

Columbia University
Graduate School of Arts & Sciences
Human Rights Studies Master of Arts Program

Collective Identity and its Impact on
Indian Farmer Movements

Renita Edwin

Thesis Advisor: Inga Winkler

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

February 2018

Abstract

India's rural populations remain routinely marginalized in national policy decisions. The economic concerns of farming communities are often ignored by policy makers, with a complete lack of attention paid to systemic failures and decades of ill-governance. Perhaps the biggest manifestation of this is the country's farmer suicide epidemic, which has been ongoing since the 1990s, having taken more than 300,000 lives.

The prolonged and pervasive nature of the crisis necessitates an analysis of both the structural constraints impacting Indian agriculture as well as civil society's response. This is especially significant considering that India is often referred to as the "world's largest democracy." A close analysis of today's farmer movements, however, suggest that they are periodically inactive and largely ineffective in impacting structural change. Why?

A viable explanation for this lies in the application of social movement theoretical perspectives, which point to the value of culture and identity in shaping movements. It is argued that culture, in conjunction with capacity and socio-political capital, becomes an agency of reform when leveraged to induce a sense of "collective identity" amongst participants. The value of such a hypothesis is evidenced by Indian farming communities, whereby until the 1990s, they existed as some of the most important non-parliamentary political forces across multiple states.

By applying existing these theories to both historical and present-day movements within the Maharashtra district of Wardha, the text proposes that today's farmers stand divided, as conflicting characteristics (be it class, caste or religion) take precedence over a singular farmer identity, thereby hindering collective action and, in the process, placing limits on the politics of farmer empowerment. In doing so, it deepens understandings of how culture, collective identity and emotion cultivate political opportunities, facilitate socio-economic and political agency and ultimately lead to structural change within communities.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	4
Chapter 2: The Current State of Indian Agriculture	
Assessing the Structural Constraints.....	6
Chapter 3: Literature Review.....	11
3.1 Theoretical Framework: Structuralism vs. Cultural Constructivism.....	11
3.1.1 Significance of Culture, Emotion and Collective Identity.....	12
3.1.2 Capacity Building vs. Political Opportunity.....	13
3.2 Farmworker Movements in India: A Historical Overview.....	13
3.3 Today's Movements: Comparable Contexts, Changing Responses.....	17
Chapter 4: Methodology.....	19
4.1 Research Design.....	19
4.2 Research Participants.....	20
4.3 Data Collection.....	22
4.4 Boundaries of the Study.....	22
Chapter 5: Findings.....	25
5.1 The History of Peasant Mobilization in Vidarbha.....	25
5.1.1 Emergence and Decline.....	26
5.1.2 Long-term Repercussions.....	28
5.2 Present-day Farmer Movements in Wardha: Operation and Dynamics.....	29
5.2.1 Scope of Operation.....	29
5.2.2 Organizational Structure and Composition.....	30
5.2.3 Leadership.....	31
5.3 Dynamics Within Farming Communities.....	32
Chapter 6: Discussion.....	34
6.1 Significance of Political Processes in Collective Identity Formation.....	35
6.1.1 Marginalization of Rural Interests in National Policy.....	35
6.1.2 Ethnicization of Politics Within Rural Communities.....	38
6.2 Weakening of the 'Farmer' Identity: How Does It Manifest Within Movements?.....	40
6.3 Structural Repercussions of the Collective Identity Deficit Within Movements.....	44
Chapter 7: Conclusion.....	46
References.....	49

Chapter 1:

Introduction

Despite India's recent focus on industrialization, agriculture continues to be its largest sector of employment and an indispensable food source. Agriculture accounts for 17.32% of the country's GDP (Indian Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation 2018) and more than 44% of Indians work either directly or indirectly in agriculture (World Bank 2017), making the field pivotal in the economic growth of the country. Simultaneously, India also faces an agrarian crisis of monumental proportions. Statistics from India's National Crime Records Bureau indicate that close to 300,000 farmers have taken their lives in the past 20 years by ingesting pesticide or hanging themselves, with this wave being officially recognized as the largest of recorded suicides in human history (Center for Human Rights and Global Justice 2012, 1). Approximately 41 farmers die every day, a statistic that incited the tagline many Indians are all too familiar with: every 30 minutes, a farmer kills himself.

The reasons for this long-standing crisis are as complex as they are debatable, but it is known that extreme indebtedness is a common factor behind most of the reported suicides (Kaushal 2015, 49; Posani 2009, 10). Critical researchers have dug deeper into farmers' economic concerns to analyze the causes of their current marginal standing (Posani 2009; Bastian 2012; Kaushal 2015). Their results point to the opening of the Indian economy in 1991 and the economic reforms that ensued as the fundamental defining factors. A report released by an Expert Group under the Ministry of Finance on Agricultural Indebtedness points to a steep decline in agricultural growth over the past twenty years, resulting in the abolition of farmers' subsidies, competition with foreign multinationals with superior monetary capital, infrastructure and technology, rising input prices and weakening support systems (Indian Ministry of Finance 2007).

Given its severity, understanding why this crisis has been tolerated by the Indian government and general public for so long is imperative. Social movement theory in combination with a critical analysis of similar movements go a long way in understanding this area. However, the limits of theoretical analysis lie in the fact that, while there is a wealth of literature about the economic and structural facets of the country's suicide crisis, research relating specifically to present-day Indian farmer movements mobilizing to tackle the issue is scant or non-existent.

This study attempts to address that gap. In doing so, it asks why modern-day farmer movements in India have not translated to meaningful structural change, despite the ongoing human rights crisis which has garnered international attention. Are they missing something? To add more insight to this line of thought, the following sections also examine whether or not a lack of collective identity and cohesion amongst farming communities have impacted the success of its movements, thereby contributing to the country's agricultural decline and consequentially, failing to mitigate the suicide crisis.

Chapter 2:

The Current State of Indian Agriculture:

Assessing the Structural Constraints

Prior to examining the dynamics of both historical and present-day farmer movements in India, it is worth considering the structural constraints that contribute to present-day farmer distress. The following sections lay out the primary factors that have either directly or indirectly contributed to the decline of agriculture in India. This includes but is not limited to: (i) increasing costs of production within the agricultural sector; (ii) an inadequacy of agricultural policies relating to debt relief and access to credit; and (i) the absence of adequate rural infrastructure.

Considering the geographical scope of this study, these factors are discussed within the context of cotton farmers in the Indian state of Maharashtra. However, their relevance holds across multiple geographical locations and crop types across India.

1. Cost of Production

In order to protect agricultural producers from sharp falls in farm prices, the government of India announces a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for certain crops (one of which is cotton) at the beginning of every sowing season (Farmers' Portal 2016). Essentially, this means that the price of a farmer's produce is determined by the government. However, for the majority of the crops, the MSP announced by the government is often far lower than a farmer's cost of production. This is particularly true for cotton, which is becoming an increasingly expensive crop to farm (Dev & Rao 2009, 602).

The involvement of foreign multinationals further contributes to cotton farmers' increasing costs of production. Historically, cotton farming has been relatively inexpensive for farmers – during harvest, cotton growers would cultivate crop seed and save them for the following season. However, in 2002, India's Genetic Engineering Approval Committee

approved Monsanto International's Bt cotton variety, a move which resulted in the far more expensive Bt cotton monopolizing India's cotton industry. With Bt seeds, farmers cannot replant seeds harvested from the crop – hence, seeds need to be purchased year after year. (Center for Human Rights and Global Justice 2012, 6). While Bt cotton has been proved to provide better yield, around 50 percent of farmers' expense goes toward the seed and according to one of Monsanto's own studies, 95 percent of cotton farmers in India now have expenditures more than income (Center for Human Rights and Global Justice 2011, 34). The variety also necessitates the use of increased amounts of water and is hence ideal for irrigated land – an infrastructural feature largely absent in Indian agriculture.

The impact of this infrastructural gap is then exacerbated by a lack of awareness of farmer training, a key consideration given that warnings about the increased water requirements of Bt cotton are reportedly provided on packages in English (and hence, are not understood by the majority of farmers). The misapplication of an expensive water-intensive seed in drought-hit regions coupled with the falling market price of cotton has resulted in (i) poor harvests, and (ii) farmers being riddled in debt with both banks and illegal money lenders and viewing death as the only feasible alternative (Center for Human Rights and Global Justice 2012, 8).

There also appears to be a direct conflict of interest in terms of the perpetuation of Bt cotton – the co-chair of the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (India's only regulating body of genetically modified agriculture) is also on the board of directors for the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA), an organization funded by Monsanto (Shiva 2015).

2. Debt Relief and Access to Credit

While India does have a debt-relief policy in place for farmers, its implementation appears to be misdirected and discriminatory in nature. Both debt-relief and monetary suicide-

compensation packages exclude farmers with no land titles – a categorization that frequently encompasses women in farming, farmers from lower castes, those who have land on lease and those who have inherited their land (Indian Ministry of Finance 2008). Additionally, suicide compensation packages often exclude families wherein a farmer’s suicide is deemed by authorities as non-agriculture related (Open Government Data 2015).

While loan waivers and debt relief policies have long been cited as viable solutions for more than ten years, many assert that they will not work unless implemented in conjunction with other welfare schemes. Even with the launch of India’s largest debt relief package in 2008, there were multiple concerns. For instance, several farmers who did qualify to receive the benefits were not included in the list of beneficiaries by lending institutions. Accountability measures were also questioned as lending institutions responsible for implementing the scheme were tasked with monitoring their own work. Alternations were eventually discovered within claim records but there was no follow up. Hence, many assert that these policies are merely a tactic to ‘sweep farmers issues under the rug’ (Anand & Karnik 2017; Singh 2017; The Logical Indian 2017).

A related agricultural development problem is one which concerns the lack of access to credit in rural areas – commercial banks are not present in remote locations of India, and co-operative banks which have been set up previously have largely failed due to a lack of funds (Golait 2007, 95-96). Recognizing this barrier, the government introduced the *Kisan Credit Card (KCC)* scheme (translating to “the farmer’s credit card”) as a viable solution to the problem. The scheme was introduced in 1998 and has since become a flagship program providing access to affordable, short term credit in the agriculture sector. It is currently the only [legitimate] credit option for farmers in regions with limited access to banks (Chanda 2012, 3).

Considering the duration of the scheme's existence and the push by the government at various levels, one would expect to see significant impact by now. However, according to a study conducted by the International Growth Center, there is no indication that the scheme has increased either agricultural labor productivity or land productivity (Chanda 2012, 14). The alternative for most farmers is then to turn to illegal money lenders for assistance – a move which often results in deeper levels of debt with more fatal consequences (Center for Human Rights and Global Justice 2011, 7).

3. Inadequate rural infrastructure

Irrigation and sustainable water management infrastructure

In 2005, the Indian government launched the *Bharat Nirman* program (translating to “the construction of India”), an initiative intended to expand basic rural infrastructure. One of the key components of the *Bharat Nirman* program was to provide an additional 10 million hectares of irrigated land by the year 2012 (National Portal of India 2011). However, between the year 2005 and 2012, the total percentage of irrigated land only progressed from 32.87% (52.8 million hectares) to 36.33% (57.6 million hectares). The total arable land in India is 160 million hectares (Food and Agriculture Organization 2012).

At the end of 2015, less than 40% of India's farmland was adequately irrigated and the majority of smallholders generally have no choice but to hope for timely rain in regions afflicted by relentless drought. Despite the Indian government revising their budget in February 2016 to accommodate irrigation projects and “sustainable management of ground water resources” (Indian Ministry of Finance, 2016), active steps have not been taken to achieve the same. Data from the Irrigation Development Corporation of India for the state of Maharashtra – the epicenter of the crisis - reveals that as of April 2016, there are 515 irrigation projects underway, 85 of which have been underway for the past 30 years, 61 projects for 20 years, 78 projects for 10 years and 179 projects for 5 years (Kapre 2016).

Access to healthcare services

To effectively address India's farmer suicides, one needs to understand the nuances of what comprises farmer distress. While debt might appear as the most obvious contributing factor, there are several other factors at play, one of which is the rural population's access to adequate healthcare. As per World Bank (2016) statistics, the rural population of India is around 716 million people (67%) and yet there is a chronic lack of proper medical facilities for them. Considering the mental health needs of farming communities and the treatment gap, it is not difficult to point to the lack of such as one of the factors exacerbating the farmer suicide crisis in India. A report released by the Brookings Institution analyzed information provided by the country's National Crime Records Bureau to further understand the decades-long tragedy of farmer suicides. They cited illness – both mental and physical - and not debt alone, as the underlying cause for the majority of farmer suicides (Ravi 2015, 6-8).

Despite India's economic growth, the country's health care expenditures remain exceptionally low - between 2008 and 2014, India's annual health care expenditure only increased from 1.1 percent to 1.4 percent (World Health Organization 2014). Rural Health Statistics (2014-15) released by the government also indicate that there is a shortfall of 6,796 sub-centers, 1,267 Primary Health Centers (PHCs) and 309 Community Health Centers (CHCs) (Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare 2015). As per the same report, while the sub-centers, PHCs and CHCs in rural areas increased in number in 2014-15, the current numbers are not sufficient to meet their population norm. A report released by the ILO confirms this by stating that approximately 75% of the health infrastructure in India – including doctors and specialists and other health resources – is concentrated in urban areas where less than 35% of India's population lives. The report also cited that 87.5 percent of the Indian population did not have legal health coverage in 2010, with 93.1 percent in rural areas alone (Scheil-Adlung 2015, 45-48).

Chapter 3:

Literature Review

In the following sections, I provide a framework for analyzing the present-day landscape of farmer movements in India. Specifically, I first examine the major schools of thought in social movement literature, presenting their key theoretical components and considerations. With this, I explore how culture and collective identity construction inevitably shapes political structures and opportunity (Section 3.1). Then, I review the successes of India's iconic and immensely successful farmer movements of the 1980s (Section 3.2). Finally, I consider the parallels between India's farmer movements from thirty years ago and the movements today (Section 3.3).

3.1 Theoretical Framework: Structuralism vs. Cultural Constructivism

Goodwin & Jasper (2004, 2-5) point to two broad schools of thought within the field of social movement analysis: the structuralist approach (the perennially dominant paradigm) and the cultural constructivist approach. Each has vastly different interpretations of the role of political opportunity, strategy, culture, emotions, agency and structure in analyzing the emergence and success of social movements. Structuralists emphasize the role of economic resources, political structures, formal organizations and social networks. Constructivists on the other hand, acknowledge the importance of all these factors, but maintain that the role of culture permeates and shapes all aspects and social contexts of collective actions, including their "structures." Accordingly, constructivists emphasize collective identities, strategies, cultural traditions, capacity and emotions as key facets of successful mobilizations.

Could these clashing approaches absorb each other's insights without completely rethinking their foundations? In this section, I engage with precisely this question while pulling insights from social movements research. Accordingly, I present the literature on the various aspects emphasized across both structuralist and constructivist schools of thought.

3.1.1 Significance of Culture, Emotion and Collective Identity

Structuralists argue that the state is the “main player” that social movements interact with, the “structure” at the center of everything. They present a universal, invariant analytical framework, wherein emphasis is placed on political institutions, economies and material resources. While this perspective does not negate the value of culture, emotional responses or identity in shaping movements, it holds these elements must not be prioritized. Instead, structuralists understand cultural factors in terms of their relationship to the larger political system, i.e. the objective, non-cultural element (Goodwin & Jasper 2004, 5).

Conversely, cultural constructivists maintain that cultural and strategic processes define and create the very systems that are usually presented as “structural” (Polletta 2004, 98). For instance, while constructivists acknowledge the significance of the state, they view it as a “complex web of agencies and authorities, thoroughly saturated with culture, emotions and strategic interactions” (Goodwin & Jasper 2004, viii). As asserted by Melucci (1995, 45), “there can be no cognition without feeling.” Consequently, they argue that culture becomes agency itself when leveraged to induce a sense of “collective identity” amongst participants.

Gould (2004, 157) emphasizes the definitive role of emotion in culturally-rooted collective action by stating that people usually organize around highly emotionally charged issues, making the process of intentionally and strategically mobilizing emotion a vital part of the fabric of movements. Similarly, Nepstad (2004) illustrates the importance of evoking emotional responses through the employment of stories and interpersonal interaction. She states that, “activists can generate anger by revealing information that violates moral norms or by framing an event as a breach of ethical standards” (2004, viii). However, Ganz (2011, 275-278) maintains that acute emotional sentiments – specifically anger, isolation and self-doubt – do not guarantee successful mobilization as they carry with them the potential to both “mobilize *and* inhibit collective action.” He also argues that patterns of helplessness can be reconstructed as

collective will by movement leaders who engage in: (i) storytelling rooted in shared struggles; (ii) education and awareness raising; and (iii) loyalty and affective bonds via consistent interaction with community members.

3.1.2 Capacity Building vs. Political Opportunity

While strict structuralist models view collective action as constructed predominantly around the state, cultural constructivists recognize activists' actions are often directed at multiple audiences apart from the state (Goodwin & Jasper 2004, 11). Structuralists' conception of the state as the center of social movements is derived in part from their notion of “political opportunity.” McAdam (2004, 203) and McCarthy & Zald (1977, 1216-1217) cite political opportunities as the deciding factors of social movements stating that opportunities make established political order more vulnerable or receptive to challenge. By claiming that “social movements arise only when expanding political opportunities are seized” (McCarthy & Zald 1977, 1216), they fail to distinguish between political opportunity and people's perceptions of those opportunities (Goodwin & Jasper 2004, 14).

Conversely, while asserting the role of culture, Polletta (2004, 184) asserts there can be no fixed or universal “model” of social movements; while some require political opportunities, others might not. Hence, she warns against confusing structure with process (2004, p.99). Similarly, Ganz acknowledges the uncertainty of political opportunity, asserting that movements are more likely to achieve positive outcomes if they develop strategic capacity, stating it develops when leaders (i) possess local knowledge, (ii) employ tactics stemming from local knowledge, and (iii) possess motivation – a factor tied to leaders' emotional investment.

3.2 Farmworker Movements in India: A Historical Overview

The “New Farmers’ Movements”

Agricultural decline is by no means a recent phenomenon in India. Varshney's (1998) analysis of India's urban-rural struggles points to its bleak agricultural situation post its

Independence in 1947. In the forty years preceding Independence, there was a significant decline in per capita food grain output, meaning food availability grew only 12%, while the population increased 40%. Additionally, less than 15% of India's farmland was adequately irrigated and the formidable and immediate task of transforming agriculture thus fell on the state's first elected leaders (Posani 2009, 15).

According to Posani's (2009, 17) analysis of the economic history of the subcontinental agrarian distress, between 1964 and 1967, India experienced a fundamental and far-reaching shift in its agricultural policy, igniting turbulent cultural and political effects that still reverberate today. In India's Green Revolution, the government began to regulate price of outputs, while mandates on the use of resource intensive and expensive imported seeds and the advent of new technologies put overwhelming pressure on small farmers, even as price incentives were offered to motivate their compliance.

In the late 1970s, India's farmworkers began mobilizing in response to structural transformations in the agrarian economy. Faced with an increasingly commoditized agricultural economy and state regulation of markets, marginal farmers along with landless farmworkers protested against the government's monetary value of their outputs, which Omvedt (1989, 8-9) argues did not match the price of input. Also, farmworkers held that terms of trade between industry and agriculture prevailingly sided "in favor of industry and against agriculture" (Lindberg 1994, 98). Organizations formed to demand lower prices on inputs, like seeds, fertilizer and pesticide, lower tariffs on electricity and water, lower taxes, and seeking debt relief. Likewise, they demanded higher prices for their products: grains, cash crops, vegetables, milk, etc. Posani (2009, 9) and Brass (1994, 3) maintain that until the early 1990s, Indian farmer movements — popularly named farmer agitations — were some of the most important non-parliamentary political forces across multiple states. Lindberg (1994, 96) further adds depth by asserting they impacted all of India's political levels: local, regional and national.

State and national governments often faced massive political and economic demonstrations, often lasting for several days and involving hundreds of thousands of farmers. Roads and railways were often blocked. Villages were generally closed to government officials and politicians during these agitations. In some states, farmers caused steep price rises by withholding their produce from the market. Also, farmers were reported refusing to pay taxes, electricity or water bills, interest, or loans from banks (Lindberg 1994, 96).

Lindberg (1994, 101) notes that although these were non-violent demonstrations, hundreds of farmers lost their lives due to law enforcement officials' violent repression. Nonetheless, the movements' impact was extraordinary. Lindberg cites strong evidence demonstrating they played a significant role in the overthrow of the Rajiv Gandhi government in the 1989 elections. Posani (2009, 18) also argues farmer's political currency was strengthened with the increasing proportion of government agriculturists, specifically when a pro-rural party came to power in the late 1970s.

In July 1990, when the new Congress government tried to increase fertilizer prices by 40 per cent, massive opposition from all political parties emerged seeking drastic changes from the proposal. Similarly, countrywide protests facilitated by the farmer movements and opposition parties emerged when they decided to import wheat in 1991 to keep prices down (Lindberg 1988, 451). Omvedt (1989) and Lindberg (1994, 97) assert that by the mid 1980s, these movements – commonly referred to as the 'New Farmers' Movements' – were viewed by many as part of a new wave of movements, which also included environmental, women's and Dalit's movements.

Deconstructing the Rise of Rural Power: Bharat vs. India

The farmworker mobilizations of the 1980s did not comprise of *one* farmer movement but of multiple regional movements that differed in important respects (Lindberg 1994; Dhanagare 1990). Drastic economic reforms were the most obvious point of divergence

between the movements. They were supported in full by *Shetkari Sanghatana (SS)* in Maharashtra – owing to conditions of severe drought, poor soil and limited irrigation facilities in the state – but opposed by *Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU)* in Uttar Pradesh and the *Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS)* — whose participants faced better ecological conditions. Gender was another divisive factor (Lindberg). Maharashtra’s SS – led by Sharad Joshi, an economist and former UN official – adopted a progressive stance on women’s issues. They tackled equal rights of women to land and property, violence against women, and their demonstrations were often women-led. Conversely, the BKU adhered to traditional patriarchal values. Women were generally not part of the movement; and Mahendra Singh Tikait, their leader and a farmer himself, made women’s place clear when he said, “the women stand behind us” (Lindberg 1994, 97-99).

Despite the movements’ contrasting attitudes toward certain issues, Lindberg (1994), Brass (1994) and Dhanagare (1990) all maintain their greatest strength was their construction of a collective identity — they were all characterized by an anti-urban/anti-state/anti-capitalist ideological content. Yet numerous underlying complexities may lead us to question the very possibility of such a phenomenon.

For centuries, the caste system has been the organizing principle of Indian society, weaving disparate strands into the very fabric of socio-economic, political and cultural life. Yet, Maharashtra’s movement – led by Joshi – had a mixed class and caste composition. Lindberg claims finding any “dominant” caste in the movement was impossible and all members were viewed on equal par. Leadership drew from different groups, extending from the political left to the right, and comprised of urban intellectuals and local activists. There were no fixed rules of membership or organization or strict tiers between local, intermediate and top levels in the organization. Anybody who participated in agitations was a member (Lindberg 1994, 111).

Lindberg (1994, 112) explains that Joshi stressed the sentiment at multiple rallies – directing his message at “the evils of the rural social structure as against urban exploitation.” His sentiment was compounded by the central message of the movement: “*Bharat versus India*” – with India being the country’s westernized name while *Bharat* is its native name (Lindberg 1994, 96). Similarly, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, while Hindu fundamentalism and politics were on the rise, leaders and members stressed the non-communal character of the “peasant union” (Lindberg 1994, 114). According to Lindberg (1994, 114-115), leaders led their movements strongly emphasizing this point.

One particular leader, Mahendra Singh Tikait, is credited for initiating the public meetings by greeting the participants with both a Hindu and a Muslim slogan. Likewise, movements in Punjab drew on support from the peasantry as a whole, regardless of differences in religion, caste, gender and class. The movements also viewed the mobilization of landless laborers (who worked for the farmers) as being equal to the farmers themselves, and organizations comprised of both on equal par (Lindberg 1994, 114-115).

3.3 Today’s Movements: Comparable Contexts, Changing Responses

Invoking the overwhelming political influence of the rural lobby at the end of the 80s, Posani (2009, 2) refers to today’s farmers’ movements as being periodically inactive and ineffective. A close examination of farmworkers’ current structural constraints reveals many similarities with those workers faced thirty years ago: poor government regulation, inadequate irrigation, unaffordable inputs, inadequate access to credit and debt relief (Posani 2009, 20-27). Yet, the results of the movements proved drastically different, as evidenced by today’s marginalization of agrarian interest in the national policy agenda. Why?

Varshney (1998) suggests rectifying the economic constraints faced by farmers is largely a matter of political will, determined to a large extent by political pressures faced by the government. Such pressures demand collective action. However, Posani (2009) and

Damodaran (2011) note today's farmers stand divided as conflicting class/caste/religious identities have taken precedence over a singular farmer identity, thereby hindering collective action and in the process placing limits on the politics of farmer empowerment. Gupta (2005, 755) reinforces this hypothesis arguing changes in contemporary Indian rural society's social and economic structures have drastically shifted the identities of the 'villager' and the 'farmer'.

The absence of a collective identity also influences the voting decisions of farmers, causing occupational considerations to be eclipsed by interests like caste, region, religion and/or language – often viewed in Indian traditions as principles worth dying for. Hence, political parties today no longer need to fight elections based on “sectional strategies such as the ‘urban-rural’ divide, or ‘farm prices and subsidies’” (Posani, 2009, 36). This is signified by the fact that despite rural India constituting more than 70% the country, governments so far have not changed their stance on prices and subsidies, nor have peasant-based parties come to power since 1977 (Posani, 2009, 18).

Chapter 4:

Methodology

4.1 Research Design

Methodological Framework

The methodological choices made were grounded in the assumption that I was studying features of human life which are highly contextualized and non-quantifiable, and hence subject to vast interpretation. The interpretations and conclusions presented by this study are hence drawn from four broad pillars of the human political experience: social structures, power and representation, culture and human agency. Interview questions were also framed along these lines.

Within this context, Carspecken (1996, 10-22) asserts that any qualitative study is defined by the researcher's pursuit of acquiring a thorough understanding of the following items: (i) social routines; (ii) the distribution of routines across related social sites; (iii) constraints and resources affecting social routines; (iv) cultural forms associated with social routines; (v) subjective experiences; and (vi) life history narratives (total or partial). I decided to pursue and make sense of these items in the following ways:

1. Obtain a concentrated record of social routines within farmer movements through intensive observations of meetings, and through semi-structured qualitative interviews with leaders of non-profits (including farmer unions), journalists, politicians and scholars.
2. Obtain a less concentrated record of routines within villages and the surrounding community through casual, first-person observations of farmers recorded journalistically.

3. Look for evidence of cultural themes within both farming communities and farmer movements [more broadly] by producing a detailed reconstruction of movement culture and community life using field notes and transcripts of interviews.
4. Look for evidence of broader social system determinants on both major and micro-activities within movements using theoretical frameworks as established by social movement theoretical perspectives.

Geographical Scope

The research was conducted with a focus on the district of Wardha which lies in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. Vidarbha is a region in Eastern Maharashtra consisting of 11 districts. In the past ten years, a significant number of the country's farmer suicides have occurred within six of these districts (the predominantly cotton producing districts) (Sainath 2011; Roy 2017), one of which is Wardha, which has seen consecutive droughts and a high number of farmer suicides every year. From January 2006 to October 2016, as many as 1,313 farmers have reportedly committed suicide in the district. (Ravi 2017) Furthermore, Vidarbha is specifically brought up in multiple policy discussions and is the site of multiple welfare programs launched by the government. (Chaudhary 2016; Torgalkar 2017; Deshpande 2017).

4.2 Research Participants

Background of Research Participants

Research participants come from a variety of professional backgrounds. While most are leaders of local or regional-level nonprofits, other participants include journalists (both local and national), politicians and academic scholars. The nonprofit organizations considered all fall under one of the following categories: research foundations, social advocacy organizations or community based organizations.

This study's findings and conclusions are based largely on the responses of 24 individuals working within rural Maharashtra, 17 of whom are directly affiliated with either a

local farmer union or a regional-level farmer movement. The remaining seven individuals are journalists, academic scholars, part of a research foundation, or leaders of a local developmental nonprofit, one of whom was involved with a national farmer movement in the past. Participants are mixed in terms of the extent of their affiliation with movements – while 11 of the 17 are actively involved in the decision-making processes, the involvement of the remaining six appear to be sporadic. Five individuals associate with multiple farmer unions.

14 of the 24 participants are farmers themselves, but of these, only seven cited farming as their primary source of income. Additionally, many of the activists interviewed take on other roles in their day to day lives. For instance, multiple union leaders and activists also serve as politicians, local journalists or are involved with a local development NGO in some capacity. All participants work closely with rural communities or have done so in the past. The majority of participants are male. Participants come from a mixed class and caste composition.

Recruitment of Research Participants

Considering that the site of the study was a small, hard-to-reach district within rural India, the majority of participants were recruited by utilizing snowball sampling methods. While some leaders of nonprofits were recruited for interviews through direct communication, others were contacted through a referral. In regards to this study's farmer participants, it should be noted that regardless of their background in agriculture, farmer participants were recruited for interviews based on their capacity as movement leaders and activists, not their role as farmers.

Journalists and select scholars were also contacted through referrals while politicians were recruited via direct communication. Similarly, the non-profits chosen for this study were selected on the basis of either their presence online (which was generally limited given their isolated area of operation), or through a referral provided via email communication.

4.3 Data Collection

The research is a non-interventional, non-randomized study, engaging primarily in qualitative, prospective data analysis. The prospective data collection comes from semi-structured interviews with leaders of local and regional nonprofit organizations. This includes both individuals who are directly affiliated with farmer movements and mobilization efforts, as well as individuals who work around farmer issues that are not specific to organizing. This study's findings are also based in semi-structured qualitative interviews with journalists, politicians (local and regional) and academic scholars. Each interview lasted between 40 – 120 minutes. Interviews were held in either the participant's place of work or in their home.

In addition to qualitative interviews with research participants, data is also drawn from casual observations of leaders of nonprofit organizations (including farmer unions). Observations of their interactions with villages and farming communities were documented and have been analyzed for the purpose of this study. Observations from meetings organized by leaders of nonprofits (specifically, farmer unions and social advocacy organizations) were also documented.

The purpose of the interviews and observations was for participants to share their knowledge and views of Wardha's – and more broadly, Maharashtra's – farmer movements, their goals and demands, composition, strategies and leadership, how their relationship with the movement has impacted their life and/or the farmer suicide crisis in the country. Select participants were also asked to share their views on the region's historical farmer movements of the 1908s.

4.4 Boundaries of the Study

Regardless of the choices made in terms of the research design and methodology, this study had a number of limitations which should be acknowledged.

The primary limitation of this study pertains to the general shortfall of farmer participants who are smallholders and or whose primary source of income is drawn from agriculture. As previously noted, the majority of the study's participants cited that their primary source of income *does not* come from farming. From a human rights perspective, this is problematic as it results in privileged groups speaking on behalf of those with limited social agency and political currency. From a research perspective, narratives of identity, emotion and collective action are best based in personal accounts of farmers themselves. However, it is difficult to frame a discussion around collective processes (or the lack thereof) with limited information about individual struggle.

The decision to exclude farmers who do not serve as leaders or senior activists within farmer movements – a classification which generally encompasses smallholders or those working *solely* in agriculture – is rooted in risks pertaining to their vulnerability to severe mental distress either during or post-interview. The study cannot be separated from the fact that most participants belong to a population where suicides are known to be prevalent. Considering the vulnerable nature of farming communities, in conjunction with the sensitive (and in some capacity, upsetting) nature of the questions asked, the likelihood of an individual harming her/himself certainly increases. This is especially noteworthy considering that I am not a trained clinician and do not have professional experiences dealing with mental health issues.

Considering that the research conducted for this study did place limits on the participation of farmers, there is certainly scope for expanded research in the area of present-day farmer movements in India, specifically research grounded in the lived experiences of farmers themselves.

The second limitation of this study pertains to the fact that there are a limited number of female participants who are leaders of non-profits (including farmer unions). This is

primarily due to the fact that within rural settings in India, it is far more common to find a male-led movement, be it social or political.

Furthermore, approximately half the interviews required an interpreter. In a few cases, this hindered the researcher's ability to personally connect with individuals which automatically impacted the depth of conversation. This appeared to be particularly relevant when participants chose to discuss more personal issues pertaining to economic struggle.

Lastly, while multiple themes that emerged during this study can be easily applied to the broader landscape of farmer movements across India, the results should not be generalized. The scope of the study *is* limited to a single district within Maharashtra and it is vital to note that both political and social contexts often differ drastically across different regions in India.

Chapter 5:

Findings

Whether or not we acknowledge it, politics permeate almost every aspect of our lives. Political institutions regulate the volume of privilege our respective communities hold, and to a significant extent, they determine both the personal and professional trajectories we are likely to take as individuals. But we cannot talk about politics without talking about people, and we cannot analyze socio-political processes without factoring in human nature and tendency.

To a large measure, both historical and present-day farmer movements in the Vidarbhan district of Wardha appear to be influenced by such human tendencies – specifically our propensity to derive a sense of purpose from feelings of inclusion and belonging. Hence, much like the broader cultural context of the Indian subcontinent, findings suggest that Wardha’s farmer movements pivot around two broad pillars of the human political experience: identity and community.

Using these two pillars as a framework, Section 5 introduces the study’s findings on the landscape of historical and present-day farmer movements in Wardha. First, I examine the trajectory of Vidarbha’s movements of the 80s, including the events which led to both its emergence and eventual collapse. With this, I illustrate how these events have influenced the manner in which today’s movements operate. I then present a detailed characterization of present-day farmer movements in Wardha, focusing on their scope of operation, structure and leadership. Finally, I describe present-day dynamics within Wardha’s farming communities.

5.1 The History of Peasant Mobilization in Vidarbha

The weakening of India’s agricultural economy began prior to its independence in 1947 (Posani 2009, 15). Yet, Maharashtra’s farmers only began organizing in the 1980s (Omvedt 1989, 8-9). What were the conditions which sparked the movement’s emergence and why did their influence seemingly dissipate in the 90s? More significantly, do any remnants of its

success (or eventual failure) still linger in the region? Section 5.1 attempts to address these gaps in literature through the personal accounts of activists who participated in the movements of the 80s. The narratives of participants associated with Wardha's present-day farmer movements are also employed.

5.1.1 Emergence and Decline

The Rise of Shetkari Sanghatana (1979-1990)

Shetkari Sanghatana (SS) was a pan-Maharashtrian farmer's movement founded in 1979 by Indian economist Sharad Joshi. SS was the only organized farmer's movement in Maharashtra at the time and their focus was initially on the state's cotton farmers. As is the case today, Maharashtra's cotton-production lay primarily within Vidarbha which then became their region of operation.

SS began their advocacy around the state's Cotton Monopoly Procurement Scheme (1972), a policy which allowed the State to dictate the monetary value of a farmer's output. Since the annual price announced by the government was consistently lower than farmers' costs of production, SS initially lobbied to demand remunerative prices for cotton farmers. In the initial stage of building support for his lobby, Joshi prioritized two aspects: (i) educating farmers about the policies affecting their income; and (ii) breaking down divisions in class, caste, religion and gender (Chatap 2017; Jawandhia 2017; Kashikar 2017).

To this end, SS activists travelled to almost every village in Vidarbha's cotton-producing districts (Jawandhia 2017). This was key in mobilizing farmers since most were unfamiliar with the workings of agricultural policies and had for the most part accepted that an acutely low income was just 'part of the job' (Barhate 2017; Chatap 2017; Jawandhia 2017). Joshi also addressed cultural and economic divisions in his public addresses, stressing that regardless of how much land a farmer owned or ethnic background, the root of their economic struggles was ultimately the same (Chatap 2017; Jawandhia 2017).

By the mid-1980s, support for the movement had begun to permeate urban spaces and roads and railways were often blocked during demonstrations (Kashikar 2017). Farmers also banned politicians from making speeches in their villages unless they also agreed to take questions from its residents. In effect, politicians finally began addressing agricultural concerns (Barhate 2017; Jawandhia 2017). In 1982, Joshi founded an all-India farmer's coalition. Its membership spanned 14 states and its leadership was diverse in terms of language, crop type, gender, caste and religious background. By the late 1980s, both the thematic and geographical scope of SS advocacy encompassed multiple crops and regions within Maharashtra (Jawandhia 2017; Kashikar 2017).

How Did SS Lose its Influence?

Until 1990, SS remained consistent in their demand for the government to implement protectional mechanisms for farmers. In 1991, Joshi changed his movement's political position. He began advocating for farmers to be able to sell their produce on the free market, arguing that Indian agriculture could only progress without State intervention. This proved to be highly divisive amongst SS leadership, many of whom doubted Joshi's new liberal economic model. While strategic decisions within SS were made through a Working Committee of leaders and farmer representatives, Joshi took this particular decision by himself (Jawandhia 2017).

That same year, Monsanto was in the process of applying for a permit to distribute a genetically modified cotton variety called Bt cotton. Joshi was supportive of this development, citing the need for Indian farmers to embrace modern technology and globalization. This further isolated leaders who viewed Joshi's new positions as being pro-industry. When select activists voiced their concerns to Joshi, they were dismissed (Jawandhia 2017). Conversely, some leaders supported Joshi's new political positions (Chatap 2017; Kashikar 2017).

As Joshi continued to exercise autonomy in his decision-making, leaders began distancing themselves from him and his ideologies. By the early 90s, some had started their

own movements, but still lobbied under the name of SS. Hence, SS was no longer a single organization, but one with factions across Maharashtra, each with its own leadership and agenda. This divide eventually trickled down to the community level as farmers began separating themselves between these new factions, with many leaving the movement altogether (Barhate 2017; Jawandhia 2017).

By the early to mid-1990s, cultural divides had begun to resurface within communities, and as asserted by a former activist: “These differences started diluting after 1980 and I can say that it continued up to around 1990. We were successful in dissolving all these disputes. It just was not important. [...] But after 1991 that started breaking as well” (Jawandhia 2017).

In 1993, Joshi began distancing himself from SS and in 1996, he became involved in district-level politics, although in his interactions with farmers, he had emphasized that he would never run for political office. In 2004, he also won a seat in the Upper House of the Indian Parliament. However, he ran under the name of a far right political party, which he had repeatedly denounced in his years of campaigning. Ultimately, Joshi’s shifting political and ideological positions compromised both his credibility and perceived motives amongst leaders and farmers, thereby hindering his ability to unite them (Barhate 2017; Jawandhia 2017).

5.1.2 Long-term repercussions

Joshi’s shifting stances and breach of trust compromised his ability to bring people together for a common cause. But how has this influenced the dynamics of today’s movements? Two primary themes of interest emerged from participant interviews.

First, SS continues to exist as multiple factions across Maharashtra, each with its own leadership and agenda. Collaboration between factions is minimal (Barhate 2017; Gupta 2017; Jawandhia 2017). Second, Joshi’s shifting stances left farmers disempowered and engendered a lingering sense of betrayal, one which persists today (Barhate 2017; Jawandhia 2017; Kakade 2017). Srikanth Barhate, a former economist with the World Bank and an activist with a local

movement in Wardha comments: “When the protests fizzled out, it sent a shockwave inside the movement and Vidarbha once and for all lost its ability to organize. This came from different things [...] ‘I will not run for elections’, then Joshi backtracked on it; ‘I will not support a right wing political ideology’, then he joined it. ‘I will take a particular position about a particular policy’, then he changes that position. And down the road he got an Upper House seat and that was a credibility crisis. [...] The movement’s natural thrust was interrupted and then there was no movement. It became something symbolic. Sporadic. No sustained momentum. [...] And it caused irreparable and lasting damage to people's ability to come together for a collective cause.”

5.2 Present-day Farmer Movements in Wardha: Operation and Dynamics

By the mid-1990s, SS operated as multiple class and caste-based factions across Vidarbha. However, despite this splintering, SS was still the only farmer’s organization in the region. Today, while SS continues to operate in Wardha, other movements exist as well – albeit on a much smaller scale. While some of these smaller movements are formally registered, most operate informally across a select number of villages.

Section 5.2 describes the dynamics and operations of two formally registered farmer organizations in Wardha: Shetkari Sanghatana (SS) and Kisan Adhikar Abhiyan (KAA), both of which work primarily with cotton farmers in the district. Findings are presented along three procedural strands: scope of operation, structure and composition and leadership.

5.2.1 Scope of Operation

The Vidarbhan faction of SS is the most prominent farmers union in Wardha and the only one whose scope of influence extends to the national level. The movement’s presence in Wardha has persisted since its formation in the 1980s and their primary demands continue to center around the need for remunerative prices, rural infrastructure (specifically electricity and irrigation) and the procurement of modern technology (Chatap 2017; Mute 2017). To this end,

SS activists lobby district officials, the state government and the national government (Chatap 2017; Kashikar 2017). Given that SS operates across Vidarbha, their focus in Wardha is primarily on cotton farmers, but it is not their sole focus (Chatap 2017).

KAA was founded by Wardha's farmers and community leaders in 2006 and they operate solely within the district. Their demands are primarily targeted towards district officials although recently, they have made state-level advances. (Barhate 2017; Kakade 2017). The movement is more reactive in their operation and does not pursue a fixed or prioritized set of demands. Their campaigns have previously centered around large-scale issues like the inadequacy of irrigation facilities in the district, as well community-level barriers like corrupt cotton traders or the need for protection against wildlife in the area (Barhate 2017; Pawar 2017). Within Wardha, KAA focuses on cotton and dairy farmers (Kakade 2017). Leaders from both SS and KAA assert that the two movements do not collaborate in any capacity.

5.2.2 Organizational Structure and Composition

While SS and KAA have different scopes of influence, in terms of structure, they both operate outside a framework of collectivism. Officially, Vidarbha's SS faction is considered a single unit. However, informally, the Vidarbhan SS faction is further divided into splinters based on caste, class, crop type and political affiliation, with each operating independently (Gupta 2017; Hardikar 2017; Jawandhia 2017; Pandit 2017).

KAA has also splintered into class and caste-based factions (Kakade 2017). However, KAA leaders assert that they are sometimes able to dilute caste-based difference within communities, but this progress is often undone during elections (Barhate 2017; Kakade 2017).

Participants (specifically journalists and former activists) also emphasized that women and farmers from tribal communities are consistently excluded from both SS and KAA operations (Deshpande 2017; Gupta 2017; Hardikar 2017; Tayde 2017). Leaders from KAA acknowledged this gap, but cited that women were unable to participate due to cultural norms,

while tribal communities were simply excluded due to the isolated nature of their villages (Kakade 2017; Barhate 2017; Pawar 2017). Conversely, leaders from SS denied any sort of exclusion in terms of demographics (Chatap 2017; Kashikar 2017).

5.2.3 Leadership

Local Knowledge

Most movement leaders in Wardha possess first-hand knowledge of local contexts, both cultural and political. Of the 17 movement leaders interviewed for this study, 14 came from agricultural households. During interviews, several of them brought up their background almost immediately, citing that they had a personal investment in the cause (Saheb 2017; Chatap 2017; Kakade 2017; Pawar 2017).

However, of the 14 movement leaders with agricultural backgrounds, 10 of them were sizable landholders, came from “upper” caste communities and were significantly more educated. While one can speculate on how this impacts their ties to the community, qualitative interviews with participants did not reveal any direct or definitive consequences of this.

Political Influence

Several SS leaders serve (or have served) as officers, ministers or lawmakers at all of India’s political levels: local, regional and national (Hardikar 2017; Murugkar 2017; Pandit 2017). Vidarbha’s SS faction is currently overseen by two individuals who both worked closely with Joshi and have served multiple terms in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly. Hence, several SS splinters in Wardha – although divided – have a direct line of communication with state and national officials (Chatap 2017; Jawandhia 2017). While both leaders represent a party affiliated with right-wing, Hindu nationalist ideologies, there are other leaders-cum-politicians within Vidarbha’s SS faction who represent a center-left party.

Conversely, KAA was founded by Wardha’s farmers and community leaders. Some KAA activists stated that they have party affiliations within the district, but none at the state or

national level (Saheb 2017; Kakade 2017). They asserted that without high-level political representation, the movement's political voice is severely diminished and its participants are often harassed by local authorities and politicians (Barhate 2017; Kakade 2017).

Interactions with farmers

Collective identity construction within a movement requires a network of actors who regularly communicate, influence each other and negotiate. Such a process necessitates effective communication channels, participatory dialogue and most significantly, "mutual social recognition" (Melucci 1995, 45). Findings indicate that within Wardha's movements, these elements are undermined by a lack of awareness, trust and limited farmer participation.

Multiple activists from KAA state that their primary challenge in organizing farmers is not caste politics, but rather a lack of education. They assert that most leaders serving as politicians do not invest in educating farmers about the source of their disenfranchisement, or their rights as a community (Saheb 2017; Kakade 2017; Pawar 2017). While describing an incident wherein local authorities stopped a group of farmers from protesting, he stated: "Why are farmers scared? Because they don't have an education about the processes or what their rights are. Had they been aware of their rights, the judicial potential of the entire matter [...] they wouldn't have left the movement. No education, no awareness." (Kakade 2017).

With regards to the movements' decision making processes, most leaders stated that farmers are consulted either during meetings or in informal spaces (Chatap 2017; Kashikar 2017; Pawar 2017). Conversely, journalists and select independent activists asserted that leaders generally exercise complete autonomy while making decisions pertaining to strategy, rhetoric or demands (Deshpande 2017; Hardikar 2017; Jawandhia 2017; Phate 2017).

5.3 Dynamics Within Farming Communities

While participants spoke primarily about issues within the movements themselves, many also chose to speak to the dynamics within farming communities. While several themes

emerged, three issues in particular were brought up repeatedly: the degree of farmer investment, the incitement of cultural disputes and the impact of suicides in uniting farmers.

First, journalists and activists alluded to the growing disinvestment of farmers in agriculture (Barhate 2017; Gupta 2017; Hardikar 2017; Jawandhia 2017; Kakade 2017; Pohare 2017; Tiwari 2017). Of the 14 leaders who were farmers as well, seven had invested in alternate sources of income – this was especially true for larger farmers. Additionally, all farmer participants expressed that they did not want their children to pursue farming as a career and many had spent their savings on sending their children to urban educational institutions (Chandurkar 2017; Kample 2017; Kakade 2017; Wake 2017). This finding was confirmed by non-farmer participants who work closely with the community as well.

Second, while identity politics appear to be ingrained into the movements, tensions are often exacerbated during election periods. This holds true even in farming communities where group-based social hierarchies hold less significance (Jawandhia 2017; Barhate 2017; Phate 2017). Participants also indicated that in some villages, ethnic divides are exacerbated by the government's provision of benefits for certain members of the farming population, specifically smallholders (Chandurkar 2017; Gupta 2017; Kample 2017; Tiwari 2017).

Third, participants cited that farmers tend to unite when there is a suicide in the village. However, this unity is neither sustained nor leveraged as evidenced by the fact that shortly after the death of a community member, farmers go back to attending to their own needs and their family's needs. This view was expressed by journalists and leaders of research foundations in particular (Deshpande 2017; Gupta 2017; Jagtap 2017; Phate 2017).

Chapter 6:

Discussion

This study, informed by structuralist and social constructivist theoretical perspectives, explored the experiences of activists, politicians and journalists involved in Wardha's farmer movements. While these accounts encouraged us to view the dynamics of movements as being intimately connected to local perceptions of identity and community, they also provided insight into the continuance of India's agrarian distress. In line with Polletta & Jasper's (2001, 296-297) findings, which relate collectivism to a movement's success, participant responses suggest that the lack of collective identity within Wardha's farmer movements hinders their ability to affect large-scale structural change, thereby feeding into the country's agricultural decline.

This collective identity deficit within Wardha's farmer movements appears to be both pronounced and consistent in nature. A holistic understanding of how this deficit aggravates the farmer suicide crisis in the region, however, calls for a more critical analysis of the political and cultural environment within which the movements operate. Specifically, by drawing on the insights of structuralists as well as constructivists, we need to examine both the macrostructural *and* micro-interactional processes which influence behavioral patterns and collective identity construction within Wardha's farmer movements (Polletta & Jasper 2001, 299).

In the following sections, I pursue this line of reasoning by applying social movement perspectives to this study's findings and using India's farmworker movements of the 1980s as a frame of reference. I begin by outlining broad-based political processes which have splintered previously shared identities and occupational interests amongst farmers. With this, I then explore how the identity-based splinters engendered by these processes manifest within the movements themselves. Finally, I consider the structural repercussions of the collective identity deficit within present-day movements, specifically within the context of the suicides. In doing so, the following three questions are answered:

1. How do broader political processes explain the lack of collective identity within present-day farmer movements in Wardha? (*Section 5.1*)
2. How do these processes converge with community-level interactions, and does this impact the attainment of collective identity? (*Section 5.2*)
3. What are the structural and political repercussions of the collective identity deficit within Wardha's farmer movements? (*Section 5.3*)

6.1 Significance of Political Processes in Collective Identity Formation

Cultural constructivists sympathetic to political process theorists use collective identity to explain how structural inequality translates into subjective discontent (Taylor & Whittier 1992, 104), thereby constricting the impact of mobilization. This interpretation of collectivism meshes with a key question posed in Section 2.1: Can structuralists and cultural constructivists absorb each other's insights without completely rethinking their foundations?

In the following sub-sections, I engage with this question by exploring the institutional contexts within which collective identities (or in this case, the lack of such) are fostered within Wardha's farmer movements. In doing so, I aim to throw light on a key question posed by this study: How do broader political processes explain the lack of collective identity within farmer movements in Wardha?

6.1.1 Marginalization of Agricultural Interests in National Policy Structural

India has long been on a path of structural transformation. Prompted by a string of economic reforms introduced in the 1980s (Hnatkovskay & Lahiri 2012, 2), the country now averages an annual GDP growth of approximately 8 percent, a sharp contrast to the 1960s and 1970s wherein annual output growth was just above 3 percent (World Bank 2016). The benefits engendered by this growth, however, seem to have been absorbed primarily by urban populations.

Census data from 2011 indicated that approximately 75 percent of rural households live with a monthly income of less than ₹5000, compared to 10 percent of urban households that earn the same (Mukunthan 2015; Statista 2015). Rural populations also fall behind their urban counterparts in several indicators of progress, including literacy levels, infant mortality rates, birth registration and access to basic services (Mukunthan 2015). Recent policies like Modi's demonetization campaign also disproportionately impacted rural economies as the dearth of rural banking infrastructure had left its population almost entirely cash dependent (Dhoot 2016; Kumar 2017; Shah 2017).

With insufficient infrastructure and policies to complement large-scale economic advances, rural Indians do not seem oriented to leverage the platforms provided by a globalized world (Harrison 2004, 4; Kaliyamurthy 2015, 89-90). Within agriculture, farmers do not benefit from greater access to markets or technology without technical training or social safety nets (Harrison 2006, 3-4). In conjunction with increasing costs of production, poor government regulation and poor infrastructure (including limited access to banking facilities), farmers are subject to consistent debt – a common factor behind most of the reported suicides (Kaushal 2015, 49; Posani 2009, 10).

Participant responses suggest that the persistence of structural inequalities, in conjunction with high rates of suicides in the district (Chaudhary 2016; Torgalkar 2017), have translated to pronounced resentment and dissatisfaction within farming communities (Barhate 2017; Phate 2017), evidenced in part by an activist-cum-farmer's take on the urban-rural disparity: "The people living in the city want to fill their cupboards with money and we are just looking for bread" (Kample 2017). Responses also indicate that 50 percent of farmer participants have invested in alternate sources of income, and not one wanted their children to pursue farming as a career (Chandurkar 2017; Kample 2017; Kakade 2017; Wake 2017).

These accounts point to a fundamental shift in farmers' aspirations. Agriculture is no longer an all-encompassing way of life – or identity – and as stated by a former activist, “the survival of agriculture as a culture” is in question. (Gupta 2017). Gupta (2005) adds credence to this, asserting that “the principal motivation of a peasant today is to stop being a peasant.” But how does this discontent impact collective identity within farmer movements?

First, if farmers do not attach any pride, importance or ownership to their identity *as* a farmer, creating an environment for mobilization around collective struggles becomes difficult, i.e. the potential attached to collective identity is debatable when the core ‘identity’ in question is unwanted and evidently on the decline (Barhate 2017; Gupta 2017; Jawandhia 2017). Second, discontent and disinvestment in farming appear to have fundamentally altered the way in which farmers see both themselves and each other. As Posani (2009, 40) asserts, with a decreasing loyalty to both agriculture and ‘the village’, social relations amongst farmers have become increasingly individualized, essentially based on market principles and less on notions of mutual obligation or community – both of which are necessary when leveraging culture to instill collective will and unified action (Stillman & Johanson 2007, 62).

India's macro-economic changes have fostered a sense of disempowerment and individualism within Wardha's farming communities, thereby constricting their scope for collective identity construction and subsequently, their ability to impact structural change. However, as stated by Melucci (1995, 47), social movements develop collective identity “in a circular relationship with systems of opportunities and constraints.”

In this context, these ‘constraints’ relate to the State's severe neglect of agricultural interests, evidenced in part by the pervasive rate of suicides in the district. Hence, while the State's marginalization of farmers' interests fuels the dearth of collective identity within movements, this collective identity also feeds back into their inability to affect State priorities. Situating this analysis between a structuralist focus on State-centric action and a constructivist

emphasis on collectivism, it appears that the movements' struggle with collective identity and the region's agricultural distress are two frames which operate in an interdependent and mutually re-enforceable manner.

6.1.2 Ethnicization of Politics Within Rural Communities

Electoral Politics

With 67 percent of India's population residing in rural areas (World Bank 2016) and an estimated 58 percent of rural Indians working in agriculture (Dubbudu 2015), engaging farmers is often key to succeeding in the realm of electoral politics. However, both political commentators (Posani 2009, 40-41) and participant responses (Barhate 2017; Charudatta 2017; Jawandhia 2017; Khakade 2017; Tiwari 2017) suggest that farmers' occupational interests are often proxied by identity politics during elections, i.e. voting decisions of farmers are shaped largely by their identities as dictated by caste, class, religion, region and/or language. For instance, in Wardha, political leaders reportedly lobby specific groups on the basis of caste or sub-caste – distributing cash and alcohol as added incentives for securing their votes – with very little being said about agricultural policy or economic concerns (refer Section 5.3).

Identity politics might be unavoidable, but that does not make them less dangerous. They result in farmers' identities being shaped by divisive political affiliations (resulting largely from commonalities in caste, class, religion, region or language) as opposed to shared personal and professional struggles. Consequentially, in Wardha, farmers of conflicting castes and sub-castes appear to be “pit against each other” (Posani 2009, 42), with differing communal identities serving as the drivers of these disputes both within and outside the movements (Barhate 2017; Jawandhia 2017; Khakade 2017).

Goodwin and Jasper (2004, viii) argue that culture can become agency itself and mitigate gaps in political opportunity when leveraged to induce a sense of collective identity amongst movement participants. The movements of the 80s certainly adhered to this strategy.

For instance, by initiating public meetings with both Hindu and Muslim slogans, leaders were able to continually stress the non-communal character of the movements (Lindber 1994, 114-115). However, amongst Wardha's farmers, the institutional *and* cultural contexts within which identities are forged both create and maintain ethnic splinters as cultural ideologies are co-opted and exploited to divide farming communities and movements.

In effect, rural politics and cultural authority converge and reinforce divisive narratives, thereby taking away from the movements' potential for political agency. Consequentially, farmers' bargaining power as an undivided group is weakened, lending further credence to Varshney's (1998) assertion that the multiple social identities of farmers act as a self-limitation to their acquisition of political influence, thereby compromising their ability to affect large-scale structural change or mitigate the region's dire agricultural distress.

Group-Specific Concessions

Since the late 1980s, separate socio-political categories in India referred to as "*Scheduled Castes (SC)*", "*Scheduled Tribes (ST)*" and "*Other Backward Classes (OBC)*" have encompassed "lower" castes and tribal groups (Constitution of India). In addition to being formally acknowledge as markedly vulnerable groups, they are also granted benefits and concessions when applying to an educational institution or a job. While these targeted measures are implemented with the aim of leveling the socio-economic playing field, they often engender resentment and perpetuate false narratives of identity within communities.

For instance, as highlighted in Section 5.3, some farmer participants expressed feelings of antagonism toward smallholders and "lower" caste farmers who received subsidies and free tools from the state government, arguing that they too are in dire need of these benefits, yet are systematically excluded (Chandurkar 2017; Kample 2017; Tiwari 2017). According to Gupta (2017), similar resentments also arise amongst farmers when the criteria for bank loans or the admission of their children to an educational institution are more lenient for some groups based

on these socio-political categories. Hence, while class and caste-based reservations and policies are meant to facilitate a more substantive notion of equality amongst farmers, in reality, they often exacerbate pre-existing identity-based divides.

On one hand, targeted agricultural welfare regimes acknowledge that not all farmers possess equal access to political and socio-economic opportunities. However, findings indicate that despite being grounded in an aspiration for substantive equality, India's class and caste-based concessions draw from superficial understandings of equity and structural reform (Haas Institute). They engender an environment that makes social differences and hierarchy seem both natural and permanent, while further entrenching social disparities and identity-based exclusion amongst farmers (a notably diverse *and* pervasively vulnerable community).

By implying that some farmers are more deserving than others, these enforced divisions validate narratives of caste-based hierarchies and inequity, in effect promoting internal stigmatization and discrimination, and reinforcing uneven power relations. Consequentially, inequalities, exclusion and resentment via segmentation are reinforced, reducing the scope for shared empathy or collective action within farming communities and movements.

6.2 The Weakening of the 'Farmer' Identity: How Does It Manifest Within Movements?

The government's disinvestment in farmers' needs in tandem with rural identity politics holds deep-rooted implications for whether see themselves as being part of a larger collective, the amount of power they attach to that collective and the core identities they relate to. While these overarching processes are certainly relevant in explaining the movements' inability to impact meaningful structural change, they are not sufficient. After all, constraints similar to those laid out in Section 6.1 existed in the 1980s as well and yet, notions of collective identity amongst farmers have proved to be drastically different. Why?

The environment within which collective identity is fostered needs to be analyzed from both external and internal points of view (Melucci 1995, 48). This suggests we situate India's

overarching political processes (i.e. macro-structural processes) within the frames provided by community engagement and mobilization (i.e. micro-interactional processes) (Polletta & Jasper 2001, 299). Section 6.2 employs these perspectives to address a key question posed by this study: How do broad political processes converge with community-level interactions, and does this impact the attainment of collective identity? In doing so, it explores how national politics coincide with cultural hegemony to shape narratives, emotion and perceptions of agency amongst Wardha's farmers, in effect shaping the dynamics of collective identity within their movements.

Movement Leadership as a Determinant of Collective Identity

An analysis of the movements of the 80s suggests that leadership played a pivotal role in both its advancement and collapse. While Joshi and his colleagues can be credited for initiating the lobby's processes of collectivism, the movement also began fading at around the same time that its high-level leadership began assuming roles in Parliament (refer Section 5.1). Using the decline of the 1980s movement as a frame of reference, we can draw a viable explanation for why today's movements fail to unite farmers or impact structural change.

Jawandhia (2017) cites that as the movement became more politicized in the early 90s, SS lost its ability to dissolve disputes rooted in identity, an observation substantiated by Tilly's assertion that the rise of identity politics within communities can often be attributed to the increased salience of the State in people's lives (1998, 468-471). Looking at Wardha's farmer movements today, it appears that a movement's politicization is so fundamental to its operation that without party affiliations, its scope of influence is severely limited (refer Section 5.2.1).

With most of Vidarbha's movement leaders serving as ministers or lawmakers themselves, the line between civil society and the State is arguably blurred, especially considering that within Vidarbha's SS factions, leaders do not all represent the same party (refer Section 5.2.3). Movements are often co-opted and used as tools to secure votes for a given leader, and consequentially, cultural divides are not just preserved, they become

profitable. With a convergence of the leaders' social and political agendas, identity politics are pervasive within the movements and in effect, this appears to result in a lack of: (i) education and (ii) dialogic decision making (refer Section 5.2.3). But what are the implications of this in the context of collective identity via community engagement?

First, a lack of education feeds into the agendas of politically motivated leaders. Most leaders serving as politicians generally do not try to educate farmers as there is an incentive in maintaining unawareness within farming communities: farmers remain unorganized, divisions are maintained and their political influence is preserved (Barhate 2017; Gupta 2017; Kakade 2017). As stated by Hardikar, a journalist who has covered agrarian issues for 21 years, "If [leaders] educated the farmers, then they will be free. So why would they?"

Second, although farmers may come together around ideologies that they are collectively "against" (being anti-urban/anti-state/anti-capitalist), bringing them together around an ideology that they are collectively "for" is more challenging (Barhate 2017; Jawandhia 2017). As a result, farmers have an abstract idea of what they want, but it is far from being well-defined. They know that they are angry at the State, but they are less aware of the conditions which would facilitate the effective representation of their interests or foster sustainable social reform – including but not limited to the significance of collective action. With the absence of education, this gap in understanding persists with a direct impact on the scope for collectivism.

Third, a lack of dialogic decision making hinders the mobilization of emotion – a vital aspect of collective identity construction (refer Section 3.1.1). Findings suggest that participants are rarely consulted during decision making processes (refer Section 5.2.3). Alluding to a politician within SS, a journalist commented: "I don't see any consultation with the farmers, not at all. [...] He fights elections. Basically, he is using [the movement's] platform as a tool to get elected to Parliament." (Hardikar 2017). The exclusion of farmer participations

from decision-making processes within the movements results in a lack of ownership or belonging, in effect, constraining the scope for collectivism. As summed up by Melucci (1995, 48), “there must be at least a minimal degree of reciprocity in social recognition between the actors [...] When this minimal basis for recognition is lacking there can only be pure repression, an emptiness of meaning nullifying the social field in which collective identity can be produced.” With leaders “profiting” off cultural divides, today’s farmer movements are rooted in the *determent* of collective identity. But how does the movements’ politicization hinder their ability to impact structural change or mitigate the suicide crisis?

The State’s de-prioritization of farmers’ interests in conjunction with divisive rural policies speak to a narrowing of political will and opportunity. However, Goodwin & Jasper (2004, 20) distinguish between political opportunity and people’s *perceptions* of those opportunities. The movements of the 80s were successful in diluting identity divides and collectively addressing structural constraints, but they did not accomplish this because of extensive political opportunity (or affiliations). Rather, via education, dialogue and the cultivation of trust, they instilled a sense of ownership amongst farmers and changed their perceptions of what *could* be achieved.

This investment in capacity and emotion – fundamental building blocks in collective identity construction (refer Section 3.1) – ultimately resulted in farmers’ occupational interests taking precedence over their cultural ideologies. Subsequently, this investment mitigated the lack of political opportunity and the movements became some of the most important non-parliamentary political forces across India (Posani 2009, 9; Brass 1994, 3).

Conversely, the lack education and dialogue within today’s farmer movements takes away from their potential for collectivism and subsequently, for strategic capacity. As a result, their ability to create political opportunity, collectively invest farmers in what might be

possible, impact sustainable structural change or mitigate the pervasiveness of suicides in the region appears to be severely compromised.

6.3 Structural Repercussions of the Collective Identity Deficit Within Movements

Sections 6.1 and 6.2 point to the mutual influence of “objective” conditions (i.e. overarching political processes) and “subjective” motives (i.e. divisive community interactions). In conjunction, these frames reinforce social hierarchies and resentment by fragmenting farmers’ identities, in effect reducing the scope for a shared experience of marginality or collective mobilization (Polletta & Jasper 2001, 294). But do these conditions feed into the structural constraints described in Section 2, and if so, how?

First, when farmers fail to acknowledge and operate with a collective sense of identity, their political influence is severely diluted. Hence, decisions about which issues “matter” and which do not are dispatched to those in power and as a result, key structural constraints are often neglected within national policy decisions. For instance, there is yet to be a significant campaign which addresses the impact of deforestation on farmers, the influence of Monsanto, the insufficient amount of trainings available to farmers, or the oversight of mental health issues in providing aid (Gupta 2017). Instead, movement leaders looking to advance their political agendas (refer Section 5.2.3) present the crisis as merely a question of infrastructure and economic policy.

Second, splinters both within and between movements result in the narrowing of movements’ political reach and capacity (Goodwin & Jasper 2004, 14). While structuralist and constructivist models attach different levels of importance to various facets of movements, they both agree on the power of networks and capacity building as tools to either create political opportunities (Polletta 2004; Goodwin & Jasper 2004) or utilize existing ones (McAdam 2004). However, due to communal and ethnic identities which splinter Wardha’s farmer movements, networking and capacity building are largely absent (refer Section 5.2.2). This results in

disjointed levels and areas of influence – evidenced in part by SS and KAA’s varying scopes of operation (refer Section 5.2.1) – a factor which undoubtedly influences the degree of structural change achieved.

Third, the collective identity deficit within Wardha’s farmer movements results in a limited political voice ascribed to farmers. The overall impact of a group’s lobbying efforts is directly proportional to the empowerment of its members. Constructivist models, in particular, stress that participants’ identity and purpose needs to be repeatedly emphasized (and emotionally activated) to achieve political reform (Walsh 2005, 57). However, with culturally-rooted splinters in class, caste, sub-caste and political affiliation, however, take away from Wardha’s farmers’ sense of ownership and empowerment, thereby diminishing the movements’ bargaining power and curtailing their ability to impact structural change.

The inability of Wardha’s movements to impact structural change has resulted in *persistent* patterns of agricultural decline. This is evidenced by several factors including (but not limited to) the decline of rural populations in farming (Sood 2013), the neglect of farmers’ interests in recent broad-based political decisions (refer Section 6.1.1), long-standing socio-economic inequalities between urban and rural populations (refer Section 6.1.1), inadequate farming infrastructure and perhaps most significantly – the *consistency* of farmer suicides in Vidarbha, a region which has continued to be the epicenter of the suicide crisis (Chaudhary 2016; Ravi 2017; Torgalkar 2017).

What is interesting, however, is that these indicators of agricultural distress have remained fairly consistent since the mid-1990s (Posani 2009, 20-27). Hence, it appears that the collective identity deficit within Wardha’s movements does not create *new* problems. Rather, it helps maintain the very constraints (both structural and political) which engender this lack of “collective”, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of agricultural decline and consequentially, the country’s farmer suicide epidemic.

Chapter 7:

Conclusion

Complex in its implications, collective identity speaks to the affective bonds one shares with a group, which then compel them to protest either with or on behalf of them. Collective identity is often cited to fill the gaps engendered by State-centric structuralist views of mobilization. However, this perspective replicates the very dichotomies that collectivism aims to challenge. Collective identity does not contest the significance of political structures. Rather, it maintains that cultural influences permeate and meld with these structures, in effect shaping all aspects and contexts of sustainable, collective mobilization. The implication is that objective processes cannot be separated from humanistic needs and tendencies.

The greatest strength of Vidarbha's farmer movement of the 1980s was that its strategy was anchored in the mutual influence of "objective" structural conditions and "subjective" motives. By emphasizing collective needs over individualistic demands and beliefs, a collective 'farmer' identity took precedence over individual class and caste-based identities and farmers began to collectively mobilize in response to the region's persistent agricultural decline. Despite limited political will and opportunity, the movement's capacity and the emotional investment of participants enabled them to impact significant structural change at all of India's political levels.

Findings suggest that Wardha's present-day farmer movements also pivot around broad notions of identity and community. However, unlike the movements of the 1980s, today's movements operate via class and caste-based fragments, and consequentially, a collective 'farmer' identity is largely absent. But how has this collective identity deficit compromised farmers' ability to impact sustainable and meaningful structural change or mitigate the region's high rate of farmer suicides?

A holistic understanding of the relationship between collective identity and structural change (or the lack thereof) calls for an analysis which draws on political processes as well as culturally-rooted collectivism. In pursuing this line of reasoning, this study found that identity based divides within farming communities and movements are compounded by both large-scale political forces (i.e. macrostructural processes) as well as divisive community interactions (i.e. micro-interactive processes).

The asymmetric distribution of resources between rural and urban spaces in conjunction with divisive rural policies have fostered an increasing sense of defeatism and individualism within farming communities. While findings suggest that this environment has certainly reduced the movements' scope for collectivism (and subsequently, their potential to achieve sustainable social reform) similar constraints also existed in the 1980s, and yet dynamics of collective identity construction were drastically different back then. Why?

The constraints engendered by overarching political processes co-exist with micro-interactive processes which define behavioral patterns within farming communities. Hence, it is not enough to simply analyze the political and cultural environment fostered by large-scale economic reform or national policy. Within the context of this study, there is also value in examining the interactions between actors in the movements. In doing so, we find that caste-based divides perpetuated by broad political processes are leveraged at the community-level by leaders looking to promote a political agenda. In effect, the cultural divides engendered by overarching processes is not just maintained, but also encouraged by select actors within the movement, thereby constricting farmers' ability to come together for a common cause. This is in stark contrast to the movement of the 80s, wherein culture was *leveraged* to induce a sense of collectivism and expand political agency.

Divides perpetuated by rural politics and cultural hegemony have certainly destabilized the fundamental building blocks needed to construct collective identity, including emotional

investment, strategic capacity, motivated leadership and cultural traditions. However, collective identity is constructed in a circular relationship with systems of both constraints and opportunities. In this context, that means that the movements' struggle with collective identity construction severely hinders their ability to come together for a common cause, thereby undermining the scope for meaningful structural change.

In effect, agricultural distress persists within Wardha – and more broadly, Vidarbha – evidenced, in part by the persistence of farmer suicides in the region. Hence, while caste-based identity divides might be compounded by divisive cultural and political processes (at both the national and communal level), ultimately, identity-based divides amongst farmers feed back into these processes, and to some extent, help maintain them.

References:

- Anand, Nupur, and Madhura Karnik. 2017. "All the Losers in the Great Indian Game of Farm-Loan Waivers." *Quartz (India)*, July 2017. <https://qz.com/1004554/all-the-losers-in-the-great-indian-game-of-farm-loan-waivers/>.
- Barhate, Srikanth. 2017. Interview with Srikanth Barhate Interview by R. Edwin.
- Bastian, Jacinta. 2012. "India's Agrarian Crisis and Farmer Suicides: A Human Rights Approach." *New Law Academy* 1 (1):32–40.
- Brass, Tom. 1994. "Introduction: The New Farmers' Movements in India." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 21 (3):3–26.
- Carspecken, Phil Francis. 1996. *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide*. New York: Routledge.
- Center for Human Rights and Global Justice. 2011. "Every Thirty Minutes: Farmer Suicides, Human Rights, and the Agrarian Crisis in India." New York: New York University. <http://chrgj.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Farmer-Suicides.pdf>.
- Center for Human Rights and Global Justice. 2012. "Every Thirty Minutes: Farmer Suicides, Human Rights, and the Agrarian Crisis in India." New York University. <http://chrgj.org/documents/every-thirty-minutes-farmer-suicides-human-rights-and-the-agrarian-crisis-in-india/>.
- Chanda, Areendam. 2012. "Evaluating the Kisan Credit Card Scheme." International Growth Center. <https://www.theigc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Chanda-2012-Working-Paper2.pdf>.
- Chandurkar, Manoj. 2017. Interview with Manoj Chandurkar Interview by R. Edwin.
- Chatap, Wamanrao. 2017. Interview with Wamanrao Chatap Interview by R. Edwin.

- Chaudhary, Shubhda. 2016. "Vidarbha Reels Under Agrarian Distress." *The Citizen* (blog). March 2016. <http://www.thecitizen.in/index.php/en/NewsDetail/index/8/7241/Vidarbha-Reels-Under-Agrarian-Distress>.
- Damodaran, Harish. 2011. "Decline of Farmers' Movement." *Business Line*, May 21, 2011. <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/harish-damodaran/decline-of-farmers-movement/article2035543.ece>.
- Deshpande, Vivek. 2017. "'Deaths of Farmers from Pesticide Genocide by State,' Says Farmer Welfare Task Force Chief." *Indian Express*, October 2017. <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/deaths-of-farmers-from-pesticide-genocide-by-state-4882721/>.
- Deshpande, Vivek. 2017a. Interview with Vivek Deshpande Interview by R. Edwin.
- Dev, S. Mahendra, and N. Chandrasekhara Rao. 2009. *India: Perspectives on Equitable Development*. New Delhi.
- Dhanagare, D.N. 1990. "Shetkari Sanghatana: The Farmers' Movement in Maharashtra- Background and Ideology." *Social Action* 40 (4).
- Dhoot, Vikas. 2016. "Rural India Hit Most by Cash Crunch." *The Hindu*, December 2016. <http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/Rural-India-hit-most-by-cash-crunch/article16773614.ece>.
- Dubbudu, Rakesh. 2015. "58% of the Rural Households Are Agricultural Households: NSSO Report on Agricultural Households," April 2015. <https://factly.in/58-percent-rural-indian-households-are-agricultural-households-nss-report-on-agricultural-households-part-1/>.
- Farmers' Portal (Government of India). 2016. "Statement Showing Minimum Support Prices - Fixed by Government (Rs.quintal)." <http://farmer.gov.in/mspstatements.aspx>.
- Food and Agriculture Organization. 2012. "Agricultural Irrigated Land (% of Total Agricultural Land)." <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.LND.IRIG.AG.ZS>.

- Ganz, Marshall. 2004. "Public Narrative, Collective Action and Power." In *Accountability Through Public Opinion: From Inertia to Public Action*, edited by Sina Odugbemi and Taeku Lee, 273–89.
https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/29314925/Public_Narrative_Collective_Action_and_Power.pdf?sequence=1.
- Golait, Ramesh. 2007. "Current Issues in Agriculture Credit in India: An Assessment." Reserve Bank of India Occasional Papers. Reserve Bank of India.
<https://rbidocs.rbi.org.in/rdocs/Publications/PDFs/82933.pdf>.
- Goodwin, Jeff, and James M. Jasper. 2004. "Caught in a Winding, Snarling Vine: The Structural Bias of Political Process Theory." In *Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Meaning, and Emotion*, vii–30. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC.
- Goodwin, Jeff, and James M. Jasper. 2006. "Emotions and Social Movements." In *Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Meaning, and Emotion*.
- Gould, D.B. 2004. "Passionate Political Processes: Brining Emotions Back into the Study of Social Movements." In *Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Meaning, and Emotion*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC.
- Gupta, D. 2005. "Whither the Indian Village: Culture and Agriculture in Rural India." *Economic and Political Weekly* 40 (8):751–58.
- Gupta, Vibha. 2017. Interview with Vibha Gupta (Wardha) Interview by R. Edwin.
- Haas Institute (Berkeley). n.d. "Targeted Universalism. For a Fair and Inclusive Society."
- Harrison, Ann. 2004. "Globalization and Poverty: An Introduction." *National Bureau of Economic Research*, 1–30.
- Hnatkovskaa, Viktoria, and Amartya Lahiri. 2012. "The Urban-Rural Divide in India." International Growth Center. <https://www.theigc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Hnatkovska-Lahiri-2012-Working-Paper-March.pdf>.

- Indian Ministry of Finance. 2007. "Report of the Expert Group on Agricultural Indebtedness."
<http://www.igidr.ac.in/pdf/publication/PP-059.pdf>.
- Indian Ministry of Finance. 2008. "Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme."
<http://financialservices.gov.in/banking/DebtWaiverScheme2008.pdf>.
- Indian Ministry of Finance. 2016. "Key Features of Budget 2016-2017."
<http://indiabudget.nic.in/ub2016-17/bh/bh1.pdf>.
- Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. 2015. "Rural Health Statistics 2014-15."
<http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/content/417010/rural-health-statistics-2014-15/>.
- Indian Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. 2018. "Gross Domestic Product."
<http://mospi.nic.in/133-gross-domestic-product>.
- Jagtap, Kishor, and R. Edwin. 2017. Interview with Kishor Jagtap.
- Jawandhia, Vijay. n.d. Interview with Vijay Jawandhia Interview by R. Edwin.
- Kaliyamurthy, K. 2015. "Impact of Globalization on Rural Development in India – Some Issues and Concerns." *Indian Journal of Research* 4 (10):89–92.
- Kample, Shuruprasad. 2017. Interview with Shuruprasad Kample Interview by R. Edwin.
- Kapre, Shubhangi. 2016. "Maharashtra: More than 85 Irrigation Projects Incomplete for Past 30 Years." *The Indian Express*, 2016. <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/maharashtra-water-crisis-drought-more-than-85-irrigation-projects-incomplete-for-past-30-years-2754368/>.
- Kashikar, Saroj. 2017. Interview with Saroj Kashikar Interview by R. Edwin.
- Khakade, Avinash. 2017. Interview with Avinash Khakade.
- Kumar, Gudipati Rajendera. 2017. "Demonetisation, Cashless Economy & Rural Development." *The Hans India*, March 2017. <http://www.thehansindia.com/posts/index/Civil-Services/2017-03-17/Demonetisation-cashless-economy--rural-development/287343>.

- Lenneberg, Cornelia. 1988. "Sharad Joshi and the Farmers: The Middle Peasant Lives." *Pacific Affairs* 61 (3):446–64.
- Lindberg, Steffan. 1994. "New Farmers' Movements in India as Structural Response and Collective Identity Formation: The Cases of the Shetkari Sanghatana and the BKU." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 21 (3):95–125.
- Magni, Gabriele. 2015. "Can Anger Demobilize? The Political Effects of Anger about the Economic Crisis." University of North Carolina.
<https://eustudies.org/conference/papers/download/96>.
- McAdam, Doug. 2004. "Revisiting the U.S. Civil Rights Movement: Toward a More Synthetic Understanding of the Origins of Contention." In *Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Meaning, and Emotion*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC.
- McCarthy, John D., and Mayer N. Zald. 1977. "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." *The American Journal of Sociology* 82 (9):1212–41.
- Melucci, Alberto. 1992. *Frontier Land: Collective Action between Actors and Systems in Studying Collective Action*. London: Sage Publications.
- Melucci, Alberto. 1995. "The Process of Collective Identity." 41–63.
<http://cco.cup.cam.ac.uk/chapter.jsf?bid=CBO9780511520891&cid=CBO9780511520891A0>
 21.
- Ministry of Law and Justice. "Constitution of India." <http://lawmin.nic.in/coi/coiason29july08.pdf>.
- Mukunthan, Athreya. 2015. "Rural India Is Far Behind Urban India in Every Indicator of Progress." *Factly*, 2015. <https://factly.in/rural-india-behind-urban-india-in-progress-indicators/>.
- Murugkar, Millind. 2017. Interview with Millind Murugkar Interview by R. Edwin.
- Mute, Gangadhar. 2017. Interview with Gangadhar Mute Interview by R. Edwin.

- National Portal of India. 2011. "Rural Development Infrastructure: Bharat Nirman."
<https://archive.india.gov.in/sectors/rural/index.php?id=7>.
- Nepstad, Sharon Erickson. 2004. *Convictions of the Soul: Religion, Culture and Agency In the Central America Solidarity Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Omvedt, Gail. 1989. "'India's Movements for Democracy: Peasants, 'Greens', Women and People's Power'." *Unpublished Manuscript*.
- Open Government Data (OGD). 2015. "All India Level Cause-Wise Distribution of Suicides Committed by Agricultural Labourers during 2015." <https://data.gov.in/catalog/accidental-deaths-suicides-india-2015>.
- Pandit, Vivek. 2017. Interview with Vivek Pandit Interview by R. Edwin.
- Pawar, Sudam. 2017. Interview with Sudam Pawar Interview by R. Edwin.
- Phate, Mahindra. 2017. Interview with Mahindra Phate Interview by R. Edwin.
- Pohare, Prakash, and R. Edwin. 2017. Interview with Prakash Pohare.
- Polletta, Francesca, and James M. Jasper. 2001. "Collective Identity and Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27:283–305.
- Polletta, Francesca. 2004. "Culture Is Not Just in Your Head." In *Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Meaning and Emotion*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC.
- Posani, Balamuralidhar. 2009. "Crisis in the Countryside: Farmer Suicides and The Political Economy of Agrarian Distress in India." London: Development Studies Institute, London School of Economics. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/pdf/WP/WP95.pdf>.
- Rao, Bagan. 2017. Interview with Bagan Rao Interview by R. Edwin.
- Ravi, Anusha. 2017. "Maharashtra: 1,313 Farmer Suicides in Wardha in 10 Years, yet It Is Not on Loan Waiver List." *One India*, July 2017. <https://www.oneindia.com/india/1313-farmer-suicides-reported-in-wardha-in-10-years-yet-it-finds-no-place-in-loan-waiver-list-2487338.html>.

- Ravi, S. 2015. "A Reality Check on Suicides in India." Brookings India IMPACT Series. Brookings Institution India Center. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/shamika-paper-suicides.pdf>.
- Roy, Sourav. 2017. "Battling Farmer Suicides in Vidarbha: An 83-Year-Old Organisation Carries the Legacy of India's Freedom Movement." August 2017. <https://yourstory.com/2017/08/gram-seva-mandal-vinoba-bhave/>.
- Saheb, Bala. 2017. Interview with Bala Saheb Interview by R. Edwin.
- Sainath, P. 2017. "Maharashtra: 'graveyard of Farmers.'" *The Hindu*, November 2017. <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/Maharashtra-Isquograveyard-of-farmersrsquo/article14874806.ece>.
- Scheil-Adlung, X. 2015. "Global Evidence on Inequities in Rural Health Protection: New Data on Rural Deficits in Health Coverage for 174 Countries." Geneva: International Labour Organization. <http://www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/RessourcePDF.action?ressource.ressourceId=51297>.
- Shah, Ayash Yousuf. 2017. "Impact of Demonetization on Rural India." *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications* 7 (3). <http://www.ijsrp.org/research-paper-0317/ijsrp-p6335.pdf>.
- Shiva, Vandana. 2015. "How Monsanto Wrote and Broke Laws to Enter India." 2015. <http://vandanashiva.com/?p=260>.
- Singh, Gurbir. 2017. "Just Loan Waivers Will Not Work." *The Indian Express*, June 2017. <http://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/2017/jun/19/just-loan-waivers-will-not-work-1618241--1.html>.
- Statista. 2015. "Distribution of Average Monthly Income in Households across Rural India in 2015 (INR)." <https://www.statista.com/statistics/653918/average-monthly-rural-household-income-india/>.

- Stillman, Larry, and Graeme Johanson. n.d. *Constructing and Sharing Memory: Community Informatics, Identity and Empowerment*.
- Tayde, Dev. 2017. Interview with Dev Tayde Interview by R. Edwin.
- Taylor, V., and NE Whittier. 1992. "Collective Identity in Social Movement Communities: Lesbian Feminist Mobilization," 104–29.
- The Logical Indian. 2017. "Ex-PM Manmohan Singh Also Gave Rs 52,000 Crore Loan Waiver To Farmers, But Did It Work?" 2017. *The Logical Indian* (blog). April 2017.
<https://thelogicalindian.com/story-feed/opinion/loan-waivers-for-farmers/>.
- Tilly, Charles. 1998. "Social Movements and (All Sorts of) Other Political Interactions - Local, National, and International - Including Identities." *Theory and Society* 27 (4):453–80.
- Tiwari, Kishor. 2017. Interview with Kishor Tiwari Interview by R. Edwin.
- Torgalkar, Varsha. 2017. "AGRICULTURE Pesticide Poisoning Kills 18 Farmers in Maharashtra's Yavatmal, NHRC Seeks Report," October 2017.
<https://thewire.in/187103/maharashtra-farmers-pesticide-deaths-nhrc/>.
- Varshney, A. 1998. *Democracy, Development, and the Countryside: Urban-Rural Struggles in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wake, Charudatta, and R. Edwin. 2017. Interview with Charudatta Wake.
- Walsh, Jane M. 2005. "Migrant Mobilization: Factors Contributing to the Success of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers." Duquesne University.
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/545baa72e4b09adaa34a69ae/t/5481e0b3e4b01d051963294b/1417797811412/SFA_resources_WalshThesis.pdf.
- World Bank. 2016. "GDP Growth (Annual %)."
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>.
- World Bank. 2016. "Rural Population (% of Total Population)."
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS>.

World Bank. 2017. "Employment in Agriculture (% of Total Employment)."

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS>.

World Health Organization. 2014. "Health Expenditure, Public, % of GDP (Global Health

Expenditure Database)." <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.PUBL.ZS>.