EXTENDED ABSRACT

Recast(e)ing Inequality: Residential Segregation by Caste across City Size in India

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Research problem and motivation

India is in the middle of a transformation from a majority rural to an increasingly urban society, with its urban population projected to reach 590 million over the next 20 years. This demographic shift has profound implications for existing and emerging forms of inequality in urban India. Against the backdrop of rapidly growing Indian cities, this paper seeks to understand how patterns of inequality—with particular attention to residential segregation by caste—vary across city size. We look at the specific case of the Indian state of Karnataka. In this paper, we specifically seek to answer: *how do patterns of residential segregation by caste differ across small, medium and large cities?*

Theoretical orientation

India's caste system has long been cited as a source of inequality and of social and spatial segregation. But increased urbanization and the economic and cultural environment of cities have been theorized to erode the dominance of existing social structures, such as caste (Rao 1974). Urban theory argues that as individuals and groups adapt to the city-life, prior forms of social organization—such as caste, family, and religion—weaken and modify (Park 1967). However, recent social science research on caste in urban India suggests that caste identities continue to shape schooling decisions, educational outcomes, and the likelihood of securing jobs (Munshi & Rosenzweig 2006; Thorat & Newman 2010).

Limited research on Indian cities also finds a high degree of residential segregation. Recent work on residential segregation in India's mega cities finds that segregation by caste is greater than segregation by class in all seven such cities (Vithayathil and Singh 2012). In Mehta's (1968, 1969) studies of the Indian city of Poona, he finds that segregation in residence is greatest for groups with the highest and lowest status, both with regards to socioeconomic status and caste. He also disaggregates the effect of caste and income on the level of residential segregation and finds that only one-fifth of level of residential segregation between Brahmins and the Depressed Classes[1] can be attributed to the effect of differences in income (Mehta 1969). Mehta (1969) argues that if income or occupation had determined where households of each caste or religious group lives, then the extent of residential segregation would have been much less. However, much of the existing literature has focussed on big metro cities, particularly on global cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore etc. There is little understanding of how segregation by caste may vary across cities of differing sizes.

We wish to contribute to the emerging body of research on how caste matters in urban India by examining a range of city sizes while controlling for the regional context, given the

[1] Mehta uses this term "Depressed Classes", which became a widely used in the Indian bureaucracy during the colonial period, to refer to the most socially and economically disadvantaged castes.

tremendous diversity of caste dynamics and socio-political contexts across different Indian regions. Using the case of the Indian state of Karnataka, we seek to compare residential segregation across large, medium and small sized cities. Based on existing literature we expect higher levels of residential segregation in small cities where caste relations and patterns of inequality are more likely to be similar to rural settings. In rural Indian settings, residential patterns remain highly structured by caste identities and relations. In contrast, in larger cities, we expect that the intermixing of diverse linguistic, ethnic and regional identities reconfigure caste relations, leading to lower levels of residential segregation by caste.

Data and Methods

The data for this project comes from the 2001 Census. The decennial Indian Census aims to collect information on every household in the country, through the use of more than 2 million enumerators. The census collects household level data (e.g. housing quality and materials, number of rooms in the house, ownership status) and individual-level characteristics for each member of the household (e.g. highest education level attained, literacy, caste membership, migration history and economic activity of workers). There is no specific question on income or consumption level in the census. (Bose 2001). With regards to caste, there are three answer options: (1) Scheduled Castes; (2) Scheduled Tribes; and, (3) Other.

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are national-level categories for thousands of local castes groups, which faced extreme discrimination, ostracization and social isolation. According to the 2001 Census, Scheduled Castes (SC) accounted for over 16% and Scheduled Tribes (ST) over 8% of India's population (Government of India 2005a).

Our analysis will look at fourteen cities classified as Class I and Class II cities across seven districts in Karnataka. We look at seven small cities (between 50,000 and 100,000), four medium cities (between 400,000 500,000), and three large cities (greater than 500,000). As discussed in Vithayathil and Singh (2012), median ward sizes can vary considerably across Indian cities, ranging from 25,000 to 75,000 in the seven mega cities.

In this analysis, we use aggregated data on membership to SC and ST. For each city, data is available at the ward level. In the case of caste, we combined the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe populations (hereafter, SC/ST) and compare it to individuals who have not identified as belonging to SC and SC (hereafter, non-SC/ST). We combine these two groups for two reasons. One, the number of scheduled tribe individuals is very low in many cities at the ward level. In addition, as both scheduled caste and scheduled tribe have been the most excluded and discriminated groups, they have been afforded similar constitutional rights in the form of affirmative action policies. This gives us a reason to believe that both of these groups are most likely to experience residential segregation in contemporary urban India.

To calculate the level of residential segregation by caste, we use the index of dissimilarity. We use this measure of evenness for two reasons. First, the two-group limitation is not a concern given the dichotomous nature of the variable of interest. Our measure of caste creates two groups: SC/ST versus other castes. The other reason for using the dissimilarity index is that it has an easy to comprehend verbal interpretation: "the fraction of one group that would have to relocate to produce an even (unsegregated) distribution" (White & Kim 2005).

Expected Findings and Larger Implications

We expect to find that residential segregation by caste will vary across city size such that caste based spatial segregation persists to a greater degree in smaller cities when compared to medium sized and larger metropolitan areas. We expect that our findings will resonate with other recent scholarship that finds variation in caste inequality across city size in India. Desai and Dubey (2011) find that caste inequalities by education, income and social networks are higher in developed villages and in smaller cities, and less strong in India's metro cities—though the same holds true in less developed villages.

In our final paper for PAA, we hope to measure changes in residential segregation over time for each city, as Mehta (1968,1969) does in his studies for the city of Poona. We plan to use Indian Census data from 1991, 2001 and if available, 2011. In doing so, we would like to see how changing patterns of residential segregation by caste vary across different sized cities, which we would expect to be affected differentially by dynamics of urbanization, migration, globalization and state policies.

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