

PERSPECTIVES ON POPULATION GROWTH AND GENDER EQUALITY IN KERALA,
INDIA

by

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(Under the Direction of Ronald C. Carroll)

ABSTRACT

Kerala is a state often cited for its strong social development within the Indian context. It is considered a model for widely available health care, universally available primary education, and significantly lower birth rates. This study examines these assertions in India on a more human level through 30 extended interviews in Kerala. These interviews exposed strong differences between women and men's views about population growth and gender equality. It also highlights the difference of perspectives between doctors, teacher, and politicians' opinions concerning the issue. This study finds that Kerala's development experience, when gender issues are included, is far more complicated than generally discussed in the literature, and that these complications temper basic assumptions about Kerala as a model of development.

INDEX WORDS: Kerala, India, Population Growth, Gender Equality

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis P.N. Prakash, Subya Prakash, and Asha Prakash. Without your initial inspiration, constant guidance, unending encouragement, and deep hospitality, this work could not have been completed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

Kerala is a state in India often cited for its achievements in high literacy, high quality health statistics, and a low population growth rate (Murdoch 1980 and Dreze and Sen 1996). Of particular interest in development studies is the fact that Kerala has reached a high level of social development without complete modernization or industrialization (Murdoch 1980). Many of the successes of Kerala were reached through organized public action and political involvement, indicating a public command, concern, and ultimately a high success rate for social development issues. “In Kerala, informed political activism—building partly on the achievement of mass literacy—has played a crucial role in the reduction of social inequalities based on caste, gender, and (to some extent) caste” (Sen 1995).

Kerala’s social development attainments become considerably more interesting when thinking about development strategies in the rest of the world. Development strategies in much of the world have had questionable success, so Kerala may be a model to provide social development in places lacking economic resources. Nobel Prize winner in economics, and expert on Kerala studies, Amartya Sen considers Kerala to have a possible “replicability” (Dreze and Sen 1995). This is because of the strong and direct role of the local people in the development and implementation of the government’s social policies used in the state’s transformation (Nair 2000 and Corbridge and Harriss 2000). This research intends to address the following question:

given Kerala's unique social, cultural, and political history, how do current perspectives of social policy and gender politics interact to provide a model of successfully lowered population growth within the context of a developing country? The goal of this thesis is to search for answers to this important question.

Human beings have cognition, agency and versatility of choice, and therefore the factors affecting human reproduction are different than those affecting other organisms. However, this does not discount the important ecological impact of human reproductive trends. Though predictions vary, it is certain that the humans have a carrying capacity on earth which includes the size and consumptive patterns of their populations. Therefore, in order to answer human questions that are primarily ecological in their genesis, ecological studies must look to anthropology and sociology for methods of measuring and evaluating the variables that affect human reproduction. Thus questions of an ecological nature take on an ostensibly anthropological scope. This study will attempt to combine both quantitative demographic analysis with qualitative interviews around population growth and gender equality in Kerala, India.

Kerala's Physical and Human Geography

Kerala, a state in southwest India, is 39,000 square kilometers in area that is split into three geographic zones. The Western Ghats is the highland area of Kerala and roughly forms its eastern border, thus separating it from the states of Tamil Nadu and Kannada. The midland area is characterized by rolling hills and rich agricultural lands. The lowland area makes up the third geographical zone, which is essentially a narrow coastal area along the Arabian Sea (Dreze and Sen 1996).

Figure 1. Map of India



(Consular General of India, 2005)

The climate in Kerala is monsoonal characterized by distinct wet and dry seasons (Gazetteer of India 1986). This is coupled with rich soils, creating a verdant state with an abundant harvest of rice and fruit (Gazetteer of India). The many streams create an intricate backwater region that is important for the fishing industry and the growing ecotourism economy (Dreze and Sen 1996).

Though varied in religion, Keralites have somewhat converged culturally due to the isolation created by the Western Ghats. The people of Kerala speak Malayalam, which is the local language distinct to Kerala (Jeffery 1978). The religious makeup of Kerala varies throughout the state with an overall population comprised of 30 % Muslims, 30% Christians, and 40% Hindu (Jeffery 1987). The Hindu caste system in particular has had an influence on Kerala's economic development, because historically, caste status and economic power were

parallel (Jeffery 1978). Although religious differences have likely influenced Kerala's development they are not the focus of this thesis.

One Hindu caste in particular though, must be noted for its influence on women's status in Kerala. The Nayers were the Hindu caste that abided by a regionally unique strict matrilineal system. In this system, groups of families lived in communal joint-households where the family inheritance belonged to the equally to the daughters through a structure which at retained a level of egalitarianism in the family (Jeffrey 1978). Until World War One the matrilineal Hindu-Nayar system dominated the region for most of the cultural and religious groups. At that time, the matrilineal system began to disintegrate as the communal families in the area modernized toward nuclear families (Jeffery 1978).

Kerala's Political History

Kerala is a politically significant within both India and the world because it has sustained a democratic government who intermittently elects a communist government. Kerala had a unique colonial history. Instead of being a direct colony like most of India, pre-independence Kerala was comprised of three princely states ruled by maharajas and overseen by a British resident (Jeffrey 1978). The political existence of Kerala arose out of the combination of these three princely states in 1956.

India's long independence movement fostered a variety of political opinions and organizations throughout the nation. Gandhi famously emphasized the importance of nonviolent civil disobedience as a mode of political action throughout India. Looking for alternatives, some in India studied the Bolshevik revolution, closely observing the speed and efficiency of a violent revolution. Shripat Amrit published a famous pamphlet called *Gandhi and Lenin* encouraging Indians to follow the superior leadership of Lenin in their struggles for social revolution

(Wolpert 1977). Nationally, the communist movement did not override the socialist Congress Party, but it did take hold in Kerala (Balakrishnan 1998).

In the 1930's caste tensions and a struggle to dissolve the caste system played a major role in the political development of India. Kerala experience the combined power of political activism, civil disobedience, and prominent and charismatic leaders. Some of these leaders were imprisoned for their activism. Two leaders in particular, A.K. Gopalan and Krishna Pillai became heros of the movement from within the cell walls (Balakrishnan 1998). While in jail, communist literature and ideas circulated more easily among the imprisoned, because all of the leaders were imprisoned together. These two leaders were seriously abused while in jail, furthering their distaste for nonviolent civil disobedience and their public outcry for action (Balakrisnan 1998). These communist prisoners read widely and became more zealous. Once released, these men went back to organizing the party and reaching out to rural areas to recruit new members (Jeffrey 1978).

Currently, the Communist Party of India (CPI) is considered a well-disciplined party, though not above corruption (Corbridge and Harriss 2000). The CPI party is one that criticizes any policy that will hurt the poorest of the poor or members of lower classes (Dreze and Sen 1996). "In Kerala, the state has made significant efforts to take the part of the poor since the late1970's. The gap between the state's rhetorics of development and actual government practices is less noticeable in theses states than it is elsewhere in India" (Corbridge and Harriss 2000).

The Communist Party of India has representation in the national parliament, Kerala's state government, and in the state government of West Bengal (Kesselman, Krieger, and Joseph 2004). The Communist Party won the first general elections in Kerela in 1957. Since then, it

has intermittently controlled Kerala from 1957-59, 1967-69, 1980-81, 1987-1991, 1995-2000, with the socialist Congress party in power in the intervening periods (Dreze and Sen 1996). The Congress Party holds the majority today, and the next elections will be held this year. The Kerala state government works on a system of strong institutionalized coalition politics between many parties (Vanaik 1997). The communist party has only controlled the state for short periods of time. The combination of socialist and communist policies has had a powerful impact on the direction of the Kerala's social and economic development.

Achievements in Social Development

Through land reform, educational reform, health reform, food and farming distribution programs, and works programs, Kerala has also been able to reach high levels of human development, which is a true feat in the developing world (Murdoch 1980). As noted earlier, Kerala's social development is of particular interest due to the speed of their social development as opposed to their economic development (Nair 2000). "Kerala's success in improving the welfare of its people and in achieving fertility decline cannot be explained by exceptional affluence in the state. On the contrary, the per capita income in Kerala is in fact *lower* than the average for all Indian states" (Murdoch 1980)

Though the per capita income in Kerala is lower than that in the rest of India, Kerala has managed to reduce their poverty levels by "relying on expansion of basic education, health care, and equitable land distribution for its success in reducing penury" (Sen 1999).

Health care in Kerala is free to all through programs that provide accessible and medical coverage through decentralized health centers. This accessibility has resulted in remarkably high health rates. The health indicators for human development are strikingly different in Kerala than other states in India (Dreze and Sen 1996). The most recent data show that the life expectancy at

birth in Kerala is 73.3, whereas in all India surveys, life expectancy is 61.1 (Powell and Agarwal 2004). Table 1 presents Births attended by a health professional as a sign of quality health care in Kerala, and Table 2 describes the reasons for death prevalent in Kerala. Cerebral thrombosis is the brain clot that leads to stroke. The Mayo Clinic says that strokes are the disease of developed countries. Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), political activist and research group, reports says that in 1996, strokes were the number one cause of death in Kerala (Larson 1996 and Aravindan and Kunhikannan 2000). This is interesting because it indicates that the major diseases of Kerala are not those of developing countries, but of ones that are already developed.

Table 1: Percent of Births Attended by a Health Professional

	1992-1993			1998-1999		
States	Rural	Urban	Combined	Rural	Urban	Combined
All India	25.0	65.3	34.2	33.5	73.3	42.3
Kerala	87.6	95.7	89.7	92.8	99.4	94.1
Tamil Nadu	59.7	91.8	71.2	78.4	95.1	84.1
Uttar Pradesh	11.6	44.2	17.2	17.5	52.3	23.0
West Bengal	23.1	66.5	33.0	36.2	81.7	44.5

(Powell, L. and Agarwal, R. 2004 from National Family Health Surveys I and II)

Table 2: Causes of Adult Death in Kerala

Cause of Death	1987 rank	%	1996 rank	%
Heart Attack	1	10.4	1	14.28
Cerebral Thrombosis	7	2.4	1	14.28
Cancer	2	7.4	2	8.57
Accidents	4	3.6	3	5.7
Suicides	45	3	4	2.8

(Aravindan, K.P. and Kunhikannan, T.P. 2000)

Land reform acts began in 1964, but the actual reforms took place in 1969. These reforms gave laborers small amounts of land for farming. Agricultural unions developed, thus increasing the amount of pay for laborers on larger farms. Distribution programs include health care, and rationing systems for food, energy and basic household items. Kerala's educational systems focus on the lower and middle levels, providing free education (Murdoch 1980).

Kerala is India's most literate region. The current literacy rate shows that 90.92 percent of the people in Kerala are literate; the literacy rate amongst women 87.86 percent. This is quite different from the 65.38 of people and 54.16 of females in the all-India data (Powell and Agarwal 2004). According to UNESCO, Kerala's literacy rates reached what UNESCO refers to as "total literacy" (Dreze and Sen 1996). It is also striking that the rural female literacy rate, which is usually the lowest of the literacy rates, is higher in Kerala than in India's overall urban female literacy rate (Dreze and Sen 1996). The educational system in Kerala has obviously been extremely successful. "Kerala's education performance has been so impressive that it could receive the distinctive acclaim as the 'Kerala model'" (Tilak 2001). Some suggest that India's entire education system should undergo a "Keralization" (Lewis 1997).

Kerala's history has greatly influenced this literacy rate for quite some time (Tilak 2001). Missionary schools long encouraged women's literacy to teach both customs and religion (Jeffrey 1987). Matriliney is also given credit for this early women's literacy level (Jeffrey 1987). Even in the 1800's women in Kerala were more literate than in surrounding states (Jeffrey 1987). Though in 1870 it ranged from less than one percent to 15 percent, it was still many times higher than in Tamilnadu, the neighboring state, during the same time period (Jeffrey 1987).

Jeffrey (1987) links Kerala's communist ideology and government to its literacy successes. Jeffrey suggest that if the landless are literate, it is more likely for a communist voting group to emerge and to remain in power. Therefore, it was incredibly valuable to the Communist Party to continue education programs in Kerala, because they provided the political base for the party's electoral success. This combination of factors increases the involvement of the people in the government and the government in the people, making it nearly impossible to determine which acts first (Jeffrey 1987). This suggests that the government had a key role in the development of high literacy rates, but it did so upon a cultural base that was able to support it (Jeffrey 1987). Jeffrey thus argues that it was women that brought literacy to Kerala on the argument that "literate men have literate sons; literate women have literate children."

Another major obstacle for Kerala, as it is for much of the developing world, was to educate not only the elites, but also the laborers in order to reach total literacy. This also required an active program from the public and the government to overcome such difficult barriers. From 1989-1991, the state began a Total Literacy Campaign (Dreze and Sen 1996). It was a campaign model that has since been utilized by other Indian states. This campaign and education policies invested heavily in primary and secondary education and ignored higher education, and "it might suggest that universalization of elementary education is possible only if higher education is ignored" (Tilak 2001)

Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad, a political activist group, initiated the literacy campaign and its activists included citizens, non-governmental organizations, and major international organizations (Ekbal 1988). KSSP is a political organization that was initially founded to increase awareness about science writing in Kerala, but it quickly evolved into a political organization that uses power of the citizens to push for and accomplish policy directives (Raj

1983). “The ‘social revolution’ which the Parishat [KSSP] wants to help bring about is one in which these impoverishment and enrichment processes are reversed and where there is a forward motion of the entire society. The political consciousness and alertness and the high level of literacy in Kerala might be some of the contributing factors for the growth of this movement” (Raj 1983)

The mission for total literacy pushed by KSSP targeted people from age 6 to 60. The campaign used a mass of volunteers who measured the number of illiterate people in the areas and then started teaching after each person had been identified (Raj 1983). The program was unique because it taught not only reading, but also about “food, work, the dignity of labor, disease-prevention, drinking water, oral rehydration therapy, India’s freedom struggle, Panchayats (village level administrative political units), post offices, the equality of the sexes, fair-price shops, and immunization” (Dreze and Sen 1996).

Stabilizing population growth was another of Kerala’s major successes. One of the reasons is connected with female education, which is considered to be a reason that rates drop. Dreze and Murthi (2001) combine research to determine three effects that female education has on fertility. First, it influences the “desired family size.” Second it combines the first attribute with the number of births that are planned. Third, female education impacts the ability for a woman to actually reach and stay at the number of births that she plans. Generally educating females reduces the first attribute, or the desired family size for a number of reasons. The reasons listed vary from autonomy and modernization to education about disease, which decrease infant mortality, and thus decrease the need for a high fertility rate (Dreze and Murthi 2001). This paper adds that a fourth reason that fertility decline is inversely related to education

is that as women become more educated, time at first reproduction occurs later and generation time increases. Combining delayed education with fewer children greatly decreases the population growth. Since female education is so high in Kerala, it is not surprising that the fertility rate is very low.

Conclusion

Kerala is a unique and interesting place that entices those interested in population growth and gender equality to investigate further. Though its development background and history is fairly individual, this research hopes to better understand the human perspectives of Kerala's development for the betterment of all development strategies. This study will investigate the opinions and ideas of Keralites today about population growth and gender equality. The goal is to add a human perspective to the discussion surrounding Kerala as a model of development.

CHAPTER 2

PERSPECTIVES ON POPULATION GROWTH

Population Growth in Kerala, India

Kerala is a particularly interesting case study of demographic change due to its unique political situation, which is manifest in a literate society with high human development indices and stable population growth. The indicators for human development are strikingly different in Kerala than in all of the other states in India. Kerala is significantly more “successful” according to human development indices, which brings about a number of questions about how this occurred.

Total population statistics are shown in Table 1 for India nationally, and the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal for comparison. These latter three states are examined because their relation to Kerala highlights certain critical contrasts: Tamil Nadu is the geographical neighboring state, Uttar Pradesh is significantly less socially developed than Kerala and West Bengal has a similar political culture to Kerala. Kerala has a drastically more balanced sex ratio than the other states, which is also seen as a sign of social development.

Table 3: Population Statistics of Kerala and Surrounding States

State	Total	Male	Female
India	1,027,015,247	531,277,078	495,783,169
Kerala	31,838,619	15,468,664	16,369,955
Tamil Nadu	62,110,839	31,268,645	30,824,185
Uttar Pradesh	166,052,859	87,466,301	78,586,558
West Bengal	80,221,171	41,487,694	38,733,477

(Powell, L. and Agarwal, R. 2004 from Indian Census 2001)

According to Table 3, Kerala has the smallest population of all of these states. Kerala also has a small projected growth rate as well (Table 3), though it is growing slightly faster than Tamil Nadu at a rate of 1.19%. Kerala, however, has a lower crude death rate (5.4) than Tamil Nadu (7.3), which explains why its population growth rate is similar (Powell and Agarwal 2004). Though the census information is difficult to obtain, it is also possible that inter-state migration has impacted the crude population growth statistics.

Table 4: Projected Population Growth in Kerala and Surrounding States (in millions)

State	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	Growth Rate
India	934.2	1012.4	1094.1	1117.8	1263.5	1.35%
Kerala	31.0	32.5	34.2	35.6	36.9	1.19%
Tamil Nadu	59.4	62.2	65.0	67.6	69.9	1.17%
Uttar Pradesh	156.7	174.3	194.1	217.1	242.9	1.55%
West Bengal	74.6	79.9	85.4	90.8	96.2	1.29%

(Powell, L. and Agarwal, R. 2004 from Sample Registration by the Technical Group 1996).

Kerala also maintains a high population density as shown by Table 3, even though the population growth is fairly low. Kerala's population density rates eighth out of thirty-five Indian States. This has a particularly important impact on the development of Kerala, because there is little differentiation between urban and rural areas of Kerala; in many states, there is a stark difference in population densities from urban to rural areas, but in Kerala, there is a consistently less of a difference between urban and rural population densities.

Table 5: Population Density (Per square kilometer)

State	1991	2001
All India	273	324
Kerala	749	819
Tamil Nadu	429	478
Uttar Pradesh	548	698
West Bengal	767	904

(Powell, L. and Agarwal, R. 2004 from Indian Census 2001)

Methods

Thirty open ended interviews with doctors, teachers, students, and politicians were conducted with the intention of adding new information to the previously published demographic work in Kerala. The field aspect of this research was conducted between December 13, 2004 and January 11, 2005 in Kerala, India.

The interviews took place in Thrissure, Kerala, unless otherwise stated. Thrissure is a moderately sized town centrally located in Kerala.

The semi-structured interviews addressed two topics. The first was population stabilization. I prompted the participants by asking why they thought Kerala had reached a stabilized population. I allowed the interviewees to discuss their answers as long as they were willing or interested in discussing their answers. I wrote down their responses, noting the order in which they brought up each factor of fertility decline. I took notes during the interviews as opposed to tape recording to increase the interviewee's comfort with me. Some of the conversations included personal stories and important life events, and I wanted them to be at ease while speaking with me.

Gender equality was the second topic discussed in the interviews. The results of these questions will be discussed in the next chapter. I asked the participants if they thought that men and women were equal in any part of public or private life, particularly with regard to reproductive choices. I asked them to describe any personal experiences with gender equality or inequality. Though the interviews had two areas of general focus, the open-ended methodology provides the opportunity for discussion and personal anecdotes, which are also considered as important data in this discussion of perspectives on the state of Kerala.

The interviewees came from a cross-section of occupations and ideologies. The teachers I interviewed taught in both public and private schools from primary to collegiate levels. The students were college or graduate students. The doctors practiced in a community medicine center. The political group consisted of politicians, journalists, and members of active politically minded activist organizations.

Though this study does not attempt to represent the opinions of all citizen of Kerala, it does attempt to represent the participants accurately. This is not a comprehensive ethnography of Kerala; however, it is an attempt to discuss some of the complexities of the Kerala development experience through the perceptions and opinions of Keralites themselves.

Population Growth: Data Presentation

Freelist methodology was used in the collection and analysis of the population growth statistics. During the interviews, I would ask the interviewee why she or he thought that Kerala's population was stable, or why families chose to have less children. She or he would then list a number of factors she or he considered important in Kerala's population trends. I would record these factors in the order she or he mentioned them. This became the freelist used in the analysis.

As explained by Borgatti (1999), freelists are intended to evaluate the data in terms of frequency, rank (or sequence mentioned), and salience (or Smith's S). High frequency is considered to signify more salience, because most interviewees remembered to cite that particular factor. Borgatti (1999) also says that the relative order in which a person cites the item, or the rank, is also a measure of salience. When a person remembers to mention that factor early in the interview, it is given a low rank. A low rank indicates a higher salience. Generally, frequency and rank are inversely related because often people will remember the same factors early in the

interview. As they continue to talk, they will begin to remember less salient factors. The percent of the respondents who mentioned each item is also evaluated as an indicator.

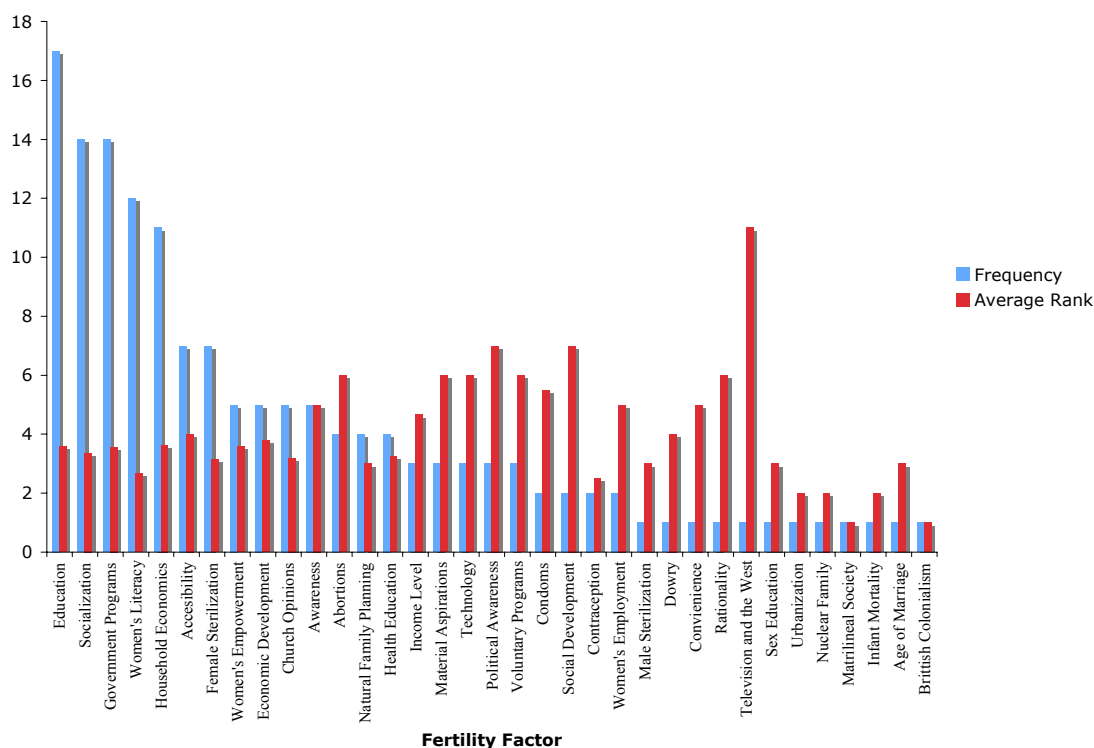
The first set of data collected from the interviews is presented in Table 6. All of the respondents are represented. The first column represents the respondent's answer to the question, "what factors do you think contribute to Kerala having a lower population growth rate than the rest of India, or the developing world?"

Table 6: Total Statistical Perspectives on Kerala's Fertility Trends

	Frequency	Average Rank	Smith's S	Percent (%)
Education	17	3.59	0.379	65.38
Socialization	14	3.36	0.358	53.85
Government Programs	14	3.57	0.344	53.85
Women's Literacy	12	2.67	0.337	46.15
Household Economics	11	3.64	0.274	42.31
Accessibility	7	4	0.178	26.92
Female Sterilization	7	3.14	0.183	26.92
Women's Empowerment	5	3.6	0.112	19.23
Economic Development	5	3.8	0.111	19.23
Church Opinions	5	3.2	0.097	19.23
Awareness	5	5	0.108	19.23
Abortions	4	6	0.057	15.38
Natural Family Planning	4	3	0.087	15.38
Health Education	4	3.25	0.108	15.38
Income Level	3	4.67	0.047	11.54
Material Aspirations	3	6	0.041	11.54
Technology	3	6	0.037	11.54
Political Awareness	3	7	0.034	11.54
Voluntary Programs	3	6	0.046	11.54
Condoms	2	5.5	0.03	7.69
Social Development	2	7	0.01	7.69
Contraception	2	2.5	0.048	7.69
Women's Employment	2	5	0.025	7.69
Male Sterilization	1	3	0.023	3.85
Dowry	1	4	0.019	3.85
Convenience	1	5	0.007	3.85
Rationality	1	6	0.02	3.85
Television and the West	1	11	0.003	3.85
Sex Education	1	3	0.012	3.85
Urbanization	1	2	0.03	3.85
Nuclear Family	1	2	0.03	3.85
Matrilineal Society	1	1	0.038	3.85
Infant Mortality	1	2	0.034	3.85
Age of Marriage	1	3	0.03	3.85
British Colonialism	1	1	0.038	3.85

Figure 2 compares frequency and average rank for each factor drawn from the interviews. The graph indicates that the actual relationship between frequency and average rank corroborates the predicted inverse relationship between the two factors. This is not true for the items that were mentioned only once across all the interviews, which were generally ranked lower than expected. Because they were mentioned only once, these factors have no basis for comparison and are therefore considered outliers.

Figure 2: Total Frequency and Rank of Fertility Factors in Kerala

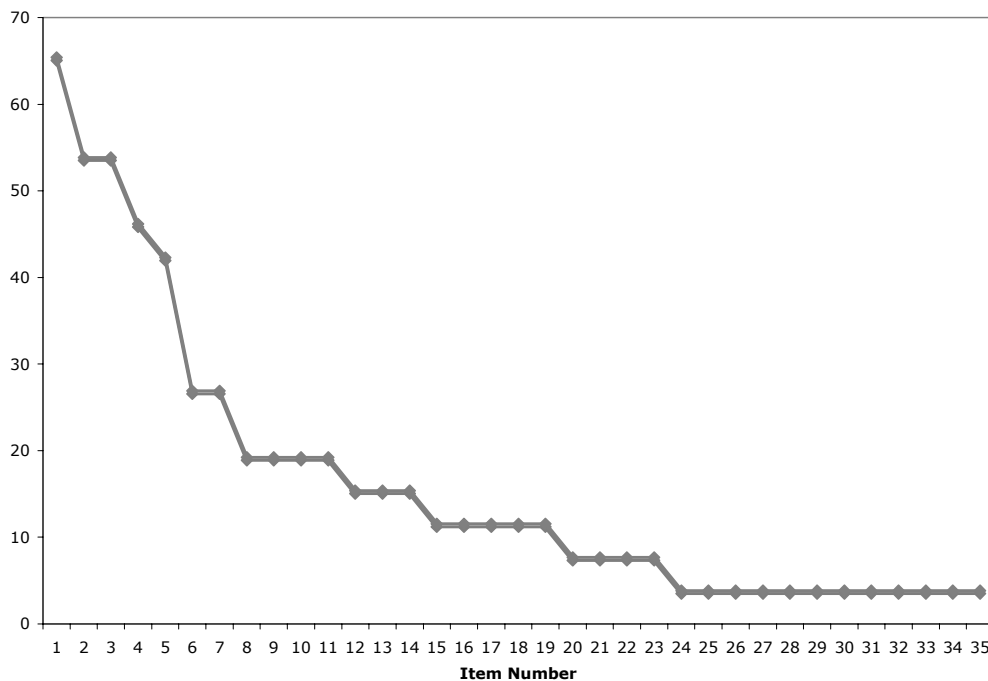


The data in a freelist analysis can be used to generate a cultural domain around a set of items, or in this case, a question. Cultural domain is an anthropological method to determine perceptions, but not personal preferences surrounding a particular item (Borgatti 1999). The

information generated from this analysis is fundamentally considered to be a web of related information. The individuals undergoing the interviews are not necessarily in agreement about the answers to the questions. The point of finding the cultural domain is not to determine the experience of the individuals, but to discover more about the culture through individual knowledge (Borgatti 1999).

This study looked for the cultural domain around population trends in Kerala. One way to determine cultural domain of this issue is to graph the relationship between the percent frequency and the factors mentioned. Any bend in the graph indicates the difference between the cultural domain and the idiosyncratic answers (Borgatti 1999). Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between the percent of the population that mentioned each factor and the factors themselves.

Figure 3: Relationship Between Frequency of Mention and Factor of Fertility Decline



Legend for Figure 2

Education	1	Voluntary Programs	19
Socialization	2	Condoms	20
Government Programs	3	Social Development	21
Women's Literacy	4	Contraception	22
Household Economics	5	Women's Employment	23
Accessibility	6	Male Sterilization	24
Female Sterilization	7	Dowry	25
Women's Empowerment	8	Convenience	26
Economic Development	9	Rationality	27
Church Opinions	10	Television and the West	28
Awareness	11	Sex Education	29
Abortions	12	Urbanization	30
Natural Family Planning	13	Nuclear Family	31
Health Education	14	Matrilineal Society	32
Income Level	15	Infant Mortality	33
Material Aspirations	16	Age of Marriage	34
Technology	17	British Colonialism	35
Political Awareness	18		

Though the figure does not provide a single distinct bend, it does identify a few natural breaks. The first seven items, education, socialization, government programs, women's literacy, household economics, health care accessibility, and female sterilization are clearly part of the cultural domain of the people interviewed.

The second tier, which may or may not be considered part of the cultural domain, includes women's empowerment, economic development, church opinions, awareness, abortions, natural family planning, health education, income level, material aspirations, technology, political awareness, voluntary programs, condoms, social development, contraception and women's employment.

The outliers are the last tier of the scree graph. They represent factors that individuals remembered, but do not represent a part of the cultural domain due to their low frequency. The

outliers include male sterilization, dowry, convenience, rationality, television and the west, sex education, urbanization, nuclear family, matrilineal society, infant mortality, age of marriage and British colonialism.

This data can be more deeply interpreted by separating the women's and men's responses. This data separation elucidates the differences in the way men and women are thinking about population growth in Kerala. Because population growth is a culturally sensitive and personally difficult topic, understanding the differences in perceptions between women and men can shed light on the cultural perceptions concerning this issue. Table 5 and Table 6 list the factors for fertility decline sorted by the women respondent's frequency and the percent difference in women and men's frequency respectively.

Table 7: Fertility Decline Data (Sorted by Women's Rank by Frequency)

	Total (n=26)		Women (n=15)			Men (n=11)			Women -Men (%)
	Total	%	Freq	Rank	%	Freq	Rank	%	
Education	17	65.38	10	3.3	66.67	7	4	63.64	3.03
Socialization	14	53.85	10	2.5	66.67	4	5.5	36.36	30.31
Government Programs	14	53.85	6	3.67	40	8	3.5	72.73	-32.73
Women's Literacy	12	46.15	5	1.8	33.33	7	3.3	63.64	-30.31
Household Economics	11	42.31	5	1.8	33.33	6	4.8	54.55	-21.22
Female Sterilization	7	26.92	4	4.5	26.67	3	1.3	27.27	-0.6
Accessibility	7	26.92	3	1.67	20	4	5.8	36.36	-16.36
Women's Empowerment	5	19.23	3	4	20	2	3	18.18	1.82
Economic Development	5	19.23	3	5.67	20	2	1	18.18	1.82
Abortions	4	15.38	3	5	20	1	9	9.09	10.91
Health Education	4	15.38	3	3.3	20	1	3	9.09	10.91
Income Level	3	11.54	3	4.67	20	0	0	0	20
Church Opinions	5	19.23	2	1.5	13.33	3	4.3	27.27	-13.94
Natural Family Planning	4	15.38	2	2.5	13.33	2	3.5	18.18	-4.85
Technology	3	11.54	2	5	13.33	0	0	0	13.33
Social Development	2	7.69	2	7	13.33	0	0	0	13.33
Contraception	2	7.69	2	2.5	13.33	0	0	0	13.33
Awareness	5	19.23	1	1	6.67	4	6	36.36	-29.69
Material Aspirations	3	11.54	1	9	6.67	1	5	9.09	-2.42
Condoms	2	7.69	1	7	6.67	1	4	9.09	-2.42
Women's Employment	2	7.69	1	3	6.67	1	7	9.09	-2.42
Dowry	1	3.85	1	4	6.67	0	0	0	6.67
Convenience	1	3.85	1	5	6.67	0	0	0	6.67
Sex Education	1	3.85	1	3	6.67	0	0	0	6.67
Urbanization	1	3.85	1	2	6.67	0	0	0	6.67
Political Awareness	3	11.54	0	0	0	3	7	27.27	-27.27
Voluntary Programs	3	11.54	0	0	0	3	6	27.27	-27.27
Male Sterilization	1	3.85	0	0	0	1	3	9.09	-9.09
Rationality	1	3.85	0	0	0	1	6	9.09	-9.09
Television and the West	1	3.85	0	0	0	1	11	9.09	-9.09
Nuclear Family	1	3.85	0	0	0	1	2	9.09	-9.09
Matrilineal Society	1	3.85	0	0	0	1	1	9.09	-9.09
Infant Mortality	1	3.85	0	0	0	1	2	9.09	-9.09
Age of Marriage	1	3.85	0	0	0	1	3	9.09	-9.09
British Colonialism	1	3.85	0	0	0	1	1	9.09	-9.09

To determine the difference in men and women's opinions about fertility decline, Table 8 is sorted by the difference between men and women. The outliers, including the lower part of the second tier with fewer than three responses, from Figure 3 have been removed. The large negative differences represent those responses that women thought were far more important than men. The responses near zero represent agreement when men's and the women's responses are similar. Responses with a large positive difference represent those factors that men thought far more important than did the women.

Table 8: Fertility Decline Data (Sorted by Women-Men's% Difference)

	Total (n=26)		Women (n=15)			Men (n=11)			Women-Men (%)
	Total	%	Freq	Rank	%	Freq	Rank	%	
Socialization	14	53.85	10	2.5	66.67	4	5.5	36.36	30.31
Income Level	3	11.54	3	4.67	20	0	0	0	20
Abortions	4	15.38	3	5	20	1	9	9.09	10.91
Health Education	4	15.38	3	3.3	20	1	3	9.09	10.91
Education	17	65.38	10	3.3	66.67	7	4	63.64	3.03
Women's Empowerment	5	19.23	3	4	20	2	3	18.18	1.82
Economic Development	5	19.23	3	5.67	20	2	1	18.18	1.82
Female Sterilization	7	26.92	4	4.5	26.67	3	1.3	27.27	-0.6
Material Aspirations	3	11.54	1	9	6.67	1	5	9.09	-2.42
Natural Family Planning	4	15.38	2	2.5	13.33	2	3.5	18.18	-4.85
Church Opinions	5	19.23	2	1.5	13.33	3	4.3	27.27	-13.94
Accessibility	7	26.92	3	1.67	20	4	5.8	36.36	-16.36
Household Economics	11	42.31	5	1.8	33.33	6	4.8	54.55	-21.22
Political Awareness	3	11.54	0	0	0	3	7	27.27	-27.27
Voluntary Programs	3	11.54	0	0	0	3	6	27.27	-27.27
Awareness	5	19.23	1	1	6.67	4	6	36.36	-29.69
Women's Literacy	12	46.15	5	1.8	33.33	7	3.3	63.64	-30.31
Government Programs	14	53.85	6	3.67	40	8	3.5	72.73	-32.73

From this table, it is clear that women believe socialization to be far more important than men. Socialization is discussed in depth later in this chapter. Socialization says that communication and social acceptance gives women the comfort to go to family planning clinics. Women also considered income level to be more important to lowering population growth than the men. This is also interesting, because it demonstrates that women are considering the costs of each child while deciding whether or not to have the next child.

The men in this study believe government programs, women's literacy, and awareness, voluntary programs, and political awareness to be more important factors in Kerala's population trends. Women's literacy and education are separate factors because the interviewees assured me that literacy and education are two different achievements, and therefore have different impacts on population growth. Many people noted that literacy is helpful for people to take more and better opportunities while education is a more difficult, but ultimately more empowering endeavor. Awareness was mentioned a number of times, and seemed to have direct connotations to educational community seminars. A number of towns and schools have "awareness seminars" where they talk about population growth issues. Men in this study considered the awareness that arose out of these efforts more important than the women. The political awareness mentioned here means whether or not the person is involved in politics, either through party membership or reading the newspaper. Men considered this type of involvement far more important in the process of fertility decline than the women.

The clearest agreement occurred around female sterilization. Both men and women in Kerala seem to consider female sterilization to be an important fact of fertility decline. Some level of agreement occurred around education, women's empowerment, economic development, and material aspirations. Women's empowerment was a general term that multiple people

mentioned. They often did not explain exactly what they meant by it, but said that it was a factor. Material aspirations will also be discussed later in this chapter. This factor was described as people desiring more material possessions, thus choosing to have less children in order to afford the material goods.

Table 9 depicts the interviewee's responses grouped by his or her occupation. Students have been excluded from this chart due their low number of students interviewed. Doctors were all community medicine practitioners and professors. The teachers worked on a spectrum from primary school to college and graduate school. The politicians are people involved in politics through journalism, activism, organizations, and direct party involvement. They are grouped together due to their close association with local, state and national news and events.

Table 9: Factors of Fertility Decline by Occupation

	Doctors	%	Teachers	%	Politicians	%
1	Female Sterilization	100	Household Economics	66.67	Women's Literacy	77.78
2	Socialization	80	Government Programs	55.56	Education	66.67
3	Women's Literacy	60	Education	55.56	Household Economics	55.56
4	Income Level	60	Socialization	44.44	Government Program	44.44
5	Education	60	Natural Family planning	33.33	Socialization	44.44
6	Health Education	60	Church Opinions	33.33	Accessibility	33.33
7	Accessibility	40	Economic Development	22.22	Awareness	33.33
8	Condoms	40	Contraception	22.22	Female Sterilization	22.22
9	Abortion	40	Awareness	22.22	Church Opinions	22.22
10	Government Programs	20	Political Activism	22.22	Voluntary Programs	22.22
11	Women's Education	20	Convenience	11.11	Women's Employment	22.22
12	Natural Family Planning	20	Accessibility	11.11	Women's Empowerment	22.22
13	Material Aspirations	20	Women's Literacy	11.11	Nuclear Family	11.11
14	Male Sterilization	20	Rationality	11.11	Technology	11.11
15			Dowry	11.11	Matrilineal Society	11.11
16			Voluntary Programs	11.11	Health Education	11.11
17			Television	11.11	Material Aspirations	11.11
18			Sex Education	11.11	Political Awareness	11.11
19			Urbanization	11.11	Economic Development	11.11
20			Abortions	11.11	Infant Mortality	11.11
21			Material Aspirations	11.11	Age of Marriage	11.11
22					Abortion	11.11
23					British Colonialism	11.11

Discussion: The “Fact of School”

Many people thought that either education or women’s literacy lead to reduced population growth in Kerala. The inverse relationship between education and fertility has been investigated in a number of settings in the developing world (Bhat 2002 and Caldwell 1980). In an evaluation of the social reasons for the inverse relationship between education and fertility, Basu (2002) reviewed multiple causes. Some propose that the content of school did not seem to contribute to population decline, but instead that the “fact of school” was the actual factor responsible for declining fertility (Basu 2002). The fact of school is the idea that fertility is not altered by the information being taught within the school, but instead by the mere fact that people are attending school instead of starting families at an early age. Thus, by increasing the generation time and decreasing the reproductive lifetime of each individual, population is certain to grow less rapidly.

In many traditional societies without formal or modern education systems, there is much learning and indigenous knowledge expected of each of the community members, thus, as Basu states, “the counterpart of literacy is not illiteracy (with all its negative connotations of ignorance, irrationality and so on) but *nonliteracy*; and nonliteracy is often a feature of “nonmodern” society in the sense of being nontechnical and non-Western, rather than nonthinking.” Basu then acknowledges that while Western-style schools may often be of poor quality in developing countries, there seems to be something distinct about the “fact of going to school or being schooled, independently of what school itself teaches, that must account for at least a part of the highly changed individual that the school girl becomes.”

This “fact of schooling” can also be interpreted in an ecological context for population decline. The fact of schooling often removes young women from societal pressure for marriage

and child rearing. This release of pressure thereby delays her time of first reproduction, and thus increases generation time. The “fact of school” is thus directly related to the phenomenon of fertility decline.

Basu omits any discussion of population ecology, portraying the “fact of schooling” as an almost mythical and inexplicable source of population decline. This lack of understanding reinforces the importance of interdisciplinary investigations. Ecological discussions, when singularly utilized to explain human population trends, omit a number of possible explanations demographic changes.

For example, Basu notes that child labor and apprentices may have the same effect on population growth because they are working instead of marrying and having children. Child labor is not a proven method of slowing population growth. This is because there are social, cultural, and political factors, such as socialization, which create a different set of circumstances around child labor, which are not present during educational development. When children attend school, they are an economic burden to the family, and the family is more likely smaller families. When the child is receiving an income by working, the family benefits economically from larger families. These differences are observed during interdisciplinary work, but are often overlooked when considering only one side of the population story.

Discussion: Socialization

Many women in this study believed that socialization is a major explanation for fertility decline. This is a particularly interesting difference because men in this study did not consider socialization to be as nearly important. Transitional theory is dependant on the idea of socialization. Demographic Transition Theory was the next major development in population studies after Malthus. The theory has divides demographic transition into three time periods.

First, it proposes that when birth rates and death rates are high, population growth rate is stable. As modernization occurs, medicines and methods of birth control become available. People begin to live longer, decreasing the death rate, however they do not lessen the number of children that they have immediately therefore retaining the high birth rate. This combination of factors means that the population growth rate spikes, the age structure is extremely young and sets the population up for a boom in numbers. After some time, the population will transition out of this state and into a completely developed state where both the birth rate and the death rate are low, and therefore the population will stabilize.

Socialization is a vital part of the Demographic Transition Theory. For each of the steps of transition occur, people must be willing to accept the modern ideas. Socialization means that as educated women choose to have fewer children later, that lifestyle becomes the norm of the society, whether or not the woman has obtained the same level of education. This influence of the educated on the uneducated is an important and fascinating relationship that provides even more import to the potential widespread impact of education.

Socialization has also been investigated in a number of different settings, including India. Moursund and Kravdal (2003) used evidence from India to investigate a variety of statistical factors on fertility to determine community-level results. They found that educated women had an influence on uneducated women's fertility choices. These educated women's choices and resources may be shaping societal culture in a way that alters the intimate behaviors of other women. Through women's observations, conversations and general contact with one another, socialization seems to be a possible reason for fertility decline. I propose that in Kerala, socialization is particularly important because women interact from a young age by attending school. This means that they receive and dispense information quickly and efficiently.

Socialization in education has been shown in a study by McNay, Arokiasamy, and Cassen (2003). They consider socialization to be an of social learning.. They combine the influence of education and socialization to create the idea of social learning. This may be a way that education reaches even farther into society than just the set of women who are educated and into the parts of society which are not yet educated, making education an even more powerful tool for national fertility decline goals.

Acceptance of education is also a factor of socialization. Differentials in educational attainment between men and women are often considered a reflection of the status of women and society and overall situation of gender politics in the particular culture. Societies with well-educated men do not experience the same benefits of fertility decline as those who also have an increase in education in women, however. This son-preference discussion is essential due to its depression on women's educational attainment, and thus, fertility decline in general. Basu suggests that there is a fundamental difference between men who marry educated women and those who marry uneducated women because they are more likely to continue educating their children, including their girls.

In a study in China, Feng and Quanhe (1996) found an interesting socialization fertility factor in China. Traditionally, most Chinese marriages were arranged. The newly wedded wife lived in the husband's parental home. In that home, sex was always considered a taboo, and the wife was also allowed to return to her childhood home for months on end. The result of this cultural attribute is that the first post-marital reproduction is usually delayed for a few years after marriage, increasing generation time and decreasing population growth.

In the past twenty to thirty years, arranged marriages of this type have declined. Feng and Quanhe believe that formal education has been a factor in the decrease of arranged marriages. Face to face contact with others outside of a particular Chinese village seems to be changing individual marriage choices. In this change they claim that the new types of marriages lead to increased intimacy between the husband and wife and therefore, the first post-marital reproduction is shorter than in the arranged marriage schemes. Feng and Quanhe do not report the impact that these changes in marriage selection have had on education, but it would be interesting to see which arrangement has the largest impact on population growth, since they are both dealing with postponing reproduction.

During discussions of development in Kerala, most people said that immigration and migration have a major impact on society. Some people also said that women have been moving more often as they become more educated. However, arranged marriages are still the norm, and it would be interesting to investigate the ideas of marriage selection, education, and movement in the context of Kerala.

Discussion: Transitional Theory

As noted above, the inverse relationship between fertility and education has been well documented in a number of situations. Some researchers, however, believe that this relationship is a transitional one that does not remain true after the fertility rate has transitioned, as in the leader-follower model (Bongaarts 2003). The leader-follower model is a formalized socialization theory. It says that as more of the community is educated, they will begin to have fewer children. However, the theory does not suggest that all of the population should or needs to be educated; instead, people will follow the educated people and begin to have less children.

Because of the high level of literacy in Kerala combined with the opinion that education and socialization are major factors of fertility decline, a discussion of this theory seems appropriate.

In a study using the data from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) from the United Nations, Bongaarts (2003) proposed an addition on the inverse relationship between education and fertility. Bongaarts (2003) evaluated two models by looking at the relationship between total fertility and transition phase. The first model proposed was the more typical “permanent difference.” This model says that throughout all of the transitional period, women with higher education tend to have a lower total fertility. In contrast, the “leader-follower” model proposes that there are fewer total fertility differentiations among women of various educational levels at the beginning of the transitional period. As women with secondary education or more begin to lower their total fertility, the women with primary, average, or no education follow the decrease, with a time lag. At the end of the transitional period, the leader-follower model suggests that the total fertility differentials among women of various educational attainment levels will become less and less obvious.

Bongaarts’ data somewhat supports the proposed leader-follower model, but due to a lack of information, the analysis is far from complete. By studying the DHS information for 57 countries, including India, Bongaarts found a slight narrowing of fertility differences between women of different educational attainment as the transition progressed, however the gap remained quite wide throughout. This study remains incomplete because none of the case study countries have entered the final stages of fertility transition. Because they are still transitioning, it is difficult to determine which of the fertility models will prove to be an accurate account of the empirical course of events. According to the information in this study, the interviewees believe that women’s education, a desire for material possessions and economic development, and

socialization suggest that people's perceptions of fertility decline in Kerala seem to be following this model on some level.

Discussion: Rising Material Aspirations and Economic Development

An introduction of modern lifestyles and expectations and western capitalism is often cited as a reason for declining fertility, and is often considered modernization theory (Freeman 1979). These materialistic goals are directly related to education and fertility because obtaining higher levels of material wealth usually requires a higher level of education. This theory suggests that as the women yearn for more wealth and for material possessions, she will also obtain more schooling. As this becomes an accepted part of society, and more families engage in such practices, more women are sent to schools, age at first reproduction is delayed, and generation time increases, thus decreasing population growth.

Freeman also reports that economic development and modernization is often coupled with a desire to give more materially to each child. Choosing to have fewer children makes attaining this goal easier. Many of the respondents in this study listed household economics or financial constraints as a reason for having fewer children. In a society where education is pervasive, and each child is an economic burden this response is not surprising.

Government Family Planning Programs, Accessibility, and Contraception

A number of respondents, in particular men, considered government programs to be an important fertility factor in Kerala. Also, a number of people, and particularly the doctors, considered health care accessibility to be one of the most important fertility factors.

Government programs have been a part of the population policy of Kerala for quite some time. In the early 70's there was a large push for male sterilization in camps around Kerala. The administrative success of this campaign was discussed by Vaslan (1977). In this analysis of the

campaign, Vaslan suggests that male sterilization is and should be a major part of Kerala's population policy, though most of the doctors in this study commented that male sterilization is no longer an accepted form of family planning in Kerala. Valsan also noted that to undertake such an issue, it is central to have the support of various political and religious leaders and that it is important to be tactful about religious differences. Incentives for sterilization are a major part of Valsan's argument, and he says that family planning should be integrated with traditional health care in Kerala's communities.

Because this evaluation of Kerala's population policy took place thirty years ago, some of his suggestions do not seem to apply to the state at present. I interviewed Vaslan in this study, and he agreed that vasectomies are no longer a part of people's family planning programs, though he hopes that in the future, they will reintegrate into the programs due to their efficiency and low cost.

The factors of health care accessibility and socialization factors have been recorded in a study in rural north India by Sandhu and Allen (1974). They found that accessibility to contraceptives is the most successful when combined with social acceptance, or the belief that others in the community are using contraception. It is possible that this combination of factor or perception of these factors is also at play in Kerala.

Conclusion

This research and evaluation of people's perceptions attempts to reflect the social and cultural ideas surrounding population growth trends in Kerala. This study is a valuable inquiry into what people in Kerala actually think and believe about their own reproductive destinies and the direction of their own society. Research into the actual population trends and the policy decisions around them has already been conducted, so this research extends and complicates that

body of knowledge by adding human perspectives. By using cultural domain and freelist methodology, education, socialization, government programs, women's literacy, household economics, health care accessibility, and female sterilization are clearly shown to be at the front of people's minds when they think about population growth. This is an interesting array of factors that because it provides a breadth that some demographic studies do not necessarily approach. In particular, female sterilization provides a fascinating insight into Kerala's success. This factor ties together gender equality and responsibility and social perceptions about fertility decline.

Though a variety of factors were mentioned for fertility decline, it seems that many of them are deeply connected parts of societal values and social and economic development. Socialization, health care accessibility, and education seem to be intertwined. Education places women around each other and exposes them to different ideas. It also increases the speed of socialization. If health care and family planning is accessible, and women are around each other more often sharing ideas, it seems realistic that more women will participate in family planning programs. The interrelated nature of the factors of fertility decline was clear in the interviews, and deserves further attention in this field of research.

The differences in men and women's responses to the same question provide some insight into the ways that each person views her or his own society. Women considered socialization and income level far more important than men did. Neither of these are programs or policies. On the other hand, men considered household economics, political awareness, voluntary programs, awareness, and women's literacy and government programs. Policies or political programming lay the foundation most of the men's responses. It is interesting that the

women and men seem to believe that there are vastly different forces acting on society to change population growth patterns.

Sorting the responses by occupation also provides insight into the way people think about population growth. The doctors assigned many more societal factors responsibility for fertility decline than did the teachers or politicians. It is possible that as doctors in a community health center, these women and men think about and consider population growth and family planning more often than the teachers or politicians. Also, the politicians considered education and women's literacy to be more important than the teachers. Though I am uncertain why they brought up education more often than the teachers, perhaps politicians are more willing to give political policies credit for the success than those directly involved in the implementation of the policies. These interviews do not necessarily provide information on why population growth has slowed, but they do give insight into how people in Kerala think about population growth.

CHAPTER 3

PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER EQUALITY

Introduction

This discussion of gender equality in Kerala contributes a more complex and difficult interpretation of Kerala's development experience. This thesis recognizes the historical and cultural context, while also representing the participants' opinions and experiences with this issue.

I approach this discussion of gender equality and fertility agency (defined as the control over one's own reproductive destiny) through a gender perspective as proposed by Greenhalgh (1995). She proposed that when we conduct feminist anthropological and sociological research, and in particular when considering reproductive and fertility relations, simplified ideas of women and status should be replaced by more complex ideas of gender. In contrast to this idea, however, many demographic studies in India have only communicated women's roles through statistical definitions of autonomy and status (Cleland and Hobcraft 1985). By conducting research that relies only on aggregate information about women excludes the "multidimensionality" of women's autonomy, status, and place in society (Oppenheim Mason 1986).

Such statistical studies (Cleland and Hobcraft 1985) are limited in their interpretation of women (Watkins 1993). Though these studies provide some information about the fertility dynamics, it is clear that they neglect much of the complexity and depth of the male-female

power relationships, which are clearly acknowledged in studies of gender. Also, only taking into account the status of women in a purely statistical manner constructs a system of thought and research that creates an “otherness” inherent in the individuals being studied. By looking into household economics alone (Becker 1960), only a limited understanding of fertility can occur. Jeffrey and Jeffrey (1998) state that the largest problem with these types of purely statistical approaches to fertility is that they propose only one individual indicator as the sole reason for the fertility outcomes without investigating what those indicators actually mean in respect to women’s autonomy or deeper investigations into people’s lives (Jeffery and Jeffery 1997). Most of these indicators are implying a modernization theory behind the indicators that they evaluate (Jeffery and Jeffery 1997). Through this theory, they are indicating that development should follow a western capitalist view by abandoning local culture to join the global market and its western values. By investigating gender relations, we can incorporate men and women, cultural dynamics, social organizations and power relations to craft research that becomes more representative of the people we study (Greenhalgh 1995).

Greenhalgh presents three points about gender that have been incorporated into this study and discussion. First, she says that gender is a “pervasive force that structures all aspects of life.” Because reproduction is a major part of a person’s life, it is an important manifestation of the culture-bound ideas of gender. Second, by studying gender, we are able to imply agency. Instead of suggesting that oppressed women are victims and passive bearers of children, studying gender accepts that even in repressive and patriarchal societies, women are able to resist and

portray some level of reproductive decision making ability. Third, gender studies are not as optimistic as demographic studies. Most demographic theories, and in particular demographic transition theory, predict that with lowered fertility rates, and economic development, women will gain status in society.

Studies of gender dynamics do not expect that such changes in power relations occur as rapidly or completely as often expected. This is probably because gender dynamics are more complicated and deeply entrenched parts of society than simple measures of household income or accessibility of health care, which can be altered through policy decisions. Using gender as a means of interpretation does give researchers explanations about why development does not necessarily lead to equality (Jeffery and Jeffery 1997). Though the statistically defined demographic theories of raised women's status continue to persist, Greenhaulgh notes the lack of clarity or depth in these studies. She even considers that these vague notions of women's status may lead to contradictory or meaningless results.

This thesis will include such complexities and issues that seem less optimistic, but represent the participants in a more complete and realistic manner. First, I will discuss the results from the interviews within each interviewed group, followed by a comparison of the answers between the groups. As before, all of these respondents will remain anonymous as agreed during the interviews.

Gender Equality Data: Doctors

At the Medical College, three of the five doctors (four female and one male) I interviewed discussed gender equality issues. Three of the five doctors stated that women in Kerala are better off than women elsewhere in India, though they all also limited their statements of equality to social realms. Amla stated that gender inequalities were stronger in the study site

of Thrissure than in the rest of Kerala. The other two doctors, Nirja and Janesh said that women do not make reproductive choices, but that the husband's family will decide how many children to have and when to have them. Nirja and Janesh said that children are considered equal in Kerala. They both noted that this is the fundamental reason that Kerala has achieved a favorable sex ratio.

Amla, a young female doctor and a well-liked teacher in the Medical College, told me that she recently attended a conference about gender equality. She said that men seemed to be the most enthusiastic supporters of women's equality. She found this quite amusing, because Amla believes that they are willing to speak up at conferences but not follow through with their words in the actions of daily life. Amla also noted that men in Kerala are quite idle. Everyone in Kerala is accepting of a man reading the newspaper for two hours a day, but a married woman is generally not allowed to relax and read newspapers or books. Amla says that this leads to women not being quite as informed as men because they do not keep up with the news.

In the introduction of the gender equality section, I mentioned that even in oppressive regions, women have the personal agency necessary to be in some control of their own reproductive destinies. Amla described such a situation:

“Once, I had a servant, and her husband did not want her to have any kind of permanent contraception. So she arranged to go have it done on her own without the consent of her husband. We supported her. This would never have happened in Tamilnadu. Education is what makes that difference. So it [education] can make the final difference in a woman's choice.”

Understanding and acknowledging that such cases occur in Kerala indicates that women in Kerala are not always passive in their reproductive decisions, but that they are taking into account their own personal desires and plans as well. Though the other two doctors, both female, suggested that women are not in control of their reproductive decisions, and in many cases they do not seem to be, some women are seeking out medical consultations and assistance beyond the limitations of their homes.

Gender Equality Data: Politicians

The politicians consist of a group of three journalists, a think tank member, a development center, and three members of Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) This group is broadly defined and consists of a number of wide-ranging and often contradictory opinions.

The journalists were all highly respected members of the community and have had productive careers. The first journalist Sanjit (male) was the editor for the national newspaper, the Indian Express, in the South India section. He felt that gender equality is much better in Kerala than in the rest of India. Sanjit said that the historical matrilineal system gave women strength and power, but as the nuclear family emerged, women lost their power to male domination. He stated that in Kerala children are considered equal, and that girl children are greatly celebrated. Women's personal economic power through employment seemed to him to be the way that women are regaining control over their own destinies. Sanjit even cited female elephant drivers as a major step for culturally accepted gender equality in Kerala.

Lokesh (male), the second writer with whom I spoke, writes books in Malayalam fiction, science, sports, economics, fiction, and social commentary. He gave yet another perspective when asked about gender equality in Kerala. Men and women are never equal because of the physical and biological differences, and therefore, Lokesh says that in the family, it is natural for

the women to want to cook and take care of children. He says that chess is the only way that men and women have equal standards. In the professional field, he believes that women are as competitive as men because they are highly educated. He commented that though boys and girls are considered equal in many parts of Kerala, it is not true in all communities in the state.

Because marriages are arranged, Lokesh says that it leads to less marital friction, and therefore there is a low divorce rate. He also emphasized that sex is not an important issue or a factor in a Kerala marriage. Neither marriage nor family is affected by sex, which keeps the families together and working very smoothly. Though modern education has greatly influenced Kerala, Lokesh does not believe that it has altered these traditional values or ideas about the family. When we talked about sex in society, he said that though westerners have the freedom to discuss sex, Keralites have the freedom to discuss politics in a way that is lacking in the west.

The third journalist Priya (female) agreed to a lengthy interview with me in her home. Many of these interviews were conducted in homes. However, a spouse, child, or servant would often be present. Priya did not have anyone at home, which made for an intense and candid interview. This journalist has been reporting in Kerala for 25 years, and specialized in reporting issues of women and their status in society. She became the first woman editor in the state, and an icon for many women in the region. My interview with her was a valuable part of this research, since she has followed Kerala's development and women with great interest. Her responses paint a more complicated picture than many other interviewees.

As with the other journalists, Priya also believes that the change from the matrilineal joint family to the nuclear family promoted males to the dominating status in the family. She says that families have become "isolated islands" which hurts women most of all. Though women in Kerala are literate, she thinks that the education stops at that level—literacy. Even when women

are working, most of the women she knows are unable to make their own economic choices without their husband's permission. One of Priya's close friends said, "The only choice I make in my life is what to cook." Priya also tells about a married couple with whom she is a friend. Both of them are educated and state legislators, and therefore politically powerful. However, the wife still has to serve the husband when they get home, even though the husband's career and place in society is identical.

Priya has noticed that now families use copious amounts of jewelry and exorbitant dowry in the weddings, even if they can't afford it, and it is not traditionally part of a South Indian wedding. She says that people feel that it is an integral part of the modern marriage. Even if women do object, Priya says that no girl will say no to this system because marriage is the pinnacle of a woman's achievement and otherwise they have no social status.

In her career as a journalist, Priya has spoken out frequently about women's rights, and in particular domestic violence. She notes Kerala tops India's statistics in domestic violence, alcoholism, and suicide. With such problems, she does not see Kerala as the success story that others portray. She says that domestic violence is considered a personal and family affair and the tears are the only acceptable option for suffering women. She pointed these statistics out by way of emphasizing that health care or life expectancy statistics are only the beginning of the effort to provide better lives for people.

Sexual abuse in Kerala is a problem she has thought about deeply. "Women are not safe from cradle to grave." This problem is complicated by the fact that Kerala women are not mentally prepared to react to sexual abuse or harassment, even when it occurs in public settings such as buses or markets. This is a cultural mindset that Priya says is compounded because sexually abused women have no role in society. Priya states that women might speak out about

sexual abuse if they could play some role in the resolution of the problem; however, because sexually abused women become pariahs in their society, few women choose to draw attention to instances of sexual abuse. Priya is most worried about the mental disempowerment that she feels deeply affect Kerala's women. Even educated women subject themselves to such difficulties in their lives, and Priya wants them to develop the mental power to change their own lives and society in turn.

Even though these hardships are oppressive, abused women come to Priya for help. She continues to give these women a voice by writing their stories in hopes that by increasing awareness about these women's lives, she is empowering more women to come out of silence. Such a career has been quite controversial and difficult for her. She says that most of her stories are considered unimportant and she has had to fight incredibly hard to reach the top of her field. Early in her career, she was one of the first female journalists who wanted to go into the field and conduct investigative journalism. These actions are considered immoral by many because she would travel alone and for long hours. She hopes that the path she created will make it easier for other women take her messages seriously in order to better their own living conditions.

Namita (female) works as a teacher, lobbyist, and coordinator of a center that promotes and researches development and governance in Kerala. Because her multifaceted career is largely oriented around government policy, I placed her in the politician grouping. She began our conversation by saying that all statistics say that gender equality is prevalent in Kerala. However, she, like Priya, quickly noted that there are high alcoholism and suicide rates in Kerala. She also believes that despite statistical literacy rates, empowerment remains low.

In the home, she has seen the worst forms of inequality, even though in public, many men say that women in Kerala are empowered. She feels that this rhetoric is a way to keep women from complaining about their place in society. Namita says that if women do complain, men will “knock them out of what they have worked for.” The glass ceiling generally enforces this limitation for women in Kerala. Namita talks about women who have overcome these barriers, such as Priya. Though they have accomplished great feats in Kerala, she says it is not easy for other women and that we cannot expect all women in Kerala to follow this path. Becoming an accomplished woman in Kerala often means giving up parts of your life that are deeply important, such as family, and social acceptance. Even those who want to have careers are not always allowed. Namita has two close friends who are licensed medical practitioners, but neither one of their husbands will permit them to work.

Namita says that family is the main concern for women in Kerala. Women would prefer to keep their family intact in Kerala than to walk out of an unhappy home life, which she says is enforced by a strong social control too. She sees society-forcing women into wanting to be the ideal woman. The ideal woman in Kerala is a family woman who is always ready to compromise her career for her husband and family according to Namita. She is the ideal mother and if there is physical or emotional violence, she should just suffer it for the better of the family, which leads to what Namita sees as a destructive pattern where suffering is glorified.

Namita also sees that submitting to the patriarchy gives many women some comforts that they would otherwise be deprived of. She told me the story of another friend of hers who wanted two children. Her husband wanted only one child, and when she became pregnant with the

second, he forced her to have an abortion. After that incident, her friend divorced her husband, but because that choice is disrespected here, she moved to the Gulf States in the Middle East to start a new life. Namita says that most women are not willing to make such drastic changes as alter their lives so deeply, and thus they remain in these poor situations.

When Namita has talked to friends in Kerala about the problems of India, she says that many women have not yet identified these issues as problems. They will say that the problems in India are poverty. Namita has heard some say that ideas of women's liberation are imported from the West, but she thinks Indians need to redefine gender roles in India. She sees the husband-wife relationship as a slave and master relationship, and Namita thinks that this is the first place to start in that redefinition.

K.K. George (male) is on the executive council and a researcher at CSES (Center for Socio-Economic and Environmental Studies). He considers it to be an experimental organization based on action research. He wants it to develop into a think-tank with public policy oriented research (especially on education). He has conducted a large quantity of research concerning social and economic development in Kerala, much of which is cited in this paper, and therefore was able to give a perspective on these issues based upon his research in the state.

K.K. George said that women are not equal to men in status, even though they are equal in social and statistical indicators. The attitude in Kerala towards women is very conservative, and K.K. George emphasizes this by saying that he has not seen many women in politics, administration, higher education, or corporate areas. Women who do become employed hit a

glass ceiling of sorts because he says that families allow women to obtain an education, and work, but in the end, people want women to compromise their careers for their families in more traditional ways. Within the home, K.K George thinks that women are equal to men if they bring more income into the home, in which case they might have more of an influence in financial matters.

“Unemployment problem in Kerala is largely a problem of the educated” (K.K. George 2005). Women are quite educated in Kerala, but there are more unemployed educated woman than men. As seen in Table 10 (adapted by K.K. George 2005 from B.A. Prakash and M.P. Abraham 2004) educated rural women consist of the largest unemployment block in Kerala. This recent research supports comments in various interviews, including K.K. George’s, that education does not necessarily lead to employment and economic autonomy for Kerala’s women.

Table 10: Unemployment Statistics in Kerala

Category	1993-1994 Unemployment in Kerala Total (%)	1993-1994 Unemployment Of educated Persons above 15 years (%)	1999-2000 Unemployment in Kerala Total (%)	1999-2000 Unemployment Of educated Persons above 15 years (%)
Rural				
Male	7.2	18.5	7.6	15.0
Female	15.8	49.6	19.7	49.1
Person	9.4	27.2	10.9	25.5
Urban				
Male	7.6	12.6	6.9	9.9
Female	24.4	40.6	26.4	41.9
Person	12.0	21.4	12.5	21.2

(B.A. Prakash (ed.), Kerala’s Economic Development: *Performance and Problems in the Post Liberation Period*, SAGE Publications, New Delhi, p. 94, 95, 97.)

Vinay (male) is one of the active members of KSSP, which has been previously mentioned in this paper. He commented on the role of women in Kerala saying that Kerala has maintained feudal values, which leads Keralites to think that the girl has to be under the

maintenance of men at all times. They think that marriage is something that has to be earned by the woman and something that she achieves, and the parents have to pay a price for it in dowry. He thinks that a girl is always considered one step below the boy, and it remains this way in Kerala. Vinay says that people in Kerala believe that for the family to be stable, which is considered a sacred value, the women must be considered lower than the men. He believes that patriarchy still rules in Kerala though it is not any more prevalent here than in the rest of India.

When discussing the unemployment of educated women in Kerala, Vinay said that the participation of women in education and some professions such as teaching and nurses is very high though the total formal employment for men remains higher than that for women. Vinay sees very few women in politics, or in the civil service, and says that if women take a role in public life, the public and media are more likely to attack her character. Even though India had a woman prime minister, Indira Gandhi, Vinay believes that she still had great limits as a leader because she was a woman.

Whereas most people in Kerala would rather be unemployed than conduct manual labor, Vinay sees women taking up this work in Thrissure, including road construction, sweeping the roads, and flattening out the roads before the tractors come through. He says that all of the street sweepers are women. He also notes that early morning, men are sitting on the street curbs idle while the women are sweeping past them on the sidewalks. The only idle women that Vinay knows are the ones who have finished school and are waiting for marriage. He ended our conversation by saying that we are far from recognizing women as equal human beings. He said that in Kerala, “the status of women is deplorable, and it is the last item of modernization to come to a country; everything else gets modernized, your house, your toilet, your kitchen, but the man-woman relationship is the last thing to happen.”

Gender Equality Data: Teachers and Students

Two teachers and the principal spoke to me at an all girls' Catholic primary and secondary school in Thrissure. The principal, Sister Gabrielle, told me that men and women are not equal. She said that men prefer to go outside of Kerala for business and industry, while women cannot go as easily as men to earn a doctorate outside of the state or country. According to Sister Gabrielle, almost all women are willing to get foreign jobs, and some are beginning to seek them now.

Onella, a female who teaches secondary English said that girls are not considered equal to boys, and that this state persists because the girls and boys remain separated. She did note that the situation in Kerala is not as bad as in Northern India. Importance is given to the boy, and the girls are not given as much recognition. Onella says that the man is normally dominant in the family even if he has defects, and that the men blame the women for problems. But she reiterated that life here is not as difficult as in other places because women are employed. Even with the education and employment, it is usually the middle class families who want their girls to work because the upper-class families want their girls to become housewives.

The third teacher at this school with whom I spoke was Sister Basheera. She was hopeful that equality is coming now for women and girls. Our interview was conducted in a classroom between classes. She told me that the school does not have a library, so she has been collecting books for the students to read. Between classes they can come to this classroom, and she will lend them books that she thinks they will enjoy, and yet be challenging. Throughout the

interview, young students would come into the room periodically to ask about a particular biography or novel that another student had been reading. Sister Basheera worries that the students work so hard that they do not have time to read for personal enrichment. She has a strong faith in the students and says, “When I find a girl who is interested, I push her to do something great.”

Sister Basheera has seen that the girls score equally on the competitive exams as boys in school, and she feels that this is one of the prime ways that they have shown that girls and boys are equal. She says that the girls in Kerala are timid. Even though they are intelligent, talented, and score well on exams, they are not selected for many high honors. Nevertheless, she says that very few of these students leave Kerala or the country because people feel that women and children should be protected, though she said that these attitudes are changing as well. The girls who attend this school are the best in the state, but according to Sister Basheera, they are not willing to work to improve society as a whole. She motivates them to involve themselves in politics, but she does not belong to any political party herself. She says, “If these talented girls would enter politics, they could really change things.”

At a Christian College outside of town, two of the professors spoke about some of these issues. The first, Saloni teaches environmental science at the college. She said that about 60% of the lecturers at the college have their PhD's and that there are only five female lecturers of about sixty lecturers. Most of the male staff continues their education immediately after they get a job, but she says it is not as easy for women. Saloni has two sons, and after 11 years of teaching she feels prepared to go back to school for her doctorate now that her sons are old enough. She says that professionally, men and women are equals, but women usually chose to stay home instead of pursuing jobs, though she feels that this trend is beginning to change.

The second teacher at this college, Raveena a female commerce teacher instructs human resource management, computer skills and communication skills. She is only 24 years old, and is outspoken even as the head of the department walks in and out of the room. She immediately pointed out that in this college, nearly 75% of the students are girls and they get higher marks than the boys. Raveena said that many of the girl students automatically become introverted in school because they feel that the other people will treat them poorly if they speak out. However, she wanted to make it clear that there were girls who were better and bolder communicators than the men. With Malayalam as the language of choice, Raveena does feel that the communication skills in Kerala are low, which means that it is hard for them to express their knowledge. She feels that this is especially challenging for the girls.

Raveena is Nair, which is the matrilineal caste discussed in the first chapter. She describes her caste as one in which the woman is the main person in the home, and given much respect in the family. The majority of people think that social justice is best, according to Raveena, though she still sees professional discrimination because people don't think that men and women should integrate. She said that the Nairs believe "If we educate a man, 1 person is educated. If we educate a woman, a whole family is educated."

When speaking of marriage, she said that fewer women are married early and that love marriages are becoming more common. However, Raveena says that women give much preference to their parents because they think that their parents will know what is best for them; parents do not want harm for their children and they, as parents, are mature enough to make marital decisions. She says that parents are worried about their children choosing spouses with poor qualities, and therefore protest love marriages, but in her eyes, these trends are changing. Raveena is 24 and unmarried, which is not a problem with her family.

One of the male students at the college, Manik says that there is not much gender equality in Kerala because there is so much discrimination in the home. He says that boys are allowed to leave the home to study, work, or travel, but that girls must restrict themselves locally. He sees less discrimination in the work force than in the home.

Two other college students, sisters Chandi and Deepal, think that people in Kerala feel that men and women are equal. Even though people say this, they believe that in the home, the men are still in charge because the women do not earn any money, so they do not have much of a say in the financial affairs. Chandi and Deepal said that though some people say that women should not apply for jobs once they are married, they both intend to keep their jobs after marriage.

Chetana is a statistics teacher at an all women's college. She said that society feels that it is important for education of women here, but that life is not much better for women just because of women's education. When her husband walked out of the house she told me emphatically that women are not equal in the home because men feel superior to women, especially in Kerala. Chetana's marriage is a difficult one, but she is unable to leave it because of the social barriers to divorce. Instead she just avoids conflict by never speaking with her husband.

In Cochin, about 60 kilometers from Thrissure, Gwenith is principal of a primary and secondary school. She feels that education empowers people, and in particular women. But she is hesitant in this comment, saying that it is not as much empowerment as she would hope. All of the female teachers in her school are educated and employed, but when she overhears them

talking, she realized that they have no control over how they spend their salaries. Gwenith has been surprised however, that even though the cleaning women in her school are considered socially subservient, they are far more independent in their financial decisions than the teachers. She supports their decisions because she knows that often their husbands are not working, which means that they must have control over their income.

Gwenith quotes a female Kerala author by saying that gender discrimination is not what it used to be, but that people still do not write everything that they want to write. Women's empowerment is coming to Kerala, according to Gwenith, but she considers the present a time of flux. Within her school, she has noticed that women are making their voices heard about their children's education and that for the first time there are children at her school with divorced parents. Gwenith knows women who are going into business and is hopeful that this empowerment will continue into the next generation of Keralite women.

Ravish has just entered retirement from being an English teacher and the Principal of the government college in Thrissure. He has been a long-term member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and a supporter of women's rights. He said that his ideology is always centered around giving the largest number of people a better quality of life. Ravish believes that women work so much and suffer greatly even though they know that there are limitations on their futures. He also said that women are still considered lesser than a man, even in Kerala where they have made so much progress in social development, Ravish said that Kerala has not achieved this change. Though he believes in the importance of this change, he said that change can only happen through organized resistance against injustice and different standards. He

compared the women's rights movement in Kerala to the caste resistance movement. The movement was organized, but it has not achieved all of its goals as yet. Ravish thinks that the caste system is still a part of marriage decisions, even though many people think that it is wrong. Many large cultural problems such as women's rights have not been solved because of residual ideas of caste.

Shila is a teacher at the government college and Ravish's wife. Shila spoke with me about her servant, Deepti's difficult situation. While we were having tea one afternoon, Deepti came into the room and said that she would not be in on Monday. Shila came back to say that Deepti's daughter would be in domestic court with her husband on Monday. When her daughter had a girl child instead of a boy, the husband left her saying that he didn't want a girl. Now the child is 7 years old, and the husband has returned asking for custody of the child. Zaina noted that even though all of the women like Deepti and her daughter can read and write, it does not mean that they are equal; serious problems such as this one still occur, especially among the working poor.

Domestic workers like Deepti live in small houses or shacks by the railroad tracks, which provide little security, especially to single women. There are no places for women to go if their husband, father, or son-in-law threatens them. Zaina and Shila knew of a few women's shelters, but they are located in the capital city of Trivandrum, which is too far for these women to move. Shila said that some people ask why they do not just leave. She says that she has heard many domestic helpers say over and over that it is better for them to have a man around the house, because it is safer for them. If there is no man, single women in this situation often feel completely insecure. So instead of leaving their husbands, these women just work to support

their intermittent, unemployed, and often alcoholic husbands instead of going off on their own. Shila feels like these women have a strength that is so deep that it was hard for her to describe. Deepti continues to work and help her daughter keep custody of her daughter, but it will be a difficult battle, and one that puts additional strain on her life.

Alexandria, another English teacher at the college, is a close friend of Shila and Ravish. She invited me to her house for the afternoon to talk. Her husband was at work, and we spoke for hours. She is proud that education is better in Kerala, but she was quick to tell me that education does not mean gender equality. Within her own department at the college, she knows that there is salary equity, but that does not mean that women get the same level of success. For example, she says that decisions in the faculty are still made without consultation with the women. The men make the decisions, and they don't tell the female professors what they are doing.

Alexandria also mentioned the professional glass ceiling that limits many women's career growth. She sees many of these women confined to their husband and children, but Alexandria refuses to blame the husbands for these outcomes. She said that many women who choose careers over family feel guilty after making that decision; this means that only very few women make it to the highest levels of their careers. She does not believe that oppression in Kerala is overt. However, she said that when a woman chooses a career, society puts guilt on her. Alexandria said that the teachers attend seminars on awareness and equity, but they don't actually have it.

She also believes that these patterns begin at a young age. She told me of the recent elections with the Student's Federation of India at the college. The college decided that there would be a predetermined number of girls in leadership roles in this organization. Alexandria

asked a group of her female students if they would contest the election. The girls told her they wanted to be in the election. When Alexandria asked which position they wanted to run for, the girls said that the boys in the organization had not told them yet. Alexandria said that these girls were not making decisions, even though they were politically involved. She said that even though the girls are smart and efficient in Kerala they are still taking orders from the men.

Alexandria said that women's work is not valued in the same way as a man's work. She said that maids work and bring money to their children, but no one recognized it as work. She tells me a story about a day at work where the women in the English department were complaining about how hard they had been working, and a man said that it was always the women who are complaining. She asked him what he was doing last night. He said that he was working on a paper to publish. Then she said, but you see, this is different, because you will get recognition for this paper from the community. Women, on the other hand get no recognition for the work that they do. So, you can't find fault with women when they complain, because it is only when complaining to other women that their work is recognized.

When talking about domestic life, Alexandria said that outside the home we see that women are doing well in life, but when we investigate more deeply, we see that there is a lack of understanding of the self, which she considers a fundamental problem plaguing the women of Kerala. She said that women have to look for what actually makes us happy in life instead of doing what is expected of us. She says that women are expected to be housewives. In her house, Alexandria says that her husband knows how she feels about gender equality, so he is more

lenient and allows her to make many of her own decisions, but she says that he allows this because he knows she will not cross the line. He knows that all she wants is the freedom to think and believe these ideas. If she wanted more, including political leadership, Alexandria believes he would protest, however, he has not said no yet. She said that she knows plenty of educated women who are not even allowed this level of decision in their own homes.

According to Alexandria, girls in her college say they want to work because they want economic freedom. She believes that this is the greatest advance that we have made as women in Kerala. She said that women are now fully conscious of the power that money holds.

Domestic violence is a subject that is close to Alexandria. She told me that her sister, who married a man who physically abused her. She left her husband and did not return to him. Because she has a strong education, employment, and family support, she was able to continue on with her life. Alexandria's father has been looking after her sister, but it is still difficult to be a divorcee in Kerala. When looking for a husband for her daughter, they initially heard from many people because she was a smart and accomplished girl. When they found out that she was the daughter of a divorcee, no one wanted to marry her. At school gatherings, it is very hard to for the children of these divorcees.

Because this happened when Alexandria was a child, her parents and sisters never told her everything, because they didn't want to ruin her optimistic ideas and dreams about marriage. Alexandria's maids have also been involved with domestic violence. She believes that women in

the lower strata of society are often much more expressive and they quarrel with their husbands. She thinks that they are able to do this because they have nothing to lose. She said that her maid is a strong woman, but that she is susceptible to violence and physical abuse. There are teachers in the college who say that their husbands abuse them, but she does not know if she should believe them or not.

We also talked about women's happiness. Alexandria said that many women say that they are happy, but more often it is just that they have nice belongings. She says that outsiders see a woman in Kerala and think that she is smart and has a job, but Alexandria believes that women are not happy. She tells me that she used to travel in ladies departments on the train, and she would watch the faces of the women when they were thinking; it was obvious that those women were unhappy. She described it as some kind of deep unhappiness that they can't share with anyone. "Personally, I am not happy with what is going on. Personally, I say that women in Kerala can do much better."

Conclusions and Recommendations

Qualitative research often exposes more complication, and this study is no different. By asking people their opinions on population growth and gender equality, it becomes more clear that Kerala is home to a range of opinions. Some are more satisfied than others with the status of the state. Though there was a variety of opinion, many people, and women in particular, are unhappy with their situation in Kerala, and some feel that the state has not followed through with their promises to the people, and to women in particular. Kerala's development successes should be praised and discussed in the literature and in the international community, but I would argue that the praises are fairly empty unless they also contain the words, opinions, and stories of the people who live in Kerala.

As women have gained through equal educational opportunities, they have remained deeply unequal in their homes. Some people said that men and women are equal in the public sphere, while others said that there is a strong glass ceiling preventing true equality for career women. They also noted that there is a strong social pressure for women to receive their education, and follow that with marriage and two children. To do otherwise seems to be outside of the social norm. Within the home, most of the respondents said that there is a range from very little gender equality or outright repression. This seems to be the part of Kerala's society that is the most difficult for Kerala's women.

Domestic violence is one of the reasons that the home life can be so difficult for Kerala's women. Domestic violence seems to be an unspoken concern for some women in Kerala. Currently, women cannot speak out for fear of losing their place in society. Schooling, even if it does lead to decreased fertility, does not always lead to a decrease in domestic violence, as shown in Kenya (Bradley 1995). It is possible that this qualitative data supports such a hypothesis. I would propose that working toward acceptance of abused women while reaching toward less violence could be a vital pressure point of change for Kerala's women.

Though I do not want to portray the women of Kerala as passive victims, I do want to expose the reality and voices of these women's lives. Because Kerala has become cited as a model of social development, problems such as gender inequality are often overlooked in favor of focusing on Kerala's success. Research that does not undermine the successes of this unique state while still recognizes the more complicated reality is necessary if we are to truly understand the context of Kerala and begin to consider possibility of Kerala as a model of development.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions and Recommendations

Western industrialization has proved to be an unsustainable way of providing a meaningful life to the earth's human population. Though it is unsustainable, people of all national histories deserve a worthwhile life. Most of the world's human population lives in the developing world, which has scarce economic resources and few options for large-scale social development. Kerala's social development provides hope and encouragement that western development schemes are not the only options for the world of limited resources. I wanted to investigate the current state of Kerala's social development through the voices of the people in Kerala. I feel that in order to truly understand the Kerala model of development, we must understand how the people of Kerala feel about and are personally impacted by Kerala's development. This research attempted answer a complex and integrative question. First, I wanted to investigate how social perspectives interact with gender politics within the social, political, and cultural context of Kerala, India. Those interactions are intricately tied to lowered population growth as a social development success in Kerala. The ultimate purpose of the question is to question and investigate the idea of Kerala as a model of development.

Using the cultural domain methodology to analyze the freelist data gave a way to quantify the information from the interviews. From this analysis, I determined that there exist a set of seven distinct items within the cultural domain around population growth in Kerala. These

items are education, socialization, government programs, women's literacy, household economics, health care accessibility, and female sterilization. These items were mentioned enough times in the interviews to consider them a clear part of the cultural domain. Some of them were mentioned more often and earlier in the sequence than other, such as socialization, government programs, and women's literacy. These issues are clearly at the forefront of people's minds when they think about population stabilization in Kerala.

A closer examination of these freelist responses showed that there were clear differences between men and women's responses to the question, "Why has population growth stabilized in Kerala?" Women considered socialization and income levels to be more important. Men considered household economics, political awareness, voluntary programs, awareness, women's literacy, and government programs influential in population stabilization.

It is particularly interesting that the women seemed to consider factors internal to the family more important than the men. The men seemed to think that external factors, such as social policies were more important. I would propose that this is the case because of what exposure the men and women receive. The high unemployment rate among educated women means that most women in Kerala spend the majority of their time within the household and local community. The men, however, spend much of their time outside of the home. Because idle time is more accepted for men, they often spend more time with engaged in political forums. These two viewpoints may be the reason that women and men have different perspectives on population stabilization.

Women and men agreed most that female sterilization impacts population trends in Kerala. This agreement is coupled with the fact that female sterilization is a part of the seven factors within the cultural domain, giving it more weight. Female sterilization relates the ideas

of gender equality and population growth quite clearly. Both men and women recognize that women bear much of the burden in the process of stabilizing their population growth. Though male sterilization is less intrusive, it is the women who undergo the procedure in order to limit the number of children per couple.

The data from the gender equality section provides a different perspective on a similar idea from above. I was interested in how people in Kerala thought about gender equality in the reproductive sphere and beyond. Women's autonomy or the lack of autonomy in reproductive choices has vast impacts on population growth within Kerala. The interviewees gave a mix of responses about autonomy in reproduction. Though there may be some level of female decision-making, there is still a significant amount of male control over the number and timing of children his wife has. This is echoed by the fact that female sterilization, and therefore the female burden of family planning, is so common in Kerala.

Modernization theories often assume that women's rights and gender equality are a part of the western style of development. People tend to think that once women are able to read and have less children to care for, her life become easier and she is able to gain control over patriarchy. Kerala is often considered a model for development. My work in Kerala seems to suggest that a decrease in the number of children a woman has does not necessarily mean that her autonomy will immediately increase. Many of the women, in fact, said that deep inequalities still exist within the home.

I do not want to discount the Kerala's social development successes. Instead, I only intent to point out that relying solely on statistical data about social development indices misses many of the fundamentally important parts of people's lives. If we are interested in finding ways to truly improve people lives, we will have to admit that improving live expectancy, population growth rate, and sex ratios alone is a simplistic and naïve view of development.

This study is not a comprehensive investigation into the perspectives of all people in Kerala. A longer study with more resources would be able to provide more depth and breadth into this complicated question. I would be interested in further studies into the relationship and interactions between gender politics and development. These types of studies provide an insight into the complex and intertwined nature of development and the human experience. If we are serious about finding a true model of sustainable development in the developing world, a deep and complex investigation of population growth and gender equality, which includes the voices local people must be included in our search.

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