anne Scott's contact details mentioned above.

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School of Social and Political Sciences

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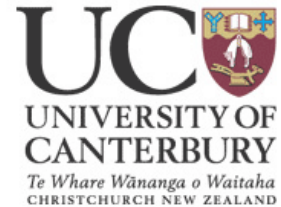
Questionairre

Please read all the following questions carefully and answer them. If you don't understand anything, please ask the researcher.

PERSONAL IFORMATION:

a. Name:
   …………………………………………………………………………………………

b. Marital Status:
   …………….……………………………………………………………………………

c. Age:
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d. Sex:
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e. Caste:
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f. Place of Origin in India:
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g. Educational Qualifications:
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h. Citizenship status:
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i. Working or Unemployed (please mention your working position):
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j. Number of children (please mention how many boys and girls):
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………

Signature: ……………………………………………………………

Date: …………………………………………………………………..

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Tel: +64 3 364 2899, Fax: + 64 364 2414

Web site: http://www.saps.canterbury.ac.nz/

Consent Form
Abortions, Motherhood, and Decision-Making in India

I have read and understood the description of the **'Abortions, Motherhood, and Decision-Making in India'** project. I have had the opportunity to have my questions answered and I am satisfied with the answers I have been given. I have also had time to consider whether to take part. On this basis, I agree to participate in the project.

I understand that a PhD is a pubic document via the University of Canterbury's library database.

I understand that taking part in this study is my choice. I may withdraw at any time, and also withdraw any information I have provided.

I understand that my privacy will be carefully protected, and that any personal data relating to me will be kept in a secure location. No material that may identify me or my family will be used in any reports on this study. I also understand that information provided by me in interview can be used for publication with confidentiality protected.

Name:

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Signature: …………………………………………… Date: ....

CONTACT DETAILS:

Address:

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Email address:

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Phone number**: …………………………………………………………………………**

Do you want transcript returned? **…………………** Yes…………………………No

How should it be returned?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

Signature: ……………………………………………

Date: ……………………………………..

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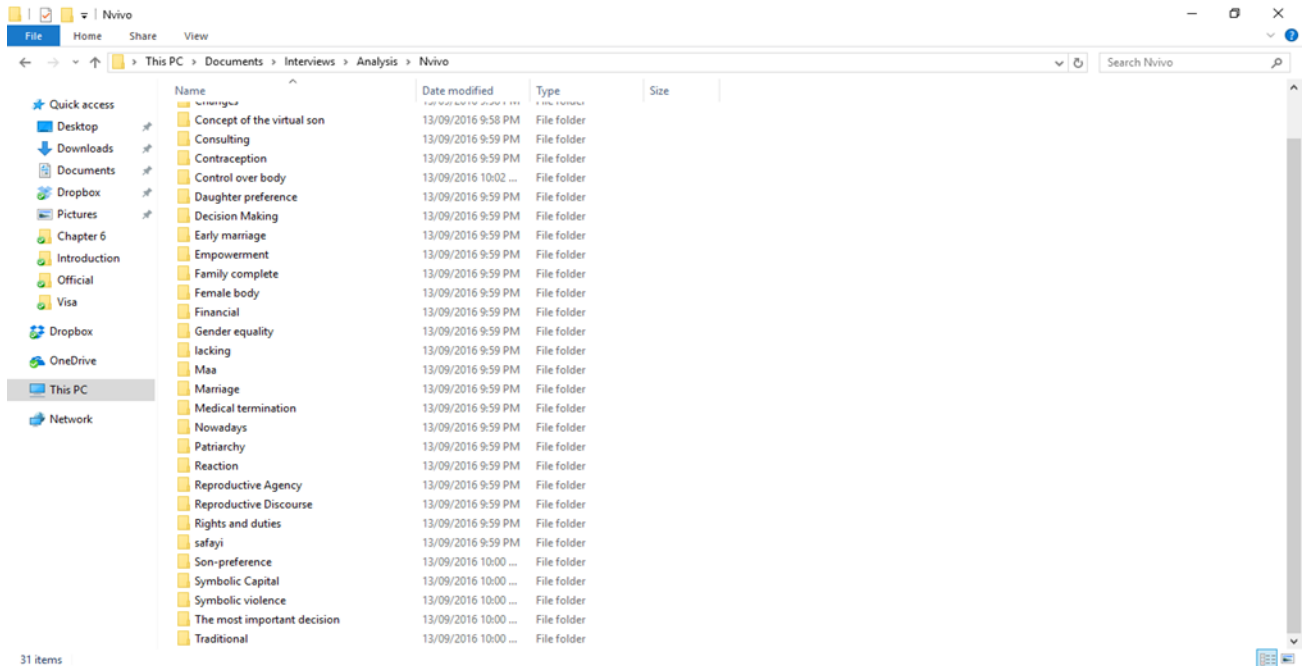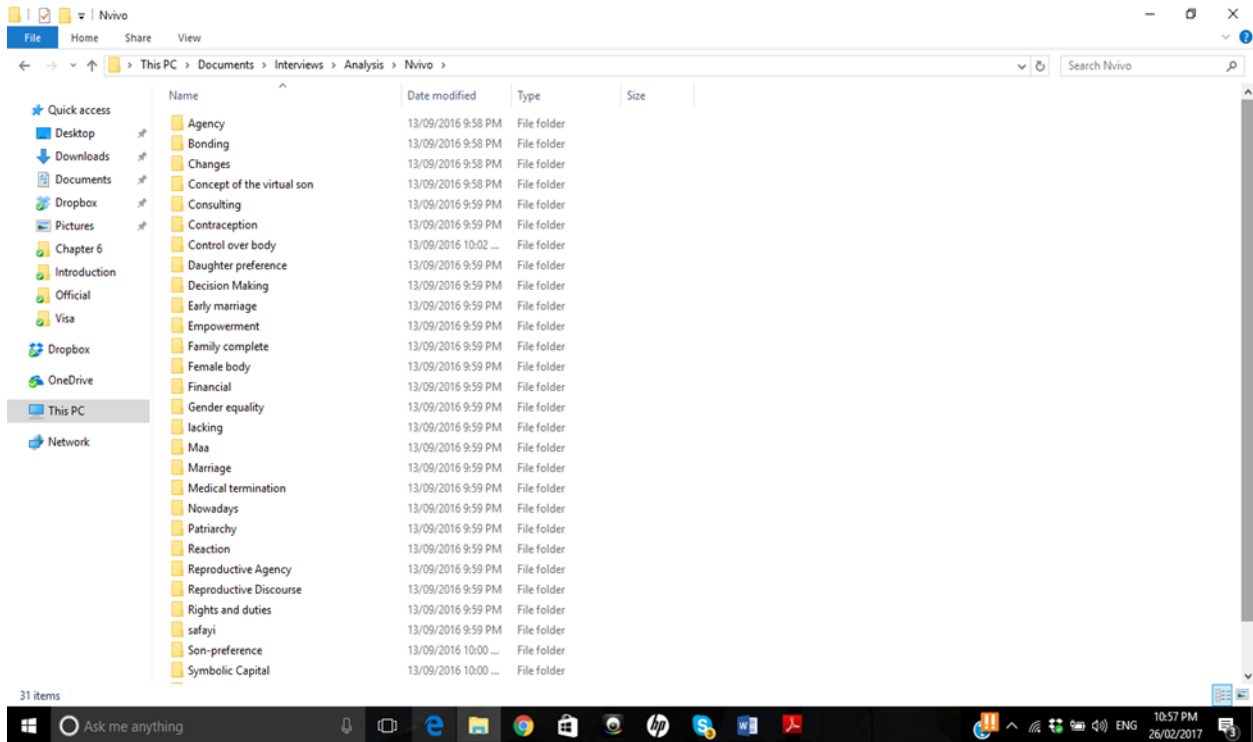
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