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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ

TRANSNATIONAL HYBRIDITY: (RE)CONSTRUCTING EDUCATION FOR
ORPHAN GIRLS IN RURAL NORTH INDIA

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

EDUCATION

by

Yolanda Diaz-Houston

September 2015

The Dissertation of Yolanda Diaz-Houston is
approved:

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Tyrus Miller
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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Abstract

Transnational Hybridity: (Re)constructing education for orphan girls in rural north

India

Yolanda Diaz-Houston

This dissertation begins to address the academic void at the intersection of education, women, and orphans in India. As educational access in countries like India increases, marginalized students, including women, are entering the classroom in greater numbers. This dissertation contributes to the body of literature which describes the experiences of marginalized students in educational settings, but is unique in its focus on orphan girls. Despite an estimated 20,000,000 Indian orphans¹, very little is written about the population, much less the subjective ways in which education impacts their lived realities. The qualitative approach of this dissertation provides a window into the experiences of the girls as they encounter educational spaces and discourses. Through ethnographic techniques, including observation, examination of curricular materials, and semi-structured interviews, the 6 month field study focused on the interplay of social factors the influenced conceptions of the “educated Indian woman” within the particular community of Sri Ram Ashram, an orphanage and school located in rural North India. It investigated how educational norms are negotiated within a transnational community where educators from

¹ See <http://www.soschildrensvillages.ca/india-now-home-20-million-orphans-study-finds>

(literally) opposite sides of the world contribute to the socialization of abandoned children.

The dissertation found that education at the ashram is impacted by local, national and transnational discourses that contribute to a hybrid educational environment. Forces within and beyond the context of the local community influence the value laden decisions concerning the nature of education and consequently the cultural production of the “educated Indian woman”.

Ashram girls draw from and negotiate these various, and often contradictory, educational ideals in order to (re)construct their notions of an educated self. Specifically, they navigate conceptions of gender embedded within disparate educational discourses at the ashram. Girls encounter three discourses: 1) Education as Irrelevant; schooling for girls is unnecessary to traditional gender roles. 2) Education for Enhancement; formal schooling prepares women for marriage and motherhood thereby enhancing existing gender roles. 3) Education for Expansion; formal education offers an expansion of woman’s roles and life options.

In addition, aspects of the sociological sphere, such as social and cultural capital, deeply impact the educational experiences and life trajectories of the orphan girls. In a highly stratified society such as India, the girls require access to social capital and alternative forms of socialization *in addition to* formal schooling in order to transition from traditional to non-traditional gender roles. This process is underpinned by an strong ethic of care within the ashram community which

foregrounds caring relationships and a focus on bolstering the status of girls in particular. These often unscrutinized and intangible aspects of girl's lived realities are central to understanding how education, broadly defined, plays a role in the successful integration of ashram girls into Indian society.

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My greatest debt is to the children, young adults and extended family members of Sri Ram Ashram. Without the willingness of the entire community, and in particular the orphanage director Rashmi Cole, I could never have completed this research. Although I also brought knowledge and skills to share, it was truly I who received the greatest gifts through the privilege of living with the Sri Ram Ashram family. This dissertation is not only about how I came to understand members of the community. It’s completion speaks to what I learned from the children. Their honesty, bravery, and friendliness has impacted how I relate to others and my own work. I would also like to pay my deepest respects to Baba Hari Dass, my teacher and founder of Sri Ram Ashram, who has inspired so many through his example of selfless service.

Introduction

In the haze of early morning at Sri Ram Ashram in rural north India, the repeated clangs of a heavy iron bell reverberate throughout the courtyard between the concrete residence halls. A saffron colored sun is rising over the mustard fields in the distance. Wooden screen doors crash shut as dozens of children, dressed in brown school uniforms and carrying backpacks, scurry out from their shared rooms. Some stoop down to tie shoe laces in haste; others are quickly stuffing books into their packs. They form two lines facing the path to school, the boys on the left and girls on the right, ordered by height. Older children hold the hands of the smallest girls as they guide them to the front. The girls, who outnumber the boys three to one, wear their hair in tight braids over cream colored button up shirts, brown skirts and knee high socks sprouting from black shoes with buckles. Once assembled, the rows begin marching forward. As these brothers and sisters turn the corner towards the gate that separates the residential section of the ashram and the school, the lines dissolve with exuberance and chaos. Within the ashram, the children are not considered orphans, but members of a large extended family. Chattering dies off in the distance as they pass the fields full of vegetables for the communal kitchen and fodder for the ashram cows, and they slip through the wrought metal gate onto the brick path beyond.

The transition from home to school, that takes place all over the globe, is a symbolic moment of moving between different, and often disparate, worlds. Students

everywhere are socialized both in the home and the classroom, both of which can contain competing and complimentary educational discourses. Within communities, nations, and on a global level, debate and negotiation ensue over the purposes of schooling and the various aspects of teaching and learning. At the ashram, the configuration of transnational forces and educational actors contribute to a unique context and social space that shape the educational experiences of orphan girls. However, the insights provided in this dissertation have implications that go far beyond this specific setting.

In this dissertation I examine the educational discourses that affect the lived experiences of orphan girls on global, national and local levels. This ethnographic study focuses on the interplay of social factors that influenced conceptions of the “educated Indian woman” within the particular community of Sri Ram Ashram, an orphanage and school located in rural North India. It investigates how educational norms are negotiated within a transnational² community where educators from (literally) opposite sides of the world contribute to the socialization of orphan girls. During the six month ethnography at the ashram, I considered the following research questions:

² This term draws from Cohen (2011) who expands the definition of transnationalism from a single "field" that spans national borders to a focus on the processes by which that space is produced, and to which many sets of actors contribute.

1. How do various actors in the educational community, including (U.S.) volunteers, Indian teachers, and Indian students, participate in the cultural construction(s) of what it means to be an “educated Indian woman” for orphan girls at an ashram³ in rural northern India?
 - a. Particularly, how do these participants negotiate, co-construct, and/or contest various discourses surrounding the educational norms of the community in relationship to underlying ideologies of gender, caste, class, and race?
2. How does the interplay of these discourses create, constrain, and/or influence how the older girls, who are completing or have completed their secondary education, construct/negotiate their own subjectivities of the “educated Indian woman”?

This introduction presents the context of girls education at the ashram, and gives an in-depth view of the setting, participants and background of the researcher. It goes on to explain the epistemological stance and theoretical paradigms that the study draws from, and the layout of the three papers that constitute the dissertation.

The context of women’s education at Sri Ram Ashram

³ Ashram can be translated as home, and in this case should be thought of as a community center.

India is known as the world's largest democracy with a population well over 1.2 billion. It has a reputation as a rapidly expanding economic power with an increasing middle class, but it is also a deeply stratified country rife with inequities. The position of girls is the most highlighted aspect of social inequality in India, and the "missing women" phenomenon is the most fundamental. The ratio of females to males continues to decrease despite, or perhaps congruent with, rises in economic activity. In fact, states in India that have seen the most economic expansion tend to have higher sex disparities in population.

Despite rapid economic growth and positive human development, Indian society remains highly segmented and income inequality is rising. Inequalities vis-à-vis disadvantaged groups such as so-called scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and women persist. Structural inequalities have kept entire groups trapped, unable to take advantage of opportunities that economic growth has offered. While much progress has been made in education, health, maternal mortality, and fertility, gender inequality remains high. The ratio of girls to boys has decreased steadily over the last fifty years—a trend associated with the "missing women" phenomenon; it is particularly low in some of India's more advanced states. (World Bank, 2013, p.5)

It is in this context that educating girls takes on a different level of significance in India. Escaping death is only the first hurdle for girls such as those brought to Sri Ram Ashram. Indeed, some children are not as fortunate as those who participated in my study.

One morning in India, I walked on the dirt and brick road to the local village with Beth, a resident nurse at the orphanage. She pointed to a banyan tree near the adjacent wheat field. The previous year, she explained, they had buried a baby there

along the path. The grandmother had brought the 6 hour old infant to the orphanage. She had been delivered premature in a hospital by cesarean section to the fifth daughter of a widow which conveyed the low social status imparted to girl children. “The hospital was extremely irresponsible. They should not let a baby go - even if it was unwanted,” she told me. They had discharged the mother and child even though the baby had only weighed 2.5 lbs. “She was very cold when she arrived. There was a pediatric nurse visiting at the time otherwise I would have felt completely responsible.” After an hour of providing care, they decided to take the baby back to the hospital, but she died on the way. One of the American volunteers gave her the name Gracie.

It is in this context that education for women is contested. Widespread poverty exacerbates bias against female children that can result in infanticide, abandonment or chronic neglect. More than 75% of India’s population lives on less than \$2 per day (UNESCO, 2008). Cultural norms such as sequestering women in the home, prioritizing domestic work, or the practice of child marriage impact girls’ participation in schools. In 2006, 20% of school age girls in India, or 27.7 million girls were not in school (Lewis and Lockheed, 2006).⁴ Parents are also less likely to allow their daughters to attend school if there is no facility close to home, but will send their sons farther distances to be educated (Lewis & Lockheed, 2007, 2006).

⁴ This seems to be the most recent statistics available; however, improvements in primary school enrollment in India in the past decade have certainly influenced these numbers.

Lack of infrastructure also contributes, particularly in rural areas where all students have fewer educational opportunities; girls, however have the fewest; rural females are nearly three times as likely to be illiterate than their urban counterparts (Education Policy & Data Center, 2007). In the district where the orphanage is located, the rural female literacy is 59.4% (Census of India, 2011b) and the rural sex ratio is 868 females for every 1000 males (Census of India, 2011a).



Figure 1. Government campaign to increase female population in New Delhi.

Setting and Participants

Founded in 1984, the community center is located in the northern state of Uttarakhand, on 16 acres of farmland near the town of Haridwar. The ashram supports an orphanage for over 70 children, a school for over 500 children, the majority of whom come from local villages, and a charitable medical clinic that services the surrounding rural communities. The center is sponsored by a partnership between two non-profit organizations, Anath Shishu Palan Trust of India and the Sri Rama Foundation based in the United States. The work of the Foundation is primarily

funded by private donations from individuals and organizations in the United States, Canada, Japan and India.

The local agrarian area is densely populated with over 1,500 people living within each square mile. Nearby farmers tend crops of wheat, rice or mustard, and many plow their fields by hand with oxen or bullock. Most roads are unpaved and frequented by rickshaws, motor scooters and bicycles. Electricity is unreliable, often cutting out several times, perhaps for several hours at a time, during the day and night. Most buildings are made out of concrete and may be one or two stories high; there is no indoor heating or air conditioning. At the orphanage, children benefit from superior resources in comparison to much of the local population because they have access to superior facilities, clean water, basic healthcare, and nutritious food.

The orphanage includes residence halls for girls and boys, an office, a communal kitchen, and a dormitory for visiting guests. Caretakers who supervise the children include long term volunteers from Canada and the United States who reside in India for most or part of the year, Indian citizens, and a constantly rotating population of foreign volunteers from all over the world. Life at the orphanage is organized around the schedule of the school, field trips, and many holidays and religious events through out the year. Children at the ashram are raised in the Hindu spiritual tradition, but the line can often blur between religious events and more secular celebrations.

Children come to live at the ashram due to multiple social factors. Some are brought by family members who could not care for them due to poverty. Others are found as infants left in fields or by the side of the road. Many arrive after being abandoned and having suffered severe physical and psychological abuse. After arriving at the ashram, children are not put up for adoption; they remain at the children's home until they reach adulthood aligning with the mission of raising children in a protective family environment and their eventual integration into Indian society. The children range in age from newborns to teenagers, and recently the first wave of college bound students has moved on to higher education, marriage, and/or employment.

The educational experiences of the ashram girls take place both in the more formal classroom environments of the school with Indian teachers, and the more informal setting of the ashram residence through activities and tutoring with foreign volunteers. These were the primary settings for observation during the ethnography. There were 29 primary participants. These included 10 of the orphan girls themselves, 9 Indian teachers and administrators at the Indian school, and 10 foreign volunteers, primarily from the United States.

Researcher Background

As a child in northern California, I grew up at an intentional community in the Santa Cruz mountains. The Mount Madonna Center was established in 1979 by the students of a renunciate monk from India who teaches yoga philosophy and practice. Baba Hari Dass, or Babaji as he is respectfully called, took a vow of silence in 1952. Now in his early 90's, he has only communicated through writing since that time, choosing not to speak as an austerity. As a young adult I studied yoga, not the imported version that can be found in most yoga studios and is seen primarily as a form of exercise, but a classical set of teachings that more aptly fit the description of a spiritual discipline.

Babaji came to the United States in 1971 at the request of a group of UCSC students who had traveled to India and began studying with him, and he was sponsored by a UC Davis professor to immigrate to the U.S. He brought with him a vast store of knowledge that shaped the cultural landscape of the Mount Madonna community. A thorough description of this phenomenon belongs in another dissertation. For purposes of this work, it is important to note that from an early age I lived at a cultural crossroads. Within the community, I experienced a collage of customs and values that drew from Indian tradition but integrated American culture.

I was also born into a multicultural family. My father is Mexican-American while my mother's grandparents emigrated from Sweden. My father's parents met picking grapes in California as migrant farm workers right before World War II. While I feel deeply connected to my Latino heritage, the experiences I had within the

Mount Madonna community significantly impacted my perspective of the world. Soon after the founding of the Mount Madonna Center, plans began to establish a children's home in India.

As a young boy in India, Babaji had a childhood friend that lived at an orphanage. He witnessed abuse of the orphans by their caretakers, and from that experience decided to someday found a safe and loving home for children. When I was growing up in the mid 1990's, the orphanage was well established, and a regular group of community members traveled annually to India to volunteer. This group consisted of my extended family members, teachers and friends. They brought home photos and stories, and the experiences of living in another culture that made a deep impression on me. The individuals who were involved in establishing and sustaining life at Sri Ram Ashram, were simultaneously involved in my own life and socialization.

Through this connection, I traveled to India for the first time when I was 17 years old. At the ashram I met the children that I had seen in photographs and heard stories about for years. That was the beginning of a closer and active connection to the organization in India. It was because of this background that when I started my ethnography at Sri Ram Ashram, I felt like I was coming home. I was familiar with the people, the communal living, and many of the cultural practices at the orphanage. When I arrived, I already considered all the children as my own brothers and sisters. They knew my husband, who had also volunteered at the ashram and

traveled with me when I volunteered in 2007. My mother in law was a regular visitor, usually making an annual trip and was seen as a mentor to the older girls. In essence, my relationship with the ashram was familial. Living in the ashram during my ethnography both more clearly defined and redefined my relationship to the children and community members.

Research Epistemology: Shifting subjectivities

The epistemological stance that this dissertation draws from is grounded in feminist standpoint epistemology. It is premised upon the understanding that all knowledge is constructed in a specific matrix of physical location, history, culture, and interests, and that these matrices change in configuration from one location to another (Harding, 1998, 2004). Here I borrow from Harding's (1987) distinction between method, methodology, and epistemology used in designing feminist research.

Method is defined as the techniques for gathering evidence, methodology as a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed, and epistemology is a general theory of knowledge that establishes the parameters of the knower, the known and the process of knowing. Sprague (2005) summarizes the relationship between the three by writing "...methodology works out the implications of a specific epistemology for how to implement a method" (p. 5).

Haraway (1988) posits that our vision is embodied in a specific social and physical space and that our knowledge is thus situated and partial. Standpoints are multiple for a researcher, as well as participants. Rather than inhabiting a stable singular position, individual viewpoints are constituted by multiple influences, constantly in flux, that shift depending on context. Knowing is partial, local, and historically specific. This can be understood in terms of polyvocality (LeCompte, 1995), the construction of reality by multiple perspectives present in research.

The concept of voice involves the realization that reality is constructed of the perceptions of the many participants in any social setting, including research settings. Especially in research settings, there are multiple voices and cross-cutting discourses. What were once called stakeholders now become part of the polyvocality of the setting; their interests constitute stories which, for them, create a definition of the situation or of the reality in which they live. It is the sense of this reality which makes the conflicts among stakeholders more than mere differences of opinion; they are, in fact, conflicts over who has the right to define truth. (p. 100)

The meaning created out of the research setting has many possible sources. It is in the choosing of how and which voices to weigh into the process *and* representation of the work that researchers exercise their privilege and power. As Clifford(1986) articulates, ethnography is actively situated between powerful systems of meaning such as the boundaries of culture, class, race, and gender. It decodes and recodes, setting the basis for understanding collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion. It describes processes of innovation and structuration, and is itself part of these processes. Indeed the focus of this dissertation itself looks at the interplay of

multiple perspectives on education. In other words, the focus of the ethnography is to examine the polyvocality of the dialogue surrounding the education for girls at the ashram. Not only do participants engage within these discourses, but the researcher brings their own set of discourses, beliefs and biases.

Considering ethnography as a methodological path in particular is impacted by this critical stance. Bell Hooks (1990) argues that ethnography should work against a critical background that breaks with the past patterns of cultural domination through research. Participants in contemporary discussions of culture highlighting difference and otherness who have not interrogated their perspectives, the location from which they write in a culture of domination, can easily create an ethnographic terrain where old practices are simultaneously critiqued, re-enacted and sustained. This awareness also impacts how we think about the process of gathering data.

According to Sharma (2011), articulations by participants in the study are greatly influenced by the social and historical positioning of the investigator vis a vis individuals and the institutions that they participate in. In the case of this dissertation, I had worked as a volunteer within the ashram, and therefore in the discourse production and transformation that I sought to examine. As a result, it was not only the methods I used, such as the questions I chose to ask, that impacted responses, but how participants *chose* to engage, i.e., answer the questions. In other words, participants revealed their lives in selective ways, depending on which facet of their

positionally might be appropriately revealed given the relationship of myself to them and the ashram.

Visweswaran (1994) explores the meaning of critical feminist ethnography by interrogating herself in the field, and in doing so recuperates her own feminism as self-reflection, self-critique, and self-subversion. She revives ethnography as a method that makes imperative what Haraway calls “engaged, accountable positioning” that allows us to become answerable to what we learn to see and do. The ethnographer learns to observe herself negotiating the field and makes accountable knowledge claims. She asks, “Who is engaged in creating the field even before engaging in field work, and where is she located? In the field, what “truths” or knowledge claims are being created and by whom?” In addition, she comments on the particular challenges for researchers when the line is blurred between the status of insider/outsider.

“In fact, it seems that the entire ethnographic process becomes “agonizing” especially for feminist ethnographers who claim hyphenated identities. In other words, women who acknowledge their hyphenated identities agonize at length about intersubjective relations and how to write about them or how best to manage their “insider-outsider” identities in their complex permutations both in and off the field” (p.68).

Her characterization of the ethnographic process as often “agonizing” resonates with me deeply because of my personal history with the ashram and its residents. The multiple identities that I brought to the field often created personal

tension around representation and notions of loyalty. As a member of the ashram community, I attempted to honor the public narrative of life at the ashram while negotiating the integrity of my role as a researcher. I sought to balance the interests of my participants with those of the academic work; two agendas that are sometimes not easily reconciled.

(Re)presenting marginalized women: Whose agenda?

In the tradition of feminist anthropology, scholars have attempted to address the quandary of both representing Third World women by speaking *of* them, in a manner that challenges patriarchal disciplinary practices, and simultaneously speaking *for* Third World women (Mohanty, 2004). Wolf (1996) states that from a feminist perspective the most central dilemmas in field-work are issues of power, hierarchy and control that are often maintained, perpetuated, created, and re-created during and after field research.

In his introduction to Power and Method (1994), Apple raises questions about the relationship between activism and research, and poses the central question echoed by many authors; research for whom?

...[bringing attention to issues of power in research] immediately brings to the fore a whole set of issues about the social role of research, about the conceptual and

epistemological grounding of knowledge claims, about what such knowledge is for, and about who ultimately benefits from its generation. (p. x)

Some authors problematize the traditional role of methodological and theoretical scholarship, stating that by focusing the outcome of research myopically on the conversation within academia, traditional research design omits attention to action and relevance in relation to the communities that have been historically “researched upon”. Traditionally researchers have answered the “research for whom?” question with, “Other scholars like us” (Hale, 2008.) Social science scholars rely on written language, in the form of books and journal articles, to document, describe, and interpret their research, contribute to continuing discussions in their academic fields, and advance their careers. In her book Decolonizing Methodologies, Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) critiques the purpose of academic writing and poses the questions, “Who writes? For whom is the writing being done? In what circumstances” (p. 37)?

Scholars have addressed the theoretical, epistemological, and methodological questions raised by indigenous scholars, feminists, or critical race theorists, by engaging in a critical dialogue of traditional research paradigms. However, even this approach has been criticized by some as self indulgent. Patai (1994) problematizes the self-congratulatory nature of researchers through the use of reflective writing which again supersedes real life issues, such as poverty. According to the author, accounting for our positions as researchers won’t, for example, redistribute wealth. These and similar calls for more than observation, interpretation, reflection and

critique have spurred the development of action, participatory, and community centered approaches to research (Oakes & Rogers, 2006; Nygreen, 2006; Fine & Cammarota, 2008).

According to Sprague (2005), feminists have developed methodological strategies in an attempt to diminish the power imbalances between the researcher and the researched. These include cultivating reflexivity in terms of the impact of personal biographies and biases, and experiment with reporting styles that make the researcher's perspective obvious and cede more authority to the voices of the research subjects. This critical ethnography seeks to address issues of power through these methods, and through the aim of centering the understandings of marginalized women in the production of theory.

Centering the perspective of the marginalized

Writings by US third world feminists, such as Anzaldua (1999), and Moraga and Anzaldua (1983) forward theory that not only challenges Western epistemology in the production of knowledge, but also offers a framework that emphasizes the local, a thinking "with" and "from" community, a thinking that is relational and decolonial. U.S. third world feminism is an "other thinking" that confronts not only the definitions and boundaries of theory in education research but also is a framework

that questions who produces knowledge, how and where, and for what purposes (C. Cruz, personal communication, January 14, 2009).

Mohanty (2003) writes that scholars often locate “third world women” in binary terms such as underdevelopment, high illiteracy, and rural poverty. Based upon a white modern versus non-white primitive hierarchy, such analyses “...freeze Third World women in time, space, and history...the everyday, fluid fundamentally historical and dynamic nature of the lives of Third World women is here collapsed into a few frozen “indicators” of their well being.” (p.48) Mohanty points out that knowledge production in social-scientific disciplines is an important discursive site for struggle given that the material effects of knowledge production have ramifications for institutions (e.g. laws, policies, educational systems) as well as the constitution of selves and subjectivities.

Both Anzaldua (1984, 1990) and Smith (1999) call for the generation of theories/teorias from the standpoint of marginalized ways of knowing in order to reinvent the purpose of traditional academic writing to serve those of indigenous, marginalized, and unrepresented peoples. Ladson-Billings (2000) describes a “liminal position” or “point of alterity” as the dialectically constructed otherness that moves beyond the normative boundary of the conception of self/other; it attempts to transcend an either/or epistemology. In fact, it challenges dominant cultural ways of knowing for already socialized subjects, a reconstruction of knowing. According to the author, “...the work of the liminal perspective is to reveal the ways that dominant

perspectives distort the realities of the other in an effort to maintain power relations that continue to disadvantage those who are locked out of the mainstream” (p.263).

Patricia Hill-Collins (1986, 1991, 2000) argues the social marginalization of groups, black women in particular, creates an epistemic advantage in the production of knowledge due to the distance that exists between hegemonic thought and practices and the marginalized, and that this facilitates the development of critical ways of knowing. Official knowledge, and the process through which it is validated, is controlled by elite institutions, but Black feminist epistemology contends that the wisdom produced through concrete experience should be validated as a resource through which knowledge claims are evaluated, and furthermore, that knowledge production is not an individual endeavor but a process based upon dialogue and consensus building among common people. Those ideas that are validated by multiple standpoints become the most validated within the community. The struggles over creating and validating knowledge are not benign academic issues but rather struggles over “which version of the truth will prevail and shape thought and action” (2000, p. 203).

In this ethnography, basing research in the perspective of the orphan girls as a part of a larger discourse of educational norms is not meant as a means *and* an end.

As Harding (1992) writes,

...to start thought from marginal lives is not to take as incorrigible-as the irrefutable grounds for knowledge- what marginal people say or interpretations of their

experiences. Listening carefully to what marginalized people say- with fairness, honesty, and detachment-and trying to understand their life worlds are crucial first steps in gaining less partial and distorted accounts of the entire social order; but these could not be the last step. Starting thought from marginal lives is not intended to provide an interpretation of those lives but instead a causal, critical account of the regularities of the natural and social worlds and their underlying causal tendencies.

In this way, the focus of research becomes formulating theory about the nature of the relationships that contribute to a marginalized perspective, rather than attempting to essentialize the experience and view of marginalized women.

Educational discourses on the global, national, and local levels

The following three papers describe perspectives on schooling in three contexts. The first paper, “The missing sociological sphere: Development framing and the education of orphan girls in rural north India,” argues that the dominant development paradigm fails to adequately take into account the sociological dimension of women’s lives and how it impacts their educational outcomes. It shows that in a highly stratified society such as India, for ashram girls to transition from traditional to non-traditional gender roles requires access to social capital and alternative forms of socialization *in addition to* formal schooling. The sociological frame proposed challenges the notion that the education of women in developing countries can be reduced to economic gain or loss.

The second paper, “Hitching a mercedes to a bullock cart: Pedagogical tensions at a school for orphans in rural North India,” bridges the national perspective on pedagogical and curricular reform with the impact of those mandates at the ashram school. It highlights the mismatch that exists between the intention of national policy and the local context leading to resistance in the adoption of constructivist teaching methods by Indian teachers. The paper calls for acknowledgement that such reforms are fundamentally sites of political and cultural struggle that simultaneously have revolutionary potential and act to further engrain social inequities that impact the lives of marginalized students.

The third paper, “Creating gender for/from the margins: Competing educational discourses for orphan girls in rural north India,” reveals how orphan girls navigate conceptions of gender embedded within disparate educational discourses at the ashram. Girls encounter three discourses: 1) Education as Irrelevant; schooling for girls is unnecessary to traditional gender roles. 2) Education for Enhancement; formal schooling prepares women for marriage and motherhood thereby enhancing existing gender roles. 3) Education for Expansion; formal education offers an expansion of woman’s roles and life options.

These papers highlight the sociological dimension that surrounds and permeates the educational experiences of orphan girls. Together they speak to the local, national, and transnational confluence of actors and forces that constitute the educational discourses at Sr Ram Ashram. More importantly, the educational

environments and experiences that orphan girls encounter are constituted by multiple ideologies. The girls endeavor to meet hybrid educational expectations as they draw from social practices rooted in understandings within and far away from the local context. This points to the educational spaces at the ashram as both transnational and hybrid in nature.

The global policy conversation surrounding education for marginalized students tends to see education as the accumulation of skills and information that can be utilized in the workplace. In general, education is portrayed as politically and socially neutral, and as the sum of quantifiable outcomes. In contrast, the work of this dissertation characterizes education as a social process where local, national and transnational discourses contribute to the hybrid educational environment of marginalized students. These forces influence the value laden decisions concerning the nature of education and consequently the cultural production of educated persons.

When education is viewed as a social process, rather than the neutral transmission of knowledge, then learning is seen as the incorporation of social practices into an individuals' epistemological makeup. It is then that the struggle over meaning and priorities that is inherent in educational spaces becomes apparent. What this work highlights is the collective building of an educational environment for marginalized students from the ground up. It also explores the role of transnational forces in that construction, and the consequential impact of this hybrid environment on the ways of being and knowing that marginalized students come to embody. In this

way, the struggle to to define the “educated Indian woman” by participants at Sri Ram Ashram is a microcosm of the contested nature of education on a global level.

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The missing sociological sphere: Development framing and the education
of orphan girls in rural north India.

Abstract

In the international discourse of development, education for women is hailed as a key factor in addressing multiple social challenges. But how do we frame the discussion of women's education in developing countries in the first place? The answers to this question reveal multiple orientations which result in varying approaches and action strategies for education. This paper reviews the dominant framework and poses an alternative perspective. Drawing from six months of ethnographic and qualitative data collection at an orphanage in rural north India, this paper highlights the complexity of marginalized women's experiences. This paper explores the sociological dimension of women's education and argues that in a complex society such as India, for girls to transition from traditional to non-traditional gender roles requires access to social capital and alternative forms of socialization *in addition to* formal schooling. The sociological frame proposed challenges the dominant development framework that reduces the education of women in developing countries to economic gain or loss.

Introduction

Expanding education for women on a global scale has been the focus of policy makers, developmental economists, feminist researchers, educators, and social activists for decades. Starting with the First World Conference on Women in 1975, the formation of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, and the creation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, international conferences have sought to remedy the gender gaps in educational participation, access, and achievement. Globally, there has been particular focus on the education of women and girls in developing countries where barriers to basic education are highest. This approach is based largely on research that asserts that improving education for women is inextricably linked to economic development and social progress. The United Nations Girls Education Initiative, and the Global Campaign for Education are among the initiatives focusing on women's education on a global scale. The World Bank has prioritized the education of girls as an integral part of their strategy to achieve Education for All (World Bank, 2014). Increased education, especially of women in developing countries, is seen as instrumental in achieving all the MDGs (UNESCO, 2010) which included the promotion of gender equality within schools, integration of women into the non-agrarian workforce, and greater female political representation by 2015. The importance of the role of education in global development continues to be re-emphasized:

We[United Nations] reaffirm our commitments to the right to education and in this regard, we commit to strengthen international cooperation to achieve universal

access to primary education, particularly for developing countries. We further reaffirm that full access to quality education at all levels is an essential condition for achieving sustainable development, poverty eradication, gender equality and women's empowerment as well as human development, for the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals, as well as for the full participation of both women and men, in particular young people. In this regard, we stress the need for ensuring equal access to education for persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, local communities, ethnic minorities and people living in rural areas. (Rio 20 Outcome Document, 2012)

We have now arrived at the 2015 deadline, and many countries, in particular developing nations, continue to pursue these goals with particular attention to marginalized populations. In India in particular, barriers to girls' education range from issues of resource distribution to cultural practices that devalue girls and women. Such factors contribute to the roadblocks that girls must overcome in order to assume non-traditional roles outside of the domestic sphere. International policy for women's education focuses on bolstering female enrollment and gender parity in schools with the assumption that doing so will result in parallel integration into the workforce, and therefore, empower women through increased decision making capabilities. This perspective omits the social context of women's lives outside of the school⁵.

The ethnographic research, from which this paper draws, shows how orphan girls at an ashram in rural North India must accumulate social capital in order to transform their role in society *in addition to schooling*. Social connections create

⁵This has been problematized by multiple scholars (Chanana, 2003; Fennell & Arnot, 2008; Kabeer, 1994; Kapadia, 2010; Rege, 1995; Swaminathan, 2002).

educational and career opportunities, provide financial support, physical security, and connect educated girls to employment. Secondly, orphan girls are socialized into alternative gender roles that affirm the capabilities of women and fosters independence. This enables them to embody particular conceptions of gender that are required to access resources and navigate the social world. Through these two processes within the sociological sphere⁶, girls are able to bridge their life options from traditional gender roles of marriage and domestic work to non-traditional roles including employment. Ignoring the social aspects of women's education undermines the intention of global education policy given that women cannot step into non-traditional roles, such as entering the workforce, unless they are provided with, develop, and seek out social pathways that facilitate their transformation.

This paper begins by introducing the ethnographic study upon which it is based. It then outlines the major challenges to women's education, specifically in India, and critiques the dominant framework in the global conversation about women's education. The ethnographic data illustrate the ways that social capital, and alternative forms of socialization, facilitate alternative life paths for orphan girls. The paper concludes with a call to further incorporate the lived realities of women in marginalized communities into conversations that impact educational policy at the global level.

⁶ The sociological sphere consists of the intimate relationships that underlie the more visible groups and associations of society. It also includes the cultural knowledge, skills and resources that are accessed through those connections. This concept draws from the work of Simmel (See Nisbet, 2004).

Setting and Participants

This paper draws upon 6 months of research in India that highlights how life beyond the classroom is instrumental in the integration of women into non-traditional roles, such as employment. The ethnography centers on the educational experiences of orphan girls living at an orphanage and community center in rural north India. The girls have access to a unique and superiorly resourced array of educational experiences in two contexts: first, the accredited Indian school that was created to serve them and the surrounding village children, and second, the more informal tutoring and enrichment opportunities provided within the ashram for their benefit.

Founded in 1984, the community center is located in the northern state of Uttarakhand, on 16 acres of farmland. The ashram, as it is called, includes an orphanage for over 70 destitute and orphaned children, and a school for over 500 children, the majority of whom come from local villages.⁷ The center is sponsored by a partnership between two non-profit organizations, Anath Shishu Palan Trust of India and the Sri Rama Foundation based in the United States. The local agrarian area is

⁷ Most children at Sri Ram Ashram have little or no contact with their birth families. The ashram community is their primary support network. Adoption is not advocated as the children are all considered part of one family. Other orphanages or children's homes will take children whose parents or other family members are living but may not be able to care for them. The mission of the ashram is distinct because it serves only children whose parents are no longer living or are unable/unwilling to take responsibility for their welfare.

densely populated with over 1,500 people living within each square mile. In the surrounding villages, farmers tend crops of wheat, rice or mustard, and many plow their fields by hand with oxen or bullock. Most roads are unpaved and frequented by rickshaws, motor scooters and bicycles. Electricity is unreliable, often cutting out several times, perhaps for several hours at a time, during the day and night. Most buildings are made out of concrete and may be one or two stories high; there is no indoor heating or air conditioning. At the orphanage, children benefit from superior resources in comparison to much of the local population because they have access to superior facilities, clean water, basic healthcare, and nutritious food.

Children come to live at the ashram due to multiple social factors. Some are brought by family members who could not care for them due to poverty. Others are found as infants left in fields or by the side of the road. Many arrive after being abandoned and having suffered severe physical and psychological abuse. After arriving at the ashram, children are not put up for adoption; they remain at the children's home until they reach adulthood aligning with the mission of raising children in a protective family environment and their eventual integration into Indian society.

In the rural communities surrounding the ashram, orphans are perceived as social enigmas at the margins of society. Legally, the children at the ashram may not exist because they can lack legal documentation, such as birth certificates. In the words of a male teacher from the school, "It means they are not citizens." The Indian

government provides special educational provisions for members of disadvantaged groups, such as members of tribal groups, the “untouchable” caste known as Dalit, or poor students. Although these students are acknowledged and receive government aid, on an official level, orphans go unrecognized. In an interview, the orphanage director commented:

They're not legally anything. What I mean is, they're not legally destitute. They don't have a legal past. They don't qualify for any reservation system in India. So in India you can be the member of a lower caste or you can be a member of a recognized tribal group.... and you can qualify for benefits from that.

In addition, institutional barriers exist due to the invisible status of orphans in Indian society. For example, a provision of the Right to Education Act of 2010 requires that students present multiple forms of identification for school admission that are often impossible for orphans to produce (Ali, 2012). Indeed, a girl from Sri Ram Ashram was admitted into college and then her entry delayed because the administration found out that she was an orphan. It was only through the help of ashram trustees who advocated for her that she was able to gain entry.

Three quarters of the over 70 orphans are girls, reflecting the widespread gender bias against female children that can result in infanticide, abandonment or chronic neglect. According to the Annual Health Survey of India (Census of India, 2011a), the rural sex ratio in the district where the study took place is located is 868 females for every 1000 males, in comparison to the national average of 940 females

to every 1000 males (Census of India, 2011b). The girls who live and go to school at the ashram come from backgrounds where often survival, much less an education, would have been denied without the intervention of the NGO.

The ashram acts as an insulated community where education for girls is expected and schooling is provided. The orphan girls, and boys, attend the accredited Indian school that was founded as a part of the ashram along with over 400 other students from surrounding villages. This gives them have access to the resources that global educational policy strives to provide on a universal level for girls in particular, i.e. an accredited school with textbooks, female bathrooms, etc. They also participate in educational activities such as tutoring with foreign volunteers and educators who are primarily from the United States and Canada. The girls are socialized in these two main settings: the residential home where they interact primarily with American volunteers, and the ashram school where they are taught and supervised by Indian teachers.

Research Questions

This paper draws from a six month ethnography that addressed the following research questions:

1. How do various actors in the educational community, including (U.S.) volunteers, Indian teachers, and Indian students, participate in the cultural

construction(s) of what it means to be an “educated Indian woman” for orphan girls at an ashram in rural northern India?

- a. Particularly, how do these participants negotiate, co-construct, and/or contest various discourses surrounding the educational norms of the community in relationship to underlying ideologies of gender, caste, class, and race?
2. How does the interplay of these discourses create, constrain, and/or influence how the older girls, who are completing or have completed their secondary education, construct/negotiate their own subjectivities of the “educated Indian woman”?

Methods

Data collection took place over the course of two trips in the fall of 2011 and the spring of 2012. During both trips, I lived full time in the children’s home, fully immersed in the life of the community.⁸ I ate everyday in the communal kitchen with the children, pushed the youngest ones on the swing sets after school, and helped chase the monkeys away when they invaded the girls’ dormitory. I also volunteered in

⁸ I have a long history with the Ashram. I first visited in 1998 as a high school student, and have remained involved in the organization since that time. Before this study took place, I had most recently volunteered at the orphanage for 6 weeks in 2007.

various educational activities at the orphanage and school, tutoring students and advising teachers.

The main methods employed in data collection were observation, review of documents such as textbooks, and semi-structured interviews. These sources provided triangulation in the data sources. Field notes drew from extensive observations that were gathered in both formal and informal educational settings, as well as situations not labeled educational but pertinent to the research. These included student interactions with each other, Indian teachers within the school, and foreign volunteers. Documents that were analyzed included texts and media that pertained to the girls' schooling such as textbooks, journals, workbooks, assignments, and drawings, as well as texts or projects produced through more informal learning activities with foreign volunteers.

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 29 primary participants. These included 10 of the orphan girls themselves, 9 Indian teachers and administrators at the Indian school, and 10 foreign volunteers, primarily from the United States. Interviews ranged in length from 30 to 100 minutes and were conducted in English. Often, informal and impromptu conversations yielded pertinent data. In addition, I met with teachers at the school several times for informal English conversation groups from which relevant subjects and pertinent themes arose. The ethnography followed an inductive design which led to holistic, richly descriptive findings. Analysis was iterative, cyclical, and ongoing rather than reaching a

determinant “truth”. As I identified themes and patterns viewed within the particular social context of the ashram, I attempted to relay an “authentic” depiction of participant voices while being reflexive and critical of my role as a researcher.

Given the amount of data from which to draw, approaching the analysis was daunting. In order to address this obstacle, I created situational maps as a starting point. Situational maps are a visual tool for articulating the elements in a situation and examining relations among them. This approach was extremely helpful in addressing, “analytic paralysis” wherein the researcher has assiduously collected data but does not know where or how to begin (Clarke, 2005). These large “messy” amalgamations of concepts, words, actors, settings, idioms, and social categories that arose from the data were initially unorganized, but rather served to place the elements of the fieldwork in front of the researcher. From this I constructed smaller maps that reflected relationships between elements represented by labeled lines. From these, pertinent themes arose that served to direct initial coding.

The formal process of data analysis began by assigning abbreviated titles to each potential theme for coding. Large flip chart sheets were color coded and taped on the wall. Each sheet identified the descriptors under the respective categories generated in the situational maps. As the process of coding proceeded, new sheets were prepared to capture other themes as they emerged. Written memos were produced while simultaneously organizing and coding the data for themes, while considering the contextual relationships within which interviews, conversations, etc.,

occurred. Memos served as a method for capturing analytic thinking and for stimulating analytic insights.

While coding fragmented the data into separate categories, bringing attention to the details of the fieldwork, synthesis involved piecing those fragments together to construct a holistic and integrated explanation. Overall, the approach was to come up with a number of themes that were linked together through similarities and contrasts. Towards the end, I followed a three layered process in thinking about the data. First, I examined and compared threads and patterns within categories. Second, I compared connecting threads across categories, and third I further connected the themes to the larger conversation about women's education in developing countries within the literature. These three layers were not separate, but interwoven and iterative throughout the synthesizing process.

The Broader Context: Framing education for women in India

Overview of women's education in India

India is known as the world's largest democracy, with a population of over 1.2 billion. It is also one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions in the world. According to the Anthropological Survey of India, it is home to 114 distinct languages and 4,635 distinct ethnic communities with their own dialects, kinship

patterns, forms of worship, physiological characteristics, and so forth (Paranjape, 2009). In principle, education is a constitutional right of each citizen. In 2009, the Right to Education Act guaranteed state supported elementary school to all children between the ages of 6 and 14 (UNICEF, 2009). Sharma (2011) points out that in India official resolutions have historically defined education as a human right, and a means for bringing about a “genuinely egalitarian and secular social order,” and as an “instrument for securing a status of equality for women and persons belonging to the backward classes and minorities” (Aggarwal, 2009, p.386). Despite this, the reality for women, particularly women from rural and marginalized communities, is far from the ideal.

Barriers to women’s education in India are multiple and can begin at birth. Widespread poverty exacerbates attitudes that devalue women and girls, and can result in female infanticide, chronic neglect of girl children, and violence against women. More than 75% of India’s population of 1.2 billion lives on less than \$2 per day (UNESCO, 2008). Cultural norms such as sequestering women in the home, prioritizing domestic work, or the practice of child marriage impact girls’ participation in schools. In 2006, 20% of school age girls in India, or 27.7 million girls were not in school (Lewis and Lockheed, 2006).⁹ There is often a lack of infrastructure such as proper facilities, running water, dependable electricity, female

⁹ This seems to be the most recent statistics available; however, improvements in primary school enrollment in India in the past decade have certainly influenced these numbers.

restrooms and textbooks. Parents are also less likely to allow their daughters to attend school if there is no facility close to home, but will send their sons farther distances to be educated (Lewis & Lockheed, 2007, 2006). Particularly in rural areas (See Table 1) all students have fewer educational opportunities; girls, however have the fewest; rural females are nearly three times as likely to be illiterate than their urban counterparts (Education Policy & Data Center, 2007). The national literacy rates are 82% for males and 65% of females, and in the particular district where the study that this paper draws from is located, the rural female literacy is 59.4% (Census of India, 2011b).

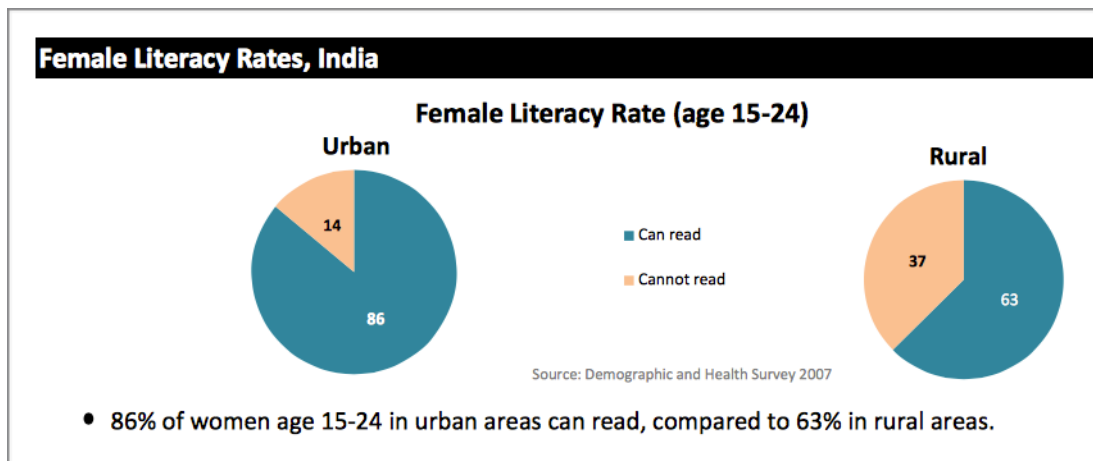


Figure 1. Female literacy rates, India.

According to the Brookings Institution (Sahni, 2015), primary school enrollment in India has improved dramatically in the past decade, reaching at least 96% since 2009. Girls made up 56% of new students between 2007 and 2013.

Through improvements to infrastructure, 98% of habitations have a primary school¹⁰ within one kilometer and 92% have an upper primary school within walking distance. Despite this, dropout rates continue to be high. Nationally 29% of children drop out before completing five years of primary school, 43% before finishing upper primary school, and high school completion is only 42%. This lands India among the top five nations for out-of-school children of primary school age, with 1.4 million 6 to 11 year olds not attending school. In addition, there is a teacher shortage of 689,000 teachers in primary schools, only 53% of schools have functional girls' toilets, and 74% have access to drinking water. Additionally, the quality of learning is a major issue. According to the Annual Status of Education Report (Pratham, 2015), children are not achieving class appropriate learning levels. Close to 50% of children in class five cannot read class two texts. Arithmetic is also a cause for concern given that only 44% of students in class eight can do a basic division problem.

Within this context, international policy efforts have focused on women's education in particular as a gateway for addressing various social challenges. How this discourse has manifested is discussed in the following section.

Critiquing the dominant framework of development, gender, and education

¹⁰The school system in India has four levels that vary in duration somewhat between states: lower primary (age 6 to 12), upper primary (12 to 14), high (14 to 16) and higher secondary (17 and 18).

Why is education important for women in developing countries like India? Is it to spur economic growth? Is it to empower women? When we explore the answers to such questions particular frameworks become apparent. How one perceives issues related to development, gender, and education is conditioned by the theoretical lenses used. These macro-theories frame the way an issue is conceptualized, thus determining what is worth discussing, what is beyond the scope of the framing, as well as the characterization of the policy recipients. The ability to frame issues discursively is a political process as it exerts power over the agenda and sets the stage for what can and cannot happen in an educational context.

While multiple frameworks exist for conceptualizing gender, education, and development, historically the most dominant has been the Women In Development (WID) approach (Unterhalter, 2005). In this framing women's education is primarily seen as a vehicle for, and aspect of, global economic development. This results in international policy that views education through an economic lens, and stresses expansion of education. As Monkman and Webster (2015) state, "Most of the writing on globalization positions its economic dimensions front and center, particularly in education policy," (p. 468.) Developmental economists' research is driven by theories of modernization and human capital that perceive education's primary function to be enhancing economic productivity (Little, 1999). Developmental research evaluates the role of education in generating individual and social benefits in a cost-benefit framework (McMohan, 1999; Shultz, 2002). Therefore, education is often seen as a

sector of the economy and women are characterized as underused segments of the population that have the potential to enter the workforce. The dominant framework centralizes particular ways of thinking about women's education, thus exerting power over the ways in which education happens and the assumptions about the relevance of gender to education. Policy is a relationship of the investment of resources with market returns. Funds for school infrastructure contribute to increased labor force production, and targeted policies increase female participation. For instance, by building a girls bathroom to encourage female enrollment in a rural school, women become qualified for work outside the home.

This dominant framework does not account for the sociological sphere that greatly impacts women's educational experiences. Women's education is seen as a quantifiable object that can be viewed through statistics and empirical data. This in turn can be aggregated, dissected and analyzed with little attention to the complex social realities that women become (or do not become) educated within. The dominant framework generates policy directives that promote getting more girls into school and assuring quantifiable achievement within the school that is equal to boys. The focus is upon equalizing resources and access while issues of subordination, exploitation, and discrimination are often not addressed. Addressing issues around gender are limited to recommendations to change the environment within the school and classroom while failing to acknowledge the larger social environment.¹¹ The

¹¹ For example, see Mannathoko (2008).

premise of the framework is that if equal access and gender parity in schooling is achieved, then a natural result will be the employment of women and subsequent empowerment (See Figure 1).

As Swaminathan (2002) points out, gender and development literature overwhelmingly views the incorporation of women into the waged labor force as not only a key element in the undermining of their oppression within capitalist society but also absolutely essential to dissolve gender asymmetries. She goes on to write that this assumes a direct causal connection between women's wage earnings and notions of liberation and empowerment. Education in this view, according to the author, is also seen as key to changing women's status and behavior. However, "Precisely how education supposedly enhances women's autonomy is rarely specified. Nevertheless a causal link between female schooling, female autonomy and low fertility is universally assumed" (p.70).

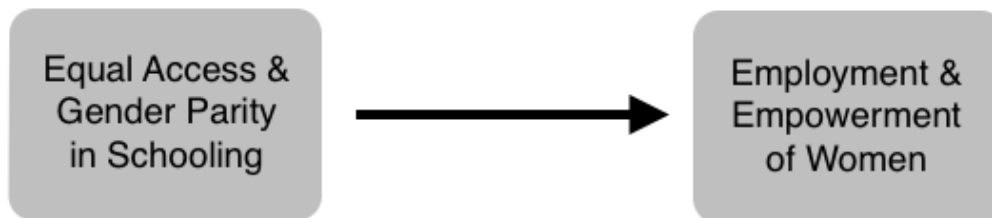


Figure 1. Dominant Policy Framework for Women's Education

The orientation of the World Bank to women's education in developing countries is an example of this dominant framework. It is the largest external

education financier for developing nations, managing a portfolio of \$11 billion, with operations in 71 countries, and therefore has major influence on education policy globally (Monkman & Webster, 2015). It provides an average of \$2.8 billion a year in new financing for education worldwide (World Bank 2014b), and of that South Asia has received the greatest percentage in recent years, borrowing more than 5.39 billion dollars from 2010-2014 (World Bank, 2015a). As of 2015, India in particular has 1.85 billion in loans from the World Bank for the specific purpose of ameliorating education (World Bank, 2015b). With such investment, how the World Bank as an institution views education for women is influential in countries such as India.

The education of girls is a major focus of the World Bank's Education for All (EFA) goals which parallel the Millennium Development Goals, and include ensuring equal access for girls to education and the elimination of gender disparities in achievement levels (World Bank, 2011). The argument for educating girls is overwhelmingly an economic one when we look at publications by the World Bank.

For example, a quantitative report highlights the relationship between economic growth and gender equality. In this model, education is a mechanism for increasing economic productivity of women. It notes, "The well-known evidence that returns on investments in educating girls are generally higher than returns on investments in educating boys points to the potential productivity gains of increasing gender equality" (Morrison, Raju, & Sinha, 2010. p.104). Acknowledgement of how social factors may effect this outcome are absent, with the exception of a footnote

acknowledging economic development by itself may not eliminate gender disparities given that even in developed countries women continue to be disadvantaged in political representation, occupational choices and earning levels. The author's main focus is whether in fact gender equality (as represented by statistical data) affects, and increases, growth. The basic assumption is that economic growth always results in positive outcomes and is the ultimate goal of policy measures. Underlying paradigms such as this inform and structure actions at the international level that are rooted in approaches that promote the rapid economic growth of third world nations. In fact, it is central to the World Bank's policy approach in India, where, "...Continued rapid economic growth is a precondition for poverty reduction and shared prosperity. Its role cannot be overstated" (p.6) (World Bank, 2013).

This dominant framing has consequences. When the sociological sphere is ignored, marginalized women are characterized in ways that disempower and exclude them from the process of priority setting in development policy discourse.¹² Mohanty(2003) writes that "third world women" are often located in binary terms such as underdevelopment, high illiteracy, and rural poverty. Based upon a white modern versus non-white primitive hierarchy, such analyses "...freeze Third World women in time, space, and history...the everyday, fluid fundamentally historical and dynamic nature of the lives of Third World women is here collapsed into a few frozen

¹²How women are subjectively positioned within development policy discourse has been well established by feminist scholars (Enloe, 1989, Acosta-Belén and Bose, 1990, Mohanty, 1984, Naples, 2002, Desai, 2002).

“indicators” of their well being” (p. 48).¹³ Kabeer (1994) characterizes development policy as “...abstract and highly formal modes of theorizing, which rule out specific viewpoints of the different unofficial actors in development, [these] have helped to generate the universalistic and top-down approaches which have been the hallmark of much of mainstream development policy...” (p.xi). According to the author, this approach results in the absence of the perspectives of women in decisions concerning not only how to address social problems, but how to identify that social problem and the policy recipients, namely women. The way that policy recipients are characterized, and the remedies for the problems constructed around them, reflect unequal power structures. As Singh (2007) aptly states,

The process of deciding upon the need, suitability, and usefulness of education emphasizes social benefits and ascribed individual benefits while largely ignoring women’s viewpoints. The decision to invest in women’s education is determined by indices of growth and labor force participation on the one hand, and gender inequalities in educational achievement and economic returns on the other. Women are excluded from the process of decision-making about the very structure and process of education that is supposed to increase their decision-making skills (p. 7).

The dominant framing of women and education is particularly insufficient in complex societies such as India. Reggie (1995) states, “Standpoints that homogenize ‘women’ as an analytical category do not hold ground in the Indian context. A feminist standpoint of interlocking oppressions that would recognize the complex

¹³For examples of this dynamic within Northeastern India see Klenk (2004, 2010) and Berry (2003).

mediations between caste, class, ethnic and gender oppression would be more connected to the living and the concrete” (p. 224-5). Chanana (2003) argues that it is impossible to view women’s education in India without reference to the social context. It is highly problematic to remain confined to the structural characteristics of education as an institution, or merely to look at the growth or absence of development from an economic viewpoint. Kapadia (2010, 2002) goes farther to argue that it is the orientation of development processes that exacerbate conditions of inequality, discrimination and violence towards women in India. In an increasingly commercialized economy, women become further marginalized due to limited job options, the structure of the labor markets, and overarching discrimination. This results in the paradox of a steady sociocultural devaluation of women in a context of economic growth.

Economic liberalization is based on economic theories that are very remote from Indian realities, given that they assume equal opportunity for all. They also assume that social inequalities can be ignored in policy formulation. In a context like India’s, namely a ‘society characterized by tremendous inequalities’, such policies inevitably harm disadvantaged groups, while further privileging elite and dominant sections (p. 36).

Economic models have focused on the individual benefits of acquiring education in terms of economic mobility with little regard to gendered or social impacts. As Nussbaum (2003) points out, promoting economic growth is not a sufficient way to promote education for women. Development theorists may focus

only on maximizing economic growth and assume that alone will provide for other central human needs. Such a myopic view cannot provide comprehensive solutions to complex social issues.

This paper contributes to an area of research that has been identified, but warrants further investigation. The ethnography from which this paper draws, provides a detailed look to the social processes to which critics of the dominant framing have drawn attention. In this paper, attention to the sociological sphere shows how the socially transformative potential of education for orphan girls is limited by factors outside the classroom.¹⁴

It takes more than schooling: Overcoming barriers to social mobility

As has been stated earlier, barriers to girls' education in India range from issues of resource distribution to cultural practices that devalue girls and women. However, this is only the first hurdle in a society marked by extreme inequity and stratification. This section examines how marginalized orphan girls encounter and overcome social barriers separate from access to first and secondary schooling. In addition to obtaining an education, which the ashram provides, girls must pass

¹⁴For example, some policy efforts in India have not taken into account the local power structures in relation to caste, race and gender which has perversely resulted in the creation of hierarchies of access that push out girls and marginal groups (Fennell & Arnott, 2008). Jeffrey (2005) details how schooling for Dalit men in Northeastern India fails to overcome entrenched social networks that privilege upper caste students.

additional social roadblocks in order to assume non-traditional roles outside of the domestic sphere. Access to social capital, and alternative socialization within the ashram, act as mechanisms that aid girls in their transition into higher education and/or employment.

How do young ashram women who have successfully completed primary and secondary school, go on to higher levels of education and the workforce? The data reveal that the causal relationship between education and employment that is assumed in the dominant development framing is insufficient. Instead, a more complex understanding of how the girls come to inhabit non-traditional gender roles is needed. Schooling is a primary requirement, but, as the research shows, not sufficient *in itself* to make this transition. As Figure 2 illustrates, formal schooling linked together with bridging social capital and alternative forms of socialization enables girls to overcome social obstacles.

Integration into the larger society is dependent upon both formal and informal educational experiences that allow them to accumulate needed social capital. Szreter and Woolcock (2004) distinguish between different types of social capital that bond, bridge and link individuals¹⁵. This conceptual framework helps to understand not just

¹⁵ a) bonding social capital, which refers to trusting and cooperative relations between members of a network who see themselves as being similar, in terms of their shared social identity; b) bridging social capital, by contrast, comprises relations of respect and mutuality between people who know that they are not alike in some sociodemographic (or social identity) sense (differing by age, ethnic group, class, etc.); and c) linking social capital, as norms of respect and networks of trusting relationships between people who are interacting across explicit, formal or institutionalized power or authority gradients in society.

the quantity of social capital brought together by, and for, girls at the ashram, but also

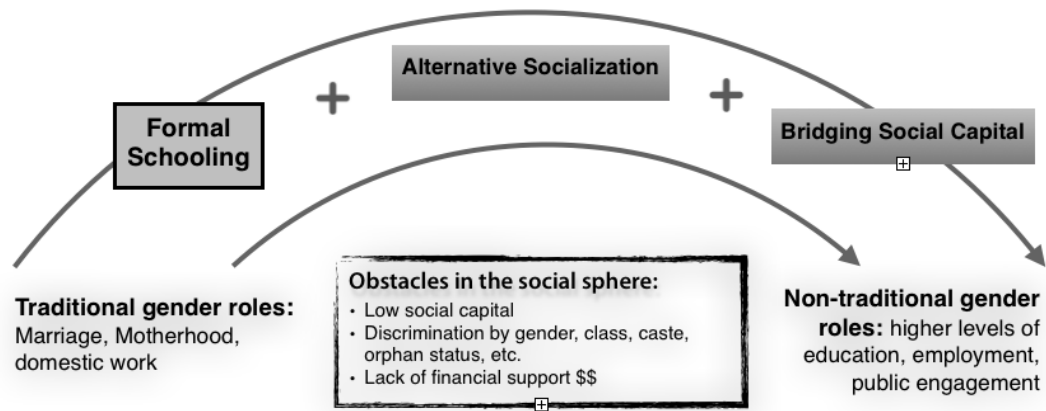


Figure 2. Bridging from traditional to non-traditional gender roles for orphan girls at Sri Ram Ashram.

what kind of social capital is generated, how this social capital is used

(Sivasubramaniam, 2008), and the sorts of benefits and/or challenges that result.

Knowledge of privileged social practices, integration into required social networks, as well as economic support provided by the ashram, influence their ability to occupy roles in the larger Indian community as students, workers, and family members. More fundamentally, through alternative forms of socialization, the girls must embody particular conceptions of gender in order to access these resources and navigate the social world. When we expand our view to include the social interactions that takes place outside of the classroom, we begin to see the processes by which girls move into non-traditional roles.

Social capital: The importance of social networks

Social capital is an essential asset, especially in a society like India that is characterized by high competition for resources, great inequality, and complex social hierarchies compromised by deeply entrenched practices, such as the caste system. In addition, access to quality schooling in India is best described as a pyramid characterized by extremely high competition. Particularly in higher education, there are many students at the bottom with no access to college level schooling (or very poor quality), and very few at the top with access to quality higher education (Altbach, 2006). This makes any advantage extremely impactful.

Bridging social capital exists in the network of foreign volunteers and Indian nationals who pool their resources in order to support and help girls navigate their educational trajectories. In the Indian educational system, students follow academic tracks beginning in secondary school that determine the field into which they seek employment later. Unlike in the United States, where students may not decide on a career path until later in their education, students at the ashram school must choose an area of academic emphasis early on. Switching to a different field of study is very uncommon and extremely difficult. Examinations at the completion of 12th class determine students' eligibility to apply for higher education programs. The quality and cost of programs vary widely as well. Navigating this process requires guidance beginning at a young age and continuing into young adulthood; a role potentially

filled by biological family members with access to prerequisite social resources. In the case of the ashram girls, trustee members and foreign volunteers fulfill this role.

The case of Kalini, an ashram girl who became a dentist, highlights this well. An American doctor organized a fundraiser in the United States for the orphanage; an Indian born dentist residing in Los Angeles attended. Soon after that dentist visited the ashram as a volunteer. Kalini, who was a young girl at the time, became his assistant as he provided free dental care to the ashram children. She was inspired to work in the field of dentistry, and the volunteer dentist offered to pay for her education if she was accepted into dental school.

Several years later, the ashram director took Kalini on a tour of a dental college with a quality five year program. By chance, the director of admissions had visited Sri Ram Ashram as a child and knew members of the extended social network. Kalini failed the entrance exam, and so it seemed that the process had come to an end. Several days later, the director of admissions called to say that a student had dropped out of the program. If the ashram could pay the considerable deposit fee immediately, Kalini could be admitted. He said he had decided to help her get admission as way of honoring the founder of Sri Ram Ashram, Baba Hari Dass. She moved into her dorm room that Sunday and started the dental program on Monday. The dentist from California kept his promise by organizing a group of family members and other dentists to pay for her dental program.

Obviously, without the social connections of the ashram with individuals and their communities both within India and in the United States, the numerous opportunities that Kalini experienced would not have existed. In the rural area where the ashram is located, medical services of any kind are hard to come by for the local villagers. In terms of health care, the ashram children have access to extraordinary resources compared to the local population. This makes her relationship with a dentist volunteer particularly extraordinary, and the subsequent exposure to her future profession and financial support all the more valuable.

Kalini's case is not an exception; rather it is the norm for how orphan girls transition after completing secondary school. Three ashram girls became employed and learned to live independently through the help of the ashram trustees. Each got their first job through Mr. Sharma, an Indian physician, businessman, and trustee for the ashram. In the rural communities surrounding the ashram, girls are generally not be allowed to travel away from home in order to attend school¹⁶ nor to subsequently find employment outside of their local village. Fear of sexual assault is a concern for women traveling, and living without a male family member is certainly uncommon. The mores of the ashram include an independent attitude towards employment trajectories for girls. The trustee gave each girl a job in his transport company and assisted them in finding a suitable place to live together. Additional Indian trustee

¹⁶ Going to school locally is generally accepted because girls can live at home. It is acceptable for boys to go to school away from home.

members facilitated their move, and visited them many times to support their transition to living independently in a new city. After 1 1/2 years the trustees facilitated their move back to a local town where they started new jobs through another trustee with many local business contacts. In order to ensure their safety, their employer had the company car bring them to and from work each day.

Bridging social capital also plays an important role in entering institutions of higher learning. For example, an Indian trustee also arranged for three other girls' admission into nursing school in Delhi. Of the three, Jeevani had a low entrance exam score, but she was able to get admission with help from the Indian trustee and his connections. He also arranged for her job placement as a nurse once she finished nursing school. Navigating the bureaucratic hurdles also required considerable effort. First, applications for the nursing program had to be purchased and delivered by hand. Results of the applications were not posted online, but posted on a bulletin board at the school. The exact dates and time of the results were not reliably announced, and a trustee had to go in person to the school to check the results. They often had to go several times to the nursing college to get information. In addition, the nursing programs and college programs outside of the community require a "local guardian" for each female student without which they cannot receive admission. For the girls who have attended such programs, extended members of the ashram community have volunteered to serve as their official guardians in order to facilitate their entry.

Even when ashram girls choose to remain closer to home, social networks play a vital role. After 12th class, Shanti signed up for a BA of Tourism at a well established, huge, correspondence school. The office was located 2 1/2 hours away in Deradhun. Shanti struggled with navigating the bureaucratic roadblocks. She couldn't find the proper assignments and no one would direct her. Finally an Indian national visiting from the United States went to Dehradun and was able to unearth the assignments that were embedded in another course.

As a volunteer educator during my research at the ashram, I assisted Shanti with her course work. Her assignments were based on several workbooks written in English from which she had to produce hand written responses to prompts. One assignment was to write about technology in the work place. The textbook that she had to draw from was written in the 1980s included a description of a fax machine, and there was a picture of a very early computer. Although this publication was obviously out of date, it seemed that the expected response was to be drawn from the text. I use the word "seemed" because there were no instructions or supplemental information. The prompts were vague and succinct. As an English language learner, it was often very difficult for her to access the text. It took many weeks but we finally finished her long list of assignments and she took them to the college for submission. She waited for hours to submit them, but then one assignment was lost. The trustees called back and forth to the college. Luckily Shanti had a signed receipt from when she had submitted the assignment. They did finally credit her for the assignment. On

another occasion, her exam paper was graded incorrectly, and she eventually had to retake the exam.

In this instance, even though Shanti was able to navigate the confusing and unquestioned rhetoric of the text with the help of a native English speaker, the institutional barriers and “sink or swim” approach to learning barred her way. In a system with no individualization of learning, and no special considerations, a student only succeeds by giving the right answer at the appropriate time in the correct way. Without the help of the ashram members, she would have had great difficulty overcoming these institutional barriers. As the orphanage director states in her interview:

I firmly believe that it takes a village to get students who don't have families into college and beyond. It's much bigger than who you know although that also helps. It's who will help you get it done. Who will support you. Who will drive across 1 1/2 hours of Delhi traffic to buy an admission form that isn't available online and can only be bought at a window in the college....without a strong (and wealthy) family it's almost impossible for an "orphan" to go beyond what they are born into.

Given these data, it is obvious that the framing suggested by the dominant development discourse about the education of women falls short. Skills learned in school do not translate directly into integration into the complex social webs that exist in Indian society. Success in formal schooling is requisite for advancing into employment, but would have been insufficient in itself for navigating the complex hurdles that the ashram girls encountered outside the walls of the orphanage. It is

through the web of social connections that girls were given opportunity and access to higher education and career paths, but how are the girls prepared to engage in these new settings? Another essential aspect of their transition into non-traditional roles is the processes of alternative socialization that the girls go through as they grow up at the ashram.

Socialization into alternative conceptions of gender

Significant socialization takes place before the girls make the transition into higher education and/or employment. In fact, this process begins in childhood, or even as early as infancy depending on the time of arrival.¹⁷ Fundamentally, the significant reorientation of life paths for orphan girls requires the formation of alternative gender identities. Prevailing expectations place women in the home, and through marriage, in the homes of their husbands' families. Although a basic level of schooling is generally seen as beneficial for girls in the surrounding communities, the extent to which they are educated is coupled with preparation for marriage. In other words, girls who have attended school are seen as more eligible brides. The culture of the ashram openly counters the expectation that orphan girls will either remain uneducated or focus on marriage as their exclusive life option.

¹⁷ Girls are found abandoned, abused and/or homeless at various ages. They are brought to the ashram by the police, strangers, or family members who cannot care for them.

At the same time, what it means to be an educated Indian woman at the ashram is not monolithic, rather it is created through the multiple discourses that are negotiated, aligned with, and contested by members of the community. The prevalent discourse of a “modern” woman who realizes her independence through education is coupled, perhaps paradoxically at times, with the explicit value of respecting traditional culture¹⁸ and Indian customs within the orphanage. The ashram visitor handbook is written for foreign volunteers as preparation for their stay. The introduction states that the main goal of the ashram is to “...help raise these children in the highest traditions of Indian culture and to help them take their place as productive members of Indian society” (p.5). Yet, orphans are not adopted out into Indian families as a means of integration, but remain at the ashram until adulthood. As a result they grow up in a hybrid space co-directed by American and Indian volunteers.

An American member of the trustee board commented that the best scenario is when foreigners “honor the culture that we’re in.” For example, the ashram observes a plethora of Indian holidays and traditions including the observance of Kanya Puja, the worship of little girls as embodiments of the Hindu Goddess Durga. Traditionally in Northern India, those who observe this holiday seek out 9 girls to make offerings and ceremonially honor. Due to the skewed sex ratio in the area and other parts of the

¹⁸ This paper shares Levinson & Holland’s (1996) definition of culture as a continual process of creating meaning in social and material contexts, consisting of the symbols and value that create the ideological frame of reference for living. This is distinct from the conceptualization of culture as a static, unchanging body of knowledge “transmitted” between generations. (p. 13)

country, this can actually be a difficult religious duty to perform because of the lack of girl children. At the ashram, the ceremony is given special attention. In a celebratory atmosphere, all of the prepubescent girls take turns having their feet washed, a sign of reverence. They are then anointed, given gifts and fed special food. The importance placed upon the ceremony communicates two things: first, honoring traditional Indian culture is valuable, and second, the ashram chooses to highlight those practices which align with their mission of affirming and supporting girl children.

In addition, girls' interaction with foreign English speaking volunteers exposes them to alternative conceptions that are dissimilar to, or in contradiction with, more traditional notions of gender in the local community. Through informal learning experiences within the ashram, girls are socialized in distinct ways as "modern" Indian women. For instance, the culture of the ashram counters the view that marriage is the only viable life path for women. This theme is captured well by Radhika¹⁹, a 16 year old girl that came to the orphanage as a baby, and who plans on attending college to pursue a business degree:

Most parents think that girls won't do well. But not at the ashram. Everyone thinks that everyone should study. In backwards areas they think that girls should only get married. They think that the girl will get married and go to another family so why should we support her? Rather give support to the boy. They don't let the girl to come forward.

¹⁹ All names are aliases.

Another girl, Sweta, recounted how when she passed her 12th class exams, she received gold earrings as a graduation present from American educators who volunteer and oversee activities at the ashram. This was a significant and symbolic gift because gold is a highly prized status symbol. She recounted her American mentors who stated, “I am giving to you so that you should give to your girl children. That way your daughters should be educated. You are getting educated and it is your right.”

The ashram community values educating girls in order to pursue goals beyond marriage. At the same time, the community does not privilege employment as the only means to “success”. Marriage is a viable life path in place of, or in addition to, employment outside the home. For example, Purnima got married but then waited to complete her BA before having her first child. When she became engaged, she made sure that her new family and fiance agreed to her condition of being allowed to pursue her degree even as she assumed the responsibilities of a new daughter-in-law. An American educator volunteer reflected on this value by saying,

...[that ashram graduates are establishing careers] is encouraging to me because it says that marriage isn't the logical endpoint. Marriage isn't the thing that college delays... You know it's not just you'll get married as soon as your education stops. Ashram kids are getting educated and then working based on that and living after their education. I think that it speaks to education really being caught up as something complete in and of itself, rather than a placeholder for a few more years before you get married.

The dominant discourse at the ashram emphasizes socializing girls in preparation for independence. Girls often assume non-traditional leadership roles as they become older. Lakshmi, one of the older girls, was put in charge of organizing summer camp activities in collaboration with an American educator. She over saw the other children who lived at the ashram in project based learning such as art and science projects.

I had the assistant director role in summer camp and I had to arrange everything. Sarah didi²⁰ put the responsibility on me. So I decided which older kids would teach which class. It taught me to be an organizer-more than 50 kids and I had all the responsibility.

From a young age, girls at the ashram interact with people from all backgrounds due to the constant influx and exodus of volunteers from around the world. This is in contrast to the prevailing social mores that discourage girls from engaging with people, in particular men, from outside their biological family group. Anuradha formed the social basis for her work as an assistant office manager while growing up at the ashram. Her co-workers comment that she acts more like a boy than a girl because she of her boisterous approach, and her ability to take charge and direct others, including male co-workers. Growing up at the ashram, she was often put in charge of organizing holidays, events, and field trips for her more than seventy brothers and sisters. A natural leader, her talents were given room to grow and mature

²⁰ The american volunteer educator suffixed by the Hindi term for aunt.

within the orphanage community. These skills later translated into the workplace after she completed her college program.

In addition, girls are raised in a bilingual environment. English language skills are a valuable form of social capital in Indian society. English is the academic and business language of India. Being fluent in English is a prerequisite for advancing through school at higher levels. Anasuya, a 15 year old with a particular interest in studying languages, told me of a common saying, “If you have English you have food.” She explained that Indian students must know English to get a good job and to ensure that they have food on the table. Tutoring sessions, after school activities, and even the summer school program that the ashram children participate in are often conducted in English with and by foreign educators. This provides them not only with a valuable skill, but allows them to interact with individuals who do not speak their first language, Hindi. These interactions socialize them in a distinct way.

As Gayatri, a 17 year old states, “We learned a lot of things from Americans, more than our own school teachers - manners, morals for me to live in this world outside ashram.” These “manners” and “morals” sometimes contradict common social practices. Sending girls away from their home communities is not a common practice. Within the discourse generally held by foreign volunteers, being able to live independently is valuable given that the girls will go out into society and make their own decisions, rather than living under the direction of a nuclear family. The absence of preset familial ties must be compensated for in part by preparing girls to

independently reason and decide as individuals. This coupled with social capital is seen as beneficial for navigating life after the ashram. As an American trustee and professional educator stated,

Our kids are outcasts. They have no caste. Caste plays a big part in society...they know that they don't have parents and they know that family is the main social card that you have in society. ...so we send them away for school even though it's not normal within the culture because there's more social capital in having graduated from a better school and in having had the experience in living away from home because you meet people from different strata...

Unlike dominant development discourse, the viewpoint of the girls is based on the local and micro level experiences and relationships that permeate their lived realities. When we look through this lens of the sociological sphere as well, we can see the complexities and nuances that characterize the educational trajectories of women. The purpose of the ashram is not to raise GDP, but to find viable social niches for children who would otherwise not have been valued in society. Through the socialization they receive outside of the classroom, ashram girls form their identities as learners, educated, and employed women. Through social capital, they are able to integrate into the larger society. As the data above show, more than schooling alone is necessary in order for orphan girls to transition from traditional to non-traditional expectations of their place within the social web.

Conclusion: The Missing Sociological Sphere

When education is viewed primarily as an economic mechanism that creates quantifiable outcomes, i.e., workers, it is tacitly emptied of contextual meaning and viewed as a universal good. Such is the generally the case within policy discourse surrounding international efforts to address the educational needs of women in developing countries (Birdsall, Levine, & Ibrahim, 2005). Development discourse generally reflects a technical approach that tends to address the question of if and how resources for schools will be distributed rather than interrogating the normative conceptions of schools and schooling that become implemented by default (Kabeer, 2005; Mundy, 2006). In this way, the process of education itself is often viewed as politically and culturally neutral. This is counterintuitive to the perspectives of education scholars, but is nonetheless reflected in popular notions about the role of schools around the world (Da Costa, 2008; Popkewitz, 2006; Levinson & Holland, 1996). In this framework, education is assumed to be the sole mechanism that results in increased vocational participation for women, but promoting economic growth is not a sufficient way to promote education for women, ensure quality of education for women, nor does it attend to what happens after women are supposedly educated. At all points of the process, before, during and after schooling, this framing falls short.

As this paper shows, orphan girls at Sri Ram Ashram must accumulate social capital in order to transform their role in society *in addition to schooling*. Social connections create educational and career opportunities, provide financial support,

physical security, and connect educated girls to employment. At a more fundamental level, orphan girls must embody alternative conceptions of gender in order to navigate non-traditional life paths, such as employment. These two processes within the sociological sphere²¹, facilitate their transition from traditional gender roles of marriage and domestic work to non-traditional roles.

Through the dominant economic discourse, the extent of the impact of the social sphere on the lives of students is almost entirely ignored. In response to these conceptual frameworks, feminist critiques have called for a broader terrain that explicitly recognizes the social construction of gender through the adoption of an expanded social science framework (Fennell & Arnot, 2008). As the contributions of this paper illustrate, the social worlds that women inhabit are complex and navigating the transition into new social roles for women requires more than equal access to education. Variations in situated knowledge (Harding, 1991), based in different social positioning in relationship to social categories (rural, gender, orphan, caste, class, etc), impact educational experiences. As this paper shows, women need social capital in order to transition and occupy new roles in society, as well as transform notions of gender through alternative socialization processes.

Given that educational policy that speaks to gender concerns remains focused on access and parity, most strategies aim to increase these through incentive programs

²¹ The sociological sphere consists of the intimate relationships that underlie the more visible groups and associations of society. It also includes the cultural knowledge, skills and resources that are accessed through those connections. This concept draws from the work of Simmel (See Nisbet, 2004).

(paying families that send girls to school), improving facilities, materials, curriculum and pedagogy, or restructuring schools to attract girls. While these are important strategies for increasing participation, effective educational policies at the global level must move away from the universal focus on increased enrollments and include a more equitable framework that centers the various aspects of women's social realities. These social realities are best understood, and articulated, by women themselves as they navigate aspects of nationhood, race, caste, colonial experience, etc.

Policy initiatives highlight the importance of addressing the educational needs of marginalized groups on the edge of social benefits. International efforts to promote education are not just directed at women in general, but focus on those on the periphery. If policy actions are meant to reach these populations in particular, than it is important to draw attention to qualitative examples of how marginalized groups experience education, such as the orphan girls who participated in this study. If the goal of educating women is to improve the qualitative experiences of women's lives, then women's lived realities should not occupy a merely anecdotal role in conversations about education at a global level.

Creating equality and empowerment for women through education requires a much deeper understanding of gender as a social dynamic that extends outside of the walls of the school. The function of educational policy for women in countries such as India should be to aid women in ameliorating their quality of life, rather than increasing statistical data that supposedly reflects those improvements. In order to do

this, we must turn our gaze toward the sociological sphere. Those involved in policy formation and discourse at the macroscopic levels are behooved to acknowledge, but more importantly focus, on the lessons drawn from the lived educational experiences of marginalized women.

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Hitching a Mercedes to a Bullock cart: Pedagogical tensions at a school for orphans
in rural North India.

Abstract

This paper explores the tensions between two different pedagogical approaches in conflict with one another in the landscape of Indian educational reform and practice. At one rural school in Northern India that serves marginalized students, including orphan girls, teachers struggle with national policy efforts to introduce “progressive” teaching into the classroom. This is in direct tension with prevalent approaches of rote learning entrenched in deeply rooted cultural values. Mismatch exists between the intention of national policy and the local context of the school leading to resistance in the adoption of constructivist methods. Within this specific educational environment converge global notions of educational “progress”, the deeply rooted cultural context of Indian society, and an education system tumultuous with reform and impacted by the legacy of colonialism. The paper calls for attention to the local, cultural, and historical context of the school in relationship to the community within the highly stratified structure of Indian society. Equally important is the acknowledgement that reforms of the Indian school system are fundamentally sites of political and cultural struggle, and that they have the potential to ameliorate, or further engrain, social inequities that impact the lives of marginalized students.

Introduction

In India, recent educational reforms have critiqued the prevalence of rote methods of memorization, textbook led instruction, and high stakes assessment. Policy documents such as the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) emphasize the incorporation of constructivist teaching methods in the classroom as a way to bring more authentic learning into Indian schools. This perspective envisions the student as actively constructing their own knowledge by engaging in activity based “child centered” learning environments in which higher order thinking skills are used to apply and synthesize curriculum content. With nearly 30% of 1.2 billion citizens under the age of 14²², India’s attempt to shift classrooms into this pedagogical approach is an immense undertaking.

This paper draws upon an ethnography conducted at an orphanage in rural Northern India. The school located at the community center, or ashram, is ideally positioned to provide not only access, but quality schooling to marginalized children from nearby villages in addition to orphan students. However, the educational reform movement promotes teaching methods which are in direct tension with local educational practices. Mismatch exists between the intention of national policy and

²²Central Intelligence Agency, 2015.

the local context of the school impeding integration of the reform mandates. The ashram serves as a microcosm of the global forces converging in India around notions of educational “progress”, the deeply rooted cultural context of Indian society, and an education system tumultuous with reform and impacted by the legacy of colonialism.

This is in wake of a global movement to improve educational access in developing countries by creating and improving infrastructure. In particular, development policy has focused on bringing women and other marginalized populations into classrooms around the world. This is in part because the education of girls has demonstrated significant social returns through including the promotion of per capita income growth, increase in women’s labor force participation rates and earnings, lowers mortality rates for children and mothers, protection against HIV/AIDS, reduction in fertility levels, and an increase in civic participation (Tembon & Fort, 2008). In addition, the social outcomes of education and schooling are considered preludes to beneficial outcomes for the individual, such as self esteem and self reliance in girls (Singh, 2007). Since the introduction of policy initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals, there has been significant increase in the number of female students enrolled in schools in India over the past decade and a half.

After pushing for access, the focus of international policy discourse has begun emphasizing issues of quality in education. Organizations such as the World Bank (2011) connect economic growth and poverty reduction with the practical skills and

information that people gain through education. This highlights that creating a space in the classroom for students is the first step in educating individuals.

The new strategy focuses on learning for a simple reason: growth, development, and poverty reduction depend on the knowledge and skills that people acquire, not the number of years that they sit in a classroom. At the individual level, while a diploma may open doors to employment, it is a worker's skills that determine his or her productivity and ability to adapt to new technologies and opportunities. Knowledge and skills also contribute to an individual's ability to have a healthy and educated family and engage in civic life (World Bank, 2011).

Since 2000, India has reduced its population of out of school children by 90% (UNESCO, 2015). Now that more students have a seat in a classroom, policy seeks to address whether or not classroom instruction results in tangible outcomes for students that ultimately benefit the individual and the society at large. This attention to quality leads us to focus on policy implementation at the local level, and the pedagogical tensions at the ashram provides insight into friction between notions of tradition and modernization.

This paper contends that the historically and culturally situated context of local educational practices cannot be ignored with regard to national educational reform efforts in a highly stratified society such as India, particularly when attempting to address the educational needs of marginalized students. When the local educational context is discounted, a mismatch is created between the expectations of the reform and the reality of classroom practice. The paper begins by providing a historical

perspective on education in India, including contemporary issues surrounding the education of marginalized populations. It then introduces the ethnographic study upon which it is based. The findings of the study reveal a dynamic of resistance to progressive teaching methods and the ultimate reproduction of entrenched practices. The paper concludes by acknowledging that reforms are fundamentally sites of political and cultural struggle that simultaneously have revolutionary potential and act to further engrain social inequities that impact the lives of marginalized students.

Indian education in historical perspective

India is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions in the world. According to the Anthropological Survey of India, it is home to 114 distinct languages, as well as 4, 635 distinct ethnic communities with their own dialects, kinship patterns, forms of worship, physiological characteristics, and so forth (Paranjape, 2009). A recorded history of formal and informal education in India dates back 4,000 years. Beginning with ancient scriptures²³, influences on education in India over the centuries have included buddhist philosophy, Islamic mores, and more recently the impact of British colonialism.

²³ Vedic philosophical verses and scriptures compiled as early as 2000 B.C., followed by the Upanishad in about 800 B.C.

The British constructed institutionalized schooling with the political goal of ideological control. To be in psychological control of the colonized, educators proclaimed that the only valid means of education was through the language and canon of the colonizer. Thus education functioned as a means to devalue traditional knowledge systems and place English thought, values, and culture above them and in place of them. This was an underlying basis for the famous Macaulay's minute of 1835, in which the then viceroy of India called for the colonial administration to educate an elite class, "...who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Aggarwal, 2009, p. 11). Thus the prevalent view of English language and western culture as superior while simultaneously vying with notions of nationalism in government institutions and schools remains to this day. As Paranjape (2009) eloquently states:

Modern education in India was founded in the colonial period with the specific intention of supplanting, even destroying the native Indian culture. Hence, it is clear that our British rulers, for their own ends and purposes, imposed upon us an alien and alienating system of knowledge... we have an inherent system clash in India between the prevalent educational culture and whatever cultural education we may wish to impart based on the native ethos of this land.....today [we] have a situation that is peculiarly postcolonial: a national, i.e., state-sponsored, educational system that is essentially antinational, that is against the very consciousness that sought to make this a free, independent, and proud country. (p.118)

The colonial system created an antagonistic relationship between education and native culture, and further engrained a hierarchical system between the educated elite

and lower classes. In Northern India, this has translated into a system broadly characterized by poorly funded, understaffed, vernacular language medium schools conducted in the vernacular language and attended by the majority. These are in contrast to expensive privately funded, English medium day and boarding schools attended by elite students (Klenk, 2010).

Another legacy of colonialism is the prevalence of examinations based on textbook content culminating in the 12th class board exams. Across the nation, students have historically been evaluated almost exclusively through a rigorous examination system which has undergone some reform in the past decade. Most notably, the 10th class board exams have been made optional. Examinations rely heavily on memorization and familiarity with specialized knowledge accessible to the higher classes of society. The call nationally is to create assessments that address analytical and practical application of knowledge rather than focusing solely on theoretical and rote based learning, but actualization of such goals are slow to take root (Ramachandran & Ramkumar, 2005).

More specifically, the sceptre of test scores seems to be haunting the entire school system in contemporary India, deforming the educational values of teachers, parents, education bureaucrats and above all hapless students. To put it differently, the prevailing educational ethos is such that value addition through education is measured mostly in economic terms of marks and test scores, rendering irrelevant other worthy goals of learning such as cognitive development, creative thinking, and citizenship abilities. (Majumdar & Mooij, 2012)

Test scores translate into economic gain through better employment, but only for a select few. The difficulty of the exams and the presence of intense competition make for a small percentage of students with access to even fewer jobs (BBC, 2014).

The government of India has historically defined education as a human right and a means for bringing about a “genuinely egalitarian and secular social order,” and as an “instrument for securing a status of equality for women and persons belonging to the backward classes and minorities.”²⁴ In 1994, the Indian supreme court ruled that the State must provide universal primary education for children from 6 to 14 years of age. In 2002, the constitution was amended to require free and compulsory education for all Indian citizens in this age group. As a result, the contemporary educational system in India has focused on providing universal primary education through the general provision of basic infrastructure. India has indeed seen a significant increase in primary school enrollment, but issues persist in securing the “elusive triangle of quality, quantity, and equity” (National Curriculum Framework, 2005).

Due to the steady growth in enrollment of marginalized students such as girls, low caste members, tribal members, and religious and ethnic minorities, Indian elementary classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse (Deshkal Society, 2010). Despite the high educational ideals promoted by the government, there is little

²⁴Resolution of the Government of India, No. F.1-6/90-PN, May 7, 1990.

evidence that the Indian states have addressed the educational issues of marginalized communities:

...the democratic spirit of education is violated by way of imposing the dominant culture and language on the state curriculum. Social exclusion leads to educational exclusion as well, not just physically but also intellectually. The dominant state language is used as the medium of instruction. Uniform textbooks are written by the upper-caste curriculum designers who have little knowledge of the cultural values of linguistic and ethnic minorities. Teachers' structured knowledge from the textbook and use of fixed teaching methods impede children's creativity. Thus, the diverse cultural resources of race, gender, language, religion, and ethnicity are ignored in the school system. Instead, discrimination is found in the school and classroom, and the behavior and attitude of the teachers perpetuates these inequities in schools. Mainstream education subjugates the learning of the marginalized (Mishra, 2012).

Access, while crucially important, provides a contradictory resource. On one hand schools are potential sites of opportunity, but on the other they can serve to reproduce social inequality. Marginalized students often find their cultures and communities in opposition to that of the school. Curriculum and assessment reflect the dominant perspective of high caste, wealthy, hindu males. Integration into the educational system requires rejection of cultural identities, practices, and language resulting in coercive assimilation. In addition, discourses of domination promulgated in the classroom and encoded in the text and language of the school pathologize children from marginalized communities. Moreover, the current system reflects the legacy of colonialism; it was not designed to equalize opportunity but as a mechanism of exclusion that reinforces social hierarchy and existing power structures.

Unfortunately [marginalized] students and their illiterate (in some cases literate) parents do not realise that the school system—its theory, practice, curriculum and pedagogy—itsself is designed to eliminate ...the majority, especially the socially and culturally marginalised and promote those who come from culturally dominant groups that constitute a numerical minority. As a result, the education system of India has created a large chunk of people who may be called 'push-outs' from both the school level and higher education institutions...What is being measured and found wanting by the examination system is actually not intelligence of ability, but these peoples' culture, language and knowledge. This is how the deep-seated prejudices of the upper castes against Dalits and other lower caste people are perpetuated systemically, and made to appear objective. Thus my argument is that the education system itself creates the binary of failures vs successes or achievers. (Krishna, 2012)

Over the last two decades, wave after wave of educational reforms have been implemented in Indian schools. Measures include efforts to train more qualified teachers, provide meals at school, more availability of text books, and redesigning of outdated and inaccessible curriculum. More recently, the National Curriculum Framework (NCERT, 2005) outlines the integration of progressive teaching methods into the classroom that includes the incorporation of local knowledge and promotes the empowerment of marginalized students. It is described as a national curriculum framework that is 'flexible and enabling' and aims to break away from 'a monolithic system' and seeks to promote instead greater autonomy for schools and teachers. It proposes five guiding principles for curriculum development: (i) connecting knowledge to life outside the school; (ii) ensuring that learning shifts away from rote methods; (iii) enriching the curriculum so that it goes beyond textbooks; (iv) making

examinations more flexible and integrating them with classroom life; and (v) nurturing an overriding identity within the democratic polity of the country.

The basic philosophy of India's National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF) is to bring revolutionary change by building solidarity between the school and community. The guiding principles of NCF are to connect knowledge to life outside the school, shift learning away from rote methods, enrich the curriculum to provide for overall development of children rather than remaining textbook-centric, make examinations more flexible and integrated into classroom life, and finally to nurture an overriding identity with India's diverse cultures and foster democratic values. NCF offers a great opportunity, in the context of challenges. (Mishra, 2012)

This ambitious undertaking has the potential to ameliorate classroom environments for marginalized students. A learner centered approach within the classroom can at the very least acknowledge and validate the student's social backgrounds. A system based upon knowledge construction rather than privileged access to particular forms of knowledge is more democratic than autocratic, but requires that policy be successfully translated into practice. How the intentions of the reform mandate play out in one local context is detailed in the following sections.

Ethnographic background: The local context of Sri Ram Ashram

This paper draws upon a 6 months ethnography that centered on the educational experiences of orphan girls living at an orphanage and community center in rural north India. Founded in 1984, Sri Ram Ashram is located in the northern state

of Uttarakhand, on 16 acres of farmland, and includes an orphanage for over 70 children, a school, and a charitable medical clinic. The center is sponsored by a partnership between two non-profit organizations, Anath Shishu Palan Trust of India and the Sri Rama Foundation based in the United States.

The local agrarian area is densely populated with over 1,500 people living within each square mile. In the surrounding villages, farmers tend crops of wheat, rice or mustard, and many plow their fields by hand with oxen or bullock. Local roads are unpaved and frequented by rickshaws, motor scooters and bicycles. Electricity is unreliable, often cutting out several times, perhaps for several hours at a time, during the day and night. Most buildings are made out of concrete and may be one or two stories high; there is no indoor heating or air conditioning. These are considered superior housing to the thatched roof huts that dot the landscape. At the orphanage, children benefit from superior resources in comparison to much of the local population because they have access to superior facilities, clean water, basic healthcare, and nutritious food.

Historically the area where the ashram is located has some of the lowest enrollment and achievement statistics in the country. The ashram school, Sri Ram Vidya Mandir (SRVM) is superiorly resourced in several ways. First, the physical infrastructure of the school is excellent relative to the rural context. There is a well constructed two story building with separate classrooms for each class level, a library, running water, indoor bathrooms for both boys and girls, electricity, and even

intermittent internet access. It is also an accredited, English medium school, meaning that the majority of classroom instruction is supposed to be conducted in English. Hindi is common language spoken at the ashram and surrounding villages, but English is the language of privilege and commerce in Indian society. As Kishori, a 16 year old orphan girl stated, “English is commercial language in India. If we speak in Hindi to them [employers] they will think we are not really good for the job. So we speak first in English.” In practice, English instruction is an ideal rather than a well established classroom practice at SRVM, but access to any level of English is considered beneficial.

A diverse population of over 400 students attend the ashram school from local communities. Hindu and muslim children come from the farms and villages nearby, as well as those from tribal groups that live in the nearby jungle. Many students come from families that are illiterate in any language, and none come from backgrounds with access to native English speakers. The orphans on the other hand have access to educational experiences and socialization in English with foreign volunteers who visit and manage the ashram.

Despite the advantages afforded by the ashram, within the wider society orphans are perceived as social enigmas at the margins of society. Legally, the children at the ashram may not exist because they can lack legal documentation, such as birth certificates. In the words of a male teacher from the school, “It means they are not citizens.” The Indian government provides special educational provisions for

members of disadvantaged groups, such as members of tribal groups, the “untouchable” caste known as Dalit, or poor students. Although these students are acknowledged and receive government aid, on an official level, orphans go unrecognized. The orphanage director commented:

They're not legally anything. What I mean is, they're not legally destitute. They don't have a legal past. They don't qualify for any reservation system in India. So in India you can be the member of a lower caste or you can be a member of a recognized tribal group.... and you can qualify for benefits from that.

In addition institutional barriers exist due to the invisible status of orphans in Indian society. For example, a provision of the Right to Education Act of 2010 requires that students present multiple forms of identification for school admission that are often impossible for orphans to produce (Ali, 2012).

Three quarters of the over 70 orphans are girls, reflecting the widespread gender bias against female children that can result in infanticide, abandonment or chronic neglect. According to the Annual Health Survey of India (Census of India, 2011a), the rural sex ratio in the district where the study took place is located is 868 females for every 1000 males, in comparison to the national average of 940 females to every 1000 males (Census of India, 2011b). The girls who live and go to school at the ashram come from backgrounds where often survival, much less an education, would have been denied without the intervention of the NGO.

The ashram acts as an insulated community where education for girls is expected and schooling is provided. This gives girls, in particular, access to the resources that global educational policy strives to provide on a universal level, i.e. basic school infrastructure including teachers, textbooks, female bathrooms, etc. In addition, a culture that promotes education for girls permeates the ashram, ameliorating social conditions that discourage educational achievement for women.²⁵

Methods

Data collection took place over the course of two trips in the fall of 2011 and the spring of 2012. During both trips, I lived full time in the children's home, fully immersed in the life of the community.²⁶ I ate everyday in the communal kitchen with the children, pushed the youngest ones on the swing sets after school, and helped chase the monkeys away when they invaded the girls' dormitory. I also volunteered in

²⁵ The study addressed the following research questions: How do various actors in the educational community, including (U.S.) volunteers, Indian teachers, and Indian students, participate in the cultural construction(s) of what it means to be an "educated Indian woman" for orphan girls at an ashram in rural northern India? Particularly, how do these participants negotiate, co-construct, and/or contest various discourses surrounding the educational norms of the community in relationship to underlying ideologies of gender, caste, class, and race? How does the interplay of these discourses create, constrain, and/or influence how the older girls, who are completing or have completed their secondary education, construct/negotiate their own subjectivities of the "educated Indian woman"?

²⁶ I have a long history with the Ashram. I first visited in 1998 as a high school student, and have remained involved in the organization since that time. Before this study took place, I had most recently volunteered at the orphanage for 6 weeks in 2007.

various educational activities at the orphanage and school, tutoring students and advising teachers.

The main methods employed in data collection were observation, review of documents such as textbooks, and semi-structured interviews. These sources provided triangulation in the data sources. Field notes drew from extensive observations that were gathered in both formal and informal educational settings, as well as situations not labeled educational but pertinent to the research. This included student interactions with each other, Indian teachers within the school, and foreign volunteers. Document analysis included texts and media that pertained to the girls' schooling such as textbooks, journals, workbooks, assignments, and drawings, as well as texts or projects produced through more informal learning activities with foreign volunteers.

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 29 primary participants. These included 10 of the orphan girls themselves, 9 Indian teachers and administrators at the Indian school, and 10 foreign volunteers, primarily from the United States. Interviews ranged in length from 30 to 100 minutes and were conducted in English. Often, informal and impromptu conversations yielded pertinent data. In addition, I met with teachers at the school several times for informal English conversation groups from which relevant subjects and pertinent themes arose. The ethnography followed an inductive design which led to holistic, richly descriptive findings. Analysis was iterative, cyclical, and ongoing rather than reaching a

determinant “truth”. As I identified themes and patterns viewed within the particular social context of the ashram, I attempted to relay an “authentic” depiction of participant voices while being reflexive and critical of my role as a researcher.

Given the amount of data from which to draw, approaching the analysis was daunting. In order to address this obstacle, I created situational maps as a starting point. Situational maps are a visual tool for articulating the elements in a situation and examining relations among them. This approach was extremely helpful in addressing, “analytic paralysis” wherein the researcher has assiduously collected data but does not know where or how to begin (Clarke, 2005). These large “messy” amalgamations of concepts, words, actors, settings, idioms, and social categories that arose from the data were initially unorganized, but rather served to place the elements of the fieldwork in front of the researcher. From this I constructed smaller maps that reflected relationships between elements represented by labeled lines. From these, pertinent themes arose that served to direct initial coding.

The formal process of data analysis began by assigning abbreviated titles to each potential theme for coding. Large flip chart sheets were color coded and taped on the wall. Each sheet identified the descriptors under the respective categories generated in the situational maps. As the process of coding proceeded, new sheets were prepared to capture other themes as they emerged. Written memos were produced while simultaneously organizing and coding the data for themes, while considering the contextual relationships within which interviews, conversations, etc.,

occurred. Memos served as a method for capturing analytic thinking and for stimulating analytic insights.

While coding fragmented the data into separate categories, bringing attention to the details of the fieldwork, synthesis involved piecing those fragments together to construct a holistic and integrated explanation. Overall, the approach was to come up with a number of themes that were linked together through similarities and contrasts. Towards the end, I followed a three layered process in thinking about the data. First, I examined and compared threads and patterns within categories. Second, I compared connecting threads across categories, and third I further connected the themes to the larger conversation about women's education in developing countries within the literature. These three layers were not separate, but interwoven and iterative throughout the synthesizing process.

Not taking root: Pedagogical tensions within Sri Ram Vidya Mandir

The ashram school might seem like the ideal setting for the national reform agenda to implement constructivist pedagogical practices in Indian classrooms. It has excellent physical infrastructure and resources, an environment inclusive of girls, and a long established presence of American educators with expertise in progressive teaching methods. It serves a diverse student body including marginalized populations who are intended as beneficiaries. One would expect that such a school

would be ideally positioned to adopt the approaches of the National Curriculum Framework. However, this is not the case. Tension exists between the prevailing classroom practices and the new “child centered” pedagogy at Sri Ram Vidya Mandir (SRVM). Indian teachers at SRVM seemingly embrace the rhetoric of their superiors while being unable, unwilling, or both, to apply the practices in the classroom.

Resistance on the continuum of “traditional” to “progressive”.

Pedagogical approaches at SRVM, at least on a theoretical level, lie on a continuum between purely rote methods of learning and student directed learning activities designed to synthesize and apply knowledge. Memorization of material in the exact form in which it was delivered followed by regurgitation of the material for assessment is seen as the “traditional” approach to learning at the school. This relies on evaluation through testing, and a relationship of subservience from students towards teachers. Teachers occupy a position of respect as elders and holders of knowledge. The Hindi word for teacher, guru, has religious connotations. As one of the orphan girls stated, “Teacher is god in India.” Teachers hold absolute authority over their students. Corporeal punishment is an accepted and common disciplinary tool.

The emphasis in classroom instruction is on theoretical concepts, rather than practical application. For example, emphasis may be placed on English grammar in

lessons that detail the construction of sentences, while reading comprehension falls to the wayside. Often there is no interpretation allowed, no rewording, and no creative license; to do so would be disrespectful. This reverential attitude extends to the text book itself. Textbooks should not be put on the ground, or touched by your feet. Emulation shows respect and a means of conforming to school culture. Teaching culminates in formal assessment. The school’s evaluation system includes testing for advancement into each class level. A series of high stakes exams at the completion of 12th class determines a student’s ability to advance into higher education after completing secondary school.

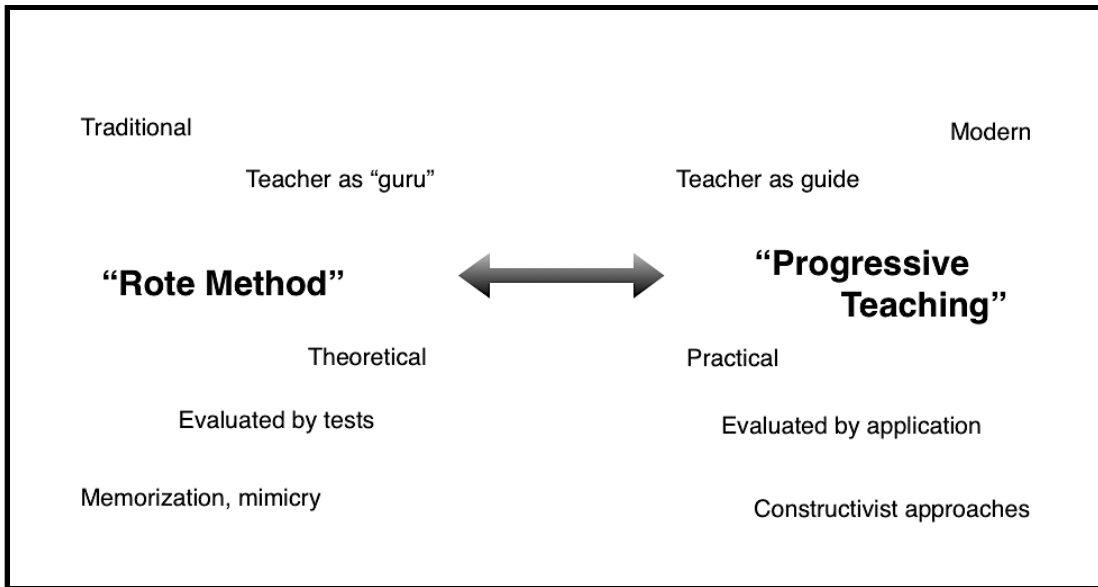


Figure 1. Continuum of Rote vs. Progressive pedagogical approaches

In stark contrast, “progressive” teaching methods that employ constructivist approaches are hailed as the learning ideal within the ashram, at least on an official level. These methods include practical application of skills, concepts, and synthesis of

knowledge. In this model, teachers act as guides while students independently construct their own knowledge through engaging in activities. Lesson plans are designed to connect to students prior knowledge on a subject. In this “modern” approach the teacher shares power with the students over the learning process. Assessment is evidenced through application of knowledge during activities.

At SRVM, the rote method continues to prevail despite the official position that “progressive” teaching methods are the ideal within the classroom. This is a direct reflection of the culture of reform that is currently voiced by the Indian government. As stated in the National Curriculum Framework, the prevalence of rote learning must be deemphasized in order for the student to be viewed as active in knowledge construction:

Our educational practice is still based on limited ‘lesson plans’ aimed at achieving measurable ‘behaviours’; according to this view, the child is akin to a creature that can be trained, or a computer that can be programmed. Hence, there is too much focus on ‘outcomes’, and presenting knowledge divided into bits of information to be memorised directly from the text or through activities after ‘motivating’ children, and finally on evaluating to see if children remember what they have learnt. Instead, we need to view the child as ‘constructing knowledge’ all the time. This is true not only of ‘cognitive subjects’ such as mathematics and science, language and social science, but equally of values, skills and attitudes (NCF 2005).

This framework calls for a significant reorientation to classroom practice in Indian schools.

The reform is conveyed at SRVM through the local accrediting organization, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). In addition the administration at the school and textbooks designed by the CBSE reflect this rhetoric. In a publication aimed at teachers' professional development, the responsibility for this transition is placed directly upon the teachers.

*The teacher needs to be open minded, receptive and non-judgemental in allowing children to learn to formulate questions and answers depending on their own mental frame work and understanding. Learner autonomy and respect for individual learners is mandatory if real learning is to take place...In short, we must de-emphasize memorization and encourage thinking...Now the question is how it can happen at the grass-root level. The [CBSE] Board has made certain innovative changes as part of new curriculum dynamics...**But apart from rich content unless and until it is appropriately transacted by motivated and updated teachers, nothing concrete will be seen [Emphasis added] (CBSE 2008).***

These same directives of the NCF are also evident in textbooks used at the school.

The ideas of establishing a connection between school and community, promoting a “child centered” classroom, and discouraging rote learning is promoted in the forward to a tenth class English textbook. Again, the perception is that teachers need to take the initiative in implementing these new approaches given that success depends on their ability to, “...perceive and treat children as participants in learning, not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge.”

At the same time, actually implementing this theoretical approach at SRVM is easier said than done. The school principal, Anuradha Madam described her

frustration with directing teachers to implement more progressive pedagogy in the classroom. In one instance she designed an ambitious series of theme based lesson plans for the upper classes around the construction of solar powered cookers, but lamented that she was the “only one excited about the idea.” In it she indicated how the students would self-direct the lesson by conducting an experiment, and answer questions in order to deduce the most successful design. The students would draw their solar cooker designs, construct them, and use them to cook food. In addition, they would prepare a theatrical skit to present to the local villagers in order to promote the use of solar cookers as an alternative to fossil fuels.

All of these aspects represent various directives of the reform movement. The lesson would engage the students in active knowledge construction, hands on learning, connect them with the local community, and at the same time reflect a concern for the environment. However, teachers were only able to mimic this approach by following detailed lesson plans. The principal complained that the teachers had failed to adopt the pedagogical strategies independently.

The teacher has to do the planning part and guide the students. This is very difficult for me to make teachers understand what to do. Every time I give them a lesson plan, they say that they understand. They say, “Very well ma’am.” But the next time they say, “Ma’am, now next what we have to do? Have you prepared a plan to give to me?” But, still I am trying. Maybe one of the teachers might get this sort of a thing.

That the teachers fail to take initiative with these approaches, and enact a superficial version of them, is a result of the unchanged assessment structure and the lack of formal training. The assessment system at the school continues to reflect the rote method. The structure of the school is designed around test taking. Students must pass a summative assessment at the end of the school year in order to advance to the next class level. At the end of 12th class, exams determine student access to enter higher education. With so much time required for test preparation, teachers feel overwhelmed with the added burden of incorporating new activities into their classes. As one teacher commented, “I ask you, how can we do group work with the children if we still have to do the exam?”

Secondly, before coming to SRVM teachers receive no formal training and tend to teach in the manner in which they were taught. They have no practical experience as students nor as teachers with the theory or methods promoted by the administration, the accrediting organization, and the national reform policy. The obvious solution is to provide such training, which in fact was attempted. However, in this effort to overcome obstacles to reform at the local level lies a mismatch between the social and cultural context of the teachers and the agenda of the reform efforts. As the following example illustrates, rather than engaging teachers in constructivist methods, training actually *reinforces* the prevailing pedagogical paradigm because of the failure of policy to translate into practice.

A didactic process for a constructivist product?

A mandatory training led by a representative of the CBSE was held at the ashram school over the course of two days. Around 45 teachers, a few from other affiliated schools and the rest from SRVM, listened to long lecture style instruction on progressive teaching methods. The divide between the urban modern representative and the rural setting of the teachers was obvious from the beginning. The trainer, a woman in her 40's, had short cropped hair and was dressed in a business suit. Her assistant set up her laptop computer to a projector in the ground floor classroom. The principal reassured them that a generator was in place in case the power should cut out, as it inevitably did. In contrast, the teachers dressed in more traditional clothes, filed into the classroom. Cows grazed outside in the fields and village women, balancing large bundles of sticks on their heads, walked barefoot down the brick pathway adjacent to the school.

The training, which lasted a full day with only a couple short breaks, was a whirlwind of information delivered in verbose academic English. It was an unfiltered download of terms, definitions, and pedagogical theory. The same content could easily be covered over the course of a week or more, and ideally in a student's first language. Many of the teachers were beginning level English speakers; a few only know several phrases. Several were more or less fluent, but the level of English text in the presentation and the amount of new vocabulary was obviously baffling. Phrases

such as "formative and summative assessment", "child development", "holistic approach" were defined quickly on slides of block passages.

The design of the training assumed several things concerning the teachers. First, that they could understand the information being imparted through the training. This would require background knowledge or experience with progressive teaching methods, and secondly a high level of fluency and skill in the use of English on par with a native speaker. Neither of these were the case. Teachers in this rural setting live a world away from the urban upper class/caste classrooms that the training seemed designed for.

Secondly, it was assumed that teachers could easily apply the pedagogical approach outlined during the training. Intermittently the lecture was broken up by assigning group work to the teachers. These activities were meant to engage teachers in creating model lesson plans that incorporated constructivist teachings methods; however, this would have required understanding of the learning theory presented initially. In addition, teachers did not have practical experience with group work themselves. The framework that the teachers were familiar with emphasized the authority of teachers as the sole holders of valid knowledge. As a result they sought to identify the "correct answer" either from the training manual provided to them, or from each other, and then parrot that answer back to the CBSE trainer.

Another revealing layer of the data was the absence of questions on the part of the teachers. As the trainer went through the slides, or assigned group work, or

prompted responses from the teachers, no questions about the constructivist methods or assessment strategies were asked. This was despite the fact that teachers obviously struggled to understand the content of the training. Why then did they refrain from clarifying the material? The answer is that the dominant educational paradigm at the school is non egalitarian and conveys a strong value of respect and deference for authority at all times. Culturally, respecting members of the community that occupy a higher position in the social hierarchy is ingrained within interaction and language²⁷. Those with authority, i.e., teachers, are the exclusive holders of valid knowledge. In this context, asking questions that challenge the position of the teacher, or reveal the ignorance of the student, are avoided. In the absence of risk taking was the appearance of understanding in order to survive the learning experience. The teachers were aware implicitly that in order to access the content they should be able to understand English, but they kept silent rather than publicly reveal their inabilities.

One effect of this dynamic was the inevitable lack of engagement by the teachers as they sat through hours of lecture. The following example mirrored dynamics between school children in classrooms at SRVM who act out due to boredom.

²⁷ Hindi, the vernacular language at the school, conveys the position of the speaker in relationship to the addressee. For example, verb forms are inflected in respect to categories of intimate, familiar, and respectful. Depending on whether the speaker is in a higher or lower social position to the addressee, different forms of the verb are used.

One of the female teachers comes over to our group and begins speaking in Hindi. The other teachers start laughing. The trainer comes over and says in a stern voice, “Mam...” and in response the teacher retreats to her table. The teaching in the laughing group glance at each other conspiratorily and laugh harder. They are just like teenagers getting scolded for messing around in class.

The elephant in the room was the inadequacy of the instruction and curriculum design to address the needs of the local context. However, acknowledging the failure of the training to convey practical skills would most probably result in blaming the teachers (in the role of the students) because they occupy an inferior social position vis a vis the trainer. Characterizing the teachers as deficient in their abilities would avoid open contradiction to authority, and continue to convey subservience on the part of the teachers. The only other scenario would be for the trainer to articulate and acknowledge that the mismatch lies with the instruction/curriculum and not the teachers. However, that was unnecessary as long as the appearance of substantive learning took place.

The training did not shift the traditional dynamic between the instructor, in this case the CBSE trainer, and the students, or in this case the teachers themselves. Thus the dominant learning paradigm was reproduced between the trainer and the teachers at the training. In other words, the absence of a constructivist approach by the trainer did not enable the teachers to participate in a constructivist manner. The training was delivered didactically, even though on a theoretical level it was focused on the constructivist approach that teachers needed to assimilate in the classroom.

The actualization of particular pedagogical approaches in the classroom require an embodiment and modeling of those strategies. Pedagogical content knowledge, the understanding of both curriculum content coupled with the ability to successfully teach that content, are requisite for learning. It does not follow that a constructivist product will result from a didactic process. There can be no contradiction between the goals and the means (Maturana, 2004). In addition, the context of the school, such as the structure of the assessment system would have to mold to the new approaches.

Rote learning is ingrained in the instruction at SRVM, and innovations at SRVM mean moving one or two steps beyond it, not fast forwarding to the "child centered environment that promotes critical thinking skills" featured in the training. As one of the foreign volunteers at the ashram noted, "Trying to get teachers at SRVM to adopt these new strategies is like hitching a mercedes to a bullock cart."

Conclusion: The bullock cart and the Mercedes

The reform environment at SRVM is a pedagogical manifestation of the tension between established cultural practices and modern expectations that are a part of the shifting context of Indian society. Although the ashram school seems like an ideal setting for implementing curricular reform, coupling rural teachers and progressive teaching methods is highly problematic. Efforts to implement reform at

the school fail to acknowledge the cultural context of established teaching practices, the preparation of the teachers, and the incompatibility of the assessment system with the new approaches.

These new pedagogical mechanisms struggle, in part, because they challenge the hierarchical positionality of the teacher in relation to the students. The reverence given to elders, including teachers, centers emulation, rather than innovation, as a sign of respect. The teachers themselves do not have personal experience as students who construct knowledge and engage in activity based learning. Therefore, they have difficulty creating such an environment for their students. There is also an overwhelming emphasis on the product of learning rather than the process by which learning outcomes are created, reinforced through high stakes summative assessment.

On the national level, the established structure and teaching practices within the DNA of Indian schools do not lend themselves to radical curricular and pedagogical transformation. Stratification was infused into the basic structure of Indian schools during the colonial period. This blueprint survives in the current educational system and reflects deeply engrained social inequities bolstered and perpetuated by institutional structures and cultural practices in schools. This fundamentally unegalitarian structure, which continues to be in tension with the democratic ideals of the country, is reflected in the organization of the ashram school and in the established teaching practices. Practices that contradict constructivist

approaches are so ingrained within Indian educational practices that efforts designed to challenge rote learning at SRVM ironically reinforce them.

In addition, the National Curriculum Framework draws from constructivist theory that depicts the learner as an autonomous individual in contrast to the emphasis on group membership present in Indian society. Policy is framed by our use of language in such a way that predetermines the policy problem, and hence constrains the solutions needed to address that problem (Lakoff & Ferguson, 2006). Policymakers also operate from a set of assumptions about the agency and motivation of participants in policy, and characterize them in a certain way, often in order to forward a certain political agenda (LeGrand, 2003).

Traditionally, dominant child development theories in the west have viewed individuals as physically constructing cognitive models independently with less emphasis on the importance of social and cultural processes at work. This goes hand in hand with a western orientation towards the power of rationality to make proper choices (which are implied as readily available). Thus reasoning and thinking in a logical and independent manner allows an individual to succeed. This leads to the behaviors that are considered socially acceptable and advantageous, such as independent decision making, risk-taking, etc. As a policy document²⁸, NCF views the child as a citizen in training through developing cognitive skills and the ability to

²⁸ Stein (2004) draws from Fraser (1989) in discussing how policy recipients and their needs are constructed through educational policy formation.

construct knowledge. Ironically, this translates into a *deemphasis* in the established social practices and context of learning that are present within Indian schools such as SRVM. According to Gupta (2006), knowledge construction in India is traditionally viewed as a social rather than physical process that draws on cumulative historical and cultural experiences. In addition, social identity and positioning create a context beyond the classroom that constricts educational access, experiences, and outcomes. Thus, the choices that are readily available within the frame of the individual learner do not readily apply to students in the Indian context, especially those who have been historically denied access and equity within the classroom.

This paper highlights the lack of attention to paid to the social context of the school in relationship to reform. This analysis is not intended as evidence that major school reforms involving cultural shifts should not be attempted; however the depth of the challenges to making such changes should be acknowledged. Without attention to the lived realities of policy recipients and actors, particularly those who do not mirror the perspective and background of those constructing the policy, reform efforts may exist on a superficial level only.

The implications for marginalized students are unfolding. Schools around the globe have proven to be a contradictory resource (Levinson & Holland, 1996). They are both enabling and narrowing in that they can tightly bind students to racist, classist systems and create the binary of educational failure and success. At the same

time they can offer opportunities and a sense of social inclusion and identity.

Educational reforms function within this frame. As Majumdar & Mooij, (2012) state:

We, therefore, need to consider two opposing possibilities while discussing the potential of education: education can be a social equaliser; education can also reproduce social inequalities. Historically, both policies and curriculum of education have been used 'as a means of power and control', as a tool for cultural and political indoctrination (to promote sectarian and parochial purposes). In short, there are contradictory records of the use of education for either social justice or social control. And the history of educational reforms in India is no exception.

Schooling is a site of political challenge and control through formalized processes of socialization. Changes to the prevailing educational paradigms not only result from concerns for increasing the effectiveness of instruction, but are struggles over who has the power to determine what is taught, how, and to what purpose. The situation at ashram school is a microcosm of this struggle that arises as more marginalized students are allowed a seat in the classroom. Indeed, ensuring access to education is not adequate in addressing educational needs, but ensuring quality of instruction in the classroom is also a complex undertaking. The local, cultural, and historical context of the school in relationship to the community within the highly stratified structure of Indian society must be attended to. This includes the acknowledgement that reforms of the Indian school system are fundamentally sites of political and cultural struggle. Changes in schools have the potential to revolutionize, or to further engrain social inequities that impact the lives of marginalized students.

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Creating Gender for/from the Margins:

Competing Educational Discourses for Orphan Girls in Rural North India.

Abstract

Drawing on six months of ethnographic and qualitative data collection, this paper explores the multiple, and often conflicting, discourses found at the intersection of education and gender at an orphanage and school in rural North India. Through formal and informal learning environments that include interaction with Indian educators and foreign volunteers, orphan girls navigate conceptions of gender embedded within multiple and competing educational discourses. This paper defines three of those discourses as: 1) Education as Irrelevant; schooling for girls is unnecessary to traditional gender roles. 2) Education for Enhancement; formal schooling prepares women for marriage and motherhood thereby enhancing existing gender roles. 3) Education for Expansion; formal education offers an expansion of woman's roles and life options. The girls negotiate these different conceptions of gender that they are called upon to perform in different educational contexts. This paper calls for policy makers and other actors engaged in transnational educational collaborations to consciously make visible and deconstruct the subjective affects of education, and to increase consideration of the social factors that contribute to women's lived educational realities.

Introduction

This paper explores multiple, and often conflicting, gender discourses in relation to the education of orphan girls at a charitable community center in rural North India. It draws from a six month ethnography that addressed the following research questions:

1. How do various actors in the educational community, including (U.S.) volunteers, Indian teachers, and Indian students, participate in the cultural construction(s) of what it means to be an “educated Indian woman” for orphan girls at an ashram in rural northern India?
 - a. Particularly, how do these participants negotiate, co-construct, and/or contest various discourses surrounding the educational norms of the community in relationship to underlying ideologies of gender, caste, class, and race?
2. How does the interplay of these discourses create, constrain, and/or influence how the older girls, who are completing or have completed their secondary education, construct/negotiate their own subjectivities of the “educated Indian woman”?

It focuses on how study participants engaged in the cultural construction of the “educated Indian woman”, and how girls at the ashram negotiated, co-constructed and contested discourses of gender within the educational norms of the community. The paper highlights three discourses that the girls were required to navigate in relation to

education in both formal and informal educational settings: 1) Education as Irrelevant; schooling for girls is unnecessary to traditional gender roles. 2) Education for Enhancement; formal schooling prepares women for marriage and motherhood thereby enhancing existing gender roles. 3) Education for Expansion; formal education offers an expansion of woman's roles and life options. Girls' educational experiences in the ashram reflected particular conceptions of gender through these discourses. Specifically, competing pedagogical approaches are aligned with competing notions of gender that are girls are prompted to embody which creates tension between educational settings at the ashram.

The paper begins by briefly introducing the ethnographic study, including the theoretical framework, setting, participants, and methods. In the following sections the three gender discourses that emerged from the data are described in detail, as well as the pedagogical implications tied to each. Examples are provided of how the girls negotiated these competing discourses. The paper concludes by calling for attention to the social contextualization of women's educational experiences by policy makers and others actors who engage in international collaborations to develop educational opportunities for women.

This work contributes to educational research that, in the words of Da Costa, produces insight into the "...highly contested, incomplete, and problematic project of making literate and schooled persons and societies"(p.288). Scholars drawing from the fields of development studies and anthropology in the United States have employed ethnography to investigate the lives and perspectives of women in India

who take part in development projects, which for the most part include an educational component (Ahearn, 2001; Berry, 2003; Da Costa, 2008; Groff, 2010; Klenk, 1995, 2004, 2010; Moodie, 2008). However, little academic work on the subject of orphans in India exists, and that which does is peripheral, (at least that is available in the United States), and there is no research on the subjective educational experiences of orphan girls in particular.

Indian feminists working in the field of sociology draw attention to the historical struggle to centralize the study of gender, citing the resistance toward the “softening” of academic research by including feminist perspectives (Rege, 2003). Similarly, Chanana (2002) critiques the field of sociology in India for failing to combine the study of education and gender. She argues that while Indian anthropology has historically focused on ethnographic studies of social institutions such as marriage and family; educational researchers have tended to focus on macro-level survey based empirical studies. The social context that affects the lives of women and how it intersects with education in India is given very little attention by scholars. She asks, “How long can education and gender be treated as the ‘other’ or remain on the margins of sociology” (p. 3721)? She argues that this leads to a void in sociological inquiry into a vital aspect of Indian society and that studies in India which foreground the educational perspectives of marginalized women are at the forefront of the discipline.

This paper contributes to this work of “filling in the blanks” by listening for the voices of women who might remain unheard. As Raitt and Ray (2004) eloquently

put, "...in an increasingly globalized and "connected" world, the omissions are often particularly brutal and dangerous...feminism will live up to its own promise only when women around the world understand that all our lives are intertwined, perhaps most of all when we are least aware of it" (p.562).

Setting and Participants

Founded in 1984, the community center is located in the northern state of Uttarakhand, on 16 acres of farmland. The ashram, as it is called, includes an orphanage for over 70 destitute and orphaned children, and a school for over 500 children, the majority of whom come from local villages. The center is sponsored by a partnership between two non-profit organizations, Anath Shishu Palan Trust of India and the Sri Rama Foundation based in the United States. The local agrarian area is densely populated with over 1,500 people living within each square mile. In the surrounding villages, farmers tend crops of wheat, rice or mustard, and many plow their fields by hand with oxen or bullock. Most roads are unpaved and frequented by rickshaws, motor scooters and bicycles. Electricity is unreliable, often cutting out several times, perhaps for several hours at a time, during the day and night. Most buildings are made out of concrete and may be one or two stories high; there is no indoor heating or air conditioning. At the orphanage, children benefit from superior resources in comparison to much of the local population because they have access to clean water, basic healthcare, and nutritious food.

Children come to live at the ashram due to multiple social factors. Some are brought by family members who could not care for them due to poverty. Others are found as infants left in fields or by the side of the road. Many arrive after being abandoned and having suffered severe physical and psychological abuse. After arriving at the ashram, children are not put up for adoption; they remain at the children's home until they reach adulthood aligning with the NGO's mission of raising children in a protective family environment and their eventual integration into Indian society.

In the rural communities surrounding the ashram, orphans are perceived as social enigmas at the margins of society. In most cases, the children at the ashram do not legally exist because they lack legal documentation, such as birth certificates. In the words of a male teacher from the school, "It means they are not citizens." Although students from disadvantaged groups such as lower castes and tribes are acknowledged and receive government aid, these orphans go unrecognized. On an official level they are invisible. For the girls who call the ashram their home, integration into the larger society is dependent upon both formal and informal educational experiences that allow them to accumulate needed cultural capital (Yosso, 2005). Access to required social practices and resources determines who is able to assume which roles in the larger Indian community as workers and family members, and hopefully as official citizens in the future. More fundamentally, the girls must embody particular conceptions of gender in order to access these resources and navigate the social world.

Three quarters of the over 70 orphans are girls, reflecting the widespread gender bias against female children that can result in infanticide, abandonment or chronic neglect. According to the Annual Health Survey of India (Census of India, 2011a), the rural sex ratio in the district where the ashram is located is 868 females for every 1000 males, in comparison to the national average of 940 females to every 1000 males (Census of India, 2011b). The girls who live and go to school at the ashram come from backgrounds where often survival, much less an education, would have been denied without the intervention of the NGO.

In India, education for women in particular continues to be an issue where 20% of school age girls (27.7 million girls) are not in school (Lewis and Lockheed, 2006). Widespread poverty adds to the difficulty of educating girls who are often seen as liabilities to their families rather than investments. More than 75% of India's population of 1.2 billion lives on less than \$2 per day (UNESCO, 2008). There is also a lack of educational infrastructure, such as school buildings, textbooks and other basic necessities. Particularly in rural areas all students have fewer educational opportunities; girls, however have the fewest; rural females are twice as likely to be illiterate than their urban counterparts. The national literacy rates are 82% for males and 65% of females, and in the particular district where the ashram is located, the rural female literacy is 59.4% (Census of India, 2011b).

In this context, educating girls is contested. The ashram acts as an insulated community where education for girls is expected and schooling is provided. Foreign volunteers, primarily from the U.S., take on central roles as tutors, caretakers,

advocates, and proxy family members for the ashram children. These individuals range from professional career educators that have been involved in the organization for decades to temporary guests. The involvement of the volunteers, especially those with a sustained presence and administrative role, is significant for the educational growth and overall socialization of the children living there. It also enables an alternative cultural space that draws from transnational perspectives on women's education.

The girls have educational experiences in two settings. In the residential home they interact primarily with American volunteers who facilitate informal learning settings such as study halls or after-school activities. At the accredited ashram school, where they are taught and supervised by Indian teachers in formal classrooms alongside their peers from local villages. Messages about the meaning of being an educated Indian woman, and other educational expectations, vary depending on whom the girls interact with. In this situation the questions arise, "To what purpose are the girls being educated? What pathway are they being moved towards? What conceptions of gender are they asked to inhabit?" This paper highlights the tension and ambiguity within this unique transnational community, in particular for the girls themselves, as multiple discourses about how women are socialized through the processes of education are created, contested and negotiated.

Methods

This paper draws from a 6 month ethnographic field study at the ashram. I first visited in 1998 as a high school student, and have remained involved in the organization since that time. Before this study took place, I had most recently volunteered at the orphanage for 6 weeks in 2007. Over the course of two trips in the fall of 2011 and the spring of 2012, I lived full time in the children's home, fully immersed in the life of the community. I ate everyday in the communal kitchen with the children, pushed the youngest ones on the swing sets after school, and helped chase the monkeys away when they invaded the girls' dormitory. I also volunteered in various educational activities at the orphanage and school, tutoring students and advising teachers.

The main methods employed in data collection were observation, review of documents such as textbooks, and semi-structured interviews. Field notes drew from extensive observations that were gathered in both formal and non formal educational settings, as well as situations not labeled educational but pertinent to the research. This included student interactions with each other, Indian teachers within the school, and foreign volunteers. Document analysis included texts and media that pertained to the girls' schooling such as textbooks, journals, workbooks, assignments, and drawings, as well as texts or projects produced through more informal learning activities with foreign volunteers.

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 29 primary participants. These included 10 of the orphan girls themselves, 9 Indian teachers and administrators at the Indian school, and 10 foreign volunteers, primarily from the

United States. Interviews ranged in length from 30 to 100 minutes and were conducted in English. Often, informal and impromptu conversations yielded pertinent data. In addition, I met with teachers at the school several times for informal English conversation groups from which relevant subjects and pertinent themes arose.

Theoretical Framework

In this paper, schools are seen as cultural sites (Giroux, 2001) in order to investigate ideological assumptions within educational settings that exist as normative and therefore invisible. This orientation explores how individuals are positioned, and position themselves, in relation to cultural discourses and practices. It also explores how participants' sense of identity, agency and possibility are impacted by cultural practices (Hytten, 2011).

Levinson and Holland (1996) see schools as cultural sites where subjectivities are formed through the production and consumption of cultural²⁹ forms. "Through the production of cultural forms, created within the structural constraints of sites such as schools, subjectivities form and agency develops. These are the processes we seek to evoke with our phrase, 'The cultural production of the educated person' " (p.14). This paper borrows from this concept, and explores ways in which participants contribute to the discourse of "an educated Indian woman" by negotiating, contesting, aligning

²⁹ This paper shares the authors' definition of culture as a continual process of creating meaning in social and material contexts, consisting of the symbols and value that create the ideological frame of reference for living. This is distinct from the conceptualization of culture as a static, unchanging body of knowledge "transmitted" between generations. (p. 13)

and/or creating new discourses and cultural practices specific to teaching and learning.

Thus, this paper focuses on how cultural norms in an educational community in rural North India are negotiated within a web of transnational³⁰ relationships. It examines the underlying ideologies surrounding gender that are embedded within an educational environment where educators from (literally) opposite sides of the world contribute to the socialization of orphan girls.

I use the concept of discourse to organize how participants discuss and enact conceptions of gender and education at the ashram. Howarth (2000) explains discourses as social and political constructions that establish a system of relations between different objects and practices, while providing subject positions with which social agents can identify. They are historically specific systems of meaning which form the identities of subjects and objects. Their construction involves the exercise of power, and consequently the structuring of relations between different social agents as well. The concept outlined by Gee (2008) highlights the multiple ways in which discourses are evidenced and reinforced.

A Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language and other symbolic expressions, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting, as well as using various tools, technologies, or props that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network' to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role,' or to signal that one is filing a social niche in a distinctively recognizable fashion (p. 161).

³⁰ This term draws from Cohen (2011) who expands the definition of transnationalism from a single "field" that spans national borders to a focus on the processes by which that space is produced, and to which many sets of actors contribute.

Discourses are not rigid entities that exist independent of one another, but are contested, changeable, multiple, and overlap within individuals. In addition they are associated with “cultural models” or ideological frames of a culture and include ways of interpreting the world and normative judgments about how to organize and act in the world.

Hicks (1995) uses the term discourse to refer to a dialectic of both linguistic form and social communicative practice similar to that defined by Gee. Hicks states that, “Discourses can never be neutral or value free; discourses always reflect ideologies, systems of values, beliefs and social practices...As James Paul Gee writes, discourses are identity tool kits replete with socially shared ways of acting, talking and believing” (p. 53). Under this description, discourses at the ashram include the ways in which participants both speak about the concept of the educated Indian woman, and actions that signal and reinforce those conceptions. Evidence of such discourses would include stories, social practices, and images that circulate within the ashram community.

It is important to note that these findings do not attempt to essentialize the experiences of women in an amorphous abstract construction of what might be considered rural North India, but rather seeks to understand the way that participants, including Indian teachers, foreign volunteers and educators, and orphan girls, discuss questions of what it means to socialize women through education in this particular and unique setting.

Gender for/from the Margins

Emerging from the data are three distinct discourses of gender which participants simultaneously create, challenge, and draw from, even when appearing contradictory (Weedon, 2004). Education plays a different role for girls depending on which discourse participants foreground. In addition, pedagogical approaches that are employed by teachers and volunteers vary as they align teaching approaches with preparing girls for particular gender roles. This constitutes a contested domain of socialization that the girls must pass through on their journey of becoming educated Indian women. They encounter multiple and often contradictory messages, teaching practices and expectations.

Irrelevant

First is the perspective that presupposes marriage and domestic labor as the predetermined life course of girls in the community, precluding the need for schooling. In this case, formal education is irrelevant to preparing women for the roles of wife and mother in the family. In the community surrounding the ashram, parentally arranged marriages are the norm. A bride traditionally leaves her parents house to live with her husband's family and act as a servant. Her status in the family goes up when she has her first child, and more so if the child is male. "Love

marriages”, relationships initiated by the bride and groom, are less common and require the permission and blessing of both families. Before and after marriage, women are expected to have no or extremely limited contact with men who are not related to them through birth or marriage. Participants stressed that women are expected to hold a good reputation prior to marriage. This essentially means that virginity is never in question, and that women display appropriate behavior, such as reverence for elders and respect for authority. Physical relationships outside of wedlock are considered taboo. Caste, religion, class, language and other social factors also figure prominently in finding a suitable match. According to the participants, awareness and fear of physical violence and sexual harassment against women, especially women who travel or go out alone, is prevalent.

“[In India being] female equals not matters,” an Indian female teacher commented. “The thinking of some families is that boy can only go ahead [and] girl cannot.” It is important to note that study participants always referred to this “backward” perspective as belonging to a third party, often portrayed as poor and rural. I never spoke or observed anyone who openly condoned this position. The idea of no formal education for girls was associated with a less “developed” mind set that included discrimination against women in general. For example, an illustrated poster displayed at the ashram school included the following “Social Evils”: Female infanticide, Child marriage, Sati (The ritual suicide of a widow upon the death of her husband), Caste system.” (See fig 1.) Such practices are shunned by the ashram

community, but female infanticide and child marriage in particular are acknowledged as social realities that impact girl children in the region.



Figure 1. Student Poster on “Social Evils” displayed at the ashram school.

In this discourse there is no formal schooling for girls; however, it is relevant to the ashram girls because they have come from situations where this perspective was most likely predominant. Under conditions of poverty especially, females are seen more as a family expense than a resource. Anusha, a college student who grew up at the ashram, commented in our interview:

There is a saying that why to educate a girl because after all the girl has to cook. That means she has to live in kitchen. So people say what is the use of educating a girl and wasting your money? After all she has to go to another house when she gets married and serve there. So they are not giving her attention.

The girls are well aware that gender and poverty played a role in their own experiences of abandonment and neglect. Had they remained with their birth families they would most likely not have been educated. In fact, they might not have survived in the first place. Close encounters with death mark the arrival of many girls to the ashram. In other cases poverty, child marriage or living on the street would have been harsh realities. Lakshmi, a young woman raised at the ashram, is now in college studying to be a teacher. She commented, “The kids who are laying on the street, I want to teach them, [those] whose parents cannot give them an education. Same would have happened to us [orphans] if we were not brought to ashram. We are lucky.”

The ashram exists to counter these social forces. It is an insular community, autonomous from the outside villages, where orphan girls can survive and thrive. Appropriately, a counter culture of girls’ education exists there as well. The NGO provides the physical resources; including the ashram school and after school tutoring, to support the endeavor of creating educated Indian women. If a girl passes her 12th class exam, she is further supported monetarily to pursue higher education, an even rarer opportunity for women. In this way the ashram functions as a social bubble that counteracts the realities of poverty while opposing the notion that girls are less valuable than boys; however, there is tension in the bubble when it comes to defining the goals of education for girls. Is the purpose intended as an enhancement or expansion of traditional gender roles? On the one hand, the ashram provides an

alternative social space with opportunities that are unavailable to their peers living in nearby villages. On the other hand, this insulated environment is also seen by participants as a potential hinderance to gaining life experience in the “real world”. Participants wonder how these young women will be prepared for the expectations faced by Indian women once they leave the ashram. Which aspects of traditional gender roles are valuable and necessary to their socialization? Conversely, can socializing girls into a more “modern” gender role be detrimental as they attempt to assimilate into society? This tension is described in the subsequent sections.

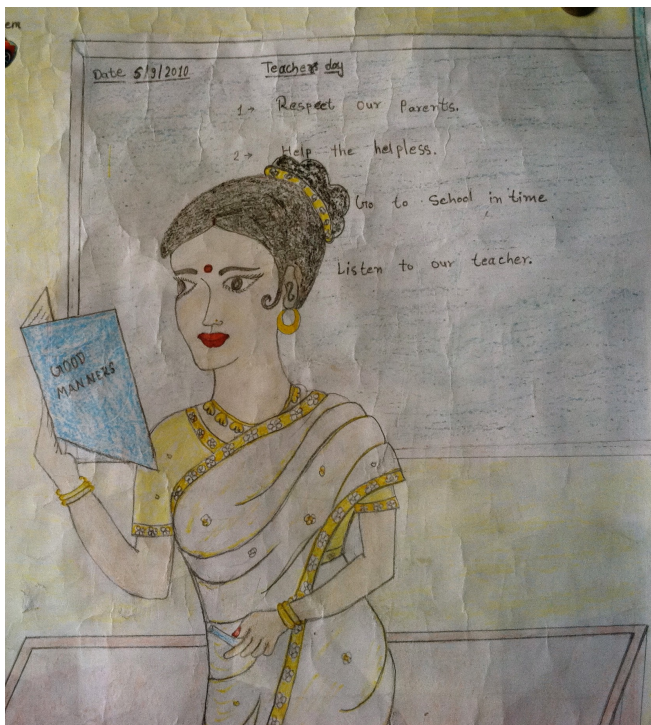
Enhancement

The second discourse positions education as an enhancement mechanism for accepted and expected social roles of wife and mother. In an enhancement discourse, education acts as an important factor in finding a “suitable match.” The education of a potential bride is seen as an asset that facilitates the characteristics of a well bred woman who displays appropriate “manners” and “can speak well.” These assets are associated with women who have gone to school. Potential grooms who are educated are associated with economic and social stability, and as participants stated, “An educated man wants an educated wife”. This view was reflected by a male school teacher at the ashram who believed strongly in educating girls in preparation for marriage. He stated that a goal of the ashram should be to create a reputation that the

girls living at the ashram make excellent brides so that, "...[men] will be lining up at the gate to marry our girls."

Formal education is also seen as preparing women to be effective mothers. Educated women are able to reinforce the rigors of schooling in the home for their own children. Furthermore, schooling is seen as a venue for training potential mothers and wives to be respectful of traditional values, such as respect for elders and subservience to the familial hierarchy. Thus, the title of "educated" that a woman receives by attending school signals a suitable bride, future wife and mother. This status is seen to enhance the social standing of the family she marries into.

This discourse is idealized in a drawing done by a non-orphan student at the school and prominently displayed on the school bulletin board. In it a female teacher is depicted holding a book entitled "Good Manners". The chalkboard lists proper



conduct for students, such as respecting their parents and teachers. The teacher is traditionally dressed in a sari, a single piece of material that women wrap and drape around themselves, invoking a more conservative and traditional view of women. She is also wearing gold bangles, earrings

and a necklace which connotes wealth. Judging from her appearance, she is unmarried since married women wear a red powder in their hair to signify their status. This educated Indian woman is not dressed in jeans or wearing her hair down, both associated with being more urban and modern. She is also following a rote teaching method of listing information for students on how to behave properly (See figure 2.) The drawing brings together multiple characteristics of a conservative educated woman.

In this example, it is significant that the teacher is engaged in the rote method of teaching that emphasizes behavior, rather than pedagogical approaches viewed as more “progressive” by the ashram community, such as project based learning. The emphasis in this approach is on a deferential nature on the part of the students while imparting information. This aligns with the goal of socializing students into appropriate deference for elders and authority. For girls, it acts as a model of the gender discourse that emphasizes education as a mechanism for placement within a family where they are expected to assume a subservient role. The rote method of teaching is considered the default approach at the ashram school. Locally known as “mugging up”³¹, students memorize vast amounts of information word for word for the sole purpose of test preparation. An extreme, but not uncommon, example of this sort of lesson will consist of a teacher copying text from a textbook onto a blackboard. Typically it is a set of questions with prefixed answers. The students in turn copy what the teacher has written into small notebooks, which are aptly referred

³¹ “Mugging up” refers to memorizing large amounts of curriculum content without comprehension of the material.

to as “copies”. Homework consists of writing the information down again, often multiple times. Evaluation consists of posing the exact questions that were given in hopes of eliciting the exact answers, word for word. In this scenario it is understood that the information given in the text is sacrosanct and the authority of the teacher is unquestionable. Comprehension of lesson content is not prioritized, and may well be overlooked, over the more powerful value of deference and respect for authority. This approach was extremely prevalent in the majority of the classrooms I observed. It was the rule, not the exception, that students would endeavor to memorize vast amounts of information without understanding the material.

Expansion

In the third discourse, participants discussed the “modern” Indian woman. Education is seen as a mechanism for fostering independence both in thought (creative thinking and problem solving) and economically, through gaining employment. In this discourse the ultimate goal of marriage is somewhat questioned, but still prevalent. Employment is seen an asset in marriage because the bride will(can) bring in additional income to her husbands family. Traditionally, when women join a family group through marriage they do not contribute monetarily to their birth families. In an expansion of this more common role, a girl can support her birth family after marriage, rather than being “married away”. This gives incentives toward education since it repositions women as being investments for their families of origin rather than liabilities. On one hand, the education of “modern” women supports

the value of using ones efforts to support and bolster the economic and social standing of the family group. On the other hand, there is a fostering of individual interest and independence to varying degrees.

This discourse can be thought of as an expansion of women's roles. It is aligned with how most foreign volunteers, and some Indian teachers, spoke about the education of the ashram girls. It was also a common description given by the girls living at the ashram when they discussed the role of education in their lives. This perspective is well captured by the comment of an American volunteer, who sits on the board of trustees for the organization. He stated that the ashram girls can be "anything they want" and elaborated that marriage is optional. A male Indian teacher at the school also stated in our interview that female students in general can, "...get married or work. Whatever they choose." Other female teachers that I spoke to at the school shared that view but were more pragmatic. They acknowledged that being given the opportunity to be educated and work outside the home was advantageous, but not at the expense of familial duties. Fulfilling one's role as wife, mother and daughter in law must not be sacrificed if a woman has to, or chooses to, work. In contrast, foreign volunteers from the United States or other countries did not place the same importance on marriage and family ties as a general rule. Education, therefore, was decoupled from marriage while establishing a career was foregrounded. Despite these variations in viewpoint, the role of education in this discourse was to expand the gender role to include some degree of autonomy outside the home.

The structure of activities and social life at the ashram supported this discourse which was tied intrinsically to completing as much formal education as possible. Young adults at the ashram who had passed the 12th class exams were supported monetarily and socially to go onto higher education and/or employment. The trustee board allocated funds in the ashram budget for just this purpose. During my ethnography, five girls who had grown up at the ashram were attending various colleges in the local area or as far away as Delhi (a four hour train ride). Their programs included nursing, social studies, and dentistry. One girl was studying for her business degree through correspondence school and three others had graduated from college and were employed as office workers in local businesses.³²

In addition, ashram girls were also socialized into non-traditional leadership roles. For example, a committee was formed to address issues that arose with the kitchen. The over 70 children that live at the ashram eat three times a day in the community dining hall. They sit in rows on the floor as food is passed out onto their stainless steel plates, or “talis”. In weekly meetings, two of the young women and ashram staff members addressed issues such as complaints about food quality, the timing of meals in relationship to school and ashram activities, and the organizing of special event or holiday meals. In another example, one of the older girls was put in charge of organizing “summer camp” activities in collaboration with an American educator. She over saw the other children who lived at the ashram in activity based learning such as hands on science projects and student written and performed theater.

³² I interviewed five of these eight young women as a part of my study.

Preparing girls for higher education and options beyond domestic life was associated with more “progressive” and “modern” educational approaches. Constructivist pedagogy views students as active participants in learning. The educators who employed this method, almost exclusively foreign volunteers, guide students to ask questions, supply creative answers, and participate in project based activities. These educators also openly solicited responses that question the absolute authority of the teacher or instructor and establish learners as independent thinkers. On an official level³³ such educational approaches were in alignment with instruction at the ashram school; however, teachers tended to refrain from actualizing them in the classroom. This resulted in part from a tension between newly introduced constructivist teaching methods, that embodied the discourse for expansion, and the deeply rooted cultural traditions that centered the enhancement discourse of existing gender roles.

For example, at a school meeting with the Indian teachers, an American educator and board member voiced his conviction that, “They [students] know more than us[teachers].” This reflected his educational perspective that knowledge rests in the students, and teachers act as guides in the learning process. However, it is contradictory to the prevalent conviction within the ashram school and broader Indian community that teachers occupy nearly reverential status in relationship to students.

“Guru is God” or “Guru is like God” are common expressions. In fact the word guru,

³³ Although the rote method is dominant, there is a national policy effort to introduce more progressive teaching methods into Indian schools which impacts the ashram. Specifically, training was being conducted during the study via the Central Board of Secondary Education, the credentialing organization of which the ashram school is affiliated.

which means teacher, is synonymous with spiritual guide and has religious connotations. From this perspective, placing students in the more knowledgeable role in the learning relationship seems nonsensical, but it is such tension; in fact, that the ashram girls must navigate as they encounter learning.

Pedagogy for Enhancement or Expansion?

These distinct discourses on teaching and learning at the ashram, and the associated conceptions of gender, were often in tension with one another. Girls are prompted to engage in activity based learning while forming opinions on a given subject by volunteers, and the same day are expected to display deference for the authority of their Indian teachers who follow a more rote method. Girls are aware of the distinct pedagogical approaches foregrounded in the educational settings of the ashram and school. Rani, an 18 year old studying business at a college in Deradhun, started at SRVM in nursery class. She recollected her experiences growing up at the ashram.

Steven bhai³⁴ [a foreign volunteer] showed us how a prism works with a real prism. In school they never show. I only learn in summer camp. This is the minus point in school. If you only memorize the answer then if you forget one part then the whole answer gets messed up. If you do practical [activity] then when you read about it, it will be easier to understand because you know how to do it.

³⁴ Hindi word meaning older brother, common respectful title given to foreign volunteers.

This juxtaposition between an emphasis on practical application versus theoretical knowledge characterizes the girls perspective of the tension between educational approaches. For example, Tarini was an excellent student at the top of her class. Her homework assignment required her to convert units into the metric system. She was easily able to complete the formulaic steps to produce a correct answer. As she filled in her workbook, she asked me, “Didi³⁵, what does millimeter mean?” We spent time discussing the basic concept in various ways. We used graph paper to understand increasing and decreasing units of measurement, and then used a ruler to trace our fingers against the different notches. As she further questioned me about larger units, i.e., centimeter, decimeter, and so forth, we transitioned outside and use the playground to explore the concept. After about 20 minutes, she stated in a finalized tone, “Now didi we must finish the homework.” She turned back to her workbook, and began checking her answers which were supplied in the back.

Tarini, turned to me, a foreign volunteer educator, in order to understand the concepts behind her assignment. However, she knew that expectations from school prioritize following the assignment to the letter and getting the correct answer. Her attitude conveyed that constructing knowledge could potentially take away from competing notions of schooling success, but her willingness to engage spoke to the instilled value of constructivist approaches within the educational culture of the ashram.

³⁵ Hindi word meaning older sister, common respectful title given to foreign volunteers.

Girls are called upon to perform contrasting conceptions of gender in educational contexts. For example, a series of sex education classes provided for the ashram girls by an American volunteer. During these sessions, ashram girls were prompted to imagine their own responses to potentially dangerous situations of sexual harassment and assault. The volunteer, Joan³⁶, was a pediatrician raised and educated in the U.S. who was staying at the ashram for several weeks with her husband and two children. She was approached by the director of the orphanage to teach the girls about their bodies, the particulars of the reproductive system, and how to guard against sexual assault. This was done over a series of meetings with different age groups. In my interview with Joan, she stated that her main goal for these sessions was to foster the ability to be independent in thought and action when dealing with the opposite sex. She wanted them to learn that, “They don’t let others (men) push them around....For the girls to know there are boundaries and that they can talk back is so important.” Joan did not speak Hindi and all the educational sessions were conducted in English. An older girl often acted as a translator to younger or less English fluent sisters when needed.

One evening I observed a meeting where Joan met with the older girls. They sat on the concrete floor in front of a small white board propped on a wooden bench next to the volunteer. One of the girls went to the window and made sure they were shut and the curtains drawn. The pediatrician used role playing as a way to teach defense against sexual assault. Girls were prompted to reject unwanted sexual

³⁶ An alias. All first names in this paper are aliases.

advances with loud direct speech. The girls were expected to shout, “Get away from me! Don’t touch me!” and other similar responses. “Don’t be afraid to make a scene,” encouraged Joan. I acted as a participant observer. I was removed from actively taking part in the directing of the session, until it was obvious to me that the girls felt uncomfortable with the approach that Joan was having them model. There was potential danger in straying from more widely accepted social norms of behavior. In a later interview, one of the girls commented that such direct statements would negatively impact her reputation. In addition, it is plausible, although ironic, that exhibiting such behavior could make the girls more vulnerable to attack even though it was the opposite intention of the volunteer.

Stepping out of my role of observer into participant, I asked the group, “Would you say that?” They answered, “No.” I asked, “What would you say?” I encouraged them to speak in Hindi in the role play. “What would you say in Hindi?” I asked. One of the older girls suggested, “Mat Karo,” which means, “Stop it (person of lower status)!” In Hindi, there are different forms of addressing another person based on their relationship to the speaker. Using a more formal form positions the speaker as deferential to whoever they are addressing, and conveys respect. Conversely the use of a less formal form can convey insult by demoting the status of the addressee in relationship to the speaker. In this way the girls sought to address the imaginary offender as beneath their status.

This example shows how the girls creatively negotiated between competing cultural expectations of gender embodied in a particular pedagogical approach. They

used less formal address as a way of creating social distance between a would-be attacker and themselves. This choice mediated the expectation of speaking up for oneself that the teacher, Joan, was asking for, and the common social norms of how Indian women act in public spaces.

There are numerous other examples of how girls are socialized within the enhancement discourse. The girls' field hockey team at the ashram school is highly successful; it placed third in a national level tournament during my stay. Despite there being hundreds of eligible girls for the team, it is comprised almost entirely of girls from the ashram. Only two of the sixteen players are from the local village. When the team competes in different districts and states, they are always accompanied by a female Indian teacher from the ashram school who acts as a chaperone, their male coach, and often one of their older ashram brothers. When they first began going on field trips, some of the ashram girls would approach and talk to male strangers without being introduced by an adult. This was considered extremely inappropriate behavior that perplexed the female chaperone. She asked, "Why are the girls talking to men?" Within the ashram community, the girls had been socialized to be open and friendly with the continuous stream of visitors who arrive as volunteers from many different countries. They also interact with boys and men on a regular basis. This is considered somewhat taboo and certainly unusual in the surrounding village communities where girls and women are more sequestered in the home and are expected to have little to no contact with men who are not related by blood or marriage. As a result, the ashram girls have come to learn that in contexts outside the

ashram they are expected to relate to others, specifically men, in a different manner. This requires that the girls enact different conceptions of gender appropriate behavior depending on the contexts that they find themselves in.

Conversely, when the team was first presented with shorts as a part of their uniforms, “Two of the girls hid in the bushes,” commented the orphanage director. In the surrounding villages women never reveal their legs in public, and the girls had never done so on the playing field. They felt uncomfortable and, in that instance, chose to resist a newly introduced gender norm. However, the girls team eventually embraced their uniforms and three years later even began wearing short sleeved jerseys as a statement of physical skill and confidence. “So you see how far we have come,” stated the orphanage director. Her statement shows the widespread conception of the girls’ behavior as lying on a continuum from conservative/traditional to less conservative/modern. More modern behavior is often portrayed as “better” but, as these examples show, can also be problematic and require girls to mediate between discourses depending on context.

The prevalent “expansion” discourse of a “modern” woman who realizes her independence through education is coupled, perhaps paradoxically at times, with the explicit value of respecting traditional culture and Indian customs within the orphanage. The ashram visitor handbook is written for foreign volunteers as preparation for their stay. The introduction reads,

The main goal of [the] ashram is to help raise these children in the highest traditions of Indian culture [my emphasis], and to help them take their place as productive members of Indian society.... While at [the] ashram, we are visitors in the permanent home of the children. We encourage guests to integrate into this experience. When we stay at the Ashram we join a large family and traditional ashram community that is functioning according to Indian culture. Our job is to understand their way of life and accept their routines and cultural rules by blending into the existing society as much as possible.

As this quote illustrates, a main goal of the ashram is to prepare children to become members of Indian society. Yet, they are not adopted out into Indian families as a means of integration, but remain at the ashram until adulthood. They grow up in a hybrid space co-directed by American and Indian volunteers where particular aspects of Indian culture are brought to the forefront.

For example, the ashram observes a plethora of Indian holidays and traditions including the observance of Kanya Puja, the worship of little girls as embodiments of the Hindu Goddess Durga. Traditionally in Northern India, those who observe this holiday seek out 9 girls to make offerings and ceremonially honor. Due to the skewed sex ratio in the area and other parts of the country, this can actually be a difficult religious duty to perform because of the lack of girl children. At the ashram, the ceremony is given special attention. In a celebratory atmosphere, all of the prepubescent girls take turns having their feet washed, a sign of reverence. They are then anointed, given gifts and fed special food. The importance placed upon the ceremony communicates two things; first, honoring traditional Indian culture is valuable, and second, the ashram chooses to highlight those practices which align with their mission of affirming and supporting girl children.

Despite the integrated nature of the ashram community on one level, the tension between methods of socialization and competing gender discourses are highlighted in the educational spaces of the ashram. This is clearly articulated by the orphanage director, an American woman who has lived part time at the ashram for over 20 years. She spoke to the inherent contradiction of providing educational resources and experiences that can be perceived as tangential, or even detrimental, to schooling:

First of all we [Americans] want education to be fun. We want it to be a warm, fuzzy experience. Second we want understanding of what we're learning and we want it to be more conceptual...So there I am faced with this decision... Is it better for them to work with a volunteer? They're going to learn English. They're going to learn spoken English. They're going to learn things that they're never going to learn in school. They're also probably not going to pass the exam or they're not going to get a good mark on the exam...Because in the end they have to answer to their education system. They have to get those good grades. It doesn't matter how smart we think Jeevani is. If she doesn't get a good percentage on her grades, she's not gonna go to a good college. It doesn't matter. Nothing else matters in the education system.

The girls certainly gain access to social capital through educational experiences from foreign volunteers and Indian teachers at the school. The question becomes, *how* do the girls place value on *whose* social capital in *which* situations? These educational experiences cannot be equated with the social identity imparted by a birth family which contains not only language, but caste, religion, class, and other social factors so important in the surrounding community. “Knowing your place” in the social hierarchy, and subsequently your relationship to others, is automatic for children with

parents. For the ashram children, the substitute mechanisms are relationships with ashram teachers and volunteers. Consequently, discourses on gender are not centralized in a biological family of origin. They are enacted and communicated by community members, including the girls themselves.

Conclusion: Educating orphan girls in a transnational space: A “mixed blessing” or a “challenging opportunity” ?

Within the unique space provided by the ashram community, orphan girls encounter multiple discourses of gender. Education in relationship to their trajectories in life is simultaneously presented as irrelevant to women, as a method of enhancement for traditional gender roles, and as a means for their expansion. The girls encounter points of tension and negotiation between the often opposing expectations of these discourses in formal and informal educational settings both within and outside the environment of the ashram.

Foreign volunteers function as a resource, particularly in providing instruction and exposure to the English language, an essential form of cultural capital necessary for continued success in the Indian school system and subsequently employment.³⁷ At the same time, a deep irony exists. As well as being a resource, foreign volunteers

³⁷ As Kishori, a 16 year old ashram girl with a talent in field hockey stated, “English is commercial language in India. If we speak in Hindi to them [employers] they will think we are not really good for the job. So we speak first in English.” In addition, the ashram school is designated as an English medium school, meaning that the majority of assessment takes place in English, and, ideally, instruction as well.

provide instruction that contradicts the established practices at the school, and can come into conflict with cultural expectations for women within Indian society. Prioritizing constructivist learning for ashram students is in direct conflict with the approach of rote learning that is deeply entrenched within the formal classroom. It is evident that engrained with these contrasting pedagogical approaches are underlying assumptions about the purpose of education, and the sort of educated person that is being produced. This includes the ways in which pedagogical approaches are associated with particular conceptions of gender.

In this way outcomes of education, broadly defined as resulting from experiences within and outside the formal classroom, are characterized by ambiguity. Which components of their educational experiences will translate into benefit and which into liability? Whose cultural capital is more important? In what ways does socializing orphan girls to occupy non traditional gender roles in society enable and/or constrict their life options? What is appropriate given the social spaces they may occupy in the future?

This dilemma is one that not only orphans face. Communities across the globe debate the role of education in producing educated individuals. In India, the question can be phrased as, “What constitutes appropriate and beneficial priorities for education, i.e. the socialization of children, in Indian society?” However, the struggle over such a question is highlighted in situations where dramatic changes in social positioning are undertaken. For the most part orphan girls, particularly those

abandoned at birth, leave behind ties to families of origin and the accompanying social placement. In one sense this creates an open space, untethered to a particular social position from birth. It is also a deficit space given that without preset familial affiliation orphans are generally perceived as social enigmas at the lowest position in the social hierarchy. In place of the family of origin, are the transnational actors: foreign volunteers, caretakers, and Indian nationals. On one level, integration into society for these girls is open ended, dependent upon the convergence of forces with the particular context of the ashram. On another level, it is constrained by those same forces that manifest in competing conceptions of what it means to be an educated Indian woman.

Karlekar (2000), in her assessment of access to education for girls in India, puts forth that the impact of gender trumps other social categories when it comes to schooling.

By and large, irrespective of caste, religion and overall socio-economic background, views on femininity and feminine roles often come into conflict with the goals of education: for their survival and unity family build on the nurturant and docile aspects of femininity which is quite contrary to the ideal goal of learning which stress a certain independence of thought, spirit of enquiry and at a more mundane level, relating to peers and developing non-familial loyalties (p.90).

The environment of the NGO community responds to this phenomenon by providing a sheltered space that supports their schooling based on the conviction that without schooling life options for girls are limited. The girls are also aware of a “traditional”

gender role that is enhanced through education. Yet, the dominant discourse at the ashram is the education of a “modern” woman who has the individual authority to choose her life path. The girls often find creative ways to negotiate these competing expectations. They contest, align, negotiate and reinforce multiple and sometimes overlapping conceptions of both who they may be, in terms of subject position, and in what way learning takes place and is evidenced.

Rather than experiencing the negation of one discourse over another, the girls are a part of an improvised enactment of what might be called a third space. The special status of the orphan girls as untethered from society allows them to bypass predetermined social placement and accompanying gender roles. This is both potentially hazardous and potentially liberating. Chudgar (2008) uses Coleman’s notion of “social capital” to discuss influences on familial decisions about educating girls in India. She highlights that social capital, while facilitating certain actions, also constrains others. “Once we acknowledge that through these norms and traditions the context may constrain certain actions, it is also easy to recognize that in a male dominated society, many of these traditions and common practices more readily limit the school participation of girls compared to boys” (p. 202). Similarly I highlight how certain possibilities are constrained, or points of friction are encountered, through acquiring social capital that contradicts more pervasive gender norms outside the ashram.

As the ashram girls become adults they navigate a social limbo that comes with a realm of possibilities. Unlike non-orphans whose life paths tend to be set by

their birth family, their special status allows them to creatively enact gender drawing from and/or resisting the discourses modeled and circulated within the community. Given the often tragic beginnings of the girls, their story is an incredible one. Survival is followed by navigation of an uncertain social world whose limits, opportunities, and expectations for women are communicated through the collective efforts of volunteers and educators from opposite sides of the world.

In an increasingly connected world, the ashram is one example of a transnational educational collaboration. Although it is a unique community, and the position occupied by the girls makes distinct their negotiation within and between discourses, such tensions in educational settings are not a social anomaly. Issues of power are inherent in the struggle over meaning and purpose in diverse societies where schooling is seen as a primary social mechanism, and often a panacea, for addressing social ills. (Apple, 2003, Labaree 1997, Tyack and Cuban 1995). Schools and communities around the world undertake the work of creating educated people while encountering influences that transcend national borders (Levinson & Holland, 1996). Baker and Letendre (2005) state, “Although on a political level schooling is a national enterprise, the essential educational activities of curricula, teaching and administration are shaped not just by local and national influences but increasingly by transnational forces” (p.xi). International development efforts in particular are an amalgamation of political and social agendas from around the world. The education of women in the global south, framed in terms of development, is a focus of international collaborations.

Mainstream development literature concerning the education of women tends to address the need for distribution of material resources, or evaluates the extent to which international education policies provide educational opportunities and institutionalized support for women and girls (Kabeer, 1994, 2005, Mundy, 2006). Although important and immediate issues that command attention, their discussion is often embedded in the default assumption that schools are politically and socially neutral spaces. Equally vital to institutionalized support is the need to consciously make visible and deconstruct the subjective affects of education such as those described in this paper.

Fundamentally, education is a site of contestation over social, political, and moral goals. Subsequently, the everyday reality of schools such as physical layout, pedagogy, curriculum, logistical organization and so forth, reflect this ongoing dispute. The explicit and tacit purposes of educating individuals in a given context results in particular decisions about how schooling manifests, such as the allocation of resources or the pedagogical approach taken. In addition, those purposes evoke a particular vision of what constitutes an educated person that are evidenced in the discourses of the educational community. Rege (1995) brings to our attention how feminist pedagogies raise the important questions about how knowledge has been/is constituted, by whom, for whom and for what purpose, and answers to these are sought through the interrelations and mediations between personal experiences, subject area and their social and political contexts. When approaching subjects like education she states, “Standpoints that homogenize ‘women’ as an analytical category

do not hold ground in the Indian context. A feminist standpoint of interlocking oppressions that would recognize the complex mediations between caste, class, ethnic and gender oppression would be more connected to the living and the concrete” (p. 224-5) Similarly, Chanana (2003) argues that it is impossible to view women’s education in India without reference to the social context, and that it is not possible to remain confined to the structural characteristics of education as an institution, or merely to look at the growth or absence of development from an economic viewpoint.

When we ask, “Education for marginalized women by whom? To what purposes? In what circumstances?”³⁸ we reframe the discussion. Education is thus viewed as a value laden contested cultural space. The necessity of improving the lives of marginalized women through providing the physical and more easily quantifiable aspects of education can overshadow a critical awareness of goal setting and subsequent value choices that occur in proliferating educational institutions.

Actors engaging in international collaborations to develop educational opportunities for women must consider the multiple discourses surrounding social factors, such as gender, that arise from the local cultural landscape and beyond. They must articulate a position in relationship to them and be prepared to directly address the implications. This paper advocates for a conscious response to these complexities because they exist regardless of whether or not they are acknowledged. If unacknowledged, an unconscious position is undertaken in any case. This shift in

³⁸ This draws from Smith, L. T., in *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999) who asks, “Who writes? For whom is the writing being done? In what circumstances (p. 37)?”

attention has to go hand in hand with dialoguing with women in marginalized communities themselves.

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Conclusion: Transnational Hybridity: (Re)constructing education for orphan girls in rural north India.

As this dissertation illustrates, the sociological sphere³⁹ deeply impacts the educational experiences and life trajectories of orphan girls at Sri Ram ashram. The unique web of relationships and social practices at the ashram reflect local, national, and transnational forces. These are woven together to create hybrid learning environments and processes that contribute to the cultural production of the “educated Indian woman”. Ashram girls draw from and negotiate these various, and often disparate, educational ideals in order to (re)construct their notions of an educated self. This process is underpinned by an strong ethic of care within the ashram community which foregrounds caring relationships, alternative forms of socialization, and a focus on bolstering the status of girls in particular. These often unscrutinized and intangible aspects of girl’s lived realities are central to understanding how education, broadly defined, plays a role in the successful integration of ashram girls into Indian society. The three chapters that constitute this dissertation stand alone in their specific arguments, but also compliment one another by portraying the educational experiences of orphan girls and the context that surrounds them on global, national

³⁹The sociological sphere consists of the intimate relationships that underlie the more visible groups and associations of society. It also includes the cultural knowledge, skills and resources that are accessed through those connections. This concept draws from the work of Simmel (See Nisbet, 2004).

and local levels. Attention to various social factors that influence educational experiences and outcomes is called for in all three papers, such as how the global discourse concerning women's education lacks emphasis of the sociological sphere that impacts women's educational experiences; the historical, cultural and structural traditions within the ashram school come into conflict with national reforms; and, how girls are socialized into, and navigate, multiple notions of being educated highlights the connection between educational experiences, outcomes *and* the social construction of gender.

The first paper, "The missing sociological sphere: Development framing and the education of orphan girls in rural north India," argues that the dominant development paradigm fails to adequately take into account the sociological dimension of women's lives and how it impacts their educational outcomes. The Women In Development (WID) approach (Unterhalter, 2005), frames women's education primarily as a vehicle for, and aspect of, global economic development. In contrast, the paper shows that in a highly stratified society such as India, for ashram girls to transition from traditional to non-traditional gender roles requires access to social capital and alternative forms of socialization *in addition to* formal schooling. The sociological frame proposed challenges the notion that the education of women in developing countries can be reduced to economic gain or loss.

The second paper, "Hitching a mercedes to a bullock cart: Pedagogical tensions at a school for orphans in rural North India," bridges the national perspective

on pedagogical and curricular reform with the impact of those mandates at the ashram school. It highlights the mismatch that exists between the intention of national policy and the historical, cultural and structural context of the school. This leads to resistance in the adoption of constructivist teaching methods by Indian teachers. The paper calls for acknowledgement that such reforms are fundamentally sites of political and cultural struggle that simultaneously have the potential to ameliorate or further engrain social inequities that impact the lives of marginalized students.

The final paper, “Creating gender for/from the margins: Competing educational discourses for orphan girls in rural north India,” reveals how orphan girls navigate conceptions of gender embedded within disparate educational discourses at the ashram. Girls encounter three discourses: 1) Education as Irrelevant; schooling for girls is unnecessary to traditional gender roles. 2) Education for Enhancement; formal schooling prepares women for marriage and motherhood thereby enhancing existing gender roles. 3) Education for Expansion; formal education offers an expansion of woman’s roles and life options.

Tension exists between notions of gender modeled by two pedagogical approaches. The emphasis of the rote method connected to the enhancement discourse requires deference to authority from students, and perpetuates the gender discourse that emphasizes education as a mechanism to support traditional gender roles, i.e., creating mothers and wives. In contrast, constructivist teaching practices connected to the expansion discourse foreground independence and creative initiative in thought

and action within the highly resourced and insulated environment of the ashram. Through these practices, girls are socialized to embody more “modern” gender roles that include higher education and employment.

Rather paradoxically, the community enables girls to manifest this independent vision, in part, through living with foreigners in order to become more interconnected and situated within Indian society.⁴⁰ Members of the community openly question the simultaneous benefits and/or liabilities of raising orphans in a transnational space where social identity and position for girls are (re)invented with the collaborative influences of foreign volunteers and Indian nationals. As Dutch, an American educator and trustee member of the ashram asked, “Is being raised by Americans a mixed blessing or a challenging opportunity?”

These three threads when woven together create a portrait of educational spaces that draw not only from forces on the local and national levels, but the transnational (Cohen, 2011; Mundy & Murphy, 2001; Smith, 2001; Unterhalter, 2000) as well. At the ashram this is evidenced in multiple ways; such as, the mismatch between national reform efforts that draws from western teaching theories transplanted into the rural school setting of the ashram. We can also look at the sources of social capital that the girls draw from in order to access educational opportunities, i.e., the Indian dentist from the United states who mentors and

⁴⁰ It is helpful to think of their educational experiences as existing within a community of practice model of education (Wenger, 1999) which better reflects the impact of educational actors in the ashram community.

financially supports the aspiring dental student. More fundamentally, the nature of the educational environments, experiences, and discourses at Sri Ram Ashram are constituted by international, national and local actors and ideologies. The girls draw from hybrid social capital, and endeavor to meet hybrid educational expectations. The ambiguity that permeates the community as to the appropriateness of pedagogical approaches points to the hybrid constitution of educational endeavors at the ashram that are in constant negotiation. Indeed, this notion of hybridity expands theoretical understanding of the processes and environments within which marginalized populations experience education. It moves beyond a localized or nationally bounded space into a transnational domain.

Transnational hybridity: Weaving together notions of the educated Indian woman

The concept of hybridity captures the struggle of translation, border crossings, and difference in contexts where cultural and linguistic practices, histories, and epistemologies collide (Anzaldúa, 1987). To varying degrees, this is evident in all educational settings. As Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejeda state, (1999) “Hybridity in learning contexts is ubiquitous”(p.288). At the classroom level, teachers and students contribute to and engage in various and often oppositional practices that come into tension with each other. According to the authors, these inevitably result in new hybrid activities that transform classroom practice. I extend this concept of

hybridity to include formal and informal learning spaces⁴¹ that are impacted by transnational forces both immediate to, and removed from, the lives of ashram girls. In addition, I point out how these educational spaces contribute to multiple epistemological stances that the girls embody in dialogic response to various social spaces that they encounter within and outside of the ashram setting.

The ways in which transnational forces converge to create a hybrid educational space are highlighted in the work of this dissertation. Indeed, schools and communities around the world undertake the work of creating educated people while encountering influences that transcend national borders (Levinson & Holland, 1996). However, the experiences of orphan girls at SRA provide a window into the nature of this process that is more distinct. This is because the girls, particularly those abandoned at birth, leave behind ties to families of origin and the accompanying social placement. In one sense this creates an open space, untethered to a particular social position from birth. It is also a deficit space given that without preset familial affiliation orphans are generally perceived as social enigmas at the lowest position in the social hierarchy. In place of the family of origin, are the transnational actors: foreign volunteers, caretakers, and indian nationals.

The educational spaces at the ashram draw from sources that extend beyond the local and national. As a result they contain a mix of social practices, discourses,

⁴¹ In both spaces only some practices may be officially labeled as “learning”, but all social practices brought to bear in these settings impact educational experiences of students. In addition, they make visible the overlapping, interwoven and hybrid nature of education.

and ways of being. This quality of the education at SRA is neither benign nor solely problematic, but rather, characterized by points of tension and disruption in the normative social practices and ways of being that are dominant within the local context of the school and surrounding village communities. This dynamic can be viewed as primarily negative because it is in opposition to the status quo; however, it is ultimately transformative. Ashram girls respond to these ruptures through producing hybrid practices and ways of being that manifest in learning contexts and beyond. These responses are not random mixtures consisting of monolithic cultural artifacts, but consist of social practices, language, and ways of being that are repurposed to create new meaning as a constitutive element of a new set of practices. It is within this dynamic of transnational hybridity that actors within the community struggle to define and redefine notions of the educated Indian woman.

From one point of view, integration into society for these girls is open ended, dependent upon the convergence of forces with the particular context of the ashram. Simultaneously, it is constrained by those same forces that manifest in competing conceptions of what it means to be an educated Indian woman. The girls are a part of an improvised enactment of what might be called a space of (re)construction surrounded by the multiple voices that influence how they create new practices and meanings. The special status of the orphan girls as untethered from society allows them to bypass predetermined social placement and accompanying gender roles. This is both potentially hazardous and potentially liberating. It is a piecing together of an

identity, of a way of being, that may or may not translate into different contexts. It may or may not result in notions of educational success or embodiments of gender that result in integration into society. In other words, these improvised epistemological standpoints may or may not be recognized as valid ways of being.

To consider the process that the ashram girls undertake, I borrow from Levi-Strauss (1966) who uses the term “bricolage” to describe how symbolic elements organize the mental representations of systems of which they are a part. Through bricolage the actor gathers various objects, which I broadly define here as social practices, language, and concepts that are conveyed through formal and informal educational spaces. Each element, once an actor decides to use it, suggests some plans and rejects others, just as each symbolic element suggests some interpretation not of itself, but of the set in which it finds its place. “[the actor engaged in bricolage] interrogates all the heterogeneous objects of which his treasury is composed to discover what each of them could “signify” and so contribute to the definition of a set which has yet to materialize” (p.18). These repurposed “objects” are the limiting factor, the material through which individuals piece together an vision of self in relation to the world. They may have served a different function in the past, but in creating the bricolage, disparate elements come together to not just constitute, but to shape the function and meaning of the new creation. The purpose of these pieces are re-envisioned and take on new functions in response to the social settings in which actors find themselves struggling to find place.

For example, as discussed in the final paper, “Creating gender for/from the margins: Competing educational discourses for orphan girls in rural north India,” orphan girls encounter multiple gender discourses with the educational settings of Sri Ram Ashram that influence their sense of self. They learn that the definition of an “educated Indian woman” varies in different contexts and with different members of the community, such as, a male teacher at the ashram school who views education for women as preparation for marriage and motherhood. This may be in contrast with a female American volunteer who sees education as a tool for independence and establishing a career. Particular pedagogical approaches are foregrounded by the Indian teacher and the American volunteer that reflect their varying objectives. In one educational setting students are prompted to engage in activity based learning with the teacher assuming a periphery role, and in another girls are expected to adhere to strict rules of conduct that value deference and respect for authority.

The girls draw from these discourses but do not necessarily privilege one over the other as they create their sense of self. Rather, they develop multiple epistemological perspectives, rather than forging one static sense of self or positionally that applies at all times. Ladson-Billings (2000) describes multiple consciousnesses as the phenomena of inhabiting multiple perspectives, multiple ways of knowing, that are in alignment with and in contrast to dominant paradigms. These subject positions are in strategic flux, similar to the idea of differential consciousness described by Sandoval (2000). How marginalized students such as the ashram girls

encounter and engage with this hybrid educational space is dialogic and constantly shaped and reshaped by the circumstances of interaction. In other words, the multiple standpoints that girls inhabit change in response to the situation. Linde (1993) conveys the dialogic nature of forming and sustaining identity through the analogy of a cloud of butterflies.

An image that may clarify the type of entity being defined is a cloud of butterflies moving across a garden. Some butterflies drop out and others join in; each butterfly constantly changes its own position slightly within the cloud, and the entire cloud moves, too. If we can recognize such a cloud as an entity, we should also be able to recognize the life story as one (p. 36).

The cloud of butterflies moves through an environment that is shaped by transnational social forces. Learning environments at SRA are directly influenced by foreign volunteers who bring their own educational epistemologies rooted in their countries of origin. At the same time Indian educational policy reform, which draws from western education theory, impacts the ashram school. The social capital that girls draw from as they navigate educational and career trajectories come from both local and international volunteers at the ashram. Thus, transnational hybridity characterizes the process of socialization that the girls encounter as they engage in this bricolage.

This work illustrates how education functions to socialize students into ways of being, rather than disseminate information or skills that are divorced from social

reality. For marginalized students such as the ashram girls, this is a dubious journey because there is little consensus on the proper goals of socialization to be attained, and even less consensus on the correct configuration of social practices to attain a particular goal. The decisions about what to teach, how, and for what purpose are consequential to the educated person that is created. It also points to a vision of a future that they enter into. Girls at SRA do not grow up in an environment inevitable in its configuration of social practices and perspectives. They could be socialized exclusively into traditional Indian gender roles, or raised to be disconnected from Indian cultural heritage. Instead the nature of their education draws from a mixture of cultural mores that often exist in tension with one another, and that result in ways of being that are subsequently shaped by contextual factors.

Implications for Policy and Research

As has been discussed in this dissertation, the global policy conversation surrounding education for marginalized students, such as the girls at SRA, tends to see education as the accumulation of skills and information that can be utilized in the workplace. In general, education is portrayed as politically and socially neutral, and as the sum of quantifiable outcomes. In contrast, the work of this dissertation characterizes education as a social process where local, national and transnational discourses contribute to the hybrid educational environment of marginalized students.

These forces influence the value laden decisions concerning the nature of education and consequently the cultural production of educated persons. The particular configuration of the ashram community and its educational spaces are unique; however, implications for policy and research go far beyond its specific setting.

Recently, controversy over the function of orphanages around the world has sparked debate over their very existence as viable options for children. Concerns have been raised over the ethical considerations of establishing and sustaining international support for orphanages, as well as evidence of the harmful affects of institutionalization on children. In particular, critics cite the exploitation of children for profit through the “voluntourism” phenomena,⁴² and the neglect of children in under-resourced settings. They call for the reintegration of children back into their families of origin or other community based options for care. Examples of abuse and exploitation lead to the generalization that orphanages are by definition harmful to children in all countries and situations⁴³.

The community at Sri Ram Ashram provides a counter narrative to this discourse. Orphanages cannot be characterized as detrimental to children in all instances. This black and white approach overshadows the important question of, “What does a well functioning and ethical environment for orphan children look like?” In addition, we need to consider the mechanisms that create meaningful

⁴² See <http://globalsl.org/why-unesf-and-save-the-children-are-against-you-caring-for-orphans/>

⁴³ See <http://orphanages.no/research.html>

educational engagement and socialization. The work of this dissertation provides a timely example of a successful transnational collaboration. This is due to several factors.

Primarily, the community raises children based upon a particular ethics of care. The culture of the ashram foregrounds providing emotional and psychological support through loving relationships as a foundation for their growth. This is evidenced through the familial atmosphere of the ashram where children are not adopted out but remain within the ashram family until adulthood. Children that come to live at SRA are taken in because they do not have other options for care, and for the most part they are divorced from their biological families of origin due to abandonment. This creates the necessity of establishing a family environment that is highly structured in order to create a secure environment. The presence and involvement of caring adults, whether Indian or foreign volunteers, provide stability through long term relationships of care. This foundational value of caring relationships permeates the work of the ashram, while physical necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter, and medical access are simultaneously provided. Education is viewed as a subsequent and vital aspect of raising the children. The NGO works from the belief that without a loving home and attention to basic needs, schooling alone has little chance of providing the support needed for orphan children to thrive.

In addition, the work of this dissertation shows how orphan girls depend upon the unique web of relationships and social practices that constitute the sociological

sphere at the ashram in order to realize notions of educational success. Their educational environments, whether within the ashram school or the informal learning spaces of the residential section, are impacted by local, national and transnational forces. Ashram girls draw from and negotiate these hybrid learning environments and processes that contribute to the cultural production of the “educated Indian woman”. This (re)construction of their role in society cannot take place through traditional schooling alone, but relies on a dynamic and dialogic relationship with competing social discourses.

Educational development policy strives to integrate marginalized populations into schools around the globe. The dominant economic discourse emphasizes access and parity, while omitting the impact of the sociological sphere on the educational experiences of students. What this dissertation shows is that marginalized students are heavily impacted by the context of social relationships and practices that can contribute to their radical process of transition and transformation as they engage with society. These relationships take on such great importance for marginalized students because education is a process that requires engagement with, and production of, hybrid practices and ways of being.

On a practical level, the social factors that come into play for girls at Sri Ram Ashram result in the very outcomes that global educational policy discourse seeks to accomplish. Girls at SRA complete their primary and secondary schooling. They go on to higher education, employment and become productive members of society. In

order to achieve these goals, policy makers should pay attention to several factors: 1) The impact of social capital and the network of relationships outside of the formal school setting that provide various types of support in immediate and pertinent ways. These include academic and financial support, as well as mentorship and pathways to employment. 2) The role of the ashram community in developing communal and personal notions of the educated woman that (re)constructs educational goals and outcomes. 3) How an explicit ethic of care is foundational to the socialization of marginalized students, including orphans.

One challenge for policy makers and practitioners is to shift the view of school as the container of extra local knowledge that is transmitted to students (and subsequently their communities), to one of multiple settings where educational journeys of (re)construction take place. This process of reconstruction is informed by local, national and transnational social forces, and has the potential to reinvent social placement and notions of the educated self for students.

Within SRA, orphan girls do indeed move between the competing sites of cultural production in the formal learning environments of the school and the more informal setting of the ashram residence. Teachers and students simultaneously produce practices and engage in discourse consonant with, and challenging to, local cultural notions of the “educated person”, and in alignment or conflict with the schooling enterprise and the formally “educated” person it is said to create. However, the school cannot be characterized as the exclusive site of extra local knowledge and

social practices. This idea of the school as an extra local setting, coupled with the framing of the environment outside the immediate borders of the school as the exclusive site of local notions of the educated person, creates a false dichotomy. This framing is evoked when schools are viewed as the only site of importation of alternative ways of thinking and being, but for students such as ashram girls the ways of knowing within the “home” of SRA consist of cultural knowledge imported from transnational sources. Thus, for ashram girls the “home” setting also consists of social practices and ways of being imported from other sites of cultural production. In this way, the creative practice of students and other actors generates understandings and strategies that exist within, and move beyond, the school.

Concerning marginalized students, democratic nations traditionally assign the double task of transmitting knowledge and forming citizens through a cultural orientation seen as constitutive of a given society, but in reality consist of dominant educational discourses that negate or overlook alternative orientations that interact with institutional discourse to form the practice of education. This lack of recognition translates into schooling as assimilation and integration (Gobbo & Anderson-Levitt, 2015). In addition to acknowledging the impact of alternative epistemologies, cultural orientations, and social practices that are brought to the classroom, policy makers must also take into account the ways in which these orientations come into being through the interplay of transnational forces such as those discussed in this dissertation.

When education is viewed as a social process, rather than the neutral transmission of knowledge, then learning is seen as the incorporation of social practices into an individuals' epistemological makeup. It is then that the struggle over meaning and priorities that is inherent in educational spaces becomes apparent. What this work highlights is the collective building of an educational environment for marginalized students from the ground up. It also explores the role of transnational forces in that construction, and the consequential impact of this hybrid environment on the ways of being and knowing that marginalized students come to embody. The resulting tensions within the SRA community around how to define valid educational means and ends are evidence of this struggle over educational form and function.

Additional research is needed to explore the ways in which educational discourses stretch and transform across borders, and into sites of learning. Ethnographic studies that investigate the cultural production of educated persons characterize this process as existing between the dominant educational discourses purveyed in schools and formal curricula, and alternative local conceptions of the educated person (Levinson and Holland, 1996).

Education is a contested space whether regarding the political nature of the global discourse of women's education, the tensions over pedagogical reform, or the negotiation of gender roles embodied in approaches to learning. On global, national, and local levels communities and societies engage in dialectical debate around the purpose of schooling and the form it takes. This includes the prioritizing of

educational goals, such as the intended characteristics of students created through the socializing function of education. In other words, what constitutes the educated person? What forms of knowledge are valid? How does this translate into the tangible forms of schooling such as resource distribution, curriculum, and pedagogy? More fundamentally, who decides?

The hybrid nature of educational discourses at SRA, although particular in its configuration, is not an isolated phenomena. All cultures develop models of how one becomes a fully “knowledgeable” person, endowed with maximum cultural capital. The role of formal education within the matrix of social forces is both potentially enabling and limiting. Schools can reinforce social stratification or facilitate social mobility, or both at once. Transforming an individuals position in society occurs within the established structures of inequity, and includes reinventing and working within social categories, such as gender. In an increasingly interconnected world, communities around the globe are influenced by transnational forces as they grapple with fundamental questions of purpose in education. The answers and responses can often be unconscious, manifesting in implicit and visibly explicit ways that lead to reinforcement of the status quo. Our responses can also be a conscious effort to alleviate inequities. From conscious reflection and acknowledgement of the political struggles present in education there is transformative potential for action that can ameliorate the educational experiences of women and all marginalized groups.

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Appendix A- Methods

Introduction

This dissertation examines discourses that affect the educational experiences of orphan girls at Sri Ram Ashram, an orphanage and school located in rural North India. In particular it investigates the interplay of social factors which influence conceptions of the “educated Indian woman”, and how educational norms are negotiated within a transnational⁴⁴ community where educators from (literally) opposite sides of the world contribute to the socialization of orphan girls. During the six month ethnography at the ashram, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How do various actors in the educational community, including (U.S.) volunteers, Indian teachers, and Indian students, participate in the cultural construction(s) of

⁴⁴ This term draws from Cohen (2011) who expands the definition of transnationalism from a single "field" that spans national borders to a focus on the processes by which that space is produced, and to which many sets of actors contribute.

what it means to be an “educated Indian woman” for orphan girls at an ashram⁴⁵ in rural northern India?

- a. Particularly, how do these participants negotiate, co-construct, and/or contest various discourses surrounding the educational norms of the community in relationship to underlying ideologies of gender, caste, class, and race?
2. How does the interplay of these discourses create, constrain, and/or influence how the older girls, who are completing or have completed their secondary education, construct/negotiate their own subjectivities of the “educated Indian woman”?

To answer these guiding questions, this dissertation employed ethnography as a methodological approach in order to gather two types of primary information. First, contextual information pertaining to the cultural, social, and institutional makeup of the setting shaped the experience and behaviors of the participants. The perceptions and subjectivities of participants could not be divorced from their context. Secondly, the study focused upon participants’ perceptions related to educational discourses and subjectivities. The research questions focused upon the assumptions, beliefs, and world views of the participants. Therefore, gathering of perceptual information was essential, including how the participants perceived the topic of education in relation to themselves and others.

⁴⁵ Ashram can be translated as home, and in this case should be thought of as a community center.

Given the research questions and the context of Sri Ram Ashram, the most appropriate means of data collection were through ethnographic techniques, primarily in-depth interviewing, participant observation, and examination of curricular materials. This process examined how participants talk about and experience educational contexts, in addition to the pedagogical approaches, texts and curricular tools that contribute to the environment. Employing these methods provided evidence for how participants perceived, articulated and enacted educational discourses in an effort to triangulate the sources of data.

This dissertation draws from in-depth interviewing and privileges the subjective meaning of participants who engage in the production of social life and human agency (Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999). The advantage of this approach lies in gaining deep and entailed understanding of social processes, and in discovering new concepts, categories, and issues (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which can lead to the development of theory. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), it is the quality of analysis and the extent to which it uncovers meanings and processes germane to the qualitative endeavor that produces theoretically relevant issues and explanations.

The characteristics of ethnography that were particularly appropriate for the work of this dissertation include: 1) providing an account of how the everyday practices of those engaged in educational processes are implicated in broader social relations, cultural, production and social reproduction 2) Taking place over time in order to allow a fuller range of empirical situations to be observed and analyzed 3)

focusing on a particular case in depth as a basis for generation of theory through the direct involvement and long-term engagement of the researcher, and 4) highlighting the agency of educational subjects (Troman, 2006). Ethnography involves research where the researcher is immersed in educational spaces through observation and participant observation. Researchers are important tools in the research process, as they acquaint themselves with educational settings through immersion in the daily lives of the participants. The ethnographers' selves are implicated in the research process, as they observe, learn, and understand local cultures through their own experiences in the field (Beach, Gordon & Lahelma, 2003). As Clifford and Marcus (1986) comment,

Ethnography is actively situated between powerful systems of meaning. It poses its questions at the boundaries of civilizations, cultures, classes, races and genders. Ethnography decodes and recodes, telling the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion. It describes processes of innovation and structuration, and is itself part of these processes (p.2).

Ethnography is thus about developing close-up descriptions of lives, identities, and activities through situated investigations with acknowledgement of the relationships of power inherent in the production of knowledge. In educational ethnography the process produces knowledge about educational conditions, practices and the perspectives of the participants involved in them.

In this study, basing research in the perspective of participants, particularly orphan girls, as a part of a larger discourse of educational norms is not meant as a means *and* an end. As Harding (1992) points out, to ground research in the perspectives of marginal peoples is not to take as the irrefutable grounds for knowledge what they say or interpretations of their experiences. Listening carefully to participants, with fairness, honesty, and detachment while trying to understand their life worlds are crucial first steps in gaining less partial and distorted accounts of the entire social order; but not the last step. Starting thought from marginal lives is not intended to provide an interpretation of those lives but instead a causal, critical account of the regularities of the natural and social worlds and their underlying causal tendencies. In this way, the focus of research becomes formulating theory about the nature of the relationships that contribute to a marginalized perspective, rather than attempting to essentialize the experience and view of marginalized women. The most appropriate way to approach this objective is to become immersed in the discourses of the educational community through ethnography.

Data collection took place over the course of two trips in the fall of 2011 and the spring of 2012. It was at these times that the weather is more conducive to interacting with students and educators, traveling in rural areas is easier, and the older girls return home for festivals and holidays. During both trips, I lived full time in the children's home, fully immersed in the life of the community. I participated in all communal aspects of ashram life, eating everyday in the communal kitchen with the

children, and helping to chase the monkeys away when they invaded the girls' dormitory. I volunteered in the daily work, and regularly tutored students of various ages.

Beginning in late September, observations were first conducted within the informal learning spaces of the residential section. Curricular materials, professional development documents, and other pertinent texts were gathered, as I established relationships with the principal and teachers at the ashram school. I began volunteering at the school and leading informal English conversation groups with the teachers. I also established a blog to memo and document my experiences in conversation with my committee members. Observations within the formal classroom settings of Sri Ram Ashram ensued. Interviews with participants began in late October and took place throughout fieldwork. I returned to the U.S. in early December, and then returned to India in mid February to resume data collection. I continued to conduct interviews, observations, and collect and analyze pertinent documents. I returned to the U.S. in mid May, when initial organization of the large amount of data.

The following sections detail the methods that were employed in the gathering and analysis of data. First an overview of the setting and participants is provided, and the relationship of the researcher to the research setting. Then the methods of data collection are described in detail, followed by the methods of analysis. I then discuss ethical considerations that impact methodological approach connected to researcher

positionality, issues of researcher bias, and limitations of the study. The conclusion reviews the methodological approach of the dissertation.

Setting and Participants

Founded in 1984, the community center is located in the northern state of Uttarakhand, on 16 acres of farmland near the town of Haridwar. The ashram supports an orphanage for over 70 children, a school for over 500 children, the majority of whom come from local villages, and a charitable medical clinic that services the surrounding rural communities. The center is sponsored by a partnership between two non-profit organizations, Anath Shishu Palan Trust of India and the Sri Rama Foundation based in the United States. The work of the Foundation is primarily funded by private donations from individuals and organizations in the United States, Canada, Japan and India.

The local agrarian area is densely populated with over 1,500 people living within each square mile. Nearby farmers tend crops of wheat, rice or mustard, and many plow their fields by hand with oxen or bullock. Most roads are unpaved and frequented by rickshaws, motor scooters and bicycles. Electricity is unreliable, often cutting out several times, perhaps for several hours at a time, during the day and night. Most buildings are made out of concrete and may be one or two stories high; there is no indoor heating or air conditioning. At the orphanage, children benefit from

superior resources in comparison to much of the local population because they have access to superior facilities, clean water, basic healthcare, and nutritious food.

The orphanage includes residence halls for girls and boys, an office, a communal kitchen, and a dormitory for visiting guests. Caretakers who supervise the children include long term volunteers from Canada and the United States who reside in India for most or part of the year, Indian citizens, and a constantly rotating population of foreign volunteers from all over the world. Life at the orphanage is organized around the schedule of the school, field trips, and many holidays and religious events throughout the year. Children at the ashram are raised in the Hindu spiritual tradition, but the line can often blur between religious events and more secular celebrations.

Children come to live at the ashram due to multiple social factors. Some are brought by family members who could not care for them due to poverty. Others are found as infants left in fields or by the side of the road. Many arrive after being abandoned and having suffered severe physical and psychological abuse. After arriving at the ashram, children are not put up for adoption; they remain at the children's home until they reach adulthood aligning with the mission of raising children in a protective family environment and their eventual integration into Indian society. The children range in age from newborns to teenagers, and recently the first wave of college bound students has moved on to higher education, marriage, and/or employment.

The educational experiences of the ashram girls take place both in the more formal classroom environments of the school with Indian teachers, and the more informal setting of the ashram residence through activities and tutoring with foreign volunteers. These were the primary settings for observation during the ethnography.

Research Participants

Selection of the research participants was purposeful. The logic of purposeful sampling lies in generating information rich data, with the objective of yielding insight into the phenomena under investigation. The intent is to describe a particular context in depth, not to generalize to another context or population.

Representativeness is secondary to the participants ability to provide information about themselves and their setting (Patton, 2002). The study used criterion based sampling to establish a large group of possible participants to approach for interviews. Ultimately, there were 29 primary participants from three different groups. These included 10 of the orphan girls themselves⁴⁶, 9 Indian teachers⁴⁷ and administrators at the Indian school, and 10 foreign volunteers⁴⁸, primarily from the United States.

⁴⁶ See table 1.

⁴⁷ See table 2.

⁴⁸ See table 3.

There was a pool of 23 older girls between the ages of 14 and 25 who attended secondary school, college, or were employed. Age did not correspond to class level given that girls entered school at varying times depending on the age at which they came to live at the orphanage. One girl, for example, began in nursery class as a 10 year old because she had never attended school prior. Soon after I arrived in India, I conducted an orientation meeting with the girls within my selected age group who were potential participants, and who were living at the ashram at the time of the study. The purpose of the orientation was to explain the nature of my study, the purpose, and solicit participation. The orphanage director acted as a translator, in order to clarify my presentation in Hindi. I first explained what a PhD program was and my own educational trajectory. I stated that I wanted to understand how the community talks about and thinks about education for girls. I described the interview process, and that I would be doing observations in the various educational settings of the ashram. I invited participants to become interviewees as a way to help me complete my educational goals, and discuss a potentially interesting topic. I then fielded questions about my work.

I choose to interview only girls at the ashram, although there was a small pool of older boys who are also transitioning or have transitioned into college and/or employment. Obviously boys are also engaged in constructions of gender and processes pertinent to my research questions. Issues of access and the intention to limit the scope of the study were primary reasons for not including boys in the

research sample. Within the surrounding villages, most activities are segregated by gender. Men and women are expected to interact primarily with their own gender. Unmarried girls are not allowed to be alone with a member of the opposite sex at any time, unless they are a family member. Boys and girls mix to a greater extent at SRA than in the surrounding communities, but still are expected to keep physical distance from each other. Foreign volunteers are educated upon entry to respect the social distance between men and women at all times, as well as codes of modesty in dress and physical interaction. As a woman, becoming a part of the lives of the girls was infinitely easier than interacting with the boys.

Over the course of the ethnography, I approached girls individually and provided a hand written copy of the interview protocol for their consideration. For the most part, I received positive response and willingness to participate. However, on several occasions a girl would verbally agree to be interviewed but passively avoid the actual meeting. I realized that they felt compelled to agree because I was seen as an older sister whose wishes must be respected, or at the least, not directly challenged. I did not pursue those interviews further. Due to the communal nature of the living at the ashram, finding a private and relatively quiet space to conduct interviews was often challenging. Older girls lived in shared rooms with 2 to 4 beds. Interviews often took place during rest periods or study hall when the younger children were subdued, and activity slowed down. The girls dormitory was a natural setting, or at times a plastic chair under the mango tree in the courtyard sufficed.

Alias	Age	Educational level
Anasuya	15	Secondary student
Anuradha	24	College graduate, Employed
Anusha	20	College student
Gayatri	17	Secondary student
Kishori	16	Secondary student
Lakshmi	19	College student
Radhika	16	Secondary student
Rani	21	College student
Shanti	23	College student
Sweta	23	College graduate, Employed

Table 1. Interview participants - Girls and women living or raised at SRA

Over the course of the 6 months that I lived at the ashram, over 40 different volunteers and visitors came to stay at different times and durations. Some stayed for extended periods while others passed through in a few days. The potential pool of interview participants was quite diverse. In order to get a sense of the community discourses surrounding the education of girls, I intended to interview the long term volunteers primarily. As an established volunteer and member of the extended ashram community, I was already well acquainted with many potential interview participants. However, it soon became apparent that the educational landscape at the ashram was impacted not only by, for example, members on the trustee board. There were daily and immediate educational interactions between students and less established

volunteers who served as tutors or led educational activities. In fact, volunteers were openly encouraged by the ashram director to “share their talents and knowledge” with the children, resulting in a steady stream of interactions. Therefore, I approached both members who had been involved with SRA since its founding, those involved for several years, as well as those completely new to volunteering within the community. Interview settings were either in public spaces, such as the main courtyard, or in a private room in the volunteer dormitory.

Alias	Age/ Gender	Volunteer status
William	68/Male	Trustee member, founding volunteer, professional educator
Judy	65/Female	Trustee member, founding volunteer, professional educator
Rachel	51/Female	Orphanage director, founding volunteer
Dutch	66/Male	Trustee member, founding volunteer, professional educator
Hamish	68/Male	Long term, founding volunteer, math and science tutor
Ben	47/Male	Long term, annual visitor 10 yrs, activities supervisor
Clyde	28/Male	Semi-annual visitor, 6 years, english tutor
Samuel	55/Male	Annual visitor, 3 years, english tutor
Suzanne	40/Female	First visit, reading tutor
Annie	45/Female	First visit, medical volunteer, sex education

Table 2. Interview participants - Foreign volunteers

The third pool of participants consisted of teachers and the principal at Sri Ram Vidya Mandir, the school founded as a part of the ashram. This setting was the most difficult to integrate into given that I was a newcomer to the school, and that I was associated with trustee members who had considerable influence and power over the school. After an initial tour and introduction to the principal, I began volunteering informally in classes. After several weeks, I began to lead an English discussion group two to three times a week with interested teachers in order to establish relationships and identify potential interview participants. Over the course of the next 5 months, I approached those teachers who I was familiar with and who were able to converse comfortably with me in English. There were 25 teachers, and of those 11 participated with varying attendance in the English discussion groups. From that group, 4 teachers agreed to be interviewed, and 3 other teachers who did not attend the discussion groups also agreed to be interviewed. After coordinating with the principal concerning my volunteer work, she also agreed to be interviewed both formally and through several informal conversations.

Alias	Age/Gender	Class level/Subject
Ravi	30/Male	English/11-12th class
Abhishek	26/Male	Librarian
Mohan	40/Male	Physical Education
Priya	27/Female	Social Studies/6th-8th class
Anjali	31/Female	Computer skills
Rani	25/Female	English/8th-10th class
Sneha	22/Female	PreK
Anuradha	46/ Female	Prinicpal

Table 3. Interview participants - Teachers & Principal at SRA

Relation of researcher to setting

As a child in northern California, I grew up at an intentional community in the Santa Cruz mountains. The Mount Madonna Center was established in 1979 by the students of a renunciate monk from India who teaches yoga philosophy and practice. Baba Hari Dass, or Babaji as he is respectfully called, took a vow of silence in 1952. Now in his early 90's, he has only communicated through writing since that time, choosing not to speak as an austerity. As a young adult I studied yoga, not the imported version that can be found in most yoga studios and is seen primarily as a form of exercise, but a classical set of teachings that more aptly fit the description of a spiritual discipline.

Babaji came to the United States in the late sixties at the request of a group of UCSC students who had traveled to India and began studying with him, and he was sponsored by a UCSC professor to immigrate to the U.S. He brought with him a vast store of knowledge that shaped the cultural landscape of the Mount Madonna community. A thorough description of this phenomenon belongs in another dissertation. For purposes of this work, it is important to note that from an early age I lived at a cultural crossroads. Within the community, I experienced a collage of customs and values that drew from Indian tradition but integrated American culture. I was also born into a multicultural family. My father is Mexican-American while my mother's grandparents emigrated from Sweden. My father's parents met picking grapes in California as migrant farm workers right before World War II. While I feel deeply connected to my Latino heritage, the experiences I had within the Mount Madonna community significantly impacted my perspective of the world. Soon after the founding of the Mount Madonna Center, plans began to establish a children's home in India.

As a young boy in India, Babaji had a childhood friend that lived at an orphanage. He witnessed abuse of the orphans by their caretakers, and from that experience decided to someday found a safe and loving home for children. When I was growing up in the mid 1990's, the orphanage was well established, and a regular group of community members traveled annually to India to volunteer. This group consisted of my extended family members, teachers and friends. They brought home

photos and stories, and the experiences of living in another culture that made a deep impression on me. The individuals who were involved in establishing and sustaining life at Sri Ram Ashram, were simultaneously involved in my own life and socialization.

Through this connection, I traveled to India for the first time when I was 17 years old. At the ashram I met the children that I had seen in photographs and heard stories about for years. That was the beginning of a closer and active connection to the organization in India. It was because of this background that when I started my ethnography at Sri Ram Ashram, I felt like I was coming home. I was familiar with the people, the communal living, and many of the cultural practices at the orphanage. When I arrived, I already considered all the children as my own brothers and sisters. They knew my husband, who had also volunteered at the ashram and traveled with me when I volunteered in 2007. My mother in law was a regular visitor, usually making an annual trip and was seen as a mentor to the older girls. In essence, my relationship with the ashram was familial. Living in the ashram during my ethnography both more clearly defined and redefined my relationship to the children and community members.

Research design overview

The research design was inductive. The design was proposed up front, but was open and emergent, rather than rigid and fixed to permit exploration of real world situations in natural contexts as they unfolded. The approach was often flexible out of necessity of the site, i.e., the electricity would go out several times a day which inhibited the use of a computer. The role as researcher was to discover and understand meaning of experiences, and adopt a flexible stance that was open to change. In addition, the design allowed for reflexivity on the part of the researcher through the acknowledgement of researcher positionally and experience brought to bear on the study. However, the study contained certain delimitations.

The research was not designed to investigate the educational experiences of all the children at Sri Ram Ashram, or create a holistic picture of their lives despite differences in factors such as gender or age. It was not an evaluative study that sought to judge the effectiveness or quality of the educational program at the ashram, nor was it intended to document the objective processes of teaching and pedagogy within educational spaces. Rather, it sought to investigate the nature of the educational discourses concerning the education of the older girls who were living, or had lived, at the ashram. The study sought to understand how people talked about education for a particular group of students, rather than the effectiveness of certain educational approaches. In other words, the focus was on how participants viewed the social phenomenon, rather than how the researcher assessed the social phenomenon.

This was undertaken through ethnographic techniques, primarily interviews, participant observation, and examination of relevant documents and curricular materials. This process examined how participants talk about and experienced educational contexts, in addition to the pedagogical approaches, texts and curricular tools that contributed to the environment. Employing these methods provided evidence for how participants perceived, articulated and enacted educational discourses in an effort to triangulate the sources of data. Interview transcripts, memos, written observations, and documents were the main sources of data. The analysis was undertaken in three stages: 1) the initial organization of the data into themes 2) coding 3) analysis and synthesis of findings. These methods do not claim representative or statistically generalizable findings.

Methods of data collection

Interviews

In-depth interviews were intended to solicit responses from participants in their own words. DeVault (1990) points out that language is embedded with ways of organizing society. During the interviews, attention was paid to how participants constructed topics of their own accord. Although the main questions lent a degree of structure to the conversation, the responses of participants shaped the ultimate direction and form of the interview. The role of the researcher was to act as a guide to

explore the conceptions presented by the interviewee. To this end interview questions were open ended, and avoided presupposition of opinion on a given topic on the part of the participants⁴⁹. In other words, the wording of the guiding questions (Hatch, 2002) avoided implying a predetermined answer or partial answer while at the same time acknowledging obvious shared knowledge between the interviewer and interviewee. All interview protocols were hand written due to the frequent power outages at the ashram, and therefore my inability to consistently print documents or use my computer. These protocols were presented to the participants before the interview for their review and understanding. Each hand written document was tailored to the type of participant engaging in the interview; thus, interview protocols varied slightly in wording.

The focus of the interviews were on the everyday educational practices and experiences of the participants without labeling or organizing their experience for them. This required reflexivity on the part of the researcher during the interview process. Follow up questions were meant to clarify previous statements or elicit additional information.

Interviews with all foreign volunteers, and the principal of the school were electronically recorded with a hand held device. All other participants declined to be recorded, including all the ashram girls and all the teachers at the school. In those cases, all interview responses had to be hand written in note form and then “fleshed

⁴⁹ See Appendix B- Interview Protocol

out” immediately following the interview. In addition, contextual notes such as the tone of the interview were added to each interview.

Observations

To document observations, I developed a “thick primary record” as described by Carspecken (1996) who distinguishes between thick descriptions and journalistic field notes. He proposes that, ideally, a primary record includes both. Thick descriptions are produced during intensive observations and aim to capture as much about the observation as possible and utilize strategies such as time-stamps, detailed descriptions of behavior and verbatim speech acts. They are selective in that they are suitable for events that are central to the research questions. Journalistic field notes, on the other hand, include less detailed information about context and events that are assumed to be important but not primary to the research. The primary record came out of the thick descriptions captured in the field notes, and early field work guided and shaped the evolving primary record. I also kept on-going analytic memos throughout data collection. Analytic memos offer the opportunity, in addition to more formal coding, to make sense of data and keep a record of emerging themes and patterns (Charmaz, 2006).

Early field-work was based on passive observation (Carspecken, 1996). Data collection began observing as a volunteer within the school and during tutoring

sessions at the orphanage led by foreign volunteers. The goal for this initial phase was to re-establish myself as a member of the ashram community, and to make contact with Indian teachers and foreign volunteers as potential interview participants. The contexts for observation at the school included classrooms within the school at various grade levels, but eventually concentrating on the upper classes. Within the residential section of the ashram, almost any public space was a potential sight for informal learning, but the majority of my observations took place within the girl's dormitory where study hall took place. Another highly relevant, but less frequent occasion for observation, were educational programs facilitated by foreign volunteers, such as the sex education workshops conducted by a visiting American pediatrician. All recording was done by hand during and after observations. In most cases a rough set of short hand notes were taken during observation and then "fleshed out" afterwards. After this initial phase where I established a level of trust with community members, observations continued in formal and informal learning environments with greater access and duration.

In addition to hand written memos, I posted reflective memos to an online blog that was accessed by my dissertation committee members during fieldwork in India. This aided in sorting and processing my experiences during data collection, and were included as data in the analysis later.

Documents

Documents were gathered throughout fieldwork that either directly or indirectly impacted educational spaces at the ashram. They served primarily as sources of contextual information. They included textbooks, exam guides, examples of student work, professional development publications, the SRA visitor manual, and so forth.⁵⁰ Selection of documents was based upon the following criteria: 1) The documents reflected, represented, or explicitly stated specific educational discourses, 2) they characterized students and educators in terms of social categories such as gender, caste, race, etc., 3) they characterized the learning process in terms of social categories, and/or 4) they were mentioned specifically by participants as relevant to their educational experiences.

Methods of data analysis

The inductive design of the study led to richly descriptive findings. Phenomena were understood as holistic and complex systems that were viewed within particular social contexts. The analysis sought to identify themes and patterns while attempting to depict an “authentic” representation of participant voices. Context sensitivity and understanding allowed for interpretation during which I engaged in a reflexive process critical of the role of the researcher. In these ways analysis was

⁵⁰ See Appendix C- Document Examples

iterative, cyclical, and ongoing rather than reaching a determinant “truth”. Analytic memos throughout data collection aided in forming initial themes and guiding the investigation.

Levinson & Holland (1996) call for an educational analysis that moves beyond the traditional boundaries of the school, into the diverse spaces of street, home, family, where other notions of educated persons are culturally produced. This ethnography employs this approach by acknowledging and observing multiple educational spaces, specifically the formal environment of the Indian school, independent educational programs facilitated by foreign volunteers outside of the school, and the more informal tutoring sessions, games and social interactions between the orphans and members of the ashram community.

The challenge though out data collection and analysis was to make sense of the vast amounts of data, organize the information, and identify significant patterns. Given the amount of data from which to draw, and the range of experiences that I had in India, I felt extremely overwhelmed in the first months after my return. Approaching the data felt daunting. In order to address this obstacle, I created situational maps as a starting point for analysis. Situational maps as outlined by Clarke(2005) are created to articulate the elements in a situation and examining relations among them. This approach was extremely helpful in addressing, “‘analytic paralysis’ wherein the researcher has assiduously collected data but does not know where or how to begin analysis (Clarke, 2005). These maps began as larger “messy”

amalgamations of concepts, words, actors, settings, idioms, and social categories that arose from the data but had not yet been organized. From this I constructed smaller maps that reflected relationships between elements represented by labeled lines. From these, pertinent themes arose that I used to begin coding the data thematically.

Open-coding is described by Charmaz (2006) as an open and iterative process that requires multiple readings of the same data. He warns against the early imposition of theoretical frames and argues for coding that comes directly from data. Because this research is inductive, I did not begin with preconceived codes. After I established strong analytic directions through initial open-coding, I used more focused coding to synthesize and explain larger segments of data. As themes emerge through focused coding, I categorized and compared data. Charmaz describes this phase of coding as a process of deciding which of the initial codes make the most “analytic sense” (p. 57), and developing more descriptive and inclusive codes.

Multiple readings of transcribed interviews, documents, memos, and blog content occurred during the process of analysis. A transcription service was used for all recorded interviews. I also listened to recorded interviews while reading corresponding transcriptions in order to correct mistakes and contextualize the text. Simultaneously, I wrote memos in the margins of the interview transcriptions while considering the contextual relationships within which these conversations occurred. In fact, written memos were produced throughout coding the data which served as a method for capturing analytic thinking and for stimulating analytic insights.

The formal process of coding began by assigning abbreviated titles to each potential theme generated from the situational maps. Large flip chart sheets were color coded and taped on the wall. Each sheet identified the descriptors under the respective categories that had been generated. As the process of coding proceeded, new sheets were prepared to capture other themes as they emerged. A final codebook was produced through this process that included the major themes present in the research⁵¹. Written memos were produced while simultaneously organizing and coding the data for themes, while considering the contextual relationships within which interviews occurred. Memos served as a method for capturing analytic thinking and for stimulating analytic insights. As I identified themes and patterns viewed within the particular social context of the ashram, I attempted to relay an “authentic” depiction of participant voices while being reflexive and critical of my role as a researcher.

While coding fragmented the data into separate categories, bringing attention to the details of the fieldwork, synthesis involved piecing those fragments together to construct a holistic and integrated explanation of the educational discourses at SRA. Overall, the approach was to come up with a number of themes that were linked together through similarities and contrasts. Towards the end, I followed a three layered process in thinking about the data. First, I examined and compared threads and patterns within categories. Second, I compared connecting threads across

⁵¹ See Appendix D- Final Codebook

categories, and third I further connected the themes to the larger conversation about women's education in developing countries within the literature. These three layers were not separate, but interwoven and iterative throughout the synthesizing process which was non linear.

Ethical considerations

It must be acknowledged that ethnography and ethnography of education in particular have long since pointed out how the meanings and practices of education can neither be taken for granted nor be considered outside the dialectics of power differentials” (Gobbo & Anderson Levitt, p. 499, 2015).

Awareness of relationships of power impacted the process of gathering and analyzing data at every stage of the study. According to Sharma (2011), articulations by participants in the study are greatly influenced by the social and historical positioning of the investigator vis a vis individuals and the institutions that they participate in. In the case of this dissertation, I had worked as a volunteer within the ashram, and therefore in the discourse production and transformation that I sought to examine. As a result, it was not only the methods I used, such as the questions I chose to ask, that impacted responses, but how participants *chose* to engage, i.e., answer the questions. In other words, participants revealed their lives in selective ways, depending on which facet of their positionality might be appropriately revealed given the relationship of myself to them and the ashram.

Visweswaran (1994) explores the meaning of critical feminist ethnography by interrogating herself in the field, and in doing so recuperates her own feminism as self-reflection, self-critique, and self-subversion. She revives ethnography as a method that makes imperative what Haraway (year?) calls “engaged, accountable positioning” that allows us to become answerable to what we learn to see and do. The ethnographer learns to observe herself negotiating the field and makes accountable knowledge claims. She asks, “Who is engaged in creating the field even before engaging in field work, and where is she located? In the field, what “truths” or knowledge claims are being created and by whom?” In addition, she comments on the particular challenges for researchers when the line is blurred between the status of insider/outsider.

“In fact, it seems that the entire ethnographic process becomes “agonizing” especially for feminist ethnographers who claim hyphenated identities. In other words, women who acknowledge their hyphenated identities agonize at length about intersubjective relations and how to write about them or how best to manage their “insider-outsider” identities in their complex permutations both in and off the field” (p.68).

Her characterization of the ethnographic process as often “agonizing” resonates with me deeply because of my personal history with the ashram and its residents. The multiple identities that I brought to the field often created personal tension around representation and notions of loyalty. As a member of the ashram community, I

attempted to honor the public narrative of life at the ashram while negotiating the integrity of my role as a researcher. I sought to balance the interests of my participants with those of the academic work; two agendas that are sometimes not easily reconciled, and a theme which I further explore in the following section.

Researcher Positionality

Anzaldua (1984) writes, “The danger in writing is not fusing our personal experience and world view with the social reality we live in, with our inner life, our history, our economics, and our vision. What validates us as human beings validates us as writers,” (p.170). At Sri Ram Ashram, the line between “insider” and “outsider” was often blurred. Ladson-Billings (2000) comments on how all of her various “selves” are invested in her research work: self as researcher, as community member, and as woman. Any individual, including the researcher, can operate from multiple positionalities in which identity is fluid, as well as the positions that one takes in relationship to power. During the study, my position as an academic fluctuated within the setting, rather than being situated in a binary relationship with participants. Addressing the dynamics of positionality and reflexivity was not only important as a reflexive exercise on my part as a researcher, but because it was the focus of the research itself. Given that the focus of the dissertation is the intersection of discourses around the purpose and nature of education for the orphan girls at the ashram, it was

imperative that I situate myself within the research, particularly in terms of the educational paradigms that inform my perspective on education.

Within the research setting, I occupied several subject positions. I served roles as an extended family member, a woman, and an academic advisor. As a foreign volunteer and professional educator I brought with me convictions about the nature of learning and teaching that impacted my work as an ethnographer. In the graduate programs at California State University Monterey Bay, and UC Santa Cruz, I resonated with learning theories that emphasized the role of social interaction. Greeno, Collins, and Resnick (1996) concisely state, “When knowing is viewed as practices of communities and the abilities of individuals to participate in those practices, then learning is the strengthening of those practices and participatory abilities”(p. 23). Similarly, Case (1996) describes the socio-historic tradition as contextualizing the process of knowing in social interaction. The learner is seen primarily as functioning within the context of a group, and the creation of knowledge is distributed as the creation of that group and not held independently by the learner. In this view, “...learning is seen as the process of being initiated into the life of a group, so that one can assume a role in its daily praxis...”(p.83). Education is then characterized as a community activity in which learners are guided from a peripheral to central role in daily practices.

These influences have led me to define learning as embedded within culture while simultaneously constructing culture, and primarily functioning to socialize

children into specific cultural practices and as members of learning communities. This is the basis for the convictions that education should be rooted in the cultural practices of the local community, and honoring the diversity of children and their backgrounds is the most appropriate form of schooling. Following this line of thinking is a critical stance against schooling as a didactic exercise that “inputs” components of knowledge into students, the purpose being for teachers to deposit knowledge into students, what Freire (1985) described as the banking model of education, that reinforces social hierarchies based on class, gender, race, and other forms of social stratification. Multiple authors critique schools as settings that reify knowledge and their transmission from an institutional motive rather than emerging organically from communities of practice (Lave, 1991, Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989, Sfard & Prusak (2005). Didactic schooling in particular functions as an accumulation of intellectual commodities that are predetermined and divorced from the learner’s immediate reality. This assumes a separation between knowing and doing, treating knowledge as an integral, self-sufficient substance, theoretically independent of the situation in which it is learned and used. In contrast, I view learning as fundamentally situated in the larger social context that exists in relationship to subject matter and pedagogy, and therefore holds equal importance. Within this framing, the position of the learner is one of participant who is engaged in “doing” rather than a consumer engaged in “having” intellectual property. Knowledge understood as property is likely to turn into attributes of position and

power. The acquisition metaphor reinforces a system of class hierarchy within education and discourages collaboration, and that the shift in language towards the participation metaphor shows the democratic nature of the metaphor. Instead of speaking of acquiring educational commodities, learning is spoken of as participating in shared activities.

The focus of this dissertation is the educational discourses at Sri Ram Ashram, which as a foreign volunteer educator, I was a part of producing. The irony is that the teaching practices of the ashram school are characterized by the very didactic approach that I had learned to disqualify in my graduate school experience. Schooling at the school was based primarily upon rote learning and memorization of material divorced from the local context of the students. I negotiated this tension between my own beliefs about education while observing and dialoguing with participants about their own conceptions and understandings of schooling and the “educated person”. The tension that I experienced between local educational expectations and my own are not unique nor unprecedented, but have been shared by volunteers during the more than century long history of U.S. educators in foreign countries (Zimmerman, 2006).

I attempted to address this tension in several ways. First, the design of the study sought to understand participants and reflect upon interactions over a long time period. This included multiple formal and informal conversations, detailed and varied

observations, and substantial time in the field in order to mediate bias and create space for reflexivity and reflection.

In addition, the multiple sources of data and data collection also helped to triangulate the findings of the study and increase the degree of authenticity. The other internal method that I used to negotiate tensions in representation and relationship between myself and participants was to maintain, to the best of my ability, a constant state of self-awareness and mindful self critique. I avoided “second guessing” myself, but rather reflected upon and shaped interactions mindful of the power dynamics and social factors that contributed to them.

As a means of reciprocity, I intend to share the findings of the study with the research participants. The language of academia is not accessible for most participants, particularly for those whose second language is English. With this in mind, I intend to bring what I have learned back to the ashram in a form that is both intelligible and useful for the community. To this end, I have been in dialogue over email with the orphanage director in order to determine how my work can best benefit SRA.

Further concrete steps that were taken to ensure confidentiality are detailed in the next section.

Confidentiality and issues of trustworthiness

In the highly interconnected communities of SRA and the surrounding Indian villages, personal reputation was incredibly important to research participants, particularly girls. Every effort was made to mitigate the impact of the study on the social dynamics of the setting that might potentially have adverse effects on the participants. For this reason several precautions were undertaken.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) process was undertaken prior to data collection⁵². Informed consent forms for participants were generated and presented before interviews took place. Consent documents were written in plain accessible English, and were reviewed verbally with all participants prior to interviews. A separate consent form was submitted to the orphanage director as the legal guardian of the minors who participated in the study. These documents emphasized the voluntary nature of the interaction and the participants right to retract any statement or cancel the interview at any time⁵³. Handwritten copies of interview protocols in English were given to Hindi speaking participants prior to each interview for their review and familiarity. I attempted to be as transparent as possible with participants as to the intention and process of the study. All data, both electronic and hand written were kept in a cabinet in a locked room. Documents such as interview notes were not left in public spaces. All participants selected an alias that was used in all written

⁵² See Appendix E - Human Subjects Protocol

⁵³ See Appendix F - Consent Forms

documents, notes, etc. Details of interviews were not discussed with other participants or members of the community.

Limitations of the study

The main limitation of the study was the language barrier between myself and participants whose first language was Hindi. Before traveling to India, I completed two quarters of introductory and intermediate Hindi at UC Santa Cruz. During my stay at the ashram, I was privately tutored in Hindi speaking and writing by a long term Indian volunteer who generously donated his time. My conversational skills in Hindi improved over the course of fieldwork which did create the benefit of establishing rapport between myself and Hindi speaking participants. However, language barriers persisted and had to be considered while conducting the interviews.

Foreign volunteers are, with few exceptions, fluent in English as their first language. The orphan children at the ashram are raised in a bilingual English/Hindi environment due to their frequent interaction with volunteers; although all children at the ashram can communicate to varying degrees in English, the older children in particular are fluent in oral and written English. This is also in part due to their study of English at the Indian school as a prerequisite in advancing to higher classes. Indian teachers for whom English is a second or third language, may have Hindi, or another language, as their first language. Ideally, interviews should be conducted in the

participants first language. As a beginning Hindi speaker, I did not yet have enough language skills to conduct interviews in Hindi; therefore, I conducted all interviews in English, being aware of the limitations and taking appropriate measures to mediate the interaction.

This was addressed in part by the use of plain simple English in the preparation of the interview protocols and during the interviews themselves. I also restricted the sample of participants to those individuals who had at least an intermediate level of English fluency. I acknowledge that this prerequisite in the selection process limited the scope of participants and may have impacted the study in unforeseen ways.

Conclusion

This dissertation employed ethnography as a methodological approach in order to gather contextual and perceptual information that addressed the main research questions. The research focused on how participants perceived, articulated, and enacted educational discourses regarding the education of orphan girls at Sri Ram Ashram. Given the focus of the research, and the context of the setting, the most appropriate means of data collection were through ethnographic techniques, primarily in-depth interviewing, participant observation, and examination of relevant documents. This process examined how participants talk about and experience

educational contexts, in addition to the pedagogical approaches, texts and curricular tools that contribute to the environment.

The in-depth interviewing, observations, and the gathering of relevant educational documents provided information about either the contextual environment of education at SRA, and/or the perceptions of education that participants brought to the communal educational discourse. These methods privileged the subjective meaning that participants create in the production of social life and human agency. The advantage of this approach lies in gaining deep understanding of the social processes at SRA, as they pertain to the concept of the “educated Indian woman.”

The ethnography sought to provide an account of how everyday practices of participants are implicated in the cultural production of the educated persons. To this end, the study took place over an extended time period, and the long term engagement of the researcher, in order to allow a fuller range of empirical situations to be observed and analyzed. It focused on the particular experiences of orphan girls in depth as a basis for the generation of theory and in order to highlight the agency of educational subjects. In this context, the researcher was a participant observer who functioned as an important tool in the research process, as they acquainted themselves with educational spaces through immersion in the daily lives of the participants. The multiple subject positions of the ethnographer also impacted the research process, and contributed to the social context within which investigations took place.

By using reflexive practices, the researcher sought to acknowledge and respond to the relationships of power inherent in the production of knowledge. Reflection upon interactions, and mindful self critique, helped contribute to the ongoing process of data collection and how power dynamics and social factors contributed to them. In addition, the duration and depth of the study, by means of multiple formal and informal conversations, detailed and varied observations, and substantial time in the field, helped to mediate bias and create space for reflexivity and reflection. The multiple sources of data and data collection also helped to triangulate the findings of the study and increase the degree of authenticity. Thus, this ethnography sought to describe educational conditions, practices, and the perspectives of the participants through situated investigations.

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Appendix B- Interview Protocol⁵⁴

Primary questions:

1. “How do various actors in the educational community at the orphanage, including (U.S.) volunteers, Indian teachers, and Indian students participate in the cultural construction(s) of what it means to be an “educated Indian woman” for orphans at an ashram in rural northern India?
2. In particular I ask, what is the nature of the discourse surrounding the educational norms of the community in relationship to underlying ideologies of gender, caste, class, and race?

Thank you so much for agreeing to talk to me today. I will now go over with you the purpose of this project and how this interview is going to go. I want to answer any questions you might have. I am interested in how you think about schooling and tutoring at Sri Ram Ashram. In particular, I am interested in how you see the **[your]** experiences of the **[as an]** older girls living at the ashram. If you decide to go forward with the interview, I will be asking you to describe how you see and experience education at the ashram. What’s it like to learn and teach at SRA? The reason I want to learn about this is to better understand how people talk about education at the ashram. **[Present and Review Consent form]**

I would like to start by learning a little background information.

1. Can you tell me briefly how you came to [live, volunteer, teach] here?
 - a. Was anything in particular that made you want to [volunteer, teach] here?
2. How long have you [taught, lived, volunteered] at the ashram?
 - a. How long have you [taught at, been attending, volunteering at this] school?
 - b. What subject(s) [do you take, teach, tutor]?

⁵⁴ As described in the methods section, interview protocols in the field were hand written and individually tailored to the type of participant. The protocol above is a sample protocol.

- c. Can you describe a typical day [at school, at the ashram]?
3. Can you describe a memorable teaching/tutoring experience? [Can you describe a memorable learning experience?]

Now I would like to talk about your ideas about teaching [learning].


4. What are your goals as a teacher [student]?
- a. Why are those important to you?
 - b. How are your goals shaped by working at the ashram [studying with foreign volunteers and Indian teachers]?
 - c. How do you try to realize your goals?

I would like to hear more about education at the ashram.

5. Can you tell me about education for girls in particular?
- a. What are the challenges for girls?
6. From your perspective, what are the educational goals of the ashram for ashram students?
- a. What are not the goals?
 - b. How do you see your personal goals connected to those of the ashram?
7. How are these goals realized?
- a. What are the challenges?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you so much.

Appendix C- Document Examples

 **UNIT-2**


EDUCATION

A little amount of care, a handful of warmth and a heart full of love for a girl child can make a big difference.

Did you know that every year 12 million girls are born in the country but unfortunately only 1/3 of those survive? Some are killed in the womb, some at the time of birth, some die due to ill health and some due to poor nutritional status.

Why do people discriminate against us for nutrition and even education?

B.6. Read the following extract on Girl Child Education



'You see, Mommy!' she said, 'When I got the little girl together, the whole world came together!'



B.5. On the basis of your reading of the story and the discussion between the girls in the following picture, have a whole class discussion on-The Need to Recognize and Empower the Girl Child



Save us.
We have a dream
too.

The
hardest profession to
take in life is being a girl
child!

A whole
range of discriminatory
practices including female foeticide,
female infanticide, son idolization, early
marriage and dowry have buried the
future of the girl child

Appendix C cont'd - Document Examples

This manual was developed to acquaint you with the Ashram, protocols and some of the Indian culture.

It is intended primarily for those visiting in January-March when a larger group typically goes, but it's also applicable for people at other times. For more information on Sri Ram Orphanage please contact sriramfoundation.org. For information on our other non-profit projects, please contact mountmadonna.org or Hanumanfellowship.org

Sri Ram Ashram Visitor's Manual

I. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a wonderful opportunity to learn about Indian culture and to participate in the lives of some very special children. In rural Uttaranchal, close to the Himalayan foothills in northern India, Sri Ram Orphanage emerges as a nurturing environment for a loving group of children who have been placed in our care. The main goal of Sri Ram Ashram is to help raise these children in the highest traditions of Indian culture, and to help them take their place as productive members of Indian society. Sri Ram Ashram was founded in 1984 by Sri Baba Hari Dass and is managed by the Anath Shishu Palan Trust of India.

Besides providing a home for needy children, Sri Ram Foundation has created a school which educates the Ashram children plus 450 of their peers from surrounding villages. (See School, III C.) More than a home for its children and its school, the orphanage includes a dairy farm and well managed green fields of wheat and plots of yellow mustard. These provide substantive nutrition for the children and staff, and offer a model for local villagers. A medical clinic is also established to provide charitable medical care and community health education for the neighborhood patients. (See Medical Clinic, III D.)

While at Sri Ram Ashram, we are visitors in the permanent home of the children. We encourage guests to integrate into this experience. When we stay at the Ashram we join a large family and traditional ashram community that is functioning according to Indian culture. Our job is to understand their way of life and accept their routines and cultural rules by blending into the existing society as much as possible. As with any new experience, it may take some adjusting. The daily routines reflect the children's needs and have been

carefully developed to provide the best possible environment for their development and education.

Our presence changes some of the usual routines and we need to be sensitive to our impact on the environment, the staff and the children. As in most families, the ashram children learn by example. **We need to be appropriate role models according to Indian culture.** Please respect the cultural rules of our ashram life. It is important to read, reread, absorb, integrate and adhere to the policies and information regarding life at the ashram. You will discover India contains tremendous diversity and contrasts even within its own culture. It is important that those of us who visit respect the local culture and adapt to the environment, rich in tradition and cultural heritage.

In the immediate area, Hindus and Muslims live cooperatively in six, very poor villages. The Van Gujjars, a semi nomadic tribe, live in nearby jungles. This is one of India's most populous regions, with one of the highest illiteracy rates in the nation, as well as being an area with poor health care access.

Two of the most noticeable areas of cultural differences are in how we dress and how we interact. While Western culture tends to be more informal, Indian culture is more specific. Guidelines are stated clearly in the sections on Cultural Guidelines (II -A) and What to Bring. (IV-1) Please adhere to those behaviors which are suitable for Indian culture and remember that many items can be purchased in India. We do not have a 'hotel staff' so we also need to take appropriate care to clean, respect and maintain the buildings, or rooms and facilities.

For those traveling with the group in January, there will be an orientation after we arrive. For others arriving intermittently, we will have someone assigned to greet and orient you. Orientation provides an opportunity to review Ashram protocols and helps us integrate more artfully with the flow of the Ashram life.

.....

F. What To Bring

What to bring is connected to cultural guidelines. Bring only those items which are suitable for the culture. Remember that many items are readily available in India.

1. Clothing, Shoes, Jewelry

January is the end of cold season and transitions into warm season by mid February. It can be fairly hot by March. So depending on when you come, bring appropriate jacket, sweater, vest, long underwear, socks, hat, gloves etc.

Dress is one of the most important considerations. We ask that everyone be neat and well groomed. This includes your time in Delhi, your stay at the ashram and any trips in the Haridwar/ neighboring vicinity. Though our organization does not judge a person by their dress, Indian culture does. When Indians go out, they wear their wealth on their person. In India If one dresses poorly, it indicates an uneducated low caste person who was never taught to dress and can't afford to dress properly. If people are well dressed they are well respected.

For Women: Women are requested to wear the Indian Punjabi dress or long tunic tops with loose pants and scarves. They can be bought inexpensively in India. Alternatively, you may wear long skirts, dresses or pants that fit loosely on the body. Scarves are still encouraged, even with western clothing. No shorts or sleeveless tops, even in hot weather. See-through skirts or underwear straps showing are not appropriate. You are welcome to peruse our "left clothes trunk," borrow from this stash and leave behind any good clothing in washed and ironed condition.

For Men: The dress for Indian men is much like western dress. All clothing must be neat, clean, and shirts tucked in. If you are comfortable in Indian kurta, pajama or dhoti, that is also acceptable. A nice shirt and tie for special occasions can be useful, but not essential. Men may not go bare-chested. Bring light weight long pants to be comfortable in the heat. (March-November) Visiting men are asked not to wear shorts, cutoffs or tanktops. While neat tee shirts are OK, collared shirts or Indian style shirts and neat pants are preferable.

For Children: Children under age 12 can typically dress as they would at home, in simple clean play clothes. They should have something nice for outings or special celebrations. Above age 12, they should respect the gender dress of the culture.

Shoes: Haridwar is a long, narrow city stretched along the banks of the Ganga, so it is fairly spread out. It is easy to walk several miles once you are in town. The streets are often dirty, and you may want to have closed walking shoes for town. In Indian culture however, shoes are often removed to go into rooms or shops, so it is also convenient to have a slip -on shoe. It will be cold in January and warm by the middle of March, so you will want to have some variety depending on the dates of your stay. Walking on streets

without shoes is not safe. A pair of rubber flip-flops is nice for bathing as the floors can be cold.

Jewelry: Men and women both wear jewelry. No one will likely try to steal jewelry off your body, but a thief might strike up a conversation and try to get your watch etc. It is best not to bring anything too obviously expensive or ostentatious.

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III. WELCOME TO SRI RAM ASHRAM

A. Cultural Guidelines

We cannot expect to understand all the Indian cultural ways, nor can we expect them to understand ours. We ask visitors to accept what you may not understand for the sake of the children's welfare and for the etiquette which the Ashram community expects. Western culture can sometimes give Indians confusing and inconsistent messages. Visitors should use discrimination in discussions with the Indians and especially with the children. Please take the most conservative approach especially around topics of personal relationships and intimacy as well as topics on dress, manners, music and wealth. Ask a designated Western staff person if you need further understanding of a cultural attitude.

1. Gender Etiquette:

Please refrain from touching or intimate contact in public places. Even with married couples, one very seldom sees public displays of affection or touching. Men and women should not kiss or hug in front of Indian people or children at the Ashram. Our ways look odd to Indians as public affection is not shown in this culture. Winking is not in the Indian culture and men and women should not wink at each other or at any Indian. In social situations, Indian women generally sit with women and men with men. Although Americans won't be expected to separate among themselves, we should be aware of this cultural difference when with Indians.

a. Men:

1. Around the children. Please respect the gender rules of India by not engaging in physical play or physical contact with girls above age six. This includes letting girls sit on men's laps and hugging. It is encouraged to engage with and play with boys of all ages.

2. Around older girls and adult women. It is not considered proper to talk with an Indian or American woman alone. For a young man and woman to speak together, they need to be within a group of people.

b. **Women:** If a woman smiles while talking to an Indian man, it is not appropriate and can be interpreted as flirting. A young Western woman must also not be alone in the presence of an American or an Indian man. They should be within a group of people. In Indian culture, women are only alone with men if the men are their relatives or husbands.

c. **Unmarried Couples:** In most Indian society it is distasteful for unmarried couples to share a bedroom. This is certainly true in the vicinity of the Ashram. We respectfully request that if you are an unmarried couple staying at the Ashram that you do not room together. If you do room together, we request that you not discuss any of your private life with the Ashram staff, children or guests and that if asked, you say that you are married. This will protect your reputation at the Ashram as well as reflect appropriate modeling for our children.

d. **Married Couples:** Even married couples are asked to be modest with their affection in public.

2. Language Etiquette:

a. If you talk to an Indian person by name, use "ji" after the name. You generally can call someone by his/her first name only if the person is younger than you are. Otherwise, to show respect, you call someone by his/her last name plus ji (a respectful suffix) or by some title, such as Sahib or Bhai sahib (masculine); or Mataji or Bahinji (feminine).

b. Calling some one by hey, or ho is not good, but in English these words are sometimes used. Indians get upset if such words are used in calling them.

c. Loudness of voice: We live in proximity to each other, so please keep your voice down. It is not appropriate to shout across distances, so please walk to whomever you want to speak with rather than yell across a courtyard or room.

d. In talking with Indians, don't ask personal questions. Don't make rude jokes. Don't talk about how other Indians cheated you, etc. Always

consider that saving face is as much a part of their culture as it is in Japan or China.

e. Do not imitate Indians speaking English ridicule the culture. They won't say anything, but it will make a very bad impression. Remember the British dominated this culture not so long ago and we must act as guests not as superiors.

3. Ashram Etiquette:

Please try to blend in with the Indian culture, both at our Ashram and in the neighboring villages and towns. It is important to act appropriately in language, dress and manners with staff, guests, laborers, the children and with each other. As with many institutions, we are watched by the local population. The way you behave will affect the reputation of the Ashram.

a. With Staff: It is okay to develop some relationships with the staff, especially same gender relationships. However, keep in mind that relationships are different in different cultures. It is not appropriate to give gifts or show favoritism towards any of the staff. Please also be mindful of the language etiquette above while interacting with the staff and guests.

b. With Guests: Indian guests are always treated very hospitably. When visitors come to the Ashram, we become the hosts and put the guest needs before ours. (Please note "Visitor Life," E 7.)

c. With Laborers: In the ashram there are workers. Be nice to them, but don't treat them as friends. You don't have to be rude, mistreat, or talk down to them, but the Indian social rules must be respected. If you get too familiar with them it disrupts the social order and puts them at risk. This is especially true for male/female contact.

B. Interacting With the Children

Please be conscious of the Ashram schedule and help the children to follow it. When the bell rings to end one activity, respect this ending time and encourage the children to move on to their next activity. Often the most effective way to do this is to disengage from them completely. It is important to keep proper boundaries with the children so that their discipline remains consistent. During most activities, the children are separated by gender. Be aware of this and act accordingly.

Children are not allowed to call us by our first names. All children use didi for a woman, which means older sister and uncle for men. Feel free to correct

the children. We can help to enforce that language in our interaction with the children when we speak to them about other people.

1. Children in Your Rooms:

Please do not invite children into your room. The children are only allowed in Om Bhavan (main wing for foreigners) during certain activities. They are not allowed to roam around the building or visit people in their rooms. A few exceptions might be made for structured activities such as tutoring and infant care.

2. Children's Schedule:

Schedule changes according to weather and events. Their current schedule will be posted on the bulletin board in Om Bhavan.

Generally, the bell wakes the children at 6:00 (earlier as it begins to warm up). The children are up and outside by 6:30 am and in lines to say prayers. We are welcome to join in at the end of their lines. They run a few laps to the gate and back and do calisthenics. This is followed by pranayama and meditation in the mandir (temple) followed by candy in Babaji's room. At 7:30 they do chores, clean, dress, and have breakfast. (We can help with morning routines). At 9:00 am school starts. Preschool kids stay home. The children come home for lunch around 12:30 or 1:00 and then home from school around 3.

Before tea, they change from their school clothes to play clothes. Teatime attendance is required for all children. They should sit properly and eat their snack quietly. They are not allowed to take their snack outside to eat. Play time is 3:30 - 5:00, after tea. Scooters, roller blades, skates, wagons, volleyball, trampoline, swings and bikes are all favorites.

At 5:00 they clean up for study hall. Please honor their schedule and not play with them at inappropriate times. We can help the schedule by stopping the play and saying "it is time to go, no we will not play one more game." Arati is at 6:30. Children's dinner is served at 8:00, followed by bedtime.

3. Study Hall:

The children have study hall usually from 5:00 to 6:30. We are welcome to help tutor students during this time. We have been a big help in assisting with English lessons. If you wish to help in study hall talk to Rashmi. The education system in India is different from what we are used to in America so be prepared to tutor in a different style than you are used to or may agree

with. Remember that we are not here to change the Indian system but to aid our children in what is expected of them within their own culture.

4. Gift Giving:

Gifts often create competition, disharmony, and jealousy. It also teaches the children to ask for and expect gifts from all visitors. Gifts should be given to individual children with consent of the management, only as a reward. Gifts like this should be given when all are sitting together and not secretly. If they are rewarded for doing some good behavior or for succeeding in their education it will create a positive affect on others. Arrangements for this type of gift-giving or for giving to the entire group should be made in advance with the appropriate regular staff. You may prefer for the staff member to give the gifts on your behalf. Also there are certain gifts that are inappropriate to give such as snacks, money, certain videos etc. If you wish to give a gift, discuss the appropriate way to do this with the staff.

5. Ways to Help

There are some on-going projects that are more enjoyable when everyone pitches in, like teatime help (also done by older children), clothes sorting, etc. It's great when people offer their help with whatever needs doing.

1. With the Children

- a. Playtime (3:30-5) or other designated times
- b. Nursing/Medical skills
- c. Study Hall tutors
- d. Tutoring for Exams (usually in March)
- e. Helping with babies (especially from 8:30-10am)

2. Other Help

- a. Sorting clothes, working in the clothes rooms, sorting, airing, folding
- b. Organizing the library and other play items.
- c. Submitting Ashram news via the Hanuman Fellowship website
- d. Administrative/organizational skills needed by administration
- e. Tea time serving (3:15-3:45) and clean up (4:15 - 4:30)
- f. Helping prepare/set-up for birthdays and special events
- g. Projects as they appear

C. School (Sri Ram Vidya Mandir)

A large, well equipped two story school building has been constructed to educate our children. Most of the resident children plus 450 children from surrounding villages attend this school at the Ashram. It is an English medium school through class 4 and Hindi medium for the classes above. English is taught as a second language. The school is accredited and currently includes preschool (age 3) and grades LKG (lower kindergarten) through grade twelve. The curriculum includes Sanskrit, Hindi, English, General Knowledge, Science, Mathematics, Art, Music, Dance, Computer Science and Social Studies.

By prior arrangement, visitors are welcome. In addition, if you have teaching experience, tutoring inclination, a subject that you know well, or patience in English conversation you may be able to help at the school, again by prior arrangement.

Appendix D- Final Codebook

Access to schooling

Advantages of education

Appearance of learning

Ambiguity around function of education

Ambiguity around form of education

Arranged marriage

Arriving at the ashram

Ashram culture vs. school/village culture

Authentic learning

Caste

Comparing ashram past to ashram present

Developing/development “backwards”

Didactic method

Discrimination based on gender

Discrimination based on caste

Discrimination based on orphan status

Education as conforming

Education as creative initiative

Education as individual self expression

Education as social placement

Education as irrelevant

Education for expansion

Education for enhancement

Elevation of female social status

English

Experience based learning

Formal assessment

Gender

Goal of educating orphans

History of ashram

Informal assessment

Language as power

Liabilities of education

Love marriages

Lowering of female social status

Marriage

National education policy

Pedagogy

Physical resources

Practice based teaching

Process of educating orphans

Progressive approach

Reform

Reputation

Rote learning

Social capital

Socialization for independence

Socialization for integration

Teacher attitudes

Teacher as guru

Teacher as guide

Teachers as policy mechanism

Technology

Theory based teaching

Transition to employment

Transition to college

Transnationality

Virginity/purity

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SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

Name: Yolanda Diaz
Department of: Education
Address: University of California, Santa Cruz
Title of Research Project: A Critical Feminist Ethnography of the Education of Orphan Girls in Rural North India

CONSENT/ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are invited to take part in a research study conducted by Yolanda Diaz-Houston from the department of Education at the University of California, Santa Cruz, U.S.A. Before you decide whether or not to take part in this interview, please read this form. Please ask questions if there is anything that you do not understand.

The purpose of the study is to understand how teachers, volunteers and students talk about schooling and tutoring at Sri Ram Ashram. In particular, I am interested in the experiences of the older girls living at the ashram. I will be speaking with Indian teachers at the school, the foreign volunteers, and the older girls. I want to understand how the teachers and volunteers think about education, and I want to understand how the older girls see their own educational experiences. If you decide to go forward with the interview, I will be asking you to describe how you see education at the ashram. I will also ask you some questions about how you see the purpose of schooling and tutoring at the ashram. The reason I want to learn about this is to better understand how people talk about education at the ashram. You may benefit from this conversation by reflecting on your own beliefs and attitudes about education, but otherwise there are no other benefits for agreeing to talk with me. We will be talking for about 45 minutes.

I want you to know that I respect your privacy and will keep any information that you would rather not share private. When I write my dissertation, I will use another name

for your name and omit any information that might identify you specifically or link you individually to any quotes I use. With your permission, I would like to record our conversation. The audio recording will be kept under lock and key in my room while I am in India. When I go back to the U.S., it will be kept under lock and key in the education department at my university. Once I write down what was said, the audio record will be erased. The written version will also be kept under lock and key in the education department at my university. Your real name, or real names of anyone at the ashram, will not be in the transcription. I am taking these precautions because of possible risks to your reputation or employment standing. My intention is to keep your statements as private as possible so that others cannot make judgments about what you say that might badly affect your reputation or job standing. However I am obliged to inform you that there is still a risk, however small, that your identity could be connected to your statements from this conversation with possible negative consequences.

Your interview will be kept for possible use in other writings. If you want, I can share the written version of the interview with you. The decision to take part in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate. Even if you decide at first to take part, you are free to change your mind at any time and quit the study. You can choose to end this interview at any time or take back anything you say at any point.

If you have questions about this research or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact me:

Yolanda Diaz, Doctoral Student
Department of Education, UCSC
Home # 011-91-(831) 661-5138
Cell # 011-91-(831) 750-4403
sangitadiaz@gmail.com

You may also contact the faculty member supervising this work:
Professor Lora Bartlett
Department of Education, UCSC

Office # 011-91-(831) 459-1893
lorab@ucsc.edu

Or, the Chair of the Education Department
Professor Kip Tellez
Department of Education, UCSC
Office # 011-91-(831) 459-3249
ktellez@ucsc.edu

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Compliance Administration at the University of California at Santa Cruz at 001-91-(831)-459-1473 or orca@ucsc.edu.

Signing this document means that you understand the information given to you in this form and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the research described above.

I agree to be interviewed. I agree to have my interview audiotaped.

I give my permission for my data to be retained and used as described above.

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name

Please sign both consent forms, keeping one for yourself.

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SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

Name: Yolanda Diaz-Houston

Department of: Education

Address: 1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95064. U.S.A.

Title of Research Project: A Critical Feminist Ethnography of the Education of Orphan Girls in Rural North India

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear Legal Guardian:

Your children in the care of Sri Ram Ashram are invited to take part in a research study conducted by Yolanda Diaz-Houston from the department of Education at the University of California, Santa Cruz, U.S.A. Before you decide whether or not your children may participate, you should read this form and ask questions if there is anything that you do not understand.

Description of the project: The purpose of this dissertation research study is to understand how educators, volunteers and students discuss the role and purpose of education at Sri Ram Ashram. Of particular interest is how participants, including Indian teachers, foreign volunteers, and the older female students who live at the ashram, perceive the educational experiences of the orphan girls who live at the ashram.

What your child will do: If you agree to allow your child to participate, your child will be involved in the study through two interviews in English. I will ask open-ended questions about their views and experiences of educational activities and schooling at the community center. Interviews will be between 45 min to 1 hour long, and will be digitally tape recorded with permission of the children. An initial round of interviews will take place during the first trip to India, in the fall of 2011. A second round of follow up interviews will be conducted during the second trip to India, in the spring of 2012.

Time required: Each interview will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Risks or discomfort: There is possible risk to the children of embarrassment or negative consequences to their academic standing if their statements were to become public at the ashram.

Benefits of this study: Although there will be no direct benefit to your child for taking part in this study, the researcher may learn more about their educational experiences and how they see the impact of education on their lives.

Confidentiality: The information that your child gives in the study will be handled confidentially. His/her name will not be used in any report. The data will be kept in a locked file. Only the researcher will have access to the file. When the study is completed, the information will be destroyed. With your permission, I would like to audiotape your children during the interviews. Only I will have access to the audio recording. Once I have analyzed the recording, I will erase the audiotape. Because of the nature of the data, it may be possible to deduce your children's identities; however, there will be no attempt to do so and the results of the study will be reported in a way that will not identify him/her.

Decision to quit at any time: If you decide to allow your children to participate, you are free to withdraw your children at any time. Your children may also refuse to participate or discontinue participation at any time.

The decision to take part in this study is completely voluntary. Whatever you decide will in no way penalize or result in loss of benefits or services to which your child is otherwise entitled.

Rights and Complaints: If you have questions about this research, please contact Yolanda Diaz, Doctoral Student
Department of Education, UCSC
Home # 011-91-(831) 661-5138
Cell # 011-91-(831) 750-4403
sangitadiaz@gmail.com

You may also contact the faculty member supervising this work:
Professor Lora Bartlett
Department of Education, UCSC
Office # 011-91-(831)-459-1893
lorab@ucsc.edu

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Compliance Administration at the University of California at Santa Cruz at 011-91-(831)-459-1473 or orca@ucsc.edu.

Signature:

Signing this document means that you understand the information given to you in this form and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the research described above.

___ I give my permission for my children to be interviewed.

___ I give my permission for the interviews to be audiotaped.

Signature of Participant

Date

Typed/printed Name

Child's Name

Please sign both copies of this form, keeping one copy for yourself.

Appendix F - Human Subjects Protocol

**UCSC IRB
PROTOCOL FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING THE USE OF HUMAN
SUBJECTS**

Project Title: A Critical Feminist Ethnography of the Education of Orphan Girls in Rural North India
Funding Agency: Rotary International
Project Start Date: September 17th, 2011 **Project End Date:** June 14th, 2012

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Investigators who do not meet Principal Investigator criteria need a Faculty Sponsor. For criteria, see <http://ucop.edu/raohome/cgmanual/chap01.html> - 1-500.

Name: Yolanda Diaz-Houston	Dept: Education
E-mail address: yediaz@ucsc.edu	Phone #: (831) 750-4403
Mail Address (student only): P.O. Box 1993 Aptos, CA. 95001	

CHECK ONE:
UCSC Faculty
UCSC Staff

UCSC Post doc
UCSC Undergraduate Student
UCSC Graduate Student
Other:

FACULTY SPONSOR:

Faculty Sponsors must satisfy the UC policy for eligibility to be Principal Investigators. For criteria, see <http://ucop.edu/raohome/cgmanual/chap01.html> - 1-500.

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SIGNATURES:

The undersigned accept(s) responsibility for the study, including adherence to federal, state and UCSC policies regarding the rights and welfare of human participants participating in this study. In the case of student protocols, the faculty sponsor and the student share responsibility for adherence to policies.

Principal Investigator's Signature
Date

Faculty Sponsor's Signature
Date

Instructions: Please complete each of the items below and send this form with necessary attachments and consent forms to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at campus mail stop Office of Research/IRB. Contact ORCA at (831) 459-4114 (orca@ucsc.edu) for questions.

1. Please provide the names, phone numbers and email addresses of the investigators, other than yourself (if any), who will also be involved with the project.

N/A

2. Will any research personnel be undergraduate students?

No

Yes. If yes, please describe how these undergraduate students will be trained. Also, if these undergraduates will be interacting with human subjects, please provide a written script detailing exactly what undergraduate research personnel will be saying to human subjects.

3. Please state the *monetary support* for this project. **If a sponsored project proposal has been submitted, please include a complete copy of the proposal** and the OSP SC number. Each grant proposal should have a separate protocol, unless you have obtained permission from the grantor for multiple submissions.

I have been awarded a grant through Rotary International to conduct research in India. The funding is awarded directly to me as an individual and not through UC Santa Cruz.

4. Are you receiving NIH funds for this project?

No

Yes. If yes, the PI and all key personnel are *required to complete an online training* and submit a copy of the certificate of completion to Office of Research Compliance Administration. You may choose between the following two courses to satisfy the NIH human subjects training requirement: (1) www.citiprogram.org; or (2) <http://cme.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials/learning/humanparticipant-protections.asp>.

5. *Related Projects:* If the research is related to a project or other program that has already been reviewed by the UCSC IRB, please indicate the title and UCSC IRB identifying number.

N/A

6. *General Project Overview:* Please give a brief summary of the nature and purpose of the proposed research. Include the research hypothesis or question and methodology.

The purpose of this dissertation research is to understand how educators, volunteers and students discuss the role and purpose of education at a rural community center in India. Of particular interest is how participants, including Indian teachers, foreign volunteers, and the orphan students themselves, perceive the educational experiences of the orphan girls who live at the community center. From an academic point of view, a purpose is to develop useful theory that addresses issues surrounding the nature and impact of education upon marginalized populations.

Sri Ram Ashram is located in the northern state of Uttarakhand, on 16 acres of farmland near the town of Haridwar. The community center includes an orphanage for over 70 destitute and orphaned children, an Indian school for over 500 children, the majority of whom come from local villages, and a charitable medical clinic that services the surrounding rural area. The center is sponsored by a partnership between two non-profit organizations, Anath Shishu Palan Trust of India and the Sri Rama Foundation based in the United States. In 2007, I volunteered at the community center for two months as an English tutor. Foreign educators such as myself consistently volunteer and lead educational activities at the orphanage.

This critical ethnography does not aim to address the effectiveness of the NGO's efforts or to evaluate the educational achievement of the students; rather I am interested in the nature of those efforts. How are educational norms and goals negotiated in this particular educational community that includes volunteers from the United States and other nations? Therefore, I primarily consider the following questions:

1. How do various actors in the educational community at the orphanage, including (U.S.) volunteers, Indian teachers, and Indian students participate in the cultural construction(s) of what it means to be an "educated Indian woman" for orphans at an ashram in rural northern India?
2. In particular I ask, what is the nature of the discourse surrounding the educational norms of the community in relationship to underlying ideologies of gender, caste, class, and race?

Given these research questions, the most appropriate means of data collection are through ethnographic techniques, primarily in-depth interviewing, participant observation, and examination of curriculum materials. Data collection will consist of six months of ethnographic field work. I will live at the community center in India volunteering as an English instructor and tutor over the course of two trips in the fall of 2011 and the spring of 2012.

7. *Procedures:* Describe how human subjects will be involved in the research. If there is to be an intervention or interaction with the subjects, describe what researcher and subjects will do, who will conduct the procedures, where and when the procedures will take place, how frequently, and for how long. If identifiable private information about the subjects will be sought, such as personal records, describe the information and how it will be obtained. Be sure to describe any photographing or video or audio tape recording of subjects and others.

Participants will be involved in the research through semi-structured interviews in English. I will ask open-ended questions about their views and experiences of educational activities and schooling at the community center. Interviews will be between 45 min to 1 hour long, and will be digitally tape recorded with permission of the participants. An initial round of interviews will take place during the first trip to India, in the fall of 2011. A second round of follow up interviews will be conducted during the second trip to India, in the spring of 2012.

The foreign volunteers are fluent in English as their first language. The Indian teachers and orphan girls at the ashram are fluent in English as a second language. The Indian school is an English and Hindi medium school. English is a required language in order to advance into higher education, and the orphans are raised in a bilingual environment through the nearly constant presence of English speaking volunteers. Even so, there is a risk that meaning may be misconstrued on my part or that of the participants due to the limitations of language. In order to address this issue, both the consent form and interview protocol reflect simple and clear use of English. For example, there is no use of contractions or academic language. Both have been reviewed by a native Hindi speaker in order to guard against possible misunderstandings.

8. Please provide a general description of subjects and recruitment of subjects. Include any materials that will be used for recruitment (e.g. advertisements, posters, email).

Participants will be approached as a part of a purposive sample due to their common experience or shared involvement in the education of the orphan girls. All participants will be approached in person. I have gained permission from the orphanage director to approach the 7 girl orphans who are completing their secondary education at the community center as possible interview participants. **Please see the attached document granting permission from the orphanage director to speak with children under the care of Sri Ram Ashram.** The young women who I will approach range in age from 15-18 years. I will also approach the additional 6 adult

women who grew up at the ashram and completed their secondary education there. In addition, 12 Indian teachers (half teaching in 11th class and half in 12th class) directly involved in the education of these young women through the Indian school will be approached for interviews. The number of foreign volunteer educators at the orphanage fluctuates throughout the year, and so it is unpredictable how many will be available for interviews. With this in mind, all foreign volunteers will be approached for interviews as opportunities arise.

9. Do you intend to include minors (persons under 18 years of age) in the project?
Yes No

10. Do you intend to include pregnant women in the project?
Yes No

11. Do you intend to include prisoners in the project?
Yes No

12. If adults are to be use as subjects, are they competent to give informed consent?
Yes No

13. Approximately how many human subjects do you plan to include in your research?

30

14. Please describe any human subjects research experience you have that is relevant to this project.

Previously, I conducted a study that included interviewing elementary teachers about thier perspectives on standardized testing. In that study I addressed issues of anonymity.

15. *Screening Procedures:* If subjects will be screened prior to entry into the research, please address the criteria for exclusion and inclusion in the research. Please also provide a statement regarding what will happen to the information collected about the individual should they not enter into the study.

N/A

16. *Risks:* Provide your evaluation of the possible risks and/or discomforts to the subjects (e.g., injury, stress, discomfort, accidental disclosure, invasion of privacy) in terms of probability and magnitude of potential harm. Where appropriate, discuss measures that will be taken to minimize risks.

The main issue that will need to be addressed is anonymity. There is possible risk to participants of embarrassment or negative consequences to their academic standing or employment status if their statements were to become public at the community center. In order to protect the participant's right to confidentiality, audio recordings, and any notes pertaining to the interviews will be kept in a locked cabinet in my private room at the community center, a room that will also be kept locked at all times. In addition, participants will be assigned an alias for use in any transcription or written notes. There will be no code linking aliases to actual names.

17. *Benefits*: Describe the benefits, if any, to the subjects or to society that will be realized as a result of this project. Discuss the benefits that may accrue directly to the subjects as well as to society. If there is no direct benefit anticipated for the subjects, please state such. **Do not include compensation in this section.**

Foreign volunteers, Indian teachers and Indian students will all have the opportunity to reflect on their professional and educational experiences through the interview process. The interview itself may affirm the value of the respondent's experience and be a rewarding experience in itself.

18. Explain why study risks are reasonable in relation to the potential benefits to subjects and to society.

If the proper precautions are taken to minimize the risks around anonymity that this study must address, then the risks are reasonable in relation to the potential benefits.

19. Describe any provisions you intend to make to protect the rights and welfare of the subjects.

Subjects will volunteer to participate in the study and every attempt will be made to keep their statements confidential (see #16). They will sign an informed consent form and their rights will be explained to them before the interview takes place. As a researcher, I understand that I must collect an assent from any underage subjects. I also understand that "assent" means a child's affirmative agreement to participate in research, and that mere failure to object should not, absent affirmative agreement, be construed as assent. This means the child must actively show his or her willingness to participate in the research, rather than just complying with directions to participate and not resisting in any way. The young women between the ages of 15 and 18 years who I will approach for the study are able to read and understand English. The

informed consent form that is attached to this application is appropriate to their level of understanding and will be used as a confirmation of assent.

20. Will data be collected anonymously (no identifying information such as name, address, phone number, etc will be collected that can be linked to the study data)? (Note: Data is *not* collected anonymously if there is a code linking it to personally identifiable information.)
- Yes No

21. If identifying information will be retained, describe how confidentiality will be protected.

Participants will be invited into the study as part of a purposive sample that seeks individuals involved in the educational experiences of orphan girls at Sri Ram Ashram. Therefore, although no other individual information such as names or phone numbers will be collected, the home address (of the orphans) or the place of employment (of the Indian teachers) or place of volunteer service (of volunteers) will be included in the data due to the nature of the sample. In order to keep this data confidential, please see the following response to #22.

22. If the data is coded, explain where the key will be stored, how the key will be protected, and who will have access to the key.

I am taking the following measures to minimize risks. First, the name of all participants will be assigned aliases. There will be no written key that identifies actual names with aliases. The interviews will be recorded on a hand held digital recorder which will be kept in a secure location under lock and key. Transcripts of the interviews will be kept on a portable memory stick, with no identifying documents or names other than the researcher's. Once the interviews are transcribed, the audio recording will be deleted to avoid voice recognition.

23. Indicate whether research data or specimens will be destroyed at the end of the study. If data will not be destroyed, explain where, in what format, and for how long it will be retained.

Data will be kept for no more than 7 years under lock and key on a memory stick and then they will be destroyed.

24. Explain how data collection instruments, audiotapes, videotapes, photographs, etc. will be stored and who will have access to them. Indicate at what point they will be transcribed and/or destroyed (if ever).

In India, all material will be kept in a locked cabinet in my private room at the community center, a room that will also be kept locked at all times. Upon returning to the U.S., Transcriptions, hardcopy or digital files, will be kept in a locked cabinet in the education office and destroyed after no more than 7 years. Only I will have access to them.

NOTE: Whenever appropriate, researchers may retain study data for future use/ other research purposes as long as they make provision in the protocol and consent documents for such use. Researchers must spell out in the protocol how confidentiality will be maintained vis-à-vis long-term storage of data and/or granting of access to other researchers, and the consent forms must clearly ask subjects for permissions in this regard.

25. *Medical Supervision:* If medical supervision is deemed necessary, describe the provisions for medical supervision.

N/A

26. *Informed Consent:* Unless a waiver is granted, informed consent needs to be documented by the use of a written consent form signed by the research subject or the subject's legally authorized representative. A copy of the consent must be given to the person signing the form. Please indicate which type of form you intend to use to obtain the subjects' consent to participate in your project:

A long form written consent document that includes all the required elements of informed consent — *please attach your consent form.*

A short form written consent document that states that the required elements of informed consent have been presented to the participant orally – *please attach the short form and a written summary of the information that will be presented to the participants.* A copy of the summary should be signed by the PI and given to the participant at the time that consent is obtained.

You are requesting a waiver of the requirement for a signed consent form.

A waiver of documented consent is permitted only when:

The consent document would be the only record linking the subject to the research and the principal risk to the subject is the potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. **OR**
The research presents no more than minimal risk and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside the research context.

Please note that participants still must be fully informed about the study. Please attach a written summary of the information that will be presented to the participants.

You are requesting an alteration or waiver of some or all of the elements of informed consent.

A waiver informed consent is permitted only when:

The research presents no more than minimal risk; it is not practicable to conduct the research without the waiver or alteration; waiving or altering the consent will not adversely affect the subjects' rights and welfare; and pertinent information be provided to subjects later, if appropriate.

OR

The research will be conducted by or subject to the approval of state or local government officials; the project designed to examine (i) public benefit of service programs; it is not practicable to conduct the research without the waiver or alteration.

Please describe and justify your request for a waiver or alteration of informed consent:

27. *Financial Aspects*: Describe any remuneration or costs to the subjects that may result from participation in the research. If the subjects will receive a payment, please include a justification of why the amount is reasonable and will not unduly influence the subject's decision to participate. Describe when and how payments will be made.

N/A

28. If tests or questionnaires are to be administered to the subjects as part of this project, the tests must be either attached or explained in detail and are subject to approval by the Institutional Review Board.

No tests or questionnaires will be administered.
Tests and/or questionnaires are attached.

29. If interviews or surveys will be conducted, a copy of the interview or survey questions must be attached or explained in detail and are subject to approval by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

No interviews or surveys will be conducted.
Interviews or survey questions are attached.

HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996) Questions:

1. Will health information be obtained from a covered entity (a health care provider who bills health insurers, e.g., Santa Cruz Medical Clinic)?

Yes No

2. Will the study involve the provision of healthcare in a covered entity, such as the Student Health Center?

Yes No

3. If the study involves the provision of healthcare, will a health insurer or billing agency be contacted for billing or eligibility?

Yes No

If you answered “YES” to any of the questions above, you are subject to HIPAA and must complete a HIPAA training and include a HIPAA authorization or waiver request with your protocol.

DISCLOSURE OF INVESTIGATORS’ FINANCIAL INTERESTS

In order to inform research subjects of all circumstances that may affect their decision about whether to participate, all researchers are required to disclose any financial interests they may have related to this study. Each positive disclosure (i.e., each affirmative response below) will be reviewed by the Independent Substantive Review Committee (ISRC) and approved by the Vice Chancellor for Research.

To complete this form, the Principal Investigator must ask all UCSC personnel who are involved in designing or conducting the research the following question:

“Do you, your spouse, or dependent children have any significant* financial interests related to the work to be conducted as part of the above-referenced project?”**

***Significant Financial Interests:** With respect to any single entity external to the University of California whose business interests are related to the results of this study, researchers are deemed to have significant financial interests if they, their spouses, or their dependent children have any of the following interests:

- Outside income exceeding \$10,000 over the preceding twelve months or anticipated during the forthcoming twelve months. Income includes salary, consultant payments, honoraria, royalty payments, dividends, loan, or any other payments or consideration with value, including payments made to the University Health Sciences Compensation Plan.
- Equity in the form of stock, stock options, real estate, loan to, or any other investment or ownership interest exceeding \$10,000 (current market value) or a 5% or greater ownership interest.
- A management position (e.g., director, officer, partner, or trustee) with the interested entity.
- An intellectual property interest, e.g., a patent (actual, planned, or applied for) or a copyright for software assigned or to be assigned to a party other than the Regents.

****Related Financial Interests:** Related interest occurs when the investigator has Significant Financial Interests that would reasonably appear to be affected by the research or in entities whose financial interests would reasonably appear to be affected by the research. Examples include situations where the investigator:

- Is conducting a project where the results could be relevant to the development, manufacturing or improvement of the products or services of the entity in which the investigator has a financial interest; or

- has a financial interest in an entity that might manufacture or commercialize a drug, device, procedure, or any other product used in the project or that will predictably result from the project; or
- has consulting income in his/her professional field where the financial interest of the entity or the investigator would reasonably appear to be affected by the project; or
- has a financial interest in an entity and the project proposes to subcontract a portion of the work, or lease property, or make referral of participants to, or make purchases from the entity, or the entity is part of a consortium or will otherwise participate in the project.

Any member of the study team who answers in the affirmative must be listed in the box below. A staff person will contact any researcher listed below to obtain additional information regarding the specific financial interest(s).

Name(s) of UCSC Personnel on Study Team who have Significant Financial Interests (Include Principal Investigator, Co-Investigators, Research Personnel and, if applicable, Faculty Sponsor)

SIGNATURE (Please sign even if no individuals have disclosed a financial interest)

I certify that all members of the study team have answered the financial interests question and only those individuals listed in the box above have disclosed any financial interest related to this study.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date