

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Chetana Sabnis

How I Wrote My Prospectus

I developed the initial idea after spending a summer in the British Library archives in London. I didn't have a clear objective for what I wanted to "do" in the archives besides explore and read some documents for some ideas for the dissertation. I also spent this summer in London reading as much as possible with as limited an agenda as possible. I read a lot of fiction, nonfiction, academic research, and essays. At the end of the summer, I developed a brief memo that I iterated many times over the year based on multiple rounds of feedback from advisor and peers, which ultimately led to the prospectus' final form.

Advice for Prospectus Writers

(1) Be open to re-writing the draft multiple times over. The draft gets sharper with every additional version, and (2) Get as much feedback as possible - I was extremely lucky in that I'd meet my advisor at least twice a month while developing the draft but if this isn't feasible, I strongly recommend sharing the draft with other graduate students, writing consultants, faculty members who aren't on the committee.

Prospectus

Seeing Sex Like A State

Chetana Sabnis
Yale University

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Abstract

Despite extensive variation in sexual regulation across states, this topic has been hardly explored in political science. This dissertation project attempts to address this gap. First, I introduce a novel framework through which regulation in sexual relations can be conceptualized. This framework enables us to understand how various sexual relations (e.g., marriage, incestuous relations, relations with “sex workers”, masturbation, dating) are regulated and in turn, result in what I describe as “sexual order.” Second, I use this framework to argue that sexual orders reflect states’ ideologies on gender. Third, given states are rarely composed of a unified set of actors, I use this framework to recognize that there is scope for ambiguity in the sexual order. I identify ambiguity when two distinct sets of state actors, those who codify regulations (codifiers) and those who enforce them (enforcers), share contrary positions on sexual relations. I contend that ambiguity across various sexual relations shows that codifiers and enforcers have distinct ideologies on gender. Finally, to formalize the association between sexual order and state ideology on gender, I propose a descriptive inferential dissertation project that focuses on observing variation in sexual order across pre- and post-Independent India. Through this investigation, I hope to offer a fresh lens, centering sexual regulation, to study politics.

1 Motivation

I open this project with the tale of two states: the Peshwa state and the Panna state, two proximate, Hindu states were fighting the Mughal Empire in 18th century precolonial India.

In the Peshwa State, we are introduced to the tragic romance of Bajji Rao I and Mastani. Bajji Rao I, the ruler of the Peshwa state, fell in love with Mastani, a Muslim woman. He chose to marry her, triggering a scandal in the state. Bajji Rao, a Brahmin man, was not only marrying a Muslim woman but was also entering marriage for the second time. His first marriage to Kashibai, a Brahmin woman, was orchestrated by the state's Brahmin elites and therefore, their deep hostility towards Bajji Rao and Mastani's marriage was hardly unexpected. Mastani was ostracized and compelled to live in the outskirts of Pune, the state's capital. Moreover, Mastani and Bajji Rao's son, who was also forced to stay on the outskirts along with his mother, was denied any claim to any inheritance besides land from his mother's dowry. This situation was in stark contrast to Bajji Rao's first wife, Kashibai's, and their four sons': Kashibai continued to stay in the main palace in Pune while all her four sons received some inheritance with the eldest having undisputed claim to the throne.

In the Panna State, we are offered a glimpse of the somewhat uneventful romance between Chhatrasal, a Hindu King, and a Persian woman, Ruhani Begum. Chhatrasal chose to enter concubinage with Ruhani Begum. At this point, he was already married to two other Hindu women from different castes. Both these wives and their children were promised a certain claim to inheritance and maintenance. While only Chhatrasal's first wife's first son received rights to claim the throne, the remaining children were given rights to various other key administrative positions. In addition to this existing fiscal and political arrangement, Chhatrasal also extended fiscal and political benefits to Ruhani Begum and their child, Mastani. Mastani was not only seen as Chhatrasal's legitimate daughter but was also provided a dowry. After Mastani was married, Ruhani Begum continued to live in the palace and receive a regular maintenance.

Over the years, the story of these two romances has inspired literature and cinema to reflect on the tragedies and joys of love but I introduce it here to draw attention to how sexual relations were shaped by the contrasting politics of two states that were similar in many aspects. Both these states that were barely within eight hundred miles of one another were ruled by Hindu rulers who were looking to wage war against the dominant Mughal Empire. Yet both these states regulated sexual relations differently.

This variation in sexual regulation is not restricted to precolonial India but extends to other pre-modern states as well. In terms of spatial variation, Akyeampong observes that the practice of abrakree, which involved bachelor men maintaining relations with "public women", was specific to precolonial coastal Asante and was not prevalent in interior Asante (Akyeampong 1997). On variation across time, Duhlade finds that while China's Ming Dynasty insisted that all young unmarried women be recruited for the position of concubine in the 1400s, this protocol was changed to exclude all Han families during the Qing dynasty's reign in the 1600s (**empty citation**). This variation is widespread today as well. If we compare Pakistan and Bangladesh, two Islamic states in South Asia with a shared institutional history, we find that while Pakistan represses prostitution, Bangladesh promotes it and while Pakistan promotes polygamy, Bangladesh represses it. Equally, if we compare Sweden and Switzerland, two culturally similar states (Henrich 2020), we find that while Sweden represses prostitution, Switzerland promotes it and while Sweden promotes civil unions and marriage equally, Switzerland promotes marriages over civil unions. These observations introduce a deeply puzzling, under-studied phenomenon that forms the focus of this dissertation project: variation in sexual regulation across time and space.

This prospectus proceeds as follows. First, I identify the theoretical contribution of the project. Second, I introduce a new framework through which regulation of sexual relations can be conceptualized as "sexual order." Third, I discuss what sexual order reveals about the state, specifically its ideology along a gendered dimension. Finally, I propose a descriptive inference project that focuses on India in the 20th century, to move towards a theory of sexual order and state ideology of gender.

2 Theoretical Contribution

States and Sexual Regulation

Since their emergence, states have regulated who can sleep with whom (Akyeampong 1997; Nair 1994), whose child is legitimate and whose is illegitimate (Canaday, Cott, and Self 2021; Morgan 2021), when love is acceptable and when it is forbidden (Gristwood 2022), what constitutes a family and what does not (Ghosh 2006; Butalia 1998). However, variation in these sexual regulations has not been adequately investigated. I believe focusing on this variation will have significant theoretical implications for political science: First, it will expand our view of the state’s role in social political order. It will specifically show us how various states manage order on the basis of sexual relations. Second, it will offer a fresh lens to understand various state ideologies. It will especially broaden mainstream political science discussions on state ideology in that it will allow us to see state ideology as tied to gender hierarchies.

To explain social political order, existing political science literature draws our attention to the role of the state. By focusing on state attributes like taxation, judicial administration and control over violence, this literature shows how states have been critical in shaping social political order. Many studies have shown that the state has been pivotal in reproducing class inequality (Dincecco 2009; Scheve and Stasavage 2012; Queralt 2015; Garfias and Sellars 2021) in contexts ranging from the Holy Land Crusades in the medieval period (Blaydes and Paik 2016) to South-East Asia in the twentieth century (Slater 2011). In addition, a growing number of studies have revealed that states have been significant in managing status inequality, whether along the basis of race like in the US (Suryanarayan and White 2021; Denney 2021), caste like in colonial India (Suryanarayan 2016), ethnicity like in Brazil today (Pardelli and Kustov 2022) or “slave status” like in many contexts across time and space (Sharman and Zarakol 2023). Finally, studies highlight that states have played a part in reifying gender inequality by refusing to recognize women’s rights to inherit land (Brulé 2020), by insisting that domestic violence against women is not a crime (Lazarev 2019), and by obstructing access to reproductive health measures (Htun and Weldon 2018). Broadly, these studies underscore how states have been involved in making hierarchies whereby it benefits some and forsakes others.

However, in spite of the vastness of this literature, there is almost no discussion on the state’s role in managing inequality across sexual relations and its impact on social political order. Across time and space, some sexual relations have been privileged (e.g. marriage) while others have been repressed (e.g. relations with “prostitutes”). Cultural anthropologist Rubin observes that “[this] system of sexual oppression cuts across other modes of social inequality, sorting out individuals and groups according to its own intrinsic dynamics. It is not reducible to, or understandable in terms of, class, race, ethnicity, or gender.” (Rubin 1984) This inequality in relations has implications for social political order (most obviously in terms of which children’s physical and financial well-being is secured). The state’s role in managing this inequality is hardly examined. To address this gap and develop a comprehensive sense of state impact on social political order, I argue it is necessary to consider the state beyond traditional attributes like taxation, judicial administration and control over violence and focus also on sexual regulation.

Focusing on sexual regulation offers a new perspective to understand state ideology. Using critical feminist IR theory, Peterson claims that “social categorizations of sex, class/status, and Insider-Outsider are historically produced and culturally, juridically (backed by state power) codified in ancient state-making processes, ‘sedimented’ (through writing technologies and legal codes) and naturalized by *ideological* legitimations of inequality.” (Peterson 2020) (emphasis mine). This argument foregrounds the role of ideology in sexual regulation but does not address why regulation, and by extension, social political order, varies across states.

The association between sexual regulation and ideology is perhaps most fleshed out in conflict research. Based on her research on the Lord’s Resistance Army, Baines argues that the organization’s promotion of forced marriage alongside it prohibiting any other sexual relation is driven by its ideological vision to have a “new Achioli nation” that is constituted purely by state authorized sexual relations (Baines 2014). In contrast, Wood and Revkin argue that the Islamic

State's (IS) regulations that promote forced marriage of Sunni girls and sexual slavery of Yazidi women can be attributed to IS' Salafi-jihadist ideology that envisions a "guardianship" system where men control women belonging to distinct ethno-religious communities differently (Revkin and Wood 2021). Most recently, based on his analysis of Nepal's Maoist insurgency, Giri argues that the party's insistence that couples in love declare that their "first love" is the party and be separated soon after are in line with the party's ideological agenda to maintain "scientific" and "modern" living (Giri 2023). En masse these studies suggest that rebel organizations' sexual regulation is informed by their respective ideologies. I extend these insights to propose that studying variation in sexual regulation across states allows us to understand various state ideologies.

In studying state ideology through the lens of sexual regulation, this dissertation aims to expand discussions on state ideology to focus on gender. For the most part, mainstream political science has understood state ideology by looking at its relation to markets, religion, and individual freedoms. Consequently, states are viewed as reflecting a variety of capitalist or socialist models (Hall and Soskice 2001; Esping-Andersen 1990), Christian or non-Christian regimes (Hudson, Bowen, and Nielsen 2020), and democratic or autocratic systems (Acemoglu and Robinson 2019; Moore 1993).

Recently, there's been a (re)emergence of the view that these labels belie the state's relation to gender (Saini 2023; Graeber and Wengrow 2021; Stasavage 2020; Teele 2018; Htun and Weldon 2018; Pateman 1988; Engels 1902). These studies argue that the subordination of women is inherent to state ideology. However, by focusing on the subordination of *women*, these studies do not explain the subordination of *different* categories of women or even men. They do not account for why some women were maintained as queens and others were made concubines, or why some men were kings and others were relegated as servants. These studies risk simplifying the manner in which state ideology is tied to gender.

In contrast, the interrogation of gender as an analytical category in (empirical?) political science is comparatively more advanced in studies on sexual violence during war. I specifically discuss Sjoberg's discussion of gender and gender order. Sjoberg challenges viewing gender as a categorical variable, anchored in biology, and instead proposes viewing it as a social and political construct that structures expectations on masculinity and femininity (Sjoberg 2016). This means that gender has less to do with whether an individual is a man or a woman in the abstract and more to do with whether the said individual is associated with values of masculinity or femininity given a certain sociopolitical context. Given this conceptualization of gender, Sjoberg argues that "[b]y gendered order...alignment with values associated with masculinities is a signifier of value and dominance, and alignment with values associated with femininities is a signifier of subordination and devaluation." In other words, a gendered order discloses who can be considered a man and equally, who can be considered a woman in a given context.

While gendered orders are manifest across all contexts, their manifestation in *state regulation* of sexual relations - whether it means privileging a relation between a White man and a White woman and repressing a relation between a Black man and a White woman or privileging a relation between a man and a woman and repressing a relation between a man and a man - offers a fresh view into state ideology. It makes clear which traits state ideology valorizes as masculine (White male, heterosexuality) and which it devalorizes as feminine (Black male, homosexuality).¹ Consequently, it highlights the gendered basis underlying the state ideology's drive to preserve some relations and obstruct others. This has implications for who can access safe reproductive health measures, who can have children, and whose lineage can be preserved.

Thus, to study variation in sexual regulation across various contexts is an opportunity to develop a unique understanding of state ideology on the basis of gender.

¹I need to develop this connection between sexual regulation and gendered order further and dive deeper into how gender is described in this conflict literature. Sjoberg's articulation of gendered order makes sense with reference to say, how Black men are feminized vis a vis White men but I have to explore further how it makes sense when the masculinization of certain individuals, say Black women, actually allows their devalorization. For now though, I want to maintain that understanding state ideology through sexual regulation offers a gendered view of ideology wherein "gender" does not merely mean women.

Gender and Sexuality and Sexual Regulation

In framing sexual regulation as a constitutive aspect of states (similar to say taxation or judicial administration), I believe I will be making a distinct two-fold contribution to the field of gender and sexuality studies. First, I offer an interpretive-positivist framework to standardize the basis on which we evaluate *all* sexual relations and how they relate to one another. I show how we can use the same set of terms to describe various sexual relations, ranging from marriage to a relation with a “prostitute”. Second, through this framework, I problematize the way in which we choose to label sexual relations (e.g. marriage, “forced marriage”, dating, relations with “prostitutes”², “sexual slavery”). I show instead that the labels we choose are in some sense determined by how the state regulates these relations in reference to one another rather than the substantive content of these relations.

I believe these are contributions to the field based on my reading of Rubin (1984), Federici (1975), Srinivasan (2021), Kay Hoang (2015), Bernstein (2007), Mitra (2020), Kligman and Gal (2000), Levine (2003), Canaday (2011), Cossman (2007), Ghodsee (2018). In my theory chapter, I will consolidate the insights of these readings along with incorporating the works of Foucault (1990), Zelizer (2007), Shrager (1994), Sinha (1995), Constable (2003), Hooven (2021), and many other gender and sexuality readings.

3 Sexual Regulation as Sexual Ordering

...sexuality is too powerful a force, socially and cosmologically, to leave unregulated.

- Eugenia Herbert as cited by Akyeampong (1997)

To understand sexual regulation, I introduce a novel framework that conceptualizes regulation along two distinct and equally, significant, dimensions: codification and enforcement. Broadly, codification refers to state policies and enforcement refers to state practices. I conceptualize each of these dimensions as a spectrum that ranges from promoting a relation to repressing it.

There are four broad modes through which sexual relations are either promoted or repressed: violence, medical interventions, taxation, and contract enforcement (particularly with respect to claims over inheritance, maintenance, and children). Each regulatory dimension authorizes these modes to regulate relations. In the case of codification, this is manifest in criminal laws, public and reproductive health policies, tax codes and policies, and personal laws that detail protocols for inheritance, maintenance and alimony. In contrast, in the case of enforcement, these modes are deployed through policing, medical check-ups and surgeries, tax collection, and adjudication.

I argue that the interaction between codification and enforcement determines the state’s position towards any sexual relation. Broadly, these positions can either promote, repress or be ambiguous. Seeing all positions towards various sexual relations (e.g. marriage, incest, masturbation, relations with “prostitutes”, dating) reveals a complex hierarchy of sexual relations that I describe as “sexual order”. This sexual order framework essentially offers a view into how various sexual relations are regulated with respect to one another. Figure 1 illustrates this framework using New York City today as an example. The x-axis represents codification and the y-dimension represents enforcement.

It’s worth noting that the extent to which a described sexual order is accurate depends on the *level* at which codification and enforcement is observed. The more local the observation, the more accurate the description. To this end, a description of sexual order in New York State that is based on observing regulation at the level of New York State is unlikely to be accurate, much less representative of sexual orders across the state. While codification is largely standard across all cities in the state, enforcement heavily varies across these cities, suggesting that the sexual order in each city in the state is unique.

²I do not mean to say that there is no category of people who can be identified as “sex workers” but rather that the emergence of this category is deeply political. In other words, who is a sex worker has little to do with the work that is performed than the fact that they are regulated in a distinct manner.

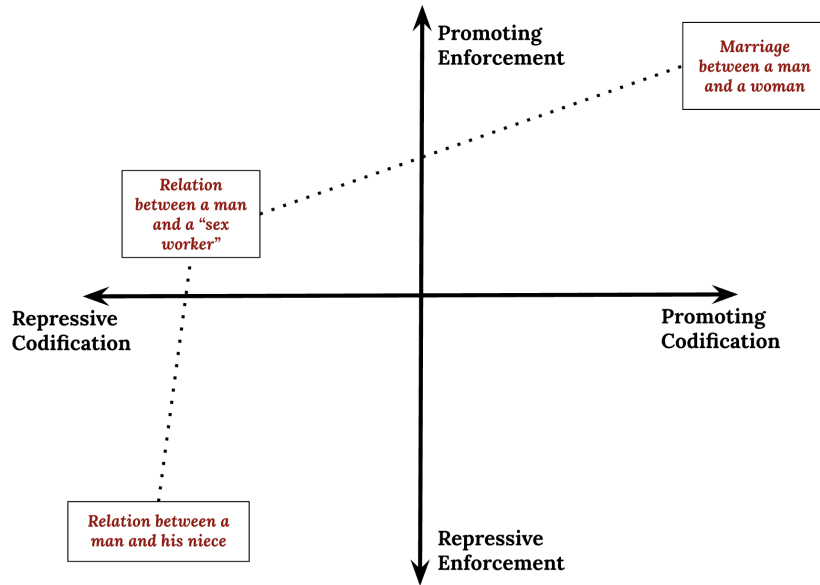


Figure 1: Sexual Order in New York City Today

I depict three relations - marriage between a man and a woman, relations between a man and a “sex worker”, relation between a man and his niece - in Figure 1 to reflect the broad set of positions the state can maintain. However, it’s worth noting that in reality, this order can be composed of positions towards various other relations that are marked by class, race, and religion so long as codification and enforcement is sensitive to these distinctions (e.g. civil union between a Christian woman and a Muslim man, sexual relations between a well-established politician and a DREAMer, etc.). In other words, if regulation has an intersectional approach, this will be reflected in the sexual order.

I discuss what each of the three depicted positions in Figure 1 broadly represent as per the framework, below.

Marriage between a man and a woman, the sexual relation that is positioned in the top right quadrant, is highly promoted by both codification and enforcement. This means that a plethora of policies and practices authorize the use of state violence, medical interventions, taxation, and contract enforcement to *preserve* the sexual relation and all relations that accompany it including those that involve children. Preserving here effectively implies ensuring the physical and economic well-being of the individuals involved for the sake of the relation. In the case of New York city, this can mean spousal citizenship rights, social security benefits, and parental rights.³ It would also entail criminalizing and policing instances of what we would describe as domestic violence since it endangers the well-being of one of the individuals involved.

In contrast, incestuous relations between a man and a woman, specifically between a man and his niece, positioned in the bottom left quadrant, is highly repressed by both codification and enforcement.⁴ This means that codes and street practices actively deploy state apparatuses to prevent the relation from existing, much less developing. It would involve checking the physical and economic security of the relation such that the individuals are incentivized to forsake the relations. This could mean seizing control over assets that are shared within the relation or sentencing members within the relation to life imprisonment.⁵

³“Lawfully married individuals, including individuals in same-sex marriages, are entitled to more New York State rights and benefits than those registered as domestic partners here in New York City.” For more information, see here: <https://www.cityclerk.nyc.gov/content/marriage-bureau>

⁴However, the state makes exceptions for half-uncles and neices: <https://nypost.com/2014/10/29/new-york-state-blesses-incest-marriage-between-uncle-niece/>

⁵I recognize that there is such a fine line between using state violence to safeguard the relation as opposed to the individuals in the relation. I think for now it ultimately comes down to not only reading the laws but also seeing

Finally, relations between a man and a “sex worker”, positioned in the top left quadrant, is significantly repressed by codification but somewhat promoted by enforcement.⁶ In this case, the state’s position is ambiguous. This would also be true of relations that fall in the bottom right quadrant as well (An example of this relation would be pre-marital relations in India today where although codification permits sexual relations before marriage, enforcement represses these relations). These relations are in a liminal space in that the terms of their existence are unclear.⁷

In addition to depicting the state’s position on these various sexual relations, this framework shows how these positions vary *across* relations. In the case of New York City, marriage between a man and a woman is clearly more privileged than sexual relations between a man and a “sex worker” and a sexual relation between a man and his niece, and sexual relations between a man and a “sex worker” is clearly more privileged than a sexual relation between a man and his niece. In revealing how the state’s position compare across various sexual relations, this framework offers a scaffolding to analyze *all* sexual relations, however different, on the *same* terms. This is less a claim that all sexual relations are comparable but rather that as far as the state is concerned, these relations are in fact comparable. In other words, this framework describes how sex is seen by the state.

In the next section, I discuss what sexual orders can allow us to infer about the state.

4 Sexual Order and State Ideology on Gender

All these hierarchies of sexual value...*rationalize* the well-being of the sexually privileged and the adversity of the sexual rabble.

- Gayle Rubin, *Thinking Sex* (1984) (emphasis mine)

Using the sexual order framework, I contend that we can infer the state ideology on gender.

Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood conceptualize ideology as “a more or less systematic set of ideas” that are advanced for instrumental purposes and to perpetuate certain norms (Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood 2014). I propose both instrumental and normative aspects of ideology can be deciphered from a state’s sexual order.

Furthermore, since this sexual order is a product of codification and enforcement, I propose that the order reflects the ideologies of the state actors involved in codification (codifiers) and enforcement (enforcers). In some states, these actors, codifiers and enforcers, can be the same set of people such as in small-scale organizations like criminal and rebel groups. However, in many states, codifiers and enforcers operate at different levels. This is especially true in complex states like empires, federal states, and confederacies. In these cases, codifiers articulate their positions through prescriptions, rarely interacting with the relations themselves, and enforcers clarify their positions through ground-level physical interactions with these relations. The set of codifiers can range from central actors like executive authorities and supreme court justices to local actors like mayors and councilors. Equally, the set of enforcers can be federal street bureaucrats or local street bureaucrats but include police officials, medical supervisors, low court judges and tax collectors; in some cases, enforcers can also be state-recognized, non-state actors like religious institution affiliates or community members.

In being sensitive to the distinction between codifiers and enforcers, the sexual order framework is open to circumstances where distinct operational positions can affect the ideologies perpetuated by state actors.⁸ For example, a Supreme Court justice (codifier) who is enacting a law on same-sex marriage might interact far more with LGBTQ+ foundations and advocates than a po-

what is enacted in practice to understand how the use of state violence is justified in the context of relations

⁶While state law states that prostitution is illegal, local prosecutors are choosing to stop prosecuting “sex workers”, disincentivizing police officials from arresting “sex workers”: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/21/nyregion/manhattan-to-stop-prosecuting-prostitution.html>

⁷There are distinct experiential implications for individuals involved in relations that are “ambiguous” but I won’t explore this aspect in this project.

⁸In this project, state actors do not need to believe in the ideology as much as choose to perpetuate it.

lice official (enforcer) who has been delegated to protect same-sex couples; and the police official in turn might interact far more with angry, homophobic family and vigilante members of the local community than a Supreme Court justice. In short, state actors' relation to society is central to the ideologies they perpetuate: in some cases, this relation to society is shared across both codifiers and enforcers implying that their ideology on gender is unified and in other cases, this relation varies across codifiers and enforcers, creating tension in the ideologies on gender perpetuated by different state actors.

In the first subsection, I show how sexual order reflects state ideology on gender assuming that codifiers and enforcers share the same ideology. In the second subsection, I relax this assumption and show how sexual order can reflect distinct sets of state actors' ideologies on gender.

Sexual Order and a Unified State Ideology

To illustrate my first point that sexual order reflects state ideology on gender, let's re-visit the two pre-colonial Indian states that were discussed at the outset: the Peshwa and the Panna states. These were two proximate Hindu states that were challenging Mughal rule and yet they maintained two distinct sexual orders. In the Peshwa state, the King⁹ was expected to maintain a monogamous relation with a Brahmin woman who was then made Queen; all other relations that were maintained either by the ruler or his wife were repressed. In contrast, in the Panna state, the ruler was extended the liberty to maintain multiple sexual relations, whether within or outside marriage; however, relations maintained by his companions with any other men were severely penalized. Figure 2 describes the sexual orders in these two states.

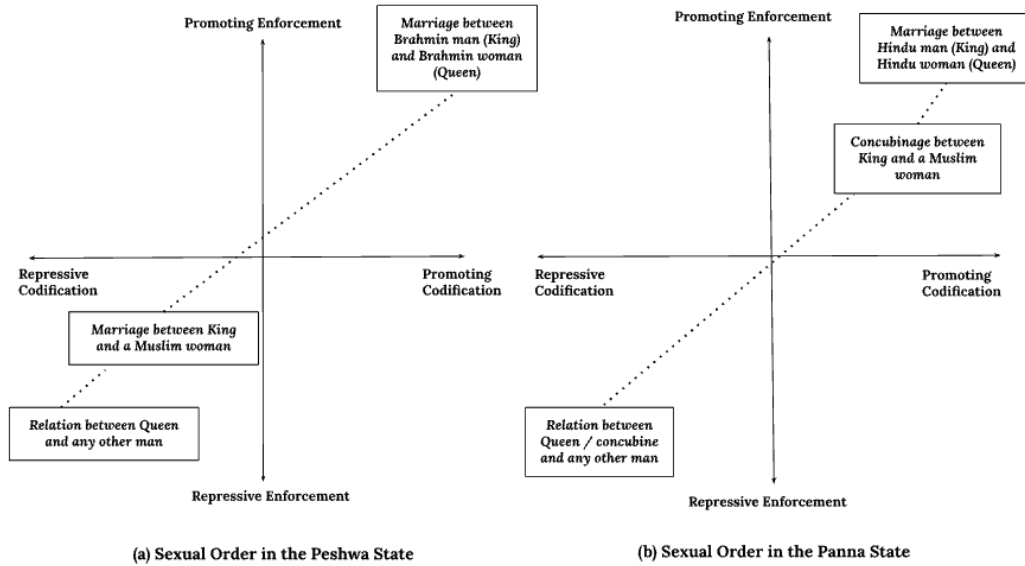


Figure 2: Sexual Orders if State Ideology is Unified

Based on Figure 2, I propose we can infer the instrumental and normative agendas that underlie each of the state's sexual order.

In the case of the Peshwa state, since the King and Queen's marital relation is the only relation that is promoted, we can infer that the instrumental question of succession, inheritance, and maintenance is cleanly resolved. Essentially, we *know* who the next King of the Peshwa state is. In addition, given that the only relation that is promoted guarantees a *Brahmin* child, we can infer the state's normative agenda to ensure that only purely Brahmin children can maintain political control over the state. It clarifies the state's agenda to advance caste hegemony. Moreover, the fact that "Relation between Queen and any other man" is distinctly more repressed than "Marriage

⁹Technically, the Peshwa state was ruled by the Peshwa which is a distinct administrative position from the King but for all effective purposes, the Peshwa was the King. For convenience, I refer to him as King in my discussion.

between King and a Muslim woman” signals the degree to which the state’s normative agenda was maintained by establishing more control over *women’s* sexual relations. These inferences of the Peshwa state align with Chakravarti’s argument that the Peshwa state was characterized by a Brahmanical patriarchal ideology (Chakravarti 1995).

In contrast, in the case of the Panna state, given all relations involving the King are broadly promoted, we can discern that from an instrumental viewpoint, the King was able to hedge on multiple of his lineages. This view is supported by Jain who argues that the Panna state’s ruler used his children strategically: most of them were recruited into the state’s administration and some were used to build political alliances with other states. However, while all these relations are broadly promoted, the fact that the “Ruler’s marriage to a Hindu woman” is distinctly more promoted than “Ruler in concubinage with a Muslim woman” suggests that the children born of the former relation have more legitimate claim to the throne and other assets, allowing the King to resolve the question of succession. Furthermore, given all the King’s relations are promoted and his companions’ relations with other men are repressed, we can also determine the state’s normative agenda, i.e. to valorize the King’s bloodline. Repressing possible sexual relations between his companions and other men guarantees that the only children who will have access to political control and resources are the King’s children. This inference is corroborated by Jain’s discussion that the Panna state’s ruler deeply desired a state that would carry *his* bloodline forward (Jain 2002).

Overall then, Figure 2 not only shows states’ sexual orders but also, the gendered dimension of their ideologies. It shows which masculinities are valued in different states: In the Peshwa state, Brahmin blood is valorized while in the Panna state, the King’s blood is valorized. Furthermore, Figure 2 also establishes that the involved state actors, codifiers and enforcers, are on the same page. This is indicated by the fact that all relations are either in top right (clearly promoted) or bottom left quadrant (clearly repressed).

Sexual Order and Diverging State Ideologies

However, “there is no guarantee that states will act as totally coherent organizations” (Migdal 2001). This possibility is factored by the sexual order framework because it distinguishes between different sets of state actors, i.e. codifiers and enforcers. In a world where codifiers and enforcers do not share the same ideology, we can expect that sexual orders will constitute of relations towards which the state’s position is ambiguous. I underscore this point by returning to the case of the Peshwa and Panna states.

In the case of the Peshwa state, let’s assume that the King uses his executive capacity to promote his second marriage despite the fact that his legal administrators, i.e. the codifiers, censure it. He disregards the code and ensures that there is some way his Muslim wife and their children have access to economic and political resources like a house, claim to some land, and gold. Effectively, he promotes his relation. Conversely, in the case of the Panna state, let’s assume that the King chooses to write off his alliance with a Muslim woman. He decides he does not want to part with any economic or political resource with respect to her and their children despite legal codes’ acknowledgement and promotion of this relation. In short, the King chooses to forsake this relation. The effect of both the Peshwa and Panna state Kings’ decisions is depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3 suggests that across both the Peshwa and Panna states, the codifiers and enforcers seem to share different *ideas* of what relation should be promoted and repressed. In comparison to Figure 2, Figure 3 tells a complex story. In Figure 2(a), the Peshwa state was advancing a Brahmanical patriarchal ideology but Figure 3(a) suggests that while the codifiers intend to advance a Brahmanical patriarchal ideology, the King instead wants to perpetuate a different ideology that focuses on maintaining *his* bloodline through whatever sexual relation. The discord is represented in the ambiguous position of the category “Marriage between King and a Muslim woman”.

Equally, in Figure 2(b), the Panna state promoted a bloodline-oriented ideology but in Figure 3(b), while codifiers continue to espouse this ideology, the King seems to maintain an ideology that is sensitive to his companion’s religious identity. This tension between the codifiers and enforcers ideologies is shown by the ambiguous position of the category “Concubinage between King and a

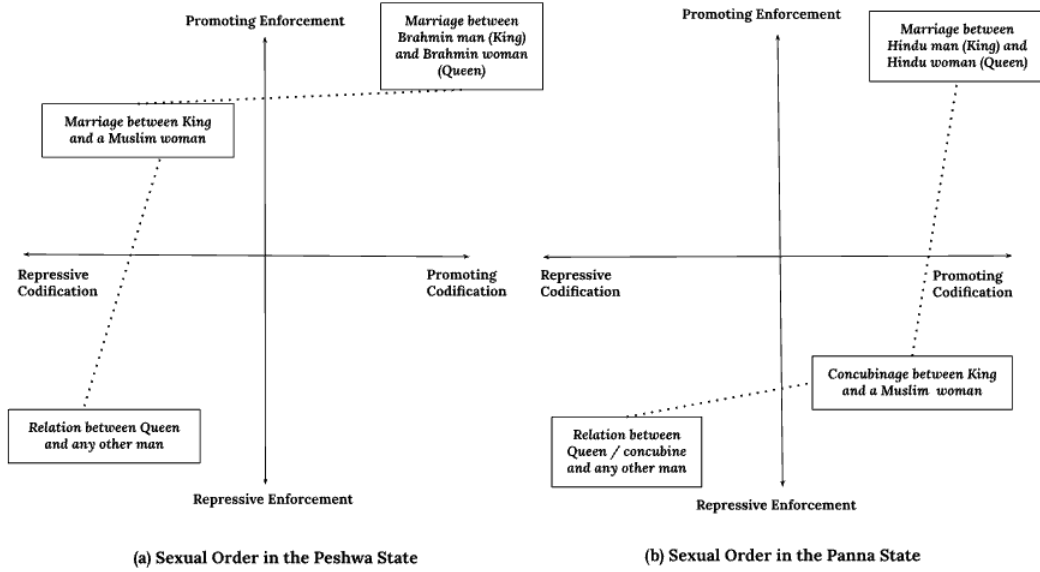


Figure 3: Sexual Orders with Diverging State Ideologies

Muslim woman”.

These are hypothetical cases but they illustrate the possibility that the state does not necessarily maintain a unified ideology and can be characterized by distinct ideologies.

Broadly, the sexual order framework suggests that sexual order is intimately tied to state ideology, specifically its gendered dimension. In the following section, I discuss formalizing this inference through my dissertation project.

5 Towards a Theory of Sexual Order and State Ideology of Gender

The state is not a fixed ideological entity. Rather, it embodies an ongoing dynamic, a changing set of aims, as it engages other social forces.

- Joel Migdal, *State in Society* (2001)

Understanding the dynamism of state ideology means investigating the manner in which codifiers and enforcers’ respective ideologies change and accordingly, converge or compete against one another, in the context of several dynamic political processes. It essentially means asking: What is the manner in which state ideology on gender varies as administrative, social and technological change unfolds across time and space? To address this question, this dissertation uses descriptive inference, focusing on developing the association between state ideology on gender and sexual order.

Given the nature of this project’s objective, descriptive inference an ideal mode of inquiry. Although description is often seen as “background knowledge”, its role in descriptive inference projects is to make an argument about what is/was. Descriptive arguments can be “Democracy means having free and fair elections” or “Gender equality is ensured by women’s equality”. While these statements are often perceived as facts or common sense knowledge, they are in fact assertions of the ultimate value of a phenomenon (Gerring 2012).

To describe the association between sexual order and state ideology on gender, and by extension, build a theory on state ideology on gender, I aim to map variation in sexual order in a context that is marked by several dynamic processes: India in the 20th century.

Case Study: 20th century India

I specifically plan to study variation in sexual order in India, tentatively across the years 1919 to 1979. During this period, the country observed changes on three dimensions that I see as critical in their effect on codifiers and enforcers' gender ideologies: gradual regime change, the introduction of reproductive technologies, and the sedimentation of gender and sexuality identities. I discuss each of these changes below.

The years 1919-1979 marks the country's transition from being a colonial to an independent state. The transition was not a clean shock as much as a set of incremental reforms that ultimately led to the decolonization of the country. Broadly these reforms started with the enactment of the Government of India Act 1919 which institutionalized elections for native Indians at the state level. A variety of these administrative reforms were rolled out immediately after the 1947 Independence, including relating to reservation for minority candidates. As far as the sexual order framework is concerned, these reforms entailed the replacement of many codifiers and enforcers at the federal, state, and municipal levels, creating a context where we can observe potential variation in sexual order.

In addition to these administrative reforms, the transition to Independence engendered many family planning programs and policies between the years 1950s and 1970s. In fact, the 1970s is infamous for being a dark episode in India's history: forced sterilization under the reign of Indira Gandhi. In some sense, this program marked the full force with which the state used reproductive technologies in India. To decipher the impact of these revolutionary technologies on gender ideologies, 20th century India provides a viable case study.

Finally, besides changes on the administrative and technological fronts, the process of classification and identification that was engendered through the state's surveying and administration of services across the 20th century, was crucial in making gender and sexuality categories salient. Labels like "prostitutes", "hijras" (transgenders), "homosexuals" were essentially becoming political categories. The sedimentation of these specific identities provides a dynamic context within which we can observe codifiers and enforcers' gender ideologies.

Overall, changes along these three dimensions makes India across the 20th century a strong case study for the dissertation project. However, as I mention earlier, the accuracy of sexual order is a function of observing codification and enforcement on several levels, federal, state and municipal. To fully comprehend the gender ideologies of these various codifiers and enforcers, I plan to study sexual order within Bangalore, India.

First, much of Bangalore was directly under British administration during the early 1900s. It was not located within any of the presidencies. This meant that as far as Bangalore was concerned, much of the impact of the country's transition to Independence was experienced primarily during the 1940s. In short, the transition was not incremental in a manner that was arguably different for cities like Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. Second, Bangalore was one of the first cities that witnessed the establishment of birth control clinics much before the country's formal independence in 1947. Third, there is a rich tradition of various gendered practices in Bangalore and proximate regions, whether it's relating to the practice of temple dancing or the recognition of transgender individuals as a spiritual category. These distinct local manifestations of macro-level political processes make Bangalore a good case within which to observe variation in sexual order.

Moreover, I believe studying Bangalore will also offer an opportunity to contribute to the existing political science literature on South Asia: Many studies that do deep dives into Indian politics typically restrict themselves to cities and towns in North, West and East India. There are few studies that have looked at the political dynamics of a city like Bangalore. By focusing on this city, this dissertation will be extending the purview of research on South Asia along with other emerging studies that are drawing attention to South India¹⁰.

¹⁰e.g. Deepika Padmanabhan's project on linguistic ideology in Bangalore and Chennai

Data and Sources

A note on data and sources: The dissertation's primary source of data will be a wide range of local state and central institutions. To gather data on codifiers, I will be looking at data from legislative state assemblies, high court verdicts, and policies enacted by mayors and councillors of the city. In contrast, for data on enforcers, I plan to look at data in police stations, lower courts, state medical hospitals, and local tax bureaus. As a first stab, I will look at the archives in New Delhi and Bangalore.

However, before diving into primary source data, I intend to rely as much on secondary source material. There is a rich corpus of research on sexual relations that is specific to the South Asian subcontinent, and I plan to leverage the data and insights from these studies to further inform which institutions I need to specifically collect data from.

I expect that further reading and discussions will refine the exact details of my empirical plan over the next few months.

Appendix 1: Working Outline - Chapters

- Chapter 1: Introduction (discuss variation in sexual regulation across states)
- Chapter 2: Theory of Sexual Order and State Ideology
- Chapter 3: Sexual Order in 20th century India
 - Change across Political Regimes (fitful transition from colonial to independent, federal administration)
 - Change in Reproductive Technologies (shift from rhythm method to sterilization and IUDs)
 - Change in Salience of Various Gender Identities (primarily feminist movements)
- Chapter 4: A Case of Sexual Order in Bangalore, India
- Chapter 5: The Codifiers: What were their gender ideologies?
- Chapter 6: The Enforcers: What were their gender ideologies?
- Chapter 7: Codifiers vs Enforcers: Converging or Competing Ideologies? (Include discussion of interaction between codifiers and enforcers)
- Chapter 8: Conclusion: What does it mean to know about state ideology as related to gender as opposed to markets, religion or individual freedoms? What unlock does the sexual order lens have over class, race or gender order? What implications does this have for research and activism?

Appendix 2: Proposed Research Timeline

Period & Location	Research Activities	Output(s)
Fall 2023: US (New Haven/New York)	Develop theory; literature review	(1) Draft chapter 2 (2) Consolidate insights on macro-processes for chapter 3
Spring 2024: India (Bangalore/Delhi)	Archival fieldwork	Draft chapter 5 (codifiers)
Summer 2024: India (Bangalore/Delhi)	Archival fieldwork	Draft chapter 6 (enforcers)
Fall 2024: US (New Haven/New York)	Desk research	Draft chapter 7 (codifiers vs enforcers)
Spring 2025: US (New Haven/New York)	Desk research	Draft chapters 3-4 (India and Bangalore; case background)
Summer 2025: US & India (New Haven/New York) (Bangalore/Delhi)	Additional fieldwork if necessary	Draft chapters 1 (intro) & 8 (conclusion)
Fall 2025: US (New Haven/New York)	Writing and rewriting	Revise chapters 1-8

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