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EDUCATION EXPERIENCES, CAREER PREFERENCES AND MARGINALISED GROUPS: A CASE STUDY FROM KERALA, INDIA

Abstract

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The caste system and gender are two factors that have been affecting what education a person is able to get and what possibilities a person has in regards to the labour market in India. Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) are three groups that have been marginalised in the Indian society. The aim of this case study is to attain an understanding of how SC/ST/OBC women from Kerala have been experiencing the educational system and what has been affecting them in their education and career decisions. In addition to this, interviews with teachers and scholars have been conducted in order to get a deeper understanding of the issue. The analysis will be based on the theoretical concepts of social exclusion, social capital, social inclusion and intergenerational contract. The conclusion of the study is that patterns of both social inclusion and social exclusion can be scrutinised among the interviewee's experiences in educational institutions. The study also shows that social capital plays an important role when being enrolled in educational institutions and that the intergenerational contract and the social policy landscape in a country can be influential when determining what to study and what career to choose.

Key words: *Social Exclusion, Social Capital, Intergenerational Contract, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Other Backward Classes, India*

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

OBC- Other Backward Classes

SC- Scheduled Castes

ST- Scheduled Tribes

1. Introduction

Social welfare policies are in its bases about ensuring welfare and well-being of the citizens in a country, with focus on the protection of citizens, redistribution, health care, education and employment issues to name a few. How social welfare policies are being managed is dependent on the country context (Ortiz 2007: 6, 13). Especially developing countries differ from the three welfare regimes that Esping-Andersen has identified (Esping-Andersen 2006). Instead the welfare regimes identified by Wood and Gough are more applicable when looking at developing countries (Wood & Gough 2006). The "Welfare Regime Approach" identified by Wood and Gough has received critique for e.g. mainly focusing on the institutional conditions in a country and its impact on welfare and the approach is not looking more in depth into how culture and values in a society affect welfare. Further, even though the approach emphasises the interdependence between institutions, how this actually takes place is not well explained (Newton 2007: 19, 21). Therefore, this thesis attempts to show that also culture and values in a society is important when looking at social policy.

In the context of India, the country could be categorised as an informal security regime, where people to a large extent have to depend on the family or community to meet social and economic needs. There are large differences between different regions within the country when looking at development and the society is hierarchal and patriarchal (Wood & Gough 2006: 1704). The aforementioned characteristics can be found in India and the country is being characterised by social stratification, where the caste system is one of many factors that have contributed towards stratification. Historically, the caste system has been regulating what opportunities a person has in the economic, political and social spheres of the Indian society. There has occurred changes in caste system and caste ideas are not as strong as previously (Pinglé 2003: 231, 247). However, even today the caste system and social norms are affecting who is excluded in the society and who is not (Ortiz 2007: 15). The Scheduled Castes (SC) is one group that has been marginalised in all parts of the society due to their low position in the caste system (Jodhka 2012: 70-71). While the Scheduled Tribes (ST) has been marginalised since they have not been considered to be part of the caste system and therefore occupy the lowest position in the system (Rao 2013: 37). The Other Backward Classes (OBC) consist of different castes that are socially, economically and educationally marginalised (Chauhan 2008: 218-220) and tend to consist of groups that belonged to lower castes in the caste system (Amaranth & Das 2012: 181).

In India there are differences in terms of social policy depending on if a person works in the formal or informal sector. The formal sector consists of the Government and those companies that are associated with the Government and further some companies in the private sector; here the focus lies on skilled and regular employment whereas the informal sector is being characterised by irregular work without for example a formal work contract. Further what is differentiating these sectors is that the formal sector is offering social protection for its employees while there is no coverage in the informal sector. The social protection offered in the formal sector consist of pensions, maternity benefits, benefits for work related accidents (Sen & Rajasekhar 2012: 97-98) and medical care to name a few (Nagaraj 2012a: 51). Since the social protection is mainly limited to the organised sector, only around eight per cent of the Indian labour force has some kind of social protection (Nagaraj 2012b: 8-9). When dealing with marginalised groups it is also important to distinguish between the public and private sectors, because the public sector is regarded to be more secure in terms of employment and there are affirmative action policies (known as reservation policy in India) for people belonging to these categories and whether a person is able to enter a public sector job is to large extent being determined on exams (Nagaraj 2012a: 47). In the private sector there is no affirmative action and what has been shown in research is that cultural capital plays an important role in the hiring process and discrimination based on a person's family background is common (Jodhka & Newman 2007: 4127-4128). Based on the aforementioned aspects, it becomes clear that social policy is important for marginalised groups. Additionally, social policy is also concerned with public provision of health, sanitation and education to name a few (Nagaraj 2012a: 46).

Education policy has been a fundamental policy, because education is regarded to bring about beneficial effects when it comes to economic and human development. Some of the beneficial effects that are associated with education are that firstly, the economic and political participation in a country tends to increase when people are educated (Sen 1999: 39). Secondly, a wide range of positive effects have been scrutinised when women are literate, e.g. both infant mortality and fertility rates tend to decrease and researchers have found that the well-being of the whole family improves with female literacy (Sen 1999: 39, 40, 129, 193, 195). Thirdly, education and particularly higher education is being seen as an important contributor to human capital (Ortiz 2007: 46-48) and therefore education is being seen as a prerequisite for a productive labour force (Jordan 2006: 104). Due to this, education provision is an essential part of the public infrastructure in many countries (Whitfield 2010: 42).

Fourthly, education, in connection with the improved labour market position, is regarded as an important contributor for social mobility for e.g. people belonging to marginalised groups in the society (Wankhede 1999: 114).

In India, gender has been one factor that has been affecting what kind of education a person is able to get, where women for a long time have been disfavoured regarding education. Even though the situation has improved in recent years, especially in urban areas, there are still differences in literacy rates between men and women (Kishor & Gupta 2009: 19-20). This difference can be scrutinised when looking at the statistics, where the male literacy rate, in India as a whole, is 81 per cent, while the female literacy rate is 65 per cent (Census of India 2011a). In addition to the gender aspect, also caste has been determining what education a person is able to attain (Cheney, Brown Ruzzi & Muralidharan 2006: 1). When looking at the literacy rates for SC/ST/OBC, the same pattern can be seen, where the male literacy for SC is 75 per cent and 57 per cent for women. The same numbers for ST are 69 per cent (male) and 50 per cent for female (Census of India 2011a). The literacy rates for OBC are higher than for SC/ST, where male literacy is 84 per cent and 66 per cent for women (Govinda & Biswal 2005: 17). Not only have women been disadvantaged in education, but women tend to lesser extent also be involved in the labour market (Kishor & Gupta 2009: 45-46). Here it is possible to see influences from that women have traditionally been assigned to work at home instead of pursuing a career, however the situation has been changing somewhat in recent years (Naqvi 2011: 281). The National Family Health Survey from 2005-2006 shows that 43 per cent of women and 87 per cent of men in the age of 15-49 had been employed in the past 12 months (Kishor & Gupta 2009: 47).

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to gain an understanding of how SC/ST/OBC women from Kerala have experienced their time at higher educational institutions and what has been affecting them in their education and career decisions. There will be a focus on both the positive and negative experiences these women have had, since a lot of previous research tend to only focus on the negative ones. Kerala has been chosen because a lot of previous research focus on other states and through this study it will be possible to identify whether or not social exclusion is evident in a state that has achieved high social development (Wheaton 2009: 35). This study will also take into account what has happened to these women after graduating from university, whereas a lot of previous research only focuses at the time in educational institutions. The thesis will draw attention to how the social setting, e.g. values and norms in a

country may be important when looking at social policy. The social setting can play an important role in what people can and cannot attain and what a person decides to do, tends to be influenced by values and norms in the society (Newton 2007: 19). Here, the concepts of social capital and intergenerational contract can explain some of the women's choices. Both of the concepts can also be useful in tackling exclusion. The reason for focusing on women is that a lot of research looks at marginalised groups as a whole and do not focus on only women. Women tend to have lower literacy rates and are more prone to discrimination and exclusion due to gender and caste (Shah et al. 2006: 117 and SJ & Mangubhai 2010: 1).

In order to answer the research questions, the study will be based on a case study, where the thesis will provide an insight into how the situation can look like in this limited context. It is also worth mentioning that the thesis does not aim at comparing the groups, but only providing an understanding and that the focus will be put on the women's own subjective experiences.

- How have the SC/ST/OBC women experienced their time at university, can patterns of social exclusion/inclusion be identified?
- Does social capital play a role when a person is enrolled in educational institutions, if it does what kind of role?
- In what ways can the intergenerational contract and the social policy landscape explain what these women have been studying and what they want to work with?

This paper is divided into seven parts, where the first two parts are providing an introduction and background to Kerala, the caste system and the education situation in Kerala. The third part will give an insight into previous research that has been conducted on the same topic, while in the fourth part the theoretical framework of the paper will be presented. The theoretical framework will be followed by the methodology and analysis parts, and the paper will end with a concluding discussion about the findings.

2. Background

The background part of the paper will situate the study and therefore, this part of the paper will give an introduction to Kerala and the caste system in both India and Kerala. Further, an overview of the educational landscape in Kerala will be provided.

2.1 Introduction to Kerala

Kerala is a state that is located in South India and the state was formed in 1956 when the three districts Malabar, Travancore and Cochin were integrated. When comparing Kerala to the rest of India, one is able to claim that Kerala is different in many aspects, e.g. regarding social development. Further, Kerala is a state where large differences between rural and urban areas cannot be found, e.g. villages tend to be well connected with roads and many villagers work outside the agricultural sector and the reason for this is can be found in targeted public policies. Kerala is also different regarding the politics in the state. As early as in the 1930s the Communist party has been influential in the politics. Shortly after the unification of Kerala, the Communist party won the election in 1957. The reason for the Communist party winning the first election in the state was that the party had a clear vision of what should be done in the state, and issues such as land reforms, health, education and public distribution of food had to be addressed. In addition to this the party also made clear that it was important to try to diminish the gaps between the different regions. After the first election, Kerala has been ruled by both the Communist and Congress parties (Ramachandran 2001: 209-211, 315).

The politics in the state has largely been influencing how the state has been developing in regards to social development. Kerala is considered to be a success story when it comes to social development in India. The state is being famous for the so called "Kerala Model of Development" and what is distinguishing the model is that Kerala has managed to develop a far-reaching welfare system, where the main focus has been on ensuring that public resources are being redistributed in a fair way (Wheaton 2009: 35-38). Kerala has e.g. made remarkable achievements in the health sector and Kerala has achieved low fertility rates, infant mortality has decreased and the life expectancy has increased. It is also interesting to show that Kerala is one of the few states in India, where the number of women are higher than men. The sex ratio in Kerala in 2011 was 1084 while the same number for India as a whole was 940 during the same time (Census of India 2011b). In order to build up the welfare system Kerala has today, the Government of Kerala has played a major role in achieving this development

(Ramachandran 2001: 244, 294, 319). Even though Kerala has made remarkable achievements, it is vital to point out that the state still encounters challenges, e.g. high unemployment rates is one major concern (Ramachandran 2001: 218). The high unemployment rates can to a large extent be explained by the fact that there are not enough working places being created in the state (Mathew 2003: 995). In addition to this, the "Kerala Model of Development" has received a lot of critique from neoliberal scholars, because Kerala has managed to achieve all the social improvements without economic growth, which is usually seen as a prerequisite for social development. Therefore, questions such as how sustainable the model is and how it will be maintained in the future has been raised (Wheaton 2009: 41-42).

2.2 The Caste System

2.2.1 The History of the Caste System and the Caste System in Kerala

The caste system has been prominent in the Indian society for a long time and has been affecting economic, political, religious and social parts of the Indian society (Pinglé 2003: 231). In its bases the caste system can be defined as: "a socially comprehensive, hierarchical system that stratifies Indian society" (Pinglé 2003: 231). Traditionally the caste system was divided into four main varnas[1] (Smith 1994: 3). Further, each of these varnas were connected to a specific social occupation (Bouglé 1971:17). Along with the division into varnas, the people can further be divided into jatis, or sub-groups, that tells which specific community a person is born into (Lindberg 2001: 17). In Kerala, as in other parts of India, the caste system has been one of many factors that have stratified the society; however, it is important to point out that the caste system in Kerala differs from the aforementioned caste structure. What is characterising the caste system in Kerala is that one is not able to see the traditional four varna division, e.g. there are only a few groups in the society that can be associated as Kshatriyas and there are no groups that can be classified as Vaisyas. The caste hierarchy in Kerala has traditionally been based on what kind of relationship a particular group has to landownership. Even though the caste system differs from the traditional four varna system, one is able to find similar traditional divisions in Kerala, regarding who e.g. has been controlling and cultivating the land and who has been working as a servant (Hardgrave Jr 1964: 1841, 1843).

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[1] The four varnas are the: Brahmin (priests), Kshatriya (warriors), Vaishya (merchants) and Shudra (servants) (Smith 1994: 3).

There are caste groups that have been educationally and economically marginalised in India for a long time (Chauhan 2008: 219). Firstly, the SC, who did not belong to the four main varnas in the caste system, because this group has historically been taking care of jobs the society has been regarding as "polluted". Due to their low position in the caste system and their occupation the SC have and are still facing discrimination in the society (Jodhka 2012: 70-71, 100, 158-159). Today the SC makes up approximately 9 per cent of the total population in Kerala (Census of India 2011a). Secondly, the ST, who are the indigenous population in India and this group has been marginalised because of living in remote areas (Chauhan 2008: 219) and having their own specific tribal culture that was different from what was being associated with the traditional Hindu society (Hasan & Bagde 2013: 1013). The ST have not been considered to be a part of the caste system and hence, this group have the lowest position in the hierarchy and therefore the group has been marginalised (Rao 2013: 37). In Kerala the ST population accounts for approximately 2 per cent of the population (Census of India 2011a). Thirdly, the OBC that consist of a wide range of different castes that are socially, economically and educationally lagging behind (Chauhan 2008: 218-220). The OBC category consists of many caste groups, where some occupy a low position in the caste system. Even though some of the groups are low castes, they are still considered to have a higher position than the SC. The Government of India has introduced the concept of creamy layer, where the income determines who is entitled to affirmative action (Amaranth & Das 2012: 181-183). Research indicates that there is still a lot to do regarding SC/ST/OBC because the educational level tends to be lower among these groups and the groups are under-represented in educational institutions (Chauhan 2008: 224-225, 228-229).

2.2.2 The Caste System Today

After India's independence in 1947, the Indian Constitution banned all kind of discrimination that is taking place on the bases of caste (The Constitution of India 1949). Despite the fact that caste based discrimination has been abolished one is able to see that the caste system is still persistent in the society, although some changes have occurred in the system. Some of the changes that are visible are that the rapid urbanisation has meant that the traditional occupations that are associated with castes have been withering, this is due to the fact that the Indian economy is no longer based on agriculture and therefore, the lower castes have been forced to seek jobs outside that sector. In addition to this the Government has launched affirmative action policies which are making it easier for marginalised groups to get into government jobs and universities (Pinglé 2003: 237-239). Scholars have also recognised that

there has been a growing distinction within castes, where status, power and wealth is seen as important (Fuller 1996: 13), hence, the caste system is nowadays more connected to the economic status a person has, instead of the occupation (Shah et al. 2006: 19-20). This leads to the question of the connectivity between caste and class, where studies show that there is a connection between the two of them, although it is not a clear-cut relationship. Upper castes tend to be associated with higher classes and tend to larger extent work with white collar jobs than lower castes (Vaid 2007: 23-24). Even though some of the lower castes may belong to the lower classes (Pinglé 2003: 249) this is not an apparent division because some of the lower castes may be wealthy, have been able to achieve social mobility and thus, do not belong to the lower social classes (Vaid 2007: 6).

2.3 Education in Kerala

As an integral part of the "Kerala Model of Development", Kerala has made remarkable achievements in the education sector and the state has achieved high literacy rate of 94% in 2011 (Government of Kerala 2011), which is remarkably higher than the 73% in India as a whole. The reasons for Kerala achieving such high literacy rates can be traced back to the nineteenth century when the Christian missionaries established schools. Here the focus was on trying to achieve mass literacy, which again meant that caste and gender differences had to be addressed (Ramachandran 2001: 266, 268-269, 271). Even though Kerala has done well when it comes to education, it is important to point out that most of the success in the education sector can be found in primary and secondary education, while higher education has not been given much attention (Tilak 2001). This has been a major concern for academics, because higher education is important when looking at employment, income generation and in spreading knowledge and skills (Devasia 2005: 10-11). In recent years higher education has undergone some changes, especially, since 1990s with the influences of the neoliberal ideology (Kumar & George 2009: 8). Some of the changes are that the private sector has started to play a more important role, because the public sector has not been able to meet the demand for higher education in Kerala (Tilak 2001). Further, there is a concern about the increased private costs in higher education, in form of costs for exams, books, preparation courses to name a few, which means that students that are coming from poorer households may not be able to afford to study (Kumar & George 2009: 3-4, 6).

3. Previous Research

This part of the thesis will provide a short overview of the research that have been conducted on firstly, marginalised groups and education experience and secondly, on marginalised groups and the labour market in India.

3.1 Education Experience and Social Capital

There are a vast number of studies conducted on how marginalised groups, mainly SC/ST students have experienced their time at educational institutions. Several studies focus on the type of discrimination these groups face when enrolled in educational institutions. Neelakandan & Patil (2012) and Singh (2013) are looking at India as a whole, while Bhoi (2013) is focusing on the state Odhisa. Common factors in these studies are the focus on marginalised groups as a whole group, i.e. taking into accounts both men and women. Hence, there is a need to also look more into how the situation looks like for women, who are more prone to discrimination (Shah et al. 2006: 117). The studies also tend to shed light on the discrimination these students face from teachers, other school staff and co-students (Neelakandan & Patil 2012, Bhoi 2013 and Singh 2013). As shown, a large amount of the studies conducted tend to only focus on the discriminatory and negative aspects of the educational experiences. In this regard, Singh's study is different and the study sheds light on both positive and negative experiences SC/ST across India have had. The study highlights three groups, those who have done well in higher education and have managed to find a job after graduating and those who have not yet graduated from university but try to cope with the discrimination they face. The last group consist of those who have not managed to fight against the discrimination, and therefore been forced to drop-out from their education and in worst cases this has led to committing suicide (Singh 2013). Vasavi is also in her article touching upon discrimination, but she has a different point of departure, and claims that caste identities are being upheld in educational institutions, because upper castes tend to keep their identity and it is common that marginalised groups tend to accept the discriminatory treatments, which is strengthening the caste identities from both upper and lower castes (Vasavi 2006: 3767-3769).

In addition to the discriminatory aspects, previous research also focuses on the importance of social capital in education. Balagopalan and Subrahmanian (2003) have conducted a study focusing on SC/ST students in the states Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan and their conclusion is that teachers and parents play an important role in a child's education. The scholars point

out that the support from teachers can help to raise the self-confidence that marginalised groups tend to lack and the help from teachers can therefore, be helpful in keeping the students enrolled in schools (Balagopalan & Subrahmanian 2003: 43-44). Hasan and Bagde (2013) have in their study found that when a student gets help and support from other students, the academic performance tends to improve (Hasan & Bagde 2013: 1009). In addition to this, influence and support from parents can affect whether a person will be enrolled in school or not and the home environment tends to be important in how a child performs in school (Paik 2007: 110). Even though support from parents are seen as vital, Singh points out in his study, that that this support is not enough when a person is finally enrolled in educational institutions. When a person is enrolled in educational institutions and especially when a person faces discrimination, the research shows that it is also vital that a person has support from other students that are in a similar situation (Singh 2013). Further, the studies show that marginalised groups to lesser extent tend to engage in extra-curricular activities due to discrimination that they are subjected to. Again, when a person is not involved in activities or in general not being social, there is a risk of feeling excluded (Neelakandan & Patil 2012: 92 and Bhoi 2013: 354).

3.2 The Labour Market

Studies have also been conducted on the Indian labour market and the discrimination that is occurring in the private sector. Jodhka and Newman (2007) have been conducting research on the recruiting process in the private sector. The study shows that the private sector tends to look for people who have got a lot of exposure and good communication skills to name a few. This has imposed obstacles for SC and other marginalised groups to find jobs in the private sector. Further, the family background of a person tends to play an important role in the recruiting process. Since marginalised groups tend to lack the social and cultural capital that is needed for entering the private sector and that the private sector is known for discriminating people from marginalised communities, it has resulted in that these groups to lesser extent are involved in the private sector (Jodhka & Newman 2007: 4125, 4127-4129). Deshpande and Newman (2007) are also in their study looking into the labour market and what expectations those students who belong to marginalised groups and are entitled to reservation and the general category, who are not entitled to reservation (with similar educational backgrounds) expect of the labour market and their experiences of it. The study shows that SC students tend to expect less of their chances and hence, they prefer public sector jobs, e.g. in teaching, while the non-SC tend to have higher dreams. The study also brings up that it usually takes longer

for those students who are entitled to reservation to find a job than other students and are to lesser extent able to find a job in the private sector. As in the study conducted by Jodhka and Newman, social and cultural capital tends to play a vital role in the recruiting process (Deshpande & Newman 2007: 4133-4135, 4139-4140). In addition to this, there are studies conducted on where at the labour market marginalised groups tend to end up in. Due to the reservation that some marginalised groups are entitled to, scholars have found that there is a tendency of preferring public sector jobs (Sahoo 2009: 54). The research also indicates that marginalised groups, and especially women tend to large extent be working with jobs like teachers and clerks and tend to be under-represented in high status jobs (Sahoo 2009: 47, 49, 56 and Paik 2007: 212-213). The same can be found in Siddique's research, where marginalised groups are to larger extent represented in blue collar jobs, while higher castes are more represented in white collar jobs (Siddique 2008: 34). Paik further points out that SC women tend to prefer jobs as teachers and clerks because it is fairly easy in these jobs to combine work and family life. In her research only a small number of the women actually had goals with their careers; instead working at home seemed to be the main goal of many women (Paik 2007: 213).

4. Theoretical Framework

This chapter of the thesis will provide an overview of the theoretical framework that will be used in the analysis. The first part of this chapter will introduce the concept of social exclusion and its characteristics. The second part of this chapter will look more into the concept of social capital and briefly introduce social inclusion, while the third part will introduce the concept of intergenerational contract.

4.1 Social Exclusion

The concept of social exclusion, as we understand it today, has its roots in the eighteenth century Europe, but it was not until the 1970s in France that the concept gained more importance, because there was a need to look into the issue of increasing unemployment and how the issue with the growing number of people being excluded due to unemployment should be addressed. From the 1990s onwards, the concept also spread outside European countries. Since the concept has its origins in Europe, scholars have been questioning how applicable the concept is in other countries, however it has been argued that the meaning of social exclusion is dependent on the prevalent political, social and cultural contexts in a

country (Mathieson et al. 2008: 5, 9-10) and in addition to this issues such as unemployment is common throughout the world (Sen 2000: 26). Social exclusion in developed countries tends to focus on how unemployment issues should be addressed. However, in developing countries, social exclusion issues are associated with trying to ensure civil, social and political rights (Mathieson et al. 2008: 8). In order to use the concept of social exclusion as a theoretical framework of this paper, there is a need to define what is being meant by social exclusion. In its core social exclusion can be defined as:

> the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society within which they live (Kumari & Jha 2012: 58).

The broad definition of social exclusion has led to that the concept has been under a lot of criticism in terms of how to understand and define the concept (Kabeer 2000: 2); however there are some common aspects that the definitions are emphasising. Firstly, social exclusion is said to be multidimensional, because social exclusion tends to happen at macro, micro and meso levels and in addition to this social exclusion has different dimensions, e.g. social, economic, political and cultural (Mathieson et al. 2008: 12). Since, social exclusion is multidimensional; a distinction between two types of social exclusion has been made, namely, economical/structural exclusion and socio-cultural exclusion. *Economic/structural exclusion* is concerned with exclusion that is happening on the basis of material deprivation, e.g. access to basic needs, other material good or financial problems. In addition to this, exclusion that is happening on the basis of denial of social rights can also be added to this group. Here one is interested in looking at how people are being excluded from access to education, health care, housing and social services to name a few. While *Socio-cultural exclusion* is concerned with to which extent a person is socially and culturally integrated in a society. Through social integration one is able to scrutinised how well a person can take part in both formal and informal networks, e.g. is a person socially isolated, does a person have support from other people and can a person take part in different activities (Jehoel-Gijsbers & Vrooman 2007: 17).

Secondly, social exclusion is regarded to be dynamic, which means that social exclusion is not static, but changes due to time and context (Mathieson et al. 2008: 13). Thirdly, social exclusion is relational by its nature. This means that one has to look at the social relationships that are persistent in a society, in order to understand the nature of social exclusion. The relational aspect of social exclusion claims that social relationships are one reason to that

social exclusion is persistent, because social identities are historically being determined and thus, social relationships also entail power relationships (Mathieson et al. 2008: 13-14). It is observed that social exclusion creates borders between different groups in the society and sometimes even create a hierarchy between people. This kind of hierarchy then tends to determine the interaction of people between different groups in the society. This further means that those who are dominating and benefitting from social exclusion, tries to maintain that position in the society and it has also been observed that those who are being excluded in the society tends not only to accept this kind of practices but also internalise these practices. These kinds of aspects make it difficult to achieve change in the society (Louis 2007: 3, 5, 10).

Further, literature concerning social exclusion also tends to point out the difference between group and individual exclusion. The former is when a group in the society is being excluded because of their group identity, e.g. caste, ethnicity or gender. The latter is when an individual is being excluded, because of individual reasons, e.g. someone may be excluded from a job, if that person does not have the qualifications needed. The distinction between group and individual exclusion is important, because within a group there may be differences between individuals, e.g. some individuals may have better opportunities to due to their economical background and therefore they may get good education (Thorat & Sabharwal 2010: 5-6). It is necessary to bear this distinction in mind, because it may help to explain why there are differences between how the women have experienced the education system.

4.2 Social Capital

The theoretical framework will also be based on the concept of social capital in order to acquire an understanding of the importance of social capital when being enrolled in educational institutions. The term has been under a lot of criticism, because the concept has been used in a great number of different situations, hence, there is a chance of losing its meaning. In addition to this the concept is not able to provide solutions to everything (Portes 1998: 44, 62). Even though the theoretical framework will be based on social capital, it has to be kept in mind that the concept can only be used to explain one side of the problem. For example in this case, also other sorts of capital could also provide an explanation. However, this thesis will focus on social capital, because the concept is important in the processes of both inclusion and exclusion (Kay & Johnston 2007: 24). Social exclusion was discussed earlier in the paper, however, social inclusion is in it bases about trying to ensure that people in the society, no matter of their social background have the possibility to participate in the

society. Such things can e.g. be whether a person has access and is included in educational institutions, can participate in the labour market and whether a person can take part in different activities in the society (Westfall 2010: 7).

In sociology social capital is being used in order to understand the networks and relationships between different individuals and groups (Kay & Johnston 2007: 17), where e.g. Bourdieu's definition focuses on benefits that are connected to being involved in a group. Bourdieu defines social capital as:

> the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu 1989: 248).

From a sociological point of view, social capital is inherent in different associations and when a person is involved in different activities. What is characterising social capital is that an individual has to invest in it, in order to be able to get some benefits. Scholars have been able to differentiate between bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital tends to be exclusionary in its form, because the homogeneity and identity within a group is strong, therefore making it possible to exclude individuals that do not belong to this group (Kay & Johnston 2007: 17-18, 24, 30). This leads to Portes, who is critical towards that much research tends to only pay attention to the positive aspects with social capital and neglect the negative outcomes, e.g. groups are powerful in excluding non-group members (Portes 1998: 56). Also Bourdieu points out social capital, in connection to other sorts of capital, can help to reproduce those social relationships that already exist in a society and hence, also reproducing e.g. social inequalities that are persistent (Bourdieu 1989: 249-250). Bridging social capital again is more inclusionary, because this kind of social capital connects people from different groups and bridging social capital can be useful when trying to overcome social differences between people and also in the shaping of wider identities (Kay & Johnston 2007: 24). Here it is also worth mentioning Burt's concept of structural holes, where structural holes are gaps between two different networks (Burt 1997: 255). Burt points out that a broker between two otherwise not connected groups yield benefits. The benefits derive from that a broker is entitled to information from both groups (Burt 1997: 257-258). By knowing the values of what is happening in another group is regarded to be more beneficial than if a person is not aware of this, because it provides new information and enables a person to think outside his/her own box (Burt 2004: 355). Thus, the structural holes argument shows that weak ties

may sometimes be more beneficial than when a person only possess social capital with strong ties (Portes 1998: 53).

Coleman is looking into how social capital can be seen as important when a person tries to perform a certain action and make that action easier to carry out. Coleman distinguishes between different forms of social capital, where information that is involved in a network constitutes one kind of social capital. In addition to this, norms in a society are being categorised as another type. Both social norms and information can guide a person in what actions one is able to perform (Coleman 2011: 98, 102-103).

In research conducted in India, social capital has been used in a wide arrange of fields. In education research social capital has e.g. been used to explain school participation (Iyenagar 2011) and how social capital affects academic performance (Hasan & Bagde 2013). In addition to this social capital has been widely used in research conducted on health (Constanza Torri 2013) and how social capital affects community development (Bhuiyan 2011).

4.3 Intergenerational Contract

The theoretical framework will also focus on the concept of intergenerational contract. The interest for the concept emerged during the interviews, where it became apparent that parents have played an important role in deciding what to study and what career to prefer. The intergenerational contract also has a connection to social capital, where relations and values that exist e.g. in a family can affect what a person opts for (Moncrieffe 2009: 2, 7). The origins of the term intergenerational contract can be found in the concept of "social contract" that was articulated on already in ancient Greece, but grew in importance in the seventeenth and eighteenth century (Göransson 2009: 10). According to Göransson, an intergenerational contract can be understood as: "the expectations and obligations that bind the generations together" (Göransson 2009: 9)

Further, Göransson points out that it is not a contract based on legal basis, but more of social contract between generations, where a person is morally bounded to accomplish the expectations and obligations. Göransson also points out that the characteristics of this contract are to a large extent dependent on the social and cultural context in a country (Göransson 2009: 9-10). This can be seen from that the concept has been widely used in research in different contexts, e.g. both Western and Asian countries. Despite the concept being widely used the focus tends to be on the relationship between parents and children (Göransson 2013:

66-67). Additionally, it is important to point out that this contract is usually not approved on, but instead socialised into (Göransson 2009: 13). To use the concept of intergenerational contract is appropriate in the Indian and Asian contexts, because, the family is regarded as an important institution in the society (Croll 2006: 473). When using the concept, it is necessary to look at both expectations and obligations, where e.g. the parents will not only have an expectation that their children will take care of them in the future but also have an obligation towards their children regarding providing them education. Since the intergenerational contract is a relationship between different parties, it is also possible that it is not an equal relationship. For example, it is possible that the relationship is asymmetrical and therefore may also be regarded as restrictive (Göransson 2009: 12, 148). In academia it has been discussed whether or not social change has resulted in that the concept of intergenerational contract has started to lose its importance (Lieber, Nihira and Mink 2004: 325). Some scholars also points out that the concept has been changed throughout the years, in order to adapt to social change (Ting 2009: 7). It is important to consider social policy and intergenerational contract, because intergenerational contract tends to be stronger and play a more important role in countries where public welfare is limited. In these countries there is a greater need to rely on e.g. family to meet social needs and thus this kind of contract is vital (Göransson 2013: 65)

5. Methodology

In the methodology part of the paper, the whole research process will be accounted for, starting with the choice of research design and methods and then continuing on with presenting the process of recording, transcription and analysis.

5.1 Research Design

When conducting research it is possible to make a distinction between quantitative and qualitative research and by its nature this study is following the qualitative. What is distinguishing qualitative research is the aim to study a specific case in its own context (Flick 2009: 21) and qualitative research aims at gaining knowledge about the social context through studying how the participants in that context understand that particular reality (Bryman 2008: 366). Since the aim of this study is to gain knowledge about how the women have experienced the education system and what has been influencing their education and work decisions, a qualitative approach to the study is applicable.

Further, this study will be built around a case study, because case studies are appropriate when one wants to study e.g. individuals, organisations or a particular social phenomenon (Yin 2003: 1, 13). When using case studies as a research design, it is important to determine what the case is (Bryman 2008: 53). In this study, the case consists of SC/ST/OBC women in Kerala, who have been enrolled in higher educational institutions. Even though the focus lies on the women's experiences, viewpoints by teachers and academics, who work with caste issues, will be incorporated in order to get a comprehensive view of the whole situation, by e.g. strengthening what the women have been saying or in attaining a better understanding of what the women have been expressing during the interviews. When using case studies one has to take into account construct validity, external validity and reliability. Construct validity means that one should clarify, define and justify why certain concepts are being used in the research. While reliability in the research can be secured through documenting the whole research process (Yin 2003: 35-38). In this paper, the problems with construct validity will be managed through defining the concepts that are being used and regarding reliability, this part of the paper will give a description of the research process. One limitation concerning the research can be found in connection with external validity, where the concept is being discussed in the academia and especially in connection to qualitative research, because of the purposive sample and the fact that the case represents a specific reality; it is difficult to make generalisations of the study. However, the aims of most case studies are to attain more knowledge about a specific issue rather than generalising the findings (De Vaus 2001: 237). Also in this case, the aim is to gain a better understanding of the situation rather than making generalisations. Since the sample size is small and India is a large country with vast differences between different states, it is difficult to generalise the study to another context than Kerala. However, the study will provide an insight into how the situation may look like in this context.

5.2 The Data Collection Process

5.2.1 Research Methods and the Data Collection

In order to gain an understanding of how the situation in educational institutions may look like for SC/ST/OBC women, the study is based on interviews, more particularly, semi-structured interviews. The field work was carried out in Kerala during November and December 2013 and the sampling followed the so called purposive sampling, which means that the sample does not have to be statistically significant when compared to the total number of the population (May 2001: 95) and what is distinguishing purposive sampling is the

attempt to choose the sample so that it matches the research (Bryman 2008: 458). In this case the sample consists of nine SC/ST/OBC women, who have obtained at least a Bachelor's degree. By having the requirement of at least a Bachelor's degree the women are able to compare how their university experiences differed from their school years before enrolling in university. I came in contact with the women through being an intern at the institution in Kerala that is organising the labour market preparation course. In addition to this, the sample consists of two teachers and three academics, who are working with caste issues in Kerala. It is also necessary to point out that the names of the interviewees that are used in the analysis are fictive and have no connection to religion, typical names etc. in Kerala.

The chosen research method for this study is semi-structured interviews and before the interviews were carried out an interview guide (see appendix), with some clear questions was prepared so that I would have an idea what kind of questions I should ask during the interviews, so that I later on in the research process is able to answer the research questions. However, even though I had a pre-designed interview guide, I was not limited to it (Bryman 2008: 442), whenever the interviewees talked about something that I wanted to know more about or they started talking about an issue that I had not been considering in my interview guide, I asked follow up questions about those topics. Due to the flexibility of the interviews and designing the question in a more open way, I could assure that the interviewees' own views became apparent in the interviews (Bryman 2008: 437, 442). The interviews lasted between 20 and 45 minutes and the interviews were carried out were the women were living, in schools and offices where the teachers and academics were working. I decided to conduct the interviews at these places, so that the interviewees are familiar with the places and therefore feel comfortable during the interviews. In addition to this, I tried to be in calm and quiet places, so that the interviewees could talk without interruption and without having to worry that anybody else is hearing them (Bryman 2008: 443).

There are several pros and cons that have to be considered when choosing semi-structured interviews as a research method. One of the strengths and also the main reason for choosing semi-structured interviews for this research is because these kinds of interviews will enable the researcher to have a clear focus of the interview, while still allowing flexibility. In addition to this, when conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher is more interested in gaining an understanding of how the interviewees are looking at a specific issue and what the interviewee consider important (Bryman 2008: 437-438) and this is exactly what this research is aiming at. There are also limitations with choosing interviews as a research

method. Literature on research methods tend to point out biases when conducting interviews, because interviews are a part of a specific context (Punch 1998: 182) and the interest of the researcher is always a part of the research (Silverman 1993: 172). Here two potential biases may be that the analysis to large extent is being influenced by how the researcher looks at the situation and that the researcher may be interested in some specific things and therefore misses other interesting issues (Silverman 1993: 107, 208). Here the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews will help to encounter this bias. Further, there may be tensions between the interviewer and interviewee, where the interviewer may contribute to how the women reply. Further the interviewer-interviewee divided may also result in that the interviewees are modifying their replies so that they fit what they think the interviewer want (May 2001: 127-128). Further, the choice of subject, e.g. sensitive subject may be one limitation (Bryman 2008: 444). Since this research is dealing with caste issues, which is a sensitive topic, I was also confronted with how to handle the situation. Regarding the women I first had to evolve some kind of friendship with the women, so that they got to know me and felt comfortable with sharing their experiences (Ryen 2002: 337). In most of the cases, the interviews went well, but particularly in one interview I felt that the woman in question had experienced some kind of problems, but even though I tried to ask what she had experienced in several different ways, she did not want to talk about it. Based on this interview, I also noticed that when some of the interviewees did not want to talk about a topic, they spoke more in general about that topic, to give a less personal view of the issue. These are all issues that the researcher has to keep in mind while conducting the interviews and also accept that everyone is not ready to share their experiences. However, during most of the interviews the women opened-up about their experiences without any kind of hesitation.

Another issue that I encountered during the interviews, especially in the case of one of the teachers was the time constraint; the teacher only gave me a limited time and as an interviewer this is a stressful situation to only know that you have a certain amount of time. In this situation I only focused on the most important questions and due to this I manage to collect the data that I needed. Also while interviewing one of the teachers, I felt that the interviewee had experienced that there are differences in the classrooms between different students, but the interviewee did not directly state that. These indirect statements also have to be taken into account when analysing the situation. Regarding the interviews with the academics I did not face similar problems, because the topic is less sensitive for the academics than for the women and the teachers, due to the fact that the situation is not directly

being linked to them. Even though semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility (Bryman 2008: 437) another challenge faced during the interview situation was how to keep the interviews on the right track. This was particularly the case with the academics where the interviewees were eager to tell me about the situation and therefore easily lost the track of the interviews. However, when this situation occurred I tried to change the direction of the interview in a subtle way, by asking another question, in order to get the interviewee to talk about things related to the study.

5.2.2 Recording, Transcription and Analysis

Most of the fourteen interviews were recorded. Even though recording brings about issues about how comfortable the interviewee is in the situation and how much the person wants to talk about personal issues when the recorder is on, I decided to take that risk, because by recording the interviews I was later on able to re-listen to the interviews and observe what the interviewees talk about and how they talk about a certain topic (Bryman 2008: 451-452), which again is beneficial for the analysis when the data can be scrutinised over and over again. In the cases, where it was not possible to record the interviews, I made notes during the interview situation and immediately after the interview I rewrote the interview, in order to remember as much as possible from the interviews.

After the data collection, those interviews which were recorded, were transcribed and although this is a time consuming process, I decided to transcribe the interviews, because, by seeing the interview written down, it is easier to go through the interview material and analyse them (Bryman 2008: 453). In order to analyse the interviews, thematic analysis was utilised. Based on the interviews, themes that the interviewees were talking about were created. By having specific themes from each interview, it is then easy to compare the interviews and see what similarities and differences there are between the interviews and how these themes can be connected to the theoretical framework of the paper (Bryman 2008: 554-555), which then is helpful when writing down the analysis. It is also important to highlight that in some quotations presented in the analysis part of the paper, the language has been modified a little bit in order to not give a bad impression of the interviewees. However, when this is done, there will be a note about that in the paper.

5.3 Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations are an important part of the research process and especially when it comes to the "lack of informed consent" and "harm of participants" principal (Bryman 2008:

118, 121). In order to secure the "lack of informed consent" principal, the interviewees were informed what the interview will be about. In addition to this, I also made it clear that the interviews were taking place on their own will, i.e. the interviewees only have to reply to those questions they feel comfortable replying to and that they are allowed to end the interview at any point, if they do not feel comfortable etc. with the interview situation. When it comes to the "harm of participant" principal, I made it clear that the interviews are highly confidential and that the names of participants and other sensitive information that could reveal their identities, will not be displayed in the thesis (Bryman 2008: 118, 121, 123). Guaranteeing confidentiality was beneficial for the data collection procedure, because by guaranteeing this, the interviewees could more easily open up and talk about their experiences, when knowing that they will be anonymous.

6. Analysis

The analysis part of the paper will be divided into three sections, where the first section will be about how the women have experienced the education system and the social capital they have had during their studies. The second part will look into their time after graduating from university and the third part will be about what has influenced them in their choice of studies and preferred work.

6.1 The Time at University

6.1.1 Affirmative Action

During the interviews the interviewees were asked to tell about their education experiences throughout their schooling, however with emphasis on their experiences during their time at university. What becomes apparent from the interviews is that the women have experienced their time at educational institutions differently. Starting with two examples of women who consider that they have had a good time during their university studies are Neha and Bhanushree, both of them belong to the SC. Neha, who did a Bachelor in Engineering, says that she did not have problems during her studies (Neha 21.12.2013). Bhanushree, who also studied a Bachelor in Engineering faced problems before entering university, agrees that her time at university was good, in fact much better than in the schools before university, because the teachers started to pay much more attention to her and she made good friends. These two women also points out that they got admission into university of the basis of affirmative

action policies. Therefore, the empirical data supports the findings of previous research that affirmative action policies work as an effective tool to ensure that marginalised groups have better chances to be included in higher education (Mitra et al. 2010: 25). Further, when it comes to Bhanushree and Neha, one is able to identify, through their positive experiences, the positive sides that this policy yields. Here, patterns of social inclusion can be seen, where the women have felt included in the university, which is an essential part of social inclusion (Westfall 2010: 7).

Even though the aforementioned empirical data indicates that some of the women have regarded their time at university as good, it is also important to point out that not all the women have regarded their time at university as positively as e.g. Bhanushree and Neha. Reshma has obtained a Master's degree in Engineering and Anjana a Master's in Chemistry, both of them have also been admitted to university on the basis of affirmative action and belong to the ST. During the interviews, they portray a clear view how the situation looked like for them during their studies, when both of them studied with merit based students:

> I used to study with merit based students, so I thought I was not really bright /.../ I could not concentrate much on my studies. And: I used to leave college [campus] as fast as possible, I never used to stay there, because I used to feel insecure (Reshma 29.12.2013).

From this quotation shows how difficult it may be for a person who has got admission on the basis of affirmative action, to actually study with students who have got admission on the basis of merits. Anjana gives a similar view:

> We belong to a lower caste /…/ we have a lot of education, but comparing with others we have less education, because the Government is giving some scholarship called reservation, so we can go for further studies. So basically, we have some lower education than others in our class, so we have some lack of self-confidence. And: Therefore I have no confidence to mingle with others and have difficulties to go through that situation[2] (Anjana 02.11.2013)

In addition to this, Reshma talks about the she could often here unpleasant comments that were made towards here, when asked what kind of comments she could hear, she does not provide a straight answer:

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[2] The language in the quotation is corrected.

this is very difficult to say /…/ we feel that if we go to certain places we feel.. if the situation is not right we will feel it (Reshma 29.12.2013).

This quotation shows that discrimination in educational institutions is common. She also talks about the end of her Bachelor studies and how depressed she felt and she thought that she would not continue on to a Master's degree:

> After my graduation /…/ I was so depressed and all, but then, I told you, I had some exams to pass and then I got admission to PG [post-graduation]. /…/ That place is really tolerant towards people, /…/ so I did not feel much insecure[3] (Reshma 29.12.2013)

In order to attain a better understanding of how the situation among marginalised groups who are enrolled in higher education may look like, it is vital to look at how the scholars Nitesh and Mukesh looks at the situation. Nitesh is a professor in sociology and Mukesh a researcher in anthropology.

> Like today, she will not ask what is your caste /.../ but things are really the same, how, she will ask her colleague, how much mark did you get in your entrance exam. So, we know that the upper caste have a cut off on 97 per cent and Dalits[4] have a cut off on 92 per cent. So, if you are between 92 and 97, obviously you are a Dalit (Nitesh 18.12.2013).

Here, the quote indicates that the affirmative action policy may help to keep up the caste structure in the society. Also Mukesh portrays how there are differences between students in the classroom due to affirmative action:

> But students who actually end up in such a classroom, generally with lower marks, because they are there just because of reservation. So in the classroom, first of all you have a set of students who are very good in academic consistently from their childhood. I do not say Dalits are bad, only to reach there is a tough job. There is a kind of relative backwardness in the classroom[5] (Mukesh 18.12.2013)

The totally different experiences Reshma and Anjana have had when compared to Bhanushree and Neha, shows how complex the situation can be when trying to ensure better access for

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[3] The language in the quotation is corrected.
[4] Dalit is another word for Scheduled Castes (Encyclopaedia Britannica (2014) Encyclopaedia Britannica Online [Online]. London: Encyclopaedia Britannica. Available at:
http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/618508/untouchable [Last Accessed: 11.05.2014]
[5] The research indicates with relative backwardness, that there are different presumptions to get into university depending on if a person gets admission on the basis on merits or affirmative action.

marginalised groups. Reshma's and Anjana's experiences are not exceptional and can be supported by a wide range of previous research. Here it is possible to see that getting into university with lower grades leads to e.g. lower self-esteem and insecurity and the same case happens when one is able to hear discriminatory comments about oneself. Here it is interesting to ask whether the use of words such as "merit based" and "reservation" students create borders between the groups with predetermined assumptions about the students. An example of this, based on Reshma's interview, is that those being admitted on the basis of reservation do not think they are equally good as the merit based students due to the fact that they can get admitted to university with lower grades. Due to insecurity and discrimination a person further feels restricted in their university life. From the empirical data presented, patters of socio-cultural exclusion (Jehoel-Gijsbers & Vrooman 2001: 17) can be depicted, where despite the fact that the women have been included in higher education, they feel that they are excluded and the aforementioned "restrictions" have resulted in that they have not been able to fully participate in the student life.

When looking at the quotations made by the scholars, it is possible to attain a better understanding of the situation and the dynamic aspect of social exclusion can be recognised. It becomes apparent that it is difficult to eliminate caste from the society even though there is a policy intervention from the Government's side, because the way of excluding someone changes according to time. In this case, knowing that a person has been enrolled in higher education with lower grades than the general category makes it possible to recognise that these students do not belong to the general category, and therefore it is easy to keep on excluding these groups in educational institutions. In association with this, it is possible to discuss whether or not there are individual reasons for experiencing social exclusion (Thorat & Sabharwal 2010: 5-6). From the empirical data it becomes apparent that not all women have regarded that they have faced social exclusion and therefore, the individual reasons for experiencing exclusion can be identified. The whole context, e.g. what university they were enrolled in, the atmosphere in university, the attitude from teachers and co-students may all contribute towards how the educational experiences have been perceived and these things are individual.

Since the empirical data indicate that these women have had diverging experiences, it is interesting to get a clarification about affirmative action from the scholars. There seem to be a consensus among the scholars that affirmative action is important (Nitesh 18.12.2013, Dipesh 07.11.2013 and Mukesh 18.12.2013). Dipesh, a researcher in anthropology and a SC himself

is in favour of reservation policies, even though he is also critical towards them and claims that there is some kind of implementation problem with the policy, where politicians do not seem to care how the policy actually affect the students, because those administering policies seem to only be caring about issues that is affecting people that have the same social background as themselves (Dipesh 07.11.2013). Mukesh is also in favour of affirmative action, but has a critical standpoint and shows that it is not easy to break away from the caste system:

> Caste has thousands of years history and cannot be eradicated through policy reforms. Whenever a policy intervention is coming there, it may do some kind of reform /.../, but it cannot eradicate it. But the form of exclusion changes in different way (Mukesh 18.12.2013)

Based on the aforementioned empirical data, it seems that affirmative action policies are important, however, the diverging experiences raise the question how these kinds of policies should be implemented. It becomes apparent that the policy has unintended consequences and it possible to scrutinise that it is difficult to improve the situation with policy reforms if there are structural problems from before in the society. It takes time to break away from traditional caste norms that have been part of the Indian society for a long time (Ortiz 2007: 15). This becomes evident in the case of discriminatory comments and from the interview with the scholar, who talks about how people only tend to care about how the reality looks like for those who have the same background as you. Here the relational aspect of social exclusion can be scrutinised, where it is possible to continue discrimination on the bases of caste, making it difficult to break away from the caste norms and to actually make changes in the current system. This indicates that although reservation policies are there, it is difficult to improve the situation if all of those who are involved in these institutions, e.g. students and teachers are not open towards people with another social background as themselves and towards changing the situation.

6.1.2 Experiences of Social Capital

6.1.2.1 Group Belonging
Gayatri, who is a ST and has a Master's degree in Commerce, tells how she felt that the beginning of her studies were difficult because she felt that there was a division based on the economical background of a person. She says that the poor formed one group and the rich formed one group. Based on the group division she felt discriminated, because the rich

students used to think that she is a useless person. Further, she says that she did not like to go to university and she describes how she hesitated to mingle with other students and she started to think that the statements were true. However, later on in her Masters studies she decided to interact with other students and got other friends than those in her own group and she realised that she is not less worth than the other students (Gayatri 06.11.2013). Dipesh, one of the scholars, also shows how common it is that there is a group division between people with different social backgrounds:

> We have some kind of group and they have some kind of group. So generally, we will go for coffee, tea or some other entertainments in our own community or group of people. This also affect or block the interaction among other people also[6] (Dipesh 07.11.2013).

Further, Dipesh also talks about his own experiences and how important it was for him to be active in different activities (mainly politics) to be able to meet different people and having support from e.g. friends to be able to manage the studies. However, he says that he was still confronted with prejudices about him and his social background when involved in these activities (Dipesh 07.11.2013).

Based on the empirical data, it becomes apparent that group belongings based on similar social backgrounds are common. In the case of Gayatri, where her start at university was not good, because she internalised the comments she heard about herself. Here the empirical data points at the relational aspect of social exclusion, even more clearly than in the case of Reshma and Anjana, which was discussed in part 6.1.1 of the paper. In this case, the division into groups based on e.g. those who are poor and rich in their studies, or social background, can help to keep up and perpetuate the identities that are associated with these groups. Here bonding social capital can be a powerful instrument to exclude some students (Kay and Johnston 2007: 24). However, the bonding social capital also leads to that those being excluded, will try make friends with people in a similar situation and therefore internalising and accepting what is being said about them. When only looking at this situation, it is possible to understand that higher education institutions may be a place where these kinds of inequalities are being upheld (Vasavi 2006: 3769). However, on the other hand, these institutions, through bridging social capital can be seen as vital when trying to break away from those identities (Kay & Johnston 2007: 24). As seen from the interview with Gayatri,

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[6] The language in the quotation is corrected.

when she started interacting with other students than just those in her own group, she realised that she is equally good as anybody else. The empirical data indicates that the potential social capital that exists in educational institutions, e.g. possibility to make friends and enlarge a network, is also a powerful tool to eradicate social distance that exists in a society. This is due to that a person is able to meet people with different backgrounds, get more exposure and hence, there is a chance that one is able to break perceptions and stereotypes that prevails in a society. In addition to this, the case of Gayatri shows the connection between a low caste and a low class (Pinglé 2003: 249).

6.1.2.2 Importance of Friends, Activities and Teachers

During the interviews, it also becomes apparent that the women perceive that it is important to have friends and being involved in activities when being enrolled in educational institutions. Reshma talks about how the fact that she did not use to meet her two close friends after university contributed towards that she felt that the time at university was difficult, in the sense that she felt insecure, when she did not spend time with her friends. However, she claims that the encouragement from her father helped her to go through the situation (Reshma 29.12.2013):

> My father used to say whatever you do /.../ you do not have to be the best but you try to reach there. /.../ mainly because of my parent I somehow had to clear it (Reshma 29.12.2013).

Here it becomes apparent that support is important when being enrolled in educational institutions. Anjana regards that her move to another city for her university studies brought about difficulties, because she was encountered with new situations and new people (Anjana 02.11.2013). It is also interesting to look at Bhanushree's situation, where her time before entering university was challenging, because her friends used to get high grades and that resulted in that she pulled herself back. She also tells that her friends did not ask her to join them for different events. Due to this she felt that the time before university was difficult. However, when entering university she experiences another situation:

> I got very good friends, who also have been discriminated on the bases of studies [lower grades] and I was very much happy[7] (Bhanushree 03.11.2013).

> I was active in each and every activity. So /.../ I made a good relationship with my teachers and friends (Bhanushree 03.11.2013).

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[7] The language in the quotation is corrected.

Based on the quotes the importance of friends and activities can be seen. The same pattern can be scrutinised among the rest of the women as well, where Maya (11.11.2013), Neha (21.11.2013) and Dipti (29.12.2013) all agrees that friends and/or activities have been important when they have been enrolled in educational institutions. Also Maya, a SC, who has a Bachelor in Engineering, says that her teachers and co-students used to help her with her assignments when she was away from university, since she participated in different sports events (Maya 11.11.2013).

In addition to friends and activities it also becomes apparent from the interviews that teachers play an important role in how the women have been experiencing their time at educational institutions. Devika, who did a Bachelor in Physics who belongs to the OBC, again talks about how different her university teachers were compared to the teachers at the school she went to before university. She says that the university teachers were not at all cooperative and she says that she remembers her upper secondary school teachers, because according to Devika, they gave her a lot of experience and exposure. However, in university she says that the teachers were not friendly and did not motivate her in the studies. Further, she says that based on the teacher's behaviour at university, she dropped her plan of becoming a teacher, because she is afraid that she would not be a good teacher (Devika 04.11.2013). Gayatri mentions that the teachers were not considerate towards her and they paid more attention to those students who were performing well in their studies (Gayatri 06.11.2013). Also Anjana has a similar view of the teachers and when asked why she thinks the teachers do not care about weaker students she says:

> they [teachers] do not care about students who are weak (Anjana 02.11.2013)

> I do not know, but I think it is the mind-set of the people[8] (Anjana 02.11.2013)

Even though the aforementioned women provide a negative view of the teachers, it is necessary to look at some of the women who think that their teachers have been good. Dipti, belonging to OBC and has a Master in Business Administration, regards that her teachers were good and she also mentions that she was able to talk to her teachers if she had problems with both studies and other things that were not connected to her studies (Dipti 29.12.2013). Bhanushree who had problems with the teachers before entering university, in the way that the teachers did not pay attention to her; she thinks the reason for this behaviour is that she did not get good grades in her studies during that time. Due to this she felt left behind and she

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[8] The language in the quotation is corrected.

was very depressed. However, she says that she always had the thought that she studies well and therefore she did not give up. When entering university she says she had a totally different experience of the university teachers:

> So the teachers were very... what to say... very fantastic teachers. The teachers they used to pull out my silent abilities (Bhanushree 03.11.2013).

When looking at the opinions made by the teachers and scholars regarding different treatment of students, there seem to be diverging points of views. Vineeta, a teacher in English, says that she has not seen this kind of different treatment between people when she has been teaching (Vineeta 09.12.2013). Also Abimanyu, who is a teacher, says that he personally has not seen differences, but he seems to be aware of that this may be the case in other universities in Kerala (Abimanyu 10.12.2013). Nitesh again stresses the importance of how the weaker students have to be helped out in order to be able to catch up with the other students (Nitesh 18.12.2013). The academics also have the opinion that teachers are only interested in those who are doing well in their studies (Dipesh 07.11.2013) and

> teachers, unfortunately, look after only the /.../ they are interested in those performing good. /.../ But you know how, you are excluded in terms of your dress style, your language, your performance level, everything (Mukesh 18.12.2013).

However, the same scholar also points out that the teachers may not consciously carry out discrimination when only caring about those having good grades; however, these actions may indirectly be taken as discrimination, due to the long history of caste discrimination (Mukesh 18.12.2013).

As the theoretical framework shows social capital tends to look at relationships between different individuals (Kay & Johnston 2007: 17). Based on the empirical data, it becomes apparent that social capital in form of relations, particularly between friends and teachers-students has been one essential factor in how these women have experienced their time at university and how they have managed to go through their studies, where the women highlights the importance of having good relationships to e.g. friends and teachers. As the theoretical framework suggests, social capital tends to entail benefits for those individuals that are involved in a network (Bourdieu 1989: 248). This can be seen from when a person moves to a new place and hence, have to build up new connections, it may be difficult in the beginning to go through the situation, because a person may not have support from other people. When e.g. looking at Bhanushree, who faced difficulties, due to her lower grades

before entering university, but when entering university she got new friends and the teachers were also supportive and therefore, she got more motivated to study. In the same case one is also able to see that when she was engaged with a group that she felt that she fit into, she also did not feel excluded from the friends group anymore. This indicates that social capital is important in achieving social inclusion. In the cases where the women have a social network/support, it is possible to yield benefits in form of more motivation to study and therefore graduating from the programme. One is also able to see how social relations can be vital for a person's health, i.e. less depressed when having people around you, who you feel connected to and a person can also rely on that she will get help from teachers and co-students when being away from university. As seen from the empirical data, a general pattern in the interviews is that when the women have not had these kinds of relations, it has been more difficult for them to go through their studies.

The empirical data also imply that the teacher-student relationship is important for how the women have experienced their time at university. As seen from the background part of the paper the teacher-student relationship is of great importance in order to help the students to manage their studies (Balagopalan & Subrahmanian 2003: 51). However, the data show that in some cases, the teacher has played a much more important role for some of the women than in just there academic studies. This can be connected to Coleman, who points out the importance of social capital in the creation of human capital (Coleman 2011). For example, in the case of Bhanushree, the teacher has been influential in changing the personality of a student, e.g. becoming more open and talkative and teachers can also provide students the opportunity to get more exposure. Further, as in the case of Dipti, teachers can also play an important and helpful role in assisting the students with other issues than their studies. To be more open, less shy, already have exposure to different activities are important qualities when e.g. looking for jobs or when a person is already working. Again, a remarkable difference in the support from teachers is between those with lower and higher grades, where those women who have had good relationships with their teachers have regarded their time at university as good. This shows that teachers are to some extent important in the process of social inclusion, so that these students can take part in e.g. different activities in educational institutions (Westfall 2010: 7) and do not feel restricted. It is important to point out that the worse treatment of students with lower grades is not per se a caste issues. However, as the scholar point out, this is an indirect way of excluding a person on the basis of lower grades and can be perceived as caste discrimination in some instances.

6.2 The Time after University

Higher education is seen as an important contributor for improving the labour market prospects of an individual (Jordan 2006: 104), therefore this part of the analysis will look into the choice of subject the women have studied and what they actually want to work with. Firstly, it becomes apparent that all of the interviewees are currently unemployed, despite them having a university degree. However, here it is vital to point out, as the background part of the paper suggests, unemployment rates in Kerala are high (Ramachandran 2001: 218). When the interviewees were asked what their plans are for the near future, it becomes apparent that that those with a Master's degree are trying to find a job (Reshma 29.12.2013, Gayatri 06.11.2013, Anjana 02.11.13, Dipti 29.12.2013), while those with a Bachelor's degree are either aiming at finding a job (Neha 21.12.2013) or trying to find a job or/and then continuing with their studies later on (Bhanushree 03.11.2013, Devika 04.11.2013, Aditi 19.12.2013 and Maya 11.11.2013). From a welfare point of view the unemployment among these women may have severe implications for the individuals, because with unemployment there is a risk of further being excluded in the society (Sen 2000: 11). Being unemployed imposes great risks for an individual, where e.g. there is a risk of being economically, structurally and socially excluded in terms of e.g. not having enough money for the basic facilities a person needs. Long term unemployment can further affect if a person and the family is able to pay for education, health and other social services (Sen 2000: 19). Again, how easily affected a person is of unemployment is dependent on the social background of that person, and as seen from the interviews, Gayatri points out that she is in need of any job, since her father is not working and her mother is working as a maid (Gayatri 06.11.2013). Further, unemployment may also result in problems with mental health, e.g. lower self-confidence; the social network of a person may deteriorate when a person is not working (Sen 2000: 20-21). Hence, in the case of long-term unemployment there is a risk that that these women will not be able to fully participate in the society. Another important aspect to mention is that since a person is largely dependent on the family/community to cover social needs (Wood and Gough 2006: 1704); one is able to see that unemployment may, depending on the rest of the family, impose great risks on the whole family.

Since the women are unemployed, they have been enrolled in a course in Kerala that is supposed to prepare them for entering the labour market. During the interviews, the women were asked why they have decided to participate in the aforementioned course. There seem to be a unison answer, where the women, through the course, want to improve their

communication skills (Anjana 02.11.2013, Bhanushree 03.11.2013, Devika 04.11.2013, Gayatri 06.11.2013, Maya 11.11.2013, Aditi 19.12.2013, Neha 21.12.2013, Reshma 29.12.2013) and professional skills (Bhanushree 03.11.2013, Maya 11.11.2013 and Dipti 29.12.2013) in order to improve their chances of entering the labour market and getting a job. In addition to this, Reshma (29.12.2013) and Devika (04.11.2013) bring up that they also hope that, through the course, she will get more knowledge about what kind of employment options there are available. From the last mentioned reason, it is possible to see how being engaged in a network, in this case through available networks in the course, may help a person to attain information that otherwise would not be possible. This shows that one should not out rule the importance of weak ties (Portes 1998: 53) when trying to acquire information about jobs that are available.

6.3 Choice of Studies and Preferred Work

6.3.1 Financial Constraints in Choosing a Specific Degree and Career

When looking at what subjects the women have been studying at university one is able to scrutinise that financial constraints is one problem that some of these women have faced when choosing what to study. One of the woman states during the interview that she wanted to study medicine, but she was unable to do this, because her family could not afford paying for the entrance exam. From the interview it also becomes apparent, that she still was able to study a Bachelor in Engineering, because she received a scholarship. If she would not have received this scholarship, she would have opted for studying a subject that is cheaper (Maya 11.11.2013). Also the teachers and scholars acknowledge that financial constraints to large extent affect what education a person can get (Abimanyu 10.12.2013). The economic background is not only determining what a person is able to study but also what a person is able to do after studying. Gayatri points out that she is willing to take any job that is available, because she is in need of money. The need for a job can be seen from the family background where only her mother works as a maid (Gayatri 06.11.2013). One of the academics provides a similar view of how the economic situation has been affecting the career path:

> Economically we are struggling for education /.../. When I was a student in PhD level my mother died and that affected me. /.../ I always think that if I have some kind of very good family support I will go to do PhD in Delhi or abroad. Like that I am thinking still. I am sticking here due to my family. /.../ otherwise I am free and I can go to Delhi or Hyderabad or abroad, but now I have to look after my family economically (Dipesh 07.11.2013).

As seen from the theoretical framework one has to take into account the multidimensionality of exclusion and as recognised, one form of exclusion is based on economic and structural reasons, where the denial of e.g. access to education is one reason (Jehoel-Gijsbers & Vrooman 2007: 17). When looking at the interviews, it becomes apparent that these women have got the opportunity to enrol in higher education and that scholarships, in some cases, are important to ensure better possibilities for these women. From the interviews one is also able to scrutinise that economical constraints is something that some of the women face in this case, where this constraint results in that a person has fewer opportunities than someone who is economically better off, e.g. what degree a person is able to pursue and what further possibilities a person has, where those who are economically weak may have to accept any kind of job, because of the economical situation and therefore, may not be able to wait until they find a job that they really like. Here one is able to see the distinction between the group and individual characteristics (Thorat & Sabharwal 2010: 5-6), where one is able to see that marginalised communities as groups are not homogeneous, i.e. not all women have faced difficulties, because of different, individual reasons, in this case the economical background of a family. Due to this some of the women have had better opportunities than others within the same groups.

6.3.2 Other Reasons for Choosing a Specific Degree and Career

During the interviews it also becomes apparent that some of the women have studied something else than what she actually wanted to. Aditi, who belongs to the OBC and has a Bachelor in Chemistry, talks about how she studied chemistry although she actually wanted to study journalism, but due to her mother she was not able to do that, because her family was not interested in journalism. Further, she says that she likes chemistry but that she has no passion for the subject. Further, she mentions that she has been preparing for exams so that she is able to apply for jobs in the banking sector, however, she reveals that she would not like to work in a bank, but that she will take the job if she is offered one in the banking sector. When asked why she has applied for bank jobs although she is not interested, the reply is that her mother wants her to do that (Aditi 19.12.2013). Also Dipti says that she decided to study a Master in Business Administration instead of journalism, because in India it is important to also take into account what the parents want their children to study. In addition to this, she talks about how her parents are looking at her educational and job career. She says that her parents, especially her father has given her a very good education. She thinks the reason for this is that his dream was to study a lot when he was young, but he was not able to do that,

because it was too expensive for him. So now, she thinks that he wants her to fulfil all the dreams he was not able to fulfil. When asked if she has felt pressurised from his side, she says no, but she acknowledge that her father is worried about that she has not found a job despite her education.

Also Neha talks about how she opted for studying a degree in engineering instead of her dream journalism, because she felt that she has to attain a degree that is valued highly in the society:

> I know that I have the responsibility to my parents /.../, so I became a holder of a professional degree (Neha 21.12.2013).

Another pattern that can be scrutinised from the interviews is the division between those women who want to work with something related to what they have studied and those who want to work with something else. Anjana (02.11.2013), Bhanushree (03.11.2013), Maya (11.11.2013), Reshma (29.12.2013) and Dipti (29.12.2013) talks about how they want to work in a field that is related to their studies, an example of this is:

> Now I should work in a place where I can use what I have learnt in college (Bhanushree 03.11.2013)

On the other hand, there are women who want to work with something else than they have studied (Devika 04.11.2013, Aditi 19.12.2013, Neha 21.12.2013). According to Devika there are a lot of opportunities in the banking sector and that is why she would like to work in a bank (Devika 04.11.2013). Neha explains in her interview why she wants to work in a bank although she has studied engineering:

> because now it is the trend /.../ The trend is changing, when we enter into engineering, the IT boom is there, but when we get out there is depression and all. So, the trend is always changing, we cannot access how the world moves. So, we also set our aims like that: where there is more opportunity to get a job, we go for that[9] (Neha 21.12.2013)

Based on the empirical data presented regarding the choice of studies and preferred type of work, it is possible to see influences of the intergenerational contract. As the theoretical framework points out, the intergenerational contract is usually between parents and children (Göransson 2013: 67) and this becomes apparent from the interviews. Here it is possible to discuss this issue in relation to obligations and expectations involved in an intergenerational

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[9] The language in the quotation is corrected.

contract (Göransson 2009: 9). It is possible to descry that the parents have given the women the opportunity to study and thus, have invested money and time to enable the women to get a higher education degree. Based on the support and opportunities provided by the parents, the women feel that they have an obligation towards meeting their parent's expectations regarding not only what subject to study but also studying a subject which means that these women are able to get a secure job in the future. Based on this, some of the women have made the decision not to study what they actually would be interested in studying, but opted for the preferences their parents have. It is also interesting to look at Dipti and how her dad was not able to study a lot and therefore, he has put expectations on her to get a Master's degree. Here, it is possible to see the moral side of the contract (Göransson 2009: 10), where e.g. Dipti in reality only are morally obliged to fulfil the parents expectations and preferences what to study. This also becomes apparent from the quote made my Neha, where she says that she has a responsibility towards her parents to study something that will give her a good degree. This draws attention to the power relation between parents and children, where the relation may not be equal (Göransson 2009: 12). Aditi is a good example of how restrictive a relationship like this can be. She was not able to study what she actually wanted and she also admits that she has no passion for chemistry that she studied. Further, she does not want to work in the banking sector that her mother wants her to work in. In addition to this, when looking at the choice of degrees the women have opted for, it is necessary to look at the theoretical framework that points out that social norms that are prevailing in a society may be a powerful tool to influence what a person opts for (Coleman 2011: 103). In the case of India, subjects such as engineering and medicine are being regarded as professional courses and that one will get good jobs with those degrees, while this is not the case with e.g. a degree in social sciences (Samuel 2013). The influence of social norms can be seen in the case where Neha pinpoints that she became a holder of a professional degree when she studied engineering instead of journalism. The quote from the same woman, who wants to work in the banking sector although she has an engineering degree, clearly shows how pragmatic the decision what to work with can be. This implies that even though a person has a degree in one subject, the person is also open for other working places than those related to their studies, in order to improve the chances of getting a job.

6.3.3 Public versus Private Sector

When further looking into the preferred choice of job sector, the interviews show a tendency that these women would like to work in the public sector, where three of the women are

interested in working in this particular sector (Anjana 02.11.2013, Neha 21.12.2013, Aditi 19.12.2013, Dipti 29.12.2013). The general explanation to why there is a preference for government jobs lies around the benefits that are associated with the particular sector. Dipti talks about the job security in the public sector and the fact that a person gets pensions after retirement. Due to this she feels that her life would be better secured. She also pinpoints that the salary is higher in the private sector, but that the private sector is not as secure as the public sector, because in the private sector they can fire her at any time (Dipti 29.12.2013). Neha has similar thoughts about the public sector:

> So, it is more secure [public sector jobs] and the security is given by the Government (Neha 21.12.2013)

The preference for working in the government sector is further strengthened by teachers and academics, where Mukesh talks about the security in the Government sector, in terms of affirmative action being there when applying for a job and different benefits that are associated with the sector (Mukesh 18.12.2013). Further, Mukesh mentions that getting a government job is preferred because a person knows that he/she will have that job until retirement:

> You have entered a Government job; you have like a golden check. Like, in the private sector, your performance is not good, they are sacked. That is not happening in the Government sector, once you are in there your performance is not omitted (Mukesh 18.12.2013).

The aforementioned quotation supports the women's view of why there is a preference for the public sector. One of the teachers also gives an interesting explanation to why there is a preference for government jobs, but highlights that in relation to their family background:

> the sense of insecurity they have, which has been handed down to them from their parents. This sense of insecurity tells that /.../ if I go for the private sector, they may kick me out, that is again lack of self-confidence. /.../ So if it is a Government job, that thing is assured, your job, you are there for life; whether they want you or not, they cannot kick you out (Abimanyu 10.12.2013).

This is an interesting quote because many of the women have a parent that has or is working in the Government sector (Anjana 02.11.2013, Bhanushree 03.11.2013, Devika 04.11.2013, Aditi 19.12.2013, Neha 21.12.2013, Reshma 29.12.2013, Dipti 29.12.2013). Even though the interviews show a tendency for opting for a Government job, Maya says during her interview

that she is not interested in public sectors jobs, because the specific sector only offers low status jobs. According to her, she should get a better job, since she has a university education (Maya 11.11.2013).

The empirical data implies that parents can also influence when it comes to what kinds of jobs are being preferred. Many of the interviewee's parents are or have been working in the public sector and many of the women themselves want to work in the same sector. Here one is able to see that social capital in form of information (Coleman 2011: 102-103) can play a directing role in where one should work, because if the parents work in the public sector they may have information and knowledge about how to apply for jobs and further when the women themselves know and have seen what benefits there are with working in the public sector, this may direct what decisions these women make concerning their career. In the quote made by the teacher, one is able to see that how the attitudes by parents, e.g. feeling insecure about the private sector may be handed down from parents to children and this will further influence and determine what kind of job a person decides to apply for. This is particularly apparent in the case where Maya says that she does not want to work in the Government sector, because when looking at her parents' occupation it is possible to see that they are not working in the public sector.

Since, the intergenerational contract between parents and children to large extent can influence what choices a person makes, the questions that arises is why this is the case? Here it is important to examine the topic from the theoretical framework that the how much a person is dependent on intergenerational contract is dependent on the context in a country (Göransson 2009: 10). However, to get a more comprehensive view it is also vital to look into the country's welfare system that was presented in the part 1 of the thesis, where the welfare system in India is not extensively developed (Wood and Gough 2006: 1704). Based on the welfare system, where social protection is a part of the formal sector and the coverage in the public sector is more extensive in the Government sector (Sen & Rajasekhar 2012: 97-98) it is understandable that these women would prefer a government job. Further, this can also to some extent explain why some of the women have decided to follow their parents' preferences regarding what to study and work with. Hence, a Government job would mean that the women are able to have a secure income and pension benefits, where pensions can be seen as a vital part for securing against risks after employment. By also having a secure income, one is able to save for the future and further be able to handle unexpected crisis that may occur in a person's life. This is particularly important in today's world, where it is

difficult to predict what risks may arise, e.g. global economic crises that may affect the job availability. Therefore, a person who is aware and have prepared for potential risks is better able to manage risks when they occur (Hacker 2008: 168-170, 176, 185). A Government job in this case would also in many instances mean that these women to lesser extent have to face unemployment again, than if they are working in the private sector. In this sense, the Government sector is more secure than the private sector and hence understandable that these women prefer a Government job. In addition to this, one is able to gain an understanding of why the parents want their children to have a secure job; because one is able to recognise that it is not only the women alone that will benefit from having a secure job, but it will also contribute towards helping the family as a whole to support themselves and securing against unexpected risks in the future. This is particularly important in a society like India, where social welfare to large extent has to be covered by individuals and families. Hence, it is easy to see the connection between the influence of parents and the preference for a job that is regarded to be secure.

7. Concluding Discussion

In this part of the thesis, a discussion of the findings will take place in connection with the research questions. Based on the first research questions, about *how the SC/ST/OBC women have experienced their time at university, can patterns of social exclusion/inclusion be identified* it becomes visible that the women have had diverging experiences. Even though the analysis indicate that the time at university has been perceived as difficult for some of the women, it is important to point out that the thesis also provided a positive view of the situation, where some of the women regard their time at university as good. Here, patterns of social inclusion can be identified, where the women feel that they have not been excluded while enrolled in educational institutions. The thesis also draws attention to affirmative action and in some cases it is possible to scrutinise the positive sides with the policy. However, the thesis also points out the problematic sides with affirmative action and the fact that the policy has some unintended consequences. Where getting admission to university with lower grades seem to result in lower self-confidence and hesitation to interact with other students that are not in the same situation. In this case, it is possible to scrutinise patterns of social exclusion in higher education institutions, where although the some of the women are included in higher education, they still feel excluded and restricted because of the aforementioned aspects.

Patterns of both economical/structural and socio-cultural exclusion can be found in the analysis. Here, it is also possible to descry how dynamic social exclusion is and how caste based discrimination is changing through times and becoming more subtle. The diverging experiences regarding affirmative action, shows that social policy can be important in combating social exclusion through providing better opportunities for marginalised groups to enter higher education. However, the analysis also indicates how complex the situation is, because of the risk of facing exclusion when being admitted to university on the basis of affirmative action.

In connection with this, the analysis reveals that although the chosen theoretical framework provides explanations to a lot, it does not provide an explanation to everything. What becomes evident from the analysis is that structural problems or inequalities are visible in educational institutions. Such problems can be connected to that people belonging to marginalised groups face prejudices e.g. being taken as useless. Another thing that can be scrutinised is the problem with teachers, who to large extent seem to only pay attention to those students that are performing well in their studies. This is a complex issue when connecting it to caste, because as it becomes apparent from the analysis, this can be considered as caste discrimination. Even though there have been no attempts to compare the groups, the analysis show that SC/ST to greater extent than the OBC regard that they have had problems when being enrolled in educational institutions. Even here structural inequalities can be depicted, where SC/ST have historically been more prone to exclusion than the OBC, because of their low position in the caste system (Jodhka 2012: 70-71 and Rao 2013: 37). This may explain the difference in the women's experiences.

Although it does not appear in the thesis why the women are unemployed, unemployment in connection to gender and caste is vital to point out. This is due to the fact that women for a long time have not been part of the labour market in India (Naqvi 2011: 28) and that research has shown that people belonging to lower castes face more difficulties with entering the labour market than the general category (Jodhka 2012: 166-167). Another thing that becomes apparent in the thesis is that if a person belongs to both a low caste and class, the person in question has much more limited options than someone who is economically better off, but still belongs to a lower caste. Also here, SC/ST to larger extent than the OBC states that they have had economical problems, which again can be seen from their lower caste position. The appearance of structural problems shows that although there are policy interventions, it is difficult to change the situation unless larger structural problems in the society first are

addressed. This can e.g. be that society as a whole have to change its view about a certain thing in order to change the situation. This is particularly evident in the case of India, where the caste system has been one factor that has been stratifying the society for a long time, making it difficult to achieve changes quickly. Here a suggestion for further research is to look more into the structural dimensions that are persistent in the society and are acting as obstacles for achieving changes.

In association with unemployment and the fact that women have decided to enrol in a course preparing them for the labour market the analysis also reveals that the concept of social capital is only able to explain one part of the situation. The analysis, concerning why the women are involved in the labour market preparation course, reveals that also cultural capital in form of communication skills and other skills that is necessary in a working life, e.g. how one presents oneself and the personality of that person is important. If a person lacks cultural capital it is more difficult for a person to enter the labour market, this is also being supported by previous research (Deshpande & Newman 2007: 4136-4138). Since, the women are involved in the labour market preparation course; it is possible to see that these women are aware of what they need to improve in order to have a chance to get a job. However, based on structural problems and lack of e.g. cultural capital, it may be difficult for these women to actually enter the labour market.

The second research question, *does social capital play a role when a person is enrolled in educational institutions, if it does what kind of role?* From the analysis is becomes apparent that support from friends, teachers and co-students is of great importance when talking about how the time at an education institution has been experienced. Social capital is essential since it facilitates different kinds of actions, e.g. in feeling included in university. Further, when looking at the analysis, one is able to see that some of the women who have experienced a problematic time at university feel that they have been different from other students and therefore, in a case searched for groups of people that have been in the same situation as them or have the same background. Based on this, as previous research also indicated, universities, through bonding social capital and the relational dimension of social exclusion can be a powerful way to perpetuate the social inequalities that are persistent in a society. This shows that social capital also may be an obstacle in the process of inclusion, especially if group divisions are strong. However, one should also point out that universities, in a few of the cases, may also be a place where, social distance is being eradicated through bridging social capital, when meeting different people or being involved in activities. Here it is possible to

see that although it is necessary to have friends etc. while being enrolled in educational institutions; strong ties may only be one important aspect. Also weaker ties may be important in order to get exposed to other people and ideas than just those that are prevailing in your own circle.

The third research question *in what ways can the intergenerational contract and the social policy landscape explain what these women have been studying and what they want to work with* shows that the intergenerational contract is influential in the decision of what to study and what kind of jobs are being preferred. It is possible to see that parent's expectations of what to study have been affecting what some of the women have been studying, where the women have felt that they need to take into account their parent's wishes. Where in some of the cases, the parent's wishes have led to that the women have not been studying what they actually wanted to. Further, social norms about that a person should study a subject that is considered to be a professional degree has been influential in the women's decisions. When looking into the social policy landscape in the country, it is possible to understand why there is a preference for these kinds of degrees, where for example, an engineering degree is regarded to give a more secure job than a degree in mass communication. The analysis also shows the tendency of preferring a job in the public sector, where the work is regarded as more secure and it is comprehensible that both the women and their families are interested in these jobs, because by having a secure job there are higher possibilities to secure and manage risks that may occur in the future, this is particularly important in a society where social needs to large extent have to be covered by families or individuals themselves.

8. Appendix

8.1 Presentation of Interviewees

Women:

- Aditi: Bachelor in Chemistry, 19.12.2013
- Anjana: Master in Chemistry, 02.11.2013
- Bhanushree: Bachelor in Engineering, 03.11.2013
- Devika: Bachelor in Physics, 04.11.2013
- Dipti: Master in Business Administration, 29.12.2013
- Gayatri: Master in Commerce, 06.11.2013
- Maya: Bachelor in Engineering, 11.11.2013
- Neha: Bachelor in Engineering, 21.12.2013
- Reshma: Master in Engineering, 29.12.2013

Teachers:

- Abimanyu: Teacher in English, 10.12.2013
- Vineeta: Teacher in English, 09.12.2013

Academics:

- Dipesh: Researcher in Anthropology, a Scheduled Caste himself, 07.11.2013
- Mukesh: Researcher in Anthropology, works with caste issues, 18.12.2013
- Nitesh: Teacher and professor in sociology, works with caste issues,18.12.2013

8.2 Interview Guide

Women:

- Introduction?
- Can you tell me about your educational background?
- Did you go to a Government or private school?
- Did you receive any scholarship?
- Can you tell me about your school experience in the classroom?
- How did the teachers treat you?
- Did you see any differences in how students were treated in school?
- What did you want to work with when you were younger?
- Why did you get involved in the labour market preparation course?
- What are your plans for the future?
- How are your parents looking at your educational/job career?

Teachers:

- Introduction?
- Can you tell me about your experience working with students belonging to marginalised groups?
- What are the biggest problems that these students face in higher education?
- It is usually being claimed that students belonging to marginalised groups lack motivation and are weak in subjects such as English, how do you look at this?
- How do you address the weaknesses these students have?

Scholars:

Interview with Dipesh:

- Introduction?
- Can you tell me about your experience in the classroom?
- What kind of problems did you face as a student?
    - How did the teachers treat you?
    - How did other students treat you?
- In higher education, where you involved in any extra-curricular activities?
- In school, what do you think blocks the motivation of Scheduled Caste students?
- The reservation system has been getting a lot of critique, what is your opinion about that?

Interviews with Mukesh and Nitesh:

- Introduction?
- Can you tell me about your experiences with working with students belonging to marginalised groups?
- What are the biggest problems these students face in higher education?
- It is usually being claimed that students belonging to marginalised groups lack motivation and are weak in subjects such as English, how do you look at this?
- The reservation system has been getting a lot of critique, what is your opinion about that?
    - How do you look at reservation in the private sector?

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