HEGEMONIC MASCULINITIES, CASTE, AND THE BODY: INTERACTIONS IN LOCAL AND TRANSNATIONAL SPACES

by © Navjotpal Kaur

A Dissertation submitted

to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), Sociology

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Memorial University of Newfoundland

July 25, 2022

St. John's Newfoundland and Labrador

Abstract:

I frame the current dissertation in theories of hegemonic masculinity, geographies of masculinities, embodiment, and feminist political ecology. For this research, I conducted a total of 45 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with men belonging to the upper Jat caste in Punjab and Canada. The work is comprised of three standalone but interrelated research articles addressing Jat masculinities in local and transnational spaces, the relationship of Jats with the land, and caste embodiment. In the first article, I explore how upper caste Jat masculinities interact with space and arable land. That is, I address the geographical contingency of hegemonic masculinities and how they are produced, constituted, and contested in relation to the land. Findings suggest that ownership of arable land is crucial to the construction and performance of Jat masculinities and a threat to the loss of land gives rise to vulnerabilities and challenges to which men respond by strategizing their masculine performances. The second article considers how body and embodiment interact with caste and masculinities. In this article, I explore why caste visibility is important in the constitution of Jat masculinities and how caste visibility is achieved through the male body in local and transnational spaces. Findings suggest that the processes through which caste is embodied overlap with the principles of hegemonic masculinity and they both complement each other. The third article focuses on Jat men in transnational spaces in Canada. By exploring Jat men's experiences as international students in Canada, I explore how landownership, caste identity and transnational communication shape Jat masculinities in transnational spaces. Findings suggest that landownership in Punjab remains an important determining factor for young men's masculinities in Canada. I also investigate how these young men are 'othered' in transnational spaces and how their masculinities are negotiated in such contexts.

Acknowledgements:

As I sit at my desk at my parents' home in Amritsar, I think of all the people and places that have been instrumental in my work. First and foremost, I thank the universe for the existence of Sri Harmandir Sahib (the Golden Temple), a place of constant positivity for me and a place to turn to whenever I needed a reminder that the order of things is bigger than us and our lives. My supervisor Dr. Rose Ricciardelli, to whom I am forever indebted for her endless supply of provision, support, kindness, and humor. Rose, you have challenged me to take ownership over my successes and taught me to believe in myself. I simply would not have been here if it weren't for you. Thank you for everything!

Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Liam Swiss and Dr. Yolande Pottie-Sherman for their proactive support and patience in writing this dissertation. A special thanks to all the wonderful people at MUN who touched me with their kindness, especially Dr. Eric Tenkorang and Dr. Lisa-Jo van den Scott. Lisa-Jo, thank you for being a great friend, mentor, and supplier of food and shelter when I needed it. You are the #bestkind!

Lastly, I would like to thank my family whom I cherish dearly – my mother, father, brothers, and sister – for their unconditional love and support. H.Sran, my dear beloved and soulmate, thank you for making me happy. Words cannot express how much I love you all, and I thank God for you every day.

Contents

CHAPTER 1: **Introduction**

Much has happened in the world since I started writing this dissertation in 2020. Most notably, the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the farmers' protests in India have had profound impact for the world politics and for the local sociopolitical and cultural realms of the Indian Punjab respectively. I completed the fieldwork for my research shortly before the lockdowns due to COVID-19 commenced in India and well before the farmers' protests started in the later months of 2020. The scale of farmers' protests, in mobilization and impact, against problematic farm laws passed by the Government of India without consulting the stakeholders proved to be unsurpassed. Farmers of Punjab and the neighboring state of Haryana led the protests – which, in the end, mobilized hundreds of thousands of farmers and their supporters in India and eventually led to the revocation of the farm laws by the Government of India. Within the ethno-cultural, transnational, and diasporic spaces of Punjab, the farmers' protest is supposed to have revived the 'sleeping spirit' of the Sikhs post-Green Revolution – particularly Jat Sikhs, the 'upper-caste' community that holds most agrarian land in Punjab. For Punjabi farmers, these protests became a medium to (re)assert and (re)establish their identities. Farmers' protests have supposedly challenged and reversed the narrative of past couple decades of the agrarian crisis and masculinity crisis in Punjab evinced through farmers suicides, mass migration, and rampant drug use among the youth and reinforced the traditional masculine notions of Jat Sikhs as benevolent, industrious, courageous, as well as hypermasculine. The static, stereotypical Punjabi Jat identity and the urge to display and perform its hypermasculine nature was seen at its peak during the protests – pop culture, songs, social media, assisted in creating, or reviving, a space where the masculinity of Punjab contrasted the femininity of New Delhi (capital of India). Songs chronicling the farmers' protests such as '*Delhi nu viahaun Punjab chalea*' (Punjab is going to

wed Delhi), '*Delhi ch Punjab bukkda*' (Punjab roars in Delhi), and many more became instantly popular. The gendering of the states of Punjab and Delhi during these protests reflects the collective ideology and identification of the majority population i.e., the Jat Sikhs as hypermasculine men. The reassertion of the legacy of Punjabis to overcome all barriers as overtly displayed through tractor rallies, 'kabja' (possession) of the roads leading to Delhi by setting up semi-permanent tents, overcoming nailed roads, "invasion" of the Red Fort were all hypermasculine displays of power, courage, clout, bravery, and brotherhood – the core elements of Punjabi Jat Sikh masculinity. While I will not go into unpacking the events that unfolded at the farmers protests, I explore the constructions of these hegemonic masculinities and their principles which were deliberately, overtly performed by the (Jat Sikh) farmers.

In this dissertation, I engage with the complex interactions of the upper-caste status, masculinities, and embodiment and understand these interactions as ideological constructs as well as sets of practices. In doing so, I explore the multiple articulations of these interactions within different spatial contexts which helps in explaining the plurality of Jat masculinities and in locating their varied performances and manifestations. Located in the context of caste, class, and gender relations, patriarchy, cultural domination, and other social divisions in different historical and contemporary periods, my research investigates how exactly masculinities, the male body, and space are co-constituted. I address the following main questions in this dissertation: How are masculine in the rural and the rural in the masculine constructed and performed? That is, I explore the ways in which masculinities are constituted in rural spaces as well as the ways the rural symbolically constitutes ideas of masculinities in local as well as transnational spaces in India and Canada respectively. What role does the presence and absence of physical markers (residential segregation, landownership etc.) have in the construction,

performance, and embodiment of upper-caste Jat masculinities in different spatial settings? In case of migrant Jat men in Canada, how does migration and transnationalism interact with and transform their notions of masculinities and caste? How are their performances of Jat masculinities viewed/interpreted in Punjabi communities in Canada? My line of inquiry increases provisions for critical engagement with situatedness of masculinities and emphasizes the multiplicity/plurality of masculinities by focusing on their dynamism and contextual variation. my research enables an analysis of the practices by which attributes and behaviours of Jat men are selectively assembled, normalized, and reproduced as signifying the character or qualities of "real" farmers or hegemonic Jat masculinities in different spatialities, the adaptation of alternate masculinities in the face of vulnerabilities, and the 'othering' faced in a transnational context.

In what follows, I offer a brief introduction to the caste system in India, Jat Sikhs in Punjab and contextualize masculinities in major shifts that marked Punjab's political and sociocultural landscape: the colonial period, the era of the Green Revolution, and out-migration of youth from Punjab.

Caste: An overview

Caste in India is not a homogenous structure. The structure and experience of caste varies by the socio-economic context and geographical location. However, according to the popular – almost universally accepted – view, caste is a static, ancient institution derived from the dominant Hindu ideology (Jodhka, 2019). According to this view, the ideas of purity and pollution, of karma and dharma, produced a hierarchical social order with Brahmins at the top, followed by Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Dalits are considered outcastes. This textbook view is, however, criticized by many historians and social anthropologists due to its seemingly simplistic

representation of a complex social phenomenon (see, for example, Appadurai, 1998; Dirks, 2001; Banerjee-Dube, 2008; Samarendra, 2011; Jodhka, 2019). One of the most influential works on this book-view of caste is *Homo Hierarchicus* by Louis Dumont (1966; 1971). For Dumont, inequality is central to the notion of caste – it is an effective and valued mode of social organization overdetermined by the Hindu religious ideology (Dumont, 1971). Dumont argued that status and hierarchy associated with caste are far more critical than the prevailing political economy and the realities of power. Most noticeably, he blatantly disregarded the material circumstances and aspects accompanying the system of caste relations (see Manor, 2010). Historians have contested Dumont's argument by citing classical texts that attest that caste had never been a static structure – it was always a contested and evolving reality which tended to change over time (see Das & Uberoi, 1971; Gupta, 1981). For example, Brahmins, the "purest," only enjoyed a high status when they had good relationship with the king, or became the priest, or had control over great amounts of land (Fuller, 1979, 1984; Gupta ,1981). Therefore, caste relations were also a part of the larger political authority and were rooted in materiality (Manor, 2010). According to Manor (2010: xxii), 'caste and caste hierarchies had, and still have, tangible substance.' The relationship between the status hierarchies of caste and the materialities of everyday life are never independent of each other. This entwinement has also been established through M.N. Srinivas's work on Sanskritization that shows how 'lower' castes could become upwardly mobile through material success (Srinivas, 1996). According to Srinivas, in any given geographical region, any caste group can become the 'dominant caste' by virtue of its demographic, socio-economic, and political predominance (Srinivas, 1996) and can consequently enjoy status and power associated with the 'higher' caste. Furthermore, several scholars have postulated that the practice of untouchability was/is also a relationship of power accomplished

through exerting control over the lives of those in the lowest strata of the system (Beteille, 1996). The centrality of power in the theorization of caste has further been accentuated in the works of Nicholas Dirks and Guleria Raheja. In their respective studies, Dirks (1989) and Raheja (1989) concluded that caste is a diverse reality with multiple configurations – its meanings and values differ from context to context. That is, in a given region, the specific socio-historical trajectory and the politico-economic conditions (or developments) determine the actual working of caste and caste relations (see Beteille, 2000; Jodhka, 2019).

Caste in Punjab: Who are the Jats?

> *"Punjab can be characterized by regional traditions of farming, family, and faith, as well as by struggles over post-coloniality and modernity [...] where leadership, authority, and local power are established and enforced through dominant caste standing, comparative wealth and education, and modern as well as charismatic forms of prestige" (Mooney, 2011: 48).*

Punjab is an agrarian state of north India where Sikhism is the majority religion and Hindus constitute less than 40 percent of the state population. Sikh religion denounces caste – one of its fundamental missions was to create an egalitarian society free of caste-based divisions. In Punjab, the structure of agrarian relations is such that caste-based divisions have become functional prerequisites for the working of the agrarian economy (Judge, 2015; Jodhka, 2019). Even though Sikh religion denounces caste – one of its fundamental missions was to create an egalitarian society free of caste-based divisions – the local material base of the caste system was so powerful and entrenched into the social structure, that it largely remained unaltered (see Jodhka, 2019).

Unlike the rest of India, the caste system and, hence the associated power hierarchy in the North Indian state of Punjab is not based on Hindu notions of purity and pollution (e.g.,

Pettigrew, 1995:4; Gill, 2012). Instead, local caste divisions in Punjab are based on land wealth, distinguishing the landowners (the Jats) from non-landowners (Jodhka, 2006; McLeod, 1989, 2007; Mooney, 2011:163). Jats, even though belonging to a lower caste (*Vaishyas*) according to the Hindu caste schema, constitute the "dominant caste" in Punjab by virtue of their socioeconomic and demographic predominance (Srinivas, 1966, 1996) and consequently have more socio-political power and social status of 'high caste' group. In Punjab, Jats largely belong to Sikh religion, and while Jat identity is not entirely dependent on religion, religious affiliation is an important aspect of the Jat identity (Mooney, 2011; Judge, 2015; Jodhka, 2006). It is understood, in common parlance, that a Jat in Punjab must be a Sikh despite the fact that Jats, in general, do not conform to the basic tenets of Sikhism, and there are also a small number of non-Sikh (Hindu, Muslim) Jats in Punjab (Mooney, 2011; McLeod, 1989). WH McLeod (1989) explains, whereas other Sikh castes feel compulsions of religious identity to maintain at least unshorn hair (*kesh,* one of the five tenets of the Sikh identity), failing which they lose their Sikh identity, such compulsions do not exist for the Jat Sikhs. Similarly, Mooney points out that Jats are "particularly implicated in the persistence of un-Sikh notions of hierarchy and exclusivity" (Mooney, 2011:163), yet it is them who enjoy an uncontended hegemonic status in the predominantly Sikh state of Punjab (see Mooney, 2011, 2013; Jodhka, 2006; Judge, 2015). McLeod (1989) has also vividly described the overall domination of the Jat Sikhs not only in rural Punjab, but in Punjab as such.

South Asian Masculinities:

Most of the work on South Asian masculinities is based on and emanates from the examination of colonial masculinities. Drawing upon postcolonial history, this body of work contrasts the hypermasculinized and progressive 'colonizer' with the effeminate and primitive

'colonized' (Sinha, 1995; Grewal, 1996; Krishnaswamy, 2002). It describes the processes by which the British bolstered colonial projects of domination by constructing the Hindu male as effeminate and at the same sought allies among certain groups by redeeming them as the 'martial races' (Caplan, 1995; Sinha, 1995; Luhrmann, 1996; detailed description in next section). Other than the scholarship on (post)colonial masculinities, most classic, empirical studies in/on post-independence India lack a specific and explicit 'masculine focus' but many can be re-read for their gender implications. That is, these studies do focus upon contexts where social structures are defined by gender and where men prevail. For example, M.N. Srinivas, in his famous work 'Remembered village' (1976), describes men of hypermasculine disposition who had money, power, and influence in the village. He even alludes to the men's manly embodiment by referring to their 'impressive moustache with twirled ends, which the older villagers regarded as a symbol of beauty as well as manliness (Srinivas, 1976:68). Similarly, Mattison Mines in his 1994 study of Tamil personhood discusses the concept of 'big' men; men who are successful in business, belong to prominent families, are office-bearers of public organizations and so on. When read between the lines, these studies do give a sense of corporeal and cultural distinction of dominant men – almost invariably belonging to upper castes or dominant communities. In more recent research with explicit masculine focus, there emerges no coherent concept of a 'South Asian masculinity,' but there are some themes recurrent across studies. For example, the relational construction of dominant masculinities with women and other men is ubiquitous, albeit geographically specific. Control of female sexuality (read chastity) and discourses of (preserving) masculine honor are two of the main principles of masculinities identified across different cultures in South Asia (see Walle, 2004 for a discussion on Pakistani men; Mookherjee, 2004 for a discussion on Bangladeshi men).

The focus of the present study are Punjabi men and masculinities. Therefore, below I will review the limited extant literature on Punjabi/Sikh masculinities. Referring to Jat Sikh masculinities, researchers contend that historical representations, in part informed through the colonial encounter, constructed a hyper-masculine, martial, Sikh warrior (often Jat), as the ideal and 'authentic' Sikh male, in contrast to representations of other South Asian men (e.g., Ballantyne, 2006; Sinha, 1995). Hence, the construction of Jat masculinities as hegemonic and dominance of Jats in the politico-social order of Punjab may be attributed largely to some specific historical events and phenomenon before, during, and after the British Raj[1]. Below, I delineate the socio-historical context which shape(d) the Jat masculine identity. I explain how some events and material markers remain fundamental in understanding how stereotypical images of Sikh (Jat) men as hypermasculine warriors and deft agriculturalists have been created and maintained.

Construction of hypermasculine identity of Sikh warrior and soldier:

Jats constitute(d) a huge proportion of the Sikh Panth[2] who, according to some historians, joined the Panth largely in early 1600s (see for example McLeod 1989, 1976; Habib 1976). McLeod convincingly makes the argument that arming/militarization of the Panth, which was started in 1606 by the sixth Sikh guru, Guru Hargobind, was extensively influenced by Jat cultural patterns as they were "a people accustomed to bearing arms and to using them as a means of resolving disputes" (McLeod 1989: 43; McLeod 1976). This view, however, is severely contended and challenged by some other Sikh scholars (e.g., Singh 1985). They reject McLeod's argument outright and instead argue that the reason that the Panth was armed was the Mughal

[1] Rule by British in India
[2] In Sikh terminology, the word 'Panth' stands for the Sikh faith as well as for the Sikh people as a whole

hostility and the need to defend for themselves, and their faith, in the hostile environment, among other reasons.

However, the militarization of the Sikhs was culminated in 1699 with Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and final Sikh guru, establishing the *Khalsa* or community of the 'pure,' which mandated the Sikhs to wear five K's namely *Kesh, Kangha, Karra, Kirpan*, and *Kachera*. *Kesh* means unshorn hair; *Kangha* refers to a small wooden comb worn in the hair which symbolized order and cleanliness in both body and community; *Karra* is an iron/steel bangle to remind Sikhs of their integrity and honor; *Kirpan* is a small sword or dagger for the Sikhs to defend their faith and fight injustice; and *Kachera* refers to briefs or shorts worn beneath the pyjamas which represents both sexual engagement and moral restraint. Together, these give Sikhs a unique and visible identity. The British perceived Sikhs as possessing "martial instincts," dubbed them as "fighting machines," and considered them highly suitable for the army (Barstow, 1928/2004). The hypermasculine identity and fierce loyalty of Sikhs to their faith, reflecting trustworthiness, became significant determinants for the British to recruit Sikh soldiers for the British Army. Sikh Jats, in particular, were seen as naturally seditious, and many British scholars lauded the fine physique of Jats and their propriety for soldiery in the British Army (see for example Darling, 1925, Barstow, 1928/2004). For instance, Malcolm Darling, one of the avid admirers of the Jats of Punjab, commented that "…in the whole of India, there is no finer raw material than the Jat… it would be difficult in any country to find a more remarkable combination of cultivator, colonist, emigrant and soldier" (Darling, 1925:40).

In 1858, the British Army in India was reorganized based on a theory of 'martial races.' Nicholas Dirks cites from recruiting handbooks of the Indian army that the "martial races" were distinguished by loyalty, military fidelity, and "manly independence," in contrast to other groups

(races) which were considered effeminate, cowardly or inclined to crime (Dirks, 2002:179). The Sikhs were recognized as one of the most prominent martial races of India. Although Sikhism was noted to have drawn its adherents from all classes, it was the Jats who carried such weight in the formation of the national character that the Sikh, "whatever his origin, may now be considered as practically identical with" the Punjabi Jat (Bingley, 1985: 112). As a result, Jats' dominance in Punjab was further reinforced as a new conception of 'merit' was attached to the class/caste owning landed property, belonging to military (martial race) strata, and 'pride' of unflinching loyalty to the British (Narang, 1998; Puri, 2003). The internalization of such special merit also accentuated the natural social domination of the Jat landowners in their relations with the lower castes in their local village situations (Puri, 2003).

Another instance, which further granted extraordinary provision to the Jat agriculturalist, was the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1901 (Cassan, 2015; Puri, 2003). According to this law, which was enacted by the British rulers primarily to save the indebted farmers from the mercenary money lenders of other castes, agricultural land could be purchased or acquired only by people belonging to the defined 'agricultural castes' (Cassan, 2015), of which Jats constituted the majority. All those belonging to the lower castes, those not included among the 'agricultural tribes,' were debarred from owning land even if a few had the means to purchase land for cultivation (Puri, 2003). All of this significantly contributed to aggrandize Jats' caste domination and privilege in the Punjab.

Green Revolution & the village setting:

Paramjit Judge (2015) discusses the more recent phenomena that led to the emergence of Jat Sikhs in the post-independence period as a force at all levels of political governance which, by extension, resulted in the construction of contemporary Jat masculinities as hegemonic as well

as dominant in the socio-political landscape of Punjab. According to Judge (2015), three major historical occurrences, namely, the partition of Punjab at the time of independence in 1947, the reorganization of Punjab into Punjabi Suba on linguistic basis in 1966, and the Green Revolution that began in 1967, had huge influences in establishing Jats in overwhelming majority in social, political, and cultural apparatus of Punjab; and it happened so much so that the cultural ethos of Punjab became synonymous with Jat ethos. Of these, the Green Revolution brought a rapid material modernity to Punjab's villages (Mooney, 2011), with profound effects on Jat values and culture:

> The Green Revolution package was not just a technological and political strategy. It was also a cultural strategy which replaced traditional peasant values of cooperation with competition, of prudent living with conspicuous consumption, of soil and crop husbandry with the calculus of subsidies, profits and remunerative prices. (Shiva, 1991:129)

The impermanent economic prosperity of the rural peasantry as a result of the Green Revolution, brought about the advancement of marked decisive characteristics in the form of modern material culture that conveyed prestige, social status, and became core aspects of contemporary Jat masculinities—such as, land ownership, conspicuous consumption, and material display (Mooney, 2011, 2013; Judge, 2015). Unfortunately, the disappointing repercussions of the Green Revolution in later years led to major agricultural catastrophes in Punjab, which resulted in extreme indebtedness and farmer suicides evincing the crisis in Punjabi masculinity, which "may be seen as emanating from the Punjabi male's inability to conform to hegemonic Jat Sikh masculinity that enjoins every male to be the family provider" (Roy, 2015:172).

However, the rural economy of Punjab continued to be ubiquitously dependent on the Jats (read Jat men) as a result of defining events and developments discussed above, a system that continued up until a few decades ago. All other caste groups or "service castes" were dependent on the Jat for sustenance (Judge, 2015; Jodhka, 2006). This phenomenon became immensely

exigent in establishing hegemonic Jat masculinity in rural Punjab— an area that remains underexplored, except for a few very brief references (for example, Judge, 2015; Jodhka, 2006).

It was only in the late 1980s and early 90s that the village economy opened up, with Government of India's new economic policy of Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization, which enabled everyone to pursue their business as they sought, irrespective of their caste. Mechanization rendered the small manual workers, from lower castes, purposeless and many fled the village scene to seek employment as well as education in the cities. Nowadays, the discourse of dependence on the Jat is virtually absent from the rural economic imagery, but the psychological impact, awareness, and perceived predomination of the Jat is still very much prevalent, both among Jats and other caste groups. Jats continue to hold on to the nostalgia of past superiority and high-status through perpetuation of conspicuous consumption and hypermasculine exhibit (see Mooney, 2011). The young Jat men, in particular, take immense pride and honor in being Jats and continue in a tradition that has "keen historical awareness," which may claim to foster a sense of continuous struggle for self-identity (Mooney, 2011: 84).

Dissertation Overview:

My focus in this research is the construction and performance of Jat masculinities in local and transnational spaces. I define local spaces as spaces where caste is materially and distinguishably present, such as in rural Punjab, India. There are various caste markers that lead to caste visibility in such spaces such as residential segregation, land ownership, conspicuous consumption of material goods and so on. These are the spaces where degree of caste-visibility is the highest. Owing to the neoliberal ethos of consumerism and the flux of late capitalism, over the past few decades, Jats have largely shifted their focus from farming to transnational

migration as a pathway to earn and remit money (see, for example, Mooney, 2011, 2013; Chopra, 2011; Gill, 2012; Kukreja, 2020). So, in defining transnational spaces, I refer to the spaces where Jats migrate to (in this case, Canada) and where caste identity is rendered invisible or ambiguous. I identify and explore the ways Jat hegemonic masculinities intersect with these geographies of high and low caste-visibility and produce, reproduce, and rework their significant markers or attributes. I also look at how Jat caste identity intersects with the male body in different geographical contexts so as to produce the Jat masculine embodiment that conveys power and privilege. Specifically, I explore what Jat hegemonic masculine ideals are at different intersections of space and time and how men strategize their masculine performances to achieve that ideal in different geographical contexts with varying degrees of caste visibility. One of the intents in my research is to demonstrate that the Punjabi Jat masculinities are intimately formed as much by discourses of the past, which are continually interwoven within the contemporary masculine subjectivities and performativity, as by the processes of modernity including transnationalism.

Methodology:

For my research, I interviewed 23 men from Punjab and 22 men from Canada (Greater Toronto Area). Punjab is a Sikh majority state in India and GTA has a large proportion of Punjabi/Sikh population. My participants were young Jat men in the age group of 18-34 years. Interviews were conducted from August 2019-November 2019 in Canada and from December 2020-April 2020 in Punjab, India. I recruited participants for my research through recruitment posters that were put up at several locations in cities and villages in Punjab – such as university, colleges, cafes, eateries, gurdwaras etc. In addition, I also recruited participants through social media (Facebook, Twitter) and through snowballing or "chain referral" to include potential

participants from different areas in Punjab, such as villages/rural areas. In Canada (GTA), participants were largely recruited through social media adverts and snowballing. I also put-up posters at some shops/public places frequently visited by international students (for instance, Punjabi restaurants, convenience stores, gurdwaras etc.)

Semi-structured Interviews:

My main method of data collection was semi-structured interviews with observation as a complementary method. The semi structured qualitative interviews encouraged the men—as both analytic observers and engaged participants—to reflect on a series of general questions such as the following: How would you define being a man? What does it mean to be a Jat man? What (if any) physical appearance practices and styles are important to you? Do you feel pressure or inclination towards living up to a certain image of Jat masculinity? What happens if you fail to live up to this image? Sample questions for men in Punjab: What is your perception of a Jat man? Other follow-up questions were asked depending on the participants' answers such as on the importance of agricultural land for Jats, the role of other material devices, their perception of Jat embodiment, and masculine spaces. Sample questions for men in Canada: Why did you migrate; what are your short- or long-term goals in Canada? How do you think a Jat man in Canada is different from Jat man in Punjab? What are the expectations of your family from you? Do you feel the need to 'maintain an image' for people back home in Punjab or on social media? I expected to answer the following questions through the interviews: What are the specific contexts when men become aware of their caste identity? Is caste identity always asserted or does it manifest in specific situations/contexts/circumstances? If it only arises or comes to the surface in some situations, what are those situations/contexts? e.g., are these private or public realms? How do men find their expressions to Jat masculinities through sources exterior to them?

I wanted to capture how young Jat men navigate different spaces—local and transnational—that provided a picture of an overall dynamic interconnectedness of different influencers/determinants of Jat masculinities.

Data Analysis:

In my analysis of the data (interview transcripts) through a semi-grounded approach, I identified core conceptual themes through open and axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). My approach of data analysis was not fully grounded as, in the framing of research questions, I also drew from a prior stock-of-knowledge; in addition to being semi-guided by the cultural, historical, and theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinities, embodiment, and feminist political ecology. Grounded theory is an inductive methodology where theory is developed from the corpus of data where themes were discovered (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As a member of the same upper caste, I thought of myself as an insider familiar with the dynamics and ongoings associated with the specific caste group. At other times, I was aware of being an outsider as a woman in men's spaces. In these moments, my subject position shifted as I reflexively navigated the dichotomy of my positionality. In the open coding phase, I examined the interview transcripts for emergent themes. Theme saturation was ensured by reading and re-reading the transcripts and by constantly evaluating the content of on-going interviews until no new information was obtained that provided further insight into the categories (Creswell, 1998). During the axial coding phase, I mapped, connected, and integrated the emergent themes and theoretical constructs from the data sources into distinct categories and subcategories. I achieved this by identifying a single theme from the open coding list as the central phenomenon of interest and returned to the interview transcripts to understand the text and categories that related to this central phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). That is, I looked for further specific coding categories that

related to or explained the central phenomenon. This process was followed for each theme identified in the open coding phase. In the end, I identified ten core conceptual themes which were used to construct a coherent and conceptual narrative in the three papers.

The Three Articles:

I comprise my dissertation of three standalone but interrelated research analyses.

Article I: Gender, caste, and spatiality: Construction and performance of hegemonic masculinities

There is a dearth of literature on what constitutes or defines contemporary Jat masculinities – except for a handful of studies (e.g., Mooney, 2011; Gill, 2012; Roy, 2015). In response, in the first article, I start my investigation by exploring young Jat men's notions of masculinities and hegemonic ideals in local spaces in Punjab. In the article, by analyzing the interviews conducted in Punjab (n=23), I explore the dynamic processes enrolled in the constitution of Jat masculine characteristics, the role of landownership, availability of masculinized spaces, and their associated symbolic meanings that might strengthen or produce vulnerabilities for Jat men's masculinities. As a point of departure, I use the significance of "rural imaginary" and rurality for Jat masculinities (Mooney, 2011, 2013) realized through ownership of arable land and Jat male bodies. My findings suggest the importance of pride, highlighting the hegemonic status, associated with Jat caste and the construction and the expression of Jat caste through masculinized spaces and land ownership (Roy, 2015; Mooney, 2011). Attributes, exclusive to Jat masculinities by virtue of the socio-cultural context, exist in concomitance with the traditionally defined principles/characteristics of masculinity, that is breadwinning, aggression, and hyperheterosexuality (Howson, 2006; Connell, 1995; Connell &

Messerschmidt, 2005), within the Jat body. The first article is accepted for publication in *Gender, Place and Culture.*

Article II: Caste Visibility and Hegemonic Masculinity: Theorizing Caste-Embodiment in Local and Transnational Spaces

In the second article, I explore the role of caste-visibility and the processes through which caste is embodied, in both local and transnational spaces. Of the total 45 interviews conducted in Punjab and Canada, I analyze for this article 36 interviews with men that mentioned the role of caste and body in expressing their masculinities. I propose that the degree of caste-visibility is dependent on the spatio-temporal context and differs for different geographical spaces, namely local (in Punjab) and transnational (in Canada). I explore how varying degrees of caste-visibility leads to variation in Jat masculine performances and embodiment. I identify how Jat masculinities intersect with different geographies and (re)produce, rework, and embody their significant markers or attributes. I theorize the concept of caste embodiment asserting that the intersection of historical power and privilege associated with gender and caste are pivotal to the materiality of contemporary caste bodies, which in turn shape individual and collective consciousness and the practices that these result in, including masculine practices. Findings reveal that Jat men's bodies carry and convey upper caste status in different spaces and the contextual expression of caste embodiment overlaps with, and sometimes informs, the hegemonic principles of Jat masculinity. The second article is currently under initial review at the journal *Men and masculinities*.

Article III: Punjabi masculinities and transnational spaces: performance, choice, and othering

In the third article, I analyze interviews conducted with young Jat men in Canada (n=22) who migrated from Punjab as international students. In this article, I extend the findings of the first article – that landownership is a crucial part of Jats' social and subjective identity – to transnational spaces. In the current article, I focus on how land-man relationship figures in the performance of Jat masculinities in transnational spaces in Canada. Building on the concept of centrality of migration and transnational life in defining contemporary Jat masculinities (Gill, 2012; Mooney, 2011, 2013), I examine transnational nature of migrant men's lives within their new cultural situations. I explore how Jat masculinities are negotiated in transnational spaces and how power and privilege associated with the Jat caste are translated and transformed in spaces outside of the original locale (that is, Punjab). I argue that transnationalization operationalizes caste and aspiration as an aspect of migrant men's development of their masculinity. Men existing in transnational contexts negotiate these principles as part of their alignment to a particular ideal of hegemonic masculinity. Findings reveal that landownership in Punjab continues to be a hegemonic ideal for men in transnational spaces, in addition to working and remitting money and making their upper caste identity deliberately visible. The challenges and vulnerabilities faced by men in the new cultural context manifest in the form of 'othering' by their co-ethnic groups. The third article is revised and resubmitted at *Global Networks*.

References:

Appadurai, A. (1986). Introduction. In A. Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (pp. 3-63). Pennsylvania: Cambridge University Press.

Appadurai, A. (1988). Putting Hierarchy in its Place. *Cultural Anthropology*, *3*(1,), 36–49.

Baas, M. (2007). The Language of Migration: The Education Industry versus the Migration Industry. *People and Place, 15*(2), 49-60.

Ballantyne, T. (2006). *Between Colonialism and Diaspora: Sikh Cultural Formations in an Imperial World.* Durham & London: Duke UNiversity Press.

Banerjee-Dube, I. (2010). *Caste in History: Oxford in India Readings: Themes in Indian History*. Oxford University Press.

Barstow, M. A. (1928 (2004 rpt.)). *The Sikhs: An Ethnology.* Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation.

Basch, G., Glick-Schiller, N., & Blanc-Szanton, C. (1994). *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Post-colonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States.* Langhorne, PA: Gordon and Breach.

Baubock, R. (2003). Towards a Political Theory of Migrant Transnationalism. *International Migration Review, 37*(3), 700-723.

Béteille, A. (1996). *Caste, Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in Tanjore Village.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Béteille, A. (2000). The Scheduled Castes: An Inter-regional Perspective. *Journal of Indian School of Political Economy, 12*(3-4), 367-80

Bingley, A. (1916 (1985 rpt.)). *The Sikhs.* Delhi: National Book Shop.

Brod, H., & Kaufman, M. (1994). *Theorizing Masculinities.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Caplan, L. (1995). *Warrior Getlemen: "Gurkhas in the Western Imagination.* Providence: Berghahn.

Cassan, G. (2015). Identity-Based Policies and Identity Manipulation: Evidence from Colonial Punjab. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, 7*(4), 103-131.

Charsley, K. (2005). Unhappy Husbands: Masculinity and Migration in Transnational Pakistani Marriages. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*(11), 85-105.

Chopra, R. (2004). Encountering Masculinity: An Ethnographer's Dilemma. In R. Chopra, C. Osella, & O. Filippo, *South Asian Masculinities: Context of Change, Sites of Continuity* (pp. 36-59). New Delhi: Women Unlimited.

Cloke, P., & Little, J. (1997). *Contested Countryside Cultures*. London: Routledge.

Collier, J. J. (1957). Photography in Anthropology: A Report on Two Experiments. *American Anthropologist, 59*, 843-859.

Connell, Raewyn. *Gender and Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987. Print.

Connell, Raewyn. *Masculinities: Knowledge, Power, and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995. Print.

Connell, R., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender and Society, 19*(6), 829-859.

Cornwall, A., & Lindisfarne, N. (1994). Introduction. In A. Cornwall, & N. Lindisfarne, *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies* (pp. 1-10). London & New York: Routledge.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Darling, M. L. (1925). *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt.* London: Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press.

Das, V., & Singh Uberoi, J. (1971). On the Nature of Caste in India A Review Symposium on Louis Dumont's Homo Hierarchicus: The Elementary Structure of Caste. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, *5*(1), 33–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/006996677100500107

Dirks, N. B. (1989). The Original Caste: Power, Histroy and Hierarchy in South Asia. *Contributions to Indian Sociology, 23*(1), 59-77

Dirks, N. B. (2001). *Castes of Mind: Colonnialism and the Making of Modern India.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Donaldson, M., Hibbins, R., Howson, B., & Pease, B. (2009). *Migrant Men: Critical Studies of Masculinties and the Migration Experience.* New York: Routledge.

Dumont, L. (1971). *Homo Hierarichicus: The Caste System and its Implications.* Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks.

Dusenbery, V. A. (2008). *Sikhs at Large: Religion, Culture, and Politics in Global Perspective.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Fanon, F. (1968). *Black Skin White Masks.* New York: Grove Press.

Forbes-Mewett, H., & Nyland, C. (2008). Cultural Diversity, Relocation, and the Security of International Students at an Internationalized University. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 12*(2), 181-203

Ford, M., & Lyons, L. (2012). *Men and Masculinties in Southeast Asia.* New York: Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1975 (rpt. 1995)). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison.* NY: Vintage Books.

Fuller, C. J. (1979). Gods, Priests and Purity: On the Relation between Hinduism and the Caste System. *Man, 14*(3), 459-476

Fuller, C. J. (1984). *Servants of the Goddess: The Priests of a South Indian Temple.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Gill, H. (2012). *Becoming Men in a Modern City: Masculinity, Migration and Globalization in North India.* Washington DC: American University.

Gold, S. J. (1991). Ethnic Boundaries and Ethnic Entrepreneurship: A Photo-Elicitation Study. *Visual Studies, 6*(2), 9-22.

Gosden, C. (2001). Making Sense: Archaeology and Aesthetics. *World Anthropology, 33*(2), 164

Grewal, J.S. (1994). *The Sikhs of Punjab*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gupta, D. (1981). Caste Infrastructure and Superstructure. *Economic and Political Weekly,* 16 December, 2093-2104

Habib, I. (1976). Jats of Punjab and Sind. In H. Singh, & N. Barrier, *Punjab Past and Present: Essays in Honour of Dr. Ganda Singh* (pp. 92-103). Patiala: Punjabi University.

Harper, D. (2012). *Visual Sociology.* London and New York: Routledge.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (1994). *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration.* Berkeley: University of California Press

Hopkins, P., & Noble, G. (2009). Masculinities in Place: Situated Identities, Relations and Intersectionality. *Social and Cultural Geography, 10*(8), 811-819.

Howson, R. (2006). *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity.* London and New York: Routledge.

Howson, R. (2014). Rethinking Apiration and Hegemonic Masculinity in Transnational Context. *Masculinities and Social Change, 3*(1), 18-35

Jacobsen, K. A., & Myrvold, K. (2015). *Young Sikhs in a Global World: Negotiating Traditions, Identities and Authorities.* Surrey, England: Ashgate.

Jodhka, S. (2006). Caste and Democracy: Assertion and Identity Among the Dalits of Rural Punjab. *Sociological Bulletin, 55*(1), 4-23.

Jodhka, S. (2019). *Caste in Contemporary India.* London and New York: Routledge

Judge, P. S. (2015). Caste Hierarchy, Dominance, and Change in Punjab. *Sociological Bulletin, 64*(1), 55-76.

Kabesh, A. T. (2013). *Postcolonial Masculinities: Emotions, Histories, and Ethics.* Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Kalra, V. S. (2009). Between Emasculation and Hypermasculinity: Theorizing British South Asian Masculinities. *South Asian Popular Culture*, 113-125.

Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with Patriarchy. *Gender and Society, 2*(3), 274-290.

Komter, A. (2001). Heirlooms, Nikes and Bribes: Towards a Sociology of Things. *Sociology, 35*(1), 59-75.

Krishnaswamy, R. (1999). *Effeminism: The Economy of Colonial Desire.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.

Luhrmann, T. (1996). *The Good Parsi.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mahler, S. (2007). Theoretical and Empirical Contributions Toward a Research Agenda for Transnationalism. In M. Smith, & L. Guarnizo, *Transnationalism From Below* (pp. 64-100). New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.

Malhotra, A. (2002). *Gender, Caste, and Religious Identities: Restructuring Class in Colonial Punjab.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Manor, J. (2010). Prologue: Caste and Politics in Recent Times. In R. Kothari (Ed.), *Caste in Indian Politics* (pp. xi-lxi). Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan.

McLeod, W. (1976). *The Evolution of Sikh Community.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

McLeod, W. (2007). *Essays in Sikh History, Tradition and Society.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

McLeod, W. H. (1989). *The Sikhs: History, Religion, and Society.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Messerschmidt, J. W. (2016). *Masculinties in the Making: From the Local to the Global.* Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Messerschmidt, J. W. (2018). *Hegemonic Masculinity: Formulation, Reformulation, and Amplification.* Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Mines, M. (1994). *Public Faces, Private Voices: Community and Individuality in South India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Mookherjee, N. (20014). My Man (Honour) is Lost but I Still have my Man (Faith). In R. Chopra, C. Osella, and F. Osella (Eds.), *South Asian Masculinities: Context of Change, Sites of Continuity* (pp. 131-159). Delhi: Women Unlimited.

Mooney, N. (2011). *Rural Nostalgias and Transnational Dreams: Identity and Modernity among Jat Sikhs.* Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press.

Mooney, N. (2013). The Yeoman Jats of Punjab: Time, Expertise and the Colonial Construction of Jat Sikh Identity. *Anthropologica, 55*(2), 277-290.

Narang, S. S. (1998). *Sikh Politics: A Study of Elite Perspective.* Jalandhar: Punjab Development Society.

Padhi, R. (2012). *Those Who Did Not Die: Impact of the Agrarian Crisis on Women in Punjab.* Delhi: SAGE.

Pande, A. (2017). Mobile Masculinities: Migrant Bangladeshi Men in South Africa. *Gender and Society, 31*(3), 383-406.

Pauwels, L. (2015). *Reframing Visual Social Science: Towards a more Visual Sociology and Anthropology.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Pettigrew, J. (1995). *The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and Guerilla Violence.* London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd.

Puri, H. K. (2003). Scheduled Castes in Sikh Commuunnity: A Historical Perspective. *Economic and Political Weekly, 38*(26), 2693-2701.

Raheja, G. (1989). Centrality, Mutuality and Hierarchy: Shifting Aspects of Inter-Caste Relationships in North India. *Contributions to Indian Sociology, 23*(1), 79-101

Ram, R. (2008). Ravidass Deras and Social Protest: Making Sense of Dalit Consciousness in Punjab. *Journal of Asian Studies, 67*(4), 1341-1364.

Robertson, S. (2013). *Transnational Student-Migrants and the State: The Education-Migration Nexus.* NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Robertson, S., Harris, A., & Baldassar, L. (2018). Mobile Trabsitions: A Conceptual Framework for Researching a Generation on the Move. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 203-217.

Sabo, D., Kupers, T. A., & London, W. (2001). Gender and the Politics of Punishment. In D. Sabo, T. A. Kupers, & W. London, *Prison Masculinities* (pp. 3-18). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism.* New York: Pantheon Books.

Samarendra, P. (2011). Census in Colonial India and the Birth of Caste. *Economic and Political Weekly, 46*(33), 51-58

Sen, S. (2003). Colonial Aversion and Domestic Desires: Blood, race, Sex, and the Decline of Intimacy in the Early British India. In S. Srivastava, *Sexual Sites, Seminal Attitudes: Sexualities, Masculinities and Culture in South Asia* (pp. 49-82). New Delhi: SAGE.

Shiva, V. (1991). *The Violence of Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology and Politics.* London: Zed Books.

Singh, J. (1985). *Perspectives on Sikh Studies.* New Delhi: Guru Nanak Foundation.

Sinha, M. (1995). *Colonial Masculinity: The Manly Englishman and the Effeminate Bengali.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Sofaer, J. (2007). Introduction. In J. Sofaer, *Material Identities* (pp. 1-9). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Srinivas, M. (1966). *Social Change in Modern India.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Srinivas, M. (1996). *Village, Caste, Gender, and Method: Essays in Indian Social Anthropology.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

van Hoven, B., & Horschelmann, K. (2005). *Spaces of Masculinities.* London: Routledge.

Walle, T. (2004). Virginity vs. Decency: Continuity and Change in Pakistani Men's Perception of Sexuality and Women.' In R. Chopra, C. Osella, and F. Osella (Eds.), *South Asian Masculinities: Context of Change, Sites of Continuity* (pp. 96-130). Delhi: Women Unlimited.

Wetherall, M., & Edley, N. (1999). Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity: Imaginary Positions and Psycho-discursive Practices. *Feminism Psychology, 9*, 335.

CHAPTER 2: **Gender, caste, and spatiality: Intersectional emergence of hegemonic masculinities**

Abstract:

In this article, I address hegemonic masculinities and their geographical contingency. I focus on when and how space matters and how hegemonic upper-caste masculinities are socio-spatially produced, constituted, and contested. I draw on relational theories in the geographies of masculinities and feminist political ecology. Current theorizing in these fields highlights the role of space/place/environment in the production of subjectivities such that ideas of gender and space arise as co-constitutive. Drawing from these literatures, in this article, I explore the role of (construction of and power over) land and space; physical/real and abstract/imagined, gendered and casted in the construction and performance of hegemonic masculinities; and the ways hegemonic masculinities respond to vulnerabilities and challenges within said space. Through this conceptualization, I advance the inter-disciplinary discourse in sociology and geography on the intersectional and spatial emergence of the masculine. Using empirical evidence from Punjab (India) I explore the construction of masculinized spaces and their control by dominant-caste men and highlight the mutually constitutive relationships between space, masculinities, and the caste axis of identity.

Keywords: Masculinities, caste, space, feminist political ecology, Punjab

Introduction:

"When the partition happened, my brother, the Subedar got us safely across the border in his army truck. We were allotted land here in this village. It was nothing but rubbles. Your *Bapu* (grandfather) worked the land with his own two hands, he crushed heads of snakes; we then made our farms and houses over it – the Jat alone did all the work, he never tired." Bibi reminisced, beaming with pride for her husband, my grandfather. My grandmother told me the story of the India-Pakistan partition, and how they were forced out of Pakistan's Punjab to what is now Indian Punjab, numerous times when I was a child. Punjab is an agrarian state in North India and, owing to various historical factors during and after British Raj, the 'upper-caste' farming community of Jats own most of the arable land (Cassan, 2015). As in any agrarian-patriarchal society, land (ownership) is fundamental to the Jats' identity – it is never just a commodity (see Unruh, 1998). In this context, land is not a lifeless space – something that is seen and observed, land is an actual process through which people's identities are both created and contested (Saugeres, 2002a; also see van Hoven & Horschelman, 2005). That is, identity is strongly connected to geographical location, land, soil, vegetation, and other biophysical characteristics, and masculine identities are particularly substantiated in instances where, in an encounter, the dualism of the agency of man and passivity of nature is highlighted (Saugeres, 2002a, 2002b; Shrestha, Joshi, & Clement, 2019).

Since the foundational work by Mies and Shiva first came out in 1993, ecofeminists all over the world have seen women as having a special connection with the environment – women as embodying nature and nature as embodying women (see Mies and Shiva, 1993; rpt. 2014). However, in the dominant ideology of some specific cultural contexts – such as in Punjab, men are believed to have an inherently stronger connection with land and nature than women (for example, see Saugeres, 2002a; Cush and Macken-Walsh, 2018). Men's control and mastery over

both women and nature is seen as a classic hallmark of rural hegemonic masculinities (see Berg and Longhurst, 2003; Little and Panelli, 2003; Chowdhry, 2014, 2019). For Bibi, the rubble filled land waiting to be made fertile was the man's space which was masculinized by Bapu shedding his sweat, asserting his claim by literally "crushing the heads of snakes" – it was the proof of his manliness, his virility, his strength. The meanings of land/space come to be defined by people who inhabit it, interact with it, whose subjectivities are (re)produced and contested through everyday relational discourse and practice. In this context, masculinities and space are co-constructed (McDowell and Harris, 2019; Saugeres, 2002a, 2002b).

The assertion of power over space, the act of claiming the land has always been a core trait of hegemonic Punjabi masculinity, the evidence for which could be found in the folk and pop culture of Punjab and north India (Roy, 2017; Mooney, 2013; Chowdhry, 2015). In rural Punjab, a Jat's masculinity is measured by his ability to work on the land and it is even more compounded when he takes "kabza" (forceful possession) of land or stops someone from taking "kabza" of his land. The very act of taking kabza warrants the manifestation of every single principle of Punjabi hegemonic (hyper)masculinity – upper-caste clout, the use of violence, physical strength, control over space, homosocial solidarity and so on (see Chowdhry, 2019, 2015). In Punjab, a Jat's land does not just signify power relations in society, it is itself a medium of cultural power (see Chowdhry, 2019; Chopra, 2009). Therefore, in this setting, a threat of loss of power over land – on which Jats' masculine identities are dependent – would create vulnerabilities and have the potential to pose a threat to the hegemonic masculinity (see Ricciardelli, Maier, and Hannah-Moffat, 2015).

In the current article, I explore the role of – construction of and power over – land and space: physical/real and abstract/imagined, gendered and casted in the construction and

performativity of hegemonic masculinity. Space and its segregation have always been a critical, gendered feature of villages in north India (Chowdhry, 2014, 2019). Physical spatial divisions along caste, religion, and gender lines ensure the exclusion or limited participation of women and lower-caste men in different spaces (Chowdhry, 2014, 2019). In Punjab's agrarian-patriarchal context, land ownership or power over space is crucial to the configuration of difference in terms of gender and caste as well as in expressing the intersectional, and sometimes conflicting, ways gender, caste, and space come into existence. Therefore, to undermine the role of space in an empirical research on agrarian masculinities, such as in Punjab, would be a tremendous oversight. In my research, using the village setting as the fundamental spatial unit of analysis, I interpret spaces within it – particularly arable land – as active constituents and determinants of producing hegemonic masculinities based on caste and gender difference as well as arenas wherein such differences are contested and challenged (see also Bondi & Davidson, 2003; Massey, 2005; Nightingale, 2011). I address the situated and dynamic ways masculine identities are constructed in and through land/space, as well as discuss how particular places become gendered as masculine by employing the relational mode of conceptualizing space. I integrate feminist political ecology in my analysis and draw upon literature from geographies of masculinities as I write from the sociological perspective of masculinity studies. I conclude the analysis by offering a snapshot of the dynamic process of threat to hegemonic masculinity and how men respond to and strategize the performance of their masculinities in response to vulnerabilities in different ways.

Theoretical Framework:

Geographies and spaces of hegemonic masculinities:

Based on the conceptual framework of hegemonic masculinities and critical studies of men and masculinities (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Mac an Ghail, 1996), the imperative to study masculinities as spatialized, emplaced and located in particular contexts is especially encouraged by geographers studying men and masculinities (Gorman-Murray & Hopkins, 2013). Even though "the late 1990s saw something of a flurry of geographical research on masculinity, male identity and men" (Longhurst, 2000:400), feminist geographers ubiquitously agree that 'Spaces of masculinities' by Bettina Van Hoven and Kathrin Horschelmann (2005) represents a landmark contribution to the study of the spatial dimensions of masculinities that encouraged researchers to study men as gendered rather than simply empirical subjects (Van Hoven & Horschelmann, 2005; Hopkins & Gorman-Murray, 2019).

Literature on masculinities and geographies suggests that major studies pertaining to space, place, and masculinities have been in the field of rural masculinities (Brandth & Haugen, 2016; van Hoven and Horschelmann, 2005; Little, 2002; Cloke, 2005; Brandth, 2016). The interest in rural masculinities and space has been so prolific that, in the last few decades, the field of rural gender identity research has come to be dominated by studies of men and masculinities (Brandth, 2016; Brandth & Haugen, 2016; Bryant and Garnham, 2015; Bye, 2003; Little and Leyshon, 2003; Peter et al., 2000; Pini, 2008; Saugeres, 2002a, 2002b; Stenbacka, 2011; Cush and Macken-Walsh, 2018). Researchers have analyzed the fundamental connections between rurality and masculinities through a distinction between 'the masculine and the rural' and 'the rural in the masculine' (Campbell and Bell, 2000: 540). The masculine in the rural refers to how masculinities are constituted in different kinds of rural spaces, while rural in the masculine refers to the way the rural symbolically constitutes ideas of masculinities regardless of location (Campbell & Bell, 2000). In this article, I focus on the masculine in the rural and explore how

hegemonic Jat/farmer masculinities are constructed in relation to the arable land. In the sociological literature, male farmer identity has been largely characterized as hegemonic, scripted by narratives of hard work, tenacity, self-reliance, and provision, reinforced by men's position as head of and 'breadwinner' for the farm household (Brandth, 1995; Saugeres, 2002a, 2002b; Shortall and Byrne, 2009; Cush and Macken, 2018). However, most of the existing research pertains to rural masculinities in the global North and there is still a paucity of research on different masculinities across various ruralities of the global South – particularly South Asia (barring a few exceptions such as Chopra, Osella, & Osella, 2004; Chowdhry, 2019). While the core traits of rural farmers' identity remain consistent across cultures, rurality across geographies is not the same. Different ruralities shape the performance of masculinities and femininities differently depending on the socio-spatial context that reinforces, transgresses, and (re)defines gender identities (for example, see Datta, 2008). The study of rural masculinities in the global South sits at the intersections of gender with different other structural factors such as caste, patriarchy, patrilineality etc. that augment the complexity of the social construct.

A crucial signifier of rural masculinity is its interaction with the nature and wilderness (for example, Shisler and Sbicca, 2019). Space outside the confines of the domestic is vital for the expression of masculinities and the testing of rural manhood. Effective encounter with nature is also something that transfers onto men's bodies and is visible in the physical fitness of the rural masculine body (Little, 2002, 2006) marking the male body as the default, material, visible image of rurality (for example, Chopra, Osella, & Osella, 2004; Chopra, 2009; Mooney, 2011; Shisler and Sbicca, 2019). Here, in agrarian societies, nature in the form of arable land becomes the space where rural agrarian masculinities are constructed, tested, contested, and reinforced. For example, Chopra (2004) states that rural Punjabi men's identity is "crafted through and

rooted in agrarian ways of life." According to Chopra (2004), the landowner (Jat) masculinity, in the countryside, is produced through the act of farming and cultivation of land. On the farm, "driving the tractor is an act in which masculine hierarchy is articulated" (Chopra, 2004:46).

Similarly, Chowdhry (2019) also underscores the centrality of arable land for men's existence and identity in the context of north India's rural milieu. In essence, in agrarian societies such as Punjab, arable land is the space where hierarchies and inequalities based on gender as well as caste are produced, performed, and reproduced. Many researchers have also highlighted the hegemonic character of rural masculinity such as Campbell, Bell, and Finney (2006:3) who, in their book, suggest that the most recognizable images of rural masculinities – such as woodsmen, farmers, hunters, fishermen – render other aspects of masculinities invisible, particularly those that contradict or deviate from these images. In the Punjabi countryside, per Chopra (2004), the Jat farmer and landowner often informs the template to which young boys and men measure their masculine selves (see also Gill, 2012; Chowdhry, 2019). Thus, traditional Jat identity is in accordance with what Connell (1995) defines as hegemonic masculinity – a certain set of central traits that are socio-culturally exalted over other types of masculinities. For a Punjabi Jat farmer, similar to rural farmer masculinity across different cultures, the hegemonic masculine principles are having/controlling a farmland, attending to the physical demands of farming through hard work; relentless overcoming of difficult conditions; a capacity for tenacity in the face of challenges; and occupying the breadwinner role for the household (see also Liepins, 1998; Saugeres, 2002a, 2002b; Ni Laoire, 2005; Cush and Macken-Walsh, 2018).

Feminist political ecology (FPE):

The concept of ecofeminism (Mies and Shiva, 1993) puts forth that women are thought to have a special inherent connection with the nature and environment marked a turning point in

gender and environment studies. By focusing on the subordination of nature and equating the passivity and submissiveness of nature with the feminine (women's bodies, spaces, and sexuality), ecofeminism provided a much-needed interdisciplinary perspective to examine the intersections of gender and the environment (Mies and Shiva, 1993; Shiva, 1988). More recently, rooted in geography, scholarship in feminist political ecology (FPE) has further complicated the narratives promulgated by ecofeminists; of intricate linkages between women and nature by moving beyond the simplistic binaries of nature-women relationships and engaging a more intersectional and relational approach to nature-society relations (e.g., Elmhirst, 2015; Elmhirst et al., 2017; Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, & Wangari, 1996; Nightingale, 2009, 2011; Rose & Johnson, 2017). Most of the work attested as FPE focuses on gender dynamics of power across and within socio-natures (Elmhirst, 2011). Some scholars have also engaged FPE in analyses of subjectivities (for example, Nightingale, 2011) and have established the role of dynamic interrelations between gender, ethnicity, caste, and landscape in shaping the impacts of access to and commodification of natural resources (see Elmhirst et al., 2017). FPE acknowledges the significance of socio-cultural regimes and meanings that shape social relations and gendered subjectivities; its scope is not merely limited to the simplistic understanding of gendered nature-societal relationships through the lens of material needs and access to natural resources (Mollett & Faria, 2013). Nightingale (2011) and others (for example, Elmhirst et al., 2017) have shown that FPE can effectively provide the tools for a nuanced and reflexive analysis of various forms of political agencies that arise from complex subjectivities such as gender, race, class, caste, sexuality.

Like other socially constructed phenomenon, masculinities intersect with different structural factors as well as with other forms of identification; and current theorization in FPE

seems well-positioned to explore how gender, rurality, and landownership coalesce with each other (Bryant & Pini, 2011; see also Nightingale, 2011) and give rise to differentiated forms of masculinities. Therefore, while scholarship of FPE evolves, there remains space for an inquiry that excavates how access to or ownership over social and natural resources shapes/constructs the hegemonic masculinities as well as the masculine interactions with everyday lived experiences (which brings into conversation the construction of rural hegemonic masculinities). Although feminist political ecology scholars have yet to engage directly with masculinities (except for a couple of scholars, for example: Shrestha, Joshi, & Clement, 2019) and have yet to connect with geographic literatures concerning men, the body of work appears germane to incorporate critiques and analyses of masculinities and point out the ways that these sociocultural positions contribute to larger nature-society/land-man discourses. FPE draws from post-structural and relational theory wherein social difference is understood as dynamic and perpetually constructed out of situated, everyday practices and social relations (Nightingale, 2006, 2011; Elmhirst, 2011, 2015). That is, social identities/differences are constituted and materialize differently in different contexts, warranting special attention on space that, in turn, is constituted out of the practices that take place within such space (Massey, 2005; Harris, 2006; Longhurst et al., 2008). As Farrugia (2014:295) notes 'identity construction takes place in and through the making of *places*,' which means that social divisions, hierarchies, and distinctions, impacted by and impacting the identity, should also be viewed as emplaced (Cassidy & McGrath, 2015). In the present article's context, an intersectional FPE approach in studying agrarian/rural masculinities, therefore, does not undermine the originary environmental/spatial context but highlights it and follows its unfolding as the relation between man and nature/land extends onto the social realm, and eventually get ingrained into individual and collective subjectivities. Given

the geographic trend for FPE to focus on the global South (Mollett and Faria, 2013), a conceptual FPE framework is especially befitting to use in the socio-spatial context of Punjab.

While FPE has provided a renewed focus on subjectivities in understanding gendered access and control, some scholars advocate for a posthumanist relational ontology that seeks to centralize non-human "others" along with the human subjects instead of considering "nature" simply as an objectified/passive backdrop against which social relations take place (Sundberg, 2014; see also Asker and Andrews, 2020). Although I consider nature/space as an active constituent of masculine subjectivities, employing or expanding from a posthumanist perspective, however, is beyond the scope of the current article. Here, I look at how masculine subjectivities are produced and respond to vulnerabilities through multiple and intersecting exercise of power within socio-natural spaces (Braun, 2006).

Methods:

For the present study, I recruited 23 men participants from different villages in Punjab initially through recruitment posters, social media, and later through chain-referral. All participants belonged to the upper 'Jat' caste. Participants' age ranged from 20 to 32 years. I conducted in-depth face-to-face semi structured interviews in public places of participants' choice and convenience. Nine of the 23 interviews took place in a city – however, all nine participants resided in nearby villages and visited the city daily for work or education. In the city, interviews took place in cafes, parks, or the university campus. Of the 14 interviews conducted in the rural settings (villages), five turned into a focus group discussion as the participants were in the same space and were willing to talk. In the villages, due to lack of co-ed public spaces, I conducted four interviews in the villages' common *satth*, two in the playground, and the rest at the 'motor' (tube wells for irrigation) in the fields. Due to the distance of the motors from the

villages' residential area, non-availability of public transport, and relative isolation from each other, I asked a friend to accompany me and drive me to the locations. Their presence, however, did not affect data collection, nor impose on the confidentiality of the interview.

I used an interview guide which, in most cases, was given up and the conversation followed emergent pathways. In my conversations with participants, I particularly focused on land and masculinities and proceeded with caution in unpacking the ways in which gender, caste, and spatiality interact. I asked open-ended questions on men's notions of masculinity, how they perceived their relationship with the land, if land was important to them, and so on. All interviews were audio-recorded, and the length of interviews ranged from 1-2 hours. There were no discernible differences in the content of interviews and the focus group. All interviews were conducted in Punjabi and translated and transcribed verbatim with minimum impairment to participants' vernacular. I use pseudonyms in lieu of participants' real names to preserve anonymity and confidentiality. I analyzed the data manually by initially using open coding. Subsequently, I used axial coding by reading, re-reading, grouping, and colour-coding different themes and patterns as they emerged. For example, any references to land in relation to men's identity would fall under the code 'land-man relationship,' references to the motor or other male-exclusive spaces would fall under the code 'masculinized spaces' and so on. I then wrote memos to link, understand, and draw out meanings from the coded bits and themes in light of existing research.

Findings:

FPE argues that environmental knowledges and accessibility are shaped by social, political, and economic contexts, and that the contexts themselves are gendered (Elmhirst, 2011; Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, & Wangari, 1996). Throughout the findings, to illustrate various

gendered complexities associated with 'claim over' the space/land, I present three interwoven themes – (i) Land and masculine identity; (ii) Construction of masculinized spaces; and (iii) Hegemonic masculinities and responding to vulnerabilities.

Land and hegemonic masculine identity: 'sons of the soil'

In Punjab, normative social differences of gender as well as caste are founded on land ownership (by upper-caste men). Like most agrarian societies, land ownership in Punjab is based on patrilineality – sons inherit their fathers' land and have exclusive access to and claim over resources (Purewal, 2020; Chowdhry, 2009, 2019). Even though daughters/women are also legally entitled to the land, they rarely claim their share – societal and familial backlash, the question of upper-caste honor, and negative sanctions are some reasons that discourage women from owning land (Chowdhry, 2019; see also Purewal, 2020). Punjab's agrarian landscape is not a priori masculinized, women are an integral part of the landscape (Chowdhry, 2009, 2019; Singh, 2010). But the dominant hetero-patriarchal setting has appropriated and claimed the landscape as an ostensibly masculine/masculinized setting and agriculture an exclusively masculine experience; one that is (re)produced on specific historical narratives of land-man relation, gender inequality, caste dominance, and the control over land/space. Therefore, men are largely the de facto owners and managers of the land; and the meanings of the space are constructed in and through the male bodies and vice-versa.

Highlighting the unique relationship of land and men and the cruciality of working in the land, Sharan, 32, said:

> "I have seen my grandfather and father work in these fields. It's easier now but back then they didn't have tractors or motors (tubewells). They did back-breaking work and were proud of it. In my view, they were the real Jats, the sons of the soil… we don't do half the work as them and look for the easy ways out. That's why people are selling their lands

> now and moving abroad. The belief that 'land is Jat's mother' doesn't hold now. They are selling their mother *laughs*. I don't know how they live without their roots."

According to Sharan, a connection with the land is essential to keep a man rooted. A 'real' Jat's identity is intimately linked to the land, is reinforced in the practice of agriculture, and through claim over the space. It is in resonance with the anecdote I mentioned in the beginning about Bapu's masculinity that claim over the land and the ability to work on it is the proof of a man's virility, strength, and manhood. The relationship between land and man could be understood through an FPE perspective which adds a gendered power dimension – in access and ownership of land, the ability to manipulate the natural resource, and everyday practices in relation to the physical characteristics of the environment. Together each reinforces and constructs the Jat masculinity as a hegemonic ideal in the rural agrarian context that other men aspire to achieve (see Chopra, 2004; Chowdhry, 2009).

The hegemonic masculine principle prescribes and rewards men, particularly Jat men, to assert and exercise their power over land by working on it. There are negative social sanctions for those who sell their land – the very essence of their identity. Selling the land and going abroad is an "easy way out" according to Sharan. The inextricability of land-man identity is apparent from Sharan's comment that men, who turn the land into a commodity, are no longer connected to their roots and therefore are not "real Jats." A real Jat man would look for no alternative to the land – he will work on it no matter what. Here, the construction of the subject position of "real" farmers emerges in a flow of discursive meanings which have normalizing and hegemonizing tendencies in the present context. In this vein, Malkit, 26, said:

> "There were these Lambars who sold their land and the whole family moved to the nearby town. Shortly after, their old man died; my father says he died of humiliation and a broken heart [because his son sold their land] and I think he's right. It's a little different for us but for our grandfathers, selling the land is unthinkable. It is like selling who you are."

Like Sharan, Malkit also comments on how the relationship of men with the land has changed over time – but ownership of land and working on it remains a common thread in Jat's masculine identities across the past and present resonating with the rural hegemonic masculinity of a farmer (see Ni Liaore year… etc.). The unique relationship of land and men is apparent from both these quotes, albeit they both point out that it was stronger in the past; and contemporary Jat masculinity is merely an extension of it. These findings demonstrate the establishment of a composite hegemonic masculine identity drawing on constructions of farmers as men who, in addition to controlling the land, exhibit tenacity in the face of challenging environmental and market conditions.

Construction of masculinized spaces:

The spatial structure of Punjab's villages is crucial to its caste and gender relations. In a typical village, the residential area is surrounded by arable land, owned mostly by the Jats of the village, with link roads connecting villages to the main roads/cities. The houses are usually aggregated in the center, with segregation based on mostly caste. There are tube wells scattered over the arable land – typically one tube well for every family-owned farmland (more, if the land spans over hundreds of acres). Tube wells extract groundwater with the help of a motor used for irrigation. A modest outbuilding/brick shack is usually constructed over the motor to shield it from the elements and theft. Locally, the building itself and the area surrounding the space is called 'motor,' or 'tubewell,' or '*Bambi*' in Punjabi. Apart from serving the purely functional purpose of irrigation, the motor provides a space where hegemonic masculinities are (re)produced, asserted, and sometimes contested and where women's presence is rare. It is a masculinized space (see also Chowdhry, 2014). In fact, women were an important part of this space until recently (a few decades ago when wells were used to irrigate the land; there were

these open spaces – they used to carry food to the fields for men of their family and they'd eat, spend time, help men out in that space (Singh, 2010). But with the mechanization of agriculture, and with the confinement of tube wells within four walls, women were gradually barred from that space and it was wholly constructed as a masculinized space. As one participant explained

> "First of all, it's not much work now – we only have to press a button and wait for the fields to fill up. Also, the electricity for tube wells is usually supplied at night, so we must get up at odd hours to water our fields. There's no work for women to do there." (Balwant, 26)

The change in technology led to the expulsion of women from these functional areas and these spaces were gradually converted into spaces of work and leisure only for men – somewhere to pass the time while the fields are watered. The temporal change in irrigation process from day to night could also be responsible for women's non-participation. Multiple dimensions of power in terms of space, time, and cultural changes made women invisible from the agrarian setting and altered the nature of work in the countryside. In this context, Bye (2003) argues that when, due to change in work practices, young rural men no longer have strong connections to traditional masculine work identities, many will construct their masculine identities at other sites and consequently, leisure activities assume an even greater significance. In this vein, in the present setting, men not only visit the motor for irrigation, but to regularly bond, socialize, and drink. In the eyes of men who spend time at the motor, the motor is imbued with multiple meanings, relationships, and practices which illustrates gendered rationales for spending most of their time there. Kulvir, 23 years of age, who goes daily to the motor, says:

> "This is a place for us [the men] to relax and hang out after work [in the fields]. There's nothing for me to do at home with the women. So, we come here – sometimes we play cards, drink, listen to music, watch films – sometimes blue movies [porn] *laughs* it doesn't look nice if we do it at home – there are women you know, our mothers, sisters."

The motor is intimately interconnected – spatially, socially, and ecologically – to its immediately proximal environments as well as to the male bodies. It is within and through such spaces that boundaries/borders are constructed along gender lines – what happens on either side of these boundaries is not to cross over to the other side. Masculine activities/practices render the space inaccessible to women since women do not (or are discouraged from) partake in any of these activities. In Kulvir's words, the activities of masculine leisure and work can only take place outside the feminine/domestic sphere – a sphere commonly delineated for women. In this way, the gendered division of labor (at home, in the fields) leads to the construction of certain spaces as exclusively masculinized –here, the fields and, as an extension, the motor. As Nightingale (2011:154) puts it: "It is the symbolic meanings of particular spaces, practices and bodies that are (re)produced through everyday, embodied activities and have profound consequences of ecological processes and social difference." Even though the motor only serves the essential function it was supposed to serve (of irrigation), it is also closely enrolled in the social aspect and is a crucial space for the enactment and implementation of gender and power relations (see also Nightingale, 2003, 2005, 2006); and where women are seen as outsiders and anomalies. The presence of such exclusive all-male spaces signifies the symbolic and material dimensions of male power as "they validate men's power over women, while asserting the hierarchies of caste and class" (Chowdhry, 2019:159).

Contesting intra-spatial boundaries:

As motors are converted into spaces of leisure for men, their outlook and functional purpose is changing to suit the expression and assertion of modern consumerist masculinities. Motors have become status symbols, the markers of Jat masculinity in the rural agrarian Punjab. For instance, Rana (29), has the most "luxuriant" motor of all neighbouring motors and is the

host of most evening gatherings. The walls are cemented, decorated, the water reservoirs (to catch the heavy flow of water before it lets into the fields) are enlarged and converted into small (swimming) pools, the building is equipped with music systems, and mud *chullahs* (stoves) to cook food – mostly meat. 'This is our expert cook,' Rana said pointing toward Jassi. When I asked if he also cooks at home, Jassi laughed and said, 'No, I don't cook at home. It's not like I make *rotis* [flat bread] here; it's only chicken, goat, or sometimes *shikar* [game].' So, while the motor serves to emphasize hegemonic masculine principle of asserting and making visible claim over space, it also facilitates its contestation as is apparent from men doing the supposedly feminine activity of cooking in these spaces. However, the contestation also has certain limitations as only cooking meat is acceptable. The perceived domesticity, and hence femininity, of the cooking activity is removed by only cooking meat and nothing else (see, for example, Love & Sulikowski, 2018 for a discussion on meat, masculinity, and power). In this way, everyday dynamic and material practices in these spaces become crucial sites for constitution and expression of masculine gendered identities, or for challenging normative subjectivities.

Because Jat men own most of the arable land, motor – as a space of work and leisure – remains a space exclusive to them. When I asked if a woman would (be allowed to) participate in activities at the motor, men unequivocally opposed the idea. Their responses varied from slight pessimism such as "there's nothing for women to do here," to strong negative sanctions such as "no respectable *(shareef)* Jat woman will be seen at the motor alone." This further serves to reinforce the claim that "spaces are not socially neutral" (Nightingale, 2011:155) but are dynamically engaged in creating difference and (re)producing varying forms of exclusion along gender and caste lines (see also Bondi and Davidson, 2003; Massey, 2005). However, in some instances, other-caste men (mostly farmhands) and women are admitted into the space (see

Chowdhry, 2014). For example, Tara (24) said: "some people do that. They bring in girls here [for sexual encounters]." Therefore, the motor becomes not only a space for men to assert their masculinities by engaging in displays of heterosexuality, but also a space where gendered boundaries are blurred temporarily on men's discretion – boundaries, which otherwise remain closed to women. It is in this way that power laden boundaries within such spaces are produced that may be open to contestation, but also serve to keep those social inequalities intact the transformation of which can potentially have significant consequences for the normative social order (Nightingale, 2011).

Hegemonic masculinities and responding to vulnerabilities:

Hegemonic masculinities are conceptualized as fluid constructions that are contingent upon space, place, as well as perceptions of risk and vulnerabilities by men (Ricciardelli, Maier, & Hannah-Moffat, 2015). In the present context, when vulnerabilities arise from threats to loss of land and by extension hegemonic masculinity, men respond to them in different ways. Jassi points to a decrepit looking motor a few hundred meters away – "that's where [name removed] drank poison [pesticide] over two months ago and ended his life." Away from the village, in the fields, the motor not only serves as a space to assert and reproduce hegemonic masculinity – by making the claim over space visible, bonding in a homosocial setting, and constructing masculinized spaces – but, unfortunately, also a dangerous/precarious space where sometimes vulnerabilities to masculinity manifest themselves. "He was heavily indebted. They [the bank] were going to take his land away. *Zameen to bina kahda Jatt* [what's a Jat without his land]; where will his children go? or so he must have thought." Jassi, once again, reasserts the inextricability of land-man relationship and the importance of land for a Jat's identity. According to Brandth and Haugen (2016), for masculinities that are defined primarily in terms of work-

based characteristics, such as Jat masculinities, any perturbation in the existing structure may challenge the established masculine order. In this case, the loss of land threatens the hegemonic masculine principle of being a provider for the family and of losing control over the land, which is in resonance with studies that show when men confront circumstances beyond their control, the threat of status loss or their felt inability to fulfil internalized masculine ideals can result in depression and suicide (Ni Laoire, 2005; Alston, 2012; Roy, Tremblay & Robertson, 2014; Bryant & Garnham, 2015; Kumar, 2017). Here, the lack of power over circumstances puts men in a vulnerable position where they can either succumb to circumstances or come out stronger by utilizing available social resources.

In their study on strategic masculinities, Ricciardelli, Maier, and Hannah-Moffat (2015) have shown that masculinities, risk/vulnerabilities, and risk strategies are mutually constitutive. How men strategize their masculine performances in the face of risks depends on how they perceive them and what resources they have available to deal with the said vulnerabilities. Prem, in this vein, said:

> "We all here are hanging on by a thread. Who knows whose turn is going to be next. Anything can happen when you are depressed and left alone [at the motor] with your thoughts in the middle of the night. But when you have a circle with whom you can talk, it makes a difference." (Prem, 28)

Prem speaks ubiquitously to the challenges faced by the farmers and its effect on individual subjectivities. He underlines the importance of having a 'support group' in order to talk about their shared experiences. So, in a way, the motor also proves to be a space that serves as a support mechanism for men, where they can seek help, talk amongst themselves, and where tragedies are averted. Responding to vulnerabilities by confiding in each other further strengthens homosocial solidarity, in turn reinforcing the notion of masculinities of the individual members of the homosocial group. Therefore, in its broadest connotation, the space

(the land and the motor) should not merely be understood as a passive backdrop against (or in relation to) which hegemonic masculinities are enacted or reinforced, but as a space actively involved in rendering masculinities as multiples, shaping the experience, performance, and construction of masculinities in diverse ways (Lohokare, 2020).

Conclusion:

In Punjab's agrarian setting, arable land and spaces within it involve meanings, concepts, and signifying practices that produce and reinforce gender identities – particularly masculine identities. In this article, regarding the village setting of Punjab as the spatial unit of analysis, I focused on how masculinities and spaces are co-constituted in the agrarian-patriarchal context. I explored, using the theoretical framework of feminist political ecology and rural, hegemonic masculinities, how gender, rurality, and landownership coalesce with each other and the ways in which hegemonizing principles of masculinities are reinforced and contested within these spaces. By problematizing and addressing the intricate relationship of arable land and Jat masculinities, my research enabled an analysis of the practices by which attributes and behaviors of Jat men are selectively assembled, normalized, and reproduced as signifying the character or qualities of "real" farmers or hegemonic Jat masculinities. My findings show that as men actively negotiate, contest, and acquiesce to differential gender norms and power hierarchies, the boundaries of social categorizations based on gender are sometimes blurred and other times, reinforced.

The construction and gendering of specific spaces (such as the motor) in the agrarian setting as masculine, with strict gender and caste boundaries, demonstrates an unmitigated power and control of (Jat) men over said spaces, reinforcing the hegemonic masculine principles. From an FPE perspective, such spaces impose social distance and limit the interaction of those who have no control over the agrarian land and space resources – women and other-caste men – with

those who control these resources, i.e., Jat men. In this way, these spaces and their associated practices ensure the preservation and policing of traditional power hierarchies based on gender and caste (see also, Chowdhry, 2014). Masculinized spaces not only serve to reinforce and reproduce the hegemonic masculine principle of controlling/having power over the space but also function as arenas where different forms of masculinities, besides hegemonic masculinities, become manifest – as is clear from examples on men doing the supposedly feminine work (of cooking at the motor), men accepting and dealing with vulnerabilities that arise from the threat of or actual loss of land which puts their hegemonic principle of being a breadwinner and a real farmer/Jat at risk. Within the same space, stemming from differential perceptions of risk and vulnerabilities, different forms of masculinities arise – some men utilize homosocial solidarity to get through the difficult times, others face existential predicaments based on the perceived threat to their reliable social identity. Therefore, in addition to exhibiting traits of traditional, hegemonic farmer masculinity, men within these spaces are also increasingly reflexive, willing to seek help, and are expressive – suggesting an incorporation of alternative masculinities.

Although an unpronounced theme, the disenfranchisement/marginalization of women by men warrants a special attention. In their minimal mention of women, men referred to women only in relation to the reproduction/assertion of their masculine attributes such as heterosexuality. Within the agrarian-patriarchal context, with their culturally assigned subordinate position in relation to men, women's entry into the masculinized spaces is often met with resistance. The exclusion of women from, what men constructed as, masculine spaces and women's partial admittance only on men's discretion further endorses the ubiquitous prevalence of men's control and power over the space and the lack of appropriate avenues for the expression of women's agency in the present context.

Limitations:

Although the findings of my research resonate with the larger literature on rural and hegemonic masculinities, far from determining an unproblematic generalization of all men, males, or individuals asserting and performing rural/agrarian masculinities, they remain socio-spatially bound to the specific context of Punjab.

References:

Alston, M. (2012). Rural male suicide in Australia. *Social Science & Medicine*, *74*(4), 515–522. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2010.04.036

Asker, C., & Andrews, G. J. (2020). The understated turn: Emerging interests and themes in Canadian posthumanist geography. *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe Canadien*, *64*(4), 551–563. https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12639

Berg, L. D., & Longhurst, R. (2003). Placing Masculinities and Geography. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *10*(4), 351–360. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369032000153322

Bondi, L. & Davidson, J. (2003). Troubling the place of gender. In Anderson, K., Domosh, M., Pile, S., & Thrift, N. (Ed.). *Handbook of Cultural Geography*. SAGE, pp. 325-342

Brandth, B. (2016). Rural masculinities and fathering practices. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *23*(3), 435–450. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2015.1013454

Brandth, B., & Haugen, M. S. (2016). Rural Masculinity. In. Shucksmith, M., Brown, D. (eds.). *Routledge International Handbook of Rural Studies.* pp. 412-423

Braun, B. (2006). Environmental issues: Global natures in the space of assemblage. *Progress in Human Geography*, *30*(5), 644–654. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132506070180

Bryant, L., & Garnham, B. (2015). The fallen hero: Masculinity, shame and farmer suicide in Australia. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *22*(1), 67–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2013.855628

Bye, L. M. (2003). Masculinity and rurality at play in stories about hunting. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography*, *57*(3), 145–153. https://doi.org/10.1080/00291950310002125

Campbell, H., & Bell, M. M. (2000). The Question of Rural Masculinities*. *Rural Sociology*, *65*(4), 532–546. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1549-0831.2000.tb00042.x

Cassan, G. (2015). Identity-Based Policies and Identity Manipulation: Evidence from Colonial Punjab. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, *7*(4), 103–131. https://doi.org/10.1257/pol.20130290

Cassidy, A., & McGrath, B. (2015). Farm, place and identity construction among Irish farm youth who migrate. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *37*, 20–28. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2014.11.006

Connell, R.W. (1995). *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity

Connell, R.W., & Messerschmidt, J.W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society, 19*(6), 829-859

Chopra, R., Osella, C., & Osella, F. (2004). *South Asian masculinities: Context of change, sites of continuity*. Women Unlimited an associate of Kali for Women.

Chopra, R. (2004). Encountering Masculinity: An Ethnographer's Dilemma. In R. Chopra, C. Osella, & O. Filippo, *South Asian Masculinities: Context of Change, Sites of Continuity*. New Delhi: Women Unlimited, pp. 36-59

Chopra, R. (2009). Lives in Dialogue: Discourses of Masculinity in India. *Indian Journal of Human Development*, *3*(1), 119–132. https://doi.org/10.1177/0973703020090106

Chopra, R. (2011). Local lives, global dialogues: Shifting discourses of masculinity in India. In Cornwall, A., Edström, J., & Greig, A. (Eds.) *Men and development: Politicizing masculinities*. Zed Books, pp. 139-152

Chowdhry, P. (2014). Masculine Spaces: Rural Male Culture in North India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, *49*(47), 41–49.

Chowdhry, P. (2015). Popular Perceptions of Masculinity in Rural North Indian Oral Traditions. *Asian Ethnology*, *74*(1). https://doi.org/10.18874/ae.74.1.02

Chowdhry, P. (2019). *Gender, Power and Identity: Essays on Masculinities in Rural North India.* Orient Black Swan

Cloke, P. (2005). Masculinity and rurality. In van Hoven, B., & Horschelman, K. (eds.) *Spaces of masculinities,* pp. 45-62. London: Routledge

Cush, P., & Macken-Walsh, Á. (2018). Reconstituting Male Identities through Joint Farming Ventures in Ireland: Male farmer identity and joint farm ventures. *Sociologia Ruralis*, *58*(4), 726–744. https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12212

Datta, A. (2008). Spatializing performance: Masculinities and femininities in a 'fragmented' field. *Gender, Place and Culture, 19*(5), 578-599

Elmhirst, R. (2011). Introducing new feminist political ecologies. *Geoforum*, *42*(2), 129–132. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.01.006

Elmhirst, R. (2015). Feminist political ecology. In Perrault, T., Bridge, G. and McCarthy, J. (eds). *Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*. London: Routledge, pp. 519–530.

Elmhirst, R., Siscawati, M., Basnett, B. S., & Ekowati, D. (2017). Gender and generation in engagements with oil palm in East Kalimantan, Indonesia: Insights from feminist political

ecology. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, *44*(6), 1135–1157. https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2017.1337002

Farrugia, D. (2014). Towards a spatialised youth sociology: The rural and the urban in times of change. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *17*(3), 293–307. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2013.830700

Gorman-Murray, A. (2013). Urban Homebodies: Embodiment, Masculinity, and Domesticity in Inner Sydney: Embodiment, Masculinity, and Domesticity. *Geographical Research*, *51*(2), 137–144. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-5871.2011.00750.x

Hopkins, P., & Gorman-Murray, A. (2019). Masculinities and geography, moving forward: Men's bodies, emotions and spiritualities. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *26*(3), 301–314. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1552560

Hopkins, P., & Noble, G. (2009). Masculinities in place: Situated identities, relations and intersectionality. *Social & Cultural Geography*, *10*(8), 811–819. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649360903305817

Kumar, N. (2017). *Unraveling Farmer Suicides in India: Egoism and Masculinity in Peasant Life*. Oxford University Press.

Liepins, R. (2000). Making men: The construction & representation of agriculture based masculinities in Australia & New Zealand. *Rural Sociology, 65*(4), 605-620

Little, J. (2002). Rural geography: Rural gender identity and the performance of masculinity and femininity in the countryside. *Progress in Human Geography, 26*(5), 665-670

Little, J., & Leyshon, M. (2003). Embodied rural geographies: Developing research agendas. *Progress in Human Geography*, *27*(3), 257–272. https://doi.org/10.1191/0309132503ph427oa

Little, J., & Panelli, R. (2003). Gender research in rural geography. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *10*(3), 281–289. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369032000114046

Little, J. (2007). Constructing nature in the performance of rural heterosexualities. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 25*(5), 851-866

Lohokare, M. (2020). Locating critical masculinities theory: Masculinities in space and place. In Gottzen, L., Mellstrom, U., & Shefer, T. (eds.). *Routledge international handbook of masculinity studies,* pp.

Longhurst, R. (1995). Viewpoint: The Body and Geography. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *2*(1), 97–106. https://doi.org/10.1080/09663699550022134

Love, H. J., & Sulikowski, D. (2018). Of Meat and Men: Sex Differences in Implicit and Explicit Attitudes Toward Meat. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *9*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00559

Mac an Ghaill, M. (1996). *Understanding Masculinities: Social Relations and Cultural Arenas.*

McDowell, L., & Harris, A. (2019). Unruly bodies and dangerous spaces: Masculinity and the geography of 'dreadful enclosures.' *Urban Studies*, *56*(2), 419–433. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098018810320

Mies, M., & Shiva, V. (1993 rpt. 2014). *Ecofeminism.* London and New York: Zed Books

Mollett, S., & Faria, C. (2013). Messing with gender in feminist political ecology. *Geoforum*, *45*, 116–125. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2012.10.009

Mooney, N. (2013). Dancing in Diaspora Space: Bhangra, Caste, and Gender among Jat Sikhs. In *Sikh Diaspora* (pp. 279–318). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004257238_014

Ni Laoire, C. (2005). 'You're Not a Man at All!': Masculinity, Responsibility, and Staying on the Land in Contemporary Ireland. *Irish Journal of Sociology*, *14*(2), 94–114. https://doi.org/10.1177/079160350501400206

Nightingale, A.J. (2003). Nature-society and development: cultural, social and ecological change in Nepal. *Geoforum,* 34 (4), 525–540.

Nightingale, A.J. (2005). 'The experts taught us all we know': professionalisation and knowledge in Nepalese community forestry. *Antipode,* 34 (3), 581–604.

Nightingale, A.J. (2006). The nature of gender: work, gender and environment. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space,* 24 (2), 165–185.

Nightingale, A. J. (2011). Bounding difference: Intersectionality and the material production of gender, caste, class and environment in Nepal. *Geoforum*, *42*(2), 153–162. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2010.03.004

Purewal, N. K. (2020). *Son Preference: Sex Selection, Gender and Culture in South Asia*. Routledge.

Ricciardelli, R., Maier, K., & Hannah-Moffat, K. (2015). Strategic masculinities: Vulnerabilities, risk and the production of prison masculinities. *Theoretical Criminology*, *19*(4), 491–513. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362480614565849

Rocheleau, D. E., Thomas-Slayter, B. P., & Wangari, E. (1996). *Feminist Political Ecology: Global Issues and Local Experiences*. Psychology Press.

Rose, J., & Johnson, C. (2017). Homelessness, nature, and health: Toward a feminist political ecology of masculinities. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *24*(7), 991–1010. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2017.1347559

Roy, A.G. (2017). *Bhangra Moves: From Ludhiana to London and Beyond*. Routledge.

Roy, P., Tremblay, G., & Robertson, S. (2014). Help-seeking among Male Farmers: Connecting Masculinities and Mental Health. *Sociologia Ruralis*, *54*(4), 460–476. https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12045

Saugeres, L. (2002a). The cultural representation of the farming landscape: Masculinity, power and nature. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *18*(4), 373–384. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0743-0167(02)00010-4

Saugeres, L. (2002b). Of tractors and men: Masculinity, technology and power in a French farming community. *Sociologia Ruralis*, *42*(2), 143–159. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9523.00207

Shisler, R. C., & Sbicca, J. (2019). Agriculture as Carework: The Contradictions of Performing Femininity in a Male-Dominated Occupation. *Society & Natural Resources*, *32*(8), 875–892. https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2019.1597234

Shrestha, G., Joshi, D., & Clément, F. (2019). Masculinities and hydropower in India: A feminist political ecology perspective. *International Journal of the Commons*, *13*(1), 130. https://doi.org/10.18352/ijc.920

Sundberg, J. (2014). Decolonizing posthumanist geographies. *Cultural Geographies*, *21*(1), 33–47. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474013486067

Unruh, J.D. (1994). Land tenure and identity change in postwar Mozambique. *GeoJournal,* 46(2), 89-99

van Hoven, B. & Horschelman, K. (eds.). (2005). *Spaces of masculinities.* London: Routledge

CHAPTER 3: **Caste Visibility and Hegemonic Masculinity: Theorizing Caste Embodiment in Local and Transnational Spaces**

Abstract:

A significant amount of scholarly work has focused on studying masculinities, caste, and the body, albeit separately – the intersections of the three at the microstructural level have rarely been addressed by researchers. Through a qualitative analysis of thirty-six upper caste (Jat) men in India and Canada, I explore how masculinities, caste, and the body interact with each other, and examine the processes used to make caste visible through the male body in local and transnational spaces. I delve into the concept of caste embodiment asserting that the intersection of historical power and privilege associated with gender and caste are pivotal to the materiality of contemporary caste bodies, which in turn shape individual and collective consciousness and the practices that these result in, including masculine practices. My findings reveal that, in both local and transnational spaces, Jat caste is perceived as inscribed on Jat men's bodies and can be readily recognized by someone who can decipher the meanings associated with Jat men's bodily mannerisms and other material devices. For young Jat men, maintaining a distinction from other caste men becomes a valued task and is viewed as necessary to preserve their visible caste identity. In conclusion, I argue that the processes through which Jat caste is embodied constitute, and even overlap with, the principles of hegemonic Jat masculinity such as exhibiting pride associated with caste affiliation, landownership, and subordination of women and 'lower caste' men.

KEYWORDS: hegemonic masculinity, embodiment, caste, habitus, transnational, Canada, India

Introduction:

"Can you identify one's caste?" I was asked this seemingly simple question several times from genuinely curious peers at conferences and discussions on different occasions. I disregarded the controversial question and its potential answers until I encountered the same phenomena with my participants in Canada. My participants are young upper-caste Jat men in Punjab, traditionally landowners and agriculturalists, and Jat men who migrated from Punjab to Canada as international students. While interviewing the men about their notions of Jat masculinities and caste in different geographical contexts, the subject of 'recognizing someone's caste' frequently surfaced. Some participants' claim that they recognize or can tell if a man belongs to the Jat caste was especially interesting. I decided to explore it further and incorporated the question into my interview guide. It was, however, not the explicit intention of my research to chart the embodied or corporeal nature of caste – rather, repeated references to the bodily manifestations of caste in the data led to a more detailed analysis.

Indian sociologists and sociologists of India have analyzed caste from various perspectives - identity, ethnicity, culture, conflict, capitalism, politics, religion, and gender. With the global turn in social sciences towards body and embodiment, the previously understudied dimension of the corporeal nature of caste also gained attention, such that caste is now increasingly being recognized as a material social category and an amalgam of idea and matter (Saha, 2020; Nightingale, 2011; Natrajan, 2005). Even though in modern times the traditional markers of the caste are dissolving through the blurring of boundaries – in the sense that residential segregation by caste is gradually decreasing, rural to urban and international migration is leading to more anonymity and there is no longer a clear division of labour by caste in most areas (e.g., see Gill, 2012; Chopra, 2004; Mooney, 2011, 2013) – the materiality of caste

is still palpable through caste names (Dutt, 2019), spatial segregation (Samuel, 2020), and caste bodies (Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007). In addition to all these markers, in Punjab, landownership is an additional visible marker that conveys dominant caste affiliation (Mooney, 2011; Chopra, 2004). Local caste divisions in Sikh-majority Punjab are based on land wealth, broadly distinguishing the landowners (the Jats) from non-landowners (Jodhka, 2006; McLeod, 1989, 2007; Mooney, 2011:163) with hierarchies within the categories. Jats, who are traditionally farmers and landowners constitute the "dominant caste" in Punjab by virtue of their socioeconomic and demographic predominance (Srinivas, 1955, 1959, 1966, 1996), and consequently have more socio-political power and the social status of being the upper caste group.

According to M.N. Srinivas, "a caste may be said to be dominant when it preponderates numerically over other castes and when it also wields preponderant economic and political power. A large and powerful caste group can be more easily dominant if its position in the local caste hierarchy is not too low" (1955: 18). According to the Hindu caste schema, the *Brahmins* (priestly caste, the "purest") at the top and *Shudras* (manual workers, the most "polluted") at the bottom of the hierarchy. Warrior castes (*Kshatriyas*) and artisans (*Vaishyas*), which include farmers, fall somewhere between *Brahmins* and *Shudras*. *Dalits* or Untouchables are considered outcastes. But unlike the rest of India, the caste system and, hence the associated power hierarchy in the North Indian state of Punjab is not based on Hindu notions of purity and pollution but on landownership (e.g., Pettigrew, 1995; Gill, 2012). It is also true of other states, such as Bihar and Haryana, where agriculture is the main occupation and those who possess the arable land are considered the dominant caste (Nandan & Santosh, 2019).

There is a plethora of research pertaining to caste and gender focusing on Dalits or lower castes – and some researchers have even addressed the subservient and subordinate embodiment of low-caste status by men and women by virtue of their (historical and) social position in the power hierarchy (Chopra, 2004; Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007). However, there exists a notable lacuna in knowledge in terms of empirical and theoretical sociological research focusing on the contemporary postcolonial male bodies of the global South that are, and have historically been, dominant; that communicate power, privilege, and relational superiority.

In studying caste, gender, and even masculinities, the body of the upper caste male has been treated as axiomatic and hence has largely remained absent from the scholarly discussion. The bodies of women and lower caste men, in contrast, are "othered" bodies and the "othered" has always been the subject of much inspection. In the current article, I focus on the materiality of the dominant caste – how caste is embodied; specifically, I emphasize the upper caste Jat male bodies and other media – such as caste surnames – through which Jat caste affiliation is made most visible. In the process, while reviewing and building on existing theories such as Bourdieu's *Habitus*, I explore the concept of caste embodiment as it interacts with principles of hegemonic masculinities in the contemporary context. That is, in my conceptualization of the process of caste embodiment, I argue that the body, and particularly the upper caste male body, in addition to surnames/family names (Dutt, 2020), remains the vehicle of caste-visibility and carries the markers of caste – the expression of may depend upon the socio-spatial context within which the body finds itself. The shifting of analytic locus from caste as a system or structure to caste as residing within the individual bodies has the potential to lend an incredible insight into how body is depended upon as a medium for caste visibility and to the micro-structural processes by which caste is embodied.

Owing to the neoliberal ethos of consumerism and the flux of late capitalism over the past few decades, Jats have largely shifted their focus from farming to transnational migration (see, for example, Mooney, 2011, 2013; Chopra, 2011; Gill, 2012; Kukreja, 2021). The non-availability of necessary means to perform masculinities in their original locale, such as lack of employment opportunities and non-profitability in agriculture, is also seen as responsible for the mass migration of youth from Punjab to other countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom (Roy, 2017; Mooney, 2011; 2013; Gill, 2012; Kukreja, 2021). In the current article, I focus on Jat masculine caste embodiment in Canada (or transnational spaces) in tandem with and in contrast with parallel discussions in the Punjab, India (or local spaces). I argue that the archaic power and privilege associated with the Jat caste, derived from socio-historic phenomenon, and internalized by groups and individuals, is etched onto gendered and casted bodies. The interactions of gender and caste results in distinct caste-embodiments that continue to carry the historical markers of upper caste and hegemonic masculinity via contemporary bodies in both local and transnational spaces. Through interviews with young Jat men of Punjab and Canada, I explore how the practices undertaken to embody Jat caste and make caste visible are closely entwined with and even constitute the principles of hegemonic Jat masculinity.

Literature review:

Caste embodiment

The caste system, in order to sustain itself, needs bodies through and on which caste practices are (re)inscribed, (re)produced, reified, and resisted (e.g., Samuel, 2020; Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007). In Foucauldian terms, the exercise of power through/on/in bodies leads to the formation of (caste) subjects and thus "subject formations happen by embodied processes and

practices" (Samuel, 2020:59). A small number of scholars have studied caste and the body in relation to each other and how they interact. Many agree that caste is not merely an essential, fixed identity or a stable product but is performed, reproduced, and reasserted via various media, including the body (see, for example, Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007; Dutt, 2019; Samuel, 2020). Most of the scholarship in this area is in the field of Dalit studies. For example, Boopalan uses the concept of "grammar of the body" to refer to the socially conditioned, embodied performativities through which the exclusion of Dalit or "Untouchable" bodies from the caste hierarchy takes place (Boopalan, 2017). According to Samuel (2020), embodied caste performativity operates at a sub-conscious level in which bodies are 'forced' via various mechanisms to experience and enact a certain grammar, thus reifying distinct caste-based identifications (see also Boopalan, 2017).

As Foucault notes: "The body is… directly involved in a political field; power relations have immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs." Along these lines, Gorringe and Rafanell (2007) outlined the embodiment of caste among Dalits in South India where they rank lowest in caste power hierarchy. They assert that contextually specific power relations are pivotal to the materiality of caste bodies and shape the reflexive embodiment of Dalits as one of subordination in relation to the upper castes – influencing the individual and collective consciousness (Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007). That is, Gorringe and Rafanell (2007) elaborate on embodiment of caste as a 'product' of prevalent power relations where the expression of Dalit embodiment can be a result of subordination or resistance to the upper castes. In the Punjabi context, body and embodiment is particularly significant in studying contemporary Jat masculinities and their hegemonic principles as Jat men's bodies lie at the intersection of the warrior Sikh body, the relatively

privileged upper caste body, and the landowning farmer's body. In the current article, I extend the concept of caste embodiment to include gendered notions of caste and understand it as a 'process,' rather than a 'product,' used to achieve certain auxiliary hegemonic masculine principles such as pride associated with dominant caste affiliation, subordination of Others (women and lower castes), heterosexuality, and expression of landownership. In other words, I argue that caste embodiment and performance (and assertion) of hegemonic masculinities are mutually constitutive.

Hegemonic Masculinity

According to Connell (1987, 1995), different masculinities are not equal but organized hierarchically, and hegemonic masculinities are always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to femininities. Hegemonic masculinities define successful ways of 'being a man' within a specific spatio-temporal context and in so doing, they define other masculine styles as inadequate or inferior (Donaldson, 1993; Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994:3; Ricciardelli, et al., 2015; Ricciardelli, 2011). Thus, hegemonic definitions of masculinities receive their legitimacy from the marginalization of other forms of masculinities, such as those of different social classes, ethnicities, sexualities, ages, or abilities, where the latter are almost always characterized as more feminine (Connell, 1987; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2018) – and have the underlying connotation of being read culturally as inferior (e.g., see Ricciardelli, et al., 2015).

Sabo et al. (2001:5) assert that "hegemonic masculinity [can be understood] as the prevailing, most lauded, idealized, and valorized form of masculinity in a historical setting." This definition of hegemonic masculinity is significant in the context of studying and unpacking Punjabi Jat masculinities within a socio-historic frame. Throughout the course of Punjabi history,

Jat masculinities have emerged as dominant as well as predominant as a result of different momentous events (e.g., Roy, 2015; Mooney, 2011; Judge, 2015; Jodhka, 2006). In so being, they have produced and reproduced different hegemonic principles – such as landownership, expression of Jat identities through male bodies (or caste embodiment) – upon which contemporary Punjabi (Jat) masculinities are constructed (e.g., Roy, 2015; Mooney, 2011) and that serve as the "aspirational goals" which men strive to achieve (Wetherell & Edley, 1999: 337; Howson, 2006). According to Chopra (2004), the landowner (Jat) masculinity, in the countryside, is produced through the act of farming and cultivation of land. On the farm, notes Chopra "driving the tractor is an act in which masculine hierarchy is articulated" (2004:46). When this assertion by Chopra and others is construed through the definition of hegemonic masculinity and its principles, it is clear that the dominant Jat masculinity is the hegemonic masculinity in the local context of Punjabi society.

According to Howson (2014), hegemonic masculinity exposes the ascendancy of certain broad 'principles' or 'aspirational goals' (Whetherell & Edley, 1999:337) about how to be a man. Assuming the frame of reference as the West, these are referred to as hegemonic principles and are: heterosexuality, breadwinning, aggression, and whiteness (Howson, 2006; 2014). According to Howson (2014), the objective of hegemonic principles is to define and describe the broad demands of the hegemony that then determine the identifications, configurations of practices and relationships that ultimately become normative. These principles also represent the desires, interests and values that the hegemonic is able extend into cultural life and their continuation, operation, and reproduction is subsequently ensured (Howson, 2014). They and the hegemony they represent are always determined by the historical and geographical context within which they are practiced or aspired to (see Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Howson, 2014).

While caste affiliation is acquired by birth, an individual performs caste in everyday life with the help of tools and devices available at their disposition, contingent on the spatial/geographical context in which the individual is present. Caste performance is usually targeted at making caste visible which has the underlying purpose of exercising power or exhibiting pride of one's affiliation with the dominant caste. There are many effective means to convey caste affiliation – such as caste surnames (Dutt, 2019), and, more subtly, the body through a process called caste embodiment (Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007). I discuss how caste is expressed and made visible via upper caste male bodies or how Jat men embody their caste status. Although seldom the focus of explicit discourse, historically, the male body carries caste through generations and over geographical spaces. While women's bodies have been used to conserve caste-purity, in hetero-patriarchal settings, it is through male bodies that the power associated with caste has always been expressed and exercised (for example, Chowdhry, 2019).

Habitus, embodiment, and transnationalism

Bourdieu provides a connection between agency and structure through the process of habitus (Sweetman, 2003; Shilling, 1993; Turner, 1992). For Bourdieu, habitus is the principal analytical category which "illuminates the circular process whereby practices are incorporated within the body, only then to be regenerated through the embodied work and competence of the body" (Crossley, 2001:106). Habitus is therefore, both a medium and outcome of social practice. In essence, habitus dispositions can be defined as social in origin, acquired in infancy, embodied, durable, transposable, hierarchical, and reproductive of the social context within which they originate (Bourdieu, 1990). Habitus, therefore, can be considered as a befitting framework to understand and elaborate the embodied nature of social positions such as caste status as caste identities are largely shaped via power relations (Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007). According to

Bourdieu (1994), social conditioning and social positions within which an individual finds themselves, can influence one's physical and abstract features such as bodily shape, way of walking, postures, accents and so on. Bourdieu argues that the social effects of macro-phenomena are primarily manifested and located in bodies, are naturalized, and constitute an individual's embodied disposition. Embodied dispositions, in turn, constitute cognitive features which develop a specific manner of perceiving and symbolically evaluating the world (Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007).

The most significant element of Bourdieu's theory is the emphasis on a group's collective history. According to Bourdieu, "the habitus, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemas engendered by history" (1977:82). Following Bourdieu's reasoning and interpreting caste through the definition of habitus clearly lends insight into the process and formation of a caste habitus which can be understood as the outcome of the accretion of various socio-historic phenomenon. The phenomenon shapes the caste members' perceptions and actions of the present and thereby mold not only their social practices but also bodily states of being (cf. Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007). Every time an individual "performs" caste, they demonstrate an incorporation of history into the individual's subjectivity. The differences in bodily postures adopted by individuals (men or women) belonging to different caste groups serves to exemplify that the body is a repository of ingrained and durable dispositions (see Bourdieu, 2001; Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007).

The concept of habitus helps delineate the formation of a Jat caste habitus. Embodiment has been historically central to Punjabi self-definition since the production of the *Khalsa* Sikh body during Mughal period and that of "martial races" in British imperialism (Roy, 2015). Consequently, the body of the Punjabi Sikh male has been acclaimed over history as either a

warrior or a soldier. During British Raj, Jats' dominance in Punjab was reinforced as a new conception of 'merit' was attached to the class/caste owning landed property, belonging to military (martial race) strata, and 'pride' of unflinching loyalty to the British (Narang, 1998; Puri, 2003). The internalization of such merit accentuated the social and political domination of the Jat landowners in their relations with the lower castes in their local village situations (Puri, 2003). In addition to the induction of Jat men into the Indian army, another instance which further granted extraordinary provision to the Jat agriculturalist, was the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1901 (Cassan, 2015; Puri, 2003). According to this law, which was enacted by British rulers primarily to save indebted farmers from mercenary money lenders of other castes, agricultural land could be purchased or acquired only by people belonging to the defined 'agricultural castes' (Cassan, 2015), of which Jats constituted the majority. All those belonging to the lower castes, those not included among the 'agricultural tribes,' were prohibited from owning land (Puri, 2003). The legislation significantly contributed to aggrandize Jats' caste domination, hegemony, and privilege in the Punjab.

Post-independence, the Green Revolution[i] in Punjab brought about economic prosperity of the rural peasantry (Chowdhry, 2019; see also Nandan & Santosh, 2019). The enhancement in social status led to the advancement of marked decisive characteristics in the form of modern material culture that further highlighted core aspects of Jat caste habitus – specifically those that were associated with farming and agriculture (Mooney, 2011, 2013; Judge, 2015). Jat men attached a special pride and status with the possession of large farm equipment such as tractors, combine harvesters and with their identities as farmers (Mooney, 2011). In Bourdieusean language, Jat men's individual agency and expression of identity as farmers could be understood as the by-product of structural internalization at the profound level of the corporeal (Bourdieu,

1995). Today, even when most Jat men have shifted their focus from agriculture to transnational migration (Mooney, 2011), the Jat caste habitus un-reflexively conditions and shapes individual behaviour, bodily dispositions, and material identity across local as well as transnational spaces.

Current Study:

Predicated on Bourdieu's concept of habitus and using the principles of abductive analysis with empirical data, I explore how individual upper caste Jat men's comportment and bodily expression within the context of a caste-society is shaped in conjunction with the construction and performance of hegemonic masculinities in different geographical spaces. To enhance the plausibility of the process of caste embodiment, I start with the local spaces, in Punjab, where degree of caste visibility is the highest given the availability of material caste markers, such as landownership, and then transpose the framework to transnational spaces in Canada – where such caste markers may become invisible and hence ineffective in conveying Jat caste affiliation – to see how the process of caste-embodiment plays out in these different contexts. Rather than going deeply into the hierarchical nature of the caste system – the power imbalance – I focus on the subjective internalization of power and privilege within Jat men's bodies and embodiment through which their caste identity is conveyed, often targeted at personal gratification.

Methods:

I recruited 20 participants from Punjab, India and 16 from the Greater Toronto Area, Ontario, Canada. The criteria for eligibility of participants were as follows: interviewees had to self-identify as (i) male; (ii) belonging to Jat caste; and (iii) between the age of 16 and 34. Recruitment posters were put up in various public spaces around nearby colleges, shopping

complexes, restaurants, bus stops, temples, and cafes. Additional posters were posted in virtual spaces such as pages on Facebook with the administrators' permission. A snowballing or "chain-referral" approach was followed to recruit more participants by giving the initial interviewees a copy of the recruitment poster to pass on to the future potential participants. I ensured that the sample was large enough to address the research questions and to ensure theme saturation (e.g., see Creswell, 1998). Participants' age ranged from 19 to 28 years.

In-depth, face-to-face, semi structured interviews were conducted in public places of participants' choice and convenience such as public parks, library, and cafes. An interview guide was used to initiate the interview and to allow for the probing of conversational paths as they unfolded. Responses to initial questions determined which subsequent questions were asked from the interview guide. In some cases, the interview guide was given up completely after one or two questions. Participants were given the choice of English and Punjabi language for interviews and most interviewees chose Punjabi citing their comfort with the language. All interviews were translated verbatim and transcribed with minimum possible impairment to the participants' vernacular. Since the researcher's primary language is also Punjabi, no interpreters were involved at any stage of data collection or transcription. The length of the interviews ranged from 50 to 150 minutes depending upon the general talkativeness and ongoing interest of the participants in the topic. Interviews were recorded on a digital voice-recorder.

Abductive analysis

I analyzed the data in this study using the principles of abductive analysis. After the partial analysis of data revealed that many participants were making claims about being able to tell if someone's a Jat, I decided to add the question "Can you tell if someone's a Jat from outward appearance?" into the interview guide, the data of which I analyze here. Abductive

analysis is a qualitative data analysis approach that is focused on addressing "surprising" or "unexpected" research findings and developing an emergent theoretical concept to describe these findings.

When coming across observations that do not entirely fit existing theories, a call for abduction is warranted (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). It was not the explicit intention of my research to chart the embodied nature of caste – rather, frequent mentions of the corporeal expressions of caste in the data led to a more detailed analysis. Once I identified the unexpected phenomenon of interest, "caste-embodiment," I systematically examined the variation of the phenomenon among the data accumulated before the start of initial stages of abduction. I explored how the phenomenon of interest varied across the data, across situations, across different spatial contexts, at each point redefining the characteristics of the concept of caste embodiment.

Findings:

In thematically analyzing the processes through which caste is made visible via the upper caste male body in local and transnational spaces, I unpack the processes through which caste embodiment is achieved and its role in constituting hegemonic masculinity. First, I address the inscription of caste on contemporary individual male bodies due to different socio-historical phenomenon. Next, I discuss how claims to identify someone's caste are made and how some people alter their bodily comportment to evade recognition of their caste affiliation. Finally, I explore how and why Jat men (attempt to) maintain a distinction from other caste men through caste embodiment and performative hegemonic masculinity.

Inscription of Caste on Individual Bodies:

Within a caste society, there are different codes of conduct for individuals belonging to different caste groups. Historically, in Punjab, the dependency of "service-castes[ii]" on Jats in rural areas gave rise to Jats as a dominant caste, provided them with power and privilege over others (see also Nandan & Santosh, 2019 for similar discussion in the state of Bihar). The most visible markers of caste identity are a product of the village system of interdependent labor and patronage. Such caste markers, however, are rigidly etched into the social fabric and hence end up governing how individual bodies are constituted, displayed, and identified. For example, most participants from both Punjab and Canada claimed that they could tell if a man was a Jat from outward appearance. Markers like facial hair, skin complexion, bodily disposition, and most importantly language, confidence, way of walking, bodily comportment were thought of as some of the identifying attributes of a Jat man.

> "Jats always try to stand out from others like being physically strong, they want to convey we're Jats. Language and way of speaking is different – Jats talk to other people like they have more knowledge than them - you know, 'talk down'" (Rana, Punjab).

As evidenced in Rana's words, a Bourdeiusean Jat caste habitus appears to prevail. These assertions might seem rhetorical, but they bear a grain of truth – since most Jat men work(ed) as farmers, their bodies were hardened, weathered, and muscular which became a caste indicator. And today even if the majority of young Jat men do not work in the fields, they attach sentimental, often nostalgic, significance to these bodily markers and try to subjectively adopt these on their own bodies and behaviour. In some instances, different material devices, in addition to the body are utilized to convey Jat identity and masculinity. I call these material devices 'prosthetic extensions' to the Jat body as they are used in conjunction with the body to communicate caste affiliation to those who can decipher their meaning especially in transnational spaces. The most mentioned prosthetic extensions were Bullet[iii] motorcycles, Jeeps (or SUVs),

tractors, and sometimes guns. In Punjabi pop-culture, these devices are overused to the point that sometimes it leads to the construction of a negative stereotype of Jat youth. For example, Jaideep appears to be representative of the significance attached to Bullet motorcycle by Jat men:

> "The word "cool" has a different meaning in Punjab: boys who are cool have different taste; definition of "cool" also depends on the place. For example, in Delhi boys have sports bikes they consider cool but in Punjab nobody looks at them. We want to have a "*thukk*" [appear domineering] like having a Bullet or a Jeep. […] Bullet makes your body look big and wide – you just feel good. It's just more manly. When I see a Bullet here in Canada, I'm like yeah, there goes a Jat!" (Jaideep, Brampton)

Jaideep's emphasis on "appearing domineering" and "making the body look big and wide" are the main reasons why Jat men use Bullet as a prosthetic extension. He, like other participants, developed a position where he perceives using Bullet as a *classifying* practice – a symbolic expression of Jat caste affiliation, even in Canada. The need to appear domineering is the result of Jat caste habitus that, over years, has conditioned the Jat male body to prevail over other bodies such as those of women or lower castes – which is also a principle of hegemonic Jat masculinity. In this example, the process of caste embodiment and expression of hegemonic masculinity overlap and are achieved using Bullet in the transnational space where other significant visible markers of Jat identity, such as landownership, are absent. This could also be interpreted as an exercise in claiming power over the space that otherwise deprives them of the same by rendering their caste markers – and hence associated power and privilege, invisible, and by not letting the spatial context alter the subjective masculinities or masculine performances of Jat men. In short, physical as well as abstract markers of upper caste (status) and process through which caste is embodied or made visible are closely interconnected with and sometimes overlap with principles of hegemonic masculinity.

Identifying caste:

In a caste society, an individual's bodily mannerisms may reflect the contextual power relations and their place in the caste hierarchy (Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007). It is especially true of those belonging to lower strata in the hierarchy i.e., Dalits. Since their corporeal recognition as Dalits might entail discrimination and discrediting by other (upper) castes, individuals belonging to lower castes often alter their bodily dispositions and behaviours to match those of upper castes as an attempt to 'pass' or to be perceived as upper castes (see Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007; Dutt, 2019; Samuel, 2020).

There were some negative answers to the question: "how can you tell someone's caste from appearance? that's just in people's heads." Others answered denying that such judgment can be made but at the same time affirming Jat men do have a distinct appearance from others. Raman from Brampton explained:

> I don't think you could tell that. There is hardly any difference nowadays. There are some *Bahmans*[iv] and even *Chamars*[v] who look like Jats… it's really difficult to tell… I have a friend here whom we jokingly call "*Bahman* Jat." Nobody could tell from his appearance that he's a Hindu! Well, he's from Punjab and you know how most Punjabis keep beard and moustache. The way he talks and walks is also like us [Jats] [How?] well, you know how we speak, right? Our language is a little rough and we abuse a lot [laughs] it's like more open – no restrictions – we are open people. You can see also how sons of Jats[vi] walk with more confidence than others. We keep our bodies open as well and he is like us" (Raman, Brampton)

These traits of Jat masculinity within a caste habitus as outlined by Raman highlight the distinct embodiment of Jat caste. The Jat caste markers such as facial hair, a confident bodily demeanor, and "rough language" are adopted here by a non-Jat man and hence he is perceived as a Jat man. The much-emphasized confident body language might be interpreted as having stemmed from the power relations between high and low castes. The rural context, which is the foundation of Jats' dominance and hegemonic masculinity, provided fertile grounds for Jat men to ingrain in their bodies the domineering disposition especially in relation to lower castes and women. The

emphasis on facial hair might come from the Sikh male body for which it denotes loyalty to the faith and carries a martial connotation. In this context, the embodiment of values associated with the caste system are more significant than the ideological underpinnings of the system. The ways people walk, work, act, dress, talk, and even the things they eat or drink help constitute the everyday reality of caste.

Sameer (Punjab) recalled an anecdote where one of his childhood friends, a "lower-caste" *Chamar*, had "successfully fooled people" at the college that he was a Jat.

> He had fair skin and was tall. He even adopted a Jat surname and made people around him believe that he was a Jat. But I had known him from childhood – but I didn't tell anybody. Why would I? I mean, he was ashamed [of his caste] and I felt that. It can be really difficult for those people. He is a nice person, but he wouldn't have gotten a girlfriend at college had he not assumed a Jat surname (Sameer, Punjab)

Here, the interplay between the subjective and the corporeal is palpable. The "lower-caste friend" seems to have utilized his skin complexion and height to escape his caste identity and adopt a "higher-caste" Jat identity. He embodies and performs Jat masculinity to benefit from the status associated with the Jat caste habitus; the power and privilege associated with the Jat male bodies or bodies that look like them. Bodily appearance, without doubt, is perceived to be important for how men feel about themselves, and how they relate to others. As outlined in the quotes above, slightly varied idealized appearance characteristics, adopted both by Jat men or non-Jat men, were all consistent with appropriate bodily performances required for the successful acquisition of hegemonic masculine status and Jat caste embodiment. These examples not only reassert the prevalence of a Jat caste habitus in both local and transnational spaces but also highlight the variegated, performative, and constitutive nature of power relations and associated caste-based identities. These examples are an acknowledgement of the constitutive

nature of individuals' micro-interaction with others (Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007; Bourdieu, 1995) and shed light on caste as a tangible, material, lived as well as a fluid reality.

Maintaining distinction through caste embodiment and hegemonic masculinity:

One of the central underpinnings of hegemonic masculinity is competition, which "depends not on likeness and cooperation but on separation and distinction. Competition facilitates hierarchy in relationships, whereas cooperation suggests symmetry of relationships" (Bird 1996:122-23). In most interviews, Jat men emphasized performing *classifying* practices associated with Jat caste habitus lest they should be construed as "others." A significant yardstick for many Jat men to compare themselves remains to be the "othered" upper-caste Hindu men (mostly referred to as *Bania*[vii]) against which their masculinity, or at least masculine appearance, is sometimes measured. For example, Yuvraj (Brampton) points out the significance of maintaining the Jat identity in transnational spaces where competition, or at least comparison in terms of caste and masculinity, becomes especially pronounced.

> We have to maintain a distinction in terms of style of clothing, language, overall general disposition, beard, moustache. It's rare that sons of Jats are clean-shaven even if they don't wear turban [as most Sikhs do], you can tell he's a Jat. […] Girls are almost all the same. You could tell Jat girls apart in Punjab, but not in Canada. They assimilate too quickly, wear western clothes – they all look the same. It's on the boys to maintain the Jat identity in Canada. We can't afford to look like Banias here – otherwise, what's the difference? (Yuvraj, Brampton)

Being clean-shaven, like most Banias, is especially considered undesirable as well as unacceptable by Jat men. Not wanting to be compared to Banias also arises from the caste habitus where, throughout history, Banias were considered to be exploiting Jat farmers by lending them money at exorbitant rates (Cassan, 2015). It is considered men's responsibility to maintain and continue their casted-masculine identity through embodiment in spaces where it might otherwise be rendered ambiguous. This could also be understood as a remedial measure

undertaken to mitigate the perceived threats to physical identity that comes with assimilation in the host culture. Such apprehension is highlighted in above quote where Yuvraj talks about Jat girls and how they quickly discard their identities in Canada. Here, the male body is not merely a symbol of caste difference, but the means by which such differences are constituted, perceived, and subjectively experienced. The identity continuation and an effort to make themselves distinct from "others" plays a significant role in ascertaining men's physical demeanor.

In a similar vein, Manjit (Punjab) said: "You have to take care of body and beard and moustache of course, or your own people start calling you a *bhaiyya*." *Bhaiyya*, meaning 'brother' in Hindi, is a somewhat derogatory term for non-Punjabi men. It is mostly used for migrant laborers who come from other states to work in the fields in Punjab as farmhands. To put in other words, these men participate in 'body reflexive practices' which register masculinities, and in this case caste as well, on the male body (Connell, 1995). Here, failure to achieve the successful bodily display of Jat masculinity provokes feelings of inadequacy or embarrassment, even the threat of ridicule. This resonates with Probyn's (2000) concept of "shame" that identifies it as an important factor in the construction of identity and is particularly applicable when identity is perceived as threatened given its distance from the source community.

Conclusion:

In the current article, I explore the concept of caste embodiment asserting that the intersection of historical power and privilege associated with gender and caste are pivotal to the materiality of contemporary caste bodies, which in turn shape individual and collective consciousness and the practices that these result in, including masculine practices. I argue the materiality of the body is the medium through which caste, as a mode of being and lived practice, is manifested within contextualized spaces. Embodied processes that make caste visible

and express/achieve hegemonic masculinity simultaneously constitute both social and personal identity and macro-structural phenomena. From a Bourdieusean perspective, one's social position within a particular caste informs one's caste habitus. This habitus results in the internalization of specific embodied characteristics, which constitute hierarchical boundaries and, consequently, structure relationships with other castes.

Understanding caste embodiment as a process helps transcend universalizing notions like 'patriarchal structures' and 'caste system' that theoretically, epistemologically, and methodologically tend to overlook the intricate mechanisms through which caste- and gender-based power and privilege are exercised and expressed through the body. Following Bourdieu's approach, the process of caste embodiment can be utilized to understand how *classified* practices associated with Jat caste transform into *classifying* practices within a caste habitus and convey symbolic expressions of caste status and hegemonic masculinity in both local and transnational spaces. By elaborating on the historical evolution and presence of class and caste dependent markers (such as tractors, Bullet, significance of facial hair and other bodily attributes etc.) through which contemporary Jat caste and masculinity are signified, I establish that hegemonic caste masculinities, within a caste habitus, are intimately formed as much by discourses of the past, which are continually interwoven within the contemporary masculine subjectivities and caste performativity, as they adapt to post-colonial modernity.

Following a Bourdieusean approach, when I speak of the Jats as the dominant caste – I refer to the caste, class, power, gender which operates in the background that makes Jat caste dominant. Statements about caste appearances must be read within an historical perspective that accounts for changes over time. While research on lowest castes or Dalits has elucidated the dependency of Dalits on higher-castes, the subservience, and subordination as it is

communicated through their bodies – little attention has been paid to the bodies that are dominant, that communicate power and relational superiority. Given the prevalence of bodily dispositions in the data, I try to find explanation from the socio-historical accounts which seem to have influenced Jat hegemonic masculinity and embodiment. As I saw in the data, in case of contemporary Jat masculinities, the superior/powerful bodily comportment seems to occur automatically, almost without the conscious intervention of the individuals. A Bourdieusean caste habitus appears to prevail. The dramaturgy of the occasion (Goffman, 1969) is often complemented by the physical contrast between Jats and other castes such as the Hindu Baniyas. This is most apparent in terms of male facial hair – where a beard and moustache connote pride, dignity, and most importantly caste identity. The main finding that upper caste embodiment is one of the most crucial principles of hegemonic masculinity applies not only in the context of Punjab but in India as well. Although the "dominant" and the "hegemonic" might differ by geographical area, the underlying analytical utility of performative understanding of the principle should remain the same.

Future research:

It is imperative to transpose the central argument of caste-embodiment to diverse contextual spaces within a caste society to test for its applicability for different dominant castes. In addition, exploring in future research how Bullet motorcycles came to be popular among the youth of Punjab, so much so that they became a part of their identity – a classifying expression of caste and masculinity – is warranted.

References:

Bird, S. R. (1996). Welcome to the Men's Club: Homosociality and the Maintenance of

Hegemonic Masculinity. *Gender and Society, 10*(2), 120-132.

Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1994) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge

Bourdieu, P. (1995) *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2001) *Masculine Domination*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Cassan, G. (2015). Identity-Based Policies and Identity Manipulation: Evidence from Colonial Punjab. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, 7*(4), 103-131.

Chopra, R. (2004). Encountering Masculinity: An Ethnographer's Dilemma. In R. Chopra, C. Osella, & O. Filippo, *South Asian Masculinities: Context of Change, Sites of Continuity* (pp. 36-59). New Delhi: Women Unlimited.

Connell, Raewyn. (1987). *Gender and Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Print.

Connell, Raewyn. (1995). *Masculinities: Knowledge, Power, and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Print.

Connell, R., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender and Society, 19*(6), 829-859.

Cornwall, A., & Lindisfarne, N. (1994). Introduction. In A. Cornwall, & N. Lindisfarne, *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies* (pp. 1-10). London & New York: Routledge.

Crossley, N. (2001). *The Social Body: Habit, Identity and Desire*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications

Donaldson, M. (1993). What is hegemonic masculinity? *Theory & Society* 22**:** 643–657 https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00993540

Dutt, Y. (2019). *Coming out as Dalit: A memoir*. Aleph.

Gill, H. (2012). *Becoming Men in a Modern City: Masculinity, Migration and Globalization in North India.* PhD Thesis, American University: Washington DC

Gorringe, H. & Rafanell, I. (2007). The Embodiment of Caste: Oppression, Protest and Change. *Sociology* 41(1): 97-114 DOI: 10.1177/0038038507074721

Howson, R. (2006). *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity.* London and New York: Routledge.

Howson, R. (2014). Rethinking Apiration and Hegemonic Masculinity in Transnational Context. *Masculinities and Social Change, 3*(1), 18-35

Jodhka, S. (2006). Caste and Democracy: Assertion and Identity Among the Dalits of Rural Punjab. *Sociological Bulletin, 55*(1), 4-23.

Judge, P. S. (2015). Caste Hierarchy, Dominance, and Change in Punjab. *Sociological Bulletin, 64*(1), 55-76

Messerschmidt, J. W. (2018). *Hegemonic Masculinity: Formulation, Reformulation, and Amplification.* Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Rowman & Littlefield.

McLeod, W. (2007). *Essays in Sikh History, Tradition and Society.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

McLeod, W. H. (1989). *The Sikhs: History, Religion, and Society.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Mooney, N. (2011). *Rural Nostalgias and Transnational Dreams: Identity and Modernity among Jat Sikhs.* Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press.

Mooney, N. (2013). The Yeoman Jats of Punjab: Time, Expertise and the Colonial Construction of Jat Sikh Identity. *Anthropologica, 55*(2), 277-290.

Nandan, A., & Santhosh, R. (2019). Exploring the changing forms of caste-violence: A study of Bhumihars in Bihar, India. *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, *6*(4), 421–447. https://doi.org/10.1080/23254823.2019.1668282

Narang, S. S. (1998). *Sikh Politics: A Study of Elite Perspective.* Jalandhar: Punjab Development Society

Natrajan, B. (2005). Caste, Class, and Community in India: An Ethnographic Approach. *Ethnology*, *44*(3), 227–241. https://doi.org/10.2307/3774057

Pettigrew, J. (1995). *The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and Guerilla Violence.* London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd.

Probyn, E. (2000). Sporting Bodies: Dynamics of Shame and Pride. *Body and Society, 6*, 13-28.

Puri, H. K. (2003). Scheduled Castes in Sikh Commuunnity: A Historical Perspective. *Economic and Political Weekly, 38*(26), 2693-2701

Ricciardelli, R. (2011). Masculinity, consumerism, and appearance: A look at men's hair. *Canadian Review of Sociology* 48(2): 181-201

Ricciardelli, R., Maier, K., & Hannah-Moffat, K. (2015). Strategic masculinities: Vulnerabilities, risk and the production of prison masculinities. *Theoretical Criminology* 19(4): 491-513

Roy, A.G. (2015). Dancing to the Bhangra in New York City. *Transatlantica: American Studies Journal* online.

Sabo, D., Kupers, T. A., & London, W. (2001). Gender and the Politics of Punishment. In D. Sabo, T. A. Kupers, & W. London, *Prison Masculinities* (pp. 3-18). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Saha, S. (2020). Caste, Materiality and Embodiement. *CASTE / A Global Journal on Social Exclusion*, *1*(1), 200–216. https://doi.org/10.26812/caste.v1i1.123

Samuel, J. (2020). *Untouchable Bodies, Resistance, and Liberation: A Comparative Theology of Divine Possessions*. BRILL. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004420052

Shilling, C. (1993) *The Body and Social Theory.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Srinivas, M.N. (1955). The Social System of a Mysore Village. In: McKim Marriott (ed.) *Village India*. Chicago: Univesity of Chicago Press

Srinivas, M.N. (1959). The Dominant Caste in Rampura. *American Anthropologist* 61(1): 1-16

Srinivas, M.N. (1966). *Social Change in Modern India*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Srinivas, M.N. (1996). *Village, Caste, Gender, and Method: Essays in Indian Social Anthropology.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Sweetman, P. (2003) 'Twenty-first Century Dis-ease? Habitual Reflexivity or the Reflexive Habitus', *Sociological Review* 51: 528–49

Tavory, I., Timmermans, S. (2014). *Abductive Analysis: Theorizing Qualitative Research*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

Turner, B.S. (1992) *Regulating Bodies: Essays in Medical Sociology.* London: Routledge

Wetherall, M., & Edley, N. (1999). Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity: Imaginary Positions and Psycho-discursive Practices. *Feminism Psychology, 9*, 335

CHAPTER 4: **Punjabi masculinities and transnational spaces: performance, choice, and othering**

Abstract:

Researchers on transnational men and masculinities portray migrant men as a rather homogeneous group who cause or occasionally deal with similar problems. Similarly, international students are mostly studied in relation to their education or school, rather than as part of the gendered, migrant population who are transitioning to becoming immigrants and experience complexities regarding aspects of their social identities. The lacuna in literature opens avenues for a comprehensive understanding of student-migrant men's identities and masculinities in response to the intricacies of source and host situation as well as their hegemonic content. Building on existing literature on transnational masculinities and partly on Identity Process Theory, I focus on upper-caste Punjabi men who came to Canada as international students. Through in-depth interviews with 22 men, I explore the significance of landownership, caste identity, and transnational communication in constituting the hegemonic masculinities in transnational spaces, and the 'othering' faced by young men in Canada.

Keywords: Transnational spaces, Men and masculinities, Caste, Canada, India

Introduction:

As I stood at a bus stop near an intersection in Brampton, Ontario, loud Punjabi music blaring from a Mustang drove my attention towards it as it zoomed past me. I deliberately looked at the license plate that read KABJA 11 which, in Punjabi language, refers to the taking over/taking possession of land oftentimes forcibly from someone. I was on my way to an "infamous" College Plaza to meet the first participant for my study on Punjabi transnational

masculinities. I say infamous because it had been in the news for quite some time now – news of international students from Punjab, all men, getting into a "Punjabi style brawl" in the plaza (Prime Asia TV Canada, 2017; see also House of Commons Canada press release, 2018). Brampton's local *desi* media had been raving about it, showing the phone-made video clip repeatedly, condemning "Punjabi boys" (*munday*) for bringing this "toxic male culture" to Canada with them. In these visual representations, ostensibly "othered" male bodies were seen in performances of what could be called hypermasculine behavior by engaging in acts of violence. Upon reaching the College Plaza, I saw several cars with customized license plates most of which had Jat surnames such as "Sandhu," "Bai Gill" (your bro is "Gill"), "Jattwad" (Jat way of life), etc. This hardly came as a surprise to me having previously read and heard about the trend of customized Punjabi vanity license plates in the news and in Punjabi songs (Xing, 2018, 2019; Rankin, 2018).

Jats are an upper caste of Punjabi farmers and landowners who are also well-known for their martial traditions (Mooney, 2011, 2013; Chopra, 2004; Ballantyne, 2006; Sinha, 1995). They might also be characterized as "dominant caste" (Srinivas, 1966; 1996) by virtue of their socioeconomic and demographic predominance in the north-Indian state of Punjab (Jodhka, 2006; Judge, 2015). However, in modern times, Jats have shifted their focus from farming and agriculture to transnational migration mostly to countries like Canada, Australia, England, and so on (Walton-Roberts, 2004; Mooney, 2011; Gill, 2012; Taylor, Singh, & Booth, 2015). Researchers have attributed different factors to this shift – historical propensity and the presence of huge Punjabi diaspora across different countries (Walton-Roberts, 2003, 2004), status/*izzat* enhancement (Helweg, 1979; Singh & Tatla, 2006; Taylor, Singh, & Booth, 2015),

unemployment and lack of work opportunities in Punjab and environmental/agricultural degradation (Bhalla & Singh, 2009; Rajan & Nanda, 2015).

Currently, Canada remains one of the most favourable destinations for Punjabis to emigrate owing to the relatively lenient immigration laws and a large Punjabi community (see Walton-Roberts, 2004; George & Chaze, 2015). Brampton in Ontario and Surrey in British Columbia are two cities with the largest Punjabi population – about 19% and 17% (Census of Canada, 2016) respectively. Brampton is sometimes colloquially dubbed as "Browntown" or "Singhdale" – both pejoratively by outsiders and with pride within the community – due to the vast Punjabi, mostly Sikh, population (Ahmed-Ullah, 2016). Brampton is also the hub of transnational activities – be it in the form of international news channels, Punjabi pop culture, personal or familial transnational relations (George & Chaze, 2015). Most noticeably, in recent years, Brampton has gained popularity in Punjabi pop culture with the advent of Hip Hop and Gangsta Rap genres in Punjabi music brought about by the Canadian-Punjabi artist, Sidhu Moosewala. In one of his songs, B-Town which has over 30 million views on YouTube, he describes the life of Jat men in Brampton and their proud, hypermasculine disposition despite their (somewhat precarious) status as international students in Canada (Sony Music India, 2019). Given the centrality of Brampton for Punjabi men in Canada, as understood through my cultural stock of knowledge, I chose Brampton and surrounding areas as my research site.

In the current article, I explore Punjabi masculinities in transnational spaces in Canada (Brampton and around) and their underlying hegemonic principles that young Jat men aspire to or seek to achieve. I identify and explore how Jat masculinities interact with transnational spaces and produce, reproduce, and rework their significant markers or attributes. While a little attention has recently been paid to Punjabi masculinities (Mooney, 2011, 2013; Gill, 2012; Chopra, 2004,

2009), empirical studies are rather rare on how Punjabi masculinities are negotiated in transnational spaces (except Kukreja, 2020). Existing research on transnational masculinities, in general, has presented migrant men as a homogenous group who are often the receivers or perpetrators of criminality, violence, or other culturally specific crimes in transnational spaces (Griffiths, 2015; Flores, 2014; Korteweg, 2012; Razack, 2004). Similarly, outside the discourse of patriarchy or patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti, 1988), rarely has any study focused on how power and privilege associated with masculinities are translated and transformed in spaces outside of the original locale. In response, I explore how Punjabi men translate masculinities in a transnational context to achieve/aspire to the hegemonic principles of masculinities that were achievable back home by virtue of the local socio-spatial context; and how gender, caste, and transnationalism come together or interact to form a complex socio-cultural paradigm within which men perform Jat masculinities.

Literature Review:

Transnational spaces and Punjabi masculinities:

Space and place play a major role in the ongoing constitution of identity (Bondi & Davidson, 2003; Pile & Thrift, 1995; van Hoven & Horschelmann, 2005) maybe because places generally represent relatively stable assemblages of social, material, and natural entities which have a significant influence upon subjectivity (Conradson & McKay, 2007; Sheller & Urry, 2016). The shifting of space and place because of geographical mobility and migration has a transforming effect on selfhood, gender identity, and individual subjectivity (Charsely, 2005; Conradson & McKay, 2007). For example, according to Christou (2011:253), 'experiences of mobile subjects become a process of self-researching, self- reflection, transition and

transformation' as they transiently occupy different socio-spatial settings. In this vein, Charsley (2005:208), argues that as masculinities move across spaces and are in transit and under negotiation, they become "braided with [a range of] other identities" and, as a result, are disposed to transform (see also Pande, 2017; Donato et al., 2006). In the field of transnational studies, critical role of spaces was brought to the fore by Glick-Schiller et al. (1992) who introduced an analytical framework for situated transnational understandings of immigrant communities, which led to a flourishing body of research on co-constitution of space, social relations, and migrant networks and identities that operate across the boundaries of multiple nation states (see also Datta et al., 2009; Pessar & Mahler, 2003). Some scholars also contend that to fully understand the effect of mobility on an individual's identity, it is imperative to recognize that the distance obtained from those that characterize the sending context is as important as new relations/context in the destination setting (Brah, 1996; Datta et al., 2009). Following, Brah (1996), in her intersectional approach in studying the diaspora, places equal emphasis on circumstances of leaving and conditions of arrival and current living. Such an approach situates identities/masculinities not only in their current context of settlement, but also in relation to their socio-cultural background or home environment where masculinities are embodied most vividly. In this way, local (original) spaces are given as much importance in constituting transnational identities as transnational (current/destination) spaces.

Before moving forward, we must acknowledge in all research in the field of diaspora, transnationalism, or mobility, that transnational spaces and diaspora spaces are distinct from each other. It is easy to (mis)interpret diaspora and transnational spaces as one as transnational activities occur within both these spaces. But this does not mean that transnational spaces are always contained within diasporic spaces. Transnational spaces can exist autonomously

sometimes without having any connections with the diaspora, even though there certainly are overlaps between the two – for example, sharing of iconographic symbols/practices such as religious places, markets, restaurants, media (Breneau, 2010). In most studies, the overlap between diaspora and transnational spaces is overly stressed/assumed to the point where the two concepts eventually coalesce, and the difference between the two manages to escape the empirical gaze – which, arguably, is an oversimplification of both these spaces and the processes that occur within them. Despite significant variation in spaces occupied by Punjabi men (Walton-Roberts, 2003, 2004; Kalra, 2009; Kukreja, 2020), research on Punjabi masculinities and identities, unfortunately, has also fallen prey to this practice. As a result, a focus on Punjabi identity/masculinity in exclusively transnational spaces is virtually non-existent in current sociological or geographical research and all research is assumed under a collective body of diasporic and transnational studies. I acknowledge that both diaspora and transnational spaces are complex, overlapping concepts and it is a very difficult task to disentangle them. But for the sake of this article, I attempt to highlight the differences between the two and delineate how I use these concepts.

The pioneers in transnationalism studies define transnationalism as a 'process by which migrants, through their daily life activities… create social fields that cross national boundaries' (Basch, Glick-Schiller & Blanc-Szanton, 1994: 22). In this sense, drawing from interdisciplinary literature in sociology and geography on transnationalism, I interpret transnational spaces as precarious, transient, fluid spaces outside the borders of one's home nation (see Basch, Glick Schiller, & Blanc-Szanton, 1994; Baubock, 2003). Transnational spaces can exist outside of both the home country and destination country; and wherein immigrants or those on the path of becoming immigrants temporally (but not necessarily temporarily) reside, and perform activities

targeted at people in their home countries i.e., transnational activities (Smith & Guarzino, 2007; Mahler, 2007). On the other hand, diaspora spaces include the immigrants and their descendants, and those who are constructed and represented as indigenous and local (Brah, 1996). It is to be noted here that I refer to diaspora spaces and not diaspora as a political concept. Following Brah's definition, since my participants are not yet immigrants and no longer local – they cannot be said to occupy diaspora spaces; instead, they are in between both these ends and occupy transnational spaces. One example of transnational space would be space occupied by people who are on route to their destination or to becoming immigrants – for instance, those in the journey; especially those who have longer journeys to endure such as illegal migrants, refugees (see for example, Pande, 2017). Even though my participants have relatively "more stable" status in terms of immigration than, say, refugees, they too reside in transnational spaces and are affected by and affect the dynamics of these spaces.

In almost all studies on migrant, transnational masculinities, three stages are identified: 1. The sending cultural context or the originary locale (e.g., Brah, 1996, 2002; Taylor, 2013, 2014); 2. Emasculation and gendered status loss from the journey or while assimilating in the host society (Pande, 2017; Kalra, 2009; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner, 1999); 3. Employment of remasculation strategies often through displays of hypermasculinity and violence in current/destination settings (see Pande, 2017; Kalra, 2009). While this framework is certainly effective, it assumes, requires, and concludes that, in migration or geographical mobility, for a man's identity/masculinity to be reconfigured, there needs to be a 'break' in terms of loss of masculine status; from where the man can recuperate and restart. The question here is: Can this framework be applied in contexts where mobility does not necessarily cause a significant break in masculinity? For example, the young men I focus on come from a position of power and

privilege in their home country – in terms of caste, gender, socio-economic status, and other aspects of their social living (Judge, 2015; Jodhka, 2006; Chopra, 2009; Gill, 2012; Mooney, 2011, 2013; Walton-Roberts, 2003). Their journey as student-migrants is relatively easier and smooth as compared to other groups studied by researchers – such as undocumented migrants, individuals with precarious migrant status, refugees, and so on (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Najani, Ng, & Groutsis 2018; see also Robertson, 2013; Robertson, Harris, & Baldassar, 2018; Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008) – and a break in masculinity or emasculation might not have occurred for them in such a notable manner. However, despite the positionality migrant men still experience vulnerabilities in their masculinity when introduced to the new culture that they must learn to navigate, even overcome.

To explore and explain effectively the transformation and performativity of their masculinities in transnational spaces, I draw partly on Identity Process Theory, which postulates various motivational principles that help guide identity construction in individuals (Vignoles, Chryssochou, and Breakwell, 2000; Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal, 2011; Jaspal & Takhar, 2016). Specifically, I delineate some of the guiding 'identity principles' as they are employable and seem relevant to the hegemonic principles of masculinities in a transnational context such as (i) continuity; (ii) distinctiveness; (iii) and belonging (Jaspal & Takhar, 2016:90; see also Jaspal, 2011). The continuity principle requires that an individual's sense of self remain the same over time despite changes in one's environment; distinctiveness requires that one's identity is unique and distinct from others; and belonging refers to the need to maintain closeness to others, especially to one's ingroup (Jaspal, 2011). A large body of research suggests that masculine identity might be perceived as threatened if all or some of its reinforcing elements are not able to function as usual and men might take remedial measures to mitigate the effects of the obstruction

(Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal, 2011; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner, 1999), i.e., to ensure continuity of their masculinities. Therefore, in the present context, identity principle of continuity is particularly relevant and can also help understand and explain the role of caste-visibility for Jat men in transnational masculine performativity.

Caste identity and visibility in transnational spaces:

In the past few years, migration and transnational studies have shifted their focus from a broad structural analyses and interdependencies across nation-states (Glick-Schiller et al., 1992; Vertovec, 2003), which has been critiqued for downplayed migrant agency and social and cultural lives of migrants, to a phenomenological approach that locates migrant and transnational practices as lived experiences in everyday lives (e.g., Faist et al., 2010; Guarnizo, 2002; Basch et al., 1992). To further magnify the scope of the field, in recent years, transnational studies have taken a turn toward exploring international student mobilities and their transnational practices by focusing on various empirical aspects (for example, Collins, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010; Waters & Brooks, 2012). Howson (2014: 31) has even categorized international students into a "new transnational identity." There is also a small body of qualitative research that focuses exclusively on international students from South Asia, and particularly India (see for example, Robertson, 2013, 2018; Raghuram, 2013; Baas, 2010). However, subjective caste identities and associated practices remain underexplored in transnational contexts (barring a few exceptions in diaspora studies such as Jaspal, 2011; Kalra, 2009) and explicit examination of caste has been completely ignored in phenomenological studies of "student-migrants." It is a serious omission, since almost all aspects of lives of individuals (residing in or originating) from India are influenced directly or indirectly by the caste (system) regardless of their current socio-spatial setting (for example, see Jaspal, 2011; Chopra, 2009; Mooney, 2011). In fact, it is now acknowledged that significance of

caste identity, if and when not higher, is at least as high as other social and psychological constructs which may have physical markers (e.g., Jaspal, 2011; Dovidio et al., 2000). As such there remains immense scope for extending critical analysis into "casted" contextualization of men's practices and masculinities, and their problematization in transnational spaces (see Howson, 2006).

"Jat identity is at its core a caste identity" (Mooney, 2011:7). Punjabi Jat identities, particularly masculinities, are largely dependent on the spatial context as the degree of visibility and materiality of their caste-association varies with space and place. For example, the most important marker of Jats' caste-identity – landownership – is visible only in local spaces (such as villages) in Punjab (for example, see Taylor, 2013; Chopra, 2004, 2009) and becomes somewhat invisible in spaces outside of the local, yet continues to be a crucial part of their identity in diaspora, transnational spaces (Taylor, Singh, & Booth, 2015; Taylor, 2014). A plethora of research has established that many operating structures of identity, gender relations, patriarchy etc. in the sending contexts might become inoperative as people move from local to transnational/diasporic spaces (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner, 1999). Similarly, limited research on caste in Indian diaspora has concluded that the underlying structure of caste and associated identity also becomes somewhat weakened but continues to persist as an important social and psychological phenomenon in various spatialities still governing personal and social relationships (Jaspal, 2011; Dumont, 1988; Gupta, 2004). By this reasoning, since landownership is decidedly an important constituent of Jat caste identity and by extension, masculinities (see Verma, 2002; Taylor, Singh, & Booth, 2015; Taylor, 2014) – the absence or invisibility of landownership (in transnational spaces) would result in a threat to Jat men's masculinities. With more and more Punjabis migrating to other countries (see Walton-Roberts, 2003, 2004), and

keeping in mind that negotiating transnational space is a strongly gendered process (Yeoh & Willis, 2004; Willis & Yeoh, 2000), it is imperative to study how masculinities of Punjabi men (trans)form outside of the local or in transnational spaces. Transnationalism is a dynamic process, and how transnationalism operationalizes hegemonic ideals/aspirations significantly influences migrant men's development of their masculinities (Howson, 2006, 2014).

Researchers in diaspora and transnational studies, recently, have started to realize the importance of caste identity as an influential variable in addition to other social identities such as gender and ethnicity (in Jaspal, 2011). In addition to theorization of caste as a material social category in geography (for example see Nightingale, 2011), scholars in social psychology have conceptualized caste as a psychological construct that operates at a much deeper level and profoundly affects a person's self-concept (Jaspal, 2011). Jaspal and Takhar (2016), in their research among Indian diaspora in the UK, found that caste identity overrides any other social identity and hence is an exceptionally important phenomenological variable for studies on South Asians in diaspora spaces (see also, Jaspal, 2011; Gayer 2000; Mand 2006; Chopra 2005). In social psychology, caste or caste group affiliation is understood as serving particular psychological functions for an individual's self-concept such as feelings of belongingness or self-esteem (Jaspal, 2011). Mahalingam (2007) and Jaspal (2011) assert that caste group members have a strong tendency to internalize the social representation of one's own caste identity and interpret it as innate within the self-concept, especially when the ascribed social position of one's caste group ranks higher (see also Mooney, 2013).

Current Study:

In the current study, I chose first generation international students and not second or higher generation Canadian-Punjabi men, because I wanted to map the transition in masculine

subjectivities shortly after immigration. The examination of student-migrant men with a focus on the transnational nature of their lives in their new cultural situations will offer insight into a new clarity into how aspiration operates with hegemonic masculinities. The narratives that I focus on reveal constant negotiation and renegotiation of masculinities and caste-identities in transnational spaces. Thematic analysis sheds light on how transnationalization operationalizes caste and aspiration as an aspect of migrant men's development of their masculinity and how men existing in transnational contexts negotiate these principles as part of their alignment to a particular ideal of hegemonic masculinity. Therefore, in the present article I explore how transnational spaces may impinge upon caste visibility and hence Jat masculine performativity and how men may respond to fluctuations within the identity structure.

Methods:

I recruited participants mainly from the Greater Toronto Area, Ontario – specifically, Brampton (18), Mississauga (3), and Hamilton (1). The criteria for eligibility of participants were as follows: interviewees had to self-identify as (i) male; (ii) belonging to Jat caste; (iii) between the age of 16 and 34; (iv) international student from Punjab, India. I posted recruitment posters in various public spaces around nearby colleges, shopping complexes, Indian restaurants, bus stops, some temples, and cafes. Additional posters were posted in virtual spaces such as international students' pages on Facebook with the administrators' permission. A snowballing or "chain-referral" approach was followed to recruit more participants by giving the initial interviewees a copy of the recruitment poster to pass on to the future potential participants. Given the general hectic work-and-study schedule of international students, finding young men who were willing to talk proved to be difficult initially. I interviewed a total of 22 men from August 2019 to November 2019. I ensured that the sample was large enough to address the

research questions and to ensure theme saturation (e.g., see Creswell, 1998). Participants' age ranged from 19 to 26 years. Most participants moved to Canada as international students between 2015 and 2018 with one participant who came in 2013.

In-depth and face-to-face semi structured interviews were conducted at public places of participants' choice and convenience such as public parks, library, and cafes. An interview guide was used to initiate the interview and to allow me (the interviewer) to probe conversational paths as they unfolded. Responses to initial questions determined which subsequent questions were asked from the interview guide. In some cases, the interview guide was given up completely after one or two questions. Participants were given the choice of English and Punjabi language for interviews and most interviewees chose Punjabi language citing their comfort with the language. All interviews were translated verbatim and transcribed with minimum impairment to the participants' vernacular. Since the researcher's primary language is also Punjabi, no interpreters were involved at any stage of data collection or transcription.

The length of the interviews ranged from 50 to 150 minutes depending upon the general talkativeness and ongoing interest of the participants in the topic. Interviews were recorded on a digital voice-recorder. The data were then coded through open and focused coding into emergent themes determined by following a semi-grounded approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; see also Ricciardelli, Clow, & White, 2010). My approach of data analysis is not fully grounded as, in the framing of research questions, I also draw from a prior stock-of-knowledge; in addition to being semi-guided by the cultural, historical, and theoretical knowledge and framework of hegemonic masculinities and transnationalism.

Findings:

After farming and agriculture, migration remains a highly preferable choice for Jat men of Punjab as a means of earning money (Mooney, 2011, 2013; Chopra, 2011; Taylor, 2014; Taylor, Singh, & Booth, 2015). Diaspora spaces and transnational spaces in both Punjab and Canada (Brah, 1996; Walton-Roberts, 2003, 2004; Taylor, 2013; Mooney, 2011) are defined by transnationalism and transnational activities and significantly influence individual subjectivities. I structure the findings by presenting three themes that address Punjabi transnational masculinities in Canada: (i) Landownership and Jat masculinity in transnational spaces; (ii) Work and transnational communication; (iii) Claiming space, expression of Jat masculinity, and othering. These three themes highlight the reification, constant negotiation, and renegotiation of Jat masculinities in transnational spaces.

Landownership and Jat masculinity in transnational spaces:

Many researchers have cited landownership and, by extension, control over other resources as a primary factor for enabling Jats' migration to western countries (see for example, Ballard, 1994; Puri, 2003; Singh, 2003; Ram, 2007). For example, Ballard (1994) notes that due to their high socio-economic status, Jats have been able to mobilize resources necessary for migration. Landownership is a crucial constituent of Jat men's masculinity and a significant marker of their upper-caste status (Verma, 2003; Helweg, 1979). In transnational spaces, even though caste status associated with landownership is not readily visible/perceivable, it continues to be important for Jat men's self-concept (Jaspal, 2011; Jaspal & Takhar, 2016) or "Jatpana" (see Mooney, 2011) and continues to shape their masculine identity and performance in spaces outside of the local or in transnational spaces (see for example, Taylor, 2007).

Given that "land has always been central to Punjabi transnationalism" (Taylor, 2014:282), for some interviewees landownership in Punjab is the medium of assuring the

continuity of their Jat masculinities: "what will Jat even mean if we don't have any land – it'll be just a label," for some it is something that keeps their relationship with their homeland intact and continues their identities: "we will have nothing to go back to if we sold it all. What will we tell our children about our roots, where we come from?" In this sense, one of the goals of transnational masculinities is to keep the ancestral land in Punjab intact or to buy more land (see also, Taylor, 2014; Mooney, 2011) and acknowledging that land is *the* most important element to keep theirs and their future generations' identities as Jats unaltered. This also centralizes the importance of land as capital to the Jat identity which resonates with traditional understandings of the 'breadwinner' attribute that consistently marks the hegemonic ideal (see Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Nevertheless, according to Jacobsen & Myrvold (2015), as men move through multiple geographies, they respond to changes in their masculine identities by asserting or upholding their attachment to primordial identifications associated with their specifically rural, Jat identities. In the same vein, Mooney (2011: pp) articulates: "living abroad causes the land, and the Jat sense of being at home on it, to be further reified."

However, some participants in my study had to sell a portion of their family land to move to Canada. Even though selling the ancestral land is a practice that is looked down upon in Punjab (Verma, 2003; Taylor, 2014; Chopra, 2011), it is a last resort in the absence of alternative means, especially for men to migrate abroad. For example, Joban (22), a computer science student and a part-time cab driver in Brampton, says:

> "It was a very difficult decision to make. We are three brothers, and our combined land is in my father's name. We took a mortgage on 1.5 acres from the bank for me to come here. Now it's my responsibility to get it released *'killa chhadana'* – I must do it. Or else people will say *'pehlan e zameen thodi c, oh v vech ditti'* [they already had a small portion of land, and they sold it too]. It's pity mixed with ridicule."

The responsibility of reinstating the land and his family's honour in Punjab automatically becomes a hegemonic masculine ideal for Joban in the transnational context. In order to achieve this hegemonic ideal, he is expected to work as well as study to earn money to send back home. In this situation, despite the change in socio-spatial context from local to transnational, culturally exalted expression/form of masculinities in local spaces continue to act as the standards of masculinities in transnational spaces (see also, Kukreja, 2020). A threat or discontinuity in Jat masculinity arises from the loss of ancestral land in Punjab. Maintaining, continuing, or aspiring to the hegemonic masculinity of the local is the hegemonic ideal in spaces outside of the local as well – working towards it in transnational spaces confers upon men the acclaimed, culturally sanctioned heteropatriarchal masculine status of being a real Jat, one who keeps true to his roots.

For some young men, the hegemonic principles of masculinity change over time, which connotes the fluidity of Jat masculinities and their contingency upon spatio-temporal configurations.

> "I used to do Jatpana when I first came here. You know, things that sons of Jats typically do after coming here, wasting time and money on cars & show-off. But with time, comes wisdom *laughs* I am more serious towards my goals now."
>
> I: What are your goals?
>
> R: *long pause* "My immediate goals are to get settled here. Earn some money, get a PR [permanent residence of Canada], repay my parents' debt. You see they've done enough, my father even sold what little land he had. As their son, now it's my turn to take care of things and relieve them of their burdens." (Taj, 26)

'Jatpana' as Jat men's self-concept or sense of self as farmers has been extensively highlighted by Mooney (2011) in her book and its expression, while highly subjective, is a hegemonic ideal most men strive to achieve (Mooney, 2011). In the present context, Taj refers to Jatpana as being non-serious or to juvenile aimlessness pertaining to the 'typical' behaviour of Jat men in Canada as is seen represented in social media or news (Prime Asia TV Canada, 2017). From Taj's

statement, it appears that for men to be more responsible in their role as breadwinners and caretakers, they must grow out of the superficiality of 'Jatpana.' In this sense, the immediate hegemonic goals for Taj are also earning and remitting money to compensate for or reinstate the lost land, in addition to 'getting settled' in Canada. In switching from one hegemonic ideal to the other, men in transnational settings consistently orient their hegemonic aspirations and performances across and within both local and transnational spaces. One of the main goals for men is to actively safeguard and foster their original, rural, Jat masculinity to ensure its continuity in spaces outside of the local (see Jaspal, 2011).

While almost all participants ubiquitously agreed on the importance of land for Jat's identity, there was one contrary account that suggested the presence of non-hegemonic Jat masculinities in transnational spaces. Barinder (24) said:

> "We're not like that you know – that we will not sell our land no matter what happens. My parents already told me that they are willing to sell it all for me to get settled in Canada. Ultimately, they are also coming here. Then what's the use of having land that's doing nothing there?"

Barinder's statement indicates an alternative masculinity (see also Connell, 1992) – that is more 'practical' than 'emotional' but at the same time acknowledges the larger sentiment, or significance of land for Jats in general. For Barinder, the value of land lies in its commodification, not in continued control over it. It resonates with some of Taylor's (2014) findings that actual landownership might be becoming less important to Jats as neoliberalism and consumerist display of wealth has taken over. In transnational spaces, as long as there is a connection with the land back home and there is a notion of returning – even temporarily, rural Jat masculinities act as the hegemonic ideal and guiding principles for transnational masculinities. While Barinder's statement resonates with other aspects of transnational hegemonic masculinity as expressed by other men – that is, getting settled in Canada, taking care

of parents – landownership occupies a marginalized role in his construction/notion of masculinity. Therefore, in instances where no connection with the land is observed and the desire to return is absent, new alternative masculinities are put in place based on neoliberal ethos and which translate landownership into a new form of capital still maintaining the breadwinner ideal.

Work and transnational communication:

Even though young men in my study might not (or no longer) be farmers per se, the ethos of farming and landownership associated with Jat caste continues to impact their notions of masculinities and choice of work in local and, more so, in transnational spaces, reflecting again the role of capital in the construction of the transnational hegemonic Jat masculinity. For example, Jagmeet (Brampton) talks about his work choices in India and Canada:

> "If I wanted, I could've worked in a call-center after my diploma like others do. But I didn't want to. I know I wasn't built for this. It's the same for all sons of Jats I think – we can't work for others – can't take orders and say 'sir, sir'."
>
> I: Why's that?
>
> R: "I don't know, I think it's in our blood. Jats are known for their honest and independent hard work [on their land]. We don't work *for* people; we want to be respected and celebrated." (Jagmeet, 25)

The pride and independence associated with hard work on the land shapes men's subjectivities at a profound level (Mooney, 2011; see also Mahalingam, 2007). Here, Jagmeet seems to have "essentialized" or internalized the higher status associate with Jat caste group (Mahalingam, 2007) which, in turn, affects his work and behavioral choices. Many other participants made similar comments about the Jat identity hardwired in their "genes" or "blood" (see also, Kukreja, 2020). From such assertions, there appears to be "an essentialist understanding of caste that is an immutable, quasi-biological 'trait' that cannot be relinquished" (Jaspal & Takhar, 2016:90).

I: How about the work you do here in Canada?

> R: "Oh here, it's all the same. People don't degrade you – everybody does every kind of work whether one's rich or poor. There's respect in every work here. I still wouldn't work as a waiter or anything, but I don't think less of boys who do." (Jagmeet)

For men like Jagmeet, the choice of work depends on the socio-spatial context within which they find themselves. Jagmeet "needs" his work to suit his caste status and associated masculine disposition so it does not place him in a jeopardized position among his peers or relatives in Canada and back home. The engagement with hegemonic principle of caste-status in a transnational context is apparent from the fact that the Jagmeet's caste-group affiliation refrains him from working at odd/menial jobs in Punjab but not in Canada. The reasoning that "everybody has to do that" was a determining factor echoed by many other men as well to neutralize their decision of working at such jobs. The subtraction of agency from such decisions serve to shift the onus from the individual to a larger structure that is simultaneously perceived as rigid and liberating by these young men. The jobs these men work at also determine the nature and content of their transnational communication. When asked if their folks back home knew about their jobs in Canada, Gagan (Mississauga) said:

> "my parents know about the work I do here. We don't tell it to the relatives necessarily you know. What would they say that their son is washing dishes in Canada *laughs* they only know that I work in a restaurant – my cousins from back home "like" the Instagram videos of me driving my car [with Punjabi songs in the background] that's it." (Gagan, 25)

There is selective dissemination of information keeping in mind the "suitability" of the job for the men. Men strategize the transnational communication to maintain their status amongst relatives back home. However, activities that accentuate the appearance of Jat masculinities are decidedly emphasized and are broadcasted for everyone to see; particularly through social media.

In the absence of apparent visible markers of Jat caste in transnational spaces, the main yardstick for men to measure their masculinities against is the expression/performance of

masculinities back home – where, due the conducive social, cultural, and spatial context, masculinities are embodied, expressed, and performed most intensely (see Donaldson et al., 2006). In this vein, many participants commented on the deliberate displays of caste association especially targeted at people back home as a source of pride for young men in spaces outside of the local – and especially in transnational spaces. According to Howson (2014), within a specific cultural context, aspiration operates as a process that directs and enables men's practices and identities to a goal. For men who do not express a desire to return (like Barinder), the aspiration to replicate or achieve principles of rural Jat masculinity transforms and aligns with the larger normative masculinities in the specific socio-spatial context and translates into achieving wealth, conforming to neoliberal ethos, and expressing masculine identities through consumerism (Taylor, 2014). In addition, for most Jat men, the hegemonic goal is performing, expressing, and reproducing rural Punjabi masculinities, and when that becomes difficult to achieve, new alternative strategies are put in place.

In Canada, for example, many young men consciously indulge in practices that make their caste association visible to the Punjabi community in both local and transnational spaces such as getting license plates on their cars with Jat surnames. The license plate phenomenon can be described as signifiers of belonging, geographically and socially to a particular community or could be understood as nostalgic expressions attempted to connect with Jat traditions of the rural. For many young Punjabi men caste-visibility is also realized through association with rurality/rural background or particular regional areas of Punjab. Jasvir (27) said, when I asked about his customized license plate that read "Majha"

> That's our area back in Punjab. I don't know why I got that. Sometimes I think I should remove it, I think its *fukri* or show-off. But then I want people to read my license plate and know that I am from Majha. People who write their surnames – I have one thing to

> say to them – one who's a Jat, doesn't need to show it by shouting it to the world. *laughs* you don't need to show it, people will know you're a Jat anyway.

Here, Jasvir makes his Punjabi identity indirectly visible through identifying with a specific geographical area in Punjab. He, rather than directly displaying his caste affiliation and getting his surname on the license plate, is being discreet by identifying with the geographical region. Jasvir seems to be aware and conscious of the "judgment" such displays entail from his own community (discussed in next section). For him, the collective identity of being a Punjabi is worth showing off more so than the individualistic caste identity of being a Jat. However, he also justifies him not getting a license plate with his surname, concurrently underscoring the inherent understanding of caste embodied and conveyed through Jat bodies.

Claiming space, expression of Jat masculinity, and "othering"

During my five months stay in Brampton, in numerous conversations, the most common expression that came out of almost every Punjabi's mouth was: *"ehna ne gandh payea,"* which means these boys have littered Canada clearly referring to the "Punjabi male culture" they were continuing here in Canada. This continuity is held responsible for ruining the reputation of Punjabis in Canada. A close Canadian-Punjabi, elderly relative of mine unambiguously declared his hostility toward Punjabi students to me, when he heard about my research, that "these boys have a "slave mentality" – they cannot deal with the freedom they have been given here in Canada and they're better off when controlled." A strong reaction to these boys' bodies was also clear. "All they have done is ruin the good name of Punjabis in Canada that the earlier generations [like his] had established with honesty and hard work. All they do is roam around in their cars with their moustaches in the air. Why can't they be normal?" An antagonistic attitude towards the embodied expression of Punjabi masculinity is apparent here. For my relative, the visible refusal of assimilation in terms of bodily appearances by young men seems to discount

their credibility as students or workers in Canada. Such perceptions by the larger Punjabi community, in part, contribute to creating a context through which young men construct their masculine identities in transnational spaces.

For most men in my study, immigrating to Canada is their first experience of becoming the other – not only in terms of ethnicity- and race-based interactions, but also within their co-ethnic groups (Broughton, 2008; Cohen, 2006; Pande, 2017). Commenting on the larger antipathy of Punjabi community towards international students as perceived through debates and discussions on local news channels and through social media, Inder, 24, said:

> "I tell you what, these uncles[3] say that why these boys [Punjabi international students] aren't facing the same hardships as they did? *short pause* It was more difficult for them you know – most of them had to cut their hair, change their identity [to assimilate] – but we don't do that. We are the same as we were back home. I think that's where their judgments come from – that we don't struggle enough."

Here Inder refers to the phenomenon of body transformation that was quite common among migrant Sikh men – to assimilate into the host society and to escape racialization (see Brah, 1996 for a detailed discussion on Sikhs changing their identity by cutting their hair; see also Brah, 2002; George & Chaze, 2015). The "othering" therefore, also stems in part from apparent inter-generational struggles and differences where Punjabi students in transnational spaces, by not displaying visible signs of assimilation or alteration in their identities, are presumed to be trivializing the experiences of those in the diaspora spaces, i.e., older Punjabi community. This is also in resonance with Brah's (1996: 208-209) assertion that diaspora/transnational spaces, become sites where 'boundaries of inclusion and exclusion… of "us" and "them,"' are reinforced and sometimes contested. In most studies on transnational masculinities, it is asserted that

[3] It is common in Punjabi culture to call anyone older than oneself as uncle or aunty. Here, 'uncles' refer to older Punjabi men.

migration often leads to perceived emasculation or threatened masculine subjectivities (for example, Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner, 1999; Pande, 2017). The experiences of 'old' Punjabi men as seen by my participants could be understood through this framework but such significant "break" in identities or masculine subjectivities did not occur for young men in my study. For example, as Sarb articulates:

> "They accuse us of disrupting the environment (can't find a better word) here – *"mahaul kharab kita."* You tell me, if *goray* [white people] went and lived in Punjab, won't they also change the *mahaul* to feel at home*?* The thing is these 'old' Punjabi uncles were submissive to the *goray* and the younger generation is not very much so… so they have this problem that we spent our lives in complaisance, how are these boys enjoying themselves and still living their best lives. *laughs*" (Sarb, 21)

Like Inder, Sarb also speaks indirectly to the relative ease with which they migrated as compared to older generation Punjabis and attributes this for the antipathy displayed towards international students by their co-ethnic groups. As interpreted through the continuity principle of Identity Process Theory (Jaspal, 2011; Jaspal & Takhar, 2016), a lack of pause in masculinities in transnational spaces lets these young men continue their identities relatively unencumbered as opposed to identity challenges faced by older generations (Brah, 1996, 2002; George & Chaze, 2015). Such continuation in masculinities in transnational spaces and strong identification with hegemonic masculinities in Punjab also allows young men to assert/perceive power over space outside of the local more easily than older Punjabi men. For example, commenting on the 'fight' video, Neel, 28, said:

> "They talk about fights… all these desi channels… don't the *goray* [white people] fight among themselves? Where there's a community, there are also going to be fights. The only thing is our style is different – we don't fight one-on-one, we invite 10 more men to back us up *laughs* it's normal for us, but people here, even our own, think it's a big deal."

In the present context, contrary to the existing literature that asserts emasculation resulting from migration (Pande, 2017; Kukreja, 2020), the assertion that young men do not let geographical

context (or a different socio-cultural context) alter their performances of masculinity is an empowering notion in and of itself. Instead of changing their identities/subjectivities and behavioral practices to suit the present socio-spatial context, as consistently called for by those in the diaspora, young men argue for changing the context according to their casted masculine disposition. Such actions can be interpreted as temporally claiming the spatial context by these men as a continuation of their Jat masculinities – extending from their control over agrarian land in Punjab or gendered control in terms of masculinized spaces (see Chowdhry, 2019).

In such contexts, homosociality and homosocial solidarity may also become operational and be utilized to reassert casted masculinity in specific spatial contexts and to maintain a distinctiveness from others as well as to ascertain a sense of belonging (IPT: Jaspal, 2011). Homosociality is a proven context for the segregation of hegemonic and non-hegemonic forms (Bird 1996). As per Bird (1996:121), "[h]omosociality refers to the nonsexual attractions held by men (or women) for members of their own sex". In the present context, caste becomes another salient factor in determining homosocial relations in addition to sex. Homosociality is particularly emphasized by men in transnational spaces, perhaps because the 'continuity of identity' makes it relatively easier for men to continue their masculine and caste practices in presence of other men of the same group (see Jaspal, 2011). Like Raj (Brampton) remarks: "we're all the same, you know. We have almost same backgrounds, we come from similar families, we have similar habits." Most men find it easier and quicker to establish homosocial relationships with other Jat men because "it is understood they're all the same." Homosocial spaces become places where Jat masculine practices can effectively be conveyed and understood. In a way, they replicate the masculinized spaces back home (see Chowdhry, 2019) and serve the

same function of enhancing a sense of caste-brotherhood further affirming individual men's masculine subjectivities.

Discussion:

Landownership in Punjab is the main marker, constituent, and ideal of hegemonic Jat masculinity. In modern times, with agriculture no longer profitable, men must seek alternative avenues to achieve and perform new forms of hegemonic masculinities. Due to historical propensity and various other factors, migration and hence transnational masculinities become one such avenue. Migrating and occupying transnational spaces can be considered a rite of passage into manhood for Jat men as, in lieu of status associated with landownership, it translates into different other forms of capital upon which modern consumerist, neoliberal masculinities are founded. That is, the absence of visible control over land in transnational spaces is compensated by alternate expressions of Jat masculinities even though rural Punjabi masculinities remain to be the yardstick against which transnational masculinities are measured and performed. In the present study, I look at student-migrant men as part of a complex and diverse social category of upper-caste Jats and frame their transnational masculinities as multidimensional social phenomena.

One of the fundamental principles of hegemonic Jat masculinity is caste-visibility – making caste-association deliberately visible to other people through landownership and engagement and utilization of various ancillary devices, including the body. Whether the practice of making caste visible is targeted or broadcasted depends on the spatial context within which men attempt such displays. That is, caste-visibility, and therefore the privilege/status associated with it, is largely dependent on geographical spaces and different degrees of caste-visibility leads to variation in hegemonic aspirations and principles and masculine performativity. In transnational spaces, in

addition to landownership and keeping the ancestral land back home intact, the hegemonic ideal becomes: working and sending money back home, reinstating or continuing control over the land in Punjab, and making caste-association visible in transnational spaces.

My research findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of transnational masculinities. While most research on transnational masculinities is assumed under the collective umbrella of diaspora and transnational studies, I assert that a clear distinction between diaspora spaces and transnational spaces should be made to holistically understand masculine identities in exclusively transnational spaces. Additionally, in the present study, I highlight the phenomenological importance of caste as a social identity and delineate how masculinities, outside of the originary geographical arena within which caste system operates, are influenced by the ubiquitous existence of caste identities regardless of the spatial context. I found that many men internalize their upper caste status which not only impacts their masculine identity but work choices as well. Many men hesitate from working on jobs that can potentially compromise their caste-associated high caste status back home.

Contrary to existing discourse in the field of transnational masculinities, which asserts that migration most often leads to emasculation for men, I found that a significant "break" in masculinities did not occur for young men in my study and they are able to continue their masculine identities in transnational spaces. However, this does not imply that their masculine identities remain completely unaffected by the shift – there certainly are challenges and vulnerabilities in the new spatial context that men must respond to and align their masculine performativity accordingly. For instance, one of the biggest challenges is the 'othering' of young student-migrant men by the larger Punjabi community in the diaspora space. The antagonistic attitude of older generation Punjabis coupled with media's negative representation and

description of international students from Punjab constitute a complex social, spatial, and cultural backdrop against which young men must perform and seek to achieve hegemonic masculinities. In such contexts, homosocial solidarity and spaces at times become operational and serve as arenas wherein men can perform Jat masculinities unencumbered.

Limitations:

Transnational spaces are distinct from diasporic spaces. People who are not *yet* a part of the diaspora and who currently occupy solely transnational spaces are seen as 'others' even by their own community. Since the focus of my study was transnational spaces, there was no scope for second-generation men to be included or even first-generation men who 'crossed over' to the diaspora. Findings might have been different for those men – given they occupy a different spatio-social context within their own community.

Future research:

The casted or gendered component of reluctance to work at subservient positions at a personal level is apparent from some of the interviews. It is worth finding out, in a future study, if the types of jobs held by Indian international students are divided along caste or gender lines.

Conclusion:

By focusing on upper-caste student-migrant men in transnational spaces, I demonstrated the relational and fluid nature of hegemonic Punjabi masculinities. These masculinities are pluralistic and contingent on (transnational) spaces. Even though the hegemonic ideal for men in transnational spaces remain to be the local rural masculinities based on landownership in Punjab, alternative strategies are put in place when that hegemonic ideal becomes difficult to achieve in

transnational spaces or when there is a willing disinclination to achieve it such as in case of men who do not express a desire to return.

References:

Ahmed-Ullah, N. (2016, June 3). How Brampton, a town in suburban Ontario, was dubbed a ghetto. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/brampton-a-story-of-political-importance-power-and-ethnic-enclaves/article30273820/

Ballard, R. (1994). Introduction: The emergence of Desh Pardesh. In Ballard, R. (Ed.), *Desh Pardesh*: *The South Asian experience in Britain* (pp. 1–34). London: C. Hurst and Co.

Baas, M. (2010). *Imagined mobility: Migration and transnationalism among Indian students in Australia.* Amsterdam: Anthem.

Basch, G., Glick-Schiller, N., & Blanc-Szanton, C. (1994). *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Post-colonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States.* Langhorne, PA: Gordon and Breach.

Baubock, R. (2003). Towards a Political Theory of Migrant Transnationalism. *International Migration Review, 37*(3), 700-723.

Bhalla, G.S. & Singh, G. (2009). Economic liberalization and Indian agriculture: A state-wise analysis. *Economic and Political Weekly, XLIV* (52), 34-44

Bird, S. R. (1996). Welcome to the Men's Club: Homosociality and the Maintenance of Hegemonic Masculinity. *Gender and Society, 10*(2), 120-132.

Brah, A. (1996), *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, London: Routledge

Brah, A. (2002). Global Mobilities, Local Predicaments: Globalization and the Critical Imagination. *Feminist Review, 70*(1), 30–45. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400008

Breakwell, G.M. (1986). *Coping with threatened identities.* London: Methuen.

Bondi, L. & Davidson, J. (2003). Troubling the place of gender. In Anderson, K., Domosh, M., Pile, S., & Thrift, N. (Ed.). *Handbook of Cultural Geography*. SAGE, pp. 325-342

Census of Canada. (2016). Retrieved from https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/download-telecharger/comp/page_dl-tc.cfm?Lang=E.

Charsley, K. (2005). Unhappy Husbands: Masculinity and Migration in Transnational Pakistani Marriages. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*(11), 85-105.

Chopra, R. (2004). Encountering Masculinity: An Ethnographer's Dilemma. In R. Chopra, C. Osella, & O. Filippo, *South Asian Masculinities: Context of Change, Sites of Continuity* (pp. 36-59). New Delhi: Women Unlimited.

Chopra, R. (2011) *Militant and migrant: The politics and social history of Punjab.* London, New York, New Delhi: Routledge

Chowdhry, P. (2019). *Gender, Power and Identity: Essays on Masculinities in Rural North India.* Orient Black Swan

Christou, A. (2011). Narrating lives in (e)motion: Embodiment, belongingness and displacement in diasporic spaces of home and return. *Emotion, Space & Society, 4*(4), 249-57. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2011.06.007

Collins, F. L. (2006). Making Asian students, making students Asian: the racialisation of export education in Auckland. New Zealand. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint, 47*,217–234.

Collins, F. L. (2008). Bridges to learning: international student mobilities, education agencies and interpersonal networks. *Global Networks, 8*, 398–417.

Collins, F. L. (2009). Connecting 'home' with 'here': personal homepages in everyday transnational lives. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 35*, 839–859.

Collins, F. L. (2010). Negotiating un/familiar embodiments: investigating the corporeal dimensions of South Korean international student mobilities in Auckland, New Zealand. *Population, Space and Place, 16*, 51–62.

Connell, R. W. (1992). A Very Straight Gay: Masculinity, Homosexual Experience, and the Dynamics of Gender. *American Sociological Review, 57*(6), 735-751.

Connell, R., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender and Society, 19*(6), 829-859.

Conradson, D., & Mckay, D. (2007) Translocal Subjectivities: Mobility, Connection, Emotion. *Mobilities, 2*(2), 167-174, DOI: 10.1080/17450100701381524

Donaldson, M., and Howson, R. (2009). Men, Migration and Hegemonic Masculinity. In M. Donaldson, R. Hibbins, R. Howson, and B. Pease (eds.) *Migrant Men: Critical Studies of Masculinities and Migration Experience*, 210–217. New York: Routledge.

Dovidio, J.F, Major, B., & Crocker, J. (2000). Stigma: Introduction and overview. In T.F. Heatherton, R.E. Kleck, M.R. Hebl, & J.G. Hull (Eds), *The social psychology of stigma* (pp. 1–30). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Dumont, L. (1988). *Homo hierarchicus*: *The caste system and its implications* (trans. Mark Sainsury, Louis Dumont and Basia Gulati). Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Faist, T., Pitkänen, P., Gerdes, J., Reisenauer, E. (2010). Transnationalisation and Institutional Transformations. *COMCAD Arbeitspapiere* -Working Papers.

Forbes-Mewett, H., & Nyland, C. (2008). Cultural Diversity, Relocation, and the Security of International Students at an Internationalized University. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 12*(2), 181-203

Gill, H. (2012). *Becoming Men in a Modern City: Masculinity, Migration and Globalization in North India.* Washington DC: American University.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Glick-Schiller, N., Basch, L., Blanc-Szanton, C. (1992). *Towards a transnational perspective o migration: Race, class, ethnicity and nationalism reconsidered.* New York: New York Academy of Science.

Griffiths M. (2015). "Here, Man Is Nothing!": Gender and Policy in an Asylum Context. *Men and Masculinities,18*(4), 468-488. doi:10.1177/1097184X15575111

Helweg, A.W. (1979), *Sikhs in England: The Development of a Migrant Community*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. & Messner, M. (1999). Gender displays and men's power: The 'new man' and the Mexican immigrant man. In S. Coontz, M. Parson, & G. Raley (Eds.), *American families: A multicultural reader* (pp. 342-358). New York: Routledge.

House of Commons, Canada. (2018, June 21). *Brampton MPs release joint statement on escalating violence* [Press release]. Retrieved from openparliament.ca

Howson, R. (2006). *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity.* London and New York: Routledge.

Howson, R. (2014). Rethinking Apiration and Hegemonic Masculinity in Transnational Context. *Masculinities and Social Change, 3*(1), 18-35

Jacobsen, K. A., & Myrvold, K. (2015). *Young Sikhs in a Global World: Negotiating Traditions, Identities and Authorities.* Surrey, England: Ashgate.

Jaspal, R. (2011). Caste, Social Stigma, and Identity Processes. *Psychology and Developing Societies 23* (2): 27–62.

Jodhka, S. (2006). Caste and Democracy: Assertion and Identity Among the Dalits of Rural Punjab. *Sociological Bulletin, 55*(1), 4-23.

Judge, P. S. (2015). Caste Hierarchy, Dominance, and Change in Punjab. *Sociological Bulletin, 64*(1), 55-76.

Kalra, V. S. (2009). Between Emasculation and Hypermasculinity: Theorizing British South Asian Masculinities. *South Asian Popular Culture*, 113-125.

Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with Patriarchy. *Gender and Society, 2*(3), 274-290.

Kortewag, A. (2012). Understanding honour killing & honour-related violence in immigration context: Implication for the legal profession and beyond. *Canadian Criminal Law Review, 16*(2), 33-58.

Kukreja, R. (2020). Migration has stripped us of our manhood: Contradictions o failed masculinity among South Asian male migrants in Greece. *Men and Masculinities,* 1-19. DOI: 10.1177/1097184X20927050

Mahalingam, R. (2007). Beliefs about chastity, machismo, and caste identity: A cultural psychology of gender. *Sex Role*s, *56*(3–4), 239–49.

Mahler, S. J. (2007). Theoretical and empirical contributions toward a research agenda for transnationalism. In M. P. Smith & L.E. Guarnizo (Eds.), *Transnationalism from below* (pp.64-100). Transaction Publishers: New Jersey

Mand, K. (2006). Gender, ethnicity and social relations in the narratives of elderly Sikh men and women. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *29*(6), 1057–71.

Mooney, N. (2011). *Rural Nostalgias and Transnational Dreams: Identity and Modernity among Jat Sikhs.* Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press.

Mooney, N. (2013). The Yeoman Jats of Punjab: Time, Expertise and the Colonial Construction of Jat Sikh Identity. *Anthropologica, 55*(2), 277-290.

Nightingale, A. J. (2011). Bounding difference: Intersectionality and the material production of gender, caste, class and environment in Nepal. *Geoforum*, *42*(2), 153–162. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2010.03.004

Pande, A. (2017). Mobile Masculinities: Migrant Bangladeshi Men in South Africa. *Gender and Society, 31*(3), 383-406.

Pile, S., & Thrift, N. (1995). *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203976012

Puri, H. K. (2003). Scheduled Castes in Sikh Commuunnity: A Historical Perspective. *Economic and Political Weekly, 38*(26), 2693-2701.

Raghuram, P. (2013). Theorizing spaces of student migration. *Population, Space and Place, 19*, 138-154.

Rajan, S. I., & Nanda, A. K. (2015). Transnational world and Indian Punjab: Contemporary issues. In S. I. Rajan, V. J. Varghese, A. K. Nanda (eds.), *Migration, mobility and multiple affiliations: Punjabis in a transnational world* (pp. 1-38). New Delhi: Cambridge University Press.

Ram, R. (2008). Ravidass Deras and Social Protest: Making Sense of Dalit Consciousness in Punjab. *Journal of Asian Studies, 67*(4), 1341-1364.

Rankin, E. (2018, June 4). Vanity plate declares 'I'm drunk' — in Punjabi. *CBC*. Retrieved from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/vanity-plates-bc-1.4688769

Razack, S. (2004). Imperilled Muslim women, dangerous Muslim men and civilized Europeans: Legal and social responses to forced marriages. *Feminist Legal Studies, 12*(1), 129-74.

Ricciardelli, R., Clow, K., & White, P. (2010). Investigating hegemonic masculinity: Portrayals of masculinity in men's lifestyle magazines. *Sex Roles, 63,* 64-78. DOI: 10.1007/s11199-010-9764-8

Robertson, S. (2013). *Transnational Student-Migrants and the State: The Education-Migration Nexus.* NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Robertson, S., Harris, A., & Baldassar, L. (2018) Mobile transitions: a conceptual framework for researching a generation on the move. *Journal of Youth Studies, 21*(2), 203-217, DOI: 10.1080/13676261.2017.1362101

Sheller, M., & Urry, J. (2016) Mobilizing the new mobilities paradigm. *Applied Mobilities, 1*(1), 10-25, DOI: 10.1080/23800127.2016.1151216

Sinha, M. (1995). *Colonial Masculinity: The Manly Englishman and the Effeminate Bengali.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Smith, M. P., & Guarnizo, L. E. (2007). Locations of transnationalism. In P.M. Smith & L.E. Guarnizo (Eds.), *Transnationalism from below* (pp. 3-35). Transaction Publishers: New Jersey

Srinivas, M. (1966). *Social Change in Modern India.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Srinivas, M. (1996). *Village, Caste, Gender, and Method: Essays in Indian Social Anthropology.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Taylor, S. (2014). The Diasporic Pursuit of Home and Identity : Dynamic Punjabi Transnationalism. *The Sociological Review*, *62*(2), 276–294. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12155

Taylor, S., Singh, M., & Booth, D. (2015). The ambiguity of Punjabi transnationalism: Caste & development within a transnational community. In S. I. Rajan, V. J. Varghese, A. K. Nanda (eds.), *Migration, mobility and multiple affiliations: Punjabis in a transnational world* (pp. 205-33). New Delhi: Cambridge University Press.

van Hoven, B., & Horschelmann, K. (2005). *Spaces of Masculinities.* London: Routledge.

Verma, S.J. (2003). Punjabis in Canada: Finding the roots of their diversity. In Verma, S. J. & Seshan, R. (eds.) *The Indian Diaspora in Canada.* Jaipur: Rawat Publications, pp. 207-16

Vertovec, S. (2003). Migration and other modes of transnationalism: Towards a conceptual cross-fertilization. *International Migration and Integration, 37*, 641-65.

Vignoles, V.L., Chryssochoou, X., & Breakwell, G.M. (2000). The distinctiveness principle: Identity, meaning and the bounds of cultural relativity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *4*(4), 337–54.

Walton-Roberts, M. (2003). Transnational geographies: Indian immigration to Canada. *The Canadian Geographer, 47*(3), 235-50.

Walton-Roberts, M. (2004). Returning, remitting, reshaping: Non-resident Indians and Transformation of society and space in Punjab, India. In Jackson, P., Crang, P., & Dwyer, C. (Eds.) *Transnational Spaces.* London: Routledge, pp. 78-103

Waters, J., & Brooks, R. (2012). Transnational spaces, international students: Emergent perspectives on educational mobilities. In R. Brooks, A. Fuller, J. Waters (eds.), *Changing spaces of education: New perspectives on the nature of learning.* London: Routledge

Willis, K. & Yeoh, B.S.A. (2000). *Gender and migration*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Xing, L. (2018, June 15). Vanity plates saying 'gun' and 'rifle' in Punjabi promote violence, activist claims. *CBC*. Retrieved from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/vanity-plates-punjabi-rifle-has-community-activist-calling-for-crackdown-1.4706439

Xing, L. (2019, January 10). Vanity plates reading 'F--k You' in Punjabi still on GTA roads, Brampton man warns. *CBC*. Retrieved from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/punjabi-licence-plates-brampton-1.4972445

Yeoh, B.S.A. & Willis, K. (2004). Constructing masculinities in transnational space: Singapore men on the 'regional beat,' In P. Crang, C. Dwyer, & P. Jackson (eds.) *Transnational spaces* (pp. 147-163). London & New York: Routledge

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

What constitutes masculine identities in Jat men today? Often in the folk and pop culture of Punjab and Punjabi diaspora, identities of Jat men have mostly been conceptualized as static and homogenous, derived and located in parochial agrarian ideology, a set of beliefs peculiar to agriculture and living in Punjab's rural locale (see for example, Roy, 2017; Chowdhry, 2015). Of late, however, concepts like agrarian ideology, Jatpana (the expression of a static, hypermasculine Jat ethnicity), and rural mindedness have come under academic scrutiny and the concepts implicit in them, like rurality and hypermasculinity, have also been further unpacked, and even challenged (for example, see Taylor, 2013, 2014; Gill, 2012; Mooney, 2013; Kukreja, 2021). Along these lines, in this dissertation, I outline, explore, and unravel how the masculine subjectivities of Jats are relationally produced and entrenched in embodied interactions in different spatial contexts, namely local and transnational. I define local spaces as the original spaces where Jat caste is materially and distinguishably present, such as in rural Punjab, India. There are various structural and contextual caste markers that lead to Jat caste visibility in such spaces, including residential segregation and land ownership.

Moreover, owing to the neoliberal ethos of consumerism and the flux of late capitalism, over the past few decades, Jats have largely shifted their focus from farming to transnational migration (see, for example, Mooney, 2011, 2013; Chopra, 2011; Gill, 2012; Kukreja, 2021). In defining transnational spaces, I refer to the spaces where Jats migrate to (in this case, Canada), including the interstitial realms between transnational and diaspora spaces, and where Jat caste markers – such as landownership – are virtually absent. I identify and explore how Jat hegemonic masculinities intersect with these geographies of high and low caste-visibility and produce, reproduce, and rework their significant markers or attributes. Simultaneously, I explore

the kinds of choices and decisions men make within their structural environment and focus on how stories of the masculine (self) are sustained, altered, and manipulated over time and across geographies.

The underlying premise of my research is that a comprehensive understanding of masculinities depends partly on the explicit recognition of the geography of masculinities, and the interplay between local, regional, and global levels within a particular temporal dimension (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). By problematizing and addressing the intricate relationship of space and masculinities – in this case, local and transnational spaces and Jat masculinities – my research enables an analysis of the practices by which attributes and behaviours of Jat men are selectively assembled, normalized, and reproduced as signifying the character or qualities of "real" farmers or hegemonic Jat masculinities in different spatialities, the adaptation of alternate masculinities in the face of vulnerabilities, and the 'othering' faced in a transnational context.

In the first empirical chapter, I started with Punjab's agrarian setting, arable land and spaces, and their associated meanings, concepts, and signifying practices, which collectively produce and reinforce gender and caste identities – particularly Jat masculine identities. Using theories of feminist political ecology, hegemonic masculinities, and geographies of masculinities, I explore how access to and ownership of natural resources – in this case, arable land – and Jat men's dynamic relationship with natural resources (re)constitutes and ascertains principles of hegemonic Jat masculinity. I also look at how local masculinized spaces are constructed, their boundaries reinforced, and sometimes even dissolved at men's discretion.

I show that the creation and occupation of masculinized spaces by Jat men in the agrarian context of Punjab becomes an avenue to exercise and contest power relations between men and women and between men of different castes – where, almost unambiguously, Jat men prevail. On

the one hand, these findings highlight the fluid nature of Jat's masculine subjectivities and shed light on constantly shifting spatial and caste practices that are contingent upon larger structural determinants – especially in instances where rigid gender and caste boundaries blur and when, in the face of vulnerability, alternative, more inclusive, masculinities are sought and performed. What emerges is an understanding that Jat masculinities are not universal or fixed, but rather dynamic results of contested, spatially contingent practices. On the other hand, there is also a certain resiliency of the normative discourses on what, materially and symbolically, constitutes hegemonic Jat masculinity. For example, the centrality of landownership, the gratification associated with displaying Jat caste names, and the adaptation of corporeal markers of caste on one's body and through various ancillary devices. These un-reflexive practices result in the reproduction of hierarchies and reflect an adherence to archaic caste practices even in spaces where material caste markers are absent. The presence of such resiliency speaks to the rigidity of historical power and privilege associated with gender and caste and underline how their interactions are pivotal to the materiality of contemporary caste bodies – particularly Jat men's bodies.

In the second empirical chapter, drawing on Bourdieu's habitus, theories of hegemonic masculinities, and caste embodiment, I delineate the formation and sustenance of a Jat caste habitus in local and transnational spaces. The rather inconspicuous but significant 'material turn' in caste studies is increasingly popularizing the notion that caste is a material social category and an 'amalgam of idea and matter.' The palpability of caste is enhanced through individual caste bodies that are conditioned in certain manners of "caste-appropriate" behaviours. These processes of caste embodiment are most visible through Dalit bodies. By structurally shaping the 'grammar' of the Dalit body as one representing subordination and subservience, unequal power

relations and caste hierarchies are reified (Boopalan, 2017; Dutt, 2019; Samuel, 2020). Although less studied, the body of the upper caste individual has its own grammar that is the product of contextual power relations – often one signifying dominance, privilege, and prevalence over lower caste bodies.

In Punjab, the relational construction and embodiment of the upper caste body as dominant is most visible through the bodies of the Jat men. The historical power and privilege associated with the Sikh men's hypermasculine disposition, the corporeality of the landowning farmer, and the status of the dominant caste – all are pivotal in conditioning the Jat body and consequently shaping a Jat caste habitus. I argue the materiality of the Jat body is the medium through which Jat caste, as a mode of being and lived practice, is manifest within contextualized spaces. My findings suggest that within the Jat caste habitus, the processes through which Jat caste is made visible or embodied are closely interconnected with and co-constitute principles of hegemonic Jat masculinity in both local and transnational spaces. For instance young Jat men, whether they practice their traditional occupation of farming or not, attach a sentimental significance to the corporeal markers associated with working in the fields and with the Jat caste in general.

By subjectively trying to adapt and display caste markers in transnational spaces – such as caste names, culturally-specific bodily demeanours as codes to convey caste affiliation, the ability to decipher these codes and identifying someone's caste through appearance – Jat men attempt to maintain a connection with the original locale and interpret their identities as a continuation of the 'real' Jat identities of Punjab. Following Bourdieu's approach to understand these nuanced processes of embodiment of the Jat caste, my research sheds light on how classified practices associated with Jat caste transform into classifying practices within a caste

habitus and convey symbolic expressions of caste status and hegemonic masculinity in both local and transnational spaces.

In the third chapter, I explore how Punjabi Jat masculinities interact with and are negotiated in transnational spaces. Specifically, I look at the intricate mechanisms through which power and privilege associated with Jat masculine expressions in the original locale provide a benchmark and are translated/transformed in transnational spaces. Since landownership, the main Jat caste marker, is absent in transnational spaces, Jat men look for alternate, contextually situated avenues to convey their caste identity to those who can perceive it (i.e., the Punjabi community). In some instances, the exaggerated performance of Jat identity in transnational spaces becomes a ground for backlash by 'older' Punjabis residing in diaspora spaces in Canada.

The socio-cultural context shaped by the antipathic attitudes of those in the diaspora towards young Jat men, especially international students, provides a basis for the othering of the youth and accelerates the discourse of 'us and them' from both sides. Given that navigating transnational space is a strongly gendered process, first generation Punjabi men must then be wary of challenges and vulnerabilities to perform their masculinities within such spaces. Jats in transnational context take a course of action which satisfies the sense of self they wish to develop and/or the working/caste identity which they want others to recognize they hold. They actively endorse the traditional hegemonic principles of masculinity – such as being the breadwinner – while at the same time alternative expressions of masculinity and caste embodiment are put in place. In such contexts, continuity of one's identity as a Jat man in Punjab and power over the transnational space become important determining factors in measuring if the performance of Jat identity and masculinity has been successful. The extent of the internalization of caste identity is also manifest from work choices made by Jat men in different spatial contexts. Any such work is

avoided, or its undertaking hidden in transnational communications which has the potential to jeopardise one's caste status. What emerges then is an understanding that even though caste markers and avenues to perform caste may become somewhat limited, caste and caste practices continue to persist as an important social and psychological phenomenon in various spatialities still governing personal and social relationships.

However, in some instances, migration and transnationalism lead to the construction of a transnational Jat identity that is reconstructed away from farming as a way of life. The contents of the alternate, transnational Jat identities are actively selected and adopted by Jat men. In such cases, land as a social and cultural capital is replaced by other forms of capital in the transnational settings upon which neoliberal, consumerist masculinities are founded. For men in transnational contexts, work, money (and remittances) replaces landownership as the outward symbol of being a successful Jat man. Because of its openness to change, the transnational Jat identity is more transitory than the local Jat identity rooted in rurality and a new narrative of self, along the lines of modern consumerism may be constructed.

Limitations and future research:

To further gain insight into how upper-caste masculinities are constructed in different spatio-temporal contexts, future research using different methodologies and varied samples is warranted to better understand the dynamics associated with the intersections of gender, gender relations, caste, and space. This dissertation has some limitations in the sense that it remains socio-spatially bound to Punjab (local spaces) and Canada (transnational spaces). Recruiting participants from other geographical areas in India (from states other than Punjab) would have captured the nuances associated with transitions in upper-caste masculinities more effectively and would have presented a robust framework to compare transnational spaces against. Also, a

varied sample consisting of men from different castes would have increased the validity and reliability of the findings.

Given the small sampling frame of this research, the findings discussed are limited and should be recognized as preliminary. Further investigations on masculinities, the body, and space using larger samples are warranted to fully explore the effects of caste and gender practices in different contexts. Moreover, how one's internalized caste and gender status affects work choice in different spaces should be exclusively investigated in a dedicated study. As of now there remains a dearth in research that explores the intersections of work, gender, and caste especially in transnational contexts and, in future, an empirically grounded study in this direction could lead to findings with significant policy implications.

Lastly, this research did not take into account experiences/perceptions of women. Given that masculinities and femininities are relational in nature, future research incorporating women's interpretations of gender and caste relations in different geographical contexts is imperative and would lead to a more holistic understanding of how masculinities are constructed.

Final Remarks:

In the three articles in my dissertation, I examine relationships between men, bodies, and caste status, and explore expressions of masculinities and the ways men's bodies and identities are shaped in and with respect to local and transnational contexts. My work contributes to furthering the scholarly body of research that explores the diverse ways in which men's gendered bodies come to terms with their spatialities within particular cultures. Throughout my findings, I highlight how power, sometimes explicitly and oftentimes subtly, works across and within men's casted and gendered bodies in different spaces. By emphasizing the structures of caste, patriarchy, and transnationalism, I explain Jat men's social location and identity construction

within and without agrarian settings. My research found that rurality, traditionality or traditional occupation of farming does inform the construction and performance of Jat masculinities in both local and transnational spaces. However, in transnational spaces, traditionality in occupational identities of Jats appears to take a back seat and an increasing complexity and diversity in ways of understanding and construction of masculine identities take place outside of the rural, agrarian context. This goes on to show that important aspects of Jat identity, while seem peculiarly dependent on agriculture, are not geographically fixed and unchanging. With the rise in migration and transnationalism, there is clearly a shift in how men understand work, masculinities, and gender relations that are constructed and reconstructed in a range of contradictory settings.

References:

Chowdhry, P. (2015). Popular Perceptions of Masculinity in Rural North Indian Oral Traditions. *Asian Ethnology*, *74*(1). https://doi.org/10.18874/ae.74.1.02

Connell, R., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender and Society, 19*(6), 829-859.

Dutt, Y. (2019). *Coming out as Dalit: A memoir*. Aleph.

Gill, H. (2012). *Becoming Men in a Modern City: Masculinity, Migration and Globalization in North India*. Washington

Kukreja, R. (2021). Migration has Stripped Us of Our Manhood: Contradictions of Failed Masculinity Among South Asian Male Migrants in Greece. *Men and Masculinities*, *24*(2), 307–325. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X20927050

Mooney, N. (2011). *Rural Nostalgias and Transnational Dreams: Identity and Modernity among Jat Sikhs.* Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press.

Mooney, N. (2013). Dancing in Diaspora Space: Bhangra, Caste, and Gender among Jat Sikhs. In *Sikh Diaspora* (pp. 279–318). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004257238_014

Samuel, J. (2020). *Untouchable Bodies, Resistance, and Liberation: A Comparative Theology of Divine Possessions*. BRILL. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004420052

APPENDIX:

Interview guides:

Common questions: How would you define being a man? What does it mean to be a Jat man? What (if any) physical appearance practices and styles are important to you? Do you feel pressure or inclination towards living up to a certain image of Jat masculinity? What happens if you fail to live up to this image?

Sample questions for men in Punjab: Do you or your family own arable land in Punjab? How important is landownership to you? Do you want to pursue farming? What do you think of men who have migrated to Canada? Do you want to migrate?

Sample questions for men in Canada: Why did you migrate; what are your short- or long-term goals in Canada? How do you think a Jat man in Canada is different from Jat man in Punjab? What are the expectations of your family from you? Do you feel the need to 'maintain an image' for people back home in Punjab or on social media? Define your connection with your homeland (Punjab).

[i] In 1960s-70s, High Yielding Variety wheat and rice seeds were introduced to Punjab's agriculture which resulted in a temporary "Green Revolution."

[ii] Traditionally, in rural Punjab, "service-castes" were occupational caste groups who were dependent upon their Jat patrons for their livelihoods. They were masons, blacksmiths, tanners, cleaners etc.

[iii] Bullet are heavy-weight motorcycles manufactured by Royal Enfield. They produce a unique thumping sound and are extremely popular in Punjab.

[iv] Bahmans or Brahmins are upper caste Hindus

[v] *Chamars* are lower-caste group who were traditionally a service-caste of tanners

[vi] it is extremely common in Punjab to refer to Jat men as 'sons of Jats' or in Punjabi, *Jattan dey munday*"

[vii] Another word for Hindu Brahmins. In Punjab, Banias were moneylenders from whom Jats borrowed money in times of need. Banias are also infamous in Punjab for exploiting poor families by charging them exorbitant interests. The Land Alienation Act of 1901 was partially designed to keep Banias from defrauding Jat farmers. But the practice of borrowing money from local Banias continues even today in Punjab's villages.