FRAMING ENTITLEMENTS, FRAMING INEQUALITY: HOW STATE POLICIES ON FOOD AND CARE ENABLE WOMEN TO CHALLENGE OR ADAPT TO INEQUALITY

by

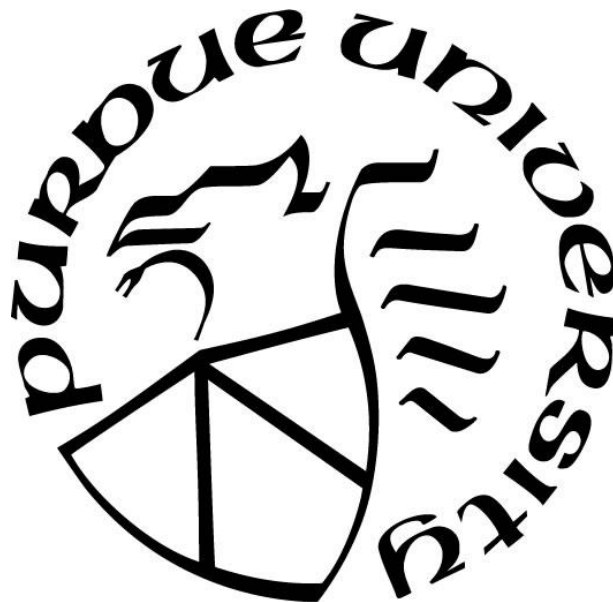**Preethi Krishnan**

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of Purdue University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology

West Lafayette, Indiana

May 2019

THE PURDUE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL
STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Dr. Linda Renzulli, Chair

    Department of Sociology

Dr. Rachel Einwohner

    Department of Sociology

Dr. Carolyn Cummings Perrucci

    Department of Sociology

Dr. Harry Targ

    Department of Political Science

Dr. Bert Useem

    Department of Sociology

Approved by:

    Dr. Shawn Bauldry

        Head of the Graduate Program

To struggles that make the world a better place

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

GLOSSARY

Anganwadi	Neighborhood childcare center
AIADMK	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Regional Political Party in Tamil Nadu)
Block	Administrative unit below district and above village.
Collector	District level bureaucratic head
Congress Party	National Political Party which was influential in Tamil Nadu in 1950s but continues to have some support.
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Regional Political Party in Tamil Nadu)
Growth monitoring	Monitoring of children's weight as severely underweight, moderately underweight, underweight, and normal, to track malnourishment in the community
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services

A welfare program in India that provides food, nutrition, and care to mothers and children. |
Infant Mortality Rate	Annual number of deaths per 1000 live births of children under the age of one.
maavu or *sathu maavu*	Supplementary nutrition flour
Maternal Mortality Rate	Number of deaths of women per 100,000 live births from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management (excluding accidental or incidental causes) while pregnant or within 42 days of pregnancy termination.
MGR	M.G. Ramachandran, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister who institutionalized the Noon Meal Program in Tamil Nadu
MNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NMP	Noon Meal Programme. Also known as Mid-day Meals.
OBC	Other Backward Classes
Panchayat	Elected village council

Sex Ratio at Birth	Number of female live births per 1000 male live births. While it can be reported in other ways, this is the definition I have adopted in this project.
SC	Scheduled Castes
ST	Scheduled Tribes
Stunted	Proportion of children whose height for their height is below WHO standards (below -2 standard deviations)
TINP	Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition Programme
Thamizh	Language of the Tamil people, also known as Tamil.
Underweight	Proportion of children whose weight for their age is below WHO standards (below -2 standard deviations)
Wasted	Proportion of children whose weight for their height is below WHO standards (below -2 standard deviations)

ABSTRACT

Author: Krishnan, Preethi. PhD
Institution: Purdue University
Degree Received: May 2019
Title: Framing Entitlements, Framing Inequality: How State Policies on Food and Care Enable
      Women to Challenge or Adapt or Adapt to Inequality.
Committee Chair: Linda Renzulli

This dissertation examines the role state-society dynamics play in influencing how people negotiate inequality. In particular, I analyze the interdependent relationship between state policies and the frames people use to interpret unequal access to food and care. While state policies shape people's frames, people also negotiate with state policies to deploy frames that either challenge or adapt to inequality. Using in-depth observations, policy documents, and 50 semi-structured interviews with mothers, *Anganwadi* workers (childcare workers), union leaders, and state representatives associated with the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), a welfare program in India, I show that state-society dynamics are central to how inequality is sustained and challenged. When welfare policies encourage collectivization, disadvantaged groups appropriate policy frames to strengthen entitlement frames and in the process, challenge inequality. I refer to this mechanism as *frame appropriation*. In contrast, policies such as privatization encourage individualization, particularly in economically mobile groups, who then adopt neoliberal frames such as personal responsibility and choice, to weaken entitlement frames through a mechanism I call *reactive adoption*. Thus, alongside social movements that has made possible historically significant policy reforms, the path to social change also comes alive in daily interactions where policies mediate people's everyday lives.

CHAPTER 1.   ENTITLEMENTS & INEQUALITY

1.1   Introduction

Sometime in the summer of 2016, I decided to visit a newly built *anganwadi*, the regional name for a childcare center, the most local arm of a national welfare program called Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in rural Tamil Nadu, India. The ICDS provides food, supplementary nutrition, and care for children under the age of six as well as for pregnant and lactating mothers. The *anganwadi* teacher enthusiastically gave me a tour of the building, as mothers and their children came trickling in. Typically, an *anganwadi* is staffed by a teacher and a helper. This particular week, the helper, who cooks and cleans the center, was assigned to the local state office due to staffing shortage, leaving the teacher to take on the additional role of the cook. As the teacher cooked the hot meal in the kitchen, the mothers sat in the front room chatting, as their children snuggled with them or played among themselves, a scene I have enjoyed watching many times since then.

Thamarai, a 27-year-old mother from the Scheduled Caste (SC) community, educated till 12th grade, was elated about the new building.[1] Until recently, the *anganwadi* was operating at the porch of a neighbor, who belonged to a more privileged caste group, known as Other Backward Classes (OBC). According to Thamarai, "they [the neighbor] did not insult us, but we still had some fear in our minds." Neither Thamarai nor her children were allowed inside the neighbor's

---

[1] Caste is a graded system of inequality where power and privilege is ascribed solely based on parentage or ancestry. Those born into Dalit caste communities were historically marginalized and oppressed through practices of untouchability, while those from Brahmin communities were socially privileged. Scheduled Caste is the government category that refers to Dalits. I have used the term Scheduled Caste (SC) because most people I spoke to, referred to themselves as SC. The government categorizes caste in the following manner – General Category (referring to Brahmins and other upper caste categories), Other Backward Classes (OBC) (intermediate caste groups between Brahmins and Dalits), and Scheduled Castes. While OBC communities are less socially privileged than Brahmins, they are more privileged than SC communities and may engage in untouchability practices against SC communities. In my field site, very few Brahmins used the *anganwadi*.

home, a reminder that untouchability practices continue in contemporary Tamil Nadu. For poor SC mothers like Thamarai, who live and work in precarious conditions, the *anganwadi* offered safety, food, care, and education for their children, without the humiliation of caste-based discrimination. They felt relieved that the center provided free and nutritious hot meals for their children. Moreover, in a cultural context where women are considered to be the primary care-givers, Thamarai felt 'free' from the constant attention that young children require, especially when families cannot afford to child-proof their homes. Thamarai told me that the new *anganwadi* was built after mothers like her made appeals to a SC state representative in the area. That the state representative belonged to the SC community was not a coincidence, but rather a direct result of the caste-based affirmative action policy in Tamil Nadu under which quotas in electoral seats, universities, and government jobs are allocated to different caste groups proportional to their representation in the population. I would hear about similar claims that emerged collaboratively between SC mothers, *anganwadi* workers (across castes), and SC state representatives in other *anganwadis* as well. In Thamarai's words, "when the government built us this *anganwadi*, we felt free. This building, it is ours. If I want to go out, or if my child urinates, there is no problem. Even if I don't take my children back on time, they will be safe."

Unlike the neighbor's home, where caste segregation was overt, children from all caste groups were expected to share space in the newly built *anganwadi* as they ate and played together, a challenge to caste norms around untouchability. When cultural norms prescribe women as the primary care-givers, demands for care-work from the state is a challenge to gender and caste structures. By claiming that the building is "ours", Thamarai was using an *entitlement* frame to interpret her access to basic needs and was holding the state accountable to providing those needs. Moreover, in the process of claiming food and care, she and others like her were challenging

unequal social structures, through a mechanism I call *frame appropriation*. My analysis reveals that frame appropriation is the mechanism by which disadvantaged groups appropriate dominant frames in state policies to strengthen their entitlements and in the process, challenge inequality. In this case, a combination of state policies such as the ICDS and the affirmative action policy had created conditions for Thamarai to use the entitlement frame and challenge inequality. Thus, certain state policies enable frame appropriation.

I would soon learn that not everyone engages in frame appropriation. A little after speaking to Thamarai, I interviewed Selvi, a 22-year-old OBC mother with a Bachelor's degree in Commerce. Her perspectives on the *anganwadi* were starkly different. Unlike Thamarai, Selvi was extremely dissatisfied with the services provided at the *anganwadi*. As was the case with similar mothers from economically mobile families, Selvi cared mostly about education, learning, and care, rather than the food provided at the center. According to her, the teacher was not available on most days, a reality that was evident to me given the staff shortage across centers in Tamil Nadu.[2] Interestingly, her major complaints were directed against the helper, rather than the teacher. It happens to be the case that the helper is from the SC community. As caste is associated with notions of purity and food, non-SC members often avoid eating food cooked by people from SC communities. As a result of affirmative action, the Tamil Nadu government had increasingly recruited women from SC communities as teachers and helpers in *anganwadis*, including those which serviced both SC and OBC children. In some cases, the caste barriers wear out over time while in others as in the case of Selvi, the privileged resist change.

---

[2] Many teachers were in charge of two centers as a result of unfilled vacancies. As they split their time between two centers, services often suffered.

Selvi did not refer to caste at all. Rather, she spoke about her dream to enroll her daughter in a private English medium school where "there will be many toys and good learning." Selvi's neighbor has enrolled her son in the private school, where the teachers are regular, better toys are available, and children learn. Selvi evokes personal responsibility and choice as she speaks about her preferences, "if this place does not work, we will enroll her in the English medium school. It depends on each person's choice where they want to enroll their children." Selvi told me that she does not bring her daughter to the *anganwadi* anymore. She is here today, only because the teacher requested her to come, for my visit. These days, Selvi performs the care-work in the family rather than make her rightful demand for quality care-work from the state. She would rather enroll her daughter in a private English medium school, which is inaccessible to poor SC mothers in the area, than hold the state accountable to providing high quality care and food. Thus, with increasing privatization, some women were adapting to inequality structures of caste, class, and gender through a mechanism I call *reactive adoption*. My analysis reveals that reactive adoption is the mechanism by which upwardly mobile people adopt neoliberal frames such as personal responsibility and choice that weakens their entitlement claims but in the process, exacerbate inequality.

Thamarai and Selvi's experiences provide a glimpse into how women make sense of state policies to challenge or adapt to inequality. Wealth, income, status, and influential social networks are distributed unequally in society. Whether the state can and should address social inequality is often a matter of debate among policy makers. In this dissertation project, I conceptualize the state not as a monolithic institution but as an ensemble of departments and groups such as the political apparatus that enacts policies as well as the bureaucratic institutions that enforce them (Krishnan and Subramaniam 2014). For some, the state must, at the minimum, provide basic needs such as

food, health, education and care for its citizens (Dreze and Sen 1989). Even then, the benevolence of the state to distribute basic needs equally among all its citizens cannot be assumed. Public action, whether individual or collective, is critical to hold the state accountable to recognizing all groups and providing quality services (Dreze and Sen 2002).

Public action in everyday interactions between citizens and state actors can be investigated under the umbrella of contentious politics that emphasizes the dynamic and varied nature of claims-making (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2003). Whether an individual or a group is motivated to act depends on various factors, including the frame they deploy to interpret their grievances (Benford and Snow 2000; Gamson 1992). If Thamarai used the "entitlement" frame to claim social welfare benefits and challenge inequality, Selvi used the "personal responsibility" frame to weaken her claims and adapt to inequality. Although scholars have discussed how challengers use strategic frames in different political circumstances, the analysis continued to be movement centered (Benford 1993; McCammon 2012a; Snow and Benford 1988). Framing is often analyzed as a strategic activity that organized movements engage in, to target the state and to mobilize public support. Missing from this rich literature is an in-depth investigation of the state's role in shaping the frames that people like Thamarai and Selvi use to negotiate inequality. The state, I argue, is not just a target for protests but also a critical actor that shapes the frames people use to interpret their unequal access to basic needs. Analysis of people's frames is salient in the case I present and in the neoliberal trends visible in the Global South more broadly. I address the following questions in this project: How does the state influence how people negotiate inequality? In particular, how do state policies influence the frames people use to interpret unequal access to basic needs? How do those frames challenge or adapt to inequality?

1.2   The Study

I address the above questions by examining the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), a welfare program in India that provides food, nutrition, and care to mothers and children. This welfare program operates through neighborhood childcare centers known as *anganwadis*. The *anganwadi* is a space where a wide variety of actors - mothers, unionized *anganwadi* workers, government representatives, civil society actors, and bureaucrats - engage in collaborative and conflict-ridden interactions. The *anganwadi* is also one of the most localized state institutions where policies developed at global, national, and subnational levels find meaning in people's lives. Using in-depth observations, policy documents about ICDS, and 50 semi-structured interviews with mothers, *anganwadi* workers, union leaders, and state representatives, I show that state-society dynamics are central to how inequality is sustained and challenged. In Chapter 3, I provide more details about the sites where I conducted observations and the people I interviewed. In the chapters that follow, I report how historical state policies regarding food, care, and entitlements continue to shape the frames mothers use to interpret their access to the ICDS. I argue that state policies can both facilitate and hinder entitlement frames that disadvantaged groups use to challenge inequality.

1.3   Framing Entitlement, Framing Inequality

Human societies are characterized by considerable gaps in resources between groups (Lenski, Lenski, and Nolan 1978). Such unequal distribution of resources determines who remains hungry, malnourished, and neglected. While some uphold the market as the all-encompassing panacea to social problems (Bhagwati and Panagariya 2013), others argue for an entitlement approach by which the state is held accountable to providing basic services to all, especially the poor who may not be able to afford market options (Sen 1999). To hold the state accountable collectively,

individuals develop a shared sense of their life situation through collective action frames that emphasize or redefine grievances in ways that holds an external entity accountable for mitigating the grievance (Benford 1993; Snow and Benford 1992). Entitlement is a frame that holds the state accountable. My analysis demonstrates the role that the state plays to create conditions under which people deploy entitlement frames to interpret unequal access to basic needs.

Specific frames are derived from within the context of a more generic master frame, which articulates a broader system of beliefs and values in a more "elastic, flexible, and inclusive" manner (Benford 2013). For instance, after the US civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s, the master frame of civil rights was adopted by several movements such as the women's movement, the gay rights movement, and Chicano/a movements even as they highlighted their specific concerns through collective action frames. Collective action frames become effective in mobilizing support when they align with the master frame, are credible, and resonate with people's life experiences and cultural environment (McCammon 2009, 2012a; Snow et al. 2014; Snow and Benford 1988). Thus, resonant frames are more likely to be effective in mobilizing action.

Even though resonant frames are effective in mobilizing broad support for causes, they tend to overlook fringe voices whose concerns may not appeal to the majority, especially if they challenge the dominant cultural narrative (Ferree 2003). For instance, the resonant frame of pro-choice in reproductive justice movements in the US sidelined the voices of women who felt deprived of quality childcare. In contrast, in Germany, the protectionist frame that upheld rights of mothers, marginalized voices of women who claimed abortion as a legitimate choice regarding one's body (Ferree 2003). Thus, the pro-choice is a resonant frame in the US and a radical frame in Germany. Similarly, right to childcare is a resonant frame in Germany, but a radical frame in the US. In both countries, resonant frames marginalized radical frames that challenged the dominant cultural

narrative. The focus on resonant frames renders invisible, power structures that make those frames effective in the first place. In contrast, radical frames do not align with the dominant cultural environment (supported by power structures) and may not be effective in mobilizing support in the short term. However, they are essential for transformational cultural challenges to structural inequalities and must be examined (Ferree 2003).

The role of the state in creating conditions for radical frames to emerge or weaken is becoming more relevant in an era of increasing neoliberalism in the Global South that influences both culture and master frames (Ray and Katzenstein 2005). For instance, the master frame of "poverty alleviation" in a post-independence socialist India is increasingly adapting to market forces (Ray and Katzenstein 2005). Thus, cultural environments and master frames are not static entities. State policies shape culture in ways that reproduce or challenge inequality structures (McCammon 2009). By shaping culture in particular ways, state policies have a dynamic relation with frames that people use, in that, frames may target the state but are simultaneously shaped by the state. While resonant frames are essential for mobilizing action, radical frames highlight unacknowledged manifestations of inequality. When state policies hinder radical frames, it contributes to sustaining inequality.

Other scholars of contentious politics have engaged with various forms of resistance at the boundary of state and society such as "passive resistance" (Scott 2008), "consentful contention" (Straughn 2005), "reformist activism" (Anderson 1994), "reasonable radicalism" (McCann 1994), and "rightful resistance" (O'Brien and Li 2006) to describe resistance under deference, the use of broad values endorsed by the state in land struggles, use of existing legislations for raising new concerns, and the use of central-local divide in state institutions to impede the power of the local elites. I follow their example to examine the state as an "ensemble of institutions and organizations"

that may include aspects of repression and opportunities embedded in them (Jessop 2008; Krishnan and Subramaniam 2014). I add to this literature in two ways. One, unlike the scholars above, I do not study resistance. Rather, I study frames, both resonant and radical, that play a role in motivating resistance. By studying frames, I analyze the meaning making process at the boundaries of state and society that may or may not be effective in mobilization but still important to our understanding of inequality. Two, because I study radical frames deployed by women who may not be organized as a social movement, possibilities for frames that motivate resistance are inherently vulnerable to state influence. I bring attention not only to how state policies enable certain frames but also how state policies deflate challenges to inequality, not with repression, but by weakening radical frames. Specific to this project, I show how different state policies facilitate and hinder entitlement frames, including radical frames, through mechanisms such as *frame appropriation* and *reactive adoption*.

Appropriation of existing resources curated by the dominant community is a strategy that vulnerable groups adopt to mobilize support (McAdam et al. 2003). I extend the concept of social appropriation to frames. I find that disadvantaged groups may appropriate dominant frames in state policies to make their voices heard. When welfare policies encourage collectivization through policies like affirmative action, disadvantaged groups including women like Thamarai may appropriate policy frames to strengthen entitlement frames and in the process, challenge inequality. I refer to this mechanism as *frame appropriation*. In contrast, other policies may hinder challenges to inequality. I find that neoliberal policies such as privatization encourage individualization, particularly in upwardly mobile groups such as families like that of Selvi's, who then adopt neoliberal frames such as personal responsibility and choice, to weaken entitlement frames through a mechanism I call *reactive adoption*. Thus, neoliberalism operates not only through policies that

redistribute basic needs from the state to the market, making it unaffordable to the poor, but also through frames that help sustain inequality. When disadvantaged groups use the entitlement frame to interpret unequal access to basic needs, they challenge neoliberal frames that seek to sustain inequality.

1.4   Neoliberalism and Frames

Neoliberalism is a set of political and economic policies that argues for the advancement of individual choices through privatization, fewer regulations, and lesser government interference (Harvey 2007). For neoliberal policy makers, the state is inefficient, slow, and corrupt, while the market place is designed to nurture innovation and choice for citizens (Bhagwati and Panagariya 2013). Neoliberal policies may include privatization of education, health, public transportation as well as less government regulation of labor rights and environmental impact. While privatization increases choices for the wealthy, reducing state provision of basic needs affects the poor who cannot afford market choices (Chudgar and Creed 2016). At times, neoliberalism may co-exist with seemingly counter-neoliberal projects like welfare, even as those projects work in the interest of capital accumulation (Jakobsen 2018). The effects of neoliberal policies vary across countries and within countries (Milanovic 2016). While the middle class in India and China have benefited from the free movement of global capital, the poor in many other countries have been left behind (Milanovic 2016). Even within India, there are variations. There has been an overall reduction in poverty, but economic inequality, especially between the rural poor and the rest of the country, has increased in liberalized India (Deaton and Dreze 2002).

In the face of such dire consequences, movements have resisted neoliberal policies. Anti-austerity citizen movements, anti-privatization movements, indigenous movements against land appropriation, grassroots movements appealing for welfare, and transnational social movements

that challenge international financial institutions and corporations have emerged around the world (Almeida 2014; Dreze and Sen 2002; Krishnan and Subramaniam 2014, 2014; Smith 2008). In the developed world, transnational social movements utilize high visibility meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) as opportunities to highlight the negative impact of neoliberal policies. However, neoliberal policies are not always implemented with such fan-fare and may also occur in 'stealth' (Jenkins and Goetz 1999; Vijayabaskar 2011).

Neoliberalism in stealth refers to how reforms are introduced gradually rather than through major announcements as in the case of austerity reforms (Jenkins and Goetz 1999). Further, politicians may engage in the rhetoric of poverty alleviation even while enacting policies that dispossess the poor and benefit the capitalist class (Jenkins 2004; Vijayabaskar 2010, 2011). Unlike large scale reforms, stealth policies do not offer social movements vocabularies to highlight threat, severity, and urgency (Benford 1993). Moreover, stealth neoliberal policies are often supported culturally through neoliberal frames such as 'personal responsibility', 'efficiency', and 'choice'. Therefore, movements may have to construct strategic frames that highlight the unseen impact of such reforms.

When disadvantaged groups challenge inequality, they may have to challenge neoliberal frames as well as its particular manifestations of gender, class, and racial inequality, and in the case of India, caste. For instance, privatization policies are supported by the frame of 'choice', even though market choices are seldom affordable to the poor. Similarly, policy recommendations for reducing welfare spending is combined with the frame, 'personal responsibility' that portrays dependency on the state as a weakness of character (Fraser and Gordon 1994). Popular media coverage on professional success stories seldom report how family background, socio-economic

status, and social networks contribute to an individual's success. Rather, most people credit their success to perseverance, personal responsibility, and talent (Lareau 2011). Moreover, not all forms of dependencies are looked down upon equally in popular discourse. For example, single mothers, especially Black mothers who seek state assistance were stigmatized while unemployment and old age insurance was not subjected to similar attacks (Fraser and Gordon 1994). Thus, neoliberalism operates in gendered and racialized ways.

Another frame deployed by neoliberal sympathizers is that of 'efficiency'. International financial institutions have established narratives about the corrupt and inefficient state, especially with regards to the developing world (Tabb 2004). For instance, the World Bank emphasizes efficiency in food and nutrition policies as they invest in humanitarian programs in the developing world. The World Bank frames hunger as a choice, that can be addressed if state governments were more efficient in food distribution and mothers adopted better feeding practices (Mooney and Hunt 2009; Sridhar 2008). The efficiency frame in food distribution often takes the form of 'targeted' distribution where means-testing is used to identify the poor. Means-testing is supported by the personal responsibility narrative, which has only contributed to stigmatizing users of welfare, as in the case of food stamps (Fraser and Gordon 1994). Further, the emphasis on mother's personal responsibility to eradicate hunger overlooks intersectional structural inequities that contribute to sustaining hunger and malnutrition in developing countries (Sridhar 2008). Thus, frames of personal responsibility, efficiency, and choice are essential to implementing neoliberal policies.

Resistance to neoliberal policies may then have to challenge these dominant frames as well. However, given that not all groups are organized as social movements, state policies often play a significant role in shaping the conditions under which those challenges emerge. In a context of stealth neoliberalism, state policies are not unidirectional. For example, in India, neoliberal

policies have been implemented through a continuous process of contestation, coercion, and consent seeking (Nilsen and Roy 2015). When civil society groups, labor unions, and grassroots movements demanded rights, the Indian state enacted several rights based legislations such as Right to Food, Right to Education, Right to Employment, and Right to Information in the last decade. At the same time, the state continued to encourage privatization of basic needs, what some refer to as "contested neoliberalism" in India (Nilsen and Roy 2015). For groups that are unorganized, these varying strands of state policies provide opportunities and hurdles to challenge inequality making the research questions of my project pertinent: How does the state influence how people negotiate inequality? In particular, how do state policies influence the frames people use to interpret unequal access to basic needs? How do those frames challenge or adapt to inequality?

1.5   Organization of the Dissertation

In the following chapters, I show how contested neoliberalism offers various pathways such as frame appropriation and reactive adoption for people to either challenge or adapt to inequality as they use (or not) entitlement frames to interpret their access to food, nutrition, and care. In Chapter 2, I describe the historical context in India and the state of Tamil Nadu, where I conducted field work. This chapter will also describe the intricacies of the caste system in India and its relevance to food and care. Tamil Nadu is an apt case to study state-society dynamics and its relation to inequality in the context of contested neoliberalism as the state has a long history of welfare policies and a more recent turn towards neoliberalism.

In Chapter 3, I describe the data collection process, the study location, and the analytical strategy. I present the sources and types of data collected, including the theoretical sampling strategy that I utilized for recruiting my interviewees. My data types and sources include

observations and 50 interviews of *anganwadi* workers, their union representatives (both at the local and subnational level), mothers, and state representatives. I gathered documents regarding the ICDS from the local state institution and downloaded union related documents from the *anganwadi* workers' union website.

Chapter 4 examines the historical evolution of Tamil Nadu policies related to food and care. This chapter also explores the role the World Bank plays in influencing food and care policies in India and Tamil Nadu. I show that Tamil Nadu welfare policies established food as an entitlement, even as care was increasingly privatized in stealth. At the same time, policies such as affirmative action and petition justice forums allowed disadvantaged groups to challenge inequality.

In Chapter 5, I draw on interviews and observations to demonstrate how welfare policies and privatization influenced mothers to engage in frame appropriation and reactive adoption as they made claims for food and care from the state.

In Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, I synthesize the findings from previous chapters and consider the theoretical implications for state-movement dynamics. Whereas previous literature on frames have focused primarily on social movements, I demonstrate how the dynamics between state institutions and citizens play a critical role in the framing process. Finally, the chapter summarizes the variegated effects of state policies on women's entitlement claims from the state and consequently, inequality.

CHAPTER 2. CONTEXT: INDIA AND TAMIL NADU

India is a federal constitutional republic governed under a parliamentary system and consists of 29 states and 7 union territories. The Indian constitution allows for some parts of legislative authority to be with the union (federal) government, some with the state government at the subnational level, and some are shared. Despite improvements in economic growth, literacy, and life expectancy since independence, 268 million Indians were still living in poverty in 2011 (povertydata.worldbank.org 2019). To examine how the dynamics of state policies – neoliberal and welfare policies - and social structures influence how women challenge or adapt to inequality, it is important to understand the national and subnational level socio-political context of India and Tamil Nadu.

Three threads in India's socio-political environment are relevant to this project. One, the increasing move toward neoliberalism and the contested nature of that shift. Second, India's unique stratification system of caste. Three, the variations in economic and social indicators across states. Neoliberalism in India is contested, because social movements have consistently challenged neoliberal reforms and demanded welfare policies to protect the poor (Nilsen and Roy 2015). At the same time, marginalized caste groups are impacted by state policies in distinct ways. While the national context is critical, each state's political history leads to variations in policy and development outcomes (Drèze and Sen 2013; Sinha 2016). For instance, human development indicators such as literacy, life expectancy, and children's nutrition are relatively better in Tamil Nadu, the state where this study is based.

2.1   Contested Neoliberalism in India

In the post-independence era, after 1947, India experienced decades of what is termed as '*Hindu* rate of growth' of 3.5% before moving on to decades of high growth (5 to 7%). The high growth period is often attributed to the moderate liberalization in the 1980s and the more aggressive economic reforms of the 1990s and after (Bhagwati and Panagariya 2013). Until the 1980s, India adopted a mixed economy approach where private investment was allowed only in certain government approved sectors with substantial restrictions on monopolistic markets. In the 1980s, the Indian government became more capital friendly and began deregulating some restrictions and controls to open some sectors such as chemicals, pharma, cement, and power to private investments (Ahmed 2009). The aggressive move towards liberalization occurred in early 90s.

In 1991, India experienced a major balance of payment crisis exacerbated by a combination of events: the collapse of the Soviet Union, the emergence of the Gulf war which forced several Indian immigrants to return, and increasing oil prices. To prevent defaulting on the payment, India had to take loans from the IMF, World Bank, and other bilateral donors. These "structural adjustment" loans from IMF and the World Bank were based on conditionalities that required India to reform its economic and trade policies to allow more private and foreign investments. The market friendly "New Economic Policy" adopted in 1991 was intended to trigger economic growth which according to neoliberal economists, would trickle down to the poor (Bhagwati and Panagariya 2013). As is evident in Table 2.1, India's growth rates rose in the post-liberalization period (after the 1990s).

Table 2.1: Growth Rates of India's GDP at Constant Prices (% growth rate) *

	GDP	GDP Per Capita
Colonial Period 1900 -01 to 1946-47	0.9	0.1
Early Post-Independence Period 1950-1 to 1960-1 1960-1 to 1970-1 1970-1 to 1980-1	3.7 3.4 3.4	1.8 1.2 1.2
Recent Decades 1980-1 to 1990-1 1990-1 to 2000-1 2000-1 to 2010-11	5.2 5.9 7.6	3.0 4.0 6.0

Source: (Drèze and Sen 2013)

The interrelation between economic growth and human development requires some critical analysis given the complexities of how economic policies are experienced differently by different groups of people (Ahmed, Kundu, and Peet 2011; Drèze and Sen 2013; Sinha 2016). Moreover, whether high economic growth has contributed to poverty reduction in India is still under debate. For instance, the World Bank data on poverty show that the number of people living under $1.90 PPP has reduced from 45.91% in 1993 to 21.2% in 2011 (povertydata.worldbank.org 2019). However, in their 2009 report about India, the World Bank also concludes,

> …the number of very poor people who lived below a dollar a day in 2005 has come down from 296 million in 1981 to 267 million in 2005. However, the number of poor people living under $1.25 a day has increased from 421 million in 1981 to 456 million in 2005. This indicates that there are a large number of people living just above this line of deprivation (a dollar a day) and their numbers are not falling. (as quoted in Ahmed et al. 2011:26)

The slow human development after decades of high economic growth provides some indications about the actual beneficiaries of the new economic policy of the1990s. In India, the biggest beneficiaries of liberalization have been the middle class and the rich rather than the rural poor (Ahmed et al. 2011; Milanovic 2016). We see differentiated benefits of India's economic growth because the agricultural sector on which the rural poor are dependent, did not garner much growth

in the liberalization period (Ahmed 2009). Rather, much of the growth has largely been in secondary and tertiary sectors such as manufacturing and service industry, respectively.

Alongside the expansion of liberalization, India also saw the increasing influence of the Hindu nationalistic party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). When in power, the BJP has taken forward the liberalization policies established by the Congress Party. At the time of writing this dissertation in 2019, the BJP is in power at the national level in India since 2014. Scholars interpret the rise of the BJP as an indication of the increasing neoliberal tendencies and Hindu fundamentalism in India, which disproportionately benefits upper caste, elite, and middle-class Indians (Ray and Katzenstein 2005).

Consequently, liberalization has received support from the elite and the middle class in India but has seen resistance from those affected at the local, national, and subnational levels (Krishnan and Subramaniam 2014). For instance, farmers' movements, slum dwellers' movements, and labor movements have resisted neoliberal policies such as privatization of water, reduction of subsidies, and privatization of public services (AIFAWH 2012; Birkenholtz 2009; Prashad 2014; Subramaniam 2014). Such protests have compelled the Indian government to withhold adoption of policies advocated by international financial institutions such as the World Trade Organization at the global level (Krishnan and Subramaniam 2014).

Local grassroots movements have demanded legal reforms that would ensure citizens' basic rights such as education, employment, food, and freedom from corruption. Besides grassroots movements, leftist parties in coalition with the Congress Party also exercised some influence on government's policies in the early 2000s. As a result, several rights-based legislations such as the Right to Information Act 2005, Right to Education Act 2009, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 and the National Food Security Act 2013 were enacted in this

period. Thus, India has seen a combination of privatization, deregulation, and liberalization policies alongside welfare initiatives lending to the characterization of Indian neoliberalism as contested (Nilsen and Roy 2015). While national level neoliberal policies affect all poor, special attention must be given to the unique system of stratification in India, caste.

2.2   Caste: A System of Graded Inequality

Caste is a system of graded inequality based on power and privilege ascribed solely based on birth, and maintained through practices of pollution rules, endogamy, and status distinctions of hereditary occupations (Ambedkar 1917; Dumont 1980). Given that caste is inherited through birth, the caste structure also determined how intergenerational wealth is distributed across caste groups. Traditionally, the Hindu religion is associated with the *varna* classification of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras, and out-castes (who were discriminated by practices of untouchability).[3] The outcastes traditionally were the landless laboring community. While these categories are well known in public knowledge, there are thousands of castes, locally known as *jati* or *jat* which may or may not always correspond with the four *varnas*.

In contemporary India, the government categories of caste include Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and General/Other category (upper caste communities).[4] Each of these categories comprise of several castes. Members of SC category are the most historically marginalized groups. The OBC category includes intermediary castes whose

---

[3] Use of the term "untouchable" to refer to the historically marginalized out-caste group is controversial (Illiah 2007). Therefore, I have either used the government category, Scheduled Caste (SC) or the term used by the anti-caste movement, 'Dalit'. Dalit, in its literal translation means broken or crushed. Some scholars argue that when people from SC community self-identify as 'Dalit', they engage in an act of assertion while calling attention to the historical discrimination and exclusion perpetuated by upper castes (Rao 2009). Other scholars argue that Dalit is a controversial term which is not uniformly adopted by all members from the SC community (Ciotti 2017). In this study, most people I spoke to tended to use the government categorization of SC. 'Dalit', is a political identity that is often used in the context of insurgent social movement mobilization (Still 2015).

[4] Scheduled Tribes are also known as *Adivasis* in reference to indigenous groups in India. There are different indigenous groups in different parts of India.

social, political, and economic power varies significantly among the various castes within that category in various local contexts. While OBC caste groups are more privileged than the SC caste groups, they have also faced exclusion in education and employment (Thorat and Newman 2012).[5] The Other/General category includes the traditionally privileged castes such as brahmins and some non-brahmins who may be considered upper caste. These government categories are used primarily in state welfare policies for the determination of social, economic, and political rights, such as affirmative action in education, employment, and in political representation. In spite of policies such as affirmative action, status distinction between castes continue to exist.

While there are regional variations and differences, SC and ST groups everywhere have the least wealth among all caste groups (International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Macro International 2007a). The hierarchy among caste groups is also reflected in the distribution of wealth. In terms of median wealth ranking, Other/General category group (the most privileged caste groups) are at the top, followed by the OBC groups, while the SC and ST caste groups are the most economically disadvantaged (Zacharias and Vakulabharanam 2011). Given the economic disadvantage of SC groups, they may require state provided food and health services far more than privileged groups. However, state governments vary in terms of ensuring those services to SC groups. For instance, only 14% of the SC families in India reported that they had received supplementary food daily from the *anganwadi* for their children (International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Macro International 2007a). Not surprisingly, a higher proportion of the poorest children, predominantly from SC communities, are malnourished, demonstrating the persistence of caste and class inequality (Diwakar 2014; International Institute for Population

---

[5] While there is now a documented list of OBC caste groups in India, there has been some fluidity in the categorization of caste groups in this category. For instance, scholars have documented the social mobility of the *Nadar* caste community in Tamil Nadu, who fought against untouchability against their caste using social movement and legal tactics to move up the caste hierarchy (Templeman 1996).

Sciences (IIPS) and Macro International 2007a). Considering how caste and wealth are inherited, both economic advantage and status privilege is transferred across generations.

Social status based on caste is most visible in oppressive practices such as untouchability. Some scholars attribute the practice of untouchability to the Hindu religion whose scriptures justify practices based on notions of purity and pollution between castes (Ambedkar 1944; Dumont 1980). Caste is a system of graded inequality where status and privilege reduces as one moves down the caste hierarchy. Brahmins, the traditional priestly class associated with purity, enjoy the highest status and privilege. At the other end are members of the Scheduled Caste (SC) community (or Dalits) who were discriminated against through untouchability practices such as excluding Dalits from sharing same dining spaces, avoiding physical contact with Dalits, and using separate dinnerware based on caste. While discrimination based on notions of purity is inherently brahmanical, almost all castes, including OBCs, emulate those practices to discriminate against castes that are below them in the caste hierarchy (Ambedkar 1917). Even among Dalits, some castes suffer more exclusion than others (Anandhi 2013). Even though untouchability was abolished by the law in 1950, practices based on notions of purity and pollution continue in subtle and overt ways, especially in the context of intermarriage, residential segregation, inter-dining, and food preferences.

Food is a predominant site where untouchability practices are most evident. Caste based segregation determines people's inter-dining practices as well as their dietary habits (Ambedkar 1948). For instance, caste is often socially marked through separate vessels and cutlery for people from the SC community, particularly in rural areas (Carswell and De Neve 2014), but is also prevalent in the urban setting where domestic workers from SC communities are disallowed from using the same tableware as the upper caste household members. Caste based discrimination is

also evident in state provision of food and care. Upper caste teachers in rural India segregate children from SC communities even in public schools especially in the use of shared water systems (Thorat and Lee 2005; Thorat and Newman 2012)

Caste distinctions are also established through food habits where vegetarianism is associated with brahmins and beef eating with Dalits (Ambedkar 1948). Whose food preferences are accommodated in state provided food and care services reflect the power and privilege across caste groups in the local context. For instance, even though experts have advocated for the inclusion of eggs in the meals provided for children in public schools and *anganwadis*, not all state governments have followed suit even though child malnourishment is a big concern in India (Drèze 2019). Even in states where non-vegetarians (predominantly from non-privileged castes) form the majority of the population, some state governments have decided to exclude eggs from *anganwadis* to appease the upper caste communities (Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner India 2014). Thus, the structure of power and privilege across caste groups influences the design and implementation of state welfare policies, particularly those related to food.

Although privileged caste groups such as brahmins enjoy high social status and economic privilege in most settings, some OBC groups, particularly in Tamil Nadu, are powerful in their local contexts because of their economic or political clout irrespective of their perceived purity in the caste hierarchy (Dirks 2011; Srinivas 1987). There may be landholding and non-landholding caste groups among OBC castes whose land ownership determines their economic and political power especially in rural areas where landless people, particularly from SC groups, are dependent on agriculture for livelihood. However, a combination of political upsurge and caste based affirmative action in electoral seats has enabled Dalits and OBC groups to gain formal political

power in India (Gorringe 2005; Witsoe 2011). Increasingly, OBC groups in particular, through their organized social movements and because of their numerical majority in the population have since become influential political parties (Subramanian 1999). Thus, caste is a significant category of distinction embedded in socio-cultural (religious), political, and economic structures.

2.3   Variations across States

While national level policies are critical, key human development indicators varied across major states in India (Table 2.2). The variations in human well-being across states is testimony to the variations in implementation of neoliberal and welfare initiatives in India. Within-country variations in India often draw the drastic contrast between the states of, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh as compared to the southern states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. For instance, compare the infant mortality rate in Madhya Pradesh (54) to that of Kerala (12) in 2013. Similarly, only 23% of children were fully immunized in Uttar Pradesh compared to 80% of children in Tamil Nadu. There are similar variations in literacy rates where Kerala has achieved 93.9% literacy while it is only 63.8% for Bihar. Divergences in health and education indicators demonstrate how states vary both in terms of availability of health and educational infrastructure as well as the ways in which welfare initiatives have been implemented (access and effectiveness).

Table 2.2: Education and Health indicators across Indian states[6]

State	Literacy Rate (2011) *	Sex Ratio at Birth [a] (2014)	Infant mortality rate (2013) *	Proportion of Underweight Children under 5 (2015) **	Proportion of Children under 5 Stunted (2015) **	% Children Fully Immunized (2015-16) ** #	Maternal Mortality Rate (2011-13) *
Andhra Pradesh	67.7(16)	955(1)	39(11)	31.9(5)	31.4(3)	65.3(5)	92
Assam	73.2(11)	902(8)	54(18)	36.4 (6)	46.5(13)	31.4(17)	300
Bihar	63.8(19)	868(16)	42 (13)	55.9 (17)	55.6(18)	32.8 (16)	208
Chhattisgarh	71(12)	934(3)	46(14)	47.1(16)	52.9(17)	48.7 (12)	-
Gujarat	79.3(5)	886(12)	36(8)	44.6(15)	51.7(16)	45.2(13)	112
Haryana	76.6(8)	843(17)	41(12)	39.6(11)	45.7(11)	65.3(6)	127
Himachal Pradesh	83.8(2)	896(10)	35(7)	36.5(7)	38.6(6)	74.2(3)	-
Jammu & Kashmir	68.7(15)	914(5)	37(9)	25.6(3)	35(4)	66.7(4)	-
Jharkhand	67.6(17)	886(11)	37(10)	56.5(18)	49.8 (14)	34.2 (15)	-
Karnataka	75.6 (9)	926(4)	31(6)	37.6 (9)	43.7(7)	55(10)	133
Kerala	93.9(1)	948(2)	12(1)	22.9(1)	24.5(1)	75.3(2)	61
Madhya Pradesh	70.6 (13)	908(7)	54(19)	60(19)	50(15)	40.3(14)	221
Maharashtra	82.9(3)	911(6)	24 (3)	37(8)	46.3(12)	58.8(9)	68
Orissa	73.5(10)	880(14)	51(17)	40.7(13)	45(10)	51.8(11)	222
Punjab	76.7 (7)	880(15)	26(4)	24.9(2)	36.7(5)	60.1(8)	141
Rajasthan	67.1(18)	799(19)	47(15)	39.9(12)	43.7(8)	26.5 (18)	244
Tamil Nadu	**80.3(4)**	**834(18)**	**21(2)**	**29.8(4)**	**30.9(2)**	**80.9 (1)**	**79**
Uttar Pradesh	69.7(14)	881(13)	50(16)	42.4(14)	56.8(19)	23(19)	285
West Bengal	77.1(6)	897(9)	31(5)	38.7(10)	44.6(9)	64.3(7)	113
India	74	887	40	35.7	38.4	43.5	167

Source: *As reported in (Sinha 2016)   ** From National Family Health Survey factsheets 2015-16
Full immunization refers to BCG, measles, polio and DPT. Ranking of these 19 states in Parenthesis.
[a] Sex Ratio at Birth as reported in Vital Statistics of India Based on Civil Registration System 2014 cited as Office of Registrar General 2014.

---

[6] The table presents data of 19 states in India as I followed other scholars such as Sinha (2016) from whom I gathered information regarding some indices.

The southern states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala are often seen to have relatively better indicators in terms of human development. One of the major contributors to improving human development indicators especially those related to children, such as infant and child mortality rates is women's literacy (Drèze and Murthi 2001; Murthi, Guio, and Dreze 1995). Both Kerala and Tamil Nadu perform comparatively well among all states in indicators such as infant mortality rate, proportion of underweight and stunted children, and children's immunization rates. Women's literacy rates in Kerala (91%) and Tamil Nadu (73.86%) are also comparably higher than the national average of 65.46%. The variations in indicators across states suggest the need to engage with the specific socio-political context of different states that may have contributed to these variations.

2.4   Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu, located in the south-eastern part of India, is home to 72 million people, comparable in this regard to UK (66 million), France (67 million), and Thailand (69 million). The Dravidian movement is the pre-cursor to the contemporary political parties in Tamil Nadu and is central to understanding the state's political history. The Dravidian movement purports to represent the descendants of the Dravidian race, distinct from the Aryans, from whom brahmins are said to have descended from (Subramanian 1999). *Thamizh* [Tamil language], the local language, is a classical language, with documented literature of over 2000 years and occupies a significant place in terms of cultural pride and political importance for Tamilians. While this dissertation does not engage with Tamil nationalism, the sense of Tamil solidarity is considered to be significant to the project of social development in the state (Singh 2015).

Tamil Nadu ranks among the high performing states with respect to infant mortality rate, proportion of stunted children, and children's immunization rates (Table 2.2). However, it is

critical to examine these indicators within the social context of caste, class, and gender based inequality in the state. The state is a paradox when statistics of human development are interrogated closely, particularly with respect to gender. The decreasing sex ratio at birth (from 905 in 2011 to 834 in 2014) is perhaps the most worrying human development indicator in Tamil Nadu. As evident in Table 2.2, the sex ratio at birth in Tamil Nadu in 2014 is lower than the national average and that of other low performing states other than Rajasthan. Considering that the standard sex ratio at birth is 950 girls born per 1000 boys, the low sex ratio at birth in Tamil Nadu (834) suggests a societal preference for boys that may have manifested in the form of sex-selective abortion biased against girls (Deaton and Dreze 2002). The indicators in Tamil Nadu demonstrate the complexities of examining gender relations where high rates of women's literacy and relatively better performance in maternal mortality rate co-exist with low sex-ratio at birth suggesting the need to evaluate the underlying social practices that shape gender relations and place a differential value on women compared to men.

In terms of caste demographics, Tamil Nadu has 68% OBC members, 20% SC members, about 1% ST members, and the remaining 10-11% categorized as 'Other' referring primarily to the upper castes. The history of anti-brahmanical movements in Tamil Nadu has made the state one of the pioneers in affirmative action in India, where close to 69% positions in educational institutions and government employment are reserved for Backward classes (BC), Most Backward Classes (MBC) Scheduled Castes (SC), and Scheduled Tribes (ST) categories.[7] Despite these policies, the wealth distribution among different caste communities continues to be disproportionately in favor of higher castes.

---

[7] MBC is a caste category unique to Tamil Nadu, separate from Backward Classes (BC). In national level surveys MBCs and BCs are part of the category OBC. The category 'Other' in caste categories includes upper caste communities outside of SC, ST and OBCs.

Table 2.3: Percent distribution of de jure population by wealth index, according to caste/tribe in Tamil Nadu 2005-06

Caste/Tribe of Household	Wealth Index (% distribution within each social group)				
	Lowest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Highest
Scheduled Caste (SC)	18.4	20.9	39.0	14.6	7.2
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	31.8	46.2	8.7	5.5	7.8
Other backward castes (OBC)	8.2	14.1	28.1	27.9	21.8
Other	1.3	0.7	6.8	17.7	73.6
Total	10.6	15.6	29.9	24.4	19.5

Source: National Family Health Survey III Year 2005-06.

73.6% of upper caste members (categorized as the unmarked Other) occupy the highest wealth index while close to 40% members of SC community are in the lowest and second lowest wealth index. Only 7.2% of the SC members are in the highest wealth index. On the other hand, only 1.3% of upper caste members are in the lowest wealth index. Besides wealth, other indicators of well-being also demonstrate variations between caste groups. Table 2.4 shows the variation in proportion of stunted, wasted, and underweight children in Tamil Nadu across various caste groups in comparison to India average.

Table 2.4: Nutritional status of children, according to caste/tribe in 2015-16

Caste/Tribe of Household	Height for Age (Stunted)		Weight for Height (Wasted)		Weight for Age (Underweight)	
	Tamil Nadu	India	Tamil Nadu	India	Tamil Nadu	India
Scheduled Caste (SC)	32.1	42.8	21.7	21.2	28.3	39.1
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	25.7	43.8	26.1	27.4	33	45.3
Other backward castes (OBC)	24.9	38.7	18.8	20.5	21.6	35.5
Other	22.5	31.2	9.3	19.0	11.3	28.8
Total	27.1	38.4	19.7	21.0	23.8	35.7

Source: National Family Health Survey 4 Year 2015-06.

Although the proportion of stunted, wasted, and underweight children in the SC, ST, and OBC communities in Tamil Nadu is lesser than the India average for each of those groups, the persistence of caste inequality in terms of children's nutritional status is evident in these tables. The graded nature of the caste structure is visible in how the proportion of malnourished children is highest among SC and ST groups and lowest in the unmarked upper caste group known as Other, with the OBC communities in between. In Tamil Nadu, the OBC community, with a Dravidian movement history has had a particular political journey.

2.4.1   Political History of Tamil Nadu

In contemporary Tamil Nadu, there are two main political parties – Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) whose presence is limited to the state.[8] As the label 'Dravida' indicates, these are Dravidian parties that emerged from the

---

[8] There are several other parties including the Tamil Nadu Congress Party, several factions of the Communist Party and other caste based parties. However, the DMK and AIADMK continue to be the most prominent political parties. While both parties are limited to Tamil Nadu with respect to their electoral reach, they have formed coalitions with national parties at the federal level. Consequently, both these parties have had the opportunity of having their members as national level cabinet ministers.

anti-brahmanical Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu. The anti-brahmanical origins of the Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu began with the Justice Party in 1917 in opposition to the Congress Party that led the independence movement. The founders of the Justice Party, who belonged to intermediary castes (similar to the OBC castes), harbored a deep mistrust for the Brahmin dominated Congress party, under which they did not believe non-Brahmins would receive equal treatment. Therefore, contrary to the Congress Party's vision of a unified India that was free from the British, the Justice Party demanded a separate Dravidian state (geographically referring to the four South Indian states in contemporary India) where members of all castes would be treated equally. Although the secessionist demand did not gather much public support, the underlying Dravidian pride and Tamil nationalism, fostered by the Justice Party, is a prevalent emotion in Tamil Nadu even today.

Further, the Justice Party also lay down the foundation for affirmative action policies and welfare programs that are typical of contemporary Tamil Nadu. For instance, when the Justice Party came to power as early as 1920s in elections boycotted by the Congress Party in British India, they set into action several legislative and educational reforms that paved the path for citizen empowerment and welfare, many of which are contemporary Tamil Nadu policies. The Justice Party was one of the first in Indian legislative history to legislate affirmative action for non-brahmins, to reverse policies that prohibited women from becoming legislators, and to introduce an early version of the mid-day meal scheme for children.

Even with their progressive agenda, the Justice Party, which was led by elite business-men from intermediary castes could not develop a mass base similar to that of the Congress Party. Thus, by the time of independence, a mass-leader from the Congress party, K. Kamaraj had emerged into the limelight. Kamaraj was the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu during 1954-1963 and between 1967-

1975. The Congress Party has not been in power in Tamil Nadu ever since. Despite his own lack of education, or perhaps because of it, Kamaraj considered primary education as one of his main priorities and invested in building the school system. Realizing how poverty and inequality could be an impediment to education, he prioritized the provision of mid-day meals and uniforms in schools to motivate parents and children to come to school (Muthusamy 1988). The emphasis on mid-day meals and schools has continued in Tamil Nadu politics. By 1998, 99.53% of children living in rural Tamil Nadu had access to a school within one kilometer of their residence (Goyal 2006).[9] Although Kamaraj belonged to a non-brahmin Nadar caste, he did not follow the Justice Party strategy and seldom evoked his caste status. He was more inclined to seek the cooperation of the privileged caste members for supporting development initiatives rather than engage in conflict (Vivek 2015).

In contrast to Kamaraj the Congress loyalist, was Periyar, also known as E.V. Ramasamy Naicker, who founded the radical, anti-caste, Self-Respect movement in opposition to the Congress in 1925. The Self-Respect movement later evolved into the Dravidian movement. Although Periyar started his political life with the Congress in the independence movement, he was soon in conflict with Gandhi. Periyar criticized Gandhi for legitimizing and romanticizing caste-based segregation (Geetha 1998). Moreover, for Periyar, an anti-caste agenda could not move forward without women's liberation or with the perpetuation of the Hindu religion (or any religion). Periyar had noted, "Just as brahminism condemns a very large portion of the working population to *Shudra*hood, so it has condemned women to the servitude of marriage" (quoted in Geetha 1998). Such radical notions about marriage and religion is unheard of in Tamil Nadu even in contemporary times. Yet, *Thanthai* Periyar (meaning Father Periyar) holds a legendary position in

---

[9] While this statistic may not seem very important to readers in the west, access to schools is critical for girls' education and not all states perform equally well in this regard.

modern Tamil history and memory. Periyar's self-respect movement soon evolved into a political party, Dravida Kazhagam (DK) and later into Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK).

In 1967, in the light of a food crisis, rising prices, and a weak Congress party, the DMK sought its first electoral victory. The DMK's rise to power was built on the rhetoric of Tamil nationalism when they led the agitation against the Indian government's decision to make Hindi, the sole official language in 1965. As Subramanian (1999:127-8) describes, "As Tamil is the major Indian language which is linguistically most different from Hindi, the compulsory introduction of Hindi instruction as a means of cultural assimilation became in Tamil Nadu a powerful symbol of the devaluation of local culture and the attenuation of Tamil autonomy." The DMK found great support among the Tamil youth across caste lines for the anti-Hindi agitations.[10] The distaste for what the Dravidians consider as North Indian imperialism and imposed cultural assimilation, is visible in Tamil Nadu even today. Although the DMK, led by Annadurai and K. Karunanithi came to power on the mantle of Tamil nationalism, as a social movement transitioning into electoral politics, they also introduced affirmative action policies that sought to address caste based inequality. Moreover, they introduced institutionalized grievance redressal mechanisms at the village level where citizens were encouraged to 'petition' bureaucrats, a practice that has played a major role in grassroots empowerment (Ramanujam 1974). Thus, Tamil Nadu's early political history has evolved through issues of Tamil nationalism, affirmative action policies and citizen empowerment that characterized Tamil Nadu politics across the Justice Party, Kamaraj, Periyar, and the early era of DMK.

In more recent years, Tamil Nadu politics has increasingly moved towards welfare populism, the beginnings of which is often attributed to the formation of All India Anna Dravida

---

[10] Anti-Hindi agitations had been prevalent in Tamil Nadu even in 1930s.

Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), the other main political party in Tamil Nadu besides DMK. M. G. Ramachandran (MGR), a film celebrity and a popular politician founded the AIADMK when he was expelled from the DMK in 1972. MGR differentiated himself and the AIADMK by focusing on the immediate, material needs of women, the poorest, and the most marginalized sections of Tamil society, in contrast to the DMK that focused on empowering the intermediary castes (Subramanian 1999). When MGR came to power, he was forced to withdraw prohibition laws for revenue reasons even though they mattered to women. Not willing to lose their support, MGR launched the biggest institutionalization of the Noon Meal Program which provided hot meals to children, widows, pregnant and lactating women and seniors (Subramanian 1999). Ever since MGR, Tamil Nadu continues to foster a very competitive electoral environment between the two political parties, DMK and AIADMK. Neither party could afford to lose the support of poor women, and the Noon Meal Program had come to stay.

The voting turn-out in India has historically been higher among the poor, and in states where electoral competition is high, political parties are forced to address the welfare needs of the public (Agarwala 2013). Consequently, irrespective of the political party in power, Tamil Nadu government has implemented several welfare initiatives related to housing, health, food, and education over the years. Distribution of food has always been important in Tamil Nadu politics as in the case of the Noon Meal Program. The difference in welfare policies in Tamil Nadu as compared to the national level food policies was acutely visible in the case of the National Food Security Act 2013, where the national government favored targeted distribution of food grains, in contrast to the universal distribution in Tamil Nadu (The Hindu 2017). The Tamil Nadu government has always insisted on universal distribution of food that allows people to access food with dignity as compared to targeted distribution (often suggested by advocates of neoliberalism)

which tends to stigmatize the poor as in the case of food stamps in the U.S. In more recent years, the two main political parties in Tamil Nadu, the DMK and the AIADMK, have also begun to distribute goods such as electric fans, kitchen gadgets, bicycles, and laptops, which has led to the disparaging characterization of Tamil Nadu politics as overly populist.

Rather than generic description of welfare populism, some have argued for a more nuanced understanding of Tamil Nadu politics as a combination of paternalistic populism and assertive populism (Subramanian 1999). While MGR's paternalistic populism included provision of material needs for the poorest and most marginalized groups who did not have much voice, DMK's assertive populism enacted empowering policies such as affirmative action in employment and education (Subramanian 1999). It is no coincidence that Tamil Nadu has one of the largest affirmative action policy for OBCs and SC/ST communities in education and government jobs. However, for some scholars and activists, the Dravidian parties which had radical beginnings with anti-caste, anti-patriarchal, and socialist leanings, has traveled far from their revolutionary ideals (Geetha 1998; Sivaraman 2013). Further, it had begun to embrace anti-labor and neoliberal policies.

2.5   Uneven Neoliberalism in Tamil Nadu

Discussing neoliberalism in Tamil Nadu, the welfare capital of India, might seem counter-intuitive considering that neoliberal reforms have traditionally attacked welfare. However, in Tamil Nadu, rather than the withdrawal of the state from welfare, policies that encourage privatization, deregulation, dispossession of land, and informalization of labor, capture the essence of neoliberalism (Vijayabaskar 2011). Informalization of labor is most visible in 'Special Economic Zones' where corporations get tax benefits for investing in the state. While these factories provide other livelihood options for Dalits who were otherwise bonded to a casteist system of agricultural labor, the seasonal and unpredictable nature of the market has not liberated

Dalits from a precarious existence (Vijayabaskar 2010, 2011). Therefore, social movements in Tamil Nadu now increasingly focus on the state to provide welfare benefits that are not provided by employers (Agarwala 2013). Thus, in Tamil Nadu, neoliberalism operates not by cutting back on welfare but by transferring labor benefits from the workplace to the government (Vijayabaskar 2011). Thus, corporations build factories, seek tax cuts, and utilize informal precarious labor at minimal cost without taking responsibility for labor benefits, while the state delivers welfare.

Besides policies that encourage informalization of labor, the Tamil Nadu government has also utilized the rhetoric of law and order to repress unionization (Sivaraman 2013; Subramanian 1999). The Dravidian parties have been strategic in their accommodation and repression of civil society groups. For instance, both parties, the DMK and the AIADMK, have accommodated caste associations and farmers' associations led by OBCs while repressing militant trade unions of industrial and agricultural labor led by the Communist party (Subramanian 1999). Moreover, the DMK and the AIADMK established their own trade unions to weaken the working class while allowing police brutality against leaders of opposition unions (Sivaraman 2013). Such repression was evident not only against unions in private companies but also against government employees' unions (Vydhianathan 2004). Despite such control, Tamil Nadu government employees, including the *anganwadi* workers, have formed a broad alliance across political parties enabling them to mobilize support to resist neoliberal reforms of the state. In the case of ICDS, the *anganwadi* workers' union continues to resist attempts for privatization of ICDS operations in Tamil Nadu and elsewhere in India (AIFAWH 2012). Thus, Tamil Nadu offers generous welfare policies and supports affirmative action policies while also engaging in union repression and tax breaks for corporations, suggesting uneven neoliberalism. Central to this study is one welfare initiative, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).

2.6   Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

Founded in 1975, the ICDS is a welfare program conceived by the Indian government at the national level but is implemented by the state governments on a cost-sharing basis. The program seeks to ensure holistic development for children by providing early child education, food, and supplementary nutrition for mothers and children under the age of six. The ICDS offers a package of six services: supplementary nutrition, pre-school non-formal education, nutrition and health education, immunization, health check-up, and referral services.

The ICDS services are provided through neighborhood childcare centers known as *anganwadi* which is staffed by an *anganwadi* teacher and a helper. As on March 2015, 1,346,000 *anganwadis* were operational in India (Ministry of Women and Child Development n.d.). The ICDS organization at the district level includes the *anganwadi* workers, *anganwadi* helpers, Supervisors, Child Development Project Officers at the Block level and the District Program Officers.[11] While the District Program Officers report to the District Collector, there is also an Executive Director for the ICDS program at the state headquarters. The *anganwadi* workers and helpers are 'honorary' workers who are paid an honorarium. However, their rights and benefits vary across different states.

When launched in 1975, the ICDS was introduced as a 'scheme', a terminology often used in Indian bureaucracy to refer to a program built on the premise of 'citizen as beneficiary' rather than as a rights-holder. However, based on a Public Interest Litigation filed by the People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL), an advocacy organization, the Supreme Court of India, in a landmark judgment, mandated that the Central Government must universalize the ICDS to cover all children

---

[11] Tamil Nadu is administratively divided into 32 districts. Each district is divided into blocks or *Taluks*.

(Krishnan and Subramaniam 2014). Thus, the ICDS is currently a right for all children under the age of six.

Some would argue that the rights-based approach to the ICDS has now protected the welfare benefit from neoliberal attacks. However, in 2012, the Central Government announced that the ICDS would be run in 'Mission Mode'. According to the government, "ICDS in Mission Mode would facilitate its implementation in flexible mode, with appropriate institutional mechanism at Central, State, District & Block levels as well as adequate human and financial resources linked to accountability and outcomes" (Ministry of Women and Child Development n.d.:10). Further, the Indian government has laid out various programmatic, institutional and management reforms that would be made to achieve the mission of the scheme. Most importantly, the government calls for at least 10% of ICDS projects in each state to be run by an NGO with the flexibility to change budget allocation across heads, except for the salaries and supplementary nutrition (Ministry of Women and Child Development n.d.). While the objective itself does not seem problematic, left parties and *anganwadi* workers' unions have critiqued the call for NGOization of the ICDS. They argue that the NGOization of the ICDS is a backdoor entry for corporations, whose philanthropic arms will begin to run *anganwadis*. Further, the provision of employing local women as cooks or helpers at the *anganwadi* is under threat in privatized spaces where companies may introduce ready-to-eat packaged food for children (Drèze and Sen 2013). For the unions, NGOization is the advent of neoliberalism with respect to the ICDS (Prashad 2014). In Tamil Nadu, the unions have resisted the NGOization of the ICDS with considerable success.

2.6.1   Tamil Nadu ICDS

Tamil Nadu is documented as a success story with respect to the implementation of the ICDS, a service that is primarily used by women and children (Citizens' Initiative for the Rights of Children

Under Six 2006; Vivek 2015). There are over 50,000 *anganwadi* centers in Tamil Nadu (Tamil Nadu ICDS website). The ICDS program in Tamil Nadu, as it exists today, is the combination of three different nutritional and child-centric programs in the state: 1) The Noon Meal Program (NMP), 2) the ICDS, and 3) the Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition Project (TINP). Therefore, the implementation of ICDS in Tamil Nadu could be qualitatively different from other states.

The NMP was launched in 1982 by the Tamil Nadu government and provided hot meals to children from ages 2 to 14, pregnant and lactating women, the disabled, destitute widows, and those over the age of 60 years. Noon meal programs have been part of schools in Tamil Nadu from as early as 1920s but was expanded and institutionalized in 1982. The TINP was a nutrition project launched by the Tamil Nadu government with supported funding from the World Bank and focused on changing "mothers' behavior through educational tools of growth monitoring, nutrition education, short term food supplementation" (Sridhar 2008: 36). Thus, instead of examining hunger and malnutrition as the outcome of structural inequality, the World Bank emphasized the rhetoric that mothers could choose to address malnutrition by engaging in good behavior (Sridhar 2008).

The ICDS program in Tamil Nadu aims to bridge the gap between primary healthcare, education, and disadvantaged communities by focusing on the "welfare of the mother and the child" (Tamil Nadu ICDS website). The *anganwadi* is a local center which provides food, nutrition, and early education for children and mothers. The ICDS program in Tamil Nadu offers the following services: Growth monitoring (monitoring of children's weight to track malnourishment in the community), supplementary nutrition, early childhood care and pre-school education, nutrition and health education, health services by the local health personnel, and other referral services. Besides children and mothers, adolescent girls and old-age pensioners also benefit from the ICDS.

The state of Tamil Nadu is divided into 32 districts. Each district is divided into blocks.[12] Each block comprises of several villages or village clusters which elects its own governing council known as a *Panchayat*. I conducted field work in a district that I refer to as Kaveri, a pseudonym. District Kaveri is divided into 11 blocks. The ICDS initiative is also structured along these administrative levels. Figure 1 is the organizational chart of the ICDS initiative in Tamil Nadu.[13] As shown in Figure 1, the ICDS comprises a main office in the Tamil Nadu state capital of Chennai managed by the Director of the ICDS. At the district level, the ICDS program is managed by the District Programme Officer (DPO) who reports not only to the Director of ICDS at Chennai but also to the District Collector of Kaveri who is the key administrative official of the district. At the block level, the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) reports to the DPO. Even though I visited *anganwadis* in three blocks, I spent most of my time in one block that I refer to as Pallivasal.

In Pallivasal, the CDPO is responsible for the functioning of 80 *anganwadi* centers. An *anganwadi* is usually staffed by one *anganwadi* teacher and a helper. One *anganwadi* is expected to cater to every 500-1500 population. There are a few mini *anganwadis* that service a smaller population and is staffed by only one worker. However, there were several centers which had vacant positions. The CDPO is assisted by a Community Nutrition Supervisor (CNS) in the field and by the Superintendent for finance/accounting responsibilities at the office. The DPO, CDPO, and the CNS officials in Tamil Nadu are all women. I interacted closely with the CDPO, the CNS, and the *anganwadi* workers and helpers.

---

[12] The term used to refer to administrative categories may differ between rural and urban India and across states. Block is an administrative category in rural Tamil Nadu.

[13] The ICDS structure has other administrative roles, such as finance, training, and monitoring beyond those represented in this chart. This chart represents the structure of officials in program management.
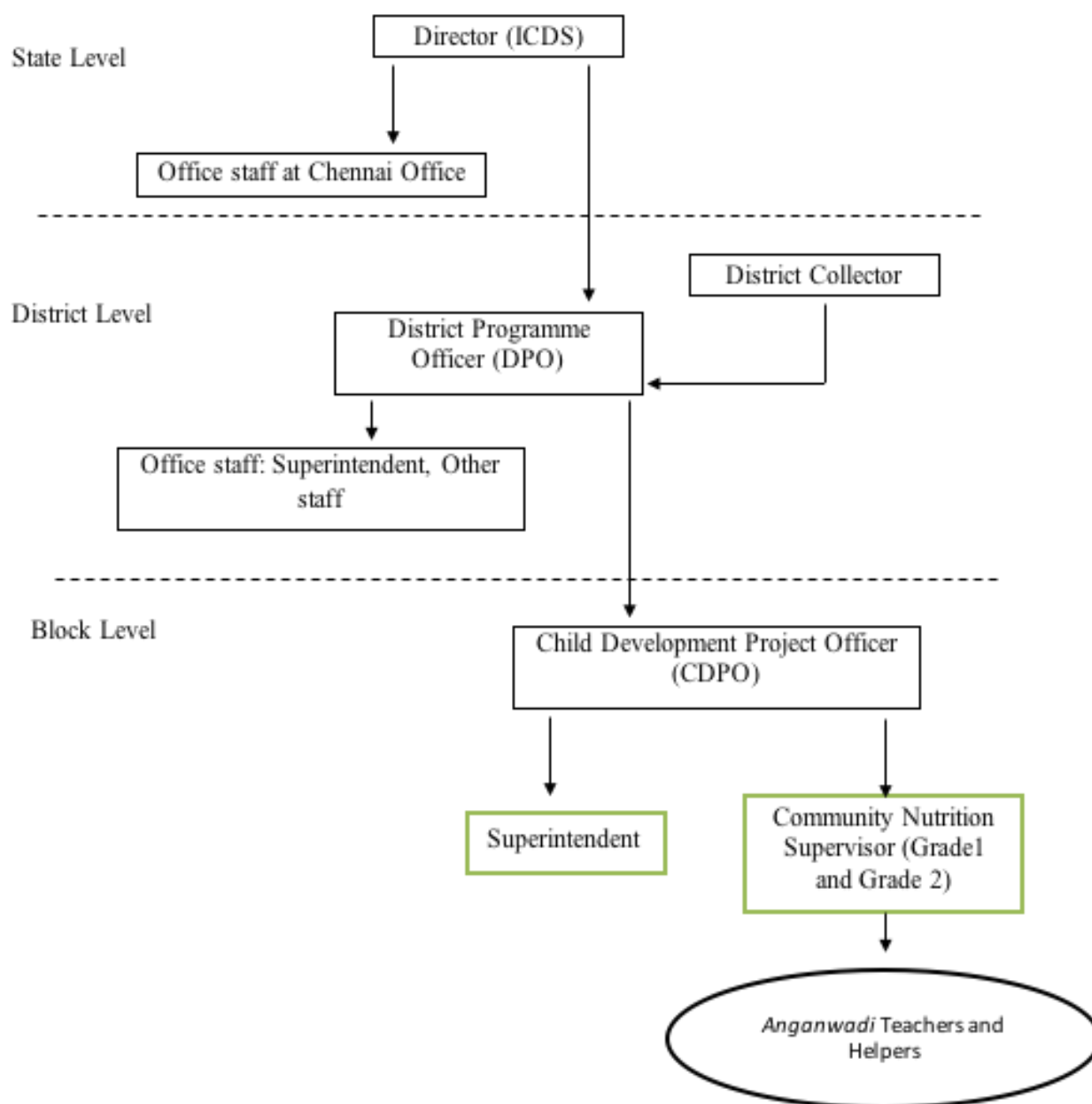
Figure 2.1: Organization Structure of Tamil Nadu ICDS

Typically, an *anganwadi* is a government building with a play and study room for children, a kitchen, and a storage room for food grains. However, the *anganwadi* buildings varied in terms of the physical structure. I visited *anganwadis* that were large, well-built, and decorated with charts, pictures, toys, and books for children. I also visited *anganwadis* that were dilapidated. *Anganwadis* in the Pallivasal block seldom had running water-taps within the building. Typically, *anganwadi* workers collected water from a common/community tap outside and stored it in pots inside the *anganwadi*.[14]

Anganwadi teachers are recruited based on the following criteria: The candidate must be a woman who resides within 3 kilometers from the *anganwadi*, educated at least till tenth grade, and between the age of 25-35 years. For women who are "widows, destitute, and candidates in hilly areas," the upper age limit is 40 years (Tamil Nadu ICDS website). Although the website does not specify marital status as a criterion, *anganwadi* teachers reported to me that women who are/were married and with children are preferred. *Anganwadi* helpers were also required to be local residents. However, helpers did not have any education based criteria so long as they knew how to read and write. Helpers are expected to be between the age of 20 and 40 years. If the candidate is a widow or considered "destitute," the age limit is extended to 45 years.

The responsibilities of the *anganwadi* teacher and helper include *anganwadi* management, early education for children, growth monitoring, and community awareness regarding health and nutrition. As part of *anganwadi* management, the helper collects water, cleans the center, makes a nutritious snack, and brings the children from their homes. In *anganwadis* where the helper position is vacant, the *anganwadi* teacher also cooks and cleans the center. The *anganwadi* teacher teaches children based on a predefined syllabus while the helper prepares lunch as per the time-

---

[14] This was a feature in most of the households in the area as well. Most people did not have running water taps in their homes. They collected water from a community tap and stored it in pots.

table provided by the ICDS administration. The helper also keeps aside a sample of the cooked lunch in case citizens allege food poisoning from the food provided by the *anganwadi*. In the afternoon, the children sleep on the floor or on a bamboo mat. After they wake up, the helper either takes the children to their homes or waits for the family members to collect the child. Another aspect of *anganwadi* management is the maintenance of records. *Anganwadi* workers maintain several reports or 'records' such as workers' attendance, children's attendance, and the account of grocery used for the day. The *anganwadi* teacher also maintains a census of her area and records every birth and death in the village.

Growth monitoring of all the children in the community is another responsibility of the *anganwadi* teacher. The *anganwadi* teacher is expected to track malnourishment by monitoring the weight of the children (under age six) and pregnant women in her area. She is expected to conduct regular house visits with a weighing machine to check if children or pregnant women in her area are underweight. If a child or a pregnant mother is found to be underweight, the *anganwadi* teacher takes special care to provide extra supplementary nutrition for the mother and the child. The supplementary nutrition for children, lactating mothers, and pregnant women is distributed in the form of a nutritious flour known as *"Sathu maavu"* or *"maavu"* [nutritious flour]. Children under the age of three are eligible to receive the *Sathu Maavu* packet for their supplementary nutrition. Through the day, mothers or family members of the mother walk in to the center to collect their *Sathu maavu* packet for the month. Children older than three years are provided food at the *anganwadi*.

Besides these daily activities, *anganwadi* workers also help the government conduct awareness programs at the centers and at the block level. Awareness programs include information about vaccines, breast feeding, menstruation hygiene, and nutrition. These educational programs

may follow a traditional workshop model or take the form of local cultural celebrations. For instance, community baby shower is an educational event that is conducted in the format of a traditional Tamil baby shower celebration in which pregnant mothers participate. *Anganwadi* teachers are dependent on the community to ensure community participation for their initiatives and in return, the community depends on the teacher for good service. Further, citizen complaints about *anganwadi* workers may significantly affect their careers. Therefore, *anganwadi* teachers often maintain a close and respectful relationship with the community to perform their job successfully.

An interesting aspect of ICDS in Tamil Nadu is that it is disproportionately utilized by the most marginalized communities. Table 5 reproduced from the NFHS of 2005-06 provides details regarding the usage of *anganwadi* centers (AWCs) in Tamil Nadu.

Table 2.5: ICDS Coverage and Utilization in Tamil Nadu in 2005-06

Background Characteristics	Percentage of children age 0-71 months in areas covered by the *Anganwadi*	% Children age 0-71 months who received any service from an *Anganwadi*	% Children age 36-71 months who went for pre-school education at the *Anganwadi*
Caste/Tribe			
Scheduled Caste	98.7%	49.8%	32.9
Scheduled Tribe	-	-	-
Other Backward Class	96.7%	39.8%	24.6
Other	85.3%	(26.1) [a]	-
Wealth Index			
Lowest	98.5%	43.4	33.1
Second	99.5%	56.7	37.8
Middle	99.3%	49.8	31.6
Fourth	97.9%	38.2	19.3
Highest	88.1%	18.2	8.9
Total	97%	42.5	26.5

Source: National Family Health Survey 2005-06 Tamil Nadu Report (International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Macro International 2007b). [a] Based on 25-49 unweighted cases.

Table 2.5 shows that 98.7% of SC children and 98.5% of the poorest children are covered by an *anganwadi* center where health, nutrition and educational services are provided for children and pregnant mothers. Thus, it is evident that *anganwadi* centers are geographically distributed such that these services are accessible to the poorest and the most marginalized communities. While only 26.5% of eligible children in Tamil Nadu had received pre-school education from *anganwadis*, 33% of the poorest quintile, 33% of SC children, and 25% of OBC children had utilized the pre-school education services compared to 8.9% of children who belong to the highest wealth index. However, despite these services, higher proportion of the poorest children, predominantly from marginalized communities are malnourished, demonstrating the persistence of caste and class inequality (Diwakar 2014). Having said that, activists document that mothers are more satisfied with ICDS services in Tamil Nadu than in other states (Citizens' Initiative for the Rights of Children Under Six 2006). The local community where the *anganwadi* is located

plays an important role in demanding quality service at the *anganwadi* (Rajivan 2006). When community members exercise both vigilance and support for the *anganwadi*, it positively influences the implementation of services at the *anganwadi* (Lokshin et al. 2005; Rajivan 2006). In this chapter, I have elaborated the history of collective action and welfare initiatives alongside the increasing neoliberal state reforms in a society embedded in gender, caste, and class inequalities, that makes Tamil Nadu an important case to study women's claims-making in the context of child-care.

CHAPTER 3. DATA AND METHODS

In this field based study, I examine the role of the state in shaping the frames women use to interpret unequal access to basic needs. I also examine how those frames enable women to challenge or adapt to inequality. Based on five months of fieldwork in rural Tamil Nadu (India) between June 2016 to October 2016, I utilize data from observations in and around *anganwadis*, 50 semi-structured interviews, several informal conversations, and documents to analyze the case of the Indian government's welfare initiative, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). In this chapter, I elaborate on the research context and the data and methods used in this study. I introduce Tamil Nadu ICDS as an appropriate case for addressing my research questions. Later, I reflect on my fieldwork experience and describe the types and sources of data used and how I gathered the data.

3.1   Research Context

As someone exposed mostly to the English media in India, I had grown up reading accounts of the corrupt and inefficient Indian state that had failed its people. Hunger, malnutrition, poverty, unequal access to education, caste, and gender inequality continue to impact a large number of Indians. Given the dire status of human development in some states, thought leaders in a neoliberalizing environment often pointed to the market as the solution. In that context, activist researchers such as Jean Dreze had a unique role to play. On one hand, these activists highlighted issues of corruption and non-performance in poorly performing states to hold the state accountable to providing basic necessities such as food and livelihood. But on the other, they also brought attention to the role of public action in various states through which citizens ensured the provision of social welfare benefits. Amidst the ubiquitous celebration of the market in the English media,

articles about public action caught my attention. The argument was made eloquently. The Indian state is often corrupt and inefficient. But a combination of state policies and public action can foster accountability and better social outcomes for citizens. Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh were all touted as examples. Among these states, I decided to focus on Tamil Nadu to engage my inquiry on inequality and state society dynamics.

3.1.1   Rationale for the Case

Tamil Nadu is an appropriate case to address my research questions on frames and inequality in the context of state provided food, nutrition, and care services for three reasons. One, the state has a long history of social movements, both at the state level and at the grassroots level (Gorringe 2005; Sivaraman 2013; Vivek 2015). Social movements in Tamil Nadu are pluralistic in terms of their political affiliations and forms of organizing. Such plurality gives me the opportunity to examine variations in frames deployed by movements that are structured formally such as the unions and among women who are connected informally at the local level as they make demands from government services. Second, scholars and activists have studied the role of public action in Tamil Nadu in holding the state accountable for providing welfare services such as the ICDS (Citizens' Initiative for the Rights of Children Under Six 2006; Rajivan 2006). But these studies do not interrogate the heterogeneous nature of Tamil society with respect to gender, caste, class, and political affiliations. In particular, Tamil Nadu is a paradox with respect to gender equality as relatively better performance in child mortality, maternal mortality, and women's literacy coexist with patriarchal attitudes in Tamil society (International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF 2017). Third, Tamil Nadu is at the forefront of welfare policies with respect to basic services such as food, education, and health. By conducting an ethnographic field study of Tamil Nadu ICDS, I was able to generate in-depth and rich data about the dynamics of

inequality structures, state policies, and frames (Snow and Trom 2002; Yin 2017). Further, an in-depth study of the case has allowed for triangulation of multiple methods such as observations, interviews, and documents (Snow and Trom 2002).

I decided to focus on Tamil Nadu because it is considered to be a successful case (relative to many other Indian states) with respect to social welfare benefits. The focus on an outlier to explain social phenomenon is a controversial one. The outlier is not representative of the typical case is the argument. However, singular cases in qualitative research can rarely claim to be representative of the population given the various factors that are unique to the case. Using the statistical language of representativeness and generalizability does not do justice to qualitative methods that are best suited to resolve a different problem (Small 2009). An outlier case is useful to draw attention to variables and processes that may not be overtly visible in other cases. For instance, public action in Tamil Nadu is touted to be the reason for the better performance of the state. Yet, we do not know why public action is more wide-spread in Tamil Nadu nor its relation to state performance. An in-depth study of Tamil Nadu ICDS allows me to engage in such an inquiry and development of theory.

3.2   Data Types and Sources

With the approval from Purdue University's human subjects review committee in 2016, I carried out five months of ethnographic field research in Tamil Nadu in the district I refer to as Kaveri. My goal was to conduct observations at *anganwadis* and interview mothers, *anganwadi* workers, union leaders, and state representatives. Three types of data informed this study: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and archival data. Using a non-probabilistic sampling strategy, I purposively selected 2 *anganwadis* where I conducted repeated observations and interviewed *anganwadi* workers and mothers. I gathered data in rural Tamil Nadu during the

period June 2016 to October 2016. I also collected documents such as newsletters, training manuals, and government orders from state institutions and online sources. Refer to Table 3.1 for a summary of data types and sources. Primary data for this study includes (1) ethnographic notes and observations at the *anganwadis*, official meetings, and rallies (2) 50 semi structured interviews with *anganwadi* workers (n=20), mothers (n=20), *anganwadi* union leaders (n=5), and state representatives (n=5). In addition, archival data including policy documents, training manuals, newsletters, government orders, and documents from the *anganwadi* workers union also informed this study.

Table 3.1: Types and Sources of Data

Type of Data	Source of Data
Observations	Observations at *anganwadi* centers, union rallies, office meetings, and union meetings
Semi Structured Interviews	Semi-structured interviews with *anganwadi* workers (n=20), Mothers (n=20), Union leaders (n=5) and State representatives (n=5).
Documents	State government documents regarding the ICDS. Union documents.

While recorded interviews are useful and critical to my analysis, I found that informal conversations without the structured context of a formal interview often gave me deep insights, especially about sensitive issues such as caste. I transcribed semi-structured interviews, but I also kept notes from various informal conversations that happened outside of these interviews. Through semi-structured interviews I gained in-depth information about people's experiences, activities, and expectations. Observations gave me insights into interactions that people themselves may not be aware of or did not report. Documents gave me insights into institutional policies and union

demands. Under each section, I will elaborate how each of these methods helped answer my research questions.

3.3 Ethnographic Fieldwork

Ethnographic observations are key to my project as I derived insights about sensitive topics such as caste and conflict about which people were more reticent in interviews. People's behavior and their verbal accounts may differ and therefore, a combination of semi-structured interviews and observations allowed me to dis/confirm themes that emerged from interviews (Jerolmack and Khan 2017; Lather 1986). I took copious field notes and wrote memos regularly while conducting field work (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011).

3.3.1 Accessing the field-site

Gaining access to the local network of *anganwadis* was not difficult as they are neighborhood centers. *Anganwadi* workers were usually eager to talk to me. However, my biggest challenge was to comply with the IRB requirement of securing a written consent letter from the 'manager' of the *anganwadi* where I intended to conduct observations. Initially, I had planned to conduct field work in District A. In Appendix H, I explained how IRB requirements of signed consent are blind to local cultural norms and manifestations of gender relations. Consequently, I decided to gain written permission from higher authorities in District A, which set in motion an upward spiral of red-tape. I soon realized that my appearance as a young woman student with no informal contacts or tacit knowledge about the administrative structure was a disadvantage. I failed to get permission from the administration by myself. Therefore, I decided to use the network of a local NGO which had access to the administration in an adjacent district, where I eventually conducted fieldwork.

Before arriving at my field site, I had cold-called the founder of the NGO for help regarding my accommodation as I did not know anyone in the area. I found the NGO through an internet search. The process of securing the trust of the NGO Head involved some amount of patriarchal bargaining (Kandiyoti 1988). Even though I informed the NGO Head about my project, I requested my father to speak to the NGO Head on phone, which he did with great enthusiasm. My brother accompanied me when I visited the NGO Head for the first time. While the NGO Head, who was knowledgeable about these issues, found my project interesting, my credibility was not based entirely on my personal credentials as a researcher but rather as a woman related to men who seemed trust-worthy. While I do not know what would have happened otherwise, I believe a possible lack of trust-worthiness as a single woman without any networks in the area was mitigated through the performance of a patriarchal family setting.

Although the NGO was primarily focused on providing microfinance services in the area, they had a secondary focus on children's health and nutrition. As part of their children's initiatives, they partner with the ICDS program to provide infrastructural support for some *anganwadis*. Thus, the NGO had access to the ICDS administration in District Kaveri where I eventually conducted fieldwork. The NGO staff introduced me to higher authorities in the ICDS administration, to whom I submitted a formal request letter from my professor. A representative of the NGO, a woman I refer to as Geetha, informed me about the formal bureaucratic structure while educating me about the norms of engaging with bureaucrats. Geetha, who trained *anganwadi* workers in local governance practices, was key in helping me gain access both to the bureaucracy and the field. Geetha also familiarized me with the terrain of the land and my travel options.

Utilizing the services of an NGO to secure access to a field site is fraught with risks. When NGOs manage *anganwadis*, they may try to influence the research process so as to show

themselves in a good light. In this case, the NGO I approached was not managing any of the *anganwadis*. Their role was limited to providing financial assistance and materials to some *anganwadis*. Since this area was affected by a Tsunami in 2004, several domestic and international NGOs were engaged in such humanitarian work in that area. However, none of them were involved in managing any *anganwadi*. Even then, I did not want my choice of sites and interviewees to be influenced by Geetha. Contrary to my concerns, Geetha also did not have the luxury to be away from her work at the NGO and spent only three days with me in the field, during which time she introduced me to local officials and *anganwadi* workers. After gaining these introductions, I chose research sites independent of the NGO's work and the NGO did not have access to any data that I gathered. Introduction to local officials was very useful as they invited me to training programs, official meetings, and other public events.

I gained access to union leaders at the local level, district level, and at the Tamil Nadu state level. At the local level, *anganwadi* workers introduced me to the leaders. Although *anganwadi* workers were united at the local level, there were several factions of unions at higher levels, based on their political party affiliations. I met leaders from two main factions at the state level. One faction was mobilized by the left leaning labor movement in India, organized by the Communist Party of India (Marxist). I gained access to this group through my friends who were active in the left leaning students movement in India. They gave me contact details of the national leader of the All India Federation of *Anganwadi* Workers' and Helpers Union (AIFAWH) who then referred me to leaders in Tamil Nadu. The leader of the other faction claimed to be bi-partisan but was dominated by one of the major regional political parties in Tamil Nadu, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). I was introduced to a union leader in this faction by a child-rights activist in Tamil Nadu.

3.3.2   Selection of Anganwadis

I conducted repeated observations at two *anganwadis* and followed two *anganwadi* workers as they carried out their various activities. I identified the two *anganwadis* based on three factors: accessibility by public transportation, their willingness to participate, and demographic factors that allow for variations in terms of the caste of the workers as well as the community they serve. One of these *anganwadis* serviced a majority of Scheduled Caste (SC) families but was staffed by *anganwadi* workers who belonged to Other Backward Class (OBC) community. As I would learn later, there were OBC families close by who were not using the *anganwadi* because it was in the SC area. In the second center, the *anganwadi* helper belonged to the SC caste, and was more educated than the *anganwadi* teacher who belonged to the OBC caste. Variations in caste between the *anganwadi* workers and the communities they serve provided me the opportunity to examine how caste intersects with the provision of food and care. Moreover, the second *anganwadi* had an infrastructural issue; the *anganwadi* ceiling was dilapidated and was a safety hazard. I chose this site for observations because it offered me the opportunity to see how the community and *anganwadi* workers make (or not) claims from the state regarding the building.

3.3.3   Participant Observation

I visited the *anganwadis* during working hours and spent the day both at the *anganwadi* and in the neighborhood. I shadowed two *anganwadi* workers – Gouri and Amala - in several of their activities including cooking and teaching at the *anganwadi*, organizing awareness events, mobilizing mothers and adolescents for awareness events, and organizing a union rally. I spent many days 'hanging out' and 'hanging about' in the *anganwadis* and the neighborhood (Woodward 2008). 'Hanging out' allowed me to listen to conversations not directed at me and less

influenced by issues of social desirability. Frequent visits to the office and the *anganwadis* made my 'hanging about' more normal.

Gouri's home was a place where workers gathered informally. I was welcomed into this group where we shared food and laughter in good measure. Gouri was aware of my presence and intent. In her own words, she introduced me to someone as, "she is here to study from me but also to study me." Being part of these 'hangout' sessions gave me fascinating insights into the workers' challenges and concerns regarding their jobs and lives. While I spent time with a group through my friendship with Gouri, I had a personal connection with Amala, who was more reserved in her interactions but deeply reflective and open about various issues. With Amala, I had insightful conversations about work, rights, life, and society. Amala also invited me to her home and introduced me to her family. As a widow, Amala expanded my understanding of what it means to challenge and navigate a stigmatized identity in Tamil culture. Spending time with Amala led to a personal and deeper interaction (Oakley 2016). Gouri and Amala were my 'key informants' who developed an understanding of my research interests and began to inform me of events or observations that they thought was important for me to know.

In ethnographic research, how people perceived me was critical to how research proceeded. At various times, *anganwadi* workers and mothers described me as a 'young woman', 'government officer', 'student', 'someone from the state of Kerala', 'someone from America', 'someone interested in women's rights', and 'friend'. Therefore, it was important that I was aware of how my background, class position, caste, and gender influenced the process of gathering and analyzing data (Dean 2017; Lal 1996; Lather 1986; Reinharz and Davidman 1992; Subramaniam 2009; Wolf 1996). In Appendix I, I reflect on my positionality in the field.

I was also able to participate in the training sessions conducted by the government for the *anganwadi* workers. Some of these training programs had role plays and discussions, which gave me insights into concerns across several sites that I could not visit. I also observed some union meetings held at the block level and rallies at the state level.

3.3.4   Semi-structured Interviews

I adopted a purposive sampling strategy to select respondents across caste categories in ways that represent how the ICDS is actually used by members of different caste categories in the community (International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Macro International 2007b). Higher proportion of children and mothers from the SC community are likely to use the *anganwadi*. See Table 3.2 for the caste profile of *anganwadi* workers and mothers.

Table 3.2: Caste Profile of Mothers and Anganwadi Workers

	Scheduled Caste (SC)	Other Backward Class (BC)	Other	Total
Mothers	13 (65%)	7 (35%)	-	20
Anganwadi Workers	6 (30%)	13 (65%)	1 (5%)	20
				40

I visited more than 14 *anganwadis* to conduct interviews with *anganwadi* workers and mothers. Of the 14, 12 *anganwadis* were located in one block. Focusing on one block allowed me to collect rich data and confirm information from various sources about similar issues. I recruited *anganwadi* workers to allow for variations in their role at the *anganwadi* (10 Helpers and 10 Teachers), and their caste. See Appendix A for a profile of *anganwadi* workers. I used snow ball sampling to recruit *anganwadi* workers.

I utilized three starting points for recruiting mothers. First, I interviewed mothers who visited the center with their children. Second, I visited the neighborhood with the *anganwadi* worker or with another mother or by myself to request interviews from mothers at their homes. Third, I also met mothers while traveling in public transportation. In those cases, I would get their contact details and interview them later. In all cases, I interviewed mothers separately. Utilizing multiple sources for recruiting helped reduce selection bias. As the ICDS is predominantly used by the SC community, I recruited a majority of mothers from the SC community to reflect the actual usage of the ICDS.

I used four different interview protocols: for *anganwadi* workers (Appendix D), mothers (Appendix E), union leaders (Appendix F), and state representatives (Appendix G). The duration of interviews ranged from 15 minutes to 3 hours. Conducting the interviews with *anganwadi* workers at the center was useful as I could include probes related to local issues specific to the center. Rapport and trust are critical for conducting interviews (Rubin and Rubin 2012). Since I spent time at the office and at other informal sessions with *anganwadi* workers, building rapport with them was much easier. All interviews were conducted in Tamil. I translated and transcribed these interviews to English. Interviews with *anganwadi* workers focused on their work, rights, organizing, and their challenges. Interviews with union leaders gave me insights into the wide variety of challenges across districts in Tamil Nadu. Further, interviews with union leaders were critical in sharpening my understanding of state society dynamics related to the ICDS. See Appendix B for a profile of *anganwadi* union leaders.

Interviews with mothers varied. While some mothers were candid about their experiences, others were more protective of the *anganwadi* worker. In Appendix I, I have elaborated on how I had to be mindful of the mothers' reluctance (in some cases) to complain against the worker.

Interviews with mothers focused on their expectations from the *anganwadi*, the quality of services provided, their experience in claims-making, their interaction with the local state institutions and their experience in participating in protests. Interviews with state representatives focused on their objectives, challenges, and strategies regarding *anganwadis*. See Appendix C for a profile of state representatives.

3.4   Documents

While I was in the field, I collected newsletters and training manuals of the ICDS program. I also downloaded union documents from the union website. The ICDS training manuals were critical for examining how gender norms regarding motherhood and care is represented in state policies. I also downloaded World Bank documents regarding the proposals and evaluation of their programs in Tamil Nadu. These documents were central to my analysis in Chapter 4. I also downloaded Government Orders (GOs) related to the ICDS from the Tamil Nadu government website. GOs are occasional announcements from the government regarding various decisions. The GOs gave me an institutional view of how decisions were made regarding the ICDS. It also demonstrated how resources were allocated to the *anganwadis*. The ICDS system has an online monitoring system, which allowed me to gather institutional information about the *anganwadis* that I visited. The union documents included their reports about protests as well as their charter of demands. The list of demands from the union allowed me to examine if and how issues and demands varied from the local to higher levels.

3.5   Discussion

My fieldwork experience has implications for research particularly for feminist research methodology and research ethics in international contexts. Feminist research methodology has

asserted the need for researchers to be reflexive about the researcher's positionality and its implications for analysis. While reflexivity is important for ethical and methodological reasons, literature on feminist research (with the exception of Oakley (2016)) has not focused much on other aspects such as friendships and agency among the subjects. Relationships in the field take several forms over the course of the fieldwork. As an ethnographer, I found my relationship with some *anganwadi* workers change from a formal relationship to one of friendship and solidarity. As I became friendlier with *anganwadi* workers, they developed a better understanding of my research questions and often intervened positively by elucidating conversations about sensitive topics or by introducing me to people who may be of interest to my project.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements often focus on one aspect of agency - people's participation in the research project. Based on my fieldwork experience, I argue that IRB processes that aim to enable people's agency may have to consider contextual factors while designing consent processes. I found that written forms of consent seeking did not enable women's agency regarding participation given the local manifestations of gender relations and hierarchy in a government program in Tamil Nadu. Rather, an oral form of consent-seeking may provide women (in some contexts) more opportunities to make decisions regarding their participation in the research project. Most importantly, processes that seek to protect research subjects may need to take into consideration cultural factors specific to the local context.

In the next two chapters, I present the analysis of the data. In Chapter four, I draw from observations, interviews with *anganwadi* workers and mothers, and various documents to examine state policies and practices in Tamil Nadu to argue that state institutions have the potential to both exacerbate and transform inequality.

CHAPTER 4.   ENTITLEMENTS & INEQUALITY: HOW STATE POLICIES CHALLENGE AND REPRODUCE INEQUALITY

Unequal gender, caste, and class relations are often sustained across generations and institutions (Tilly 1998). The impact of social relations is reflected in the life outcomes of disadvantaged groups who may experience undernourishment, lower life expectancy, and sub-optimal access to educational and employment opportunities. Unequal social relations are reproduced when the privileged exclude and exploit disadvantaged groups and when institutions adapt to cultural norms that sustain inequality (Tilly 1998). The state, as an institution, has an interdependent relationship with society in that social relations shape the "structure and intervention" of the state (Jessop 1982:221). Yet, the state can play a role in challenging, reproducing, and/or exacerbating inequality. Besides the direct impact of redistributive or exclusionary state policies, state interventions may also weaken or facilitate people's challenges to structural inequality. For instance, state repression of unions is a characteristic feature of neoliberalism. At the same time, affirmative action policies have enabled the representation of marginalized communities in mainstream spaces. This leads me to the question: What role does the state play in influencing how people negotiate inequality?

If and how state policies enable people's challenges to inequality can be examined through the concept of frames. Frames provide insight into the meaning making process of individuals (Gamson 1992). People use various frames to interpret their life situation in particular ways. In this chapter, I argue that state policies have the potential to shape the frames people use to negotiate inequality as they make claims for social welfare benefits such as food and care. Structural inequalities such as gender, caste, and class influence how food, care, and care-work is distributed

in society. I examine entitlement as a frame that holds the state accountable to providing those benefits especially to the poor who may not be able to afford market options (Sen 1999).

I assess the role of the state in enabling people to challenge or adapt to inequality by evaluating state support for two different frames - entitlement to food and entitlement to care. I show how historical state policies in Tamil Nadu have established entitlement to food as a right. On the contrary, state policies have played a far more ambivalent role with regard to entitlement to care - by encouraging privatization of care and devaluation of care-work. I was witness to women's agency as they made demands from the state. Yet, those demands differed with respect to food and care. Most women asserted their entitlement to food. But they were more hesitant about their entitlement to care. What might explain this variance? I argue that food policies in Tamil Nadu have established entitlement to food as a resonant frame in the dominant culture. In social movement studies, resonance is seen to be the distinctive feature of frames that are effective in motivating action. Resonant frames align with people's daily experiences and the broader cultural environment (Snow and Benford 1988). Entitlement to food is a culturally resonant frame in Tamil Nadu. Moreover, as a basic need, it aligns with the master frame in India, poverty alleviation (Ray and Katzenstein 2005). While resonant frames are critical to mobilize broad support for causes, they tend to overlook marginalized voices because their concerns don't often resonate with the majority (Ferree 2003). In contrast, radical frames are frames at the fringes that highlight marginalized voices and challenge cultural narratives that sustain structural inequality. I argue entitlement to care is a radical frame that does not align with the dominant cultural narratives related to gender and caste. Even though radical frames are vulnerable in a hostile culture, state policies have the potential to either facilitate or weaken the frame, entitlement to care.

Given that disproportionate amount of care-work is done by women, the distribution of care-work between the family, state, and market has the most impact on women (Razavi and Staab 2012). When neoliberal state policies cut state provision of care, care-work either continues to be women's responsibility in the family or is transferred to the market, accessible only to the wealthy. The lack of affordable, quality care-services has contributed to reducing women's participation in the labor-force and increasing the gender wage gap, what social scientists term as the motherhood penalty (Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007). However, availability of public child care services is likely to improve women's participation in the work-force, only if cultural attitudes are supportive of gender equality (Boeckmann, Misra, and Budig 2014). Thus, the provision of public child-care services, while important, may not be sufficient for addressing gender inequality in care-work. State policies may also need to encourage challenges to cultural narratives about gender that consider mothers as primary care-givers.

In Tamil Nadu, cultural attitudes regarding gender and care-work are especially skewed. In the National Family Health Survey 2015-2016, more than 55% women and 36% men agreed that, "a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife if she neglects the house or the children." The gendered distribution of care-work is supported by a cultural narrative where both women and men believe that mothers are primary care-givers. In this context, demanding care from the state as an entitlement is not resonant with the dominant cultural narrative. Thus, entitlement to care is a radical and vulnerable frame. When state policies further devalue care-work and privatize care to the market, entitlement to care is further weakened.

Perhaps, the differentiation between food and care may seem arbitrary to some. Especially because the act of feeding is often considered as care-work. For my analysis, I differentiate between food and care based on how caste and gender determine the distribution of food and care.

While gender relations established mothers as the primary care givers, in India, caste determines who is excluded from performing certain forms of care-work. For example, people from the Other Backward Class (OBC) communities may take raw eggs or packaged supplementary nutrition flour [*maavu*] from the *anganwadi*, even if the helper or the teacher belongs to the Scheduled Caste (SC) community. But in many places, people from OBC and upper caste communities do not prefer to eat food 'cooked' by someone from the SC community. The difference between packaged *maavu* and raw egg compared to food cooked by a SC *anganwadi* worker is testimony to how caste is constructed in arbitrary ways and reproduced through untouchability practices. [15] It is in this contradiction that I differentiate between food and care. For my analysis, entitlement to food refers to people's demands for food in the form of raw eggs and packaged *maavu*, while entitlement to care refers to people's demands for the upkeep of the center, caring of children, and pre-school education, all of which required effort and time from *anganwadi* workers. In the remainder of this chapter, I show how food and care policies of the Tamil Nadu government have systematically contributed to establishing entitlement to food as a resonant frame and entitlement to care as a vulnerable radical frame. Entitlement to food was further strengthened by petition justice forums and affirmative action policies that contributed to developing a culture of entitlement, including among marginalized caste groups.

4.1   Entitlement to Food - State Support for a Resonant Frame

Entitlement to food is a culturally resonant frame in Tamil society. Besides alignment with the dominant cultural, state policies also supported the entitlement to food frame in two ways. One,

---

[15] If OBC communities felt comfortable with taking raw eggs, Brahmin households did not send their children to the ICDS because they associated eggs with non-vegetarianism and as impure. I did not meet a single Brahmin child in any of the *anganwadis*.

by ensuring the availability of food for all people and by fostering an entitlement culture. State policies in Tamil Nadu not only advocated universal distribution of food but also helped develop an entitlement culture, including for marginalized groups. Universal access to food was part ofTamil Nadu state policies from the 1920s and later, even resisted the emphasis on efficiency through nutritional surveillance tools imposed by the World Bank. Figure 4.1 represents how the state established entitlement to food as a resonant frame.

Entitlement to Food

Availability of Food
- State Policies ensuring Universal Access to Food
- State Policies Resisting World Bank's efficiency frame

Entitlement Culture
- Petition Justice Forum
- Affirmative Action Policies
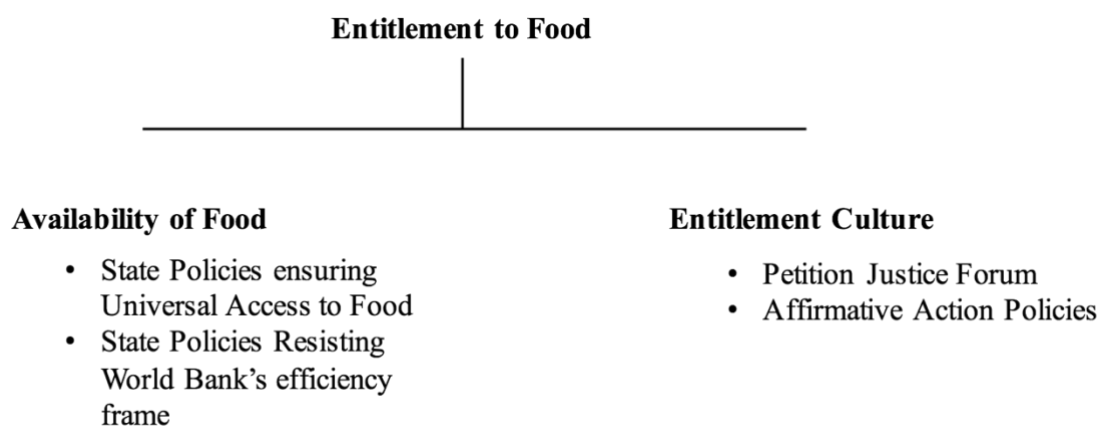
Figure 4.1: State Policy Support for Entitlement to Food

4.1.1   Universal Availability of Food

Global institutions such as the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) tend to focus on increasing food production to mitigate the issue of hunger. These organizations emphasize high productivity in food production through technological and market solutions that are purported to be more efficient in making food available (Mooney and Hunt 2009). In contrast to the market approach, an entitlement approach argues that freedom from hunger and malnourishment is an entitlement for which the state should be held accountable (Dreze and Sen 1989; Krishnan and Subramaniam 2014). Increasing food production by itself does not ensure that people from all social groups will

have equal access to food and nutrition (Dreze and Sen 1989). Rather, entitlement to food requires efforts that will ensure that food is available and distributed to all sections of society. An entitlement approach also brings attention to social inequities of caste, gender, and class that determine how food is distributed. In Tamil Nadu, state government has consistently sought to ensure universal access to food for all groups. In the process, they have also resisted efficiency frames imposed by international institutions such as the World Bank.

Historical State Policies Ensure Access

> *When I submitted a proposal to the Chief Minister . . . that we could provide meals to every school-going child from Monday to Friday, the Chief Minister remarked, 'As Director of Education, Mr. Venkatasubramanian has suggested mid-day meals on the working days Monday to Friday for all. But the Director of Education forgets that though schools do not function on Saturdays and Sundays, the stomach functions all the seven days.* - Dr. K. Venkatasubramanian, former Director of Education, Tamil Nadu (Venkatasubramanian 2004).

The above quote is from Dr. Venkatasubramanian, the former Director of Education, Tamil Nadu reminiscing an interaction with Dr. M.G. Ramachandran, former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. In the interaction described above, the Chief Minister argues that the distribution of mid-day meals for children must be based on the human need of hunger rather than the requirements of a work-week as defined by a capitalist system. With such an ideology guiding the leadership, Tamil Nadu became one of the few states in India that provided food in schools for children on all days of the week.[16] Moreover, the successful mid-day meal initiative in Tamil Nadu served as a role model for the country and is now a mandated right in all states (Krishnan and Subramaniam 2014). Tamil Nadu, a state known for its welfare policies, has often placed food at the center of its populism. For instance, while the rest of the country developed an efficiency based targeted food

---

[16] In my field work, I realized that this practice was reduced to six days at the Anganwadi a week after *anganwadi* workers demanded a weekly off.

distribution system that distributes subsidized food grains to those identified as poor, Tamil Nadu introduced a universal food distribution system available to everyone. Thus, in Tamil Nadu, food policies have tended to focus on universal need for food than neoliberal concerns for efficiency.

Food distribution policies (especially for children) have been operational in Tamil Nadu from early 1920s. Tamil Nadu state policies have had to navigate the tension between 'entitlement' and 'efficiency' in their interactions with the World Bank which has played a significant role in the design of the Tamil Nadu Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), the national level program under which the *anganwadis* operate. Table 4.1 traces the evolution of policies related to distribution of food and nutrition for children in Tamil Nadu.

Table 4.1: Features of Food and Nutrition Programs in Tamil Nadu

Year	Leading State Institution	Elements of the Welfare Program
1920s	Madras Government (Tamil Nadu in British occupation) under Justice Party, a pre-cursor to the contemporary regional political parties in Tamil Nadu	Mid-day meal program experiment
1956	Tamil Nadu government under K. Kamaraj (Congress Party)	Mid-day meal program for school children reinstituted
1960s	Tamil Nadu government under K. Kamaraj (Congress Party)	Mid-day meal program Expansion of school infrastructure to include mid-day meals
1976	Federal government	ICDS - Supplementary nutrition - Pre-school non-formal education - Nutrition & health education - Immunization - Health check-up - Referral services
1980 - 1989	Tamil Nadu government under M.G. Ramachandran (AIADMK party) & World Bank	Chief Minister's Noon Meal Program (similar to mid-day meal) Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition Programme I (TINP I) - Supplementary nutrition and growth monitoring.
1990-1997	Tamil Nadu government under J. Jayalalitha (AIADMK) & World Bank	TINP II Continue focus on growth monitoring, nutrition counseling for mothers, and distribution of supplementary nutrition for severely and moderately undernourished children.

Table 4.1 continued

1999 - 2006	Tamil Nadu government under K. Karunanithi (DMK) and J Jayalalitha (AIADMK) & World Bank	ICDS III Continue focus on supplementary nutrition feeding, immunization, pre-school education Reduction of workers in each center. Two positions (pre-school and supplementary nutrition program) are combined to form one position.
2005	Supreme Court of India	Universalization of ICDS in response to a public interest litigation by People Union of Civil Liberties.
2011	Federal Government	Mission Mode[17] - NGO participation in ICDS management - Focus on early childhood education

Public provision of food and nutrition for children has a long history in Tamil Nadu, beginning from as early as 1920, when mid-day meals were introduced in some government schools by the Justice Party, a precursor to the regional political parties in contemporary Tamil Nadu. As is evident in Table 8, almost all political parties have embraced food distribution policies of various kinds - mid-day meals, supplementary nutrition programs, and the ICDS. In 1947, at the time of independence, only around 8453 students were benefiting from the mid-day meal program in Tamil Nadu (Ramesh 2016). Currently, all school going children, and children under six are eligible to access mid-day meals in Tamil Nadu (and India).

Mid-day meals were reintroduced in post-independence Tamil Nadu by K. Kamaraj, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu from 1954 to 1963, and a passionate patron of education. A school

---

[17] Mission mode refers to the new policy initiated by the federal government. In this policy, the federal encourages the participation of non-governmental institutions in the management of the ICDS. This move has been severely critiqued by the Anganwadi unions who argue that this option allows corporations access to ICDS management through their non-profit entities. While important, these issues are not within the scope of this dissertation project.

drop-out himself, Kamaraj recognized that provision of free food was critical to incentivize families to send their children to schools. In 1956, Kamaraj re-introduced mid-day meals in Tamil Nadu in around 8000 elementary schools covering 200,000 children. In 1961, the mid-day meal program was expanded through further funding from the international non-profit organization, Cooperative for American Remittances Everywhere (CARE). By 1966, more than 1.5 million children, nearly a third of all students in Tamil Nadu were receiving mid-day meals (Muthusamy 1988). The mid-day meal scheme was also significant for weakening caste barriers in schools as children of all castes ate together, a rare occurrence in a caste segregated society. Food as an incentive for school attendance was critical in a context where poverty played a major role in preventing children from attaining education. The food-education integration and expansion of school infrastructure has ensured that almost 98% of children in the age group of 6-14 are registered to attend school in Tamil Nadu, one of the highest in India (International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF 2017). However, school attendance in the age group 15-17 drops to 83% but with almost no gender disparity.

In the year 1976, the national level program ICDS was introduced in Tamil Nadu as a pilot project. While feeding school children is crucial, poverty and malnutrition affects children's health much before they reach school-going age. Therefore, the ICDS program was introduced to address the needs of children under the age of six, as well as pregnant and lactating mothers. The ICDS offered six types of services - Supplementary nutrition, pre-school non-formal education, nutrition and health education, immunization, health check-up, and referrals. These services continue to be provided by the *anganwadi* on 2019 when this dissertation was written.

In the 1980s, three different food and nutrition programs were operational in Tamil Nadu - the Chief Minister's Nutritious Noon Meal Program (NMP), the World Bank funded Tamil Nadu

Integrated Nutrition Project (TINP), and the ICDS. All three programs were merged into the ICDS program. The largest expansion to the mid-day meal program in Tamil Nadu began on July 1st, 1982 under the governance of Chief Minister M. G. Ramachandran (Rajivan 2005). The NMP distributed hot meals to more than 6 million children in Tamil Nadu in 1982 (Rajan and Jayakumar 1992). This expansion of the NMP also included the difficult to reach population - children under the age of six - as beneficiaries. While children above six ate their meals at the school, all other beneficiaries - children under six, pregnant and lactating mothers, senior citizens, and widows - were provided hot meals at the *anganwadi*. 13% of the total number of beneficiaries in 1982 belonged to the SC caste groups and Scheduled Tribes (ST) community (Rajan and Jayakumar 1992). Given that the hot meal was often cooked by women in the community, the initiative also contributed to women's employment and livelihood security. Thus, Tamil Nadu policies have consistently introduced mid-day meals, supplementary nutrition programs through various channels to ensure universal availability of food.

Resisting World Bank's Nutritional Surveillance and Efficiency Frame

Besides making sure food was available, the Tamil Nadu government also subverted policy suggestions regarding efficiency from the World Bank. The World Bank funded nutrition program, the Tamil Nadu Integration Nutrition Project (TINP), aimed to provide funding for supplementary nutrition, expansion of rural health services, and nutritional counseling related to food and child-care practices. TINP was introduced in Tamil Nadu in three phases - TINP I (1980-1989), TINP II (1990-1997) and TINP/ICDS III (1999 -2005). Through TINP, the World Bank introduced the concept of nutritional surveillance in Tamil Nadu. Nutritional surveillance refers to the regular monitoring of children's growth in terms of weight. *Anganwadi* workers visit houses to weigh mothers and their babies to monitor the weight of mothers and children. While such growth monitoring is beneficial for tracking malnourishment, the World Bank introduced nutritional

surveillance primarily for purposes of efficiency. The World Bank envisaged that nutritional surveillance would enable targeted distribution of supplementary nutrition in contrast to the universal distribution prevalent in Tamil Nadu. The following quote from the World Bank's recommendations in 1980 demonstrates the difference in ideology between the Tamil Nadu government and the World Bank (p.11).

> once enrolled in a food supplement program [of the existing Tamil Nadu state government], children are generally fed for 200-300 days per year until they reach the upper bound of the eligible age group for a given program, without regard to the fact that they may have "graduated' to a satisfactory nutritional status. (In fact, studies have shown that 90-120 days of properly formulated nutritional supplementation is generally adequate to restore a malnourished child to a normal weight gain pattern.) This prolonged feeding period renders the existing programs very expensive per child served and limits their suitability for replication throughout the State." (The World Bank 1980: 11)

In contrast to the Tamil Nadu government's commitment to universal food distribution throughout the year, the World Bank sought to prioritize efficiency through targeted distribution of supplementary nutrition. Every child is categorized on a growth monitoring chart as "very severely underweight" (red), "severely underweight" (orange), "moderately underweight" (yellow), "mildly underweight" (light green) and "normal weight" (dark green). In TINP I, and TINP II, the World Bank recommends that supplementary nutrition be distributed only for those children and mothers identified as underweight to ensure efficient use of resources (The World Bank 1980, 1998). The Bank's emphasis on efficiency based on children's nutritional status overlooks the structural causes of hunger and malnutrition (Sridhar 2008). In Tamil Nadu, a higher proportion of the poor including those from SC communities are undernourished, a factor that nutritional surveillance does not consider (Diwakar 2014).

Although the World Bank established the practice of growth monitoring, it was not successful in institutionalizing the efficiency frame. The Tamil Nadu government continued to

implement the Noon Meal Program and an additional supplementary nutrition program under ICDS alongside TINP, making the World Bank's efficiency strategy moot. Interestingly, with each iteration of the World Bank funding, the Bank seems to have deserted its commitment to using growth monitoring for efficiency. In the ICDS III project funding, the World Bank includes all children under six as beneficiaries (The World Bank 2006). Thus, beneficiary categories in World Bank funding transitioned from including only severely underweight children in TINP I to including moderately underweight children in TINP II to all children in TINP/ICDS III - a change that is testimony to the Tamil Nadu government's commitment to universal food distribution.

In my field-site too, I did not see growth monitoring used for purposes of efficiency at all. *Anganwadi* workers were more likely to utilize growth monitoring as a tool for tracking malnutrition in their neighborhood. For example, in the middle of an interview, Amala, an *anganwadi* teacher, stopped talking and pointed to a young woman walking past us. As a baby, the young woman had been categorized as underweight. Amala told me that she had monitored the weight of the child over several weeks and given her family extra *maavu* [supplementary nutrition flour] to make sure that the child moved from the underweight category (red) to the normal weight category (green). With pride, she recollected a list of boys and girls who were underweight babies and were now healthy adults attending college.

In another neighborhood, I was accompanying Gouri, an *anganwadi* teacher, in her house visits. House visits are customary visits that an *anganwadi* teacher is expected to carry out in her neighborhood, both to monitor the weight of babies and to pass on any information from the government.[18] As we were walking, a woman called out to Gouri and informed her that there was a new baby in the street. The baby's mother had passed away during child-birth and was now living

---

[18] This is an example of how *anganwadi* workers were given several responsibilities beyond their role as teachers at the center.

with the grandmother. According to many *anganwadi* workers, children whose mothers die during child-birth are under high risk of malnourishment as poor households can rarely afford substitutes for breast milk. Gouri informed the family that she would add the child to her list and that her grandmother should get extra *maavu* packet from the center. I did not see any *anganwadi* workers restrict the distribution of *maavu* packets based on efficiency. As in this case, *anganwadi* workers rarely stuck to a list and even distributed food to children visiting from other neighborhoods.[19] Even though the World Bank recommended strict nutritional surveillance, the Tamil Nadu state administrators did not require *anganwadi* workers to aim for efficiency in their practice. Rather, practices were designed to develop a culture of entitlement, even among visiting families. In short, in spite of the World Bank policies that emphasized efficiency in food distribution, Tamil Nadu state government has emphasized universal availability of food, which supports the frame, entitlement to food.

4.2   Entitlement Culture and Inequality

The above section demonstrates how Tamil Nadu state government ensured universal availability of food in spite of World Bank policies that emphasized efficiency. Beyond the resistance to World Bank's efficiency frames, the state also developed policies that fostered an entitlement culture in the state, especially among marginalized caste groups. I focus on two such policies - petition justice forums and affirmative action policies.

---

[19] While not in the scope of this dissertation, there have been reports that technological innovations such as biometric identifications in food distribution has increasingly made such lists a reality. I did not come across any such instances in my fieldwork.

4.2.1   Petition Justice Forums (PJF)

One of the most visible signs of the entitlement culture in Tamil Nadu was the frequent use of the word "petition" among mothers, teachers, and bureaucrats. Even though Tamil Nadu ICDS is known to be relatively well performing in comparison to other states, most bureaucrats were anxious that people would petition higher authorities to complain about their grievances related to the ICDS. How did an English word 'petition,' achieve such traction in the Tamil community? I would soon realize that the Tamil Nadu government had established practices that not only encouraged petitions from individuals and collectives, but also required lower level officials to respond to those petitions in public. Petition Justice Forums (PJF) are the public face of the petitioning practice.

PJFs are monthly meetings organized by the bureaucratic wing of the government. The history of PJFs begins in late 1960s when the anti-brahmanical political party, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) first came to power after several years of Congress rule in Tamil Nadu. The revolutionary fervor of the then DMK manifested in innovative communication and accountability practices that they initiated. The DMK required officials to conduct monthly public meetings or the PJF to give people the opportunity to submit their grievances. These petitions could include grievances related to delayed benefits, corruption, or bad services. Officials were required to investigate every petition and respond to the grievance. Before the next monthly PJF, officials were required to publish and distribute a booklet containing the details of each petition, the complaint and the resolution.[20] Between June 1969 to May 1970, the government received around 100, 000 petitions (Ramanujam 1974). During my fieldwork, I attended one PJF.

---

[20] It is not clear if a booklet is published currently. At the meeting, the officials read out the number of petitions received and number mitigated.

The PJF was held at an open playground of a government school. A few chairs were placed on the cemented stage-like platform, decorated with flowers and banners. More chairs and benches were placed in front of the stage for the audience. While it was not strictly gender segregated, most of the chairs in the front were occupied by women while men occupied the relatively less comfortable benches placed at the back. Several senior citizens, especially women, were present at the meeting. On the sides, there were several banners that advertised various government initiatives of the Tamil Nadu government. Four *anganwadi* teachers from the village had organized a small ICDS stall alongside other government departments. The ICDS stall had banners about child and mother's nutrition, colorful posters about early education of children, and an exhibition of fruits, vegetables, green leaves, and lentils with information about their nutritious value. The *anganwadi* teachers distributed a delicacy made of chickpeas and a porridge made from the supplementary nutrition dough [*maavu*] distributed by the *anganwadi*. The teachers were visible to the public as they had worn their ICDS uniform, a blue saree.

People began to trickle into the event, slowly filling up the chairs. We were told that the legislative representative (Member of Legislative Assembly known as MLA) from the area had already arrived and was waiting for the event to begin. Since the PJF was largely targeted at the development bureaucracy, the event could not begin until the bureaucratic head or their representative arrived. In some time, the representative of the bureaucratic head arrived at the event with a couple of assistants, one of whom was wearing a uniform (white shirt and trousers with a distinctive belt and headgear) that reminded me of colonial era assistants. Usually, in Tamil culture, if a senior person, especially a man, or those with power arrive into a space, younger and less powerful people are likely to stand up. Yet, on that day, I was surprised to see that the people did not stand up as the VIPs of the day entered the playground. Interestingly, the lower level

government officials stood up as the higher officials arrived, but citizens remained seated. Performance of respect through such symbolic actions has much to do with the distribution of power. *Anganwadi* workers always stood up when their superiors arrived into their space. While citizens may also stand up in an individual setting, the Petition Justice Forum had created a momentary citizens' collective, who did not feel the need to stand up at the arrival of the bureaucrats. Although bureaucrats have a lot of power and are respected, at the PJF, it seemed like the citizens had a sense that the administrators are supposed to be working for them.

At first, the officials from various departments presented information about new initiatives from their departments to the public. Then, the higher official read out the number of petitions received last month, number mitigated, and number of petitions pending. Finally, the official announced names of members eligible for benefits and distributed certificates and checks. After the distribution of certificates, people crowded around the MLA and the Collector's assistants to submit their "petitions" to the government. Petitions were sent to the bureaucracy not only through the PJF but also outside of the monthly event.

Petitions could also include complaints against *anganwadi* workers, which made many workers anxious. Petitions against individual *anganwadi* workers have highlighted absenteeism, delay in providing food or nutrition, or issues related to corruption. The officers' anxiety about petitions and citizens' frequent reference to petitions, suggest that the administration is responsive to petitioning. The fear of petitions also ensured that *anganwadi* workers felt accountable to citizens. For instance, Gouri, an *anganwadi* worker while describing a recent case of petitioning against another *anganwadi* worker for corruption said, "You can steal. I also steal but you have to take care of the area. If you don't give people *maavu* [supplementary nutrition flour], if you don't open the center, or if you don't behave well with people, they will petition you." Besides individual

petitions, *anganwadi* workers also organized group petitions from citizens for highlighting common goals such as infrastructural needs. For instance, two days before the PJF I attended, the ceiling in one of the *anganwadis* had tumbled down. According to the *anganwadi* worker, the children and the workers barely escaped as the ceiling fell. Based on the advice of an ICDS officer, the *anganwadi* workers organized a group petition and submitted a community petition to the MLA when he arrived at the PJF. MLA funds are often used to construct new *anganwadi* centers.

The Petition Justice Forum (PJF) is an interesting space because it was a festive event which celebrated the petitioning practice. The PJFs played a major role in institutionalizing an accountability system at the grassroots level. Both the practice of petitioning and the responsiveness of the state to those petitions in the form of investigations and report-backs to the community, opened channels for people to assert their entitlements (Johnston 2011). While petitioning is a popular civil society tactic in the United States, writing as an act of political agency is a practice that the Tamil Nadu state helped develop. Creation of these channels suggest some level of openness in the Tamil Nadu political system even though the state has been known to use violence against labor strikes including that of *anganwadi* workers (Tilly 1978).

The demand for social welfare benefits such as food in the form of *maavu* or eggs are usually demands for material goods that can be resolved immediately. These demands for food may not create transformational structural changes, but are significant for people's everyday lives. Thus, the petitioning practice is designed to support resonant frames such as entitlement to food, that is supported by the state and can be investigated and mitigated. Moreover, these demands are made at the lower levels of the government bureaucracy, whose performance is important for citizen satisfaction in a competitive electoral environment. As a food rights activist told me about the working of the mid-day meal in Tamil Nadu, "the continuity of the program was assured not

by the virtue of the largesse of the political executive or the bureaucracy but because it was a scheme that was meant to perpetuate itself." In Tamil Nadu, events such as the petition justice forums play a major role in institutionalizing the bureaucratic accountability regarding service distribution, including food.

Petitions are tools that are available to all groups, irrespective of the power they hold in the community. While marginalized caste groups have used and threaten to use petitions to assert their rights, they are not specifically designed to mitigate historical disadvantages. Moreover, the universal application of petitions also showed the fractures in the community when groups used petitions as a weapon of vindictiveness and dominance rather than entitlement. In one of the villages I visited, an *anganwadi* in a SC area was in a state of negligence because dominant caste groups had petitioned against the OBC *anganwadi* teacher who had rallied to get the *anganwadi* built in the SC area. The petition alleged that the teacher was engaged in corrupt practices. Many *anganwadi* teachers were involved in some side hustle in relation to the *anganwadi* and were vulnerable to corruption charges. The bureaucracy conducted the investigation and transferred the teacher to another area as a compromise, leaving the *anganwadi* in the SC area without a teacher and a helper (who had recently retired). Even though the teacher had succeeded in getting the *anganwadi* in the SC area, some members of the dominant caste group managed to impact the quality of services at the *anganwadi* through the use of petitions. Thus, the caste-blind nature of petitions may at times affect how marginalized communities claim their entitlements. In contrast, caste-based affirmative action policies strengthen entitlement claims among the marginalized communities.

4.2.2   Affirmative Action Policies

Affirmative action policies based on caste strengthen entitlements in two ways: First, they create networks of power among the marginalized to create conditions where entitlements are supported. Second, caste-based affirmative action challenge caste-based segregation widely practiced in the area of food and dining in India. Thus, affirmative action policies not only strengthen entitlements but also enable challenges to caste-based inequality.

Affirmative action in the form of caste based quotas in education, politics, and government employment is a national policy in India. But, Tamil Nadu's affirmative action policy is unique in that it is representative of the population. In proportion to the population, the state reserves 69% of seats in education, politics, and government employment to people from Other Backward Classes (OBC) communities and 20% of seats to people from Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) communities. Rest of the seats are unreserved and open to people from all castes, including SC and OBC communities. Thus, a majority of seats are 'reserved'. Affirmative action in the *Panchayat* [village council] has created a network of positive working relationships between the *anganwadi* workers, the Scheduled Caste (SC) representative, and the local community in ways that benefit the historically marginalized SC community.

Take the case of Gouri, an OBC Anganwadi teacher, who was able to secure the help of the SC *Panchayat* [village council] member to rent a place for her *anganwadi* in a SC neighborhood. Gouri's *anganwadi* was initially located within the local school compound, a common practice in Tamil Nadu. After a few years, her center was in a state of dilapidation and she began to look for a place to rent. Finding a place to rent for the *anganwadi* was difficult in the area. Most of the houses were owned by members of the OBC community who did not want to rent out their homes for the *anganwadi* as they did not want SC children to be fed and cared for in their homes. The Vice President of the *Panchayat*, who I will refer to as Mohan, who belonged to

the SC community, eventually arranged for a rented house for the center. The rent for the new building was Rs 750 per month, which the ICDS bureaucracy agreed to pay. But Gouri ran into some trouble in retrieving the rent money from the local ICDS office. The accountant at the local office, who I will call Vijay, began to misappropriate Rs 150 from the rent amount and passed on only Rs 600 every month to Gouri. Further, he made Gouri sign a letter that stated that she had received Rs. 750 from the office. Gouri realized her mistake when it was too late. Although she confronted Vijay about the issue, she could not mitigate the situation. Knowing Vijay's power and influence in the administration, she did not complain to higher authorities either. Supporting Gouri, the *Panchayat* Vice President Mohan intervened and confronted Vijay. But he was also unable to resolve the matter. Thereafter, Mohan decided to contribute Rs. 150 every month. "The rent is Rs. 750, but there was some problem in the office. They give Rs 600 and I give Rs 150 as my contribution," Mohan told me. Gouri validated his claim. Vijay was an influential officer in the ICDS bureaucracy. Many *anganwadi* workers shared their concerns about Vijay's corrupt practices with me. Yet, not many of them had the kind of support that Gouri received from Mohan. In my interview with Mohan, it was evident that he believed in the utility of the *anganwadi* for all people, including people from SC community. Mohan describes the *anganwadi* to me:

> *Now, at the Anganwadi, children from all communities come and study. The teacher and the helper support them. In the morning, they pick the children from their homes. Through the day, they take care. In the evening, the helper drops the children to their respective homes. Safely. Poor families will not be able to give their children nutritious food. The government is doing it. These people are doing that service. They give nutritious food for the children. This is good for the children. This is good. Because the anganwadi is there…whether it is rich kid or a poor kid…they get supplementary nutrition, they get awareness.*

Even though Mohan was not able to resolve the issue at the ICDS bureaucracy with Vijay, he and Gouri managed the rent crisis in ways that was helpful to the community. Such positive relationships between the SC *Panchayat* member and the *anganwadi* worker, irrespective of her

caste, was not rare in my field site. I saw SC *Panchayat* members eager to help out the *anganwadi* worker and their constituency through their influence and resources. In many cases, mothers from SC community reported to me how they had approached the *Panchayat* President to make infrastructure requests regarding the *anganwadi.* Having SC representatives made it easier for mothers from SC communities to make their entitlements heard.

In contrast, there were *anganwadis* where the teachers and helpers were insulted by *Panchayat* members from higher castes who did not care for the *anganwadi* or for the workers' needs. Take the case of Gandhimathi (helper), whose *anganwadi* did not have a proper enclosure. Without a gate and an enclosing wall, the *anganwadi* building was often vandalized at night. Gandhimathi showed me broken beer bottles strewn around the building which she rightfully pointed out to be harmful to the children and the upkeep of the *anganwadi*. I inquired if the President of the *Panchayat* had helped them. Gandhimathi told me that when she and the *anganwadi* teacher reached out to the *Panchayat* President, he insulted them by saying that the teacher and the helper may have themselves thrown the bottles around. Feeling offended by his statements, Gandhimathi and the teacher decided not to approach him again. Gandhimathi, the teacher, and the children using the *anganwadi* are all members of the Pandaram caste. The *Panchayat* member belongs to the Pillai caste which is higher in the caste order compared to the Pandaram caste. The *Panchayat* President's treatment of the *anganwadi* workers is testimony to how caste operates in local government organizations. Unlike Mohan who was helpful to Gouri, the *Panchayat* President in Gandhimathi's village was not interested in helping them out even though he lived just across the *Anganwadi* and could see the condition of the center.

While networks between elected representatives and *anganwadi* workers were important to create spaces for entitlement, networks between women from SC communities was also

important to challenge untouchability practices often seen in the realm of food and dining. Malathi is one such *anganwadi* worker from the SC community, who evoked Periyar, a revered anti-caste activist, and the long history of anti-caste struggles in Tamil Nadu as she recounted her experience of caste-based discrimination in the ICDS. Malathi told me,

> *You cannot change some people. Let me tell you, no matter how many Periyars arrive, you cannot change things. Isn't that the truth? No matter how many Periyars are born, these people cannot be reformed. Caste discrimination is very bad. We cannot let go of our respect and status to work here.*

Malathi's political consciousness about caste enabled her to challenge discrimination and segregation even among *anganwadi* workers. Malathi was elected as the leader of the *anganwadi* workers union at the local level. Her nomination as the local union leader resulted in interesting interactions among *anganwadi* workers. Some senior *anganwadi* workers were skeptical of her leadership while most of the younger *anganwadi* workers (and some older union leaders) were supportive of her candidature. Malathi was aware of the caste divide among the *anganwadi* workers and often called out exclusionary practices. For example, Malathi described how she challenged the blatant casteism from upper caste workers at the retirement farewell party of an *Anganwadi* worker from the SC community, named Mekhala.

> *Malathi: For her retirement function, Mekhala teacher cooked and organized a grand event at her home. But half of the people who came to the function left without eating.*
>
> *Interviewer: Did they not eat because she is from the SC community?*
>
> *Malathi: Yes. They did not eat. They began to leave without eating anything. I stood on the road and told them, "if you leave today" …I have no fear. I will ask anything. "If you leave today, I will not come to any of your functions tomorrow. I will not give money. I will not participate in anything…Why do you need my money? Doesn't money have caste? I will not give money to any of your functions," I said. When I said that, all of them came running and sat down. Even among anganwadi workers, there are many people who think that we have all come to work at the same place, and that we should not look at these differences. There are many people like that. I appreciate those people.*

Malathi's challenge to the members of higher castes for excluding another worker based on caste demonstrates the potential of caste based affirmative action. Affirmative action had inadvertently created a network of people who belonged to marginalized castes. Malathi was painfully aware of caste-based discrimination and raised her voice to support Mekhala, another worker from the SC community.

Besides such direct challenges to power, caste based affirmative action also created situations where OBC and SC *anganwadi* workers were allocated to SC neighborhoods and OBC areas respectively. Through these inter-caste allocations, affirmative action created opportunities for blurring caste boundaries in a highly caste-segregated cultural environment. Where OBC workers worked in SC areas, the workers reported feeling accountable to the community either because of the perceived power of the SC community or because they felt committed to the community. For much of history, people from SC communities had provided labor to privileged caste groups. While that may still be true, these spaces where OBC members provided labor to SC communities, offered some opportunities to shake status quo. For instance, Selvi, an *anganwadi* teacher from the OBC community and working in an SC community told me she was anxious that people in the community might "make noise." Some others like Vijaya, an *anganwadi* teacher from an OBC community, had a more collaborative relationship with the members of the SC community where her *anganwadi* was located.

> *Interviewer: Whose cooperation do you need the most to run the Anganwadi well?*
>
> *Vijaya: Mainly the people. People in the village should cooperate with you. We should also cooperate with them. We should go to the area and provide services for them. Makkalodu makkala [we should be people among people]. They should cooperate with us and we should interact with them…**freely**. For polio drops, we cooperate with them, to give vitamin solutions, we cooperate, we give elephantiasis tablets, we cooperate with social welfare department, we go to weigh the children. We put up a meeting for the village nurse. We are together with the people.*

Vijaya uses the term "interact freely" to imply that she does not discriminate against people from SC communities in her interactions. She described her relationship in terms of collaboration and cooperation. While I did not witness her interaction with people in the community, families in the neighborhood validated her claim of cooperation when I spoke to them. I am confident that the people I spoke to were upfront about their evaluation of Vijaya. One of the family members, a vocal anti-caste activist from an SC community had much to say about the exploitative history of Thevars, an OBC caste. He told me that Thevars had stolen land from his caste community. But he and his family members expressed no grievances about Vijaya, who belongs to the Thevar community. Given his caste consciousness and vocal activism, I do not expect him to shy away from sharing his experience of caste-discrimination, if any. Therefore, Vijaya's case is an example of blurring caste boundaries.

Besides developing a collaborative relationship, Vijaya also brought her grandchild to the *anganwadi*, a practice that was rare. Most OBC and brahmin *anganwadi* workers refused to bring their own children to the *anganwadi* if it was located in the SC area. But Vijaya believed that the *anganwadi* is equally beneficial to her grandchild.

> *Vijaya: I bring my grandson here. More than the private nursery school, I feel my grandson is safer here.*
>
> *Interviewer: You bring your grandson?*
>
> *Vijaya: I bring him here. I bring him with me and I take him back with me. I have also invited those living close to me, "Send your children. I will take your children with my grandchild and bring them back."*

Unlike many other *anganwadi* workers that I interacted with, Vijaya considered the *anganwadi* as a space that was beneficial to children of all communities. Further, she role modeled herself as someone who does not segregate between her grandson and children from SC communities. While it might seem like Vijaya is just a singular individual conscious about

segregation and discrimination, the system of affirmative action that allocated OBC community members to work in SC areas created the conditions for blurring caste hierarchies, even though this did not always happen with ease as in the case of Vijaya.

Unlike teachers from OBC community working in SC areas, teachers from SC communities working in OBC areas find it more difficult to gain people's cooperation. As a helper from an SC community, Latha, told me.

> *For so many years, they had a BC person who was cooking here for a long time. Noone complained and she left only after retirement. She came here, cooked and was working well here. She interacted well with the people here. I also went to her retirement party. But, if one of us from the SC community works there, they [people from OBC] will not let her work. There is no place for SC people among OBCs.*

People from OBC community often protest when cooking jobs are given to helpers from SC community. Or else, they may choose to not send their children to the *anganwadi* at all. Amala's *anganwadi* is one such example. Amala is an *Anganwadi* teacher from the OBC community. The helper in her center, Thenmozhi, is from the SC community. Unlike most other helpers who are rarely college educated, Thenmozhi, has a Bachelor's degree and is very enthusiastic about teaching children. On most days that I visited, I found Thenmozhi teaching the children. Yet, people from the OBC community were not open to sending their children to the center.

> *Interviewer: Do most children coming here belong to the SC community?*
>
> *Amala: Everyone is SC. All the children except this child [pointing to a child], is from SC community. He comes here because his house is close by. From the time that this woman, [the SC helper] started working here, OBC children don't come here. That is why there is only one street under this center now. The OBC street is her [another Anganwadi teacher] area.*
>
> *Interviewer: But they [OBC people] won't come here?*

Amala: They will go to her [another Anganwadi teacher] center. Even OBC children from my area, around 5, go to her center. They [OBC people] think, "Why should my child eat what a Pallar [a SC caste] cooks?"

In my interview with Thenmozhi, she did not refer to any discrimination. Amala, the OBC teacher, was more open about the community's caste-based exclusion.[21] SC *anganwadi* workers face such caste based discrimination when allotted to OBC areas. Yet, in some cases, caste boundaries did begin to blur. At the time of this interview in 2016, Malathi, the teacher from the SC community, was in charge of two centers. Her primary charge was at Center A located in an OBC area and servicing OBC children. The second center, Center B that she had recently taken charge of was located in an SC area even though there were OBC children under her purview. I was interviewing Malathi at Center B. Malathi's experience and anxiety demonstrates the challenges and possibilities of blurring caste based segregation through caste based affirmative action.

Malathi: Both of us [the teacher and the helper] are from SC community and the OBC people in Center A do not differentiate based on caste. They respect me a lot. The OBC people there, they respect me. They don't create any problems. We cook in that center. Usually the problem is about cooking and food, right? Five mothers themselves eat at the center. They will feed their kids and they also eat the cooked food. They don't discriminate based on caste there. But here [Center B], they [OBC people] discriminate. A lot.

Interviewer: How do they discriminate here?

Malathi: They won't take the cooked food here. They won't eat here. They come here for the egg. If they take the food, they throw it away. They discriminate based on caste…The teacher [from a non-SC caste] who was working here earlier…even she wouldn't drink the water that the helper [from SC community] offers. She wouldn't eat the food that she [helper] makes.

---

[21] I do not mean to suggest that Thenmozhi was a passive victim of caste based discrimination. Members of marginalized groups are not always vocal about their personal experience of discrimination, especially to an outsider. While Thenmozhi did not share any experience of discrimination against herself, she was more vocal (in the interview and in the office) about corrupt practices in the ICDS bureaucracy that affected all workers, especially the women who were poorer than her.

Malathi's experience in both the centers demonstrate how her (and the helper's) presence as people from SC community but working in OBC areas is a continuous process of negotiation. While in one center, people from the OBC community did not discriminate by caste, in the other center, Malathi felt discriminated by OBC families. Admittedly, Malathi had spent eight years in Center A which allowed her to develop a relationship with the people in the village, and blur caste barriers. She believes that it may be more difficult for her to develop similar rapport in Center B as this is her own village, or as she calls it "her native." What she refers to, is the embeddedness of caste in the village. In the village where Center B is located, people have known her and her family to be from the SC caste. Malathi argues that she would find it more difficult to break caste barriers in her own village than in another village where she enters as an outsider. Further, the behavior of the earlier teacher (from the OBC community) towards the helper (from the SC community) may have legitimized caste based discrimination in the community. Only time will tell if Malathi will be able to break caste barriers in Center B.

In short, caste based affirmative action laid the conditions for SC communities to make various kinds of claims directly and indirectly. In many *anganwadi* centers, the teacher and helper position was allocated to women from the SC community. The presence of SC members in the ICDS system often led to claims of equality as in the case of Malathi who made claims for Mekhala. However, Malathi herself had to navigate caste based discrimination in her role as an *anganwadi* teacher. That Malathi had a different experience in Center A after spending eight years suggests that the presence of an SC teacher may contribute to blurring caste boundaries in the distribution of food and care, an outcome of caste based affirmative action.

4.3   Entitlement to Care: Weakening a Vulnerable Frame

While the Tamil Nadu government established entitlement to food as a resonant frame, the same was not true of entitlement to care. In a cultural context where mothers are considered to be primary care-givers, ambiguous state policies regarding care further weakens the entitlement to care. Two themes emerge in how state policies and practices contributed to weakening people's entitlement to care – privatization of care and devaluation and exploitation of care labor. Weakening the entitlement to care frame contributes to exacerbating inequalities of gender, caste, and class. Given how *anganwadis* are spaces that have the potential for blurring caste and class boundaries, emergence of private schools has contributed to exacerbating caste and class based segregation. Further, when entitlements from the state weaken, care work is redistributed back to the family.

4.3.1   Privatization of Pre-school care - To Family and to Market

State policies regarding education and care have contributed to increasing privatization of pre-school care in Tamil Nadu. While food policies tended toward universalization in-spite of World Bank influence, policies related to education and care began to increasingly move towards the market.

Before 1947, primary education in Tamil Nadu was governed by the Madras Elementary Education Act 1920 (later known as Tamil Nadu Elementary Education Act) which required publicly managed elementary schools to provide free and compulsory education to children. The provision of mid-day meals also improved attendance in schools. A major expansion in education infrastructure happened during the governance of K. Kamaraj. The number of schools doubled from 16037 in 1951 to 30,554 school in 1966 servicing 5 million students (Muthusamy 1988). Further, school improvement conferences were held to mobilize public support to fund schools

even as the government's budget allocation for education improved during this period. Table 4.2 shows the increasing number of schools during this period. School uniforms were distributed so as to alleviate any feeling of inequality among students. The distribution of school uniforms was operational in Tamil Nadu schools and in ICDS in 2016 as well. In the school expansion period, Kamaraj also introduced benefits for teachers such as pension scheme and insurance (Muthusamy 1988). Government teachers were the first to receive pensions among government employees in Tamil Nadu, a testimony to how education was valued by the state at that time.

Table 4.2: Expansion of school infrastructure in Tamil Nadu (1951-1966)

Year	No of Schools	No of students
1951	16037	1.852million
1961	27108	3.558million
1966	30554	5 million

Source: (Muthusamy 1988)

From 1970s, things began to change. As school attendance and registration improved, public funding for education declined and private schools began to emerge (Duraisamy 2003; Rajagopalan 2004). The privatization of schools resulted in the emergence of private "nursery schools," a term used to describe pre-schools that provide early education for children, similar to the *Anganwadi.*

The privatization of schools in Tamil Nadu was a neoliberal reform policy that was introduce in gradual steps. Traditionally, the school system in Tamil Nadu has had different forms of management. Public schools are entirely managed by the government. Private schools are aided (with some funding from the government) or unaided (recognized by the government but not government funded). Aided private schools are prohibited from charging tuition fees from students.

Unaided private schools may charge tuition fees from students to cover their costs. In this environment, Tamil Nadu saw the emergence of private un-aided 'matriculation schools' that followed a different curriculum from that of state schools. In 1979, private matriculation schools were brought under government regulation (Directorate of School Education) even though they continued to be self-financing. Soon after, with reducing investment in education spending, the government encouraged more self-financing matriculation schools (Rajagopalan 2004). Currently there are 4268 matriculation schools in Tamil Nadu (Matriculation School Website). Unlike the majority of public and private aided schools which are Tamil medium, private unaided matriculation schools are primarily English medium schools.

The emergence of private English medium matriculation schools is also an indication of changing aspirations among Tamil citizens to learn English, a marketable skill in a globalized world. In this period, English medium schools funded by the federal government also began to emerge. With the growth of private matriculation schools, a number of private and often unrecognized pre-schools emerged to provide a pipeline of school ready students (Rajagopalan 2004). In recent years, in response to fatal fire accidents and massive tuition fees, the government was forced to regulate infrastructure and fee collection in private pre-schools. Policies such as Draft Code of Regulations for Play Schools 2015, The Tamil Nadu Schools (Regulation of Collection of Fee) Act 2009, Code of Regulation for Approved Nursery and Primary Schools, and Tamil Nadu Private Schools Regulation Act 2018 were introduced to regulate private pre-schools. However, private schools continue to utilize loopholes in the law to collect high fees (*Lakshmi School versus State of Tamil Nadu* 2012, *Tamil Nadu Nursery Matriculation versus State of Tamil Nadu* 2010, *Lakshmi matriculation School versus State of Tamil Nadu* 2012). Neoliberal supporters tend to emphasize the inevitability of neoliberal reforms. A comparative analysis of

food and care policies show that the Tamil Nadu state has chartered particular pathways for each. In the case of food, the state was able to resist privatization and efficiency based distribution, but in the case of care and education, Tamil Nadu government sought to push the envelope on privatization.

When Privatization exacerbates Inequality

Given how the *anganwadis* are spaces that have the potential for blurring caste and class boundaries, emerging private schools have contributed to exacerbating caste and class based segregation. The emergence of private English medium schools has implications for existing inequalities of caste and class in Tamil Nadu. Private pre-schools are not affordable to poor families, who are predominantly from SC communities. Wealthier families from OBC and Other caste category (upper caste) often use private schools to segregate themselves from children from SC communities. Given how caste segregation/discrimination is reinforced through the practice of segregated dining, *anganwadi* centers have the potential to be spaces where children across caste and class positions share food and play together. While such blurring of caste lines occurs in some villages, issues of untouchability are rampant in covert and overt ways in *anganwadis* in Tamil Nadu.

Interviews with *Anganwadi* workers and ethnographic observations demonstrated how families from OBC communities and upper caste communities often chose not to send their children to *anganwadis* that service children from SC communities. Caste based exclusion becomes apparent especially when the *anganwadi* center is located in a "SC area." The mushrooming of private schools in Tamil Nadu offers members from OBC and upper caste communities the opportunity to engage in the rhetoric of 'choice' and send their children to private schools rather than to an *anganwadi* that service children from SC communities. For instance, quoted below is the observation from an *anganwadi* teacher, Vijaya, who describes how the

demographic of the children at the center changed when they shifted from an OBC area to an SC

area and how the caste-based segregation was exacerbated by the presence of a private pre-school.

Interviewer: Earlier the anganwadi was in the OBC area?

Vijaya: Earlier the anganwadi was in the OBC area. We came here [SC area] in 2011.

Interviewer: The children who used to come there, were they children from the SC community?

Vijaya: At that time, it was combined. Both OBC and SC children would come. Children would come from here [SC area] and there [OBC area] combined. After we came into this area, only SC children come. OBC children, one or two used to come. There are one or two parents who agree to send their kids. That's all. The others don't come…We have to force the parents of OBC children to bring them. Here, there are only SC people.

Interviewer: Do they [OBC people] discriminate by caste?

Vijaya: They do. [in a very low voice] If the school was there [OBC area], it would be better.

Interviewer: OBC people don't send their children because SC children come or because the school is in an SC area?

Vijaya: Because of this neighborhood. All children study together in the high school. That is alright. That is not the problem. They are not afraid of the company of SC children. But this area [SC neighborhood], they fear. When the school was there [OBC neighborhood], BC and SC children were coming together and it was not a problem…They study together in school. All that is not a problem. They are all friends…Just this neighborhood, they have a problem. I even requested Muslim families, please send your children, I will get them back to your house. They say, "No, pa, if it was here, we would bring our kids." When they say that, we cannot say anything to them.

Interviewer: You cannot force them.

Vijaya: You cannot. That is their choice…If the private pre-school was not there, there would be no other way. They would have to leave their children here. They cannot keep their children at home till 5 years. Now, since the nursery is there, and they are also well off, they will pay money and educate their children in the nursery.

The availability of the private pre-school allowed parents and the *anganwadi* workers to deploy the rhetoric of choice to practice caste based segregation of children. Besides caste based discrimination, class position also mattered. At times, SC families also sent their children to private schools if they could afford it. Take the case of Rajeshwari, who lives in an SC neighborhood, but chose to send her son to the private school owned by an upper caste group. Unlike the other SC families in the neighborhood, Rajeshwari was not dependent on daily wages. Her husband had a salaried job in Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu, while Rajeshwari ran a small grocery store in front of her home. Other than Rajeshwari's son who is from an SC family, most of the students at the private school belonged to OBC families. While caste based segregation was prevalent, I found that economically mobile SC families were also likely to use private schools. Rajeshwari told me that she chose to send her son to the private school because "he should learn now." That mothers like Rajeshwari find private schools more reliable for learning is not surprising. The *anganwadi* timings were irregular and unreliable. In many cases, the teachers were not always available on time. In the case of Rajeshwari's center, the *anganwadi* teacher, Gouri, was placed in charge of two centers, making her availability at the *anganwadi* even more unreliable. Rajeshwari chose to enroll her son in the private school, rather than hold Gouri accountable to providing reliable services.

When upwardly mobile families, whether OBC, SC, or the Other caste category (referring to the unmarked upper caste groups) choose to move to private schools, not only does it exacerbate caste and class based segregation, but it also results in deterioration of services provided at the *anganwadi*, for lack of public demand. Poor SC women often expressed relief for the food provided at the *anganwadi*. Women from economically mobile families, both SC and OBC, valued care and education far more. In *anganwadis* that predominantly serviced the poor, *anganwadi*

workers ensured that food was distributed but did not always take similar effort to provide pre-school care. Entitlement to food is a resonant frame and *anganwadi* workers responded appropriately. However, mothers did not always assert their entitlement to care from the state. Entitlement to care was further weakened when upwardly mobile families enrolled their children in private schools rather than hold the workers accountable to providing care. As upwardly mobile working-class families moved to private schools, class based segregation also prevented possible coalitions between the poor and the working class that could have strengthened the radical frame, entitlement to care (Korbi 1980). The weakening of entitlement of care also contributed to the redistribution of care work to the family from the state.

When mothers are unsatisfied with the *anganwadi*, but cannot afford private pre-schools, they usually took personal responsibility for providing child-care, forgoing any possibility of a career. Sangeetha is one such mother from the SC community. She is a certified nurse and has a master's degree in community nursing. Her husband works as a teacher in a nearby college. I met Sangeetha while I was waiting for a bus on my way to another *anganwadi*. When I told Sangeetha about my research, she was quick to share her frustrations about the *anganwadi* with me. She informed me that she doesn't send her children to the *anganwadi*.

> *The reason I don't send my children is because they do not keep the children till 3pm. They don't teach them as pre-schools. The teacher does not come regularly. I don't see her. They don't take the children and teach them either. Parents will leave the kids only if they trust them…If the Anganwadi worked well, it will be super for me. I will be able to work. If they take good care of children, I will leave him there and I can go to work. The helper can keep him till 3 pm and bring him here. And in that time, I could go to a school or something and come back. I am not able to work because it [Anganwadi] is not working. If not, I would have gone to work. That is why, I am thinking of sending him to LKG [private school]. If I enroll him in the convent [private school], I can go to work.*

Sangeetha was very unhappy with the services provided at the *anganwadi,* and especially the teacher, who she says does not provide regular quality services. The absence of a reliable

anganwadi had affected her career, as she felt compelled to stay home to take care of her son. Sangeetha told me that the private school was expensive but she would be able to afford it, because her brother-in-law who lives in Singapore sends them money, a luxury not available to many. Sangeetha's critique of the individual *anganwadi* worker may be appropriate in some cases, but there were systemic concerns that created such instability. I find that state policies and practices in Tamil Nadu tended to devalue and exploit care-labor provided by *anganwadi* workers creating conditions that fostered instability and weakened women's entitlement to care.

4.3.2   Devaluation and Exploitation of Care-work

The emphasis on the work-ethic of individual workers overlooks systemic issues in the ICDS structure. State policies and practices such as ambiguous job descriptions of *Anganwadi* workers, devaluation of care-labor in terms of wages, and utilizing *anganwadi* workers as foot soldiers for miscellaneous state initiatives, contributed to weakening women's entitlement to care. Another concern in Tamil Nadu is the large number of vacancies. Earlier in the chapter, I demonstrated how state policies established entitlement to food as a right. Mothers everywhere were informed of their entitlements regarding food. They knew that their children were eligible for mid-day meals, eggs, and *maavu* and they demanded food with zest from the state. However, similar clarity regarding care did not exist. Why might that be the case? I find that job descriptions of *Anganwadi* workers are in a state of flux, especially since transitioning from the World Bank funded TINP to the ICDS. In the initial years, the World Bank funded TINP and the ICDS program were operating simultaneously. Thus, TINP staff known as Community Nutrition Workers (CNW) focused on supplementary nutrition and growth monitoring, while ICDS staff focused on pre-school care and mid-day meals. The World Bank document lays down the job responsibilities of the CNW in this manner.

In the mornings, they [CNW] ran the supplementary feeding program. In the afternoons, they carried out home visits to families with problem children. Three predetermined days a month were set aside for child weighing, which on the first two days took place at specified locations in the village which were convenient to mothers. The third day was set aside for following up on mothers who had failed to bring their children for weighing. This outreach approach resulted in a high proportion of children being weighed every month--normally 85-90% of children in main villages, although substantial numbers of children in outlying hamlets were not reached (World Bank Completion Report 1990:10).

In contrast, the *anganwadi* teacher recruited as part of the ICDS provides pre-school education for children aged between 3 and 6 years at the *anganwadi* center. Thus, there was a clear demarcation between food and care. The Tamil Nadu ICDS website provides a daily schedule of the *anganwadi* from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm (6 hours). The helper is expected to come earlier to clean the center before the children start coming in. When TINP and ICDS were merged to form the present day ICDS, the job responsibilities of the *anganwadi* teacher of the ICDS and the Community Nutrition Worker (CNW) of TINP were combined into the singular job of the *anganwadi* worker/teacher. According to the federal government's new ICDS policy released in 2012, besides the pre-school care, the *anganwadi* worker continues to be responsible for growth monitoring and distribution of supplementary nutrition.[22] Interestingly, the 2006 completion report of the World Bank notes the unrealistic expectations placed on the *anganwadi* workers:

> …it is almost impossible for one AWC [*Anganwadi* center] worker to carry out both pre-schooling and supplementary feeding, and health/nutrition education/counseling satisfactorily. Consequently, they did not regularly and actively carry out the health and nutrition education/counseling activities and the prerequisite community mobilization (The World Bank 2006:7).

Not only does the state and federal government policy continue to place such unrealistic expectations on the *anganwadi* worker, but the combined position is a part time position, without

---

[22] The federal government's new ICDS policy from 2014 is the Mission mode policy. This policy has been controversial and has been at the receiving end of resistance from the unions.

the benefits available for a full-time worker. Given that the Tamil Nadu state government requires the *anganwadi* to be open from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm (ICDS website) and beyond, treating *anganwadi* workers as part time or voluntary workers is exploitative and devalues their care-labor. As part-time workers, *anganwadi* workers are paid lesser than full time employees even though they are expected to provide services for close to eight hours in a day. While the state commits to providing sustained care for children, state policies do not recognize the care labor provided by *anganwadi* workers adequately. It is not clear how *anganwadi* workers are expected to complete their responsibilities of growth monitoring and nutrition counseling alongside the full-time pre-school care that they provide at the *anganwadi*.

The Tamil Nadu state government has also historically used *anganwadi* workers for implementing other state initiatives such as voter registration drive, family planning policies, and polio vaccination. *Anganwadi* workers are the last leg of the government network in the community. Given that *anganwadi* workers maintain a list of households in the neighborhood, state governments often use the network of workers to implement other miscellaneous initiatives. While *anganwadi* workers were proud of their association with some initiatives (such as polio vaccination drive which was critical to make India polio free), they were not happy with other activities that they were expected to do. Perhaps the most egregious use of the *anganwadi* worker network was deployed in the case of the infamous family planning program in the 1980s which included a forced sterilization program. The program was designed based on the belief that population growth was the biggest hurdle to development. Although the program began by targeting men for vasectomy, the backlash resulted in a change in strategy that targeted women for sterilization surgeries. *Anganwadi* workers who had access to pregnant and lactating women through the ICDS were deployed to recruit women for sterilization surgeries. Activists and

scholars in India have criticized the family planning program as a coercive initiative that controls women's bodies (Tharu and Niranjana 1999). An *anganwadi* worker, Savithri recounts her experience with family planning policies of the state.[23]

> *Savithri: Then, we had almost 88-90 children. Lots of children. We used to cook a lot…But, at that time, it was only family planning. Nothing else was there. We were expected to take care of the school and also take people for family planning.*
>
> *Interviewer: You had to take women to family planning office?*
>
> *Savithri: We had to take women to the office. At that time, it was under the Block Development Office. They [Government officials] would compel us to bring women. Until 1995, it was like that, under that scheme. We have to take care of that [family planning], and the anganwadi. We had to take the women to the hospital, ensure that they are well and canvass for more women. Until those women are alright, we cannot take care of the anganwadi.*

Thus, *anganwadi* workers were used by the government as voluntary workers to implement policies unrelated to the ICDS. Such practices continue in present-day Tamil Nadu, where *anganwadi* workers are utilized for other miscellaneous activities such as voter registration drives. For instance, on one of my visits, I accompanied Gouri, an *anganwadi* worker, as she spent the day distributing voter-id cards in the village. Union leaders spoke about how such miscellaneous work is forced on *anganwadi* workers and takes them away from the care-work that they were hired to do. Elizabeth, the union leader says,

> *Once in a while, the government will announce a population survey. They need the count of children, cows, goats, pigs [laughter]…how many counts do they need? Of all the work responsibilities that I have told you, none of that is our work. But government has made us do all this work…Population survey, medical work, election work…when all that work is placed on us, how can a helper and teacher manage? It is difficult…We have said that we will not do it…But they still threaten us. Our appointment authority is the Collector [head of the district]. He is the head of the election work and he says we have to do the election work.*

---

[23] Savithri also informed me that after a few years, *anganwadi* workers demanded to be taken off the program.

The utilization of the *anganwadi* workers' time for miscellaneous work is testimony to the ambiguity towards care and care-labor in the Tamil Nadu government. On one hand, the government commits full time care for children. Yet, the government uses *anganwadi* workers as cheap labor for other initiatives, leaving them unavailable for providing care.

Perhaps the biggest concern in Tamil Nadu were the large number of unfulfilled vacancies in teacher and helper positions. In an on-going legal case related to corruption in recruitment, the court has stayed the recruitment of teachers and helpers in Tamil Nadu. As a result, several *anganwadi* workers manage two *anganwadis*. When workers manage two centers, they receive some extra wages in the form of in-charge wages. However, with so many workers managing two centers, the quality of services suffer immensely. In the administrative block that I frequented, 12 out of 68 *anganwadi* workers were taking care of two centers (ICDS website). Thus, 30% of the *anganwadis* in the block had a teacher for only half the week. Although the recruitment freeze is not a policy decision, corrupt practices in the state government had led to this eventuality which in turn affects the quality of services provided at the *anganwadi.*

As I will show in the next chapter, with such ambiguous policies regarding care, mothers were often not clear as to what their entitlements were regarding care. The lack of clarity regarding entitlement to care is in sharp contrast to the clarity that citizens had regarding food. Many workers focused on distribution of food and mid-day meals rather than on providing pre-school care. *Anganwadi* workers knew that they would be held accountable for distributing food, but they were also aware that they had more leeway in terms of providing care-work. Therefore, *anganwadi* workers would often come to the center, make sure the mid-day meals and eggs were distributed and then close the center soon after lunch. Even though the government commits to providing day

long childcare for women, the ambiguous state policies regarding care in contrast to that of food, makes entitlement to care far more nebulous than the entitlement to food.

4.4   Discussion

In this chapter, I assessed the role of the state in challenging or reproducing inequalities of gender, caste, and class. While state policies can directly impact inequality, they also play a role by facilitating and weakening people's challenges to inequality. In particular, I compare state support for two specific frames - entitlement to food and entitlement to care. Entitlement to food is a resonant frame while entitlement to care is a radical frame. Resonance and radicalism is defined by whether the frames are culturally supported. Besides the cultural resonance for entitlement to food in Tamil society, I find that state policies have also supported the frame. Entitlement to food is brought to life by state policies in two ways - by ensuring universal access to food and by developing an entitlement culture through specific state policies. To ensure universal access to food, the Tamil Nadu state has also had to subvert World Bank suggestions to utilize the efficiency frame. However, besides availability, state policies in Tamil Nadu have introduced measures to nurture an entitlement culture in the state through petition justice forums and affirmative action policies. Petition justice forums are well designed for individuals and collectives to make claims for food in the form of eggs and *maavu* packets that can be mitigated immediately. These demands are usually not claims for structural changes but make a difference to people's daily lives. If petition justice forums are caste-blind tools which may have disparate impact on different caste groups, affirmative action policies ensure that people from marginalized communities can make claims not only for food but also challenge caste-based discrimination and inequality. Thus, state policies in Tamil Nadu have established entitlement to food as a resonant frame.

In contrast, state policies regarding care have taken a different path. The state has increasingly encouraged privatization of education, including pre-school care. The emergence of private schools has reinforced caste and class based segregation while at the same time transferring care responsibilities back to the women in families that cannot afford private options. Further, the Tamil Nadu state is ambiguous about its role in the provision of care. On one hand, the state commits to providing full day care-service for mothers and on the other, does not value the care-labor provided by the anganwadi workers adequately. By merging the job of the nutrition worker and the anganwadi teacher into one part-time position, the state has placed unrealistic expectations on the anganwadi worker, resulting in deteriorating quality of services at the anganwadi. The variation in state policies in food and care demonstrate how neoliberalism is enmeshed in social relations of gender, caste, and class. While food has been established as a right, entitlement to care, a frame that lies at the intersections of gender, caste, and class continues to be vulnerable.

CHAPTER 5.   FRAMING ENTITLEMENTS, FRAMING INEQUALITY: HOW WOMEN NEGOTIATE INEQUALITY

Devi: We vote. It is because we vote, that politicians come to power. And if we vote, we will ask for our rights…Things happen only if people ask. Who gives anything without people asking? So, we ask. We protest. We stop the bus. We stop the train. For instance, there is no water here. We all lay on the road and stopped the bus. Then they gave us water.
Interviewer: The anganwadi is also a right, isn't it? When something does not work well at the anganwadi, what do you do?
Devi: We fight…If they don't give something, we ask.

I met Devi, a woman from the Scheduled Caste (SC) community, on one of my visits to an *anganwadi* that I frequented often. Although she does not personally use the *anganwadi* (her children are adults), she expects the state to provide services to her community. But she does not take for granted the benevolence of the state. Rather, she believes that public action is a necessary component of a functioning state institution. As she recounts, the community has consistently demanded various rights from the state, such as access to water. In the villages I visited, I saw and heard about protests for water, wages, and against caste-based discrimination in Hindu temples. Most protests in the area were mobilized by established movement organizations. I saw protests for water and wages organized by the local farmer's movements and the communist party. In another village, a major protest against discriminatory practices in a local Hindu temple was organized by the Liberation Panther Party, a political party that emphasizes anti-caste ideals. Thus, contentious politics is a characteristic feature of state society dynamics in Tamil Nadu (McAdam et al. 2003). Contentious politics include formal (protests, boycotts, public hearings, and campaigns) and informal (unplanned gatherings) forms of conflict between various groups and with the state (McAdam et al. 2003). Organized groups draw on organizational resources (financial, networks, knowledge, and experience) to support their mobilization (McCarthy and Zald 1977).

Indeed, not all groups have similar resources and marginalized groups often struggle to mobilize public support for their causes.

Besides resources, organized groups strategically construct frames that make sense of grievances in ways that mobilize people to support those issues (Snow and Benford 1988). Through these frames, movement actors articulate the urgency and severity of a social problem and also attribute accountability on external entities (Benford 1993). However, not all frames are equally effective in mobilizing people. When referring to effectiveness of frames, I am referring to frames that have been successful in motivating action, not necessarily those that have achieved particular policy outcomes. This differentiation between action and movement outcomes is necessary because not all collective action results in favorable outcomes for the movement. Still, the first step of mobilizing people to support a cause is often a difficult one. Of the various factors that determine why collective action occur, frames provide insights into how individuals are motivated to act.

Although contentious politics includes various forms of political action, framing literature has largely focused on organized social movement tactics such as protests and campaigns (Benford 1997; McCammon 2009, 2012a). After all, the protest happened and therefore, can be studied. With substantive and methodological bias (data are more readily available for protests and campaigns), the literature provides rich insights into what makes frames effective in motivating people to participate in protests (McCammon 2009; Snow and Benford 1988). Resonance is seen to be an important feature of effective frames (Snow and Benford 1988). Movements strategically construct resonant frames in ways that align with people's life experiences and cultural environment (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow and Benford 1988).

The predisposition in the literature toward resonant frames has rendered invisible three factors that could enrich our understanding of challenges to inequality. First, the role of radical frames in highlighting structural inequalities. Resonant frames, by definition, align with dominant cultural narratives and are supported by power structures that tend to overlook marginalized voices (Ferree 2003). In contrast, radical frames have the potential to challenge structural inequalities as they highlight concerns that may not yet have cultural approval. For example, one of the major wins for the LGBTQ movement in the US in recent times has been the realization of equal legal right to marriage for gay people. Without negating the historical significance of the accomplishment, one may note that marriage is a culturally resonant frame in the US. Although some activists argue that the disproportionate focus on marriage has rendered invisible radical structural challenges to heteronormative notions of gender and sexuality, those voices are seldom heard in the mainstream reports about the movement (Yep, Lovaas, and Elia 2003). While radical frames may not always be effective in mobilizing wide-spread support for a cause, they play a significant role in bringing attention to structural inequalities and marginalized voices. As Ferree (2003) argues, "Seeking longer-term change in hegemonic ideas is radical, and while it may decrease effectiveness in the short term or in relation to the formal political institutions of the state, it may be the only route to cultural transformations that delegitimate existing power relations." I take this call forward in this project by examining radical frames in-depth and delineating the conditions under which they are facilitated and hindered.

The second factor that I draw attention to, is the analysis of frames as it occurs in contentious situations other than in organized protests. Even though Tamil Nadu has a long history of organized protests, citizens also contest the state in their everyday lives. While the broader social movement culture has created a fertile ground for individual and collective actions of conflict on a daily basis,

we know little about frames used in these situations. Frames deployed in informal conflicts provide insights into how inequality shapes people's daily lives and the possibilities for challenging them. Examining if and how women deploy radical frames in informal everyday interaction with the state will help outline the conditions under which people challenge and adapt to inequality.

Finally, the focus on contentious politics on a daily basis beyond organized protests brings attention to the significant role of the state in shaping the frames used by women. Without the strategic construction of frames as it occurs in organized movements, the framing process is more susceptible to be influenced by state policies. As I will show in this chapter, state policies have the potential to either facilitate or hinder radical frames. In other words, state policies have implications for whether people challenge or adapt to inequality. This leads me to the questions: How do women make sense of varying state policies as they negotiate inequality in their lives? Under what conditions do women deploy radical frames and in the process challenge inequality?

I address these questions by analyzing two social welfare benefits - food and care - because they represent resonant and radical frames for entitlements. In the previous chapter, I showed how state policies established entitlement to food as a resonant frame. On the other hand, neither state policies nor the cultural environment align with women's entitlement to care, making it a radical frame.

By using entitlement to food as a reference resonant frame, I analyze the radical frame, entitlement to care, to contrast the ways in which state-society dynamics influence how people negotiate inequality. Claiming care from the state, is not only a demand for an entitlement but also a challenge to norms that sustain caste and gender relations. Typically, mothers are expected to be primary care-givers in Tamil Nadu. Demanding care from the state is a claim for redistributing unpaid care-work from the family to paid (although lowly pay) care-work provided by the state, a

challenge to gender norms. Similarly, Dalits are often segregated from other caste members in spaces of care-giving because of brahmanical notions of purity. State policies sometimes exacerbated these inequalities and at other times enabled women to challenge them.

I show how variations in state policies shape the frames women deploy and in the process, negotiate inequality. While women consistently asserted their entitlement to food, two different pathways ensued with respect to entitlement to care. Where state policies hindered the radical frame of entitlement to care through privatization policies, women often adapted to inequality, through a mechanism I call *reactive adoption.* By reactive adoption, I refer to how neoliberal policies such as privatization encourage women (from marginally better SES) to adopt frames such as personal responsibility and choice that exacerbate gender, caste, and class inequality. In contrast, some state policies that encourage collectives among women, facilitated the radical frame, entitlement to care, through a mechanism I call *frame appropriation. Frame appropriation* occurs when women use dominant frames in state policies to claim entitlements and challenge mainstream narratives that justify gender and caste inequality. Examining radical frames is critical to social change projects, especially in contexts where movement organizations do not highlight them. Tamil Nadu has a vibrant social movement culture. Yet, it is not often that women's entitlement to care was asserted by those movements. I use entitlement to food as a reference resonant frame that was supported by state policies and established as a right in Tamil society.

5.1   Entitlement to Food: Resonant Frame

Entitlement to food is a resonant frame in the villages I visited. In the previous chapter, I discussed how historical state policies in Tamil Nadu such as mid-day meals, universal distribution of subsidized food, and the Petition Justice Forums established food as an entitlement. The influence of these state policies was visible at the *anganwadi* as well. Below, I reproduce from my

field-notes, an example of an interaction with Kamala, a mother from the SC (Scheduled Caste) community, who asserts her entitlement to food at the *anganwadi*.

> *The anganwadi worker Gouri and I were returning to the childcare center after visiting some houses, when Kamala, a mother, approached us in anger.*
> *She raised her voice at Gouri to ask,* **"Why is the helper not giving me maavu?**[24] **If you don't give me maavu, I will send a petition to the Collector and I will create a ruckus.**[25] *The helper also yells at my son. If you take care of children, you should be affectionate. If she yells at my son, he will be scared and sad. He will be crushed."*
> *I was taken aback at this sudden interaction, but Gouri seemed calm.*
> *In an even voice, she replied, choosing to deal with the maavu issue, rather than the 'yelling' helper, "Your son is not eligible to receive the maavu packet. He is more than three years old."*
> *Kamala was quick to answer, "Who said that? I need the maavu packet."*
> *Gouri replied, calmly again, "You are not eligible. Who said you are eligible?"*
> *Kamala replied, "I am saying it."*
> *Gouri decided to negotiate with Kamala but without losing ground. "You are saying that you want maavu. But look at your child. He is not even wearing proper clothes. Did we not give you uniform? Then why is he roaming about like this? Let me tell you this. Why don't you send your child regularly to the center and I will see whether I can find any extra packets to give you; at least one packet. But you cannot get it for long. You are not eligible."*
> *A much calmer Kamala responded, "Ok. From Monday, I will send my child to the anganwadi and you can give me the maavu."* [Field notes]

In the scenario above, Kamala, a mother, claims food as an entitlement. She asserts that she is eligible to receive a packet of nutritious flour which most people refer to as *maavu* (flour) or *sathu maavu* (nutritious flour) packet. As per the official policy, families are eligible to receive the equivalent of two *maavu* packets each month from the time the mother is pregnant until the child is three years old. After reaching the age of three, the child is expected to come to the center and avail of hot cooked meals and snacks at the center in the morning. Besides food and nutrition, the *anganwadi* center also offers pre-school education which encompasses elements of care, pre-

---

[24] *Maavu* (flour) refers to a packet of nutritious flour which is distributed at the *anganwadi*. Some people also refer to the packet as *sathu maavu* (nutritious flour) packet.
[25] Collector is the head of the bureaucracy at the district level. India has 29 states. A district (similar to a county) is an administrative unit of the state and is made up of several blocks, and a block comprises several villages.

school education, and play for children of ages, 3 to 5 years. In an interview, Kamala told me that her child is older than three. Thus, Kamala's child was not eligible to receive the *maavu* packet. Although Gouri tries to bring up the technical issue of eligibility based on age, it was evident to both women that such rules were seldom applied in the actual implementation of the policy. Regardless of the policy, Kamala felt entitled to the food and made that known to Gouri. In the *anganwadis* that I visited, neither age nor geographical considerations were used to deny children food. Even though every *anganwadi* was supposed to service children from a specific area and for certain ages, *anganwadi* workers seldom prevented 'out of area' children from eating at the center or denied *maavu* because of eligibility reasons. Kamala's claim was not peculiar. People felt entitled to food and claimed it.

Kamala's entitlement to food was further strengthened by the culture of "petitioning" put in place through Petition Justice Forums in Tamil Nadu, described in the previous chapter. Petitions are central to state society dynamics in Tamil Nadu. *Anganwadi* workers and bureaucrats were anxious that people may send complaint petitions about them. I heard several examples of investigations and inquiries that were put in place in response to petitions. In the previous chapter, I described how petitioning was celebrated through Petition Justice Forums. For Kamala, petitioning is not a long drawn out formal process, but an organic system of accountability and claims-making that she could use to claim her entitlement to food.

Other mothers also told me that they made claims for food not only from the *anganwadi*, but also from the local administration. While I was interested in women's entitlement to food, the act of claims-making was often a family affair. For instance, Lakshmi, another mother from the SC community, told me about the process of claiming *maavu* packets from the *anganwadi*,

Lakshmi: If something does not work well, we will tell the anganwadi teacher. We will tell her that something has not been delivered and that it should be delivered. Then they will even bring it at home. If not, we will go to the block office [government administrative office] and tell the officers there.

Interviewer: Have you asked at the block office?[26]

Lakshmi: My father-in-law has complained about it. They did not give us sathu maavu for two months. So, my father-in-law went to the block office and said that the sathu maavu was not delivered. They asked the teacher to deliver it home.

Interviewer: He went to the office? And they gave it immediately?

Lakshmi: Yes, they delivered it at home.

The sense of entitlement to the *maavu* packet visible in these interviews is not new among the people I met. The state provision of food for children began in Tamil Nadu as early as the 1950s, and ever since, the program has only expanded.[27] The largest institutionalization of mid-day feeding program began in 1982 through the Noon Meals Program (NMP), with the promise that no child will be hungry. In the nineties, with growing recognition that hunger precedes birth, pregnant women were also made eligible for noon meals. These food policies are part of an electoral strategy that political parties used to create a viable political constituency consisting of women from poor and marginalized caste communities (Subramanian 1999). In a competitive electoral political environment, none of the political parties could afford to lose the support of women and the food policies had come to stay. That poor women were an important political constituency is evident both in Lakshmi and Kamala's claims and in Devi's assertion, at the beginning of this chapter. That Lakshmi, Kamala, and Devi are all women from poor SC communities who value food as an entitlement further validates state support for food rights.

---

[26] Block office is a subunit of the development bureaucracy at the block level.
[27] Some scholars document other forms of food distribution as early as 1920s in Tamil Nadu.

Entitlement to food is a resonant frame that women consistently adopted in their individual and collective interactions with the state.

5.2 Entitlement to Care: Radical Frame

Earlier, I referred to Kamala's claim to suggest that women feel entitled to food. However, in the same situation, Kamala makes a complaint about the helper, who she says 'yells' at her child. Kamala's child is from the Scheduled Caste (SC) community. The helper at Gouri's *anganwadi* is from the OBC (Other Backward Class) community, a caste category that is more privileged than the SC community. Many SC mothers in the neighborhood spoke to me about the yelling helper. From my interaction with the helper, it was evident to me, as much as it was to the SC residents, that the OBC helper tended to yell at SC children. Kamala was able to claim her entitlement to food but was not able to resolve her rightful entitlement to care without caste discrimination.

Many mothers in Kamala's neighborhood, chose not to send their children to the *anganwadi* because they wanted to protect their children from the helper's caste based discrimination. For example, in Kamala's neighborhood, a mother told me:

> *How should a helper behave with a child? It depends on the behavior of the helper whether a child will go to school. If there is an anganwadi in a village, there will be a teacher and a helper. The teacher in this anganwadi, whatever she is supposed to do, she does it. But then, the helper also has to take good care of the children. She should not leave the children here and there. Most importantly, she should not beat the children. You know what some helpers do? They beat and yell at children so harshly that the child does not want to go the next day. Our children are scared. They are afraid to go to the anganwadi. And they stay at home.*

In the conflict with Kamala described earlier, Gouri engages with Kamala's entitlement to care in two ways. One, she provides an extra *maavu* packet to Kamala than deal with the sensitive issue of caste. Two, she blames Kamala for being a bad mother. Gouri says, "Y*ou are saying that you want maavu. But look at your child. He is not even wearing proper clothes. Did we not give*

you uniform? Then why is he roaming about like this?" Inherent to this observation about the child

is the suggestion that Kamala does not take good care of the child. In this negotiation about care,

not only does Gouri ignore the claim regarding caste-based discrimination, but also reaffirms the

dominant cultural narrative that the mother is the primary care-giver, and not the state. Thus,

compared to entitlement to food, entitlement to care is a vulnerable and radical frame that can be

weakened by cultural norms regarding caste and gender.

Irrespective of whether women used the entitlement frame, I found that most women

valued state provision of care, both for themselves and for their children. Mothers felt emotionally

'free' when the cooking and feeding duty that they performed at home, was redistributed to the

state, without compromising on quality. Caring for children meant providing undivided attention

to ensure their safety and education, a luxury for poor, working class mothers. Here is what a

mother had to say when I asked her, why the village needed an *anganwadi.*

> *It is required because it means our children can be safe. It means food. How do I*
> *say…. their general knowledge will increase. We cannot teach at home. By the*
> *time we are done with the work at the forest, housework, other children, and*
> *lunch, it will be at least 8pm. After feeding our children, we may eat at 10 pm.*
> *After that, we will be sleepy. How are we going to take care of our children? They*
> *will also sleep. So…that is difficult. Since the anganwadi is there, there is no*
> *problem. I can drop them here and go. I will do some work and I can be confident*
> *that my children will eat something. I can also cook a little late at home when it is*
> *convenient for me.*

Redistribution of care-work from the family to the state, also meant the redistribution of the

mothers' attention and time from child-care. For many poor mothers, their homes were not the

safest place for their children. Given that running water-taps is a rarity in this area, poor women

often stored water in big tanks in their homes, a safety hazard for children. Child-proofing is a

luxury that is not available to them. Thus, taking care of children at home, meant providing

undivided attention during the day, which mothers were happy to redistribute to the state.

Redistribution of care-work also referred to the time that the *anganwadi* would be operational. The Tamil Nadu ICDS website has a schedule where-in the *anganwadi* is operational from 9:30 am in the morning till 3:30 pm in the evening. Helpers told me that they had to come earlier. However, several mothers mentioned that the *anganwadi* was seldom open beyond lunch time. As one mother told me,

> *The helper should take the children at 9:30 am and bring them back at 4pm. This is the time that we work. We cannot use that time to take care of the children. Children should come after 4 pm. If they take the children at 9:30 am and bring them back at 4pm, that would be fine.* ***They can do that, right? Isn't that the regulation?***

In the case of food, mothers were clear about their entitlements. In the case of care, they were unsure and often checked with me what the *anganwadi* timings were. Although mothers identified that an operational *anganwadi* would assure them the time to do other work and rest, they did not feel entitled to claim care-work from the state. Mothers expressed their desire to have the *anganwadi* operational through the day. Yet, women's entitlement to care did not take the same strength as their entitlement to food. Why would that be the case?

Unlike entitlement to food, entitlement to care is a radical frame, which does not align with the dominant cultural environment. Further, state policies were not consistent in how they supported entitlement to care. My analysis shows that the ambiguity in state policies created conditions for people to engage in the divergent mechanisms of *reactive adoption* and *frame appropriation* in the context of the radical frame, entitlement to care. Figure 3 represents my analysis of how state policies and social relations shape the divergent pathways for radical frames. When neoliberal policies devalue care-work and encourage privatization, they create conditions for reactive adoption where women from marginally better SES adapt to inequality. In contrast, when state policies create collectives of women, they engage in frame appropriation, and in the process

challenge inequality. Besides state policies, radical frames are also vulnerable because they exist in a cultural environment of structural inequalities that do not support them. Thus, social relations of gender, caste, and class also influence how these pathways emerge. As I show, women from economically mobile groups (irrespective of their caste) would often engage in reactive adoption.
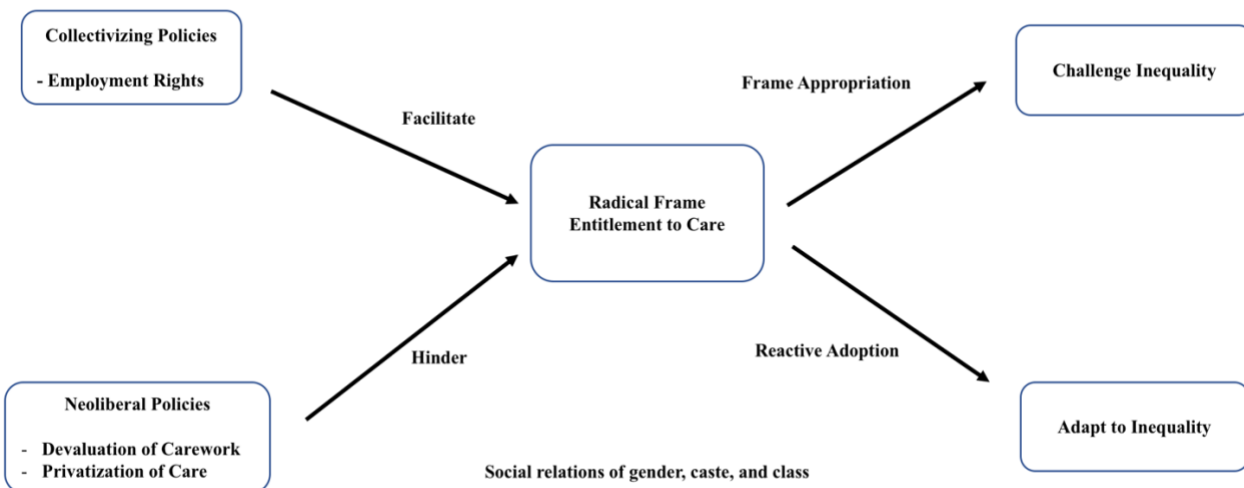
Figure 5.1: How Dynamics of State Policies and Social Relations Influence Frames

5.3   Neoliberal Policies and Reactive Adoption:

State policies regarding the provision of care-work at the *anganwadi* are ambiguous at best. Mothers were seldom sure of their entitlements regarding care from the state. Not only do these ambiguous policies undermine mothers' entitlements but they also devalue the care-work provided by *anganwadi* workers. Further, increasing privatization of pre-school services enabled the redistribution of care-work from the family to the market, encouraging the frame, personal responsibility and choice, rather than entitlement to care.

5.3.1   Devaluation of Carework

In the previous chapter, I discussed how care-work was devalued and exploited in Tamil Nadu ICDS. Ambiguous care policies regarding work timings, job responsibilities, and vacancies often resulted in weakening of the entitlement frame among mothers. Although the Tamil Nadu website suggested a work schedule from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm, the state policies and practices tended to be ambiguous in how care-work was treated. *Anganwadi* workers were treated as part-time workers (with lesser benefits) even though they were expected to provide more than six hours of work per day.

As an *anganwadi* union leader told me,

> *The government says our work time is from 8:30 am in the morning to 4 pm in the evening. How can this be part time work? After doing all this work and with this timing, is it fair to call us part time workers? We should be full time workers with full time salary. By calling us part time workers, the government is fooling us and the people.*

Unlike the provision of food which people claimed as an entitlement, claiming time has been more difficult. In the case of food, mothers knew that they were entitled to *maavu* packet and eggs and they claimed it with zeal. A similar clarity did not exist with respect to care. Mothers often asked me what the official timing of the *anganwadi* was. Mothers assumed that the timings followed by the workers were the prescribed timings and recommended extending the services. For instance, a mother told me,

> *The children go there at 10 am and they are back by noon. Aren't they supposed to keep them till 3pm? They should at least keep the children till 2 pm.*

From their end, *anganwadi* workers argued that care-work was devalued and that they were discriminated against for being women. Several workers compared their work to other part-time jobs in the government that were similarly paid, but required much lesser time commitments, and

were often done by men. An *anganwadi* union leader raised the issue of gender wage gap that many other *anganwadi* workers told me about:

> *The organizer of nutritional meal program in the schools are usually men. They need to run the family. This salary is not enough for them. But our people point out that we get the same salary as them even though anganwadi workers do more work. Our work is not the same. Compared to those working in the nutritional meal program, I am a teacher. We teach, we manage registers, and we feed the children. We should be paid more. We take care of medical work. They should pay us for that. They [nutritional meal workers] come at 10 am and leave at 2 pm. Our work time is from morning 8:30 to evening 4pm. How can this be part time work? After doing all this work, and with this timing, is it fair to call us part time workers? The government is fooling us and the people. We should get full time salary. We should get the same amount that government employees get. We should get all the benefits just as government employees.*

Moreover, various government agencies often required *anganwadi* workers to perform different jobs - such as voter registration or vaccine campaigns, besides their care-work. These contradictions resulted in fuzzy time commitments at the *anganwadi*. On one hand, *anganwadi* workers seldom kept time commitments at the *anganwadi*. At other times, they cared for children even beyond the stipulated time. For example, Amala, an *anganwadi* teacher told me how the helper cared for a child till 6 pm in her home because the child's mother worked in the city.

Yet another issue was the large number of vacancies in the teacher and helper positions in several centers.[28] I have referred to these vacancies in the previous chapter. *Anganwadi* workers who take care of two centers were unable to keep both centers open for the entire week. For example, Gouri, the *anganwadi* teacher, was in-charge of two centers and she had to distribute her work-week between them. In the second center, the helper position was also vacant. Therefore, on days that Gouri went to the first center, the second center was shut down and unavailable for service. As a mother from the second center told me,

---

[28] The huge number of vacancies were not a resource issue but rather an outcome of a court case which had stopped all recruitments because of allegations of corruption in the recruitment process. Most workers implied that they had to pay a bribe to get a job.

Earlier there was a teacher and a helper. Even if the teacher was late, the helper would be at the center at 8 am and she would make food for the kids. That doesn't happen today. There is no teacher and no helper… There will be shortcomings.

While mothers were aware that Gouri was in charge of both centers, they did not know which days or times Gouri was available. Vacancies felt like an issue outside their purview of control, and mothers felt uncertain about their entitlements regarding care. Thus, the state's ambiguous treatment of care-work has implications for how care-work is distributed and how people felt entitled to care. Further, state policies that devalued care-work contributed to weakening the radical frame, entitlement to care.

5.3.2   Privatization of Care

State policies weakened entitlement to care by encouraging privatization of care as well. The neoliberal restructuring of welfare in Tamil Nadu has enabled a gendered redistribution of care between the state, market, and family. Care-work has been increasingly redistributed from the state to the market in Tamil Nadu. There has been a surge of private schools for young children in Tamil Nadu, a clear indication of the state government's nod towards market provision for care.

Privatization of care has several implications. First, increasing privatization of care services creates conditions under which women adopt neoliberal frames such as personal responsibility and choice, rather than hold the state accountable to providing care, a mechanism I call *reactive adoption*. Such change in frames from entitlement to personal responsibility was prevalent more among women from marginally better socioeconomic backgrounds, who also had higher aspirations for their children. While the poorest families continue to utilize the services of the *anganwadi*, economically mobile families would often take loans to send their children to private schools.

The effect of privatization was very visible when I went to interview Daisy, a mother of two, a son and a daughter. The *anganwadi* where I met Daisy was newly built, large, had beautiful flooring, many toys, and was naturally lit. The teacher at the *anganwadi* told me that the building was big enough that the village often used it to conduct large village meetings. Yet, on the day I visited the *anganwadi*, only Daisy and her daughter were there. Daisy's daughter was also not very regular at the *anganwadi*. Daisy had come that day only because the teacher had requested her to come, for my visit. When I asked Daisy why her son doesn't come to the *anganwadi*, she told me about her decision to send her son to the private school or as she calls it, 'convent' school.

> *Daisy: My son was coming to the anganwadi. My son is tall, talks well, and very clever. If he was taught well at the anganwadi, he would have learnt a lot. Even at that time, they did not teach much, but he learnt to interact with people here. He had a friend who was getting enrolled at the convent and many more people in our area had enrolled their children at the convent school. So, we also enrolled him there. He has been going there for two years. But I did not want to send him there.*
> *Interviewer: You did not want to send him there?*
>
> *Daisy: No. We are losing a lot of money. Money is difficult. We are taking loans and paying interest. We don't have very high income. Why should we struggle so much and send him there? His father says, "How will we see change in just one year? Let's educate him in the convent school till the 5th grade and then we will see the difference" I agreed and he is there.*
>
> *Interviewer: How do you feel now?*
>
> *Daisy: It is good. We have enrolled him there. Let him study…that's all. His father says, "They are our children. We are half-educated, at least let our children be educated well."*

The above quote from Daisy, a mother from an OBC community, highlights how people respond to privatization. Daisy and her husband aspire for better education for their children. Private schools in the area provide regular services (without the pressure of vacancies or ambiguous time commitments mentioned earlier) and more importantly, market themselves as schools where children are taught English. Therefore, many parents like Daisy take loans to afford

private care and education, even though the *anganwadi* provides free care and food. With increasing availability of private schools, mothers like Daisy engage in reactive adoption as they use the frame of personal responsibility rather than the entitlement frame to interpret their access to care.

Even though mothers like Daisy choose to take loans to send their children to private schools, it does take a toll on them. The financial burden and ambivalence about using private schools was most evident in another *anganwadi* that serviced mostly mothers from SC community. Kala, the *anganwadi* teacher told me about how mothers enrolled their children in the private school, reducing her numbers at the *anganwadi,* but later returned to be the *anganwadi.*

> *Kala: It happened suddenly…as neighbors began to enroll the kids in private schools, everyone started enrolling all the kids. When they moved, I felt sad and I reduced the number of children in my anganwadi list. We should not account for the kids that go to the private school, right? So I reduced the number. Now, those who sent the kids to the private school are sending their children back here.*
>
> *Interviewer: Why?*
>
> *Kala: Those who took them to the convent [private school] last year have enrolled their kids to the government school for 1st grade. The remaining children, the two children who went to the convent this year, they said they don't want to go there So they brought them back to the anganwadi.*
>
> *Interviewer: Now they are coming here?*
>
> *Kala: [laughter] They are coming here.*
>
> *Interviewer: Are people here wealthy enough to send their kids to the convent school?*
>
> *Kala: Now they are better. Earlier, it was not like this. They won't go anywhere. Many children would come to the anganwadi. They would expect everything from the government. Now, they have a little more money and they aspire to have similar things as everyone else. "Our children should study in English convent". They aspire for that and will enroll their kids there even if it means they have to take loans. They went to private schools first but now they send their kids to government school only. Only two children are going to the private school. Now, even the van from the private school does not come here because all the children*

have gone to the government school.

Thus, even though families aspire to send their children to private schools, and may even take loans to access those schools, they have not been able to keep up. Since I did not interview the particular mothers whose children moved back, I cannot say for sure what inspired their return. But it is clear that poor families are not always able to sustain the expenses related to private schools. This is a phenomenon prevalent all over Tamil Nadu, as noted by the state level union leader, Elizabeth.

> *We should stop private schools. We should discourage people from utilizing them. Parents think, for one or two years, let my child go to an English medium school; after that they can go to Tamil medium schools. In those one or two years, instead of giving up all their hard-earned money to private entities, they could have saved that money and used it for their child's future. People do not have the financial ability to educate their children entirely in private schools. There is price increase on one side. Consumption expenses on another side. It is impossible for parents to educate their children from kindergarten to 12th grade in private schools…But as far as government is concerned, they want to privatize education. If there are four private schools in each street, how can we run the anganwadi well?*

Elizabeth's quote also highlights a particular strand of neoliberalism prevalent in Tamil Nadu. One of the main features of neoliberalism, as we typically understand, is the withdrawal of the state. In Tamil Nadu, it is difficult to argue that the state has withdrawn from providing welfare. After all, Tamil Nadu is considered to be the welfare capital of India, known for its populism. However, in the case of care and education, instead of a retreating state, we see a state that contributes to the decline of the public system. The decline of the public services occurs primarily by weakening people's sense of entitlement. This was the case in Daisy's *anganwadi*. Even though the *anganwadi* was well-constructed and had many toys, most children in the neighborhood had enrolled in the local private school. Consequently, there was no collective demand from the public

on the *anganwadi* workers and the quality of services had deteriorated. When I asked Daisy why she doesn't use the *anganwadi*, she responded this way:

> *Interviewer: Why don't people send their children to the palvaadi?*
> *Daisy: If the teacher and the cook was available[29] and if they were teaching lessons, and if there were 10 children, people would send their children. People will see that lessons are being taught and they will send their children. Now, it is not like that. They just see an empty center. There is only food and no learning. It is only food. So, you feel a little apathetic about bringing children just for the food.*

For Daisy, food is no longer an incentive. With her household income, she feels confident that she can feed her children. However, she struggles to provide her children with the care and education that she believes they deserve. Thus, Daisy's own social position also mattered, in terms of whether she uses the entitlement frame or the personal responsibility frame.

5.3.3   Adapting to Inequality: Gender and Caste

Privatization of care contributes to increasing inequality in the household and in the community. Families like Daisy's, are now taking loans so that their children can access private pre-school education even though government services are available for free. With decreasing enrollment, the quality of services at the government *anganwadi* has deteriorated. People do not want to send their children to an empty *anganwadi*, but at the same time, not all families can afford private schools. Thus, they are deprived of both private and public options for care. Such disparities occur not only across households, but also within households. Daisy herself told me that she could not afford to send both her children to the private school. Her daughter doesn't attend the *anganwadi* or the private school at the moment. Going forward, Daisy plans to send her daughter

---

[29] The teacher in this center was also in charge of another center and therefore was not available regularly at this center.

to the government school for primary education while she hopes that her son will continue in private school. In Daisy's words,

> Interviewer: Will you enroll your daughter in the convent?
> Daisy: We are not thinking of sending her. It will be too much if we have to pay for both. We will send her to the anganwadi till she is five. That is what my husband is saying. I don't know what we will do at that time. If my husband thinks he has money, he may enroll her in the private school.

Although Daisy says she plans to use the *anganwadi* till her daughter is five, that was not happening. Most days, Daisy's daughter stayed home and did not attend the *anganwadi*. Besides impeding the child's access to pre-school care and education, the lack of options for care had also successfully transferred care-work back to the family. Instead of the *anganwadi* workers, Daisy was now providing full time care for her daughter. Thus, as privatization encouraged reactive adoption, it also resulted in exacerbating gender and class inequality as families get entrenched in debt and unpaid care-work gets redistributed to women in the family.

Finally, state policies that encourage private schools also allowed members of privileged class and caste communities to practice segregation through the rhetoric of choice. I have referred to Gouri, an *anganwadi* teacher earlier in this chapter. Most of the children I met at Gouri's *anganwadi* belonged to the SC community, even though her list included children from OBC communities as well. Soon, I would learn that most of the OBC children and some SC families (those who could afford private school fees) in the area had enrolled their children in the private school. Not only were the OBC families segregating themselves from SC families, but they were also not willing to provide space for the *anganwadi*. After moving out of a dilapidated building, Gouri was in search of a center which would be accessible to SC children. But she told me that OBC families were unwilling to rent out their homes for the *anganwadi,* which they knew would predominantly service SC children.

Interviewer: For your new building, did you have difficulty finding a building for rent due to caste issues?
Gouri: Yes. Yes. Some people discriminate based on caste. They think, why should I give place for SC children? If SC children spit and urinate, OBC people will say, "It will not work out." They will only say that much and you have to understand. They don't want any contact with SC people. This is my job. I need this because I am doing this work. They don't need it and they can remain like that. If I say this aloud, there will be trouble in the village. If I say that OBC people did not give me place because they discriminate against SC people, SC people will fight. We should not say all that. I just say, there is no place. That's all.

In this case, private schools have enabled class and caste-based segregation in the village. Because the *anganwadi* was predominantly servicing SC children, Gouri found it difficult even to rent a place, given that OBC families own most of the homes.

Segregation through privatization also contributes to weakening entitlements. Aspiration for better education and care often motivate economically mobile families to choose private options. However, those aspirations when manifested as demands on the state, could ensure better services for all people, including SC and OBC families. People's social positions matter in how and what demands they make from the state. For poor families, especially from SC communities, state provision of food was critical. While poor families also desired care and education for their children, they asserted their entitlement to food far more than their entitlement to care. For economically mobile OBC families who did not feel incentivized by state provided food, high quality care and pre-school education mattered more. Therefore, where private schools were available, they enrolled their children in those schools, weakening the public system. Although the ICDS was not designed to be a targeted service, with the emergence of private schools, the *anganwadis* are mostly servicing poor children from SC communities. Segregated services often do not reduce inequality (Korpi and Palme 1998). Rather, they create coalitions between the middle class and the working class against the poor, who may benefit the most from welfare (Korpi

and Palme 1998). At the *anganwadi*, segregated services impede a concerted collective voice between the working class and the poor which limits the kind of demands that are made from the state. While poor families demand food, middle class families tend to demand high quality care and education. Demands on the state from families with higher aspirations may benefit both the poor and the working class and challenge caste-based segregation.

In segregated neighborhoods where OBC *anganwadi* workers serviced OBC children, families maintained close relationships with the *anganwadi* teachers. For example, a mother in an OBC neighborhood told me,

> *The teacher here is very good…There is no helper. So, sometimes we help out...We are loyal to her. It has been 35 years since she has come to work. She has been working here since then, and we are all together. If she needs something, she will tell us, and we will help out. Now there are English convent schools. But we still don't feel like enrolling our children there. My brother in law's children, we did not take them to the convent school. We enrolled them in the anganwadi.*

This mother was very happy with the services at the *anganwadi*. Even though the option of the private English school was available, her family had chosen to use the *anganwadi*. It was evident that the community maintained a close relationship with the teacher. The *anganwadi* teacher at this particular center was one of the most enthusiastic *anganwadi* workers I had met. Although she did not have a helper, she was invested in educating the children as much as she cared about feeding them. Her center was small, but filled with charts, tables, and pictures that she had either purchased or drawn herself. She spoke enthusiastically about the children in her center and was eager to show-case their knowledge/talent to me. It was evident that the children at her *anganwadi* were learning even as they enjoyed the clean, open, and free space. Given how enthusiastic and capable the teacher was, I cannot say that the cooperation and camaraderie

between mothers and the teacher was based entirely on caste. But, sharing a caste certainly made it easier.

Caste based segregation is a cultural reality in Tamil Nadu. Privatization did not create the caste structure, but it has exacerbated caste-based segregation in the areas I visited. Often, mothers used the frame of choice to segregate their children. Vijaya's *anganwadi* is located in an SC neighborhood and OBC families do not send their children to the center. Vijaya describes to me how OBC families utilized the 'choice' frame to justify caste-based segregation.

> *We even tell the families that the helper will bring the kids. But they won't leave them, because the school is in this area [SC neighborhood]. People around will gossip that their child is going to an SC area to study.• There are private schools nearby. In this area itself, there are two private schools. Children from this street also go there. That is each parent's wish. In our office, they say we should persuade them to come here…We cannot force them. It is their wish. Even this year, two people told me they are going to send their kids to the private school. I asked them, why are you sending them there? We are here and it is free till the child is 5 years. We tried telling them. But they say, "No teacher. I have one child and I want to send him there."*

Thus, privatization weakens the sense of entitlement from the state, and encourages mothers to use the choice frame, which exacerbates caste based segregation and inequality, yet another manifestation of *reactive adoption*. While many state policies weaken the entitlement to care frame, there were some conditions under which state policies encouraged frame appropriation where by the entitlement to care frame was strengthened.

5.4   Collectivizing Policies and Frame Appropriation: Challenges to Inequality

As a radical frame, I made the case that entitlement to care is a vulnerable frame that is easily hindered. State policies such as privatization often weaken women's entitlement to care. But, under some conditions, I found that some state policies had a collectivizing effect in the community and contributed to strengthening women's entitlement to care. In the context of these

policies, women often appropriated those policies to claim their entitlements and in the process, challenge inequality, what I refer to as *frame appropriation*.

Most of my interviews with *anganwadi* workers happened at the center. To interview mothers, I would often walk into the neighborhood to their homes. However, on some days, I would arrive at the village hoping to interview mothers, only to be informed that most of the mothers in the area were at 100 day's work. I heard this terminology very often from *anganwadi* workers who felt accountable to keeping the *anganwadi* open on the days mothers were at 100 days work. 100 days work is the informal name given to the 2005 legislation titled, The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (MNREGA hereafter). I realized that workers and mothers were constantly referring to this seemingly unrelated policy even though I was asking them about care.

MNREGA is a national level legislation in India which aims "to provide for the enhancement of livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work" (MNREGA 2005). The work itself is selected, planned, and implemented by the local government in collaboration with the development bureaucracy. Projects often include local infrastructural projects that benefit the community. Work is often allocated to a group of workers registered under MNREGA. The MNREGA mandates that men and women be provided equal wages. The participation of women in MNREGA is variable across states, but in Tamil Nadu, 85% of beneficiaries are women (Tamil Nadu MNREGA).

As work was allocated to a group in the neighborhood, the policy contributed to creating collectives during 100 days work. In the case of Tamil Nadu, most of those collectives comprised

of women. Although the MNREGA policy mandates that child-care must be provided at the site of work (when there are more than five young children), it does not provide any guidance regarding the format of childcare. For mothers, the *anganwadi* was a much more reliable source of childcare, which they began to demand together. Thus, the provision of collective work through MNREGA, had created a collective claim for care. Thus, even though entitlement to care is a radical and vulnerable frame, a state policy that collectivized women allowed women to strengthen the entitlement frame.

Several teachers mentioned that MNREGA created a demand for opening the center on time, making it difficult for workers to exploit fuzzy policies. Here is how Kala, an *anganwadi* worker explained how NREGA influenced mothers' demand for extended childcare services at the *anganwadi*. In Tamil Nadu, most people refer to the NREGA as 100 days' work.

> *On the days that they have 100 days work, the mothers will come a little early. If we are a little late, it will be a problem. If their work for that week is a little far away, they will come with their children at 9 am or 9:15am, because they must run to work. In that case, we must be here by 8:30am. Usually the helper comes here by 9am. I may come a little late…around 9:30am or so. If that happens, they will say something. They will tell me, "Come fast teacher, only if you come, can we leave the kids and go." [Kala laughs]. So, during 100 days work, every day, we also have to come at that time. If we have any other work, it becomes a little difficult. They will talk. They will say, "What is this, teacher? Why are you coming like this? We have to go far, teacher." The next day, no matter how much work we have, we will come on time. We will come running. Even my own children will not be dressed. I will feel a little bad. We will come running. They will expect that. But on other days, the kids will trickle in slowly one by one even till 11am. That is the time I talk back. "When you have work, you push me. So, for my work, you should bring the children on time. If it is 10 am, bring them at 10 am. If it is 9:30am, bring them at that time." But if they have 100 days work, they will bring the kids at the correct time and stand here waiting for me.*

In this case, Kala feels pressured to keep the center open from 9 am till the time mothers returned from work. Not just workers, mother also told me that they used the *anganwadi* on days that they went to 100 days work.

Interviewer: Do you go for work?
Mother: I go for 100 days work only. I don't go for other things. I don't go for
agricultural work. For 100 days work, I can leave the child at the anganwadi.
They will keep the children till 3pm. By that time, I will come back. I will send
them in the morning, and by 3pm I will come to pick the kids.

Thus, mothers required the *anganwadi* to be open from morning until the time they came back

from work. When women are entitled to state provided paid work, the entitlement to care is almost

a twin demand. However, the frame was facilitated by a policy that allotted work to a collective.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the dominant cultural narrative in Tamil Nadu is that

mothers are the primary care-givers. Therefore, to demand care-work from the state is a radical

frame and a challenge to gender inequality. While in most cases, women adapted to inequality, in

some cases, women appropriated state policies, such as MNREGA, to strengthen the collective

action frame of 'entitlement to care', a case of frame appropriation. Frame appropriation refers to

how women make dominant narratives their own to amplify their radical frames, in this case,

entitlement to care.

How MNREGA shaped entitlement to care frames was even more evident as I spoke to

mothers from villages that did not have access to MNREGA. Since MNREGA was a rural

employment policy, those villages that were categorized as urban did not have access to MNREGA.

Poor women in villages without MNREGA, felt insecure about their livelihoods. But the lack of

work influenced their sense of entitlement of care from the state. Below, a grandmother describes

how the absence of work shaped their frames regarding care.

People don't bring their kids to the anganwadi because the building is far away.
They feel lazy. Many children used to come here. Around 10 children used to
come. Now, they feel a little lazy. They are all sleeping at home because there is
no work. If there was work in the field, they would go for that. Here, there is
nothing like 100 days work, or even a sewing machine. They do not have
anything. They don't have any benefits here…If they give work, we will have some
money for expenses. Now, we do not have any income.

Although MNREGA was not directly related to the ICDS, many mothers and workers referred to the policy in relation to child-care. In contrast to places where MNREGA was available, here, women pointed to how the absence of work shaped their frames. Thus, they were not able to appropriate the policy to strengthen their entitlement to care.

Theoretically, I use the radical frame, entitlement to care, to demonstrate the conditions under which women engage in frame appropriation and reactive adoption. A frame is resonant when it is credible, aligns with the cultural environment and corresponds to the master frame of the socio-political environment (Snow and Benford 1988). In contrast, a radical frame does not align with the dominant culture. However, neither the cultural environment nor the daily experiences of people are static. Therefore, state policies have the potential to foster new directions and strengthen new frames. In this case, the provision of state provided employment for a collective of women, helped them strengthen the radical frame, entitlement to care. However, other state policies that devalued care-work and encouraged privatization resulted in the weakening of radical entitlement frames.

5.5   Discussion

In this chapter, I discerned two central frames – 'entitlement to food' and 'entitlement to care' – from the data. 'Entitlement to food' is a resonant frame that aligns with the dominant culture and was strengthened by state policies in Tamil Nadu. 'Entitlement to care' is a radical frame. It does not align with the dominant cultural narrative that mothers are the natural care givers in the family. Yet, women deployed this radical frame successfully under some conditions. By exploring support and challenges to radical frames, this case contributes to the literature on frames and inequality.

Radical frames are vulnerable to demobilization as they are not safely situated in a dominant cultural narrative. Thus, ambiguous state policies that deny those frames may easily weaken them. In the case of the frame, 'entitlement to care,' state policies that devalued care work and privatized care, weakened the entitlement frame and resulted in reactive adoption among women. Entitlement to care is a demand for recognition of women's time and effort needed for care-work. Devaluation of *anganwadi* workers' care-work made it difficult for women to assert their entitlement to care-services from the state. Even more drastic threat was the sudden surge of private schools in the area. Rather than demand quality services from the state, mothers now frame care as a personal responsibility, even if it meant taking loans to access private schools, what I refer to as reactive adoption. With increasing privatization, childcare is increasingly segregated based on caste and class, such that the well-off access private care while the poor utilize government services, that are constrained by vacancies and ambiguous service commitments. Public spaces such as the *anganwadi* could also contribute to breaking barriers of caste in inter-dining and food habits. Thus, state policies may weaken radical entitlement frames and exacerbate caste and class inequality.

Yet, there were conditions when women utilized state policies to deploy radical frames that may resonate in the dominant cultural narrative. I demonstrate the case of MNREGA as one such state policy where women not only accessed paid work but also appropriated the state policy to deploy a radical frame: entitlement to care. The collective nature in which work was allotted by MNREGA also allowed women to mobilize informally to make their claim. Although the women in the villages I visited had participated in village protests for other material needs, they had not organized for gender issues, especially those that challenged the dominant gender norms. I argue that women could appropriate state policies to deploy radical frames. While the gendered

construction of care-giving was not challenged (as *anganwadi* workers are also women), care-work performed by the *anganwadi* workers in the ICDS is paid-work. Thus, this case demonstrates how certain welfare policies provide opportunities for women to engage in frame appropriation and to deploy radical frames.

Overall, I have demonstrated that state policies have the potential to create new cultural contexts that may help develop new frames, particularly radical frames. While there may be more opposition to radical frames from the dominant culture, state policies have the potential to provide resonating frames in state policies that could be appropriated by the most marginalized groups to make their radical claims more visible.

CHAPTER 6.   CONCLUSION

How does the state engage with societal inequalities? What role does the state play in mitigating or exacerbating inequality? Is the state merely a target for citizens who demand change or does the state play a more active role in shaping how people negotiate inequality? We know that social movements have challenged the state to address various aspects of inequality (Htun and Weldon 2018; McCammon 2009, 2012b; Tarrow 2011, 2012). These analyses, while important, overlook two interesting aspects of state-society dynamics that influence challenges to inequality. One, it ignores constituencies that may not be formally organized into social movements. Unlike organized social movements that have the resources to set the agenda and mobilize support, the experiences and entitlements of unorganized constituencies are seldom studied because their engagement with state actors is often indiscernible as resistance. Two, the absence of formal organizing renders these constituencies vulnerable to the influence of the democratic state, not by repressive actions but through other mechanisms such as *reactive adoption* and *frame appropriation*.

Reactive adoption occurs when people adopt neoliberal frames such as personal responsibility and choice to weaken their entitlements rather than hold the state accountable and in the process, exacerbate inequality. In this case, economically mobile women (and their families) engage in reactive adoption when state policies encourage privatization of welfare services such as care. Unlike overt state repression of movements through the use of force, state policies covertly influence the frames people deploy to interpret their experience of inequality. In contrast, other state policies that have collectivizing effects, as in the case of the employment guarantee policy enabled poor and marginalized women to appropriate those policies to strengthen their entitlements from the state, through the mechanism of frame appropriation. Frame appropriation

not only strengthens entitlements but also enables challenges to inequality. In this concluding chapter, I highlight how state-society dynamics outside of organized social movements have implications for whether people challenge or adapt to inequality.

6.1   Why Care and Care-work matter to Inequality

When I began my fieldwork in Tamil Nadu, I had not expected to engage with the issue of care at all. While some scholars examine the care-work provided by *anganwadi* workers (Palriwala and Neetha 2010; Sreerekha 2017), most studies on the ICDS evaluated the state's delivery of food and nutrition to mothers and children (Citizens' Initiative for the Rights of Children Under Six 2006; Gupta 2012; Rajivan 2006). I expected to hear more about women's struggles for food security in my observations and interviews. Keeping with my expectations, I heard mothers speak about food. As I show in Chapter 4, the frame, entitlement to food, aligned with state policies and cultural narratives, making it a resonant frame. However, mothers interpreted their access to care differently. In contrast to entitlement to food, entitlement to care is a radical frame that does not align with the dominant cultural narrative which considers mothers to be the primary care-giver. Therefore, even though mothers expected care-services from the state, they did not demand care with the same zest as they claimed food.

Radical frames, frames that challenge structural inequality and raise marginalized concerns, may get sidelined in mainstream social movements (Ferree 2003). Even though women are not organized as mothers in the villages I visited, they are active participants in other organized activism such as those related to caste, wages, and water. But those organized groups rarely raised the issue of entitlement to care. Social movements develop strategic resonant frames that appeal to a majority of supporters in society (Benford and Snow 2000; McCammon 2009). The absence of entitlement to care frames in organized activism in the villages I visited does not mean that

women do not have grievances related to care. Rather, it shows how resonant frames in organized movements may overlook marginalized voices and concerns. In this project, I highlight frames that emerge outside of the strategic framing process that movement leaders in organized groups engage in. Given that radical frames do not align with the dominant cultural narrative, they are vulnerable to the influence of state policies, especially when those frames are raised by unorganized constituencies.

As a frame, entitlement to care has implications for inequality given how gender, caste, and class intersect in the distribution of care in society. As I identified in Chapters four and five, state policies such as employment guarantee policies and privatization policies influence whether women access care, and challenge or adapt to inequality. Given the centrality of caste as a system of stratification, entitlement to care has particular complexities in India. Upper caste and OBC (Other Backward Classes) groups often segregate themselves from SC (Scheduled Caste) communities in *anganwadis*. For instance, even though there was no difference with respect to infrastructure in the *anganwadis* located in SC and OBC neighborhoods, OBC families often chose not to send their children to *anganwadi*s in SC areas. Further, unlike in the west where minority groups are exploited to provide care for privileged groups (Farris 2017), in India, marginalized caste groups are excluded from providing care for privileged caste groups, especially from acts such as cooking food (Thorat and Lee 2005). Whether it was the location of the *anganwadi* or the caste of the *anganwadi* worker, upper caste and OBC communities often chose to stay away from *anganwadis.* Thus, caste influenced who utilized care provided at the *anganwadi* and who was accepted as the care-giver.

Privatization offered OBC and upper caste groups the opportunity to use the rhetoric of choice as they segregated themselves from SC children. With increasing private options,

economically mobile families engaged in reactive adoption in ways that exacerbate inequality. Even when OBC families are unable to afford private options, they assume personal responsibility for their children's care at home, rather than send their children to the *anganwadis* located in SC areas. Caste in combination with privatization policies makes it difficult to develop coalitions between SC and non-SC groups and across social classes even though all groups could have benefited from state provided care benefits. Besides caste, gender and class relations also influenced the frames people used to interpret their access to care.

Women, particularly from poor and marginalized communities, are affected by how care is distributed between family, market, and the state. A combination of gender norms, caste based practices, and state policies has established women as unpaid or lowly paid care-givers in our society. When state policies encourage privatization of care, poor women are the most affected (Razavi and Staab 2012). When care is redistributed from the state to the market, poor women provide care in the family as they are unable to access expensive market options. Thus, the demand for care from the state is not only a claim for care but also a challenge to structural inequalities of gender, caste, and class. Examining how state policies influence women's entitlement to care is critical to understand whether women challenge or adapt to structural inequalities of gender, caste, and class.

6.2   Dismantling Inequality - Gender, Caste, and Class

At the core of this project's inquiry is the issue of inequality and how state society dynamics enable people to either challenge or adapt to inequality. The mothers I spoke with were active participants in various movements that defined Tamil society. Mothers showed me fliers for wage related protests (regarding employment guarantee policy); they spoke enthusiastically about the protests for equal participation of Dalits in the local Hindu temple; mothers were members of the

vibrant farmers' movements in Tamil Nadu. Even in relation to the *anganwadi*, mothers participated in protests regarding children's safety. However, none of these groups included the broader agenda of how care and care-work is distributed.[30]

Whose agenda gets included in social movements is an issue of power (Gaventa 1982). Marginalized groups often alter power relations in society through social movement organizing. Organized groups make demands from the state to enact or implement policies that benefit them. State institutions may either respond favorably or repress those movements (Johnston 2011). Yet, even in those groups, some grievances, as that of mothers, are not recognized, especially when their concerns do not align with the dominant cultural narrative. I argue that the state has an active role in shaping the frames deployed by unorganized groups. I show the unapparent ways in which state institutions foster "rebellion and quiescence" in the frames deployed by unorganized constituencies (Gaventa 1982). While some state policies such as privatization fostered an individualist frame about personal responsibility and choice that exacerbated caste and class based segregation, other state policies such as employment rights policy, collectivized women, enabling them to frame care as an entitlement, and in the process challenge gender norms regarding care-giving. Thus, state policies exercised considerable influence on whether mothers interpreted their access to care as personal responsibility or as an entitlement.

Besides privatization and employment rights policies, caste based affirmative action policies allowed *anganwadi* workers from SC communities to create networks of power that challenged untouchability practices in the context of care-giving. Untouchability practices continue in contemporary Tamil Nadu in covert and overt ways. *Anganwadi* workers from SC communities

---

[30] Outside the scope of this dissertation, I examine the *anganwadi* workers struggles that focuses on care and care-work.

are excluded both by community members and other *anganwadi* workers from OBC and upper castes. As a result of caste based affirmative action, the allocation of OBC workers in SC communities and SC workers in OBC communities helped blur caste boundaries in some places. But, as I show in Chapter 4, affirmative action is no magic pill. Sometimes, OBC workers yelled at SC children making it difficult for those families to access care. Similarly, OBC communities often declined to send their children to *anganwadi*s with SC workers or located in SC areas. Thus, even as affirmative action has enabled SC *anganwadi* workers and communities to challenge the caste structure, they do so at enormous cost and struggle.

In spite of the barriers and gaps mentioned above, affirmative action policies played a major role in challenging caste based inequality. Compared to the caste conscious policy of affirmative action, petition justice forum (PJF) is a universal policy that fostered some challenges to the state from citizens. PJFs were utilized both by OBC and SC communities to make demands for material issues such as access to food, such as supplementary nutrition flour or eggs. When community members sent petitions, or threatened to petition the government for food, *anganwadi* workers were quick to mitigate those concerns. Although petitions are useful to demand material entitlements, they are not designed to challenge structural inequality. Moreover, as a universal policy, the potency of the petition also depended on the social position and power of the petitioner. For example, privileged caste groups in the community used petitions to undermine SC *anganwadi* workers or allies to the SC community.

The comparison between PJFs and affirmative action as ways of claiming entitlements have implications for how people challenge inequality. PJFs enabled people to assert their entitlement to food (eggs and packets of supplementary nutrition flour) without challenging structural inequalities in Tamil Nadu. This may not be the case everywhere. In other parts of India,

distribution of eggs could highlight structural concerns related to caste. For example, brahmin and upper caste lobbies in many states have ensured that the menu in the *anganwadi* does not include eggs (considered as non-vegetarian) even though the majority of the constituents eat eggs and other non-vegetarian options. In Tamil Nadu, given the dominance of the OBC communities in state politics (who unlike brahmins eat eggs), access to eggs in state facilities has not been a structural concern.[31] This is not to say that PJFs or entitlement to food are insignificant in Tamil Nadu. 23.8% of children under five in Tamil Nadu are still categorized as underweight, and children from SC communities are disproportionately affected by malnutrition (International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF 2017). Therefore, state policies that help develop an entitlement culture regarding food in the cultural milieu are important. However, for economically mobile families, access to food from the state was less important than their children's access care or education.

The apathy towards state provision of food is shaped by people's social position. While poor communities also desired care and education for their children, they were less likely to assert their entitlement to care or transition to private options for better care and education. Rather, they were more likely to keep their children at home if the *anganwadi* did not provide regular pre-school education and care. As economically mobile families moved to private options, *anganwadi* workers also tended to disregard the provision of care and focused mostly on food. These variations in priority of needs among different social classes also determined who demanded food and care from the state. Overall, I find that state policies such as employment rights policies created conditions for strengthening women's entitlement to care while affirmative action policies played a role in creating networks of people from SC communities who challenged caste in their immediate environment. On the other hand, privatization exacerbated class and caste based

---

[31] Some child rights activists challenged why the menu does not include fish or other non-vegetarian options in Tamil Nadu, even in areas where the *anganwadi* was serving fisher communities.

segregation in society. Thus, the state plays an active role in enabling people to both adapt and challenge structural inequalities.

6.3   Neoliberalism in Stealth: Weakening Welfare, Weakening Coalitions

Besides other tendencies, neoliberal reforms often advocate withdrawal of the state from welfare while encouraging privatization (Harvey 2007). As the welfare capital of India, few would agree that Tamil Nadu fits the image of a state withdrawing from welfare. In my field site, I saw the stamp of Tamil Nadu government on housing projects, on laptops and bags distributed to children in government schools, in government hospitals, and on household gadgets such as fans and blenders distributed to families. Depending on who you ask, Tamil Nadu may be labelled as a populist state that engages in clientelism (Wyatt 2013b) or as a successful welfare state that ensures public services and programmatic benefits, especially for the poor (Vivek 2015; Wyatt 2013a). In that respect, Tamil Nadu is not a typical case of neoliberalism. Alongside welfare, the Tamil Nadu government has enacted policies that has dispossessed the poor (Vijayabaskar 2010). Thus, the state is a case-study of neoliberalism in stealth (Jenkins 2004; Vijayabaskar 2011). As I show in this project, the Tamil Nadu state did not withdraw from providing welfare, but by encouraging privatization, it helped weaken people's entitlement to welfare especially in policy domains that do not have cultural support, such as care.

Tamil Nadu policies weaken welfare benefits related to care not by reducing spending but by weakening people's sense of entitlement that can hold the state accountable to providing those benefits. With increasing privatization, not only has the state exacerbated caste and class based segregation in usage of welfare, but has also prevented coalitions between the poor and the working-class groups. Neither the poor nor the economically mobile groups benefit from segregated care services. As the economically mobile groups moved towards private options, the

reduction in public demand has had negative impact on the quality of services provided by the public system. On the other hand, the economically mobile groups also find themselves smothered in debt.

In the introductory chapter, I described the varied demands of Thamarai, a mother from the SC community and Selvi, a mother from the OBC community. They both desire good food, care, and education for their children. However, their aspirations are shaped by their class and caste positions. Selvi, an educated woman, desires a regular and enriching learning environment for her son. Thamarai is delighted that her child will be fed regularly and has a safe space. Rather than demanding high quality care from the state, Selvi would prefer to use the private option available to her. A possible coalition between Selvi and Tamara could have ensured food and care for all communities. As families, similar to that of Selvi's, get access to better care and education in private schools, the *anganwadi* servicing poor SC families like that of Thamarai focus primarily on food, setting in motion an unequal trajectory of access and opportunity. Public action is a critical component of ensuring the enactment and enforcement of welfare services. Through privatization, and ensuring segregation of welfare use, state policies have weakened people's entitlements and in the process hindered coalitions for collective action that can hold the state accountable.

6.4   Radical Frames and Inequality - Why We Must Pay Attention to Radical Frames

Social movement struggles are critical for social change (Dreze and Sen 1989; Htun and Weldon 2018). For those interested in issues of justice, the emergence of an uprising that highlights social problems is a sign of hope that things may be changing. Even though media may present protests as uprisings that emerged without warning, we know that movements organize and strategically frame their grievances to mobilize broad support (McCammon 2012b). Often, popular movements use frames that resonate with the public. While resonant frames are critical for

mobilizing broad support for important issues, as scholars of inequality, it may be important to ask: Whose voices are we not hearing in popular representations of the uprising?

Radical frames represent the concerns of the most marginalized voices in a movement, especially if they are not organized. By design, radical frames are ineffective in securing wide-spread support. But if our interest is equality, we may have to actively look for vulnerable voices that are not being heard. In this dissertation project, I identify radical frames and the conditions under which they are supported by state policies. When employment rights policies collectivized women, it created conditions for them to appropriate state policies, assert radical frames, and consequently challenge gender norms related to care. Thus, the state is not just a target for social movements, but an active agent that shapes how radical frames are developed and asserted among groups whose voices may not be heard otherwise.

6.5   Implications for Contexts Outside of India

The empirical context of India, is in many ways unique. But the theoretical implications of this project can be examined in contexts beyond India. I outline three major arguments and raise possible research questions regarding various policy domains in the United States context.

1. Affordable Care Act: State policies can facilitate and hinder frames that hold the state accountable.

Movements have targeted state institutions by strategically adapting their frames, changing tactics based on political contexts, and demanding policy outcomes from the state (Amenta 2008; McCammon 2012b). I use the framing literature to highlight possibilities for citizen action in individual and collective ways even when those citizens are not part of an organized movement. I

argue that the state plays an active role in shaping individual and collective action, in supportive and negative ways.

On July 20th, 2017, the NY Times, published an article titled, *"These Americans Hated the Health Law. Until the Idea of Repeal Sank In."* This article presented profiles of Americans in Doylestown, Pennsylvania who had initially contested the Affordable Care Act (ACA), but later began to advocate against the possible repeal of the ACA. Over the last few years, the frame, healthcare as a right, has found credence among the American public. While some may argue that the surge of democratic socialists in mainstream American politics may have played a role in strategically framing a credible grievance, it may be interesting to examine if people's experience with the ACA played any role in encouraging citizens to call their representatives to prevent its repeal. Polls show that approval for the ACA has changed among all political groups - Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. In some cases, their approval for the ACA has also transitioned into citizen action, individually and collectively. While it can be expected that self-identifying Democrats may organize to contest the repeal of the ACA for ideological reasons, it may be worthwhile to study if and how self-identifying Independents and Republicans have engaged in any citizen action in relation to the ACA and what frames they use to interpret their access to healthcare. Citizen action against the repeal of ACA, especially among Independents and Republicans, offer opportunities to examine the role of the state in shaping people's frames and consequently motivating action.

2. Charter School System: Private options weaken entitlements by hindering coalitions between the poor and the working class.

Neoliberal policy reforms in the United States are often accompanied by a rhetoric about personal responsibility and choice. Blaming the poor for their conditions, attributing professional success to individual hard work and talent rather than privileges of their social position, and evaluating basic welfare services through the lens of efficiency rather than entitlement, are all part of the neoliberal rhetoric. Neoliberal policies such as privatization also contribute to exacerbating inequality through class and race based segregation in education. Segregation in education contributes to developing distinct trajectories for people from minority groups and working-class backgrounds compared to people from more privileged socio-economic status. Besides unequal trajectories, I argue that privatization and the resulting segregation also contributes to hindering coalitions between the poor and the working class that prevents collective action in relation to education, in ways that can help all groups. In the United States, the rhetoric of choice in education is epitomized by the charter school movement, a case of reactive adoption.

For some, charter schools use public funds to exacerbate racial and ethnic segregation (Cobb and Glass 1999). The rhetoric of choice has contributed to white flight from public schools to charter schools especially in districts where whites and non-whites are evenly distributed (Renzulli and Evans 2005). For others, charter schools provide opportunities for families unsatisfied with the public system to provide better education for their children (Nathan 1996). While sociologists interested in educational inequality have studied charter schools, the focus has largely been on schools and neighborhoods without much attention being paid to the state or the politics of neoliberal logics that drive the rhetoric of choice (Renzulli 2014).

As in the case of *anganwadis* in India, the charter school system hinders possible coalitions between the poor, the working class, and the middle class. In the 2019 Los Angeles school strike, we saw coalitions between teachers and parents demand smaller class sizes, librarians, counselors,

nurses, green spaces, and immigrant defense fund in public schools (Henwood 2009). Such coalitions between teachers and parents, as well as among parents, strengthen people's sense of entitlement that can improve the quality of public schools. While collective action such as the LA school strike is critical for public school improvement, continuous parental engagement with the school is also an essential form of citizen action. Given how social class mediates people's aspirations and parenting practices (Lareau 2011), and based on my examination of the *anganwadi* system, I expect that parental engagement with public schools will also vary based on social class. Middle class aspirations about education is necessary to hold public schools accountable to providing high quality education for all children.

As charter schools stratify children's educational experiences based on race and social class, it hinders potential coalitions between parents across race, ethnicity, and social class. Rather than hold the state accountable to providing high quality education for all their children, parents may take personal responsibility for providing education for their children, a case of reactive adoption. I expect that the emergence of charter schools will negatively affect broad coalitions among parents, parental engagement, and the demands placed on public schools.

3. Right to Marriage: Radical frames and Inequality

In my investigation of the radical frame, entitlement to care, I found that state policies may create conditions for facilitating or hindering radical frames. Irrespective of whether radical frames become effective in motivating action, they represent the marginalized voices whose concerns may not find resonance with the majority. As mentioned earlier, scholars of inequality may have to actively look for radical frames, especially within successful movements.

In Chapter 5, I briefly mentioned the marginalization of various voices within the gay rights movement for whom right to marriage did not go far enough to challenge structural inequalities. Perhaps, the marginalization of voices in the queer community was most visible at a White House gay pride event when Jennicet Gutiérrez, an undocumented transgender woman, interrupted President Obama during his speech on same-sex marriage in 2015. Gutiérrez interrupted the speech to highlight the plight of detained LGBT immigrants only to be drowned down by other members of the gay community in the room. She was later escorted out of the room by security.

Activists like Gutiérrez represent voices within the gay rights movement who deploy frames that may not be resonant within the broader gay rights movement and therefore did not have similar support from the community. It may be interesting to delineate other factors that determine how gay rights activists engage with radical frames in the broader movement. Further, it may also be critical to examine if enactment of policies (such as recognition of gay marriage) that find resonance in broader society create a sense of progress that may further alienate marginalized voices in the movement.

6.6   What can the analysis of state-society dynamics tell us about inequality?

Social change through public action has its roots in people's movements as well as through everyday implications of policies that those movements may have mobilized to enact. Even as movements play a major role in holding the state accountable to enacting policies, social movements are not free from issues of power and inequality either. Who is represented and what issues are raised, demonstrate not only the organizational resources of different categories of people but also the power they hold within those groups. Most mothers I spoke to, were part of some mobilized groups, whose concerns such as water, wages, and caste, mattered to them. Yet, the agenda of organized groups did not include grievances such as care. The absence of social

movement force behind particular grievances make those concerns susceptible to state influence, both negatively and positively.

Paying attention to the power structures and inequities in social movement organizations does not undermine the role of collective action in challenging inequality. What it points to, is the need to consider both the state and society as integral to any social change project, not only in opposition to each other but as entities constantly changing and challenging each other. Often, the state is examined as a monolithic, static institution that exacerbates societal inequities or responds to social movement action reluctantly. But, state actors and policies change over time, and societal aspirations evolve. For instance, organized social movements have participated in electoral politics and enacted policies that transform cultural and social context for state-society interactions. At other times, state policies have unintended consequences in collectivizing previously unorganized groups. Thus, alongside social movements that has made possible historically significant policy reforms, the path to social change also comes alive in daily interactions where policies mediate people's everyday lives.

APPENDIX A: PROFILE OF ANGANWADI WORKERS

Sl. No	Name (Pseudonyms)	Role in the *Anganwadi*	Caste
1	Gouri	Teacher (Informal union organizer)	OBC
2	Amala	Teacher	OBC
3	Rekha	Teacher	OBC (Converted to Roman Catholic)
4	Malathi	Teacher (Elected union leader at the block level)	SC
5	Jothy	Teacher	SC
6	Kanakavalli	Teacher (Informal organizer of the union)	OBC
7	Kala	Teacher	OBC
8	Vijaya	Teacher	OBC
9	Savithri	Teacher	MBC
10	Mohana	Teacher	Other (Brahmin)
11	Kalyani	Helper	OBC
12	Thenmozhi	Helper	SC
13	Krishnaveni	Helper	OBC
14	Jeyanthi	Helper	SC
15	Bhuvana	Helper	SC
16	Gandhimati	Helper	MBC
17	Latha	Helper (Temporary)	SC
18	Vasugi	Helper	OBC
19	Chithra	Helper	OBC

APPENDIX B: PROFILE OF UNION LEADERS

Union Leaders	Affiliation	Union Level
Malliga	Self-identified as un-affiliated to specific political parties	District
Mary	Affiliated to the Communist Party unions	District
Elizabeth	Affiliated to the Communist Party unions	State
Banu	Affiliated to the government employees' union which is dominated by the political party, DMK	State
Sumathi	Affiliated to the Communist Party unions	State

APPENDIX C: PROFILE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVES

State Representatives	Role	Gender
Meera	Community Nutrition Supervisor	F
Ramya	Child Development Project Officer	F
Uma	Child Development Project Officer	F
Gajendran	Panchayat Vice President	M
Ashokan	Panchayat President	M

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR ANGANWADI WORKERS

1. Profile of Respondent
    a. Age:
    b. Caste:
    c. Religion:
    d. Education:
    e. Tenure at Anganwadi Center (AWC):
    f. Role at the AWC (Teacher/Helper):
    g. Salary and benefits:
    h. Membership in union:
    i. Role in the union:
    j. Household members:
    k. Other major income contribution to the family:
2. Work:
    a. When did you join the *Anganwadi*? How did you get this job?
    b. What do you do in a typical day? What are your responsibilities in the *Anganwadi*? What services do you provide here? What food do you provide?
    c. What aspects of your work are most challenging?
    d. How have you handled the challenges? What did you do? How did you solve the issue? Where did you go for support?
        i. Other workers?
        ii. Elected representatives? Political parties?
        iii. Bureaucrats?
    e. What did you ask them? How did they respond?
3. Frames
    a. In your opinion, how is the *Anganwadi* useful to people? Why is it important?
    b. What are the expectations of mothers? (Probe if different for caste/class categories).
    c. Have you faced challenges in running the *Anganwadi*? How did you handle them?
        i. Can you give examples of when these challenges occurred?
4. Organizing
    a. Do you meet other *Anganwadi* workers? How often? Where do you meet them?
        ii. Friendships?
        iii. Official meetings? Union meetings?
    b. How does having meetings or friendships with other *Anganwadi* workers help you in your work?
    c. Are you a member of the *Anganwadi* union? When and how did you become a member? How does it affect your work? Does it help? How?
    d. What activities does the union organize? Have you participated in any? What kind of activities? When?
        iv. Can you tell me about some of those activities in more detail?
        v. What did the union do? What happened? What was the event for?
    e. Have you participated in any protests, dharna, rallies in the district or elsewhere? What happened? What was the purpose?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR MOTHERS

1. Profile of Respondent
    a. Age:
    b. Religion:
    c. Caste:
    d. Education:
    e. Number of children:
    f. Age of children:
    g. Occupation:
    h. Other household members:
    i. Other major income contribution to the family:
2. Frames
    a. Do you send your children to the *Anganwadi*? When did you start using the services of the *Anganwadi*?
    b. Why do you use it? What benefits do you see?
        i. Is this the first time you are using the *Anganwadi*? Have you used it for other children?
    c. What services do you use in the *Anganwadi*? What do you like most about the *Anganwadi*?
        i. What could be better? [Here I will probe about the different services they mention]
        ii. Can you give specific examples? What was the issue? What did you do? How did you respond?
        iii. Who did you approach to resolve the issue? What happened?
    d. In your opinion, in what ways are the *Anganwadi* useful to the people living here?
    e. Specific to food arrangements, what do they provide at the *Anganwadi*? What do you like about them? What could be better?
        i. Can you give specific experiences? What happened when you had that experience? What did you do? Who did you approach to resolve the issue?
    f. Do you interact with the *Anganwadi* workers? For what purposes do you interact with the *Anganwadi* workers?
        i. What activities do they do? Can you describe how they service your needs?
3. Organizing
    a. How did you decide to send your child/children to the *Anganwadi*?
    b. Do you go to the *Anganwadi*? How frequently do you go to the *Anganwadi*? For what purpose do you go to the *Anganwadi*?
    c. Do you know other people who go to the *Anganwadi* or send their children? Did you know them before? How? Do you meet them often? Where? How?
    d. Have you gone to the *Anganwadi* along with other mothers?
    e. Have you met anyone else from the government regarding the *Anganwadi*? When? What happened at the meeting? What did you ask them?

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR ANGANWADI UNION LEADERS

1. Profile

    a. Age:
    b. Caste:
    c. Religion:
    d. Education:
    e. Name of the union:
    f. Tenure in union:
    g. Role in the union:
    h. Whether currently working at *Anganwadi* Center (AWC):
    i. If so, district of work:
    j. Role at the AWC (Teacher/Helper):
    k. Salary and benefits:

2. Union:

    a. Can you explain to me what the union is about? What are its goals?
    b. When was the union formed? Why was it important to form this union? What is its purpose?
    c. When did you join the union? What is your current position in the union?
    d. How did you decide to join the union?
    e. Over the years of your association with the union, have the union priorities changed? How?

3. Frames

    a. What according to you, is the role of the *Anganwadi* for the people in Tamil Nadu?
    b. What are the challenges for the *Anganwadi* to work well?
    c. Can you give examples of how the *Anganwadi* union dealt with those challenges? How did you address it? What happened?
    d. Did you have to approach the government? How did you do that? What did you ask from them? How did they respond?

4. Organizing

    a. In what ways, does the union impact the *Anganwadis* in Tamil Nadu? You are a national/state wide union. Are there different concerns in different districts? What are the differences?
    b. How is the union structured? How do members meet each other?
    c. How often do you hold meetings? You have a state headquarters and national headquarters. How are people at the local level(district) involved in the union?
    d. Over the year, what activities has the union engaged in?
    e. What were your major activities last year?
    f. Can you describe some of those activities? Have you organized protests, dharnas, hunger strikes?

g. What happened in those events? Where did they happen? Who all came? What did you ask for?
h. How has the *Anganwadi* changed over the years? How did those changes happen?
i. Did the union demands change? Did state policies change?

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STATE REPRESENTATIVES

1. Profile of Respondent

    a. Current position in the state institution:
    b. Tenure at current position:
    c. Previous roles in the state institution:

2. State policies

    1. In general, this year, what would you say are the broad policy priorities of the Tamil Nadu government?
    2. How do you see the role of the *Anganwadi* within those broad policy priorities?
    3. Considering that the *Anganwadi* system is a national program, how does the national policy decisions affect the state level program?
    [If they do not mention it, I will probe more about the national level reduction in

       the budget for *Anganwadis* last year]

    4. The National Food Security Act(NFSA)- which also mandates services through *Anganwadis* - was enacted in 2013. Recently, there is a push for state governments to start implementing it. What are the challenges in actually implementing the NFSA, particularly regarding the *Anganwadis*?
    5. Besides the national level priorities, how do you balance local/district level needs alongside state level priorities when you have to make decisions regarding the ICDS?
    6. What kind of expectations do people have from the *Anganwadi*? Does it vary from one district to the other? What are the differences?
    7. How has the *Anganwadi* system changed over years? What brought about the changes?
    8. Have people approached you with issues related to the *Anganwadi*? Who? Can you give an example? What did they want? How did you resolve the issue?

APPENDIX H: RESEARCH ETHICS IN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

I began my fieldwork after gaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Purdue University. The process of securing IRB approval gave me the opportunity to think more about the privacy and protection of the people I was studying. I was careful in ensuring that interviews of mothers and *anganwadi* workers were held in private. Even though I interacted with children at the *anganwadis*, my notes did not include observations about children's behavior, except for noting conditions of the *anganwadi* that may have affected children in different ways.

The IRB process aims to protect research subjects from coercive practices of recruitment in research projects. However, some requirements of the IRB seemed to be unaligned with the local cultural norms. As part of the IRB process, I was required to secure a signed consent from the "manager" of the *anganwadi* which demonstrated their willingness to let me conduct observations at the *anganwadi*. While I appreciate the motive, in my experience, such IRB requirements constrained women's ability to make decisions rather than enhance it.

In the first few days of my field work, I visited an *anganwadi* to secure the permission of the *anganwadi* teacher to interview her and to conduct observations at her center. After securing her enthusiastic oral agreement to let me observe, I requested her to sign a consent document that I proceeded to write in the Tamil language in front of her. I clarified to her that the consent letter was a requirement from the University to ensure that I am conducting observations with her permission. She reaffirmed that I could conduct observations but seemed uncomfortable signing the document. The next day, her husband asked to see the document. He informed me that his wife will not be signing the form and that I should be seeking permission from higher authorities. Such deference to the husband regarding signed documents is testimony to the gender relations in rural

Tamil Nadu. Thus, rather than enhancing her agency, the requirement of a formal document constrained her ability to decide about her participation in the research process.

This experience made me realize that even though *anganwadi* workers would give me oral consent, they were less likely to give me sign consent forms. Even though they were the head of the *anganwadi*, they were uncomfortable documenting their consent. Therefore, I decided to secure written permission from higher authorities in the ICDS program which I have elaborated in Chapter 3. With the involvement of higher authorities in the process of securing consent, I argue that research subjects are made more vulnerable as their anonymity is compromised. In my study, the *anganwadi* workers are at the lowest level of the ICDS administrative structure and have relatively less power in the hierarchy. However, as a result of my request for a written permission, higher authorities in the bureaucracy became aware of the blocks that I frequented, even though they did not know my detailed schedule.

The purpose of the documented approval for conducting observations may have been intended to provide more power to the researched. However, in this case, the formal approval from higher authorities in the ICDS program constrains the space for decision-making among *anganwadi* workers who may feel compelled to comply with the decisions of higher authorities. I argue that documented formal rights, while useful, also have the potential to curtail opportunities for women who have made choices in spaces that are traditionally informal, ambiguous, and vague. Thus, the *anganwadi* worker chose to participate orally but when asked for a documented consent, she deferred to existing power structures of bureaucratic hierarchy and gender relations (husband) to make the decision regarding her participation.

APPENDIX I: POSITIONALITY

Reflexivity on the researcher's positionality is important to achieve validity and to actively seek disconfirmation of what one observes and interprets (Harding 1986; Lal 1996; Lather 1983; Jerolmack and Khan 2017). As a researcher conducting fieldwork in Tamil Nadu, I tried to be aware of how I was perceived by the members of the community. Indeed, it is impossible to know for certain how everyone perceived me. While people associated various identities with me during the course of the field work, my caste, gender, and perceived role as a government agent were probably the most significant.

As caste is a significant category of stratification in India and particularly in rural Tamil Nadu, I was certain that people may assess my caste status. In my experience, people have often mis-identified me as a brahmin especially when they interact with me in the context of higher education. I have always corrected them. However, people do not always make those assumptions explicit. Since I could not predict what assumptions people would make of my caste, I decided to proactively indicate my non-brahmin caste status by referring to my non-vegetarian diet. When people asked my caste directly (which was surprisingly rare), I told them my caste name.[32] Many caste communities are often distributed geographically such that different castes are visible in different areas. My caste was not well known in my field site. Therefore, even when I told them my specific caste name, people could not place my caste clearly in the hierarchy, which led to an ambiguous perception of my caste status, the way I preferred it to be. Given how food is associated

---

[32] I am inspired by the social activist Periyar's struggles against caste, Hindu patriarchy, and brahmanical privilege to actively claim my non-brahmin caste status without claiming a particular caste identity. I have often made the deliberate political choice of being ambiguous about my caste in response to covert inquiries from a deeply caste conscious Indian community in India and in the US. Even though I mentioned my caste to people in the field site in the spirit of reciprocity, I prefer not to state my caste in this dissertation.

with notions of caste based purity, I was aware that accepting or denying food served by people from the SC community had more meaning than the mere exchange of food and water. Therefore, I was careful to accept food and water, when offered. If I declined their offer for lack of appetite, I worried that they would think it was because of their caste. It is difficult to say how caste affected my interactions with the community and whether it would have been different if I belonged to a different caste. While caste may have played a role in how people perceived me, I believe that their perception of me as a government official and as a young woman was most significant in my data gathering process. These perceptions also changed over time especially with repeated interactions.

In the first few weeks, most people assumed that I was closely associated with the government. That I looked visibly different in how I dressed and spoke may have contributed to this perception. When *anganwadi* workers perceived me as a government officer, they were very reticent about sharing any information about their union/protest activities. [33] I proactively communicated to them that my intention was not to evaluate them. With frequent visits, the workers realized that I was interested in their rights and began to open up about their union activities. The ICDS, like other government initiatives in Tamil Nadu, is a highly monitored welfare initiative. Even though the government recognizes and negotiates with the union, the *anganwadi* workers reported instances of arrests and other forms of repression against protest activities. The workers were cautious about sharing information regarding their protest activities to someone they perceived to be from the government. The rigorous monitoring of the *anganwadis* also made the workers defensive about their performance and activities when I visited them

---

[33] I used the IRB approved information sheet to inform mothers and *anganwadi* workers about my research. However, such a formal rendition of my research seldom did little to change their perception. It took time for workers to change their perception of me as a government official.

initially. As the workers were accustomed to government officials checking their records, the workers were quick to suggest that I could see their updated records whenever I visited them. It took several visits to convince the workers that I was not interested in monitoring or evaluating them.

The perception of being a government official was perhaps most evident in my interactions with mothers with whom repeated visits were less likely. Given that I was interested in their claims from the government, I asked mothers about their grievances regarding the *anganwadi* center. Their responses varied. While some mothers were candid about their grievances, others were reluctant to complain about the workers. That some mothers were reluctant to share their grievances about the *anganwadi* workers was by itself an important insight. The point was made clear by a mother when she explained why she would not 'rat' out the worker to me.

> *If I say that this anganwadi [childcare center] is not good, if you give such a report, will there be anganwadi in this area? Will maavu [nutritious flour] come here? Will rice stock come here? Will children come here? Will they [helper and teacher] get a good name? If I say that they don't do anything or that they are not taking care of children or that they are not giving food, if I complain about them, you will tell people above. Won't you tell them?*

Through this interaction, I realized that mothers were also aware of the monitoring system which they intended to use at a time convenient to them rather than when defined by an external person [me]. In my analysis of interviews with mothers, I was mindful of such perceptions that may have colored how mothers described their experience with the *anganwadi*.

Most people also perceived me as a young woman from a non-brahmin caste which I felt was largely an advantage in helping me gain access to many intimate settings. As people perceived me as a young but educated woman, they also fluctuated between associating naivety and expertise with me. For instance, *anganwadi* workers have both teased my limited Tamil vocabulary and invited me to be a speaker at an ICDS awareness event. Having said that, as a woman, I had access

to formal and informal women-only spaces. In particular, one of the workers that I followed closely, who I will refer to as Gouri, lived close to the ICDS administrative office. Many *anganwadi* teachers gathered at her home before meeting at the office. I was invited to Gouri's home to spend time with the teachers in a comfortable setting. As Gouri was closely involved in mobilizing workers for a union rally in Chennai, I could also observe how workers organized and mobilized protests. Their perception of me as a young woman allowed for several moments of joy, fun, and teasing which were crucial for me as an ethnographer not just to physically access the space but also to allow for emotional comfort where natural interactions could occur.

REFERENCES

Agarwala, Rina. 2013. *Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India*. Cambridge University Press.

Ahmed, Waquar. 2009. "From Mixed Economy to Neo-Liberalism: Class and Caste in India's Economic Transition." *Human Geography* 2(3):37–51.

Ahmed, Waquar, Amitabh Kundu, and Richard Peet. 2011. *India's New Economic Policy: A Critical Analysis*. New York: Routledge.

AIFAWH. 2012. "Charter of Demands." Retrieved March 23, 2019 (http://aifawh.org/charter-of-demands).

Almeida, Paul. 2014. *Mobilizing Democracy: Globalization and Citizen Protest*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Ambedkar, Bhimrao Ramji. 1917. *Castes In India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development*. Indian Antiquary.

Ambedkar, Bhimrao Ramji. 1944. *Annihilation of Caste with a Reply to Mahatma Gandhi: Writings and Speeches, Vol. 1*. Maharashtra: Bombay-Education Department: Government of Maharashtra.

Ambedkar, Bhimrao Ramji. 1948. *Untouchables: Who Were They and Why They Became Untouchables*. Amrit Book Company, New Delhi.

Amenta, Edwin. 2008. *When Movements Matter: The Townsend Plan and the Rise of Social Security*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Anandhi, S. 2013. "The Mathammas: Gender, Caste and the Politics of Intersectionality in Rural Tamil Nadu." *Economic and Political Weekly* 64–71.

Anderson, Leslie E. 1994. *The Political Ecology of the Modern Peasant: Calculation and Community*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Benford, Robert D. 1993. "'You Could Be the Hundredth Monkey': Collective Action Frames and Vocabularies of Motive within the Nuclear Disarmament Movement." *Sociological Quarterly* 34(2):195–216.

Benford, Robert D. 1997. "An Insider's Critique of the Social Movement Framing Perspective." *Sociological Inquiry* 67(4):409–30.

Benford, Robert D. 2013. "Master Frame." *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*.

Benford, Robert D. and David A. Snow. 2000. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26(1):611–39.

Bhagwati, Jagdish and Arvind Panagariya. 2013. *Why Growth Matters: How Economic Growth in India Reduced Poverty and the Lessons for Other Developing Countries*. Hachette UK.

Birkenholtz, Trevor. 2009. "Groundwater Governmentality: Hegemony and Technologies of Resistance in Rajasthan's (India) Groundwater Governance." *Geographical Journal* 175(3):208–20.

Boeckmann, Irene, Joya Misra, and Michelle J. Budig. 2014. "Cultural and Institutional Factors Shaping Mothers' Employment and Working Hours in Postindustrial Countries." *Social Forces* 93(4):1301–33.

Carswell, Grace and Geert De Neve. 2014. "T-Shirts and Tumblers: Caste, Dependency and Work under Neoliberalisation in South India." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 48(1):103–31.

Chudgar, Amita and Benjamin Creed. 2016. "How Are Private School Enrolment Patterns Changing across Indian Districts with a Growth in Private School Availability?" *Oxford Review of Education* 42(5):543–60.

Citizens' Initiative for the Rights of Children Under Six. 2006. *Focus On Children Under Six*. New Delhi: The Right to Food Campaign.

Cobb, Casey D. and Gene V. Glass. 1999. "Ethnic Segregation in Arizona Charter Schools." *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 7:1.

Correll, Shelley J., Stephen Benard, and In Paik. 2007. "Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?" *American Journal of Sociology* 112(5):1297–1338.

Dean, Jon. 2017. *Doing Reflexivity: An Introduction*. Bristol, Chicago: Policy Press.

Deaton, Angus and Jean Dreze. 2002. "Poverty and Inequality in India: A Re-Examination." *Economic and Political Weekly* 37(36):3729–48.

Dirks, Nicholas B. 2011. *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*. Princeton University Press.

Diwakar, Dilip. 2014. "Addressing Utilization of the ICDS Programme in Tamil Nadu, India: How Class and Caste Matters." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 34(3/4):166–80.

Drèze, Jean. 2019. *Sense and Solidarity: Jholawala Economics for Everyone*. Oxford University Press.

Drèze, Jean and Mamta Murthi. 2001. "Fertility, Education, and Development: Evidence from India." *Population and Development Review* 27(1):33–63.

Dreze, Jean and Amartya Sen. 1989. *Hunger and Public Action*. Oxford University Press on Demand.

Dreze, Jean and Amartya Sen. 2002. *India: Development and Participation*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Drèze, Jean and Amartya Sen. 2013. *An Uncertain Glory: India and Its Contradictions*. Princeton University Press.

Dumont, Louis. 1980. *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Duraisamy, Malathy. 2003. "Cost, Quality and Outcomes of Primary Schooling in Rural Tamil Nadu: Does School Management Matter?" *Management Of School Education In India* 177.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press.

Farris, Sara R. 2017. *In the Name of Women's Rights:The Rise of Femonationalism*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Ferree, Myra Marx. 2003. "Resonance and Radicalism: Feminist Framing in the Abortion Debates of the United States and Germany." *American Journal of Sociology* 109(2):304–44.

Fraser, Nancy and Linda Gordon. 1994. "A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the US Welfare State." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19(2):309–36.

Gamson, William A. 1992. "The Social Psychology of Collective Action." Pp. 53–76 in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, edited by A. D. Morris and C. M. Muel. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Gaventa, John. 1982. *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Geetha, V. 1998. "Periyar, Women and an Ethic of Citizenship." *Economic and Political Weekly* WS9–15.

Gorringe, Hugo. 2005. *Untouchable Citizens: Dalit Movements and Democratization in Tamil Nadu*. New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London: SAGE Publications India.

Goyal, Sangeeta. 2006. "Human Development in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka: A Comparison." Pp. 294–332 in *Reinventing Public Service Delivery in India: Selected Case Studies*. New Delhi: The World Bank and Sage Publications.

Gupta, Akhil. 2012. *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India*. USA: Duke University Press.

Harvey, David. 2007. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. OUP Oxford.

Henwood, Doug. 2009. "'There Are So Many Things That We Can Learn From This Strike.'" *Jacobin*. Retrieved March 23, 2019 (https://jacobinmag.com/2019/02/caputo-pearl-mcalevey-henwood-interview-la-teachers-strike).

Htun, Mala and S. Laurel Weldon. 2018. *The Logics of Gender Justice: State Action on Women's Rights around the World*. Cambridge University Press.

International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF. 2017. *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), India, 2015-16: Tamil Nadu.* Mumbai: IIPS.

International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Macro International. 2007a. *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3), 2005–06: India: Volume I.* Mumbai: IIPS.

International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Macro International. 2007b. *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3), India, 2005-06: Tamil Nadu.* Mumbai: IIPS.

Jakobsen, Jostein. 2018. "Neoliberalising the Food Regime 'amongst Its Others': The Right to Food and the State in India." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 1–21.

Jenkins, Rob. 2004. "Labor Policy and the Second Generation of Economic Reform in India." *India Review* 3(4):333–63.

Jenkins, Rob and Anne Marie Goetz. 1999. "Accounts and Accountability: Theoretical Implications of the Right-to-Information Movement in India." *Third World Quarterly* 20(3,).

Jerolmack, Colin and Shamus Khan. 2017. "Introduction: An Analytic Approach to Ethnography." Pp. xi–xxx in *Approaches to ethnography: analysis and representation in participant observation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Jessop, Bob. 1982. *The Capitalist State*. New York University Press New York.

Jessop, Bob. 2008. *State Power*. Cambridge and MA: Polity Press.

Johnston, Hank. 2011. *States and Social Movements*. Cambridge and MA: Polity Press.

Kandiyoti, Deniz. 1988. "Bargaining with Patriarchy." *Gender & Society* 2(3):274–90.

Korpi, Walter and Joakim Palme. 1998. "The Paradox of Redistribution and Strategies of Equality: Welfare State Institutions, Inequality, and Poverty in the Western Countries." *American Sociological Review* 661–87.

Krishnan, Preethi and Mangala Subramaniam. 2014. "Understanding the State: Right to Food Campaign in India." *The Global South* 8(2):101–18.

Lal, Jayati. 1996. "Situating Locations: Politics of Self, Identity, and 'Other' in Living and Writing the Text." Pp. 185–214 in *Feminist dilemmas in fieldwork*. Colorado: Westview Press.

Lareau, Annette. 2011. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Lather, Patti. 1986. "Research as Praxis." *Harvard Educational Review* 56(3):257–78.

Lenski, Gerhard Emmanuel, Jean Lenski, and Patrick Nolan. 1978. *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*. McGraw-Hill New York.

Lokshin, Michael, Monica Das Gupta, Michele Gragnolati, and Oleksiy Ivaschenko. 2005. "Improving Child Nutrition? The Integrated Child Development Services in India." *Development and Change* 36(4):613–40.

McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. 2003. *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCammon, Holly. 2009. "Beyond Frame Resonance: The Argumentative Structure and Persuasive Capacity of Twentieth-Century US Women's Jury-Rights Frames." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 14(1):45–64.

McCammon, Holly J. 2012a. "Explaining Frame Variation: More Moderate and Radical Demands for Women's Citizenship in the US Women's Jury Movements." *Social Problems* 59(1):43–69.

McCammon, Holly J. 2012b. *The US Women's Jury Movements and Strategic Adaptation: A More Just Verdict*. Cambridge University Press.

McCann, Michael W. 1994. *Rights at Work: Pay Equity Reform and the Politics of Legal Mobilization*. University of Chicago Press.

McCarthy, John D. and Mayer N. Zald. 1977. "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 82(6):1212–41.

Milanovic, Branko. 2016. *Global Inequality: A New Approach for the Age of Globalization*. Harvard University Press.

Ministry of Women and Child Development. n.d. *ICDS MIssion: The Broad Framework for Implementation*. Government of India.

Mooney, Patrick H. and Scott A. Hunt. 2009. "Food Security: The Elaboration of Contested Claims to a Consensus Frame." *Rural Sociology* 74(4):469–97.

Murthi, Mamta, Anne-Catherine Guio, and Jean Dreze. 1995. "Mortality, Fertility, and Gender Bias in India: A District-Level Analysis." *Population and Development Review* 745–82.

Muthusamy, M. S. 1988. *K. Kamaraj: A Socio-Political Study*. Tamil Nadu Academy of Political Science.

Nathan, Joe. 1996. "Possibilities, Problems, and Progress: Early Lessons from the Charter Movement." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 78(1):18–23.

Nilsen, A. G. and S. Roy. 2015. *New Subaltern Politics: Reconceptualizing Hegemony and Resistance in Contemporary India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Oakley, Ann. 2016. "Interviewing Women Again: Power, Time and the Gift." *Sociology* 50(1):195–213.

O'Brien, Kevin J. and Lianjiang Li. 2006. *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*. Cambridge University Press.

Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner (India. 2014. *India Sample Registration System Baseline Survey 2014*.

Palriwala, Rajni and N. Neetha. 2010. "Care Arrangements and Bargains: Anganwadi and Paid Domestic Workers in India." *International Labour Review* 149(4):511–27.

povertydata.worldbank.org. 2019. "Poverty & Equity Data Portal." *Poverty & Equity Data Portal*. Retrieved March 23, 2019 (http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/country/IND).

Prashad, Vijay. 2014. *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South*. Verso Books.

Rajagopalan, S. .. 2004. "Removing Thatched Roofs Is Not the Solution: Interview with Dr.S.S.Rajagopalan by Asha Krishnakumar." *Frontline*, August 31.

Rajan, S. Irudaya and A. Jayakumar. 1992. "Impact of Noon Meal Programme on Primary Education: An Exploratory Study in Tamil Nadu." *Economic and Political Weekly* 2372–80.

Rajivan, Anuradha Khati. 2006. "ICDS with a Difference." *Economic and Political Weekly* 41(34):3684–88.

Ramanujam, K. S. 1974. *Challenge & Response: An Intimate Report on Tamil Nadu Politics 1967-1971*. Sundara Prachuralyam.

Ramesh, K. 2016. "Development of Education Under the Chennai Corporation." Department of Historical Studies, Government Arts College for Men, Chennai.

Ray, Raka and Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, eds. 2005. *Social Movements in India: Poverty, Power, and Politics*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Razavi, Shahra and Silke Staab. 2012. *Global Variations in the Political and Social Economy of Care: Worlds Apart*. Vol. 8. Routledge.

Reinharz, Shulamit and Lynn Davidman. 1992. *Feminist Methods in Social Research.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Renzulli, Linda. 2014. "Educational Transformations and Why Sociology Should Care." *Social Currents* 1(2):149–56.

Renzulli, Linda A. and Lorraine Evans. 2005. "School Choice, Charter Schools, and White Flight." *Social Problems* 52(3):398–418.

Rubin, Herbert J. and Irene S. Rubin. 2012. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Scott, James C. 2008. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. yale university Press.

Sen, Amartya. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Singh, Prerna. 2015. *How Solidarity Works for Welfare: Subnationalism and Social Development in India*. Cambridge University Press.

Sinha, Dipa. 2016. *Women, Health and Public Services in India: Why Are States Different?* London and New York: Routledge India.

Sivaraman, Mythily. 2013. *Haunted by Fire: Essays on Caste, Class, Exploitation and Emancipation*. New Delhi: LeftWord Books.

Small, Mario Luis. 2009. "'How Many Cases Do I Need?': On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-Based Research." *Ethnography* 10(1):5–38.

Smith, Jackie. 2008. *Social Movements for Global Democracy*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Snow, David A. and Robert D. Benford. 1988. "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization." *International Social Movement Research* 1(1):197–217.

Snow, David A. and Robert D. Benford. 1992. "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest." Pp. 133–55 in *Frontiers in social movement theory*, edited by A. D. Morris and Mueller, Carol McClurg. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Snow, David A. and Danny Trom. 2002. "The Case Study and the Study of Social Movements." Pp. 146–72 in *Methods of Social Movement Research*. Vol. 16. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Snow, David, Robert Benford, Holly McCammon, Lyndi Hewitt, and Scott Fitzgerald. 2014. "The Emergence, Development, and Future of the Framing Perspective: 25+ Years Since" Frame Alignment"." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 19(1):23–46.

Sreerekha, M. S. 2017. *State Without Honour: Women Workers in India's Anganwadis*. Oxford University Press.

Sridhar, Devi. 2008. *The Battle against Hunger: Choice, Circumstance, and the World Bank*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Srinivas, Mysore Narasimhachar. 1987. *The Dominant Caste and Other Essays*. Oxford University Press Delhi.

Straughn, Jeremy Brooke. 2005. "'Taking the State at Its Word': The Arts of Consentful Contention in the German Democratic Republic." *American Journal of Sociology* 110(6):1598–1650.

Subramaniam, Mangala. 2009. "Negotiating the Field in Rural India: Location, Organization, and Identity Salience." Pp. 201–26 in *Women fielding danger: Negotiating Ethnographic Identities in Field Research*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Subramaniam, Mangala. 2014. "Neoliberalism and Water Rights: The Case of India." *Current Sociology* 62(3):393–411.

Subramanian, Narendra. 1999. *Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization: Political Parties, Citizens, and Democracy in South India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Tabb, William K. 2004. *Economic Governance in the Age of Globalization*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Tarrow, Sidney. 2012. *Strangers at the Gates: Movements and States in Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tarrow, Sidney G. 2011. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Templeman, Dennis. 1996. *The Northern Nadars of Tamil Nadu: An Indian Caste in the Process of Change*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Tharu, Susie and and Tejaswini Niranjana. 1999. "Problems for a Contemporary Theory of Gender." in *Gender and Politics*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

The Hindu. 2017. "Universal PDS Here to Stay, Says Minister - The Hindu." Retrieved March 23, 2019 (https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/universal-pds-here-to-stay-says-minister/article19398314.ece).

The World Bank. 1980. *India - Tamil Nadu Nutrition Project*. P2753. Washington, D.C: The World Bank.

The World Bank. 1998. *India - Second Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition Project*. 17755. Washington, D.C: The World Bank.

The World Bank. 2006. *Implementation Completion and Results Report (IDS-N0420) On a Credit. In the Amount of SDR 205.92 Million (US$ 305.70 Million Equivalent) to India for a Women and Child Development Project*. ICR000030. Washington, D.C: The World Bank.

Thorat, Sukhadeo and Katherine Newman. 2012. *Blocked by Caste: Economic Discrimination in Modern India*. India: Oxford University Press.

Thorat, Sukhdeo and Joel Lee. 2005. "Caste Discrimination and Food Security Programmes." *Economic and Political Weekly* 40(39):4198–4201.

Tilly, Charles. 1978. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. New York: Random House.

Tilly, Charles. 1998. *Durable Inequality*. Univ of California Press.

Venkatasubramanian, Dr. K. 2004. "The Mid-Day Meal Scheme." *The Hindu Business Line* :, June 14.

Vijayabaskar, M. 2010. "Saving Agricultural Labour from Agriculture: SEZs and Politics of Silence in Tamil Nadu." *Economic and Political Weekly* 36–43.

Vijayabaskar, M. 2011. "Global Crises, Welfare Provision and Coping Strategies of Labour in Tiruppur." *Economic and Political Weekly* 46(22):38–45.

Vivek, S. 2015. *Delivering Public Services Effectively: Tamil Nadu and Beyond*. Oxford University Press.

Vydhianathan, S. 2004. "Jayalalithaa Reinstates All 999 Dismissed Government Employees." *The Hindu*, February 11.

Witsoe, Jeffrey. 2011. "Corruption as Power: Caste and the Political Imagination of the Postcolonial State." *American Ethnologist* 38(1):73–85.

Wolf, Diane L. 1996. "Situating Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork." Pp. 1–55 in *Feminist dilemmas in fieldwork*. Colorado: Westview Press.

Woodward, Kath. 2008. "Hanging out and Hanging about: Insider/Outsider Research in the Sport of Boxing." *Ethnography* 9(4):536–60.

Wyatt, Andrew. 2013a. "Combining Clientelist and Programmatic Politics in Tamil Nadu, South India." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 51(1):27–55.

Wyatt, Andrew. 2013b. "Populism and Politics in Contemporary Tamil Nadu." *Contemporary South Asia* 21(4):365–81.

Yep, Gust A., Karen E. Lovaas, and John P. Elia. 2003. "A Critical Appraisal of Assimilationist and Radical Ideologies Underlying Same-Sex Marriage in LGBT Communities in the United States." *Journal of Homosexuality* 45(1):45–64.

Yin, Robert K. 2017. *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Zacharias, Ajit and Vamsi Vakulabharanam. 2011. "Caste Stratification and Wealth Inequality in India." *World Development* 39(10):1820–33.

VITA

Preethi Krishnan

Department of Sociology
Purdue University
Stone Hall, 700 West State Street,
West Lafayette, Indiana – 47907

EDUCATION

2019 (Expected)	Ph.D. in Sociology, Purdue University
	Dissertation Title: *Framing Inequality, Framing Entitlements: Dynamics of State Policies and Local Inequities in Women's Claims for Food, Nutrition, and Pre-school Care*
2013	M.S., Sociology, Purdue University
	Thesis title: *Adjudicating Domestic Violence Cases: Interpretation of Domestic Violence Laws by the Supreme Court in India*
2006	M.A., Personnel Management & Industrial Relations, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India
2003	B Tech, Electrical & Electronics Engineering, College of Engineering, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala University

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

Inequality, Intersections of gender, caste, and class, Development, Globalization, Social Movements, Qualitative methods, Violence against women, South Asia (India).

AWARDS AND GRANTS

2018	Teaching Academy Graduate Teaching Award
2017	Graduate Student Outstanding Teaching Award, Sociology Dept.
2016	PRF Grant for Dissertation Project ($17,215)
2015	Center for Research on Diversity & Inclusion (CRDI), College of Liberal Arts Excellence in Research Award for paper: Krishnan, Preethi and Mangala Subramaniam. "Dowry, Domestic Violence and Gender: Legal interpretations by India's Supreme Court."
2015-17	PROMISE Award, College of Liberal Arts, Purdue University ($2500)
2014	Borlaug Summer Institute on Global Food Security, Center for Global Food Security, Purdue University
2013	Sociology Dept. Nominee for CLA Distinguished Master's Thesis award.

PUBLICATIONS

Chaudhuri, Soma, Preethi Krishnan, and Mangala Subramanium. "Mainstreaming Gender, Endangered, Ungendered? Analysis of Media Reports of the 2012 Case of Rape in India." (equal co-authors) Volume 26 *Advances in Gender Research*. Forthcoming.

Subramaniam, Mangala and Preethi Krishnan. 2016. "Stranded between the Law, Family, and Society: Women in Domestic Violence and Rulings of India's Supreme Court." *Current Sociology* 64(4): 603-619.

Krishnan, Preethi and Mangala Subramaniam. 2015. "Understanding the Nation-State from a Global South Stand Point: Right to Food Campaign in India." *The Global South* 8(2):101-118.
Krishnan, Preethi and Mangala Subramaniam. 2015. "Domestic Violence and Intra-family Dynamics: Analysis of India's Supreme Court Rulings." *Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research* 9:45-72.

Subramaniam, Mangala, Preethi Krishnan Ramaswamy and Christopher Bunka. 2014. "Women's Movement Groups in State Policy Formulation: Addressing Violence against Women." *Indian Anthropologist* 44(1):37-52.

BOOK CHAPTERS

Subramaniam, Mangala and Preethi Krishnan. "Agenda Setting and Agenda Building: Intersections of Gender and Engendering Caste and Class in the Indian Women's Movement." Taylor & Francis. *Forthcoming*

Subramaniam, Mangala and Preethi Krishnan Ramaswamy. 2014. "Gender, Caste, and Class: Structural Violence in India." Pp. 240-248 in Routledge International Handbook of Race, Class and Gender edited by Shirley Jackson. UK: Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group).

POLICY BRIEFS

Krishnan, Preethi, Andrew Raridon, Leigh Raymond, and Mangala Subramaniam. 2016. "Intellectual Property Rights for New Seed Technologies: Balancing Farmers' and Breeders' Rights." *Purdue Policy Research Institute (PPRI) Policy Briefs* 3(1) Article 2.
(Authors listed in alphabetical order).

Krishnan, Preethi, Andrew Raridon, Leigh Raymond, and Mangala Subramaniam. 2016. "Review of the Gender and Social Impacts of Improved Seed Technology in Developing Countries: Policy Implications." *Purdue Policy Research Institute (PPRI) Policy Briefs* 3(1) Article 1. (Authors listed in alphabetical order).

MANUSCRIPTS IN PROGRESS

Krishnan, Preethi and Mangala Subramaniam. Formal and Substantive Equality in the Adjudication of Domestic Violence Cases: Legal interpretations by India's Supreme Court.

Krishnan, Preethi. "Framing Entitlements, Framing Inequality: Women, State, and Frames."

PRESENTATIONS

Preethi Krishnan. "Framing Entitlement, Framing Inequality." Session on Welfare State and Community Research. International Sociological Association, Toronto, Ontario. July 2018.

Subramaniam, Mangala and Preethi Krishnan. "Food, Water, and Social Justice: Women in Rural India." United Nations Commission on the Status of Women session, New York City. March 2018.

Krishnan, Preethi. "Framing Care, Framing Entitlement: Women, State, and Care." Regular Session, Development. American Sociological Association, Montreal, Canada. August 2017.

Chaudhary, Soma, Preethi Krishnan, and Mangala Subramaniam. "Mainstreaming Gender, Endangered, Ungendered? Analysis of Media Reports of 2012 Case of Rape in India." Section on Race, Gender and Class Paper Session. American Sociological Association, Chicago, IL August 2015.

Krishnan, Preethi and Mangala Subramaniam. "Domestic Violence and Intra-family Dynamics: Analysis of India's Supreme Court Rulings." Regular Session, Sex and Violence. American Sociological Association, Chicago, IL, August 2015.

Subramaniam, Mangala, Preethi Krishnan, and Leigh Raymond. "Gender Impacts of Institutional Arrangements for Improved Seed Technologies." International Conference on Global Food Security. Cornell University. October 2015.

Krishnan, Preethi and Mangala Subramaniam. "Gender-Blind and Pro-Gender Judgments: Domestic Violence Cases and India's Supreme Court." Regular Session on Violence, ASA Annual Meetings, San Francsico, August 2014.

Krishnan, Preethi. "Associating with Hegemonic Masculinity: Women Perpetuating Violence Against Women." American Sociological Association, San Francisco, August 2014.

Krishnan, Preethi and Mangala Subramaniam. "State and Struggles for Food: Right to Food Campaign in India." Research Poster Session, Borlaug Summer Institute on Global Food Security, Purdue University, June 2014.

Krishnan, Preethi. Invited panelist in Gender panel for Borlaug Summer Institute on Global Food Security, Purdue University, June 2014.

Subramaniam, Mangala and Preethi Krishnan. "Doing" Research - Female Sex Workers and HIV/AIDS: Notes from an Exploratory Qualitative Study in India. Health and Disease: Science, Culture and Policy. Research Poster Session, Purdue University, March 2014.

Krishnan, Preethi. "Interpreting Domestic Violence Laws: A Feminist Analysis of Supreme Court Judgments." Symposium titled 'State and Social Movements: Violence, Health, Food Security' in IIT, Madras, India, March 2013.

Krishnan, Preethi and Mangala Subramaniam. "Globalization and State Accountability: Significance of Local Protests in India." American Sociological Association, New York, August 2013.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

June 2017 to July 2017	"Gender, State, Social Movements, and Rights." (PI: Dr. Mangala Subramaniam)
Jan 2015 to Dec 2015	"Gender and Social Impacts of Institutional Arrangements for Improved Seed Technologies." (PI: Dr. Mangala Subramaniam)
Summer 2013	"HIV/AIDS and Rights of Sex Workers." (PI: Dr. Mangala Subramaniam)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Independent Instructor
Sociology of Developing Nations in Spring 2016, Fall 2014, Summer 2014, Fall 2013.

Teaching Assistantships
Sociological Theory
Introduction to Research Methods in Sociology
Racial and Ethnic Diversity
Introductory Sociology

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

2017 – 2018	Assisting the mission of Susan Bulkeley Butler Center for Leadership Excellence at Purdue University to develop leadership capacity, especially for women, through research, education, and collaborations that advance inclusion and broaden representation in academic decision-making.

SERVICE

Fall 2014 - Spring 2016	Graduate Student Representative in Department Head Search Committee for Sociology Department, Purdue University.
2018	Occasional Reviewer: *Social Problems*, *Gender & Society*, *Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change*

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Sociological Association
      Section on Sex and Gender
      Section on Sociology of Development
      Section on Global and Transnational Sociology
      Section on Collective Behavior and Social Movements
      Section on Inequality, Poverty, and Mobility
Sociologists for Women in Society
Society for the Study of Social Problems

EMPLOYMENT

06/10 – 08/11	Research Associate, Best Practices Foundation, Bangalore, India. I worked on research projects in the field of gender, social movements, development, and governance.
05/06 – 06/10	Human Resources Manager, Unilever (India)
08/03 – 07/04	Software Engineer, Patni Computer Systems, India