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Hemangini Gupta May 12, 2016

Start Up Fictions: Gender, Labor, and Public Culture in Neoliberal Bangalore, India

By

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Doctor of Philosophy

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

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Start Up Fictions: Gender, Labor, and Public Culture in Neoliberal Bangalore, India

By

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Advisor: Carla Freeman, Ph.D.

An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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Abstract

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By Hemangini Gupta

This dissertation maps the emergence of a startup economy in the south-Indian city of Bangalore. Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted between 2012-2014 at different sites of the new economy including at Start Up Festivals, incubation labs, investor and networking meetings, entrepreneurial workplaces, and sites of leisure and consumption. Drawing on interviews, media and informational material, and participant observation, I argue for a concept of "start up fictions"—idealized imaginations and articulations of the new economy as open and welcoming to anyone with initiative and drive. These "fictions" sustain and maintain the promise of success and fulfillment in the new economy. They offer an analytic through which to understand how neoliberal forms of labor and governance are enforced and maintained.

While dominant understandings of neoliberalism globally center the individual, in Bangalore I show that startup cultures reinforce collective belonging to religious identities, the family, and nation. Relatedly, startup ideologies produce affective labor and attachments that enable neoliberal governance in the production of docile and caring workers in the enterprise economy. Finally, tracking emergent workers subjectivities and labor and leisure practices around the city, I show how neoliberalism offers a contested realm of public culture. In postcolonial Bangalore, boundaries between work and life are blurred, and labor and gender are reformulated.

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I. Introduction: Navigating the Startup Economy

In September 2012, I returned to Bangalore[1], the city in which I was born and raised, to begin fieldwork for my dissertation research. On one of my first evenings back I met an old friend who had recently moved back to the city after twelve years in the United States. He was one amongst many of my classmates who had left for their undergraduate education and were now returning to India. Curious to discover how he had transitioned back to Bangalore after a decade living in Boston and New York, I went to visit him.

He lived with his wife on the second floor of his parent's bungalow, in an apartment with a spacious balcony that was draped in plants and creepers. A frisky puppy began yelping from indoors when I rang the doorbell. Inside, his living room was alive with people and color. Warm light radiated from low lamps and bounced off a disco ball suspended on the ceiling. Dark rosewood and teak furniture was elegantly placed around the room—armchairs, a ceiling–high bookshelf, a wine cabinet. A majestic golden gramophone rested on a low table. Books, DVDs, and an air gun were scattered around the room. The remnants of the dinner were still on the dining table in porcelain vessels—rice, lentils, salad, a mixed vegetable curry.

It was well past dinnertime, but the group of people lounging on the couches or idly picking food off the dishes had arrived straight from work. They were casually dressed in jeans and blouses or in striped long–sleeved shirts. All but one had worked overseas and

[1] The city's name was officially changed to "Bengaluru" in 2014. However my interviewees and the city's middle classes still refer to it by the old name "Bangalore," and I have retained that usage.

recently returned to Bangalore: this was one of their routine late evening gatherings. They represent a new elite return migration from the West to India following the global economic collapse of 2008. Ten years ago a group like this would most likely be I.T. (Information Technology) engineers. Today, everyone in the room was an entrepreneur.

I tried to explain my research project to them, asking if they knew where I could study the new forms of middle–class leisure in the city. I imagined that my entry to the field would be through an Information Technology company, and asked if they had any contacts. Bangalore has been an "I.T. City" since the 1990s, and it seemed an ideal location from where to begin a study of transformations in class and culture in the city. Yet no one in the room that night could suggest any leads for me. Insistent on exploring the already well-researched segment of I.T. and related services (Upadhya 2007, Radhakrishnan 2011, Mirchandani 2012), I did not imagine then that my friends' *lack* of contacts was a sign that my research had, in fact, already begun.

"You should study startups," one of the young women, Nayantara—my eventual flatmate—told me. "And you should live with me, I might soon have a spare room in my apartment." It turned out I did just that. I shifted my research from I.T. to an emerging startup economy, driven and symbolized by the middle–class entrepreneurs like those hanging out that weekday evening.

I would not just study startup businesses: typically defined as those less than three years old with the capacity to scale very quickly and globally[2]. Instead, I realized very

---

[2] They stop being startups upon ". . . acquisition by a larger company, more than one office, revenues greater than $20 million, more than 80 employees, over five people on the board, and founders who have personally sold shares. Somewhat ironically, when a startup becomes profitable it is likely moving away from startuphood" (Robehmed 2013).

soon that a startup *ethic* permeates the entrepreneurial economy in Bangalore—one in which the move away from stable middle–class professional jobs is justified as enabling the talented and creative individual who will not anymore be restrained by the lumbering postcolonial Indian state or be entangled in corporate bureaucracy. Those in the room that evening returned to India with the hope that the country's booming economy would afford them—as a privileged middle–class—the opportunities and markets to build their own dreams, live a global lifestyle while amongst friends and family, and offer them the creative and intellectual learning that comes from being self–employed.

How do national and state projects shape the context for individual aspirations and lived experiences under neoliberalism? The city and the soul are reframed within the same terms under neoliberalism, Wendy Brown (2015) argues; they need to maximize their capital value and enhance their future value. I explore these entanglements of individuals and larger social forms in Bangalore, India, an aspiring Start Up City. Here, dreams about labor and life are articulated through neoliberal frameworks and contextualized within the imagination of the individual's belonging within, and responsibility to, larger social structures of family, community, and nation. The dissertation explores how "start up fictions," or idealized imaginations and articulations of this new economy, are appropriated, negotiated, and modified by individuals. My analysis helps us understand how neoliberalism is made sense of in the Global South through local articulations and systems of meaning.

In Bangalore the startup economy emerges from large–scale Socialist and, later, globalized, industry and business that culminates with Information Technology—the

middle–class predecessor to the startup economy. While the dominant rhetoric and aspirations of the startup dream offer it as a welcoming economy for those with drive and initiative, I show how these are "fictions"—in fact, the new economy values and privileges certain expressions of class, gender, and labor. There is a postcolonial dimension to these uneven experiences in the Start Up City as well: here neoliberal mantras about enabling *individuals* folds people into newly mapped subjectivities and collective forms of life that draw on powerful symbolic forms—the family, community, and nation—through economies of affect[3] that are "critical to establishing the continuity of government between the self, the family, and the state that is characteristic of modern polities" (Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009: 59). Thus the empowered and agentive neoliberal figure of the Western entrepreneurial worker emerges very differently in postcolonial Bangalore.

Mapping startup fictions as they interpellate new characters, spaces, and practices requires a mobile fieldwork methodology. As Jae Chung explains about her fieldwork method amongst venture capitalists in Korea, it "required expansion to heterogeneous objects, subjects, and processes, connected by the field, an unstable object itself, partly located in the immediacy of the face–to–face social and partly in capital flows, theories, structures, and discourses" (Chung 72). I center gendered mobilities (Sheller and Urry 2006) as a method through which to explore the claims, fictions, and effects of neoliberal startup reason and practice.

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[3] Here I use affect to mean the intensities and modes of subjectivation engendered through the encounter of bodies with each other and with particular objects (Ahmed 2004: 4) but also in their movements amongst and through imagined belongings within social landscapes of family and nation (see Mankekar 2015 for a discussion of affect and public culture).

Drawing on a tradition of second wave feminist standpoint epistemology, I follow Nancy Hartsock who argued that "women's lives make available a particular and privileged vantage point on male supremacy, a vantage point which can ground a powerful critique of the phallocentric institutions and ideology which constitute the capitalist form of patriarchy" (Hartsock 1997: 217). Studying the startup economy with a gendered perspective allows me to understand first how startup enterprise is created through a valorization and masculinization of risk, innovation, and flexibility amongst elite startup entrepreneurs creating the new economy in Bangalore. Neoliberal "rationales" thus construct and advantage gendered and classed forms of subjectivity. I analyze this production and then explore how this rhetoric is experienced using a feminist standpoint rooted in women's labor.

The Enterprise Economy in India

In India, the "modern" market was regulated through contractual colonial law and the "private" business of the local capitalist was relegated to personal law. In, and through, this distinction, British bureaucrats produced a cleavage between public and private that mapped onto a separation of economy and culture, privileging the former over the latter (Birla 2008: 5). In the neoliberal present, these colonial divisions are being redrawn as startup "culture"—meaning embodied expressions of class (or habitus, see Bourdieu 1986), lifestyle, values, and social practices—lends itself to the construction of economic value (see also Birla 2013).

Today's startup economy is distinct from an older idea of entrepreneurship in India that is typically associated with caste–based forms of business, practiced by vernacular capitalists, thought of as the traditional or old-school entrepreneurs, or India's

vast entrepreneurial sector of MSMEs (Micro Small[4] Medium Enterprises). The MSME industry has 29.8 million industries employing 69 million people, making it the second largest workforce in the country after agriculture, and contributing 11.5% to the Gross Domestic Product annually (Shah, Gao, and Mittal 2015: 185).

In this, older, sense "enterprise" itself is defined broadly as: "an undertaking engaged in production and/or distribution of goods and/or services not for the sole purpose of own consumption." The definition includes non-crop growing agricultural enterprises, and large, medium, and small-scale industries as well as rural enterprises (Varshney 2012: 237). These businesses are not *entrepreneurial*—instead they offer products that already exist (Bhattacharya 2008). They are risk-averse, conservative, and linked to labor practices through their caste origins.

India's caste system, rigidly linking birth and occupation is hard to break (Tripathi 1971: 59). Indian entrepreneurs have typically relied on their links with caste and business communities to activate kin links for business. As middle–class Bangaloreans attempt to build the Start Up City, incubating small, flexible, and risk–taking enterprise here, they continually encounter an older middle–class and upper–caste disdain for the profit–motive of business; Brahmin upper-castes tend to privilege knowledge and respectability rather than monetary gain.

Advocates of startup enterprise in Bangalore then have to create a new subject of entrepreneurship: middle–class, and unmarked by gender, class, or caste. Those with

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[4] Small businesses are defined as those with investment in plant and machinery not exceeding Rs. 5 crore (for manufacturing) and Rs. 2 crore (for service enterprises) whereas for a micro enterprise the limit is Rs. 2.5 crore for manufacturing and Rs. 1 crore for service enterprises (Bhattacharya 2008: 94).

potential and drive are encouraged in this free–market ideology where everyone is exhorted to "take a risk!" "start your own business!"

Bangalore is an ideal location from which to study the birth and rise of startup entrepreneurship as part of a neoliberal turn to marketization. A recent World Bank Report ranked India number 132 in the world in terms of ease of doing business—but business growth is especially strong in the Western and Southern regions (Shah, Gao, and Mittal 2015: 188). As a South Indian city, Bangalore is poised to both benefit from, and build on, this regional boom of entrepreneurialism: a growth of 55% between 1998–2005, compared to the 27.8% growth of the North in that same time period in the South Indian states (Varshney 2012).

This dissertation begins at the moment in political economy situated on the cusp of a transition from older forms of Information Technology work to a new startup economy. Central to this economy is the exalted and, as I show, masculinized figure of the Indian startup entrepreneur who makes his own present and shapes his future, as opposed to his predecessor who rode the privilege of business and caste communities to build enterprise capital.

Chapter Outline

The current chapter introduces the startup economy and shows how it emerges in Bangalore from a longer history of Information Technology (I.T.) and I.T.–Enabled Services like call–centers. Middle–class women's movements into public spaces of professional work was enabled and legitimatized by global corporate workspaces that replicated the upper–caste and class norms of their family lives; work presented as a non–threatening extension of the home, and maintained the social order. I suggest here that

urban infrastructures have been vital to the production of gendered femininity. Studies of call–center workers point to the gendered social stigma attached to those who do not adhere to dominant norms around Indian womanhood.

Chapter Two introduces the different sites of my ethnography and locates my researcher positionality within the terms of what Kamala Visweswaran (1994) might call a "hyphenated–ethnographer," as I returned to a context I was in some senses familiar with. Born and raised in Bangalore, the city offered me a dizzying range of comfortingly familiar and startlingly new experiences to explore as an ethnographer. I introduce my mobile methodology by showing how I accompanied a startup entrepreneur, my flatmate Nayantara, on her circulations around the city. Adopting this "standpoint methodology" allows me to unfold the startup economy by adopting a situated perspective (Haraway 1988) alongside an entrepreneur.

Chapter Three introduces the startup economy through an analysis of the sites of its production and its imagined subject. In it, I focus on a four–day Start Up Festival as a pedagogical venture to "teach" not only startup business but also how to be a startup entrepreneur in the city. The earlier middle–class professional in Bangalore was the "software techie," frequently characterized as a homebound geek, tied to smoky bars and attached to rock music (see Kelty 2008). As an "intellectual," and an engineering geek, the software professional is often parodied as an emasculated figure, more passionate about quizzing, music, and attending Bangalore's many weekend software "coding festivals" than enjoying the outdoors or engaging in physical activities[5]. In contrast, the

[5] See Anantharaman 2016 for a discussion on how new middle–class software engineers challenge these stereotypes through participating in bicycling clubs.

startup entrepreneur is masculinized not only by valorizing the production of risk for its own sake (see Ho 2008) but through physical practices that signal "doing business" in the startup economy involves corporeal labor. I show that gender is not a separate sphere or axis that operates on its own but is constitutive of a field of power (Scott 1986) that structures the startup economy. This field is determined and structured by the masculinized movements and bodily practices of startup entrepreneurs.

Chapter Four—Seven investigate how neoliberal startup ideologies intersect with the production of selves, workplaces, and city life. My ethnographic sites in these chapters include both physical locations (investor meetings, accelerator labs, workplaces, homes, networking sessions) and aspirational states (dreams of success, understandings of love, creation of fictive kin ties, desires to consume). These conversations examine the dominant ideas of the startup economy that are focused on risk, innovation, flexibility, and individuality to ask how these are experienced at the fringes of the economy. How do women subvert, appropriate, and negotiate the dominant ideals to which startup entrepreneurs aspire? How do lower middle–class migrant workers articulate classed forms of consumption and leisure in a fragmented startup economy that does not offer the symbolic capital of I.T. work?

Chapter Four analyzes how middle–class women encounter global startup discourses through mediations of religion, class, age, and lifestage. Paying attention to mobilities—temporal mobility (or the ability to commit time), physical and spatial mobility (densely networking, meeting collaborators, attending the right events), and aspirational mobility (the capacity to scale a venture and indicate potential for growth)—I analyze how women's access to success in the startup economy is structured. Women

entrepreneurs, I show, both resist the dominant narratives of Indian womanhood through which their bodies are read even as they simultaneously evoke and engage these to frame alternative logics through which to enter startup business.

Chapter Five focuses on how startup values shape contemporary entrepreneurial work cultures. Through fieldwork at a mid–size company in the transnational service sector—that I call "Captivate"—I show how startup ideologies intended to enable productive workers through a managerial culture of "openness" and flexibility shape everyday labor practices. Ideals of "work–as–freedom" and the mantra of flexibility are experienced differentially depending on age, migration status, class, gender, and the possession of cultural capital. I show how workers appropriate and misrecognize flexibility to claim "ownership" of the company and to generate forms of affective labor to love their work.

Chapter Six continues the discussion of startup work to consider how workers refuse and resist neoliberal discourses of flexible work to instead densely integrate themselves into the workplace, imagined as "family." I show that the startup economy's flexibility results in a lack of structural and institutional support—meaning no office transport, no landscaped campuses, no lunch and gym facilities at work. Devoid of the patronage and structures of large corporations, smaller startup and entrepreneurial workplaces force women to take care of themselves, managing their safety and public reputations. Explaining why reputation is critical to middle–class professional subjectivity, this chapter analyses the creative and affective routes through which women translate neoliberal ethics into emotional bonds. They respond to neoliberalism's individualizing impulse and effect by creating informal social groups and networks that

produce colleagues as fictive kin.

Chapter Seven traces startup culture into the spaces of the city to show how urban spaces and practices are enfolded within the tenets of neoliberal startup ideologies. I show how the individualizing imperative of neoliberal labor and self–making result in new forms of occupying public space. These include startup initiatives such as yoga–in–the–park, running groups, and dating clubs, and activist initiatives to reclaim and reformulate public space that threaten conventional classed and gendered occupations of the public realm. Startup actors respond to these "risky" initiatives by undertaking them in groups, thus mitigating and distancing the risk of one's reputation, class status, and safety.

My Conclusion analyzes the startup economy as a form of labor and everyday city life, and of neoliberalism in Bangalore as a collective endeavor to live a better life rather than an individualized undertaking. In sum, I show how labor practices are spatialized as the startup economy fragments "work" from the well–established corporate environments of gated communities into smaller, flexible spaces and practices spread across the city. To be clear, this is not the argument that with modernity and an integration into global capital markets, "all that is solid melts into air" (Berman 1988) or that space and time are compressed (Harvey 1991) or that labor is deterritorialized and fragmented into electronic networks and flows of capital, labor, imagination, and media (Appadurai 1996, Castells 2009).

Work is fragmented across *specific* material sites and practices and embodied in particular ways that offer the "body as a site of capitalist accumulation" (Harvey 1996). Melissa Wright notes that the laboring body, under capitalist conditions, emerges as an

embodied site of accumulation and exploitation (Wright 2006: 13, see also Scott 1988). Further the potential for the movement of this body—its capacity to aspire for growth, roam around the city, work day and night—is determined through its connections with age, gender, caste, class, and migration status. The next few sections offer the context for my discussion on the startup economy, startup selves, and the Start Up City.

Liberalization and the New Economy

In July 1991, India responded to a fiscal crisis by formally undertaking Bretton Woods-led reforms that are broadly referred to as economic liberalization, closing down public-sector industries in favor of privatization and large-scale structural readjustment. Reforms were "outward–looking," aimed at integrating India into a global market by de-restricting domestic production, loosening constrictions on foreign trade, reducing tariffs, and reforming company law to enable majority share–holding by foreign corporations in their Indian subsidiaries and new ventures (Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan 2011). Private enterprise entered core sectors such as education, healthcare, telecommunications, transport, urban public health and sanitation and energy supply. To be sure, globalization is not a recent phenomenon in Bangalore[6]. However, the globalization of the 1990s brought the city into transnational circuits with the intention of courting foreign investment (Oza 1992).

While currency devaluation and economic stabilization are amongst the short–term measures initiated with liberalization, a far more significant aspect of the 1990s is the long–term reformulation of the relationship between the state and economy (Gupta

[6] As a "Garden City," it was a node in the global circulation of seed cultivation and horticulture across the British Empire, see Mathur and da Cunha (2006).

and K. Sivaramakrishnan 2011). In Bangalore, they had the effect of transforming a work culture steeped in bureaucracy and the slow and steady work of professionals employed in the city's large public sector units (such as aerospace). This was visible in the shift from the notion of "middle–class" as a relatively coherent category describing a "Nehruvian civil service-oriented salariat, short on money but long on institutional perks—to a bewildering (and, to some, distasteful) array of new, often markedly entrepreneurial pretenders to the title" (Mazzarella n.d.).

The older middle–classes were associated with hierarchy and bureaucratic structure—the new middle–classes were built on an ideal of meritocracy and a privileging of the go-getting attitude. I discuss the effects of this on everyday labor temporalities—the "slowness" of bureaucratic work and the productivity model of neoliberal startup work—in Chapter Five. Although the notion of the Indian "middle–class" had a long ascendancy, most scholars agree that it reached its peak with the era of economic liberalization that facilitated Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and trade, freed businesses from the license permit Raj that Prime Minister Nehru inaugurated after Independence, and eased banking regulations to encourage spending (Baviskar and Ray 2011). It is this middle–class that state officials and software entrepreneurs target as their core audience in Chapter Three where I discuss the pedagogical efforts to shape startup founders.

In addition to liberalization, there were other factors producing a new middle–class: Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's salary hikes enabled by the 1973 Pay Commission, the long-term effects of the Green Revolution[7] were being felt, and foreign remittances from Indian laborers in the Gulf grew this class (Mazzarella n.d.) The new middle–class

[7] New technologies to enable agriculture.

was defined and identified by their location within circuits of consumption and production differentiating them from an earlier Nehruvian socialist model of growth (Menon & Nigam 2007: 3).

My childhood neighborhood of Malleswaram is a good example of how new middle–class life emerged through consumption practices, consolidated in urban infrastructure. Although it is at the other end of the city from the software companies associated with the professional middle–classes, even here urban spatial changes have reworked the material environment. Low-slung bungalows and quiet front lawns gave way to modest three-storied apartment complexes from the 1990s. More recently the neighborhood's steady urban growth spiked with two massive gated communities. Each has a major mall, movie theater, housing complex; one also contains a school, hospital, and hotel. *Mall*-eswaram, my friend rechristened it.

Across Bangalore, such privatized enclosures including gated housing communities and office "parks" with offices, gyms, and food courts have overcome socialist economic growth and their owners' once modest means to model and claim a dramatic landscape of the future. These are the visible markers of liberalization and examples of how new modes of production (professional, transnational corporate work environments) and consumption (residential gated communities and townships) create and situate a new middle–class. Their presence—visible and invisibilized—reinforces what Pow terms, in the context of contemporary China, as the "distinctiveness of group structures and membership" (Pow 2009: 10). It is this spatial segregation into the symbolic and material spaces of transnational capital that consolidates middle–class professionalism. In Chapter Six I discuss the gendered implications of working in a very

different environment: the small and unmarked single floors and innocuous workplaces of the startup economy.

New York Times journalist Thomas Friedman (2006: 5–6) offers a vivid description of such a community during a visit to one in the early 1990s in this adulatory paean to it:

> Once you enter the gates of Infosys[8], though, you are in a different world. A massive resort-size swimming pool nestles amid boulders and manicured lawns, adjacent to a huge putting green. There are multiple restaurants and a fabulous health club. Glass-and-steel buildings seem to sprout up like weeds each week. In some of those buildings, Infosys employees are writing specific software programs for American or European companies; in others, they are running the backrooms of major American and European-based multinationals—everything from computer maintenance to specific research projects to answering customer calls routed there from all over the world. Security is tight, cameras monitor the doors, and if you are working for American Express, you cannot get into the building that is managing services and research for General Electric. Young Indian engineers, men and women, walk briskly from building to building, dangling ID badges. One looked like he could do my taxes. Another looked like she could take my computer apart. And a third looked like she designed it.

Friedman is describing a campus emblematic of the private communities of the new middle–classes in Bangalore today: multiple global corporations nestle amongst landscaped green spaces. In global contexts, such private communities are seen as an attack on modern ideals of public space as Teresa Caldeira argues of Brazil (Caldeira 2001). They are based in neoliberal ideals of privacy linked to discourses on individualized rights of seclusion and self-protection (Pow 2009: 26, 27). Yet it is this very distinction—the self–contained (im) mobility of the private township—that enables the high global visibility of India's new middle–class. This desirable class position is

[8] A leading Indian software company.

certainly what frames the aspirations and ambitions for those less privileged, as I will show, but the reality of contemporary work in the startup economy offers a far more modest office environment, without the architectures of gated community life to help consolidate middle–class position.

Of course the "new" middle–classes in India are not "new" in terms of structural or social basis, as Leela Fernandes reminds us; "new" doesn't refer to upwardly mobile segments but rather is "a process of production of a distinctive social and political identity that represents and lays claim to the benefits of liberalization" (Fernandes 2006: xviii). Thus, a professional job in a gated community alone is not a marker of the new middle–class. The new middle–classes occupy an ideological position to establish their distinction from other groups in the city through spatial practices including "beautification" schemes, urban "cleansing" and a politics resonant with liberalization principles of privatization, spatial segregation, and an emphasis on consumption culture. Minna Säävälä (2010) points out in her ethnography of middle–classes in Hyderabad that such engagement with public spaces of consumption are not necessarily pleasurable: they are sometimes sought out in order to simply signal and indicate one's middle–classness and ability to circulate with ease in urban environments.

My dissertation centers a moment in which labor is splintered from these symbolically middle–class spaces to be conducted in and around fragmented spaces of the city (small workplaces, temporary offices, coffee shops). Workers and entrepreneurs in the startup economy are employed in precarious and often temporary forms of labor. Not just the nature of labor but the spaces and practices that produce it—and at which it

is produced—have expanded, with implications for gender and class, now unmoored from privacy.

I do not argue that participation in startup labor enables the production of a new middle–class, but rather that this economy offers the opportunities and spaces at which to learn, practice, and temporarily inhabit new forms of subjectivity that are not neatly recognized as "middle–class" since class and gender are being reformulated. Instead I pay attention to how actors draw on discourses of the startup economy to imagine, inhabit, and temporarily experience new ways of being—this embodiment of neoliberalism is deeply gendered and reflective of the uneven ways in which the economy enables mobility and belonging.

The Changing Industries of Liberalized Bangalore

In 1999, the Chief Minister of Karnataka, S. M. Krishna, articulated a future for Bangalore based on planning and development models used in Singapore and rooted in public-private partnerships. The Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF) was the vehicle for this transformation, unveiled in the year 2000 at the Bangalore Summit, and intended to marshal public-private synergy. Within the new paradigm of corporate governance, urban problems were regarded as a sign of inefficient management (Nair 2005: 124). The city itself is regarded as a set of problems to which diverse solutions are possible (Ong and Roy 2012). Neoliberalism is taken up to recast problems as non–ideological and non–political issues that need technical solutions to maximize intended outcomes (Ong 2006). Significantly for this discussion, private investment is channeled into public programs—unfolding the possibilities for privatized public life, and welcoming the new middle–classes into city spaces.

By the late 1990s, garment industries in Bangalore were employing nearly 70,000 workers (Nair 2005: 85). As capital moved from the realm of government control to private hands, it also moved fluidly to spaces and practices that require the least capital and labor investment and generate the highest profit (Salzinger 2003). This is flexible specialization: the outsourcing of labor and capital to where it can be employed most productively (Harvey 2006). In keeping with these global economic logics, most garment workers in Bangalore were women employed as cheap labor.

Young women's work in garment factories produced a large new class of women workers, linking respectable everyday labor with consumption and middle–class aspirations. Yamini Atmavilas (2008: 3) in her thesis on women garment workers in Bangalore, explains how women workers came to be associated with, and embodied, ideas of *nagareekthana*, what she translates as an "urbaneness," which:

> . . . is both an ideology equating commodity acquisition and display with being modern, and a set of practices men and women undertake to become modern, such as labor, consumption, marriage payments, marriage, household contributions, and other asset-building activities.

Her research allows us to understand how consumption is linked to everyday and structural transformations of gender including women's entry into respectable waged labor in Bangalore. Women draw on local social and gender norms and cultural idioms to negotiate and respond to global transformations in the market economy (see also Modern Girl Research Group 2008).

In the decade of India's liberalization, respectable labor for women became available at different rungs of the economy, offering significant opportunities for middle–

class formation and consolidation. Secondly, expanding cities and emergent leisure and consumption options enabled the public display of class practices at restaurants, malls, pubs, and fitness centers. Shifts in production and consumption both spatialized class, through new workplaces and socialities, and through the shopping arcades, restaurants, movie theaters, coffee shops, and apartment complexes in which a new middle–class expressed its ideological orientation toward consumption. Private developers offered suitable opportunities for consumption, with housing leading the way (Nair 2005). These were single family units for professional middle–class migrants to Bangalore who live in nuclear families or with roommates far from their family homes.

As Aihwa Ong has shown with factory workers in Malaysia, new conditions of living for migrant labor far from the reproach of parental and familial eyes realign expectations around marriage and marriageable age, leisure options, and the consumption of cosmetics (Ong 2010). A new migrant class of women are free from the responsibilities and dense networks of joint families and immerse themselves in urban leisure and consumption (see also Peiss 1988). Other scholars of Bangalore suggest that with professional work and consumption larger joint family and kin systems are reworked but not dismantled (Belliappa 2013). In the startup economy, I show how "work families" replace kin networks as young women rely on each other to navigate the dizzying possibilities of living in the startup economy. Bangalore's current startup economy invites a reiteration of community and national belonging even as it individualizes and isolates workers in flexible offices and work schedules in the name of "worker freedom."

Middle–class life is visible and partially built through consumptive interactions with urban leisure spaces. But not everyone who aspires to join the new middle–classes

can do so: being middle–class is not a class position consolidated by merely "hanging out" on the shopping boulevards or getting a coffee at a new café. These visible landscapes of consumption frame the city symbolically as a referent of its global ambitions but are not part of the routine leisure of the lower middle–class workers in the entrepreneurial firm where I conducted fieldwork. For women with less class privilege, experiments with self–making and ways–of–being are focused on bodily practices (fitness, dance, drinking) rather than on leisure time at malls.

Nicholas Nesbitt similarly mapped the techniques through which lower middle–class men attempt to access the transnationally–connected worlds of the upper middle–class through his ethnography of cyber café culture in Bangalore. He found that they did not have the social and cultural capital or the educational credentials that constitute the "family background" necessary for success in I.T. (Radhakrishnan 2011). Nisbett's interlocutors failed at getting jobs at the prestigious I.T. firms (Nisbett 2009)—much as I show of my interlocutors too. Unable to circulate in the middle–class spaces of I.T., Nisbett's young men meet at cyber cafes run by friends, and it is here in the cramped cafes with hi-speed internet at private booths that they apply to jobs, send out matrimonial profiles, drink Coca-Cola and discuss I.T. courses—a performance of middle–class life through the virtual spaces of the internet within the symbolic presence of I.T., represented by the affordable and accessible cyber café.

My fieldwork explores how less–privileged participants in the startup economy shore up forms of capital, perform imaginative labor, and employ discursive strategies to enter middle–class worlds without the stability and confidence that comes from professional corporate jobs or upper caste families. They do not "pass" as middle–class,

as I show, yet they experiment and learn how to navigate the spaces of the startup economy.

Making Bangalore the I.T. City

Bangalore's global reputation as a center for software and offshore processing work began in the late 1980s. When I moved back to Atlanta in 2014 after fieldwork, my neighbor was excited to hear where I was from. "Can you fix my computer problems?" he asked. He was only half–joking. Bangalore is a south-Indian city of approximately 11.5 million people in 2016. It is considered the software capital of India with over 1000 I.T. firms, employing over 80, 000 I.T. professionals (van Dijk 2003). Companies choose Bangalore as a base for its temperate climate, cheap labor, and educational resources that continually produce a large class of I.T. graduates with the requisite skills for global work, cosmopolitan culture and as the first state to develop its own I.T. policy (van Dijk 2003). In 1977 Tata Burroughs was created in Bangalore as a separate unit of the national Tata Industries to serve the software requirements of the US-based Burroughs Ltd. (Heitzman 2004: 181).

The emphasis on technology came in 1984 when the microcomputer became available in India and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi launched the New Computer Policy liberalizing the computer sector. Industry in Bangalore responded: Wipro Infotech begun by Azim Premji established production and marketing agreements with a variety of foreign computer firms (Heitzman 2004: 180). Similarly, Infosys Consultants Private Limited was formed in 1981 with $1000 pooled in from the household accounts of seven colleagues including N. R. Narayana Murthy then the head of the software firm in Mumbai where they all worked (Heitzman 2004: 181). Thomas Friedman's excitement

around a modern gated community in Bangalore was centered on his visit to Infosys. The company was set up to use inexpensive but well-trained software engineers to provide off–shore and on–site consulting to corporate programming projects mostly in the United States (Heitzman 2004: 181).

Software brought India an international reputation by the 1990s—in fact economic projections as early as 1970 suggested a substantial revenue if India could capture even 1% of the US software market (Heitzman 2004: 181). This labor process has yielded a verb in the English dictionary—"Bangalored"—to refer to outsourced work and a job loss in the United States. In addition to revenue earnings, I.T. performed a symbolic role in circulating the image of Indian professionals—middle–class men *and women*—as modern, skilled, global workers (Radhakrishnan 2011).

Despite I.T. entrepreneurs' claims that it is a meritocratic industry that spawned a new middle–class, in its early years it systematically concealed the class and caste biases through which it favored some employees (Upadhya 2007). Those with a particular "background"—a term that stands in for class and caste status—were able to enter the industry, and shaped its work culture as rooted in Indian culture yet globally-oriented (Radhakrishnan 2011).

The early years of software were dominated by the practice of "body-shopping" in which Indian workers registered with placement firms who placed them in different companies. This mobile Indian labor performed piece-meal work, scattered across work sites within advanced economies (Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom). Young male software engineers shared rooms, slept on mattresses, and ate home-cooked meals to send savings home, where their potential to be recruited by Indian body

shopping agencies exponentially increased their "market value" as their families hunted for brides (Biao 2011). This mobility was gendered male; I.T. women, on the other hand, often privileged their families—a concern that is often accommodated by management—and are chaperoned in private company buses between home and work thus maintaining their middle–class and upper–caste spatial segregation (Radhakrishnan 2011).

I.T. Women: Reproducing Caste and Class Hierarchies

The significance of women's symbolic and lived experience of I.T. work is significant in determining the blueprint for middle–class women's professional labor outside the home. I lay out the following links between professional labor, space, and class in order to contextualize the later shift to fragmented and flexible workplaces of the startup economy to show how the infrastructure of class has been eroded with the neoliberal economy, thus challenging and reworking the links between women and privacy and middle–class position.

Women employed in I.T. tend to be located in major metropolitan centers (Bangalore, Chennai, New Delhi etc.) and their presence is concentrated in southern parts of India—41% here as compared with 6% in the Eastern region (Agarwal n.d.). Sociologists believe that I.T. maintains upper caste standards for women's work by regulating and monitoring women's movements through work timings (through the strategic assigning of projects, see Radhakrishnan 2011), commuting regimens (for a discussion on special buses and cabs, see Patel 2010), and employing them in jobs that draw on their ability to adopt "global" standards of speech and communication (see Mirchandani 2012). It is these aspects of class that are built into I.T. protocols that are missing in the startup economy where employees are responsible for their own safety and

well–being, and invoke affective ties to maintain sentimental attachment to the workplace (see Chapter Five).

Take the example of a large facility for software (and related) corporations: Electronic City. It is set on 330 acres of land containing mainly I.T. firms including Wipro, Infosys, Motorola, and Siemens; Infosys' Bangalore headquarters is the world's largest software services campus (Chacko 2007). A special bus service connects corporate industry and new middle–class residential neighborhoods via a fleet of red air-conditioned luxury buses. A regular bus ticket is about 10% the cost of these cushioned Volvo buses, ensuring that they are ear marked for the professional new middle–classes, to ease their commuting between work and home. An "I.T. Corridor" is planned as a 15–mile stretch of real estate to serve a population of one million by 2021 and includes commercial centers, townships, new universities, hospitals, polytechnics and golf courses (Chacko 2007: 137 quoting the Government of Karnataka). Middle class professionals are kept isolated from the city in these campuses of global facilities and privatized services, able to work at full productivity without the hindrance of noise, pollution, traffic congestion or failed essential services. The state government aids and supports this privatization and is actively assisting its production.

The highly-skilled middle–class I.T. professionals who graduated from nearby engineering schools to garner technology-based jobs at glass and chrome complexes frequently travel internationally and earn starting salaries equal to their fathers' retirement pay checks. Their demand for upscale housing and living has produced gated communities and self-enclosed townships on the outskirts of Bangalore, often multi-acre sites resembling suburban US communities (Brosius 2010, Chacko 2007).

I.T. is often accused of elitism and it is not hard to see why. The lawns in many gated communities (across India, see Brosius 2010) and I.T. parks are manicured, swimming pools and gyms offer on-site opportunities for exercise and relaxation, and security features keep the chaos of the city at bay. Working in these secluded gated communities of office and leisure allows middle–class women to join the professional workforce even while maintaining the spatial segregations integral to maintaining caste status and class privilege. The production of the private through both spatial regimes (of enclosed parks, modern offices, and securitized campuses) and spatial practices (of tailor-made timings, cab pick-ups, the construction of an upper caste work culture) enables middle–class women's professional work.

I.T. women specifically embody a "respectable femininity" that is middle–class, and gendered (see Radhakrishnan 2007: 198) in order to be accepted in their workplaces (Raju 2013). This is a gendered habitus (McNay 1990) through which middle–class and primarily upper caste women reinscribe their femininity through choices around consumption, leisure, clothing, and work priorities. For instance, Smitha Radhakrishnan found that I.T. women privilege work but usually not at the cost of family (they maintained strict hierarchies between families and work), they practice restraint in their consumption and leisure by shopping for family goods rather than for themselves, and choose their clothing to demonstrate their ease at "being Indian" yet global professionals to reflect the moral fabric of a certain "south-Indian middle–class ethos" (Radhakrishnan 2009: 202, 205, 209). Air-conditioned offices, interaction with other upper caste middle–class professionals, and international travel for short periods make I.T. professional work

appropriate for middle–class Indian women who can afford to make choices about whether, and where, to work[9] (Patel 2010).

The Transnational Service Sector

While I.T. engineers perform software related work, another sector called I.T.ES (or I.T. Enabled Services) created a subsidiary economy of call-center workers who work night shifts in India, modifying names, accents, and conversation styles to erase specifically Indian mannerisms and modes of speech (Bhagat 2007, Mirchandani 2012, Patel 2010). This is the transnational service sector that has begun expanding globally since at least the early 1980s (Mukhopadhyay 2002) and India joined this boom after its liberalization in the 1990s. Within the service sector, offshoring is seen as the engine of India's globally focused growth (Murphy 2011). The Indian I.T.–BPO sector is the largest private sector employer in the country, with direct employment of about 2.23 million professionals and the largest private sector employing women (Bhattacharyya and Ghosh 2013). Captivate, as an entrepreneurial transnational service sector company, offers insights into how caste, class, and gender practices and norms are reconfigured in India's contemporary service sector economy. Captivate offers a lens into forms of labor that are emotional, aesthetic, and framed as "authenticity" work (Mirchandani 2012).

As with most jobs in the service sector, at Captivate too, women make up between 40%–70% of call–center staff (Basi 2009:14). These numbers need to be contextualized within the overall fall in women's participation in the labor force in India—it has fallen from 37% in 2004–'05 to 29% in 2009–'10, leaving India at the eleventh lowest spot out

[9] The reinforcement of class and caste norms even in a professional industry is a source of frustration for some scholars who argue that entry into professional environments has not yielded any real transformation in gendered norms (Raju 2013).

of 131 countries (Lannon 2013). More recent statistics suggest that the percentage of women employed in I.T. has declined from 26% in 2010 to 22% in 2012 although the number of jobs in this sector increases annually (Lannon 2013). Although Indian BPOs and I.T.ES industries employ female workers senior management is consistently male–dominated.

Offshore information processing to India builds on a postcolonial inheritance of English–language education, and Bangalore has been actively developed as a service sector base by successive state governments providing tax cuts, infrastructural amenities (by way of sanctioning land for large gated communities and working in public–private partnerships to build highways and airports), and the availability of science and engineering graduates from local colleges. These local conditions combine with the ascendant rationale of global flexible specialization (see Harvey 1991) since the 1970s, by which firms find the most economically viable destinations for some aspects of their production. Early waves of this kind of offshoring occurred in manufacturing, and flexible specialization mapped on to gender and race, as Third World Women performed feminized jobs for low pay (Fernandez–Kelly 1984, Ong [1983] 2010, Salzinger 2003).

In India these jobs were often located in Export Processing Zones to encourage export and foreign investment. Bangalore also hosts many small and medium scale industries, including in manufacturing and textiles, where women workers were employed in large numbers (Atmavilas 2008). With advances in technology, “pink collar” jobs (Freeman 2000) in different global locations simulated professional middle–class office environments while retaining the divisions of labor by which women in the non–West performed routine back–office work.

Currently with the cut in internet and phone costs, in India transnational service work is typically in the I.T. and I.T. Enabled Services (I.T.E.S.) sectors. Bangalore's turn to startup business draws on these older circuits of state–support for technology—startups are funded based on their projected ability to scale, and it is technology that enables rapid scaling. Unlike other countries where call–centers often serve domestic markets and employ less than 100 people in old warehouses and makeshift back–end offices, countries like India, Ireland, and Canada are known as subcontracting nations and have significant infrastructure and state support to run large operations (Basi 2009, Batt, Holeman, and Holtgrewe 2007).

In India and the Philippines, call–centers offer white–collar employment opportunities to many who would not have obtained such employment on completing their secondary and tertiary education (Ng and Mitter 2005). Many of the workers in transnational call–center industry are women, possibly mirroring the "runaway" manufacturing jobs of the global assembly line in the 1970s (Ng and Mitter 2005: 210). While the refrain around feminized work in call–centers is based on concerns around the erosion of skills, the routine nature of jobs, and the limited possibilities of career advancement (Ng and Mitter 2005: 210), transnational service sector jobs also afford significant opportunities for class mobility. Many young women from a lower middle–class took up jobs at Captivate for the similar reason that with a basic Bachelor's degree, it is jobs requiring basic technical skills for which they are most eligible.

Call–centers reflect a feminization of the labor force: Basi's study showed that 80% of those she interviewed were between 21–26 years old, and several centers had clauses preventing those with more than three years of work experience from even applying (Basi

2009: 12). Basi suggests this age restriction is because call–centers do not want older women who might not fit into the college–like atmosphere of the office; older workers described the unprofessionalism of their peers who would only be temporarily employed here as a brief job right out of college (2009: 12–13). At Captivate too, the expectation is that when workers need to learn more, they will leave the job. Yet the precarious structure of the neoliberal economy and a turn to part–time and project–based work makes this dream of job–hopping an illusory one.

Class and Gender in the Startup Service Economy

Transnational service sector workers typically come from the "creamy layers" of caste divisions, meaning that while they may not be upper caste, they are from upper layers of lower castes, are reluctant to identify as "workers" in the traditional sense and are typically drawn from upper layers of Indian society because they have to be or become fluent in English, interact with Western clients, and be assertive in their behavior: a practice enabled by their elite education (Murphy 2011). Thus Kiran Mirchandani suggests that India's transnational service sector workers straddle the class borders of routinized and professional work and exist in a labor role between production and social reproduction (Mirchandani 2012). They are paid more than those employed in local industries, enjoy benefits and recognize themselves as often better qualified than their Western clients (Mirchandani 2012).

Murphy shows that in international call–centers, starting salaries in 2007 ran from Rs. 14,000 (or US$350 per month), translating to US$1000 and up in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms. In large centers, employees with over one year's experience could expect monthly salaries of 32,000 rupees (US$800) and above (PPP = US$2500). Nearly

two-thirds of workers lived with their parents, often paying little or no rent, thus providing most employees with significant disposable income. Seventy percent of Indian call center workers have college degrees as opposed to 20% of their U.S. counterparts, and about 76% of India's call center workers are between 18–30 (Cherian 2015: 2).

Frequently portrayed in films, books, and media as comprised of young upwardly mobile men and women, public perception paints call–centers as licentious spaces where mixed-gender groups of college graduates live in the moment.[10] Stereotypes of call center workers depict them spending their entire income on consumer durables and clothes for themselves (see Krishnamurthy 2004). Landlords prefer not to rent apartments and rooms to young women employed in call–centers, or continually pass judgment on their male visitors, late hours, and high spending, as the fictive character of Sophie Das in Anjum Hasan's *Neti Neti* found out (Hasan 2009). Thus age (early twenties), life–stage (unmarried) and class (aspirational middle–classness, crafted through practices of conspicuous consumption) map on to each other to produce a gendered "bad worker:" she is too mobile and too much of a consumer.

This gendered vulnerability leaves young women susceptible to rumor, gossip, and forms of community and local policing. "I didn't want to work in a call center, you can understand, no…?" a young woman explained to me later in my fieldwork when she justified her decision to refuse work at a call center job. The dangers to the reputation of young women in call–centers are so well known that they do not have to be spelt out. It is assumed that everyone is complicit in understanding the dangers associated with young, unmarried women roaming around the city, financially independent, and working all

[10] In films such as "Outsourced," "Bombay Calling," "The Other End of the Line."

night. Caitryn Lynch's (2007) study of young feminized labor in Sri Lanka's manufacturing industry notes that these women were called "juki girls," a derogatory term referencing the Japanese brand of sewing machine ("juki") that they worked on. She writes that women's financial independence, their urban circulation without paternalistic and patriarchal supervision, their class mobility, and their employment are all forms of mobility (spatial, class, employment) that threatens men's roles as workers, providers, and protectors of women (Lynch 2007).

Women's incorporation into new labor markets, their circulation in public spaces, and the fraught tensions surrounding the reworking of femininity in this context are well-documented (Ong [1983] 2010, Freeman 2014). Even while media and popular culture representations of women workers who are incorporated into new labor markets highlight the mixed–gender work environments of these spaces to label them "promiscuous" and describe them as sexually charged, workers differ in their opinions. The women in Murphy's (2011) study rejected these stereotypes actively and did not mention that their parents were worried about their safety (428).

In India, the feminized figure of the call–center worker is stigmatized even as an equally mobile and itinerant figure, the young male software engineer traversing the globe on software projects, accumulates an enhanced value in the arranged marriage "market" (Biao 2011. Gender is produced as a system of meaning through which everyday labor is distributed and valued, through which movements and mobilities of individual workers are determined, and through which aspirations for the future are enabled or limited. My study analyzes the affective charge linked to gendered mobilities in the neoliberal startup economy showing how the mobility of certain workers and

entrepreneurs is premised on the immobility of other lower–class and less–privileged employees in entrepreneurial firms.

Transnational service sector workers in India's new economy are expected to be driven, entrepreneurial workers; their parents typically belong to an older middle–class who held government jobs or ran their own business. Jonathan Murphy suggests that the transnational middle–class habitus of the call center workers is "built upon their existing cultural and social capital, including social and language skills conditioned by schooling and their family upbringing" (Murphy 2011). In his interviews, young call center workers explained that their parents support their decisions to work in a call center and encouraged their efforts at such professionalization. Despite the transformations in labor practice between one generation and the next, Murphy (2011) found that there was not much friction and he explains this as a "generational transfer of symbolic capital" (430).

Pierre Bourdieu understood the social scenarios in which individuals function to be akin to "fields" in which people maneuver and navigate complex social practices by mastering the rules of the game (see Bourdieu 1992). One's ability to gain legitimacy in the social field is determined by habitus, or the social space of "lifestyles" that are determined by "the instinctual social orientations of individuals, manifested in daily conduct, attitudes, judgment, consumption practices and interpersonal associations" (Murphy 2011: 421).

Call center workers embrace globalization more readily than other youth, own more consumer items, and are conversant in consumption and leisure practices such as visiting malls or eating out—all key elements of this habitus. Their middle–class practices and aspirations are enabled by their access to, and ability to learn about and master, aspects of

everyday consumption and leisure including what technology to own, clothes, mall visits, frequenting restaurants and "fast–food joints" and so on. Since most of them are under 30 and live at home, they have a disposable income through which to engage and develop the crafting of modern selves and their orientations toward global practices (Mirchandani 2012, Murphy 2011). Thus their positioning as a new middle–class is enabled by their parent's symbolic capital and their ability to transform older forms of privilege into assets in the contemporary neoliberal urban environment.

I take up this question of prior class advantage in Chapters Five and Six to ask how contemporary neoliberal work that privileges flexible work protocols and schedules is premised on a mobilization of cultural capital. I show how neoliberal flexibility intersects with class and gender to frame experiences of work. While neoliberal work does not offer the resources to enable class mobility at Captivate, I show how it does offer the possibilities to experiment with, and temporarily inhabit, new forms of startup subjectivity.

Startup Economy: Shaping a New Bangalore

I arrived in Bangalore following the I.T. boom of the 2000s when the city was being fashioned as a Start Up City[11]. State government officials, middle–class technology entrepreneurs and return migrants all have a stake in building and inhabiting a Bangalore that is globally oriented toward disruptive business. This is not only a push toward flexible and globally–scalable businesses that rely on technology to grow, but also an

[11] Bangalore's development of an I.T. cluster was enabled by government support and a labor arbitrage strategy that carves out a share of the large I.T. services markets in Europe and the United States (Anfinsen et al. 2014). However, this strategy is believed to be waning and scholars recommend that Bangalore realign its strategy towards higher–value exports and a growing domestic market (see Anfinsen 2014).

encouragement of certain neoliberal principles of love for one's work, risk–taking, and creativity. Startups try to challenge prevalent industrial norms by using technology to tap underserved markets or reconfigure the dominant processes through which business is conducted. This is "disruptive innovation" and Captivate is an example. While other travel companies have one employee service a guest from start to finish, Captivate "disrupts" this model by involving all teams in the coordination of a single guest, thus changing the existent model.

As I explain in Chapter Three, these developments of the startup economy were enabled by a reverse migration to India in 2008, a resurgent middle–class nationalism that imagined India's role in the global economy not as one of back-end service work but as innovation (see also Upadhya 2013), and Bangalore's own technical strengths. They take place within the larger context of a global turn to neoliberal marketization that addresses untapped potential by encouraging people to take up entrepreneurship (Freeman 2014). The return migration of professionals is not to the place of their birth, but to a "new India," embodied in global cities like Bangalore, where returnees imbue places with new meanings, reinventing and colonizing the city by partially reproducing the modes of living they have learnt while abroad (Upadhya 2013: 151).

To talk of the startup economy in Bangalore is not to suggest that startups have smoothly eliminated software as a significant middle–class industry in the city. Despite the migration of many call–centers to the Philippines (Padios 2014), software is still the substantial presence in Bangalore that it has been since the first Software Technology Park was established in 1992. Even a few years ago, Bangalore's software exports reached Rs. 82,000 crores (or $15,7451) from 2250 companies, providing direct

employment to over half a million people, and indirect employment to 800,000 people (Economic Survey Report 2012–13: 327). Almost all of the Fortune 500 companies have a few or all of their outsourced activities taking place in Bangalore (Economic Survey Report 2012–13: 327).

However the profits of major software firms like Infosys are in steady decline. In an Annual General Meeting of Infosys in June 2015, the CEO said that he would emphasize innovation since clients were pleased with Infosys' responsibility and responsiveness but asked for more innovation (Phadnis 2015). Working more closely with startups is seen as a way for behemoth software firms to offer valued benefits to their clients and help them to remain relevant. In keeping with the new focus on interfacing with startups, the Infosys CEO changed the official company dress code. Employees can wear business casuals all days, not just Fridays, as before (Indiatimes 2015). An emphasis on startup culture involves attention to *how* business is done: performing startup entrepreneurship through clothes, comportment, forms of embodiment. Startup businesses are premised on the idea of disruption: this applies not only to innovative work processes but equally to styles of work, and urban practices.

Although Bangalore is an I.T. City being reimagined as a Start Up City to harness the potential of Internet Communication Technologies and build on the technology expertise of its residents (see Pai and Naidu 2013), not all the startups emergent in Bangalore are technology companies run by local I.T. engineers. Startups exist in different industries including real estate, fitness, media, hospitality and so on. They often adopt technology as *part* of their business, and find it crucial to their potential to scale

and innovate with creativity rather than resource investment. However, the startup label comes not from an association with technology but from:

> …a freshness that suggests a finger on the pulse of the future. The label may even help companies to cash in on a "cool" factor when hiring, allowing them to snap up qualified staff on the cheap who are attracted by the promise of innovation and a ping-pong table" (Robehmed 2013).

Thus the feel and spirit of the call–center infuses work in the startup sector. Unlike the call–center business, the startup economy is not labeled as work for "cyber coolies" or believed to be routine work. Instead it is valued and celebrated by the middle–classes as the economy driving future growth and enabling Bangalore to be centered as a city of innovation and creativity rather than back–end work. When the dynamism, casual clothing, and team spirit become dissipated, startups graduate into becoming full-fledged companies[12]. It seems, then, that there is a certain "spirit," or feel—referred to as "freshness" in popular parlance—in these startup companies that attracts venture capital, employees, and consumers.

Startup discourses emphasize risk for its own sake, and require the urban circulation of entrepreneurs around the city: these forms of aggressive business and mobility produce the figure of the startup entrepreneur as a masculinized one. Yet it is not only the startup entrepreneurs who assume risk-taking in their ventures—in fact risk is passed on to the most vulnerable groups of the startup economy. I show how the feminized labor that supports startup firms assume everyday forms of risk-taking as they

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[12] Or, in the case of Infosys, a well-established company introduces casual dressing to simulate the informal and relaxed vibe of a startup.

negotiate an economy increasingly enacted in public, but devoid of the structures and protections of an earlier era. With no gated communities, no private office transport, and no secluded office gyms and canteens, startup employees assess and measure the risks implicit in their everyday forays into the lifeworlds of the startup economy: adventure sports, fitness classes, eating new cuisines, and dating. In my dissertation the male startup entrepreneurs are typically figured as young and middle-aged middle-class men—these are the desirable subjects of the neoliberal economy. Yet those who do the everyday labor sustaining the economy are typically women from different classes. The forms of cultural capital that they bring to the job determine what roles they take on as the entrepreneurial economy extracts immaterial forms of labor from its workers.

The gendering (not only the feminization) of work is mapped on to space, and the movements of entrepreneurs, workers, and consumers create new social relations, affective approaches to business, and imaginations of the future. Categories of public and private are configured and continually adapted to accommodate gendered movements across space. The challenge for feminist ethnographers is to understand how distinctions between spaces are often projected on to people; distinctions between social groups in turns are projected on to spaces, and how public and private are created and differentiated as ideologies (Gal 2005).

Neoliberal Individualism and Startup Collectives

Globally, theorists mark the financialization of contemporary economies as a rendering of all relations in market terms. They are imagined and expressed in terms of value, potential, and speculation, and thus the ascendance of neoliberalism marks both the disappearance of labor as a category and its collective form, class (Brown 2015: 38). I

show how this takes place in Bangalore through the dispersal of labor through the city in the startup economy and by analyzing the impossibility of achieving middle–class status in precarious neoliberal entrepreneurial workplaces and the challenges inherent in aspiring to become a startup entrepreneur.

Neoliberalism's imperative to adopt forms of refashioning and skill–bundling into the construction of the "entrepreneur of the self" (Bourdieu 1998) or "homo oeconomicus" (the market–driven individual, Brown 2015) or the "entrepreneurial self" (Freeman 2014) has a particular resonance in postcolonial and neoliberalizing India. Here workers in the startup economy create alternate forms of sociality and group belonging that exceed Marxist categories of class and labor but help people to navigate new social and geographical territories through elected identity into familiar social forms such as the family and nation.

Gowri Vijayakumar's fieldwork at a small town BPO outside Bangalore shows that in contrast to managers' expectations of individualized work aspirations, women workers craft neoliberal vocabularies of individualism together with national ideals and domestically embedded articulations of the future to formulate what she calls "flexible aspirations" (Vijayakumar 2013). These aspirations, she argues, are a form of gendered class distinction. Thus neoliberalism does not inflect the aspirations and experiences of her interlocutors but acts as a resource through which they formulate their own strategies of meaning–making and class consolidation. Women in her study imagined themselves as flexible and adaptable to global labor standards as well as to family norms and strictures.

Jyothsna Belliappa's work amongst I.T. women in Bangalore is positioned as a critique of the sociological theory of reflexive modernity wherein changes in technology

and communication are believed to enhance an individual's sense of self, privileging the individual over the collective (Belliappa 2013: 22). Instead in her research she found that,

> Even though women use the language of individual choice and responsibility to describe their collective obligations, they do not favor a form of individualism that liberates them from family obligations, nor do they find their families to always be oppressive of their freedom (Belliappa 2009: 91).

She found that women workers in I.T. sustain and value traditional relationships (of living in joint families, for example) even in the face of global restructuring and neoliberal transformations of labor. In other words, those studying I.T. and related industries in Bangalore suggest that the neoliberal individualizing discourses of contemporary workplaces do not necessarily result in a fragmenting of family ties and social formations or in the straightforward passing on of neoliberal ideologies to workers. I argue that entry into neoliberal startup worlds is mediated by life–stage, class, religion, and gender: thus, the category of "woman" is itself is incomprehensible outside a matrix of other identities, as postcolonial theorists suggest (Sinha 2012). For instance, when I discuss the efforts of women to enter the startup economy in Chapter Four, I show how their family's religious convictions and their own location as middle–class, married women with families inflects their "origin stories" of how and why they begin their businesses.

While startup entrepreneurship is dominantly described and celebrated as the rise of the driven and risk–taking individual, in India, this aspiration is tempered and defined by questions of mobility, movement, and circulation. As J. Devika and Binitha Thampi argue, imagining women's mobility as liberatory is resonant of Enlightenment discourses,

and do not always lead to autonomy (2011). Dreams of individual autonomy do not sever social and familial ties to enable entrepreneurial mobility, but can integrate and be nourished by dense affective ties, as Carla Freeman found in Barbados (Freeman 2014).

Yet the lens of mobility allows me to understand how capital is being spatialized under neoliberalism, how labor is dispersed into practices and sites across the city, and how economic actors differently mobilize resources to navigate startup cartographies of labor and life. In Bangalore, the dream of a startup, the ambition for its growth, working in an enterprise business, living the startup lifestyle—these neoliberal possibilities and practices are mediated by women's positions within a network of other responsibilities, duties, and pleasures that are enabling and limiting, sometimes both at once. The ethnographic lens of mobility and the analytic approach of standpoint theory together help me understand how these navigations unfold and what their limits are.

II. Ethnographer at Work: Tracking Labor Across the City

On the second evening of my fieldwork in Bangalore, I caught an auto to meet a friend at a new beer brewery. I wrapped a long *dupatta* around my hair and shoulders, carefully shrouding myself from the dust and pollution of constant construction work in the city. New flyovers, new buildings, underpasses, and gated communities. We bumped and swerved at a manic pace disturbing sand, rubble, and grit in flurries. An impossible sea of brake lights resolutely snaked to the horizon and the auto stalled and revved in its tangle. Finally, after an hour we had traversed the eleven kilometers (or 6.8 miles) to our destination.

Bouncers in black guarded the entrance to the brewery, swinging back its heavy doors at regular intervals to let in the constant stream of young people, usually still their office clothes: button–down shirts and pants for both men and women. My friend and I were soon seated and we looked around us to find most tables already taken. A large group of office colleagues boisterously chatted on one side. On the other, East Asian businessmen inked a deal with two local men, signing papers and then sipping their beers, nervous laughter all around. Rock music thundered, and groups of people continued flocking in as the night wore on.

Soon a familiar figure loped across to meet me: a friend who was one of the three entrepreneurs who started this bar. He was a software engineer from Bangalore who recently moved back to the city, part of the reverse transnational migration that spurs startup entrepreneurship in Bangalore. This bar was his "startup" business, but it has scaled and become one of the city's most popular breweries. Even now, in 2012, it was

always full despite its three-level seating for four hundred people. He sat down with us and began pointing out the local favorites. “That’s the woman who owns the bra company Butter Cups,” he said, gesturing to a young woman seated on a barstool, chatting with the bartenders. “She’s an entrepreneur and comes here to unwind after work. If you want to meet people, you should come and hang out here,” he suggested. The bar is a popular choice for entrepreneurs to network and socialize, for large office groups to unwind after work, for business meetings, and for software techies who like their beer and rock music. On just my second evening I was being introduced to how Bangalore’s new urban spaces extend, support, and intersect with everyday work life for the growing middle–classes.

The city felt new to me too. Unlike the Bangalore of the 1990s when middle–class teenagers stumbled into a pub only to run into family friends (and subsequent trouble), tonight the brewery was a sea of unfamiliar faces. The “opening up” of Bangalore’s economy offers not only new kinds of work (small startups in fashion, design, hospitality, travel) but equally, new spaces for these entrepreneurs to mingle, socialize, and network (see Farrer 2002 for a comparison with the “opening up” of markets and sexual cultures in China). Amidst the surge in pubs, malls, bowling alleys, breweries, and restaurants the chances of accidentally running into familiar faces is less likely.

As the evening wore on, a post-beer haze settled on our table. It felt as though I had never left Bangalore, as though this was not the city of my birth—a city that always felt strangely provincial. I was returning to study a city that I could claim my own in some ways, having lived here since I was sixteen, as what Kamala Visweswaran (1994) calls a “hyphenated–ethnographer.” Yet on my return, people encountered me like a newcomer

to the city. It was a strangely liberating feeling, to be somewhere that seemed at once familiar and strange. Over the next few days this feeling repeatedly crept up on me—feeling displaced when I met so many new people, encountered new possibilities for life and work, and new forms of leisure. Yet it was familiar in reassuring ways: speaking many local languages (Tamil and Kannada), being a half hour away from my mother's house, and reconnecting with old school friends. Many of them had returned to India after between 5–10 years overseas, and almost all of them were startup entrepreneurs. I didn't realize it at first but each of these encounters was unfolding a new aspect of urban life in Bangalore to me—if I wanted to study it.

Mobile Sites and Mobility as Method

The startup economy claims to operate in an inclusive and welcoming manner for all those who can innovate and show initiative. However by centering the question of women's mobility (both physical and aspirational), my dissertation challenges this new economy's claims of inclusion and incorporation. By attending to mobility I understand how women enter, experience, and make sense of different sites of the startup economy. Mobility as method privileges and foregrounds the gendered body as an ontological mechanism[13] to understand the current political economy in India. Tracking women's movements across spaces I also aim to capture the blurred distinctions between home and work, ethnographer and informant as I trace various intersecting routes through the city.

My journey into fieldwork began, quite literally, with trying to find a home to live in. My hunt began in the yellow pages of local newspapers that I found at street corner

[13] Molé (2011) understands the body as an ontological mechanism of truth–telling about the effects of the Italian harassment practice of "mobbing" that unfolds in offices.

newsstands. I called tens of real estate agencies and devotedly visited their offices. At each one a new man emerged on a motorbike and I would explain to him that I did not have my own transport. Clambering on to the back seat of motorbikes, I clung gingerly on to the side of many leather seats as real estate agents took me on bumpy rides through inner neighborhood streets looking for homes. We often entered the grand gate of a spacious bungalow only to make an abrupt turn and head around to the back of the building. There, narrow staircases arranged behind tangles of clothing lines led to a dimly lit single room. Dogs howled and neighbors' eyes seemed everywhere. Landlords asked me persistent questions: what would my timings be? Would I have male visitors? What hours did I expect to keep? What was my dissertation about? How old was I? What did my parents do? I needed to be located, tied down, contextualized against a social fabric with the appropriate configurations of caste, class, profession and only then would I be allowed to stay.

Elsewhere, reading phone numbers on the photocopied signs for "Ladies Hostels," I entered a thriving economy of small homes turned into living arrangements. Each room was lined with single beds. Three or four women shared these rooms that all tunneled into each other ending with a single bathroom that was always in use. These were for less affluent women, often employed in office jobs in smaller firms, and moving from middle towns and cities across India. As I found out later, these women performed accountant work, secretarial work, and back–end office work in small, local entrepreneurial offices across the city. Their jobs were usually support–oriented and did not involve any interaction with people outside their office or require them to be fluent in English.

My male cousin, hunting for an apartment just months before I was, quickly found

an independent room, and attached bathroom. I, on the other hand, toured neighborhoods and agents unsuccessfully. “They don’t like to have single women,” my cousin explained to me. “It’s dangerous for them—anything could happen.” For women, hostels only offered densely packed rooms. Instead of the single individual lady, they created a space that would accommodate the far more acceptable *group* of working women. Stuck between the inquisitive landlord and the controlling hostel owner, I realized my limited options for mobility and freedom as a single woman.

Some months later Nayantara, whom I introduced in Chapter One as the startup entrepreneur who runs a sports company, called to follow up on her offer that I move in with her. I packed my things up immediately. I had first met Nayantara just a few months ago through common friends, and we had made promises to keep in touch and hang out. She had recently taken over the media arm of a small sports company that my high school friends had started to popularize and support sports other than cricket. Nayantara had a work background in Public Relations and continued to run the company as one that provided media support and strategizing, planned events, advised sports celebrities, and ran campaigns.

Until her spare room became free though, we did not know each other very well. We ended up living together throughout my fieldwork, Nayantara the startup entrepreneur and me, the ethnographer of the startup economy. We lived the life of two single women in a spacious and airy apartment off Bangalore’s central boulevard. One street away pubs discharged air conditioning blasts suffused with cigarette smoke, and teenagers hung out on bikes and scooters, gossiping after college. Our street was the beginning of a residential neighborhood; large leafy trees shrouded the sky, vigilant

security guards manned the building, and domestic help walked their employer's yapping dogs in the late afternoons.

I had no fieldsite established when I first moved in with Nayantara. I walked out of my room every morning to see her alert and awake, hunched over her iPhone at the breakfast table, typically dressed in a sleeveless T-shirt and tights, back from a nearby gym. She hastily sipped a tumbler of South Indian filter coffee, simultaneously trawling Facebook and Twitter. She offered me a running news feed of what her sports clients said (she runs her own sports publicity firm, employing between 5–10 people), what latest shocking thing the new right–wing government at the center had done, and updating me on friends and events in the city. Once she was done giving me a dense rundown of events, people, and the challenges that faced her as an entrepreneur that day, she would look at me. "And you? What's your plan today?"

I had just begun fieldwork and was still hunting for a fieldsite. Nayantara began taking me around with her, and from here my fieldwork analyzing the startup economy and its diverse labor practices and spread of middle–class neoliberal work began.

The Dispersed Sites of the Startup Economy

Nayantara was 29 years old when I moved in with her, and she is an energetic and driven entrepreneur. She comes from an affluent family and lived in Singapore before she moved back to Bangalore to live one floor above her mother and sister. Rather than join the nursery school that they launched and worked at together, she chose to run her own business. She often commanded me to write down what she thought people should know about women startup entrepreneurs: "tell them how hard it is to be the boss and command a team!" she would say one day. On another, "dude, tell them how sexist the sports

business is!" On a third: "You know the main problem? I literally don't know where the money to pay salaries is going to come from! I can't give those kids [her employees] late pay—they pay rent every month! You know I can't sleep at night worrying about money? Why do clients pay so late?! Should I break my financial bonds? Please write about this!"

Living with her enabled me to understand how varied each working day was from the next. In the morning we might rent a cab and be driven miles away to a hospice for end–of–life cancer patients as she sits in on a meeting advising volunteers on how to rope in a sports celebrity for a donation drive. In the afternoon I could be persuaded to photograph a football league she is introducing to Bangalore; the team poses as I organize a shoot at Bangalore Club. The late afternoons could be meetings with her employees, scrunched up at narrow desks behind a wall that separates us from the office foosball table. In the evenings Nayantara might meet a client for a drink—"wait, 'client?' Which client is this? Is this a date?! I'm not accompanying you on a date, Nayantara!"—or she might make a day trip to another city handling publicity at an event.

I learnt by accompanying her and watching her, living with her, and sharing her life, that there was no central workplace that anchored Nayantara. Her every day was different. Her sites of work were displaced across the city—volunteer meeting, office, club event, bar—as was the notion of "work" itself. She drew on her work clients to enrich her service to the cancer hospice, building goodwill with both the charity organization that ran it and with her sports client… but is this "work?" She met a client for drinks in the evening: but is this a casual business drink or a date? For Nayantara, spaces of work and what constitutes work are fluid and diffuse and seep into each other.

Most significantly they are also spread across the city, and take place in a range of different environments.

I discovered this while accompanying her to a range of spaces: meetings, startup offices, events, and after–work socializing. At each of these spaces she was differently dressed and made up and she had arrived through different means of public transport. Pieces of clothing—jackets, scarves, cardigans—were worn and discarded depending on the need for professionalism, to enact power, or to feel safe. She would take autos in the day, and cabs by sunset (Uber in India launched at the time of my fieldwork). When I began fieldwork amongst startup founders as mobile as she was, I did not have a smartphone and took autos late at night despite being told it was unsafe. When I stayed at my mother's house in a residential neighborhood, autos were harder to come by in the evenings as the streets quietened down and commerce slackened. Women's mobility is not only about arriving safely at a destination but involves calibrating and assessing how and when to travel as well. Possibilities for mobility are further circumscribed by classed and gendered expectations around women's domestic labor and their far–flung homes at the middle–class gated communities on the periphery of the city. Mobility presents material, urban, temporal challenges: the frictions (Tsing 2004) to the startup economy's celebratory account of enabling flexible business for all.

Crafting my research design, I knew that to understand what I am calling the startup ethic across the neoliberal economy, I would have to be equally mobile and equally flexible, traveling to different sites and spaces, threading together the varied practices that loosely categorize contemporary "work." Nayantara introduced me to her friends and to young women whom she mentored. Additionally, through common introductions I met a

group of entrepreneurial women who gather every few Fridays to network and socialize and build a stronger community of support for each other. I visited the workplaces of these entrepreneurs—startups in travel, events, image consulting—and volunteered my labor, writing skills, and time.

Some months into this I noticed a large advertisement in the city's leading English–language newspaper advertising a Start Up Festival in early 2013. Registration was open to "all" (but required a registration fee of Rs. 2,500 or roughly $37), and over four days, four different neighborhoods in the city would open up startup offices to the general public. We would be able to meet entrepreneurs, interact with them, learn their stories, and ask them questions. There were sessions with venture capitalists and angel investors, with "pitching sessions" allowing aspiring entrepreneurs to acquire seed funding. Startups in yoga, fitness, dating, and hospitality opened their doors for participants to train their bodies, learn fitness techniques, and sample new spaces to network at.

The Broad Landscape of Startup Culture

Living with Nayantara had shown me what the everyday life of an entrepreneur looks and feels like, but at the Start Up Festival I would be "taught" how to become one. As I describe in the next chapter this learning is not limited to the logics of business alone—how to draw up a plan, how to scale a startup. It was focused on how to cultivate the figure of the startup entrepreneur; it was a pedagogical instruction in the everyday rhythms, modes of self–making, forms of love and passion, and mobile practices that produce the startup entrepreneur. It struck me at the very first Start Up event that I attended that this kind of entrepreneurship was ontologically premised on masculine ways of interacting in public, comporting oneself, and dressing. In other words, startup

entrepreneurship is a performative iteration of masculinity.

I attended many events at the Start Up Festival, and show in the next chapter how individuals are taught about what it means to be a startup entrepreneur in Bangalore. People I spent time with influenced my experience of the event: typically women who drifted to me or found me. Gathering from these women's experiences that there are particular gendered challenges to entering the ostensible "public" of the startup economy, I set out to explore what these are, and how they manifest. At networking sessions, pitching sessions, and at the different public and semi–public events where entrepreneurs sell their innovations, I found that they also sell themselves.

There is no way to know how valuable a startup is when it is being conceptualized; efforts to assign value are largely speculative. Funders assess the potential of a company based on how the entrepreneur pitches it. In the early stages of startup business founders thus have to show a single–minded dedication to their business idea. They have to be mobile, traveling at short notice around the city to meet funders, collaborators, and clients. They have to appear unattached to anything but their business: a sign for investors that the startup founder will stay focused on exponential growth, be able to scale the business, and not just produce a "lifestyle company" (a modest company that makes some profit). Intense networking allows startup founders to spread the word about their business, develop new contacts, and expand in exciting ways. Thus the early stages of startup growth require a control and mastery over one's own mobility: commuting across the city on days and evenings, staying immersed in entrepreneurial networks, signaling orientation toward business (not home), and toward growth and expansion rather than small–scale home enterprise. Each of these facets of startup labor are both

gendered and classed, premised on a secondary system of labor that (invisibly) enables the mobile, aspirational startup founder.

The world's primary startup sector in Silicon Valley is male–dominated for some of these very reasons: men's training in technology and their ability to immerse themselves in formal work. Michael Kimmel explains how the masculine figure of the Internet entrepreneur reproduces narratives of the "self–made man" so dominant in turn of the century America (Kimmel 2012). But if middle–class, white American men are expected to be ambitious, mobile, and aggressive at work, how do women enter these work environments? In the context of my research, how do Indian women enter these circuits of labor and capital?

There is a significantly postcolonial gendered dimension attached to middle–class mobility in the Indian city. During the late colonial period, gender emerged as an axis of difference through which Indian womanhood was reconceptualized within a division of public and private life, in which the family would support the elevated roles of Indian men and the nation (Mankekar 1999, Sinha 2006). As colonial legislation permeated spheres of family life including age of marriage, sati (or widow immolation) and age of reproduction, women's bodies were dragged into these debates as a part of colonial modernity (Donner 2008: 43):

> …the debate on the "Hindu woman" was resurrected through a combination of two essentialisms: the Victorian discourses on the nature of women and the domestic sphere, and the upper-caste ideal of the chaste Hindu wife and mother of sons. (Donner 2008: 43).

Victorian practices of middle class domesticity, femininity, and closeness to private

space map on to upper-caste Hindu practices. Women's education into the colonial figure of the Enlightened Woman prepared them to participate in philanthropic activities in the 19th and early 20th century. They were expected to acquire European accomplishments, yet present themselves as emblems of national culture, as traditional yet modern (Jayawardena 1986: 13). Such women had to be the negation of anything considered "backward" in the old society; their role was to advocate freedom and a self–conscious "return" to pre–colonial values of emancipation and freedom. Their circulation, then, was equally purposeful—to join larger movements, to serve the poor and to support nationalist movements (Enloe 2014). Their femininity was closely calibrated through a regulation of their presentation and movement in public spaces.

To address these questions in the new economy, I myself turned the entrepreneurial ethnographer, handing out business cards and networking to gain more startup contacts. Building on this new database of people, I was able to understand how entrepreneurs are expected to move in and out dispersed and diverse sites including local accelerator labs, incubation centers, and networking events. By paying attention to women's mobility at these spaces—their access, participation, dreams, and ambitions here—my ethnography unfolds the fictions that the startup economy tells about itself.

Given the historical association of Indian middle–class women with domestic spaces and practices that undergirded nationalist struggles to define and embrace a newly emergent nation, can women achieve the mobility required of startup founders? Startup entrepreneurs, I found, were expected to be sociable, confident, mobile, able to stay days and night at incubation labs, and able to work fluidly without any formal work timings. What negotiations, compromises, and adjustments enable women to turn to the new and

deeply gendered and classed economy of startups?

Following the Startup Actors

The first six months of my research were spent dropping in and out of various entrepreneurial sites, reassembling the social and economic world of startups. As Bruno Latour (2005) explains, social scientists can no longer expect actors to conform to the behavior of some well–known "types"; instead we have to "'follow the actors themselves,' that is try to catch up with their often wild innovations in order to learn from them what the collective existence has become in their hands, which methods they have elaborated to make it fit together, which accounts could best define the new associations that they have been forced to accomplish" (12).

I spent the first phase of my research following entrepreneurial actors in the early stages of their company's growth. I spent time at startups in sports media, event planning, and travel consultancy, and interviewing women who launched a range of startups (including Human Resource matching companies, educational resources, technology startups, and children's products). Woman entrepreneurs who left corporate jobs started or headed these companies and each had between 1–6 employees. They were different ages (from 25–45) and their life stage, religion, caste, and class background determined their approach to work. For young and unmarried women, work expanded to fill their days—yet there were clauses and caveats. For instance, a Muslim entrepreneur from a family that she herself termed "conservative" was dissuaded from running her own business, and presented with almost daily stresses by way of phone calls, visits to her single mother, and admonitions on her choice of life by her extended family. The married women enjoyed far more freedom: as Perveez Mody (2008) explains, when Indian

women pass from their father's family to their husband's care through marriage, the responsibility for her actions and her movements also passes on to her marital household. For women married to men who supported their business, marriage could be a far more enabling and supportive experience than one's own natal home and kin, as Carla Freeman (2014) too found with women entrepreneurs in Barbados for whom a companionate marriage is a "risky" undertaking, marking a turn away from living embedded within larger kin networks. There, women entrepreneurs explained how their husbands support both their work and their life's aspirations: home life was an important resource in sustaining and developing entrepreneurial work. I explain gendered relationships with startup work culture and expectations in detail in Chapter Four.

I offered to help out with everyday work at these startup companies, and found myself organizing events, planning website development, and sitting in on meetings and office work. Employees at these companies were young, usually between 21–25, and right out of college. They were being paid around Rs. 10,000 (or $150) a month or less, and worked from 9 a.m. to late evening depending on the events and schedule for the day. I draw from my fieldwork with them in more detail in Chapter Three, coming next.

Encountering my Main Fieldsite: Captivate

Next, I wanted to understand what it meant to work at the next stage of startups. How do startup ideologies shape entrepreneurial workplaces as they scale up? After all the startup economy involves not only innovation and launching a new business—the most publicized aspects of this form of enterprise—but equally the more routine labor of sustaining these as lean and flexible entrepreneurial workplaces. During my second phase of fieldwork (March–December 2013) I concentrate on one workplace—that I call

"Captivate," co–founded by Pushkar Subramaniam—studying it in–depth over nine months. Such companies, as I was to discover, are not premised on profit but equally develop a distinctive "ethic" that embodies the founder/s principles and values and classed outlook.

When I told friends that I was beginning to work at Captivate, they associated the workplace with the persona of one its founders—"Pushkar is allowing you in because he has nothing to hide," one of them said. "He's always above–board and ethical." "He's very straight [laced]," said another. I could tell that this particular company was publicly shaped by the impression that one of its founders gives: he is truthful and honest, and therefore his company would be defined by those traits. Pushkar has other interests and defining traits in addition to being "honest." He was once a professional tennis player, he experiments with yoga styles, he is fond of trying new things (whether food, travel, or new approaches to business), and wants his employees to be fluent in these lifestyle experiments; to him it is a mark of being global.

The company organizes an annual off–site trip as a bonding exercise for employees, and Pushkar takes this seriously. When I interviewed him over lunch one afternoon after an annual off–site he was eager to learn how Captivate's women employees responded to the white–water rafting experience. At work, he actively encourages employees to experiment with new cafes and food types, often insisting at a lunch out that people try something new. He embodies the entrepreneurial ethic to embrace risk: in the workplace this manifests as widespread changes in technology and workflow but also in efforts to eat out, take an annual adventure off–site journey, include workers on test trips to stay at elite Captivate properties across India, and in company–allocated funds that employees

can use to enhance themselves (learn English, take a software class, and so on).

In turn Pushkar influences workers, especially those from a lower middle–class background who are curious to learn about middle–class practices and dispositions. They are deeply curious about his family life, his lifestyle, the way that he speaks and moves, and discuss and analyze his interactions with other employees in great detail. As the Founder crafts the entrepreneurial company according to his own ethics and values, so too do employees align themselves toward these ethics or turn away from them. Present and past employees spoke about how Captivate was "not what it used to be," meaning that the employee closeness of its initial days had been replaced by hierarchical structures. People often reminisced to me about the early days of the company when they could learn from the founders and interact closely with them.

In a workplace that employs individuals from different class backgrounds and nationalities, a closeness between different groups of employees also allows cross–cultural and cross–class learning about clothing, professional speech and mannerisms, pastimes and family life, and leisure practices. In Chapter Six I show how employees affectively align themselves toward the company and thus also imagine themselves as belonging within a desirable middle–class family.

Like many encounters in the startup world, my entry into this fieldsite was not planned. My modes of work, my entries and exits, my movements through this economy and my attachments to it were already replicating the world I was studying. Ethnographer and entrepreneur intersected and diverged at unpredictable moments as the field swallowed me into its rhythm and swirl. Six months into my fieldwork, I found myself at an incubation lab, waiting to hear how aspiring entrepreneurs pitch their products to a

venture capitalist. When the VC walked in, he turned out to be an old acquaintance and was curious about my research. He suggested I contact his brother's company: he had funded it as a startup and it had now grown into a mid-size entrepreneurial workplace. Anant, the venture capitalist, sent me an email introducing me to his brother, Pushkar, the company CEO. We fixed a time to chat on the phone since Pushkar was leaving for South America the next day.

Pushkar called me exactly on time. This was unusual by Bangalore's laid-back standards for other fields in which I had previously worked in 2004 and 2007 (like media and education). However, the startup economy has many return migrants from the US, like Pushkar himself, for whom rigidly adhering to time schedules is one way of maintaining a distinction from the local workforce. Pushkar's questions were precise and brief, occasionally interspersed with instructions to his children who were shouting in the background. He told me a little bit about Captivate: it is a boutique travel service that plans individualized vacations in Africa, Asia, and South America. Guests are frequently accompanied on their trips by Captivate representatives who act as tour guides, and each itinerary is completely tailor–made to the guest's needs. Pushkar then asked me about my research.

I offered a general explanation—that I was interested in the studying the everyday work world of entrepreneurial companies, and its gendered and classed experiences. In exchange for being at the office everyday, I offered my unpaid labor. Pushkar said he could think of a few possible roles for me in the company, but for now he would put me in touch with the Marketing team where I would be "on trial" for two months. Following this period, we would check in with each other to see how things were working before

committing to a longer fieldwork period. I agreed immediately. This site eventually became my main fieldwork site: the lens through which I understand how entrepreneurial imperatives of risk–taking and flexibility are experienced by those at its fringes: not the highly visible funders and founders of startups, but the invisible employees who grow companies and sustain their everyday functioning.

Captivate was launched in 2006 by an Indian man (Pushkar) and a German man and began in two small home-offices in Bangalore and Munich. The idea for Captivate emerged from Pushkar's own experience during business school in France. He had invited a group of friends to visit India and, while he was hosting them, realized that there was a need for a travel service that was India–based but could host Western guests and understand their needs. Returning to business school after the break, he developed this idea as a project for one of his courses. A German classmate joined him as partner, and a professor invested initial funds in the idea.

On graduating from business school, the two founders and their wives traveled all over to India to understand the sector they were diving into. Gradually, over the next few years they expanded to Captivate South America and Captivate Africa. These other branches too are built on the same idea that centers a love for travel and a familiarity with destinations as the core focus of the business. As Pushkar told me, "we don't look for people with a formal training in travel. In fact, we prefer to have people who 'fit' the company rather than have the educational degrees. We look for certain *personalities*." When Captivate hires guides and consultants, they look for people who are cosmopolitan, well-traveled, able to communicate their own experiences to guests and to convert that mutual love of travel into sales.

In 2013 when I began fieldwork here, Captivate had scaled up to a company with over 100 employees in Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America. It was not a startup anymore but a mid–size company. However it still valued and celebrated its entrepreneurial roots. Employees who had been in the company since its inception spoke to me proudly of the long hours that they put in, and the ways they learnt how to nurture the company when it was a fledgling entity. As I show in Chapter Six, the trope of "work–as–family" arose repeatedly amongst some employees.

Their head office is in Bangalore and when I was first introduced to the company they had over 50 employees in this office, around 75% of whom were women. Six employees were foreign nationals, two of Indian descent, but the rest were Spanish, Scots, and English. Several languages are heard in the office: mostly Kannada, English (the primary medium of communication), Tamil, and Spanish. Captivate's position in the travel sector, as a former startup company that has now scaled up to a mid–size global company, and its employee base of both middle–class well–traveled professionals and young migrant women who were the first generation of professionals in their families made it an ideal fieldwork site as I explain in a later section of this chapter.

Introducing the Captivate Office

Pushkar put me in touch with his Marketing team before he left on his travels, and presently I received a phone call from a Captivate employee named Susan. She was Scottish and spoke quickly; when I first heard her, I could not place her accent or understand most of what she said. I later discovered that she had lived in Kenya (and spoke some Swahili) and had moved to Bangalore to work with Captivate, where she was learning some Kannada. Susan is representative of the kinds of employees that Captivate

likes to hire amongst its management—she is adventurous, fluent in different cultural contexts (the U.K., West Africa, southern India), makes friends easily, and is a good communicator (she has written a book on eco–weddings and was a journalist before joining Captivate). Captivate's small Bangalore office had at least seven others like Susan who had made an ethical choice to move to a modestly–paid job in a small company that worked in a field that they loved: travel.

The office was in Indiranagar, known also as Bangalore's "Start Up Neighborhood" and I set off on a warm March afternoon for my first meeting there. Its main street—Hundred Feet Road—is crammed with restaurants, cafes, bars, and small offices. The Café Coffee Day nearby invariably hosts startup entrepreneurs sitting in meetings, laptops open, discussing ideas and plans. I finally found the office on the second floor of a white non-descript building, with a cell phone store and a sari store at its base. A rack of motorbikes and a small cabin for a security guard lined the side of the building.

This is a vastly different landscape from the gated communities of I.T. offices that dominate the global image of middle–class professional life in Bangalore. Not only is it smaller, there is little that distinguishes it from neighborhood commerce and consumption spaces. Squeezing past the bikes I entered the building to face a tiled wall with a tiny alcove in which a statue of the Hindu Lord Ganesha—the pot–bellied elephant god of prosperity—had been recently worshipped with flowers and a lit incense stick. A cramped elevator for about three people took me to the second floor.

The entry to Captivate Travels is through a glass door requiring a swipe card. The card was amended to record time during my nine months at Captivate. Official work hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. but—depending on the team you are on—hours are flexible.

Unlike many travel agencies that host walk–in customers making enquiries, all of Captivate's business is conducted online. This is a back–end office.

The main Captivate office is shades of grey and white, with large glass walls and open cubicles giving the single floor light and a sense of space. Trees, the sky, and neighboring buildings are visible through walls made of massive glass panes. At one corner, the Marketing team sits by one of these sheets of glass, looking out onto dense tree cover that one of them calls her "private garden." Cubicles are separated by walls that prevent employees from seeing each other and direct the gaze to the computer screen. The cubicles are also open which means that managers walking by will often tap an employee on the shoulder asking them to stop chatting on Skype or Facebook.

Presently Susan and Jyothi from the Marketing team came out to meet me. They were excessively warm and friendly, and welcomed me into a little conference room. Susan was a bustling Scotswoman in a knee–length teal-colored dress with a shrug over her shoulders and large earrings and a necklace. Jyothi seemed self–contained; as a middle–class North Indian from a family with a business background, she had developed an interest in German and won scholarships through all levels of training till she became a qualified teacher at the Goethe Insitut in New Delhi and simultaneously worked with Captivate there for many years before moving to Bangalore. She was dressed modestly in a simple *salwar kameez* with a *dupatta* over her chest, and had long hair tied into a low no–nonsense bun.

They sat on either side of me in the conference room and began to explain their work. As part of a four–member Marketing team, Susan and Jyothi were responsible for writing website content, soliciting guest blog posts after or during their travels,

enlivening the websites for all of Captivate's destinations with classy photographs and perfectly grammatical (and alluring!) text. Susan also establishes long email communication with guests after their stay. She organizes and conducts guest events in London to meet past and prospective guests over hosted dinners and presentations of Captivate's plans. These long emails along with the spontaneous gestures that Susan organizes (a surprise bottle of wine, a suite upgrade) personalize relationships and offer a unique advantage to traveling with Captivate; not surprisingly many guests travel with Captivate more than once, and recommend it to friends.

As I came to see, these emails perform an important affective function. They are especially valuable for Captivate's primary clientele who are elderly affluent Westerners, often living alone or away from families. Susan's long and warm emails to them describe her everyday life in Bangalore; guests in turn respond with their own news and travel reminiscences. Guests sometimes organize "viewing parties" of photographs from their Captivate travel with Indian takeaway food for friends and neighbors on their return home from a trip, and Susan inquires with care about these as well, offering suggestions for Indian movies to watch during the gathering. Jyothi does not undertake this kind of intensive communication with Western guests: it requires someone from the milieu of the guests themselves, like Susan.

As a small entrepreneurial company, Captivate does not have training programs for employees when they join. Instead they look for a "fit" as the founder told me when I confessed I did not think I had the requisite skills to benefit everyday work at Captivate.

Rather than place value on formal educational training[14], Subramaniam was suggesting that an assessment of employee potential is key to hiring practices. Each work role is performed by those who already have some knowledge or capacity for how to perform this labor. Susan and the other foreign nationals, for instance, are hired because they love to travel themselves, and can command the ease with language and the confidence to converse easily with affluent Western guests.

Those who have a basic Bachelor's degree (and sometimes a Tourism Masters degree), a working command of English, and are straight out of college are typically hired on to teams that perform the back–end jobs of making itineraries, crafting websites, updating databases, and organizing logistics. They learn how to work in professional environments, communicate with other teams across the world (one of the workers specifically mentioned the Skype calls he has with the Germany and Kenya offices as a benefit of the job: it teaches him cross–cultural communication). Some of these jobs require specific *technical* skills that are often picked up during work: for instance knowing about Search Engine Optimization (SEO, or how to increase hits to a website). Mentors teach newcomers about workflow and technology and often take on an additional role of providing guidance outside the office as well, as in Chapter Six where young women are taught how to order food, and how to conduct themselves at middle–class spaces of leisure. These jobs do not have much career mobility, and when people learn the skills associated with them and want more challenge, they are expected to leave the company; a manager called this "healthy attrition." I describe these jobs in more de

[14] Unlike the Information Technology industry that looks for elite degrees and middle–class professionals in its engineering workforce (see Radhakrishnan 2011, Upadhya 2007).

When employees at Captivate are hired into one team, it was not very common for them to switch to another. This kind of movement happened rarely and this seems to be because of the matrix of reasons that come together determining which employees should communicate directly with foreign guests, and which have the resources and ability to communicate with aggressive and demanding vendors, and who has the ability to be mobile across day and night, and moving across the city.

Comprehending Class at Captivate

Susan and Jyothi represent two distinct groups of employees at Captivate. Susan's group comprises the seven or so (the number changes as people come and leave) Travel Consultants (I will often abbreviate to TC) who are typically foreign nationals and upper middle–class Indians who sell travel packages and interface with guests on the phone. They are between 30–40 years old with prior work histories in corporate finance or communications and a rich history of personal travel for pleasure. They often came to office in *tuk tuks*, driving their own cars, or using chauffeured cars—vastly different from the scooter commute or two–bus journeys that women in back–office jobs frequently undertook. Commuting time for TCs was short—between fifteen minutes to a half hour, barely anything by Bangalore's standards. The three Indians in this group had all worked in major metropolitan cities before (Mumbai and New Delhi) and were already well–established middle–class professional women leading teams and in positions of authority before they moved to Captivate.

Although the company did not exceed their former pay or even match it, these women work here because they love travel, wanted a less stressful job, desired to move to India and experience something different from before. When they talked to me about

their jobs, they always made sure to mention it was enjoyable and challenging and spoke of work in terms of personal interactions—"chats with clients," and a fascination with the many kinds of people they meet and vacations that they plan. When the CEO described the foreign nationals on the phone to me, he said, "These aren't your typical expatriates who live in Palm Meadows[15]." He meant that they were atypical transnational professional migrants, wanting to immerse themselves in the experiences of everyday Indian urban life rather than shelter themselves from it. They often spent time with the younger employees at Captivate who enjoyed going out for drinks with them and cultivating transnational friendships—many of the foreigners left but kept in touch with their former colleagues.

The second group of women at Captivate—those like Jyothi—support guest travel through back–end work including building itineraries, updating databases, coordinating logistics and creating websites and translating content. They all had an undergraduate degree and a few had a Master's degree, usually in Tourism[16]. These employees are usually the first–generation of professionals in their families, and several migrated from smaller towns and villages. Their spoken and written English was uneven and when I sometimes sent them emails with an invitation to a party or to my house they would impatiently walk over to my desk and ask me to "just say it in a few words!" Unlike the other group, they were not fluent with expressing themselves in English. When they used

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[15] Palm Meadows is an elite gated residential community where expatriates and rich Indian migrants flock to replicate their lifestyles abroad. Bungalows are constructed in the style of suburban America, and the complex is self–contained with a pool and shopping centers, and an exercise center.

[16] Although I heard the management speak of not hiring those with Tourism degrees, I did encounter employees with such degrees.

messaging services like Whatsapp for instance, they used the voice function, choosing to record and send their voice messages to each other rather than text. This reflects their family class position, and their own education in local schools and colleges where English was not always the lingua franca.

These women were the youngest in the office and became my closest friends. There are five teams whose workers I include in this group: finance, accounts, those who make itineraries, marketing, and those who work with databases. This is a total of around twenty employees. My insight into how entrepreneurial workplaces are experienced by those entering professional work for the first time is shaped by interviews and interactions with them. Typically, their parents had their own businesses or worked for the state government; some had jobs that in India would be considered lower middle–class or working class including as a vegetable push–cart vendor, security guard, building contractor, nurse and so on. Their castes were more difficult to determine. Like most industries in India built on the fiction of "meritocracy"—or the idea that skills and talent are objective factors determining success—in the startup sector too, success and mobility are heralded as personal achievements. Yet Brahmins made sure to insert references to how particular they were about eating vegetarian food or their father's position as "learned men" (professors or priests). Those from middling business castes mentioned the need for their marriages to be arranged with other business families from the same caste. Aside from this, caste status was only tangentially evident, as when I accompanied women to particular temples and noted the deity.

In large part, it was class that was materially evident and indicative further of the arc of ambition of this group of women. The six or so migrant women straight out of

college, or those who were older but still unmarried, lived on their own in tiny one or two room–shared apartments or in Ladies Paying Guest facilities. They were able to work late hours, meet strangers at fitness classes, take up weekend hobbies, and engage in leisure time. In the evenings too, depending on their age, they went to a nearby pub with Ladies Night (free entry for "ladies") and two free drinks on the house (these were between 22–27 years old), or enjoyed shopping at a handicrafts sale or street–side shopping (when in their mid twenties—mid thirties).

In just a few months I came to understand the career growth and desires of this aspiring middle–class of workers. Some of them used Captivate funds for self-improvement to enroll in English language classes, others took up dance lessons for B-Boying, salsa, and hip–hop, and conducted their own romances. Migrants to the city were far from parental eyes and took significant risks with dating—almost always with a man from a different religion, race, class, or caste. They were forced to keep these romances secret, as their parents would insist on their terminating the relationships if they ever found out.

The visible difference between the employees who interact directly with guests and those who do back–end work is apparent at first glance: middle–class and elite women often wore pants, dresses, and shirts to work whereas the back–end workers were more typically in *salwar kameezes* or dressed akin to college students in skinny jeans, dressy tops (with puffed sleeves, decorations, or synthetic material), and make up. In other words, people's aesthetic tastes are distinctions, as Pierre Bourdieu argued, made in relation to other classes to consolidate how one's class status is publicly managed and read (1986).

In his analysis of the middle–classes in India, Steve Derné (2008) makes the difference between the locally–oriented middle–class and the transnational middle–class. Life for the former has not changed drastically with the globalization accompanying economic liberalization, he argues: their ideas about marriage, family, and modernity remain largely the same. The dramatic changes assumed to accompany middle–class growth in India are mostly true for a small English speaking population for whom the material effects of globalization have enabled cultural change and altered patterns of consumption.

The two groups I describe here seem to correspond roughly to Derné's (2008) local and transnational middle–classes—one oriented toward other middle–class Indians (Jyothi), and the other toward the West (Susan). Yet this compartmentalization of class is impossible to reconcile with the particular ways in which aspiration, imagination, and desire intersect with gender, caste, nationality, age, life stage, and class to produce differences between the two groups that distinguish them from each other in shifting and fluid ways. Work here does inflect, shape, and infuse everyday practices, aspirations, and desires around work, future, marriage, and lifestyle, as I show in Chapters Five and Six. It affords the opportunities to interact with class others, and to learn from them about modes of middle–class consumption and leisure: how to order food at the fast–food restaurant or the money to sometimes attend a low–key fitness class. Many of the young women's aspirations and desires were cut short either by parental diktat or their own uncertainty about being able to carry through their decisions.

Despite the romances, most women whom I met at Captivate married men that their parents chose; those who went out to eat and drink with others in the office did not

always have a say in replicating some of these pleasurable practices with their own families; and those who attended fitness and leisure classes often invited ridicule from other colleagues—they were not yet "passing" as middle–class (see Liechty 2003 for a discussion on such passing). I explain the temporary and staged aspect of urban startup life in Chapter Seven. Individuals experiment with food, drink, leisure, fitness, and travel in ways that may not result in a permanent radical break with their parent's consumption habits and social expectations, but offer temporary experiences and experiments with inhabiting expressive middle–class urban cultures and practices.

Learning to Live the Good Life

Many of Captivate's employees did not have the forms of capital that could be translated to their advantage in the new middle–class economy like the call center workers whom I described earlier in Chapter One. While those middle–class service sector workers had parents who were often part of India's older middle–classes, working in stable banking and government jobs, Captivate's employees' parents were frequently working class, non–upper caste, and most of their mothers had never been employed. They learn how to consume and inhabit Bangalore's new leisure spaces through the comfort and security of group activities provided through work and through colleagues.

As an entrepreneurial global travel company, Captivate's work environment cultivates employees as though they are individual startup founders.[17] They are offered

[17] Travel is a sector that is the second fastest growing in the world (less than China and greater than Russia) with an annual compound growth rate of 9%, according to the Economic Survey of 2013–2014, which also recommended that India expand its software services (accounting for 46% of total service exports) with an emphasis on tourism and hospitality sectors (Bhargava 2014). Travel is a dominant service–sector industry comprising over 60% of India's economy (Luce 2007).

opportunities to act, consume, exercise, and socialize like startup entrepreneurs. I call this learning to live "the good life," because in the Aristotelian sense, as Hannah Arendt reads it, the good life is an altogether different life for the citizen, one which is "'good' to the extent that by having mastered the necessities of sheer life, by being freed from labor and work, and by overcoming the innate urge of all living creatures for their own survival, it was no longer bound to the biological life process" (Arendt 1998: 36–37).

This is done by offering opportunities for individual workers to embody entrepreneurial ethics of risk, innovation, and flexibility in everyday work, as I show in more detail in Chapters Four and Five. The company organizes off–site trips to go white–water rafting and try adventure sports annually, exhorting employees to move flexibly through the kinds of spaces that their guests enjoy. Several groups of workers are encouraged to innovate with their own labor by suggesting ideas, short cuts, and changes that will simplify and clarify the workflow. Office lunches are often catered from different neighborhood restaurants so that employees can sample and try new cuisines—as the CEO said one day, "C'mon guys! We're a global company! Try something new!"

Employees who complete a few years in the company take "test" trips where they stay at exclusive company hotels and boutiques, making sure the amenities meet company standards and making recommendations. These are ways that employees "learn" about middle–class and elite practices of the guests whom they serve. Often these trips are confusing: employees at Captivate who are young women from a lower middle–class struggle to comprehend why a homely bed–and–breakfast ("You had to get your own water!") might be desirable to foreign guests. At meetings that I attended they were taught how a colorful room in a Rajasthani palace might entice guests: "French like

colors a lot" and giggled their way through reporting that they milked village cows to "test" an authentic village experience for future guests.

The primary purpose of "test trips" is a response to what Jonas Larsen and John Urry (2011) call "post–Fordist differentiated consumption" in which consumers react to mass consumption by wanting individualized experiences. Producers respond by tailor–making experiences and products to individual consumers' needs (14). "New tourism" is segmented, customized, and flexible—a move away from the standardization practices of mass ("old") tourism (Larsen and Urry citing Poon 1993). Captivate, as an entrepreneurial travel company, does not only want to offer guests an experience of the "new tourism," they also want certain forms of habitus to become naturalized amongst employees—"c'mon guys! We're a global company!" is equally a call for employees to embody the entrepreneur's own cosmopolitanism and desire to try new cuisine, exercise, travel, and sport.

Thus, as Zygmunt Bauman argues, travel is not a separate sphere from everyday life but part of a series of experiences comprising the "good life": a continuous holiday for a certain elite (2007). Travel marks status; the phrase "I need a holiday" is a reflection of a modern idea that people's physical and mental health will be restored if they can get away and rejuvenate themselves (Larsen and Urry 2011: 5). For an emerging middle–class at Captivate, work in this entrepreneurial travel sector offers the pedagogical instruction for how to cultivate an appropriate habitus to properly inhabit the new economy of startups. By participating in the off–site adventures, lunches out, and fitness activities organized by work, and informally by colleagues (see Chapter Seven), Captivate employees navigate new middle–class worlds in a group. Being with

colleagues who offer different kinds of knowledge about the city allows newly professional women to understand how to move, converse, and relate to the many spaces of leisure coming up in the neighborhood around the office.

From the company's perspective, the investment in employee lifestyles affectively binds workers to the company and creates energetic and committed employees—it is a part of work itself. The CEO sent out an email to the entire office one day. It was from a client in London and it remarked that the nicest thing about booking a vacation with Captivate was that all the employees he interacted with seemed to love their job. The CEO noted that this was the biggest asset to the company: employee love of their work. While startup entrepreneurs love what they do because they run their own business, when the company scales up, different management techniques are deployed as modes of governance, to create attachments between salaried employees and the company. The experiences of Captivate employees thus extend and complicate feminist analysis of transnational service sector jobs. Typically, service sector workers interact with clients, integrating the labor of brain, heart, and mind for material and immaterial products (Weeks 2011). Yet Captivate's startup roots expect passion, innovation, experimentation and creativity even from those who do not conduct sales. Affect is thus mobilized to facilitate neoliberal transformation and achieve the rationalization of the exercise of government (Richards and Rudnyckyj 2009). Each employee is expected to embody the firm.

Start Up Services: Drawing from the Worker

In turn, everyday labor draws from worker subjectivity. Sales team employees at Captivate are required to perform "authenticity work" (Mirchandani 2012) by drawing

from their own backgrounds and experiences to enrich client interactions. Unlike the call center model where employees are formally instructed in speech patterns and themes, at Captivate employees are expected to draw on their own backgrounds to intuitively "know" how to interact. They are expected to mobilize their habitus to enrich their labor.

As an industry, the more segmented travel becomes, the more it requires tailor–made and intensive attention to cater to customers' needs, demands, and desires (Larsen and Urry 2011). But the model of specialization then not only relies on broad categories of labor advantage—"Third World Women," or "Special Economic Zones" as with early waves of flexible accumulation (Molé 2011)—but further parses labor to accrue value from gender, class, life stage, and nationality. Feminist theorists have long understood that while work is organized by gender, it is additionally a site where gender is enforced, performed, and recreated; workers draw upon gendered codes and scripts to perform various aspects of everyday work (Weeks 2011: 209).

At Captivate, work is further organized by class, life stage, nationality, migrant status and an increasingly calibrated and complex set of identity matrices. This is why elite, Western, middle–class, often married and middle–aged women perform direct sales jobs, drawing on their habitus, cultural capital, and individual experiences with travel. This is also why women like Meera and Neelam prefer jobs with less mobility: they come to work from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and are not expected to do sales or take work home.

Neelam is a 26–year–old mother of a two–year–old son. She had an arranged marriage to a man who works in a private bank and lives with his parents in their home. She works on a team that updates databases and makes sure hotel, travel, and logistical details are in order every travel season. Neelam explained to me that she would like to

stay home to look after her toddler but she lives in a joint family and her tense relationship with her parents–in–law makes this impossible. "We have different ways of bringing up the baby!" she told me. "They do very traditional things that I am afraid will hurt him [her son]… like they give him a bath in very hot water! I knew we would fight all the time so when I got this job, my husband was happy that I could be away from them and lessen the tension in the house." Neelam was looking for a job with low mobility: one that allowed her to work set timings and not take work home.

For different reasons, her best friend Meera left a job with a bank to work at Captivate—she told me that she hated having to make sales calls at home as her earlier job expected her to. At Captivate, she says, when she leaves work at 7 p.m., she does not ever receive work calls at home or have to work on weekends. Unlike the Travel Consultants who are married but don't have children, Meera has a young son and wants to spend time with him. She would not have wanted the flexibility of a sales job at Captivate where she would be expected to work different time zones and take work home. She too lives with her in–laws, and viewed work as an engaging, immersive time spent away from home with friends, in a pleasant and collegial environment. Her central focus is her young son, and she does not desire to become a manager to take on another job role.

When I asked the company CEO about the career path for women like Neelam and Meera he told me that he expects people to leave: "healthy attrition" or the exit of employees when they want upward mobility that the job cannot offer. Neelam and Meera's family structure—married to men who work in private companies with a middle–class salary, and living with their in–laws and not paying rent—equips them with

the financial security to take a low paying job that offers the respectability of professional work while maintaining their primary allegiances to their children and husbands. Meera told me that her husband is always proud to introduce her to his friends and colleagues a "professional woman." It is not just any job that she would have taken: a call center or an I.T. job would be too little respectability and too much work commitment respectively. Instead, Captivate's position as a global entrepreneurial company offers both the status and the flexibility to allow her to manage work and home. Heterosexuality, middle–class backgrounds, and expectations around women's domestic labor produces a class of workers who stay in low–paid jobs without career mobility.

As Chandra Mohanty writes, jobs and tasks are ideologically constructed "in terms of notions of appropriate femininity, domesticity, (hetero)sexuality, and racial and cultural stereotypes" (2003: 2543). She was primarily writing in the context of the flexible restructuring of factory work and off shore informatics processing that rely on the naturalization of gendered traits such as "nimble fingers" (Ong 2010, Freeman 2000, Kondo 1990, Salzinger 2003), or the affective and emotive labor of service work including sex work, sales, call center work and secretarial work associated with femininity (Brennan 2004, Hochschild 2003, Pringle 1989, Walkerdine 2003). At Captivate, this kind of flexible restructuring and the assigning of jobs to those who "inherently" possess forms of symbolic capital or advantages in terms of family arrangement and gendered life are strategies to accrue surplus value from workers. As I show in Chapter Five, the entrepreneurial company is flexible in its internal work processes—this single company offers examples of emotional labor, affective labor,

aesthetic labor, and authenticity work. I see this simultaneous blend of varied forms of labor as exemplary of Captivate's embrace of neoliberal labor flexibility.

Placing the Ethnographer

I was to be Captivate's first "intern." This was not a separate job role carved out for me but similar to what Jyothi and Susan on the marketing team did, without the remuneration. I would be helping their team with writing content, sifting through tens of Picasa albums, and editing guest posts for the blog. In return I would accompany the office on off–site trips, on organized leisure outings, team lunches, and have my own Captivate email and Skype address. I could eat lunch with employees in the tiny snack room and get to know people there. In sum I would be treated like a Captivate employee. I was sure that this would have its own repercussions; for instance, how would those I was writing about receive my research?

I found myself in an odd position between the different social classes at Captivate. On the one hand, with a Master's degree from the University of London and work experience in national media, I found myself sharing a middle–class outlook, tastes, and leisure life with the first group. And yet as someone who grew up in India, I spoke several of the same languages (Kannada, Tamil, Bengali) as those in the second group. I looked their age too, and people assumed that I was like them, single, straight out of college and therefore a willing recipient to excitable text messages on Sundays: "Want to do something funky?" I consciously tried to associate with the second group since they were bigger and more resistant to newcomers, being already formed into strong cliques. However, the location of my rented apartment and my "in" through the company through the CEOs brother contested my efforts to easily slip into different groups. Ananth

Subramanian and I occasionally went to drink coconut water downstairs, when we came back my outing would be mined for information to know more about the CEOs brother—"how much was lunch?" "what did you eat?" "how was it?". As I explain in a later chapter there was less interest in the content of the conversation than in the material markers of food, aesthetics, and consumption that offer valuable "knowledge" about consumption practices.

Perhaps the experience of establishing identity and intent is different for foreign ethnographers conducting fieldwork: there is no immediate referent for where they come from or what their status is in their home country. Here in Bangalore, as a "local," making friends meant being hyper–aware of the need to erase difference: to take local buses, to eat non–vegetarian food that smelt strong (to me), to never talk about where I went on my personal time. As a foreigner everything about me might have been "strange" and "alien" yet here as a Bangalorean back "at home" I knew I was being assessed when people visited my fieldwork apartment or, once, at my birthday celebration met my "other" world of friends and family.

Unfortunately, despite my elaborate explanations of what research I was doing, my work seemed confusing to most employees, and eventually people adopted me into their fold as a colleague and a friend rather than a researcher. Two years after my fieldwork when I met everyone again, not a single person asked about my research. David Mosse (2006) reflects on his decade of fieldwork at a developmental project. His informants challenged his interpretations of their social work and reported their dissatisfaction to his university management. Mosse argues that in producing the ethnographic account, he had to refuse the roles allocated to him: "I had to disembed myself, erect boundaries, or put

distance between myself and the social worlds I described such that the academic individual was seen to deny the moral person of fieldwork" (Mosse 2006: 946). His objectors challenged the boundaries raised by his writing, choosing not to textually mediate it, but to socially mediate it through the creation of a "moral community" in which Mosse could be re–embedded, reproducing the relations of fieldwork.

Like the development organization where Mosse worked, Captivate too has a coherent representation of itself; by promoting ideals of flexibility and meritocracy, it explicitly locates itself as a worker–friendly space. My challenge was to both work at Captivate and to simultaneously understand how its self–representations are created and interpreted by different levels of workers. Working full–time lessened my sense of obligation to those through whom I negotiated my entry into Captivate, like the senior management who explained Captivate's work philosophy to me. Anthropologists of labor have long studied labor processes, sometimes undercover (Fernandes–Kelly 1984), participating on the assembly line (Lynch 2007, Salzinger 2003) or on specific teams on Wall Street (Ho 2009). The small scale and flexible workplace of the start up economy has no space for observers, with teams of between 5–8 people, making it imperative for my presence to have a tangible beneficial meaning and value for Captivate. In this fast–moving startup economy, I ended up staying longer than many who were recruited at the same time as I was, or even after me!

As an "employee" at Captivate, I was privy to much office gossip, scandal, and tales of lost love and fatal attraction amongst the young women who became my friends. I do briefly theorize the role of narratives and desires of love in integrating women into Bangalore's globalization story in Chapter Six, but do not widely draw on the stories that

I heard. This is because I was often drawn into people's lives as a sympathetic listener. The more dramatic stories were told to me during evenings when Captivate employees went drinking and dancing—they were tearful stories, full of longing and sadness, and they continue to unfold in transcontinental Whatsapp messages. Others were told over long afternoon chats and tea–drinking: as fieldwork progressed, not every interaction was preceded by a signed consent form and I am unsure about the lines between myself as an ethnographer and my eventual place as a friend and confidant. I do not think that these stories were meant to be repeated or circulated and for this reason while I draw on my learning from them to theorize consumption and leisure (Chapter Six), I feel it would be unethical to use them as ethnographic "text" since I had very little indication of interviewee consent in the tone, content, and context in which I heard these stories and was interpellated into them.

As time went by, earlier distinctions between "friends" and "informants" or between ethnography and life did not seem so distinct or irreconcilable anymore. My interlocutors came home for drinks or meals, became friends with Nayantara, and stayed overnight at my place. I began to spend weekends with them, traveled to meet their families, and attended significant occasions—birthdays, a daughter's first dance performance, and festive celebrations at their houses. My own mobility became intertwined with theirs, tightened and loosened according to shifting contexts of urban space, everyday work, and private life. It is through these tight and entangled set of relations that my ethnography unfolds.

III. The Startup Economy: New Selves, Forms of Labor, and City Life

This chapter maps the turn from a dominant imagination of Bangalore as a back–office site for off–shore information processing work to now become a center for innovation and an aspiring Start Up City. I show that middle-class professionals and technology entrepreneurs offer an imagination for urban growth and creative labor that are intertwined and inseparable. Not only does this imagination involve pedagogical instruction in the mechanics of startup business, it involves teaching people how to *be* a startup entrepreneur in the city. I show that startup labor does not take place at the single site of the workplace. Instead it is dispersed across sites—coffee shops and bars where ideas are hatched, the investor meetings where ideas are pitched, the accelerator labs where innovations are developed, fitness centers and social groups that enable networking, and workplaces. In other words, to be a successful startup entrepreneur is also to learn about, and master, a new middle–class lifestyle that is expressed through urban public practices of fitness, consumption, and leisure. Startup spaces demands particular forms and practices of embodied knowledge about how to inhabit and circulate in them. Integral to the growth of the startup economy, then, is learning, knowing, and practicing how to inhabit new middle–class worlds.

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A recent media report declares Bangalore the world's 19th most entrepreneurial city, and rising as a global ecosphere for startups. The criteria for belonging on this rating scale are often subjective: they include factors such as startup output, funding, trend–setting, entrepreneurial mindset, talent and so on.

Figure 1. Infographic of global entrepreneurial cities from entrepreneur.com (Davis 2013).

While several cities around the world are building themselves as "entrepreneurial cities" (Harvey 1989), in Bangalore this growth and repositioning coincides with the return of skilled migrants to India from the U.S. This return followed the global recession

of the late 2000s that impacted even highly–talented financial analysts and H1B[18] visa holders. If the "brain drain" was the alarming exodus of talented professional Indians to the West in the 1990s (Biao 2011), then by the late 2000s, Bangalore was experiencing a "reverse brain drain": Indians returning home in large numbers (Ahmed 2010).

Sixty thousand Indians returned to India after the global financial crash—in 2009 alone—saying there were increased opportunities for exciting I.T. work in India, more venture capitalists funding ideas and innovations, and a need for their children to grow up in India (Ahmed 2010). Of those returning home, most returnees flocked to the I.T. Cities of Bangalore and Hyderabad that had the infrastructure and "facilities" (the term used to describe material comforts such as homes, clubs, leisure options and so on) that would appeal to those returning from the States (Chacko 2007). The New York Times reported on the "smooth transitions" enabled by global workplaces in Bangalore and the increased presence of gated communities such as Palm Meadows, which have US suburban-style homes and sports facilities, and where—incidentally—returnees' purchases tripled sale prices and quadrupled rents (Rai 2013).

Despite media reports, returnees themselves are hesitant to link their return with the financial collapse. The more popular narrative is of wanting children to grow up with "Indian values"; the return is framed as a choice, not as a compulsion. One woman who moved to Bangalore in 2008 from "a perfect 'Rockefeller home'[19] with the dog and the two kids and a blue 1942 wooden house" in North Carolina explained to me:

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[18] This is the visa for highly-skilled migrants that is used to recruit Indian professionals to jobs in the US. Primarily this has been used in the Information Technology sector.

[19] These were homes built by the industrialist John Rockefeller in the Norman style.

> In 2008 we moved back to Bangalore. This was a decision for the children, we wanted them to have what we had, not just the family and not just the schools, but every little bit of it: the roads of the city teach you something. The very crowds, noises, pollution, make you stronger… when you're exposed to that kind of education, no amount of didactic education is going to give you that benefit. You have to be in the middle of it all to learn to fight and survive it. We came back for the kids (Interview with a returnee on March 11, 2013).

While Non Resident Indians are often caricatured for their hapless inability to navigate India's crowded streets and pollution when visiting, this woman celebrates the chaos of the streets. Traversing and inhabiting the city itself offers a valuable education irreplaceable by formal learning. The narratives of return migrants like her illustrate the symbolic shift of Bangalore from *just* a place where back-end software work is located to the construction of value *through* urban space.

Urban spaces and activities are central to the Start Up Festival, visible and manifest through what David Harvey (1989) calls "the entrepreneurial city"—or the imperative of urban governance to develop the "conditions under which the city becomes an exciting place to live and visit, and above all, in which to consume" (Miles 2010: 38). Through public-private partnerships, urban governance is shaped to lure "highly mobile and flexible production, financial, and consumption flows into its space" (Harvey 1989: 11). The entrepreneurial city provides an analytical rubric through which to understand how urban space itself offers raw material for consumption not only as acts of meaning-making (Douglas and Isherwood 1996) but as a set of practices integral to economic growth and labor.

The Start Up Festival is one key site at which Bangalore is imagined and experienced by some participants as a place that exhibits several of the traits that Harvey (1989) identifies with the entrepreneurial city. This includes an emphasis on public-private partnerships, speculative growth—or what Michael Goldman (2012) calls "speculative urbanism" i.e. the spiraling prices of formerly agricultural land on the city's outskirts that are now developed privately—and an emphasis on the construction of place rather than territory. The place/territory distinction speaks to the construction of place as an active and continuous process rather than to consider it as an already existing entity (Appadurai 1996, Gupta and Ferguson 1997a, b). Disparate urban practices, repurposed urban space, flexible land use, and the historical middle–classness of urban spaces in Bangalore combine and are refashioned by Festival organizers to produce a distinct entity: the Start Up City. The city is imagined as a bounded entity that contains urban elements conducive to Start Up growth—options for leisure and consumption, a middle–class professional population, a well-educated workforce.

In keeping with the approach of entrepreneurial cities, the Start Up Festival was curated as a public-private initiative between local chapters of global entrepreneurial networking groups such The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE), global incubation labs, and the local Karnataka government. There were several co-sponsors, each of whom further developed the eco-system of entrepreneurship in Bangalore. "Eco-system"—or the dense presence of other start ups who derive ideas and energy from each other (see Isaacson 2011)—is the term used by entrepreneurs to describe the desirable climate for entrepreneurial work. The ideal entrepreneurial eco-system would not only be packed

with start ups but would *reimagine* the city in relation to shifting forms and norms of being global (Rabinow 1991).

The Start Up Festival shed associations with the vernacular entrepreneurship of local traders, shopkeepers and of MSMEs (or Micro-Small-Medium Enterprises) to locate itself instead in conversation with the entrepreneurship of Silicon Valley: much as globalization in the 1990s explicitly represented India as a player in the global economy. This is a self-conscious process of what Aihwa Ong and Ananya Roy call, following Spivak, the "worlding" practices of Asian cities, involving "projects and practices that instantiate some vision of the world in formation" (Ong and Roy 2012). It is in such an entrepreneurial, Start Up City, that the idealized startup figure is imagined to thrive.

Contra to the image of the Indian professional as an "I.T. coolie" (the derogatory term used to describe those conducting menial labor in Information Technology), the Start Up City marks a valorization of the Indian innovator whose imagination, ingenuity, and creativity shapes global markets. The transformation of the subject of economic progress—from the dependable, aspirational I.T. engineer to risk-taking startup entrepreneur—is embedded in urban, corporeal practices.

Teaching Startup Entrepreneurship

In January 2013, local English-language newspapers in Bangalore were filled with advertisements and publicity for a forthcoming "Start Up" festival in the city. It looked like an exciting and eventful few days. Bangalore's public was to be introduced to the idea of startup entrepreneurship. In it, aspiring entrepreneurs in Bangalore are "taught" how to be risk–taking, creative, individualistic figures through modes of building cultural capital. Startup entrepreneurs are cultivated through new urban

practices, modes of socializing, and modes of relating to each other. These take place in the Start Up City that opens up spaces through which to cultivate the neoliberal figure of the startup entrepreneur.

From the itinerary it did not seem like a boring lineup of talks and business plans. Instead each of the four days was broken down into activities, events, and sessions. *Zumba*, yoga, running in the city events; networking, *pecha kucha* style pitching sessions; and tens of drop-in visits to startups in the neighborhoods hosting this event. Evenings were reserved for plenary sessions, followed by drinks and networking. I was primarily attracted by the publicity poster on the Festival's website, posted below:

Figure 2. Website photograph for the Start Up Festival, Bangalore at startupfestival.in.

Hot air balloons lift into a massive open sky, perhaps as metaphors for startup founders, moving upward without restraint and with steady purpose. Rather than conceiving entrepreneurship as it has traditionally been in India, within caste and class matrices—tied down and constrained by social structures and business cultures—here

these idea balloons are enabled to rise upward, unfettered. It was a fitting symbolic representation, as I came to realize.

The startup entrepreneur is globally configured as an instantiation of neoliberalism's very basis in the idea of the "free, possessive individual" (Hall 2011: 706). The neoliberal "enterprising self" extends economic behavior to everyday life and is "goal-oriented, self-directed, committed to acquiring skills and competences required for self- advancement; one who is optimistic, creative, takes initiatives, embraces opportunities, and seeks autonomy and self-fulfillment" (Gooptu 2009: 42). This is the startup entrepreneur as the motivated, self-directed air balloon drifting upward into the skies. The giddy prospect of floating toward the heavens in a hot–air balloon also signals the risk–taking aspect of startup business: riding a balloon involves taking chances, but probably offers worthwhile rewards.

Launching the Start Up Festival

The Start Up Festival was launched at Orion Mall, a glass-fronted luxury mall with Debenhams, Zara, Mango, Accessorize and Guess showrooms in Bangalore. When it first opened a few years before my fieldwork began, visitors were a middle–class of traders, shopkeepers and service professionals from the immediate neighborhood. Often a small crowd got backed up near the escalators as someone stepped on it for the first time and froze in fear. Ultimately a security guard or family member would intervene, grasping their wrists to yank them upward.

I was struck that the Start Up Festival, sustained by international startup networks, would hold their inaugural event here—geographically at the other end of the city from the I.T. neighborhoods in the city's North–West region. Yet perhaps the choice of Orion

Mall as a location was telling of the audiences that the Start Up Festival was hoping to cultivate. Rather than to merely sell the idea of startup entrepreneurship to Bangalore's "techie" residents, already turning to startups, the Festival was cultivating a new public, removed from I.T.

Orion Mall is just one part of a large real estate complex that includes a school, a five-star hotel, a luxury hospital, a massive block of apartments soaring over twenty floors into the sky and an artificial lake. I walked into this outdoor area on a warm afternoon in 2013 to look for the Start Up Festival's launch event. Families and groups of friends treat the lake as a picnic spot, and they were here today, gathered on the benches by its bank, taking photographs, and people–watching. Flanking the lake is an amphitheater, and on this afternoon, big and bright posters of the Start Up Festival were placed at its base. A sound check was in progress and curious passersby stopped to stare and settle uncertainly on the broad steps of the theater.

Malls are recognized—ideologically—as crucial sites to include or exclude classed subjects from the citadels of middle–class consumption in India (Voyce 2007) but also—ethnographically—as facilitating cross-class conversations and interactions (Stillerman and Rodrigo 2012), and as spaces in and through which to learn the nuances of everyday middle–class consumption and practice (McGuire 2011). The Start Up Festival articulated a vision for Bangalore's future as a Start Up City with middle–class, global, startup founders. What better space to have it than at this mall where emerging middle–classes learned and experimented with new ways of being? If middle–class subjectivity was being fashioned here, it could simultaneously be moulded into the entrepreneurial startup self.

The festival began by showcasing Bangalore as a node within circuits of global entrepreneurial networks. Vlad Dubovskiy opened the event. He is the founder of two companies, and is associated with Unreasonable Institute, an accelerator lab in Boulder, Colorado that was a large presence at the Festival. Dubovskiy and the other hosts this afternoon began clowning around with the audience, inviting people to perform impromptu on the public stage, holding spot games, and laughter contests. I could see that they wanted to convey to that the mood for this afternoon would be light–hearted and carefree. There were several young men in the audience who responded gamely, jumping on to the stage, and performing on it while their friends yelled encouragement from the audience. They later grabbed free passes to the Festival and a T–shirt. Yet this "open invite" to join the Festival was a gendered one, requiring a certain familiarity and comfort with being in public in a loud and uninhibited way.

At the back of the amphitheater a crowd of young college–going women sat together, looking skeptical. There was a kind of masculine joviality and sentiment saturating the atmosphere, with catcalls and loud laughter and young men bantering with each other. The young women became restless and, deciding to catch a movie at the mall instead, got up to leave. Amidst this irreverent youth culture, flight of female interest, and in a space of middle–class consumption, Bangalore's Start Up Festival was kicked off. The event called for a publically outgoing and curious spirit and it was the young men who accepted these gendered terms of entrepreneurship's ontological premise—I saw far fewer women at the Festival.

The Start Up Festival was open to anyone who would pay the registration fees of $160 for four days. With it you received a free T-shirt with the big Start Up Festival heart

on it and a map. The heart symbolizes "Do What You Love," a global approach to startup businesses (see Tokumitsu 2016). The Festival would teach the basics of startup business through interactions with successful startup entrepreneurs and visits to their workplace, and opportunities to pitch for venture funding and network.

The event also conveyed and communicated to aspiring startup entrepreneurs how to "do" business by acquiring certain urban forms of cultural capital. Startup entrepreneurs have to learn how to network at bars and in coffee shops, participate in middle–class forms of fitness that include yoga and running in public, and learn how to dress and act the part of a startup entrepreneur. These form of acquiring capital involves an urban performativity that—as I will show—is not a singular or deliberative act but a reiterative and citational practice through which the discourse of startup entrepreneurship materializes the phenomena that it regulates and constrains (see Butler [1993] 2011). Particular ways of being and interacting in the city produce the startup entrepreneur.

Each day of the Start Up Festival began with choices for fitness sessions (*zumba*, yoga, long-distance running) at 6 am. On the first day of the Start Up Festival, I found that I could not hail an auto while it was still dark outside. Having missed the fitness sessions because I did not have the private transport to get there, I managed to arrive in time for the next session. I signed in at the main registration desk, picked up my free T-shirt and unfolded the event map. The list of possible startups that I could visit were all on nearby streets so I set out finding a hotel–booking startup as my first visit. I promptly got lost, and kept running into other like me, in white Festival T-shirts, looking confused. When I finally found the startup, it defied my idea of an office. Bangalore's middle–class professional work environments are defined by the large glass and steel buildings of

global I.T. companies, but the startup company is small and unassuming, often hosted in a bungalow or office space. I climbed up an unobtrusive back staircase and went in to meet the company Founder.

Risk as the Basis for Startup Business

A group of us gathered in what would have been a former living room; a space now converted into an open office. The startup founder collected us around him and leaned back in his chair, arms over his head. He reminisced about how his business started: "We [the two founders] were seated at a bar on New Year's Eve and got talking about this crazy idea for a travel business so we scribbled our notes on the soggy napkin on which our beer was placed." The audience listened breathlessly. Those hasty notes, he told us, possessed the two former "techies"—male, middle-class and upper-caste software engineers—laughing over a beer late one night, to spontaneously turn into tech entrepreneurs.

Origin stories of start ups (i.e. how they were birthed) are often glossed over for their routine emphasis on risk-taking bravado, yet they offer insights into the masculine spaces and practices in and through which start ups are created. There is nothing that explicitly connects this story to men, yet it is a masculinized narrative in the spaces it describes, and in the forms of camaraderie, the leisure, and the ability to participate in the networking of a late night beer that yields a startup. When participants asked him for advice about becoming a startup entrepreneur, he explained that his own journey had been completely unpredictable and marked by forms of risk–taking that he could not have predicted. "There are no rules to become a startup entrepreneur," I noted in my field notes. "But a risk–taking appetite is a pre–condition."

After visiting a few individual startups, participants moved on next to large interactive sessions. At these a swarm of startup aspirants jostled for the attention of a panel of venture capitalists. They had to publicly demonstrate the value and worth of their product, and thus of themselves. They vocally and aggressively pitched their entrepreneurial ideas to skeptical venture capitalists (VCs). This required forms of story-telling that local entrepreneurs in Bangalore acknowledge as key to the startup industry (Anand 2014). Pitching ideas often followed the Japanese *pecha kucha* style by which presenters were given 20 seconds each for 20 slides: a total time of 6 minutes and 40 seconds to impress diverse audiences. Participants had to distinguish themselves based on their creativity and uniqueness, producing story–telling as the performative dimension of human action and speech in which dimensions of the self are revealed as Arendt has argued (Meehan 1995: 100).

There was no time for venture capitalists to sit down and understand the idea behind a new business. Part of learning how to be a start up founder was creating the semblance, the necessary fiction of future startup success by extending, in Arendt's terms, the meaning of the actions, symbols and allegories into the public, making them visible to broader audiences (in Albornoz 2014). This is part of the visibility and hype integral to the startup economy (Sunder Rajan 2006). Aspiring entrepreneurs had to embody and narrate traits of risk and innovation and convey these to the assembled audience. Thus "being" a startup entrepreneur required navigating the hyper–visible world of venture funding.

Investment pitches also create a masculine world in their valorization of risk. Current regimes of finance reward the scale and size of risk taken (Ho 2009: 25);

showing and demonstrating risk–taking appetite is itself constitutive of value and masculinized as productive work, distinct from the "unproductive" work of reproductive labor (see Moodie 2013: 284 for a discussion of how this works with the microfinance agency kiva.org). Here I show how gendered oppositions of productive and reproductive labor are naturalized in bodies through the production of a gendered habitus (McNay 1999) by reading the construction of value in a startup pitch below.

"Doing What You Love": Desire, Masculinity, and the Phallic Order

I first met Malathi, an aspiring woman entrepreneur, at a pitching session at the Start Up Festival. I was in a room crowded with Festival participants hearing feedback from venture capitalists, when she raised her hand to share her startup idea. I was impressed because women rarely put up their hands or took center stage unless they were organizers or on a panel. The masculine figure of the techie entrepreneur is the central referent for startup entrepreneurship. In fact, a woman entrepreneur felt the need to begin her conversation to me with, "I'm not a tech guy" before explaining her startup. Like several women at the Festival, Malathi was dressed in pants and a shirt: these were cut-away pants ending mid-shin with white sports socks pulled up to meet them, and an oversize black jacket hanging loose.

Malathi was performing masculinity through her choice of clothing, thus enacting gender through language and representation (McDowell 1994, 1997). Forms of dress, like Malathi's clothes, can challenge gendered hierarchies of power as women adopt male clothing and mannerisms (McDowell 1994, Fisher 2012), enact bodily resistance to entrenched disciplinary procedures (Ong 2010), and engage in everyday forms of consumption and meaning-making that resist the routine nature of off-shore processing

work (Freeman 2000). Even while the Festival barely mentioned gender, "the silences about gender in these versions of the new world order paradoxically highlight the masculinity that implicitly defines them" (Rofel 2002: 185). Women at the Festival chose masculine clothing of loose pants, oversize shirts, and no makeup, rather than the more feminine *salwar kameez* or blouses and pants, in order to "fit in" as the archetype dressed down, male startup entrepreneur.

Along with a friend, Malathi had devised a product for children's education based on her experience with her own son. It would fill a gap she had personally experienced as a parent, she said. She was nervous but earnest as sat she next to me at the investor pitching session. The whole audience fell quiet after she finished, waiting for the feedback from the panel of venture capitalists hearing her idea.

The panel included four funders, including one woman in a sari. They looked bored at her description and restless while she spoke; one of them quickly cut her off. I was surprised by his response: rather than directly address her product, he repeated the classic mantra in circulation for entrepreneurial success in Bangalore: "A lot of times people don't know what they want until you show it to them,[20]" he said. In other words, entrepreneurs should not merely fill a market gap as Malathi proposed: they needed to create a desire for their commodity, make people want it, and somehow encourage consumers to feel that they could not live without it. It seemed from his tone, his suggestion (that did not in fact address her product itself), and his mannerisms that he

[20] The Huffington Post. 2011. "Jobs: 'Follow Your Heart.'" Accessed March 30, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/05/steve-jobs-stanford-commencement-address_n_997301.html.

was dismissive of Malathi. Why did her product seem unimportant when he barely knew anything about it? How was he assessing (and dismissing) the value of her proposal?

The value of the commodity is determined, Simmel (1978) argued, not by objective assessments of labor input, but through a subjectivity accorded to value that explains the prestige and aesthetic value associated with some products. Similar to Marx's ([1844] in Tucker 1978) understanding of the commodity fetish, entrepreneurial products and services would have to be detached and delinked from their actual modes of production and use value and instead be spun into a web of mystery. They have to seem appealing and desirable rather than functional. The labor process is mystified to create desire and value within commodity exchange. In this exchange, the figure of the entrepreneur herself is key to the fabrication of mystery and value.

It seems to me that despite Malathi's efforts at "passing" as a legitimate startup entrepreneur, her gendered habitus was causing her presence and idea to be dismissed at this pitching session. Lois McNay (1999) builds on Bourdieu's (1986) theory of the habitus to explain how hierarchical gender relations are embedded in bodily hexis:

> . . . [T]hat is to say arbitrary power relations are inculcated upon the body in the naturalized form of gender identity. The living through of bodily forms of hexis leads to doxic forms of perception which permit the 're–engenderization' of all perceived social differences, that is their interpretation in a sexualized dualism" (100).

The notion of gendered habitus best explains the devaluation of Malathi's labor even before funders had a chance to ask her about its intricacies. Classed and gendered social differences were read onto her body to naturalize her gender identity. Thus even while Malathi made efforts to "blend in" through her masculine clothing, she was being read as a middle–class and middle–aged Indian woman, associating her body with within the domestic realm (Young 2005), and with gendered domestic labor. As Lois McNay 1990) writes, "the inscription of a system of sexualized oppositions upon social space is paralleled in the 'somatization' of these relations within the bodies of individuals" (100). Further the system of sexualized oppositions is differently valued; feminized reproductive labor does not enter circuits of valuation because it is believed to be outside capitalist processes (Haraway 1990, Hartmann 1997, Hartsock 1997, Mies [1986] 2012, Rosaldo 1974, Spivak 1985).

Michelle Rosaldo suggests that reproductive labor is devalued as a function of its conduct in the private realm: "male, as opposed to female, activities are always recognized as predominantly important, and cultural systems give authority and value to the roles and activities of men" (Rosaldo 1974: 19). Read as a middle–aged, middle–class woman, Malathi's body cannot transcend the domestic realm to participate in the capitalist processes of valuation that funders arbitrate.

The ability of men to control women's labor in the private sphere is another element of a patriarchal system, the relationship between men that rests on a material basis (Hartmann 1986). Watching the exchanges between venture capitalists at the Start Up Festival made me conscious of this new entrepreneurship as a performative display of masculinity. It was a relationship between men (investors and capitalists), that could be

passed down to other men (startup founders)—a phallic exchange (see also Rubin 2011, Wiegman 2002) codified in the beer bars, networking meetings, and investor pitches that maintained the symbolic order irrespective of the occasional presence of women in these spaces.

Distancing the Feminine and Embracing the Masculine

At the end of our day together, I tried to make plans to meet Malathi again, but she said that she was uncertain that she would be a "representative" case for my research. I explained that I wanted to meet her in any case, and we arranged for me to visit her (a visit I describe in the next chapter). Being devalued was also shaping Malathi who naturalized this devalued identity: as Lois McNay (1990) suggests, "women become implicated within a circular logic where the cultural arbitrary is imposed on the body in a naturalized form whose cognitive effects (doxa) result in the further naturalization of arbitrary social differences" (100). I wondered if these mutually reinforcing processes of valuing labor, the mapping of sexualized oppositions on to spaces, and their embodiment in habitus could explain why so many women whom I met at the Start Up Festival had products and services that emerged from their children's desires. Were they further naturalizing arbitrary social differences, to use McNay's (1990) argument?

Pitching for funding required a performative practice of producing a desirable startup founder. Assessments of value (of both the founder and their product, since they blur into each other) are premised on subjective value. So it was not surprising then that feminine labor was consistently devalued—a long history of gendered flexible restructuring and the gendering of work—that I traced in the previous chapter—shows why this is so.

Malathi heard the advice and nodded eagerly, saying that she would go back to the drawing board to reformulate her approach. Her product needed to be located within a different subjectivity; not one linked to her reproductive labor as a woman but one that produced and later leveraged her as a quixotic, unpredictable, “fun” entrepreneurial self that could accordingly shape such a product. The need to persuade publics that entrepreneurial innovations are not borne out of necessity but in fact are desirable, unknown, and highly profitable commodities resonates with Anna Tsing’s description of the economy of appearances in Indonesia. She calls this the “self-conscious making of a spectacle that is a necessary aid to gathering investment funds” (2004: 57). Despite her masculine clothes, Malathi’s body was read as feminine, and too close to the domestic realm of local entrepreneurship to attract venture capitalist’s attention. In fact, she later told me that she came up with the idea based on her experience with the education of her young son. By fulfilling an existent need she was not seen as taking enough of a risk—the crucial measure for the production of a startup entrepreneur.

Channeling Lifestyle Into Value

The Start Up Festival emphasized “having fun” and highlighted stereotypes about entrepreneurial lifestyle or habitus—such as the startup founders who appear at meetings in shorts. Interestingly, none of the male entrepreneurs or consultants whom I observed and interviewed were ever in shorts. The Silicon Valley ideal was continually referenced but at meetings, brainstorming sessions, and even when I would watch entrepreneurs meet at coffee shops on weekend afternoons, they were not in shorts and T-shirts. This was a startup ideal that was being circulated: entrepreneurship as an embodiment of the

self (Schumpeter 2011). The self would have to be made desirable, fun, and attractive to large audiences.

By thinking of entrepreneurship as the creation of a product that fulfills a need, Malathi reinscribed herself within older notions of entrepreneurship. Within these terms, the category of "women's work" is grounded in the ideology of the Third World woman worker producing "home work" for a supplemental income (Mohanty 2003). The subjectivity of value of Malathi's labor located it within what Marshall Sahlins (1974) calls a "generalized reciprocity" or giving out of love, care, and nurture. Women's products are valued as borne from labor that extends their domestic role: Malathi's startup was evaluated as one that satisfied domestic needs and therefore *not* one that could produce an unknown desire. Startup founders are expected to show passion and initiative—but they are also serial entrepreneurs, meaning that they create several products. Being overly attached to an innovation would be detrimental to them; their love is temporary, contingent on the product's success. Malathi also loved her product, but it is her only one, she is developing it over years and all her energy outside work is spent in building this product. This kind of single–minded devotion and care differentiates her from startup entrepreneurs who take multiple risks on a range of innovations.

Women's "origin stories" about their startups were similarly devoid of the stereotypical startup machismo of sitting around pub tables brainstorming or being racked by a sudden "Eureka" moment[21]. Instead women talked about products and services for which there was a need—often a need that they personally identified through experiences

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[21] See Walter Isaacson's 2011 biography of Steve Jobs for an example of the typical start up narrative.

with their own families and everyday lives. Products were borne from a love for their family that they wanted to fulfill, a familial need that they sought to satisfy through their startup.

The emergence of entrepreneurship from personal need links it to historical forms of Third World women's entrepreneurship emerging from necessity and survival: forcing women to participate in the market economy, yet not on favorable terms (Channa 2015). Under such conditions, entrepreneurship for women takes on different significance, becoming associated with being able to *live* rather than an enhancement of status (Channa 2015: 54–55, italics mine). Social capital—by way of networks, knowledge, and sociability—play a key role in entrepreneurship, especially at what are often the "outposts of the global economy" (Upadhya and Vasavi 2013). However, as Channa points out (2015: 55–56) women lack this capital and tend to enter the informal aspects of entrepreneurial economies by moving goods to generate profit (from rural to urban areas, for instance, or from overseas to local markets[22]).

Entrepreneurship itself has often been thought of as women's informal labor (Mohanty 2003)—emergent from their inventiveness and ability to make do and be creative with minimal resources. Women at the Start Up Festival frequently reinscribed these connections by referring to their business ideas as emerging from personal experience. For instance, some of the innovations that I encountered from them included: a gap in the market for children's educational software that a four-year-old son faced, or a lack of bouncy balls at kids' parties, a need for catered party food, or a market for elite

[22] As with the Caribbean higglers in Freeman's (2000) study who bring back goods from the US when they travel on free tickets acquired as work rewards from their offshore informatics jobs.

dog spas. Yet if startups are defined by their scalability and reach—these innovations are entrepreneurial, but not "startups," emerging from women's needs as mothers, and thus devaluing their labor as essentially reproductive, uncreative, oriented toward the home (de Beauvoir 2007), and "back–end" just supporting men's contributions (Rosaldo 1974).

The startup economy demands a transformation of the category of labor itself. Marx's understanding of alienated labor is rooted in the separation between waged labor—drudgery—and the domestic world in which workers develop their "true identities" (Marx [1844] in Tucker 1978). It is in the private realm that sentiments, feelings, and identities are built and the human spirit realized. This separation between the spheres has, for Marx, the unfortunate effect of developing the "true self" from the "animality" of the functions carried out in the domestic realm "eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and dressing up etc." (Marx 1844: 74, see also Maurer 2000: 103). Startup ideologies challenge this distinction: funders assess both the entrepreneur and their product through a logic that fuses the two.

Carla Freeman describes the nature of these concomitant and co–dependent changes in labor and life amongst entrepreneurs in Barbados: "For them, the vary *nature* of labor and the *quality* of time are being radically redefined and self–consciously prioritized" (Freeman 2014: 152). Unlike Barbados, many women I met in Bangalore were not considering entrepreneurial income as essential family income; they had consciously decided to slow down their lives and spend more time with their families (I introduce a different set of entrepreneurs in Chapter Four): the mutual imbrication of life and work is thus qualitatively different for them. This chapter has focused not so much on

the *felt experiences* of turning to startup worlds, but rather on how startup entrepreneurship is idealized and conveyed to new potential audiences as a masculinized endeavor and, building on that, to think about the public performativity of gender that is called forth in the relations between key players in this economy.

Risk, Innovation, Flexibility in the Start Up City

Participation in the Festival certainly required attendees to be mobile urban subjects. With sessions on the itinerary beginning at 6 am and ending far past 10 pm, drive and initiative to be active and energetic—as befitting an entrepreneur—were only some of the expectations from Festival participants. The intense navigation of urban neighborhoods, and spaces of leisure also required participants to be mobile at night, social, and unencumbered by other commitments. I began to sense the masculine bent of the itinerary only when I spent time with middle–aged women. As they glanced at their watches and began scratching items off their list of events to attend as evening approached, I watched the possibilities for them to network shrink.

A Festival organizer categorically explained the symbolic and productive significance of urban circulation to the startup economy:

> . . . [T]hat's why you see 6 o' clock in the morning [as the start time for each Festival day] because it also tells you, "Dude, you got to be physically, mentally fit to be able to take on this decision, it's not easy. You have to party till two in the morning and you got to make it to your breakfast meeting because there's an investor waiting to talk to you. So you gotta be able to balance both" (Interview with Start Up Festival Organizer, March 2013).

This hectic itinerary of the Festival galvanizes different aspects of entrepreneurial life—networking abilities, pitching your product strategically, locating those who can

enhance your innovation, negotiating and convincing venture capitalists about funding and keeping up with the schedule of the day that moved quickly between fitness, meetings, talks and networking over drinks at night. Malathi was unable to stay late and arrive early. She wakes up everyday at 4 a.m., sends her husband and son off to work and school by 7 a.m. and then works till they get home again in the evening. I caught glimpses of her between events and meetings.

By lunch–time on every day of the Festival, designated areas were opened up for networking. Aspiring startup entrepreneurs were meant to "work" lunch rooms and Festival venues handing out business cards, circulating, and engaging one another in talk of technology, funding, and collaboration. In the evening the action shifted to massive plenary sessions, and then finally the day ended at a neighborhood pub or bar for socializing over drinks and snacks. Many women left by now, and only those unencumbered by family, financial constraint, or a class hesitation stayed on.

As the itinerary below shows, public spaces across designated neighborhoods—bars, pubs, parks, and sidewalks—are transformed into potential sites for the performance and production of startup founders. Not only does the startup economy imagine business as an open playing field for anyone who can master its rules and embody risk: it also imagines an "open city." In this city—the Start Up City—spaces are available to be cultivated and to have value extracted from them. By encouraging startup entrepreneurship, Bangalore's state government imagines the city as an open playing field to be cultivated, through startups in fitness, socializing, food, services, and for aspects of work.

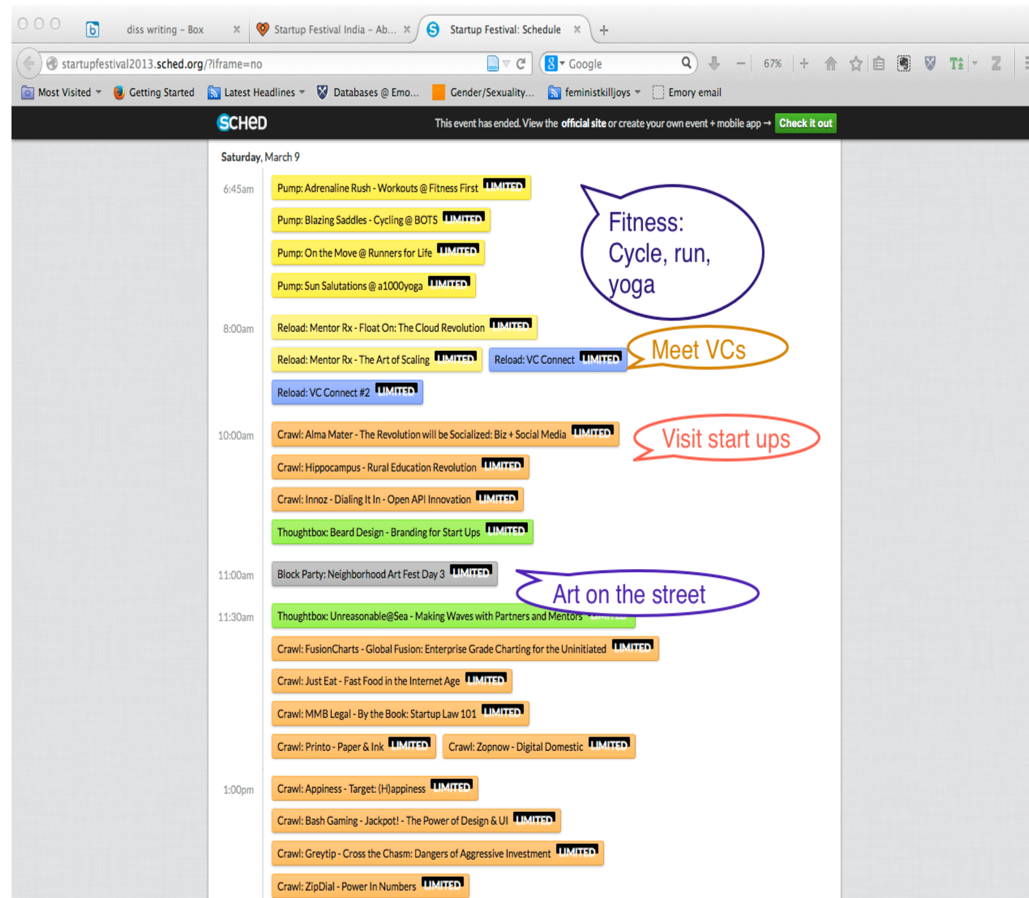

Figure 3. Saturday morning at the Start Up Festival.

The Start Up Festival invited Bangalore's public to become startup entrepreneurs. There were college students, software entrepreneurs, married women looking to start a business, journalists, artists and musicians, and a cosmopolitan team of startup consultants who travel around the world. The Festival organizers explained that they wanted to enable individuals to become risk–takers, bucking the trend of both (risk–averse) caste–based enterprise business and supposedly "safe" middle–class I.T. jobs, by helping to create an identity around startup entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs would be taught how to navigate the social world of the startup economy, and how to neutralize its

risk by making it seem like a desirable way of life rather than a precarious form of business. A Festival organizer explained this to me:

> Entrepreneurs don't land a date! On Valentine's Day they are sitting alone in a pub having a beer! Entrepreneurs in general as individuals are looked at as unemployed and unemployable. There's a little bit of social stigma that people carry that business is not good, and from an old school thought process then you're not doing the right thing… 'Be a good son, do your engineering, take up a job, and get married.' That's what people look at as a path of career growth. We said… how can it change? It can only change if you build an identity around what you do" (Fieldwork interview with Festival co-founder, March 2013).

His sense that people feel "business is not good" references the middle-class upper–caste disdain for profit enterprise that I introduced in my Introduction. The software professionals and engineering students who could turn to startup entrepreneurship would have to take a risk, gambling their I.T. jobs and middle–class lifestyles on a startup idea and dream. The festival organizers want to encourage and support this kind of risk–taking that disrupts the natural link between caste/family and business/profit-making.

Secondly it also infuses the idea of risk with entrepreneurship, an idea that does not have traction even with traditional business castes and communities. Indian enterprise has traditionally been rooted in family networks and histories of business experiences to obtain credit and mobilize capital; thick networks also offered sources of information and markets for products, and provided implicit guarantees against trade default and opportunistic behavior (Damodaran 2008). Businesses that gained strength from their communities before growing and entering formal state–regulated markets thus had significant resources through which to differ and displace risk. A study of these business

communities also challenges the contemporary masculine startup depiction of risk. Indian male businessmen achieve their standing and respect in the community as "carrying on" their father's business, and doing so respectably, rather than the American ideal of the "Self Made Man" who takes risks, ventures into unchartered territory, and carves out his own rugged individuality—the precursor to the current day U.S. Internet entrepreneur (see Kimmel 2012).

In India, risk and business enterprise have not been intertwined, and, until recently business was primarily carried out by Vaishya castes (see Damodaran 2008, Varshney 2012). It is the post–Independence period (1947 onward) in India that has witnessed the entry of non–Vaishya castes, including agricultural and allied communities (Kammas, Reddys, Naidus, Gowders) and so–called scribal castes who dominated the Indian Administrative Services (IAS) (Brahmins, Khatris, Kayasths, Bengali bhadralog) who form the new business communities. What I describe in this dissertation is a newer form of entrepreneurship still—startup businesses, which demand public performances and embodiments of neoliberal tenets of risk, individualism, innovation, and flexibility. There is no community support to back and protect these new forms of business—other entrepreneurs are expected to provide the collaboration and impetus to succeed through participating in an entrepreneurial "eco–system" (Isaacson 2014) where hundreds of startups are nurtured together. This is partly the ideal underlining public–private growth plans like Vision 2020, discussed in the Introduction.

Risk is central to this new startup eco–system. As Deborah Piscione (2014) writes in a popular book about Silicon Valley and startup entrepreneurship, risk is "the most vital apparatus of our time" (10); without risk, there can be no reward. Startup businesses

are fundamentally imagined and talked about as based in risk, in India too. The narratives travel from Silicon Valley to India in multiple ways; reverse migration has brought back hundreds of software entrepreneurs from California to Indian I.T. Cities like Hyderabad and Bangalore, eager to make use of India's growing markets to carve a niche for themselves. At the Startup Festival, as we toured neighborhoods dropping in on small startups, we watched the individuals who embodied risk to start their business. They were frequently newly returned Indians, starting businesses in their garages, in rented office spaces, and in older bungalows—altering the landscape of older neighborhoods. These businesses are now situated amongst the homes and one–room stores where middle–class women once ran "tuition" classes for high school children, and local "kaaka kade's" or cornershops offer business opportunities for non–upper caste and class men.

Narratives of risk also move from the U.S. in the form of media: popular websites like Quora attract startup entrepreneurs from India who can pose a question to their U.S. counterparts ("what's the worst pitching experience you have ever had?" "Why does India not have a Y Combinator[23]?") and receive several hundred upvotes and answers. Books and films, like the biography of Steve Jobs (called "Steve Jobs" by Walter Isaacson, 2011) or the film about Facebook Founder Mark Zuckerberg (Fincher 2010) crystallize classic entrepreneurial narratives of risk and create the figure of the startup founder as a maverick man who refuses stability and rejects middling success to pursue a wild and fantastical dream.

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[23] A school in Silicon Valley for startups that allows them to conceptualize their product and pitch it to funders, gain mentors, and network for collaborators, much like the one I describe in the next section, but oriented toward only technology startups.

Often at larger sessions where startup mentors offered advice, they would only have to begin a story about a legendary startup founder in the U.S. (the favorite was Steve Jobs) for the audience to echo the end of the quote back to them, sometimes in unison. There was no doubt that the stories of U.S. entrepreneurs shape ideas and imaginations of risk in India too. How risk is actually enacted and experienced is significantly different from the *discourse* around risk; Zuckerberg's dropping out of college is ill–advised in India where education is a key component to class identity. Similarly, Jobs' rejection of his family and his single–minded perusal of design technology are equally misaligned to an Indian context in which an entrepreneurial environment that seeks to produce startup founders also organizes dating events for them, and offers advice on how to maintain a relationship (see Chapter Seven).

Fables of risk, communicated through U.S.–based media are important as fulcrums around which aspirations to new middle–class lifestyles, class mobility, and the dream for an unpredictable future are galvanized. As organizers explained to me, this risk is not limited to formal business practice but in fact fluidly transfers to other practices: fitness, socializing, networking and so on. Startup entrepreneurs need to undertake risky practices and to do these as part of collective group efforts so that they can practice and perfect "being" an entrepreneur in public.

As the US-based Festival co-organizer Vlad Dubovskiy said in a media interview, "the idea is to convey that entrepreneurship is a lifestyle rather than a career.[24]" Dubovskiy evoked "lifestyle" as an umbrella term, using it not in Weber's (Gerth 2007) sense of a set of practices associated with status but rather to signify how startup

[24] In "The New Entrepreneurial Cool" (Rai 2013).

entrepreneurs shape and choose their movements, engagements, and business ideas to perform an identity that is made legible and recognizable as the figure of the startup entrepreneur. Anthony Giddens explains how a self identity has to be created and continually reordered against the fragmenting experiences of modern institutions, transformations of place, and diversifying contexts of interactions (1991: 186–190). Sustaining a unified identity affects and constructs the body as well as the self (Giddens 1991: 186). As “elements from different settings [come together in an] integrated narrative” (Giddens 1991: 190); so too in Bangalore do individuals circulate through different spaces and activities, piecing together the distinctive identity of the startup entrepreneur by curating the self. There is no single site at which the startup entrepreneur can be produced; instead it is through [his] movement through different spaces that the startup entrepreneur is performatively enacted.

In Carla Freeman’s ethnography of entrepreneurs in Barbados she similarly describes a new landscape of fitness centers, takeout food services, cafes, and service–oriented businesses that have emerged in response to the needs and lifestyles of aspirational middle–class entrepreneurs (see Freeman 2014: 172–174). The kinesthetic practices of self–cultivation and deliberate exercise that these entrepreneurs engage are in direct contrast to earlier generations and Freeman (2014) understands these new practices as “intricately connected to their entrepreneurial lifestyle and contemporary modes of enacting middle–class–ness” (172). Businesses, fitness studios, and therapeutic venues thus further cultivate and service the entrepreneurial self.

In Bangalore, public spaces and practices are sites where startup value is produced—“building an identity around what you do” emphasizes the spaces and

practices of doing that do not directly subsidize or enable entrepreneurial labor but are sites where belonging in the startup world is *performed*. Running, dating, bicycling in public are significant not only as symbols of status or class (Anantharaman 2014, McGuire 2011, Veblen 2008) but a productive aspect of labor itself—public proof that one can be a startup founder, and that is one is fluent in, and ready for, the risk–taking practices inherent in the idea of startup business. Startup entrepreneurs here select from a collage of events to shape themselves as distinctive (see Giddens 1991: 188). As a Start Up Festival organizer put it:

> We said we [Bangaloreans] don't have the habit of having fun. People think that fun is frivolous. How do we break that? How do we say that this generation… can be introverts and extroverts at the same time; can be creative and chaotic at the same time; destructive and probably completely organized at the same time? This is a mix of different kinds of personalities especially (amongst) people who are entrepreneurs" (Festival co–founder interview March 2013).

Even as this organizer explains startup entrepreneurs as seemingly quixotic and unpredictable figures, I will show how startup entrepreneurs are expected to construct themselves as such through particular spatial practices. While there are instabilities and incompleteness that come with any attempt at identity production as Judith Butler argues (2006), the figure of the maverick startup entrepreneur is stabilized and cultivated in public space. Dubovskiy's words about entrepreneurship as lifestyle emphasizes that piecing together an entrepreneurial self-identity requires circulation not only through physical spaces but also types of activities including those of work, socializing, and fitness. Risk and flexibility are folded into the self.

Imagining work as integrated with other forms of socializing and kinesthetic and embodied practices is an explicit shift away from the conservative, risk-averse, and staid upper caste practices of software engineers (Radhakrishnan 2011). When I had initially approached several I.T. companies to conduct research on after-work life, for instance, I was told that employees "are not that kind," meaning that they do not enjoy after-work pleasures. Leisure was conceptualized as a wasteful, even vaguely immoral activity. As Smitha Radhakrishnan's ethnography of middle–class women professionals in I.T. showed, not only did I.T. women prioritize the domestic realm over office work, even while shopping their primary purpose was to buy goods for the family. In the startup economy, space is a vital resource in performing the startup self.

Space as a Resource for the Startup Economy

If the sites of work in the startup economy are dispersed and potential collaborators are often strangers at first, a significant part of the labor process is to convince someone of your potential to be a startup entrepreneur before you have a product. This is done by looking and acting the part; wearing the right clothes, moving through the right publics, and simulating potential to be in the *future* a successful startup entrepreneur. As one of the Festival organizers explained to me, what one wears and how one carries oneself are equally a part of becoming a start up entrepreneur.

> The first thing they might drop is their full-armed shirts and chinos and… find themselves walking around in shorts and T-shirts *(sic)*… people [earlier] bet on a stereotypical character who they thought would make money, [but] did not make money. The way the ecosystem is changing now, people don't hesitate to be who they are. VCs[25] are beginning to look beyond that to say, 'he might be an

[25] Venture capitalists.

> alcoholic, but he's looking to create something cool'" (Interview with Start Up Festival organizer, March 2013).

He explained this as a "despite" but as I came to see, startup entrepreneurs are in fact encouraged to embody the informal irreverence of Silicon Valley, and this habitus signals a global familiarity with startup culture and one's own initiation into this group of innovators. In other words, to be a startup entrepreneur is not merely to have a good idea but to "pass" as a potential startup funder and thus gain acceptance amongst others, and acquire capital funds.

Sharon Zukin (1990) has called "spatial embeddedness" the way in which cultural capital is not merely symbolic in nature but plays a key material role, creating economic value in its own right. Circuits of cultural capital, generated and built by the fitness studios, breakfast "power meetings," outdoor jogs, and networking–over–drinks events operate within broader financial parameters (Craik 1997: 125). Cultural capital is built in and through sites of leisure and mediate financial success. Start up success then is not merely about disruptive business or the innovative ideas that emerge from long hours working in isolation—they are imagined and emergent as social, urban, and dynamic. They are premised upon the production and energization of cultural capital that can circulate in urban spaces, attracting capital investments, and creating the entrepreneur as a desirable urban figure. Production and consumption are bound together tightly to create economic value.

Even with the discursive construction of risk as a central aspect of neoliberal business, in practice I never saw a single startup entrepreneur at work or at a work–event in shorts. At Captivate, the entrepreneurial company that I use as a case study, the

founder was always dressed in semi–formals (i.e. an office full–sleeved shirt without a suit and tie) and other entrepreneurs were similarly dressed. Ironically, even as startup innovators and Festival organizers described the need for irreverence, in practice entrepreneurs cultivated themselves as professionals to be taken seriously. This is a new economy and participants compensate for its lack of credibility by calibrating the distinctions between their professional selves and their startup spirit. The irreverence and risk–taking was reserved for weekend events and activities.

City spaces were woven throughout the itinerary of the festival, which was curated to resemble an imagined day in the life of a startup entrepreneur. Fitness, socializing, leisure, and networking activities studded the festival itinerary as the poster below shows: the Start Up city imagines public spaces and public practices of leisure as integral to the development of the risk–taking entrepreneur. Instead of explicit discussions around gender, class, or caste, the events of the Start Up Festival emphasized a vision of Bangalore's future that is woven around "social space," to use Lefebvre's term (1991) describing space in these words:

> Though a *product* to be used, to be consumed, it is also a *means of production*; networks of exchange and flows of raw materials and energy fashion space and are determined by it" (Lefebvre 1991: 85, italics in original).

Space is a product to be consumed but it is also the raw material of production—what Chandra Mohanty calls the spatial economy (2003: 2530): those who can best use and consume it acquire maximum capitalist profit. It is masculine startup entrepreneurs who profit in this political economy, deploying speed, distance, and density to their own

best advantage. The Start Up Festival was overwhelmingly attended by men who moved around in groups, on their motorbikes and in cars. When I attended evening plenaries the audience often thinned down to twenty or so men, and the session was followed by a networking session at a neighborhood bar. Likewise the events that attracted the largest audiences included the Unreasonable @Sea event: an accelerator lab for early stage companies based in the United States took its aspiring startup founders, mentors, and venture capitalists on a global sea voyage, stopping at various ports to meet innovators and spending their time together ideating and developing their products.

Participants in the global sea journey were present in Bangalore—the ship had docked in a nearby city—to pitch their ideas. The audience was abuzz with whispers and excitement about their projects. Thus the metaphors of travel and mobility are not only embedded within the Festival's everyday itinerary of pitching, dense networking, and financial and logistical scaling, but also reflect a neoliberal urge to move unfettered across diverse forms of space, and to scale an idea exponentially: after all it is this potential to scale that differentiates a startup from other kinds of entrepreneurial ventures. Startups need to project upward growth—this is what justifies the need for venture capital. If they wanted to open a small entrepreneurial business, they are expected to take out a loan; venture capitalists justify their risk in investing in a startup only if there is a projection of rapid growth. This global scaling is masculine (see Moodie 2013: 284).

Together a mastery over speed, distance, and density comprise what Melissa Fisher, in her analysis of Wall Street women working in the 1990s, describes as "predatory market machismo" (Fisher 2012: 99). Fisher describes the advent of market machismo in concert with a wider move in the US financial sector toward acquiring

shareholder value over all other considerations. This led to aggressive risk-taking behavior, she says, as bankers expanded client bases, sealed deals, and sped up transactions—cementing predatory market machismo as the hegemonic masculinity in finance (Fisher 2012: 99). In Bangalore, the advance of the startup economy creates a need for funding based on very little prior knowledge of the product or how it could turn out. Venture capitalists typically invest in a range of different companies. Just as the embodiment of masculinized imaginaries, discourses, and practices of aggressive risk-taking constitute the core of financial capitalism (Enloe 2013, Zaloom 2004), in Bangalore the dense mobility of startup founders moving across networking sites, bars, and coffee shops, and their ability to show how many hours they can devote to their product, and how well they have mastered technology to scale it are all ways in which startup spaces and practices are masculinized.

As Lefebvre argues: "The role of social space is as a means of production; it cannot be separated from productive forces such as technology or knowledge or from the social division of labor that shapes it" (Lefebvre 1991: 85) Thus space, and navigations of it, are integral to the productive work of the startup economy and in turn shaped by the social division of labor—space genders and is shaped by gender. Reading political economy through spatial lenses led Anna Tsing to develop a theory of "spectacular accumulation" (2004: 75) by which male entrepreneurs venture into unknown territory to prospect for oil. Contrary to accounts of flexible accumulation as the worldwide *condensation* of space and time—time–space compression (Harvey 1991)—in Tsing's ethnography global projects of speculation *enlargen* space as muddy expanses of frontierland are mined and explored for their potential. The navigation of these expanding

frontiers constitutes and masculinizes the entrepreneurial risk-taking of frontier capitalism.

Startups in Bangalore are also dominated by a market machismo predicated on projections of scale, potential, and individual capacities to circulate in masculinized spaces. These include the pubs, bars, networking nights, and incubation centers where startup founders meet others to network, collaborate, and expand their ideas to create a startup business. As I show in Chapter Four, even in the early stages of company growth, founders are asked what kinds of time commitments they offer their innovations, how they expect to scale, and how they justify their projected financial needs. These are spatial metaphors and movements, marking a distance from the static place of the home shaped by the feminized role of the mother within it (Yi Fu Tuan 2001). The forays of Anna Tsing's roving entrepreneurs produced them as masculinized figures of capitalism. In Bangalore, the networking, and the ambitious future–oriented projections of emergent startups signal a fluidity of movement across spaces and in time (projected future profits and growth plans) that masculinizes these activities.

Production and Consumption in the Start Up City

In addition to risk, flexibility is another neoliberal tenet central to the public production of the startup entrepreneur. Unpredictability, chaos, and creativity are seen as key to business and to start up success. These traits are developed through urban practices and sites: the Start Up Festival emphasized neighborhood art and cultural events, and innovative startups. To the organizers this combination of art and technology is key to entrepreneurship because it fosters a "cross pollination," in Shashi Kiran's words. This leads to creative and unpredictable outcomes, which they believe to be integral to startup

success. As Shashi Kumar explains it, startup entrepreneurs do not only formulate new business strategies that are premised on risk—they equally are expected to demonstrate an unpredictable flexibility in their everyday lives and to engage in outgoing and social leisure. Creativity, chaos, and disruptive business are key entrepreneurial traits but they also emerge from what the Festival curators describe as "lifestyle choices," reminiscent of Pierre Bourdieu's description of habitus as a "space of lifestyles [...] of groups characterized by different lifestyles" (Bourdieu 1990: 133).

Listening to Festival organizers, I was able to piece together a curatorial note for the Festival. It imagined the startup self as young masculine and middle–class figure: flexible, experimental, risk-taking, creative and disruptive. Women can be startup entrepreneurs when they, like Nayantara, are middle–class and single, able to circulate freely and equipped with the kinds of cultural capital that allow them to enter and interact in diverse social settings. Carla Freeman (2007) shows how local understandings of middle–classness (namely the dialectic between masculine 'reputation' and feminine 'respectability') in the Caribbean are reworked under neoliberal logics. The dominant bureaucratic economic system stood in opposition to practices of occupational multiplicity and entrepreneurialism (coded as 'reputation–oriented'), yet now they are a central part of mainstream neoliberal economy (Freeman 2007: 259). In the context of India, middle–class women's mobility around the city for work has long been curtailed through professional work that limited their aspirational and physical mobility in industries like I.T. (see Patel 2010, Radhakrishnan 2011). However, startup cultures bring a legitimacy and global worth to founders like Nayantara who navigate being middle–class and working and living alone into their thirties as startup entrepreneurs. Yet these

women startup founders are few in number, especially compared to the much larger pool of entrepreneurial women who run feminized businesses (like salons, boutiques, etc.)

The outliers to this startup world are entrepreneurs like Malathi, whom I introduced earlier in the chapter. "Are you coming to the evening plenary?" I asked her one afternoon. We were in her car, the driver moving it uncertainly through new neighborhoods as we hunted for event venues on the Start Up Festival map. Malathi kept phoning her husband who was looking up directions on his computer.

"I can't," she said worriedly, peering out the car window. "Everything is on the schedule. I have to be home by four-thirty and my son has to go for tuition, then my husband comes home." The plenary was at 7 p.m.—she would be well into family time then, and disconnected from the spaces, energies, and networking opportunities that were opening up in different city spaces according to the Festival itinerary.

Conclusion

As Bangalore turns to the startup economy, the imagined middle–class subject of the city's future shifts from the staid and respectable I.T. engineer to the masculinized and urban figure of the quixotic startup founder. Through an analysis of a Start Up Festival that introduced Bangaloreans to the ideas, labor, and practices of startup business, this chapter argued that learning how to be a startup entrepreneur involves learning how to construct, master, and embody neoliberal conceptions of risk and flexibility that are spatialized. Startup spaces and publics are woven into the everyday life of business and act as key resources for the public performance of the startup entrepreneur. Through forms of "spatial embeddness" (Zukin 1990), cultural capital is

produced and circulated at different and dispersed sites of the startup economy, playing a material role in the construction of value and mediating financial success. Analyzing the gendered habitus of women entrepreneurs, I showed how gender is both performed and read back on to certain bodies, thus determining access and power in the startup economy. The startup entrepreneur and the Start Up City are thus imbricated through complementary and sympathetic urban practices, circulations, and future oriented temporalities.

IV. "Giving Back": Gendered Subjectivities in the Startup Economy

In the previous chapter I argued that even as the startup economy rhetorically and ideologically offers itself as an open playing field, the startup entrepreneur is an implicitly masculine figure. I showed how the core qualities of such a figure are imagined and enacted in and through the spaces of the Start Up City. This chapter ethnographically explores what it means to enter the worlds of startup economy for those who do not identify as young, middle–class male technology entrepreneurs. How do other actors encounter the expectations and dominant paradigms of startup culture? I track the mobility (both material and aspirational) of women entrepreneurs as they enter the spaces and sites of the startup economy as well as the rhetorical strategies through which they navigate the responsibilities, duties, and pleasures of home and work. Analyzing their interactions at an incubation lab where ideas are scaled and honed, in middle–class homes where expectations and responsibilities around household and reproductive labor are negotiated, and networking sessions where entrepreneurs produce womanhood through narratives of guilt, diligence, and need, I show how women founders navigate the social, material, and temporal challenges involved in becoming startup entrepreneurs.

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Human Innovation: A Labor of Passion

In Bangalore, visual signs and the narrativization of certain kinds of desire produce the startup economy as linked to the heart and the mind. For instance, the dominant imagery of the Start Up Festival (the focus of Chapter Three) was its poster and website publicity featuring a red heart (for passion) and lit bulb (for innovation). This emphasis on the heart and mind erases the notion of startup business as requiring any

physical or embodied labor. Instead it is a labor of love: the risks involved are bearable only because of the passion that drives founders. Miya Tokumitsu (2016) analyzes this as a global turn to the startup mantra of Do What You Love (DWYL). She writes that the startup world's focus on passion valorizes ideas and creativity even as it effaces the routine low-paid work that actually sustains and scales innovations.

Following Lila Abu Lughod and Catherine Lutz (1990), I treat talk of emotion in the startup sector as a form of social action that creates effects in the world; my effort is to show "how emotion discourses establish, assert, challenge, or reinforce power or status differences" (12–14). Rather than to read these following examples as establishing facticity, or "proof" that entrepreneurs are driven by passion, I would consider discourse in the Foucauldian sense, to form the object of which it speaks (Foucault 1982). In Bangalore, as I will show, talk of passion operates primarily at a discursive level. Entrepreneurs, both men and women, are eager to foreground their passion and use it to explain and legitimize their self–professed "crazy" or maverick behavior. Yet a closer look at how they socialize, work, and live suggests a disjuncture between the ideal of entrepreneurial passion and its lived experience. The focus on discourse allows us to explore how "emotion serves as an operator in a contentious field of social activity, affects a social field, serves as an idiom for communicating" (Abu Lughod and Lutz 1990: 11). It is a galvanizing discourse around which people's actions and words are oriented.

Bangalore's startup entrepreneurs encounter tales of passion that emanate from the United States. It is worth outlining what this rubric of passion looks and feels like, even as it seeks to resist containment or rational explanation. One narrative of a

successful startup founder who is driven by passion in everything he does is told by Silicon Valley venture capitalist, Chris Sacca (2015):

> A few years back, before Uber was anything more than an app used by a group of our friends, Travis [Kalanick, Uber's Founder) was staying at my house in the mountains over the holidays. One morning before snowshoeing, my dad challenged Travis to a friendly Wii Tennis match. My dad is a competitive guy and used to enjoy playing in local, real-life tennis tournaments when I was a kid. He also had a Wii at home and considered himself versed in the virtual game. So, he thought it could be a good opportunity to dish out a little good-natured pain to Travis.
>
> As the match kicked off, there was my dad in an athletic stance and confidently giving it his all. He might have even been sweating a bit. Yet, Travis was barely moving his arm or breaking his wrist. Though my dad hung in there and kept it close, Travis won every game.
>
> That was when TK, with full Princess Bride panache, announced that he had been playing with his opposite hand, and promptly switched. Uh-oh. For the next 20 minutes, my dad didn't manage to score a single point. He was completely skunked. Yet, looking over at Travis, it was clear he was still waking up.
>
> Travis could tell my dad was feeling dejected. I mean, the poor guy was getting aced at least every other serve. A slight smirk came over TK's face and he reached out to shake my dad's hand, offering him a touch of consolation.
>
> "I have a confession to make, Mr. Sacca. I've played a fair amount of Wii Tennis before." While talking, he used his controller to navigate through the settings pages on the Wii to a list of high scores. "In fact," he continued, "on the Wii Tennis global leaderboard, I am currently tied for 2nd in the world."
>
> . . . [B]ut that day in Truckee, I was reminded of how tireless and *obsessive* Travis can be when it comes to achieving goals he sets out for himself. If he decides he wants to research a new industry, he will be a veritable expert within days. If he wants to understand a new city, he will be there 24 hours from now with just a half-sized backpack and already hanging with the locals. If he wants to be one of the best Wii Tennis players in the world, even while busy co-founding one of the fastest growing companies in history and advising a half dozen others from his storied Jampad, just give him a couple weeks.
>
> He doesn't sleep. He doesn't lose focus. He will even forget to eat. He executes again and again, inspiring those around him to have the same *passion* for the end game as he does" (Sacca 2015[26], italics mine).

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[26] Chris Sacca. "Why I Would Never Want to Compete with Travis Kalanick," Medium, February 4, 2015, accessed March 1, 2016, https://medium.com/@sacca/why-i-would-never-want-to-compete-with-travis-kalanick-64e5f0218362#.fgvwsda9g.

This story activates a particular set of startup ideals: passion, obsession, determination, unpredictability—the story is being told by Chris Sacca to make a larger point: that startup founders have to be "weird" ("Where we are"). It is what distinguishes them from their competitors. The show on which Sacca recounts this story ends with his audience, the startup founder Alex Blumberg, confessing that he cares too much about his wife and family to even want to be the obsessive passionate innovator dedicated to nothing besides his love for his invention[27]. In this story that Sacca tells, Travis Kalanick's passion drives him and empowers him. It is through his passion that we can understand his determination and his will to succeed. Despite his passion seeming to enable a concrete set of strengths (becoming an expert, learning a skill, taking on unimaginable amounts of work), it is articulated in the language of neurosis: Kalanick's passion is *obsessive*.

I recount this narrative in such detail because to me it is representative of the kind of discourse that circulates with authority in Bangalore's own startup circles. When mentors and teachers at local business schools met aspiring entrepreneurs, these are the kinds of stories that they tell about "classic" startup business, and invariably their audience would chime in to compete a quote or nod knowingly at an anecdote. Stories about Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg, and now Travis Kalanick circulate in online fora, on messaging sites like Quora.com, and are repeated at startup meetings in Bangalore. The

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[27] Blumberg, Alex, host. "Where We Are [Season 1 Finale]." Start Up (iTunes podcast). Gimlet Media, February 16, 2015. Accessed March 30, 2016. https://gimletmedia.com/episode/14-where-we-are/.

stories share a celebration of unreasonable entrepreneurial passion—a distinctly gendered privilege accorded to passion that is associated with male startup founders.

Typically, passion and emotion have been historically considered gendered forms of *weakness*, rather than strength (Lloyd 1993). From Aristotle onward, man's pursuit has been described as a quest for (masculine) rationality. This is a desire for transcendence; a need to overcome the weakening effects of emotion that threaten the pursuit of knowledge and reason. In India, Tanika Sarkar describes men's emotional states when they are *bhakts* or practicing devotion to powerful female gods (Sarkar 2001). It was the powerful figures of Mothers and Goddesses that caused men to become emotional and join nationalist efforts, yet when they were engaged in the action of war or revolt they did so as masculine figures. Here too masculinity is the language of action and achievement, the transcendent state (see also de Beauvoir 2007). In the contemporary Indian scenario, transnational discourses about startup founders celebrate and valorize their passion, to create mythical origin stories.

Catherine Lutz (1990) writing on the gendering of emotion, notes this contrast with rational thinking and achievement: because the category of emotion is associated with the female, "qualities that define the emotional also define women… it is viewed as something natural rather than cultural . . . irrational . . . subjective . . . physical . . . unintended . . . uncontrollable" (69). For startup founders, the passion is converted into a form of masculine domination. It is depicted as enabling them to achieve great conquests (of ideas, markets, skills). Even the unintended and uncontrollable aspects of passion—the obsessive behavior, in Sacca's words—become desirable.

Similarly, through cheaply priced book imprints and internet sites, the words of startup founders like Steve Jobs gain currency and momentum amongst local entrepreneurial aspirants in Bangalore. Jobs speaks of passion not as something to be overcome but as a universalizing humanistic experience in quotes such as this one: "Your time is limited, don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma, which is living the result of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other opinions drown your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition, they somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary" ("Follow Your Heart").

Here, the startup ideal of passion is imagined as a motivating factor, an essential aspect of entrepreneurial business. Its qualities of madness, irrationality, and obsession become invaluable when they are masculinized through the narratives of male entrepreneurs. Passion is a lone pursuit; each of these men is shown as an individual aspiring to achieve greatness. Not only are they unencumbered by family and responsibilities, they do not wish to be tied down (see Isaacson 2011 for the story of Steve Jobs and his estrangement from parts of his family). As the American startup entrepreneur Alex Blumberg remarked wryly in response to Chris Sacca's story about Uber's founder, mentioned above, "I could never be that weird: I would never want to leave my wife and family" ("Where we are").

Women like Malathi whom I introduced in the last chapter exude a different kind of emotion: one that is rooted in, and woven from, maternal love and resolutely tied to—and tamed by—familial affect. Unlike Travis Kalanick, traveling the world to discover the answers to his questions (in the Chris Sacca reminiscence, above), Malathi's physical

mobility is circular and temporally bound: to her home and back, with free time between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Although she too is driven by ambition, it is impossible for her to produce the individualistic, unfettered passion of the itinerant startup founder, free to pursue their dreams. As I suggested earlier, not all American startup founders want to, or choose to, pursue these forms of passionate engagement either. Yet passion—like risk—is discursively produced as central to entrepreneurial success.

Historically the emergence of passion as a vector of business is new to India's business climate. More traditional entrepreneurs did not locate their enterprise in a pursuit of risky ambition. They drew from caste networks and familial relations to advance their business. As Sylvia Yanagisako (2002) describes of Italy, sentiment animates family business. But startup founders speak of "passion" not sentiment—which is a more restrained and long–lasting attachment to something. Equally, in popular discourses of startups in India, even as qualities of "passion" are named they are elaborated upon in relation to larger kin and community networks. For instance, Kishore Biyani, founder of one of India's largest retail businesses, offers insights into the narrative modes of self–making through which startup founders imagine and present themselves. Biyani says that American entrepreneur Sam Walton is one of his greatest inspirations and that he learnt a lot from Walton's book:

> Secondly, it [founding a business] is all about passion. We realized that retailing is always done with passion. It is not done with corporate imagery. Retailing is also about leading the group, leading the cheerleaders, having Saturday meetings.

> Walton's book also presents insights on how to manage the family, how to treat sons and daughters, how to view the management and the family as two separate entities and how to manage wealth[28] (Biyani 2007).

Even while Biyani centers "passion" as central to his business, his next sentence refuses the idea of passion as business pursuit—"it is not done with corporate imagery," he notes. In a minute, he goes on to talking about how passion intersects with, or relates to, other forms of attachment and feeling, represented by the family. Susan Sontag links the practice of expressing and indicating emotion with the rise of individualism: "one of the routes by which the new individual could distinguish themselves was through a focus on feelings defined as aspects of unique personalities" (Abu Lughod and Lutz 1990: 5).

In India, passion as an emotion marks the individual startup entrepreneur, and signals a transition from community–based business to passionate individuals who take risks and gambles without a network of support. Yet, equally reflective of an "Indian" inflection to emotional discourse is Biyani's follow up to his statement of passion—the importance of managing family while doing business. Perhaps Indian entrepreneurs balance the need to produce themselves as passionate individuals—in keeping with global startup discourses—while reminding the world of their moral commitments to family and community.

This need to balance the affirmation of one's passion about startup work with one's obligations to family is gendered in multiple ways as I discovered when I attended

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[28] Kishore Biyani, "We Believe in Destroying What We Have Created," Knowledge@Wharton, November 1, 2007, accessed March 15, 2016, http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/retailer-kishore-biyani-we-believe-in-destroying-what-we-have-created/.

a session with women entrepreneurs on Women's Day (March 8) in 2013. First, passion signifies a uniqueness, and an innate drive to be different that is a key ingredient of business success. Yet in transnational startup discourses, as I have shown, it is a masculine privilege: passionate women run the risk of being labeled "crazy" or "irrational" yet for men passion is a sign of drive and determination. Second, women walk an impossible line between needing to show their passion and commitment toward their business—producing themselves as independent and driven entrepreneurs—even while denying that this passion does not detract from their expected allegiances to kin networks and familial responsibilities.

In the next few sections I examine how innovation and passion are not spontaneous and instinctive—"listening to your heart"—but assembled and extracted through forms of comparative advantage, labor, and gendered identities.

Fighting the Odds: Religion and Class as Forms of Immobility

An incubation lab is a place where innovations are grown and nurtured through exposure to different kinds of expert knowledge and advice. Gaining entry into this space is prestigious and valuable because it offers access to collaborations, funding, and visibility to others in the startup ecosphere. Startup founders apply to participate in these spaces and often spend days, weeks, or even months at such labs, working around the clock to develop their ideas. I had been invited to a new incubation lab in Bangalore in order to hear aspiring entrepreneurs "pitch" their ideas to a venture capitalist who would offer feedback and responses. I saw this as an opportunity to understand how value (and more tangibly, *financial* value) is assigned to ideas and to learn what the invited venture capitalist would identify as "potential" in a startup company.

The lab was a short walk away from a stop on Bangalore's fledgling metro system so I took public transport there the afternoon of the event. I wandered a bit before realizing that—yet again—the unnamed and unmarked spacious bungalow on my left was in fact the accelerator lab. It was a repurposed bungalow, redone with wooden floors and white shining tiles. Two security guards zealously manned the entrance, and inside I found tight knots of entrepreneurs hunched over laptops on raised tables, polishing their pitches. This current batch had ten entrepreneurs, competitively selected to join, and they now lived in this house, honing their ideas. This premise of immersion and collective living already ruled out this opportunity for those who could not devote time away from families and salaried jobs to participate.

I was invited to the session by one of the company's Directors, a young woman who was active and energetic at the lab and sat chatting with me as we waited for the venture capitalist to arrive. She was an aspiring startup entrepreneur herself. She told me that she had conceptualized several startup ideas herself. One of her early ideas received money from an angel investor yet she could not pursue it, as she explained to me later in an interview. Note that, as with other Muslim entrepreneurs whom I met during fieldwork, she uses "community" to refer to her religious community. She never mentioned her religion but, as is frequent in India, caste and religion are often surmised from people's names and second names.

Director (Mehnaz): "I could not take it [my startup idea] to the next level although I had received funding for Rs 50 lakhs[29] because … ummm… things got really bad at home. So... I come from a really conservative family where even working as a corporate is not acceptable.

[29] Approximately $80,000.

Interviewer (HG): Because?

Director: So the basic expectation is… the community expects you to just finish your education and get married and that's it. That is the regular routine and that is how you are expected to be. But I happen to be the most adventurous person and I happen to always be the talk of the town [laughs]. I am like a fish out of water in my community right? [laughs] So, anyway, now things are so much better, because I have this habit of "starting up" even from my college.

HG: So how did that happen? When did you decide that you wanted to start something?

Director: It was always on, right, because my dad is an entrepreneur… [Interview on May 13, 2013]

The Director, Mehnaz, explained that she could not pursue her plans with the startup because of her family's resistance. Through her laughs and her strategic choice of words ("like a fish out of water," "talk of the town") she distanced herself—an aspiring startup founder—from the rest of her community. Incidentally, her first innovation was related to a meal service for Muslims during Ramzan, the holy month of fasting.

Like many other women I met in Bangalore's startup world, Mehnaz described everyday life and herself in startup lexicon. She told me that she "validated a pin point" (meaning that received an anticipated outcome) on one idea, wanted to use technology to "scale" her father's old-school silver business, and was inspired by the popular stories of young entrepreneurs who defied the odds to establish their own international companies.

Yet despite her growing fluency and familiarity with startups, her family was reluctant to allow her to work on her own. Mehnaz faced gendered, classed, and religious constraints: as a young Muslim woman, she told me that in her "community" it was unthinkable for an unmarried woman to branch out on her own to take a risk on a startup.

Additionally, as a member of a middle–class but not rich household, she had to contribute to home expenses so she navigated these expectations and norms by taking a corporate job to fund her startup with her salary. She then took up a senior position at this incubation lab where she works now; her own startup plans are on hold, and she hopes to return to them soon.

Mehnaz possesses all of the innovations and passion expected of startup entrepreneurs—she is a serial innovator, her businesses are "disruptive" as startups are expected to be (they challenge existing ways of doing business in a particular industry as with her idea for providing a meal service for Ramzan), and she routinely works through the night. These practices offer cues that Mehnaz is well-versed in the practices and traits through which startup founders recognize each other. Yet despite her mastery over the ways–of–being a startup founder, she encountered specific material, social, and religious constraints to actualize her dreams of building a business.

Her story explains the gendered, classed, and religious constraints of startup culture. Armed with a Business degree, inspired by her father's entrepreneurship with a silver business, full of startup ideas and great drive, Mehnaz is still not a participant in the lab but its curator: unable to become a startup entrepreneur herself. Her attempts to devote concentrated amounts of time into launching a company, or to scale her father's business, are both constrained by social and familial expectations that she keep regular work hours, a respectable salaried job, and stay close to home (rather than running a startup requiring late hours and interactions with strangers, and mobile practices around the city). In other words, for Mehnaz's family, their daughter's passion threatened to derail her from the expected temporalities of gendered life for a Muslim woman:

education, marriage, staying at home. Religion, class, and gender converge to frame Mehnaz's passion as illicit and dangerous; the "fish out of water" is tamed by her family's expectations that she reign in her mad love for startups to work a salaried job.

As I discovered at the pitching session just a few minutes later, startup entrepreneurs are recognized as such through their ability to channel intense energy and interest in sustaining a business around the clock in its period of initial inception. This assumes a young middle to upper class demographic who have no family or financial commitments. Religious and social norms, and gendered expectations disadvantage and preclude others from participating in Bangalore's startup economy. Although entrepreneurs in Bangalore speak of startups being about passion and innovation, and meant for "anyone" i.e. not just the young, not only men, and not only middle–classes, Mehnaz, poised at the intersections of various inhibiting factors finds herself effectively disqualified as a start up entrepreneur despite her ideas and inventiveness.

Incubating Immersive Ideas: Temporal and Embodied Mobility as Advantage

Not long after I entered the lab, the venture capitalist for the event entered. He was dressed semi-formally in a checked shirt tucked into dark trousers—and turned out to be someone I knew! We exchanged hellos, caught up briefly, and headed in to the conference room where the entrepreneurs had already gathered. A screen hung down from one wall and people seated themselves, looking anxious and jittery, around the long wooden table. It was a room of individuals who all presented as male except one, as well as the Director, Mehnaz, and myself. Some entrepreneurs still hovered around the large wooden conference table, tweaking their power points and whispering fiercely to each

other until the last minute. Finally, the head of the lab cleared his throat and introduced the event.

Throughout, the venture capitalist sat upright and alert in his chair, listening carefully and making suggestions. He often asked the team presenting if they were aware of what competition existed for their proposed product, why that product had failed—or how it was doing—and queried them on their anticipated timelines. One innovation was for a product that would use text messages to send directions to those without a smart phone and thus without the use of GPS.

"What if someone texts a request at 3 a.m.?" the venture capitalist, Anant Subramaniam, asked. "Will you be able to respond?"

The team replied that they had a third member in the United States who took on a shift while the India-based partners were sleeping.

"I have a one-year-old, so I am usually up at 2 a.m.," the venture capitalist said. "I'll text you then to check if I get a reply."

It was clear from this "mock" pitching session that even within the shelter of the incubation lab there was no "soft launch" and no trial run. Products and services were expected to be market ready when entrepreneurs approached investors, and this meant an immersive 24-hour commitment, or an outright rejection. The venture capitalist asked for growth timelines and then advised the team to project for a period of three months: anything longer than that would be impossible to predict, he said. This was an intense and concerted period of growth, crucial to the evolution of a startup. Not being able to commit in the ways required would likely eliminate you from the race for funding.

This dense intertwining of time and energy while an innovation is nurtured eliminates entrepreneurs on the basis of expectations around domestic labor, life stage, and gendered and classed social norms. Startup founders require the temporal mobility to manage and organize time so that it meets the expectations of co–founders and investors, and can be appropriated toward growing their business.

In addition to temporal mobility, startup entrepreneurs are also required to extend themselves in time and space, reaching out to aggressively acquire advantages and accumulate valuable resources. After the pitching session that I attended, one aspiring entrepreneur at the lab hopefully clung on to the visiting VC (venture capitalist) after the official session. The entrepreneur was imploring and deferential, wanting more feedback, more ideas, and more contacts. His body reached out in space—a phenomenological challenge for feminized bodies, as Iris Marion Young (2005) shows. Young (2005) terms this ambiguous transcendence or a subjectivity located not in consciousness but in an embodied sense of who we are. This prevents women–identified bodies from moving outward in space and results in them thinking of their own bodies as objects that are passive rather than as having the ability to achieve transcendence.

Similarly Ritty Lukose terms "oudhakam" (Lukose 2007) the embodied practice by which youth and gender in India converge to offer a model of femininity that requires the female body to signal its closeness to the earth: it has to be compact and enfolded within itself. During her fieldwork she was instructed by her interlocutors to hold her books close to her chest, look down, and walk with purpose. The free–wheeling ambulatory urban practices of roaming the streets on motorbikes and gazing out at the world and engaging strangers were masculinized. In India, Mehnaz's story helps to

explain how and why gendered bodies are mediated by broader expectations around how far women can depart from the linearity of life–stage, domestic roles, and embodied spatial practices.

Querying the Individual Subject: Access to Finance in the Non–West

Gendered access to masculine business cultures have been documented ethnographically. Karen Ho's (2009) ethnography of investment banking on Wall Street shows that the ability to insert oneself into desirable business interactions is itself gendered. Describing the hiring of entry-level consultants from Ivy League universities, Ho witnessed the diffident ways that college women stand: marginalized, on the fringes of the crowd of graduating students eager for a word or tip with the visiting representative from a leading investing firm (Ho 2009).

In the world of startups, it is the venture capitalist who is the prized figure[30] as was evident from my observations of the young man's efforts to network with the visiting VC. As with Ho's observations of women who became relegated to the sidelines or fringes of insistent and ambitious crowds of young graduates, in startups it is those with persistence, confidence, and the ability to network who can inveigle themselves with potential funders and collaborators. If aggression is recognized as a particularly masculinized occupational trait as Linda McDowell (1994) and Melissa Fisher (2012)

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[30] The world of startups depends on prestigious sources of angel investing and venture capital funding in order to ascertain its own worth and potential: not unlike the difference between receiving grant money vs. self-funding for academic research. However, funding in the start up sector is not solicited via an online portal or mail application. Venture capitalists are hard to gain access to; they are easily dismissive and well aware of their own power.

show in their research on finance, then the race to petition for venture funding has already eliminated some participants.

In the non–West, studies of finance have centered on microfinance, increasingly a central model of development in the last ten years especially in South Asia (Moodie 2008). This is the model in which U.S. government agencies and Non Government Organizations (NGOs) extend small loans to start income–generating activities, usually targeted at poor women (see Karim 2012). The feminist critique of microfinance has rested upon its assumed subject: the neoliberal, entrepreneurial, empowered, and autonomous individual. In reality, Lamia Karim notes that an increasingly profit-oriented NGO sector is aggressive about recovering loans (Karim 2012); fearing shame, women borrow from other Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) to repay their debt.

Microfinance operates on the assumption that individuals—not the state—are the drivers of economic change, and they become an instrument through which societies in Bangladesh and India are attempted to be remade as market societies similar to Western norms (Karim 2012). So too does venture capital assess and value individuals as drivers of startups, whether in India or abroad. Case studies of microfinance in the non–West (Karim 2012, Mayoux 1999, Moodie 2008), however, suggest that women access finance in ways that articulate through local gender norms and understandings of caste, religion, and even the role of Western development models. Thus finance capital is dispersed to an imagined and desired neoliberal entrepreneurial subject; the disembedding of such a subject from local social, cultural, and gender norms appears to pose a gendered problem precluding women's access to, and use of, such capital. Women's location within families, communities, and larger networks could also influence their inability to

aggressively pitch for funding, something I noticed with the women even at this elite incubation lab who were uncomfortable about lobbying for money.

It is not surprising that the most successful illustrations of financing women's work in India has been through forms of self–financing. For instance, a well–known case of Indian women entrepreneurs is of Lijjat *paapad*, a company formed in 1959 that brought together working class women who rolled *paapads* in their one room homes and began selling them (Roy and Lahiri–Roy 2010). They did not seek out capital, but instead pooled in their own money, and all members were co–owners. When the company grew to three hundred women in 1962, women simply began taking home kneaded dough and working from their homes; flexible work arrangements allowed massive expansion (Roy and Lahiri–Roy 2010). The contexts surrounding gendered participation in finance in the non–West note that women's often access finance to begin business by coming together in a group, pooling resources and using this as seed capital (see also "Self Employed Women's Association").

Entrepreneurialism relies upon networks enough to justify some scholars' argument that the unit of observation should be networks not the individual, and these networks are further gendered, meaning that the people in women's networks are likely to be other women (see Hanson 2009). The skills to network, socialize, persuade, and interact with colleagues in a masculinized field requires the proper production of entrepreneurial subjects. As Gibson-Graham suggest, processes of subjection create capitalist societies: what they call a "politics of the subject" (1996: xvi) in which bodies are integral "sensing, thinking, feeling, moving" aspects of capitalist production. Here in Bangalore, energetic, aggressive, social, and networked individuals create a field of

entrepreneurship that is masculine; thriving on an intensity of work time and density of interactions that fold in some startup entrepreneurs and exclude others like Mehnaz.

Life Histories and Life Choices

Startup entrepreneurs and consultants often scheduled my interviews with them for midday. Usually they were bleary-eyed even at noon, hoarsely recounting their sleep pattern of the previous night. "I only slept at 4 a.m.," "I was on Skype collaborating with this guy in Germany till one a.m.," "my family is used to my being up all night!" and so on. Recounting and commenting on their unpredictable and flexible sleep patterns worked as a rhetorical and representational validation of their true belonging in the startup sphere. Entrepreneurial lifestyles in their idealized unpredictable, deeply immersive, and time intensive form do not run "on the schedule" as with Malathi, the entrepreneur whom I introduced in the previous chapter. I discovered the significance of temporal and spatial mobility when I visited her at home.

I had taken down Malathi's email address when I first met her and she told me the interview would be more convenient at her home. Several women entrepreneurs had asked me to visit them at home, and each of these ended up being day–long expeditions. Public transport to the apartment buildings where many women entrepreneurs lived was scant, and I would be forced to take an auto across miles of dusty streets and around Rs. 200 each (or $4) each way. I preferred to take a bus or two to the nearest stop and walk or take an auto the remainder of the journey. The buses sometimes took me two hours as we traveled across the length and density of the city, slowly meandering along, until we began to arrive at the either more spacious or more economical real estate set apart from the city center. My audio files of these interviews with them record a mix of

conversations with their children, the cries of babies, and interactions with domestic and service help as multiple interactions unfold at the same time.

All of the thirty women entrepreneurs whom I met were between 23–45 years old. The younger, unmarried women who began a business during and right after college were serial entrepreneurs: often the current startup was not their first, and would likely not be their only one. They lived at home with their parents, and worked through the day and late into the night. Their collaborators, employees, and co–founders were usually college friends, thus converting social networks into business ones. Their undergraduate degrees were in Business, Entrepreneurship, and Economics.

Their fathers were often entrepreneurs as well, although not startup founders but more traditional entrepreneurs who worked in family businesses that built on community networks and were not built to scale exponentially: a jewelry business and a local flower business are two examples. Their mothers helped out with these businesses in a support role, where their primary orientation was to their children, homes, and husbands. Their labor was thus wholly for the exchange market of the startup world; they had to help at home but in bounded and limited ways. Their energies and creativity was directed into business and channeled into their network of friends and collaborators.

The older women had worked in corporate jobs typically for large Information Technology companies, although not as coders but as Human Resource managers and in finance and accounting. They were in their thirties and forties, and had arranged marriages to other middle–class men of the same caste, class, and religion, and had taken to entrepreneurship for different reasons. The middle–aged women often had temporary help raising their children: a house–help who would visit once a day to sweep, mop, and

wash clothes. In some households, a cook visited for an hour a day, preparing lunch and dinner for the family. The husbands of almost all married startup entrepreneurs worked in middle–level and senior management for large I.T. companies. Thus all families had at least one member with a stable job and income. They all described their husbands as being supportive of their businesses, as I describe in the next section, and parents often lived close by, or visited often to help with the children.

In addition, there are several hundred women in Bangalore who are part of online women's entrepreneurship groups. They have feminized businesses in care and service work (a dog spa, restaurants, bakeries, and restaurants) or in products catering to a middle–class clientele of women (fashion, jewelry, design ventures). In this dissertation when I talk of startup entrepreneurs I do not focus on these women; my interest is in women who have begin startups, or businesses that intend to scale nationally and, for those who use technology, perhaps even globally. Startup entrepreneurs join a larger eco–system that allows them to network, meet venture capitalists, and compete to attend incubation labs.

Middle Class Life as a Challenge to Startup Mobility

My experience visiting Malathi was representative of my visits to the homes of many women entrepreneurs. It took me two hours in a bus to get to her address, and as we inched along the streets, crowded even at one p.m., I tracked the changing city landscapes as though a diorama stretched before me. Many of these streets were along the bus route of my high school bus, and in the late 1990s they were densely knitted with tree cover and spotted with low bungalows and small gardens. The trees were razed now, streets strangled on either side by the debris and construction material for new flyovers

and the planned extension of the Bangalore Metro. Gradually we arrived at an extension of an older neighborhood, known just as "Phase Seven," signaling its growth from the epicenter. I got off and took an auto to the inner neighborhood off the main bus route.

Approaching the destination, we turned into a narrow street and suddenly massive buildings rose into the horizon. The road widened at the entry to Malathi's apartment building, one of several, tightly caught in a landscaped web of gated community life. A little security booth outside one of the buildings required me to fill out my personal details, and then I was allowed to enter through the pedestrian gate. On my left a glass-walled gym revealed young people working out on exercise machines, at an elevation a few floors above street level. On my right a small roundabout seated elderly people who chatted with each other and watched children bicycle past, screaming, at manic speeds. Children's playgrounds, a clubhouse, and smooth tarred streets winding around the complex: this was a typical middle–class residential gated community.

I found Malathi on the seventh floor of her building, in a small and kitschily-decorated apartment. TV maintenance men crowded the tiny living room area, working at straightening out a cable connection, while her four–year–old son shouted above their confabulations, insisting that his TV viewing schedule not be disrupted. Malathi had a maid who came in to do some cleaning every morning, but she cooked for her household, packed their lunches, and took care of her son's tuition, sports, and play schedules on her own. She had an arranged marriage to her husband, in his forties, a senior manager with a bank in Bangalore. Her parents lived in Mumbai, a major metropolis, and Malathi had been a professional before she was married. Her work experience as a professional

woman in a large financial center gave her a confidence and self–assured air. Yet this did not prevent her from being dubious about her ability to be a "good" respondent to my questions, and she repeatedly insisted that she was not representative of women entrepreneurs.

As I show later, most women whom I met marked their difference from others in their family, their work, and even from other entrepreneurs. In fact, this sense of oneself as "unique" is a central, and cultivated, trait of most startup founders. It is the necessary fiction that maintains their self–confidence in taking an entrepreneurial journey. She and I sat at her dining table, talking in–between the interruptions of the maintenance men and her son.

She told me she did not have the time to engage in Bangalore's startup world. She balanced her business with parenting, waking up at four a.m. to work on the new product before the rest of the household demanded her attention as day broke. Malathi's schedule challenges the familiar complaint about women entrepreneurs: that they only devote the tail end of their days to their business, after family commitments have been taken care of. She begins her day by thinking about her business—4 a.m. to 6 a.m.—a time when many startup entrepreneurs are finally turning in to bed. Other startup entrepreneurs peak and network in the evenings but Malathi is at home with her family. For those in the startup sector who live on their own, small and shared apartments in the center of town are affordable. Younger entrepreneurs who live with their parents similarly are often well-located in central neighborhoods. Attending networking meetings, collaborating face–to–face and immersing themselves in Bangalore's startup culture requires hopping on to a scooter or motorbike and arriving at a central destination without too much planning.

Middle–aged and middle–class entrepreneurs like Malathi are spatially segregated by their need to have apartments large enough for their families. The only married women startup founders who lived in the center of Bangalore and easy commuting distance to startup spaces of networking and meeting were return migrants from the United States. Their husbands were working for the Bangalore offices of global corporations and earned enough to live in luxurious apartment complexes in the city center. In general however, women's middle–class life and living patterns prevented them from traveling in and around sites of the startup economy. Her husband and son's expectations her own desires around her contribution to household labor further tie her in to her family and segregated gated community life.

I realized just how tight this web of expectations around a woman's presence and engagement with the home can be on a visit to Rochanna, a woman who left a corporate job in I.T. to begin her own startup in human resources. We met at a networking event for women, in the intense ten minutes after the event when we all went around the room trying to make sure we talked to everyone and got their visiting cards. A quick glance at her card made me wonder if Rochanna was going through a challenging period; the choice of double letters—in her case 'n' suggests a recourse to numerology to bring luck. Bollywood film actors often turn to these techniques following a series of failed films, and an unusual spelling of someone's name can be read as a sign that they are trying to fight a spell of bad luck through any and all means possible.

It took me some hours on a bus to reach Rochanna's home, a small two–bedroom apartment in a complex containing several of these, but without the amenities of a pool or clubhouse or any advantages aside from free covered parking downstairs. A heap of

slippers marked her doorway, and through the open front door I could hear her advising someone on how to recruit celebrities for a fund–raiser. Inside, Rochanna's year–old baby wailed in a crib in the center of the tiny living room, and a young man sat attentively on her faux leather sofa as she advised him on celebrity management. Finally, the young man left and Rochanna turned her attention to me. I pulled out my recorder and began talking to her about my project in between the baby's gurgling and occasional high–pitched wails. As I began to ask my first question, the doorbell rang, and this interaction followed:

> Interviewer (HG): Oh! Shall I get it?
> Rochanna: Oh no, I'll get it. That's my older one, Raunak.
> She opened the door and a young boy of around ten–years–old enters.
> Rochanna: Hello! This is Hemangini. That's Raunak.
> HG: Hi! How was school?
> Raunak: Grunts (inaudible)
> HG: Good?
> Rochanna laughs.
> Raunak (whining and accusatory tone, to his mother): You're going out?
> Rochanna: No, no, no. I'm not going out. She's here to see me. I'm not going out.
> HG: And you! (here to see you) And your brother!
> Rochanna (to Raunak): Come. Will you wash your face and all? And change your dress… get ready? I'll talk to…
> Baby interrupts by gurgling loudly.

It was only four p.m. but Rochanna's attention was forcibly splintered between a whining (and exhausted) ten–year–old, a year–old baby, her need to contribute to charity causes by consulting and sharing her networks, and her willingness to talk to me. I could see the immense resistance from her son just at the sight of me; I could imagine his tantrum if she was actually planning on stepping out. I wondered how many hours she had for her business. She told me how challenging it was to attend networking meetings

with no possibilities for child care. Middle class mothers with young babies in India typically have the assistance of their own mothers or extended families in cities like Bangalore where the culture of hiring a full–time nanny is relatively unusual except for the elite. Rochanna had no family on hand and her husband had not taken time off from his corporate job to care for the child during the day. As I talked with her that afternoon, Raunak was persuaded to care for his younger brother while she talked to me.

After we finished, I accompanied Raunak downstairs to play with his friends while she minded the baby. As his friends ran out of their apartments and rushed screaming down the stairs they asked him who I was. “My mother’s friend!” he told them. The other boys wanted to know what his mother did. “She has her own business!” he yelled to them as they all turned down the stairwell at breakneck speed. “She has her own company!” Raunak was clearly proud of his working mother, and used her status to his advantage amongst his ten–year–old friends.

I clutched at their hands to chaperone them across a broad and busy street filled with hurtling buses and swerving motorbikes. They quickly unclenched my grasp to run into a comic store library opposite where they borrowed out some books and we made our way back to their apartment building where they played downstairs. While Rochanna was extended between her children, taking care of her home, cooking, volunteering, supporting her husband, and networking, she also tried to grow her business. Spread thin laterally, across many responsibilities and commitments, she was also spatially isolated in her apartment building, and tied down to being with the children.

Similarly, it would take Malathi two hours each way to reach events and meetings, battling Bangalore’s notorious traffic. As a result of this spatial and temporal

isolation, she incorporates ideas and approaches to start up entrepreneurship in her everyday life within the gated community. I was struck by her reply to my curiosity about how she meets neighbors in this massive, anonymous–seeming community. “I network downstairs,” she said matter–of–factly. “While [my son] plays on his bicycle.”

When she expanded on this I realized she used “networking” to mean “meeting people” rather than a more specific use of the term to connote exchanging information with those who could benefit her business and increase her connections. Malathi could not be present and active in Bangalore’s entrepreneurial networking circuits, but she performed imaginative labor to locate herself within its rituals and practices, much as Mehnaz incorporated “pin points” and “scale” in hers. Perhaps she did network downstairs in a way that would help her advance her product: with other children playing and parents supervising, her potential market could be tapped while the children bicycled. Her choice of innovation both reflected and emerged from her immersion in domestic and parenting contexts.

The startup industry’s self–representation as one driven by passion and innovation are challenged by experiences of women like Malathi, Rochanna, and Mehnaz. Startup culture more broadly is not concentrated in the act of founding or starting a company; the less publicized aspects of the startup economy involve the scaling, growth, ideation and innovation required at different stages of the process. Startup selves are ideally those individuals with the spatio–temporal flexibility and mobility to moderate and navigate their engagement with the entrepreneurial economy. As these vignettes showed, they are determined by forms of urban growth that structure spatial segregation, time

commitments, familial flexibility and the ability to circulate away from home to build dense connections in different social settings.

It might seem that Malathi suffers from no concrete losses to her business by not being able to participate in the investor meetings, visit the hotels and offices where networking takes place, and enlargen her circle to find collaborators and technologists. But these different sites also offer forms of self–making that can shape Malathi into a startup entrepreneur; they would allow her to meet other startup founders, interact with investors, and sell her product. Startup entrepreneurs also lend their products a subjectivity of value that investors assess—capital congeals around the FOMO, or Fear Of Missing Out. Investors want to put their money on a potentially massive and scalable idea: a Flipkart (India's Amazon), Ola Cabs (modeled on Uber), or numerous grocery and services apps that thousands of people could use. Summoning the confidence, vocabulary, and vision for such a startup idea is a performative production of entrepreneurship learnt and mastered by participating in incubation labs, attending startup networking events, and circulating around the city for leisure and consumption. These sites enable access into the startup eco–system but also offer forms of cultural capital necessary to *perform* being a startup entrepreneur in the city.

Women entrepreneurs like Malathi are subjectively shaped in the space and temporal frames of the middle–class household. Malathi was uncertain that she would be a good interview subject for me: "I don't think I am representative," she said, repeatedly. "I don't mind meeting you, but I'm very new to all this." Malathi's product (based on a children's product), her firm situation within the temporal and spatial rhythms of her household, and her only occasional and somewhat awkward circulations in Bangalore's

larger startup world shaped her love for her invention as the *wrong* kind of love—nurturing familial and domestic love, rather than the supposedly unfettered passion for innovation that startups demand. By the end of my fieldwork, Malathi had still not found a funder for her product or taken it to market—nine months is a long time for such incubation in the startup world.

Unlike other entrepreneurial cases in which neoliberalism enables a new femininity that is imbricated within forms of work typically associated with reputation—mapped on to masculinity, the public sphere, and market (see Freeman 2014)—here the value that Raunak accords his mother's business is not matched by the valuation of investors. His mother's ability to attract visitors to their home and conduct meetings in front of him is an indication of her immersion in important and professional worlds—she is not just his mother, but also an unknowable figure existing in a realm beyond the household. Yet, as I show in the next section, for Rochanna, the startup world was proving hard to navigate. She took months to launch her company, and told me frankly that she could barely attend the networking meetings that would help her find funders and other collaborators to allow her idea to take off. She could not find childcare for her baby, she had to stay home for Raunak, and she did not have help with domestic chores.

It is not enough for Malathi and Rochanna to enter new worlds of entrepreneurial work: they need to participate and circulate in the networks, events, leisure, and consumption of the startup economy to shift from being women entrepreneurs—who juggle with managing domestic life—to becoming gender–neutral "startup founders" like Nayantara, who chaff at the talk of marriage and husbands at meetings for startup founders. In order for women to enter the startup economy as startup founders competing

for funding and attention with a multitude of young, male, unencumbered founders, they have to perform an identity that is mobile and emergent in and around different sites of the new economy. However social, classed, and gendered norms around domestic and reproductive labor and women's mobility keep Malathi and Mehnaz "on the schedule" and limit their participation in the startup economy.

The Separate Worlds of Work and Family

Women entrepreneurs in Bangalore recognize the challenges that they face in entering circuits of networking and early-stage startup growth. Separate Facebook groups, informal networking collectives, business–oriented sessions, and Google hangouts and events are organized specifically with women entrepreneurs in mind. Thus even while the public world of the startup economy—the networking meetings, incubation labs, Festivals, brainstorming meetings—masquerades as welcoming and inclusive of everyone, it is a masculine world. Those who do not attend its events, pay the subscription fees for networking sessions organized by the popular global group "The Indus Entrepreneurs" (TiE) who have a chapter in Bangalore, and know the right technologists and venture capitalists form their own counterpublics.

Women's exclusion from the networked publics of Bangalore's startup economy resembles the feminist critique of Habermas' notion of the modernist public sphere. Habermas argued that the salons and coffee shops of Europe enabled the formation of a modern public sphere to discuss issues of common concern. Despite his framing of this sphere as inclusive and open to all, feminists thinkers such as Joan Landes argue that the "open" nature of such a sphere concealed its masculinity (Landes 1995: 97). Disadvantaged groups formed their own subaltern counterpublics to:

> . . . circulate counterdiscourses that challenge the exclusionary norms of the dominant bourgeois public sphere. To such groups, she points out, the bracketing typical of the mainstream public sphere is constraining rather than enabling. The strategy they employ is one of 'unbracketing', of making the inequality visible rather than playing along with the pretence that all are equal" (Cassegard 2014: 694).

In much the same way, the unmarked masculinity of the startup sphere in Bangalore necessitates the formation of counterpublics for those who perceive their disadvantages. Women create their own groups to lend each other support in their journeys as startup entrepreneurs. My entrepreneur flatmate, Nayantara, heard about one such networking opportunity for women to discuss their challenges in entrepreneurship. We agreed to attend it together. It coincided with the first day of the Start Up Festival that—although advertised as an inclusive realm for all startup innovations—was structured by masculine norms and expectations. I analyze women's discursive modes of self–representation at these spaces to understand how they locate themselves within global startup discourses and how their narratives distance them from some forms of middle–class Indian womanhood even as they draw on tropes of gender to legitimate their participation in the public sphere of startup business.

The event was held in a small office conference room that was soon filled with the 15 women entrepreneurs attending this event. We began by introducing ourselves and our business (or in my case, research) interests. The moderator was a thirty–five–year old founder of a startup media company and she had invited a leading woman venture capitalist to share her experiences on being in the startup eco–system. We were asked two questions each: "what is your drive to excel?" and "is money important to you?"

As we went around the room women shared the ideas on which their business was based: a phone–based app for women's safety, a service that brings tailors to your doorstep, a Human Resources consultancy for recruitment, a party service for inflatable trampolines to children's birthdays, a sports public relations company, a cosmetic dermatology company, and an innovator for children's products. As we talked that afternoon, the conversation quickly turned personal. Women spoke of the guilt of not having enough time for their children. They emphasized the "real need" in the market for their product, almost as if they were justifying their business to themselves even as they spoke. The venture capitalist moderating the talk picked up on this to draw on her own experiences and offer advice to the assembled session participants:

i. not to be measured by other people's standards
ii. not to harbor guilt about missing important family events because you were at work
iii. to be willing to make small compromises continually (March 8, 2013 Field Notes).

The primary advice being given to women entrepreneurs was to learn how to compromise between work and family—not to create desirable products, to fashion themselves as a successful entrepreneur, or to overcome gender bias in the workplace. It was to reconcile the demands of entrepreneurship with those of the rest of life. Thus rather than offer startup advice (about scaling, collaborating, funding), the session focused on how to manage life and family. Women were expected to "code switch" (Goffman 1981) between their domestic worlds and their business worlds, learning how to navigate and give due time and effort to each of them.

This is starkly different from the way that startup entrepreneurship is articulated dominantly in Bangalore: as a notion of work engulfing the self that in turn informs and lends value to the startup. In other words, for the unmarked (masculine) subject of the startup economy work and life *are* one. At the Women's Day event I attended, entrepreneurs were instead advised on how to separate and maintain the distinctions between work and home. They were told "how to manage home and work" or "how to deal with maternal guilt while at work." The assumption that the venture capitalist worked with, and that most of the assembled women nodded earnestly in response to, was that for women work and life are distinct realms (see also Freeman 2014: 137 for a discussion of work–life balance).

Yet I found that even while the women entrepreneurs whom I met regarded a tension between these aspects of their lives, they also had devised a way to navigate this gap. Women appropriated global startup discourses proposing that approaches to work and life inform each other (see Chapter Three for a discussion of work and lifestyle) and fashioned them within the terms of local, gendered, ideals of middle–class Indian womanhood that are directed toward the family and community (Thapan 2004), as I show in the next section. On a comparative note, in Barbados, Carla Freeman (2014) found that the realms of "life" and "work" are increasingly blurred for entrepreneurial women when neoliberal regimes of flexibility order and inflect new forms of partnership marriage, fitness and social life, and forms of religion and self–care. Further, she writes that the "multiple reformulations of marriage, matrifocality, parenting, leisure, therapeutic and spiritual life can be interpreted as dimensions of contemporary political–economic and sociocultural restructuring of middle–class life" (Freeman 2014: 58). In India, my

experience at a Women's Day event for startup founders suggests that entrepreneurial engagements are justified by *reifying* and *reinforcing* the norms of middle–class Indian womanhood[31]. The feelings and affect produced and circulated in talk about startup business was oriented not toward one's love of work but as service toward a greater common good.

Mediating Global Startup Discourses Through Indian Womanhood

Women explained their turn to startup business as an intuitive sense that they knew they could do something "better" than work in a salaried job or because they felt the need for a particular product or service and decided to launch it since it did not exist. Rochanna was one of the women there, and like the others, she began with a short introduction of her idea before quickly diving into why being a startup founder would allow her to make a moral and ethical contribution to a community:

> Financial independence was very important for me: when you leave the world, somebody should think about you based on what you've done. I know the importance of being financially independent—all your goals and dreams can get shattered if you have no money. My life took a different turn . . . so financial independence was important. I want to give back to the community in the area of education. There must be so many others like me with the brains and passion to study but don't have the resources to do so. I want to contribute to that if my firm does well (Rochanna interview at "She Sparks," March 8, 2013).

Rochanna's narrative, like many others in the room, vacillates between affirming her need to be successful and independent as a startup founder and her desire to cast her decision as a moral and ethical one, guided by the need to serve others like her. At points

[31] If this were a full–length study devoted to women entrepreneurs with a large sample size, my findings might have been considerably different.

it was hard to distinguish her thoughts: Would the financial services startup serve others like her? Or was it the profits from such a startup that she proposed to reinvest in educational initiatives? It was not clear to me.

Other women described the need to fulfill a market need that they had experienced themselves: they did not want others to feel this need. In this way, their startup was framed as a service to other women: “I started [name of her match–making service] because for the longest time I couldn’t find a husband for myself.” Many women like this startup founder began a service based on a need they felt themselves[32]: a safety app for mobile phones, a diversity recruitment business, a cosmetic laser surgery startup that had scaled nationally and was now going global. But these were only a few of the women; the others set themselves apart with a clear “origin story” that was distinct from the masculine stories of being suddenly struck by an idea. Women’s narratives were embodied, rooted in a discourse of being in touch with their inner selves, and intuitively knowing there was something different about them, something that would lend itself to startup success.

As a woman running a small technology company to test new software put it, “I had an inner feeling saying you can change the world for the better, do something huge, but I didn’t know what to do.” The “feeling” that she was different preceded the startup idea. In fact many women traced their proclivity to be startup founders back to their childhood, when they already “knew” there was something different about them. This

[32] See also Freeman (2014: 174) for a discussion of how Barbadian entrepreneurs begin services that they felt the need for themselves. Freeman links this to a larger development of regimens of self–care that include greater self–reflection and awareness and concern for others around them.

seems to be a distinctive aspect of middle–class entrepreneurial narratives globally, if the biographical accounts of startup founders are to be taken at face value (this is an aspect of their "uniqueness" that I explore in Chapter Three, see also Isaacson 2013).

Carla Freeman understands the emphasis on affects in entrepreneurial labor as a mark of neoliberal structures of feeling that offer the emotional registers through which subjects make sense of not only their present but, equally, their futures (Freeman 2014: 3). In Bangalore, women turned to talk about "feeling" as a direct response to the guiding question of our moderator, a highly–successful thirty–five–year–old woman who runs India's largest startup news website. She had asked us, "is money important to you?" and participants elaborated on why their desires and dreams were more significant than monetary returns. As another woman said:

> I don't know where to start [telling my story]. It's always there in my mind. Before marriage I had a very tough life because my father didn't have a job. Even for studying I had a scholarship, I was doing everything on my own, borrowing books for reading. Whatever I want to achieve I would write it on a chart paper (construction paper) and go march for that. I always did it like that mostly because I was ridiculed by people because my father didn't have money and people would say "you can't do this, that," but I told them, "I can do it. I can prove to you that I can achieve whatever I want" (Rohini, March 8, 2013.)

Neoliberal ideals of individualism and uniqueness are embodied and internalized so that they are recounted as "traits," apparent even in childhood. Rohini told me she had many entrepreneurial ideas—each of them holding out the dream of a different future that could affectively alter the felt and remembered quality of her present and past.

As we listened to each other, it seemed that two apparently contradictory things were happening. On the one hand, each of the women marked themselves as "different"

from what they perceived to be a gendered norm. They resisted normative ideals of middle–class Indian womanhood that locate them properly in the realm of the domestic by presenting themselves as individuals bestowed with a special gift. They were not good wives and mothers; in fact they were markedly "bad" ones.

In Mary Hancock's (1999) study of domestic religious rituals amongst South Indian upper–caste and middle–class women, she found that even in the seemingly "traditional" world of domestic rituals, women demonstrate multiple subjectivities. The rituals themselves become a metaphor and a form of public culture through which women negotiate questions of authority, representation, and nationalism (Hancock 1999). Hancock offers us a provocative lens through which to understand how seemingly domestic and traditional spaces are entry points into women's navigations of national and gendered belonging. Thus middle–class Indian women have always contested and actively reformulated their own positions within discourses of nationalism and womanhood. Here at the networking meeting women used their public roles as economic actors and entrepreneurs as an entry point, marking a change in the sites at which such contestations are enacted: from domestic ritual to startup networking spaces.

The second speaker recounted having to be at a startup meeting when her daughter was ill, and alone at home. She was counseled to remember that she could not be perfect and that business required compromise. On the other hand, when women began to elaborate on their turn to startups, their narratives were infused with moral purpose and direction, derived from tropes of middle–class Indian womanhood. All of the women said money was not of primary importance to them. Only two (out of 15) said money was important at all. They described their startup journeys within the terms of

giving back to their communities, creating opportunities for women, acting as mentors, inspiring young people, and offering products that catered to women's safety and self–esteem.

For instance, a technology entrepreneur described her approach to her app:

> Money doesn't inspire me. To run the operations that would [be necessary] but after knowing that the purpose is all about touching lives and giving the best of others, I don't get motivated with money. If I'm able to see a genuine smile on others' face, then it's really rewarding. Everyday I start with, "I'll touch one life." I don't know whose it is, maybe even a dog but without that I don't go to bed. That gives me a lot of happiness at the end of the day (Prakriti, technology entrepreneur).

Since many of these women entrepreneurs were between 35–45 years old, they had held middle–level and senior positions in management, banking, and Human Resources. They explained that the risk in giving up their jobs was to exploit an inner potential that they always sensed they had. Only one woman explained her business as one that allowed her the flexible timings to spend time with her children. The others had specific reasons for starting these particular forms of business and did not mention family as a constraint. In fact they all described husbands and families as enabling them to take risks, fund businesses, and take on child care while they worked, networked, collaborated with others. Thus it seemed to me that even as these women distanced themselves from traditional understandings of middle–class womanhood as oriented primarily toward their household and family and only secondarily toward work, women startup founders occupied a different position as business owners rather than salaried employees of a

corporation (for studies of the primacy of family in I.T. women's lives, see Radhakrishnan 2011, and a longer discussion in Chapter Seven).

The women startup founders placed a significance on work that reflected its importance in terms of the personal commitments they had made to it (only three of the entrepreneurs in the room had attracted venture funding) and the compromises it cost their family lives. Yet they also seized the dominant discourses around startup individuality and translated it into locally meaningful practices of moral and ethical obligation to one's family, community, and nation. Under British colonialism, Indian women were imagined as bearers of community values and traditional norms—heroine figures—who inspired their patriotic sons to fight for the nation (see Sarkar 2001). Nationalist struggles linked the pure figure of the middle–class woman with the sanctity, tradition, and spiritual values of the Indian nation (Chatterjee 1987). In reality, women's active participation in subaltern struggles for Independence from British rule problematized the distinctions between masculine, "modern," public realms and feminized, "traditional," private ones. Sarkar writes that colonial literature represented and reconciled women's problematic presence in the public realm by describing mothers as "heroines" performing the nationalist duty of inspiring patriotic sons to serve the nation before going back to being "mothers" in the domestic sphere (Sarkar 2001: 258). Here women negotiate their desire to be startup founders and good mothers by imagining and justifying their work as a kind of national and moral service.

Around us in Bangalore, the Start Up Festival (that I described in Chapter Three) was simultaneously in progress. At the Festival, aspiring startup founders were encouraged to cultivate themselves as innovative, maverick, and inspired; personal

qualities that are expected to shape their businesses as disruptive, breaking the mould of conventional business with an ability to effect a paradigm shift in the industry (Christensen 2015). The women startup founders also received these messages as they circulated in Bangalore's eco–system. They too encountered the pressure to represent themselves as unique and inspired in a maverick and unpredictable way; the biographies of Steve Jobs and Facebook's founder Mark Zuckerberg acting as the gold standard for such entrepreneurship in Bangalore's technology–dominated startup world[33].

Women entrepreneurs at this session discursively transformed neoliberal startup entrepreneurship's focus on the maverick individual focused on their own product into a gendered narrative that justifies this focus by understanding it as directed toward a socially meaningful end. In her fieldwork on Bangalore's I.T. entrepreneurs, Simanti Dasgupta shows how their self–representation of themselves as businessmen invokes tropes of nation–building (Dasgupta 2009). I.T. entrepreneurs do not see themselves purely as profit–oriented, but imagine their expertise in corporate settings to be usefully translatable into issues of local civic governance (water, roads, garbage maintenance). This is a masculine translation of business profit into technocratic norms of governance.

In the room this afternoon, women entrepreneurs also translate and interpret the neoliberal business practices—here, of uniqueness and individuality—into an everyday, tangible, and material form of self–representation. However they represent *themselves* as unique through an embodiment of a neoliberal value of individualism and explain their

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[33] One of Bangalore's best–known entrepreneurs is Kiran Mazumdar–Shaw but none of the women named her as an inspiration. Married to an Irish man, Mazumdar–Shaw is over sixty years old and is perceived as an elite woman; the women in the room disagreed over whether she was a role model in terms of balancing work and home.

ventures as giving back to the community, contributing to the nation, and serving their families. Nayantara introduced her sports startup through its contribution to nation–building: "After my [10th grade exams] … all I wanted was to become an entrepreneur. The purest form of humans are athletes—sports can literally change the way a nation's run."

As I showed earlier, other women suggested their companies "brought smiles" to people's faces, made their families proud, or that their position as women entrepreneurs itself inspired other young women. The startup founders in the room embodied neoliberal discourses of individuality but reinterpreted them within the terms of middle–class Indian womanhood described above to demonstrate their service to the nation or to larger social groups and obligations. By doing this they suggested a larger motive and drive for their ventures; perhaps it legitimated and justified their time away from their families and enabled them to perform new identities as startup founders.

Conclusion

I often asked my male venture capitalist friends if they discussed wives and families at their all–male networking events. They told me they never did, and also suggested that women might be embarrassed talking about money. In this chapter I was not interested in assessing the "truth claims" of whether women really place finances as secondary to their satisfaction from work. Rather I focused on their discursive construction of themselves as startup entrepreneurs working in the service of their communities.

Women's participation in startup business, their ability to lead and guide others, and interact professionally with strangers are certainly sources of pride for their families

(as Rochanna's son Raunak demonstrated in his excited squeal, "my mother has her own business!" or Rohini's supportive husband). In Barbados, Carla Freeman sees middle–class women's entrepreneurship—their participation in public words of work—as a reworking of the norms of respectability, and thereby of gender and class (Freeman 2014: 51). In postcolonial India women's startup enterprise is conditioned by expectations rooted in religious beliefs, class structures, and norms surrounding age and life stage. Mehnaz, whom I introduced earlier in the chapter, had all the right ideas, networks, capital and time to launch her own startup. Despite this, in her own words, her "conservative" Muslim community did not allow a young woman to engage in the public world of startup entrepreneurship as a founder. Her class background meant that money she made was frequently channeled into household finances.

For Rochanna, and Malathi, their lives as married middle–class women determined not only their temporal (im)mobility but spatial as well, as the size and needs of their families moved them further away from Bangalore's networking sites. Being in the startup eco-sphere required women to travel and maintain erratic schedules, unlike their husbands who work fairly regular timings at corporate jobs. Their routines, revolving around their children and families preventing them from "moving off the schedule" as startup entrepreneurs need to do. Their household labor instilled a routine and offered a limited amount of time for them to collaborate and network to grow their businesses or visit the sites that I talk about in Chapter Seven that enable startup performativity.

However, the norms and expectations that women startup founders battle also enable discursive strategies and practices through which to insert themselves into

dominant startup discourses. Malathi "networks" with her neighbors even as they could turn potential buyers of her product, thus translating her family–time with her son into access to a fresh set of consumers. Mehnaz dreams of starting yet another business in an imagined future world of freedom from religious norms and middle–class expectations around young women's proper place in the home. Rochanna, Nayantara, Rohini, and Prakriti see their efforts at running startups as routes through which to contribute their unique individuality to the service of their gender, family, community, and nation. Neoliberalism's premise of the empowered individual self are thus unexpectedly interpreted and rationalized amongst women entrepreneurs in Bangalore. Women claim new vocabularies, dream about their futures, and craft startup businesses as imperative moral and ethical duties to "give back."

V. Encoding Startup Values in the Entrepreneurial Workplace

In the previous chapters, I explained how the introduction of neoliberal startup culture into Bangalore rides on global discourses and representations of what it means to be a startup entrepreneur. This vision is mediated and embodied through local histories and understandings of gender and class. Having examined how startup culture shapes the Start Up City (Chapter Three) and offers rubrics through which to shape the passionate entrepreneur (Chapter Four), I now turn to how it transforms and effects everyday work life in the city. Through an ethnographic study of an entrepreneurial workplace birthed as a disruptive business, I show how startup values of risk, flexibility, and innovation become encoded into everyday managerial directives for the workplace. Gender, class, caste, and age shape cultural capital and structure women's mobility to shape the entrepreneurial workplace. Yet the question of gender is not one of exclusion; employees at Captivate creatively embody, appropriate, and claim startup values in order to integrate themselves into its dominant logics and narratives.

The startup ideal of flexibility is most useful in understanding how an entrepreneurial workplace represents and mediates varied dreams, ambitions, aspirations, and hopes. Flexibility is understood as a work–ethic, a philosophy, a technique to embody labor, a mode of governance, and a persistent guiding narrative (see Chiapello and Elliott 2007, Freeman 2014, Leggett 2013, Martin 1995). In the context of contemporary capitalism, the term is used most frequently to reference the global movement of capital as it traverses national boundaries to locate itself where it can be used most productively to reap the greatest profit (Harvey 1991). Here I use the lens of flexibility as an emic concept, taking seriously how some workers in the startup sector

use it to densely tie themselves down, and how others use it *linguistically* to reference their movements in and out of work, and around the city. I understand it as it functions in diverse and even contradictory ways, rather than as a pre–fabricated category deployed to extract economic profit (see also Freeman 2007).

The Captivate Work Ethic

During an orientation for newcomers in my first month at work, recent recruits (myself included) all sat around a long table in a glass-fronted conference room. The CEO-Founder was just back from an extended business trip to the South America office and around ten new recruits were meeting him for the first time. He conducted the meeting alone, dressed semi-formally in a tucked-in shirt and trousers. As a former international tennis player, he is tall and lean and moves energetically around the office, stopping often to chat with employees at different bays.

Nerves ran high as people sat, restless, in their chairs, notepads expectantly poised in front of them on the table. The CEO was casual and conversational that introductory day, putting people at ease. "Relax!" he said, firmly. We were not going to be learning anything from each other, just getting to know one another. However, as we went around the table doing introductions, I could sense that his casual demeanor and invitations to converse heightened the anxiety amongst those not fluent in English. They worried about this informal environment in which they were unsure about what they might be called on to say. The CEO tried to emphasize a flat work structure, rather than a hierarchy. He wanted to be called by first name. Yet for many of the emergent middle–class employees, it is hierarchy that gives office interactions a structure and stability that can be reassuring. Formal codes can be learnt and mastered, whereas the informal "conversational" style of

a startup office requires an ease with language and socializing that is unfamiliar and seems unknowable. Many employees insisted on calling him "sir" despite his pleas to be more casual.

As part of the first round of introductions, we were asked why we chose to work here and what our dream holidays were. "South America," I said when it was my turn, and we continued to a string of "Switzerland's" before an unexpected "Paris," and then another "South America" from a young woman I had barely spoken to, who now exchanged a conspiratorial smile with me. Saying "Switzerland" was an apt indicator at Captivate that an employee was a recent hire. For decades, Switzerland has been the idealized vacation for middle–class Indians whose exposure to "exotic" Western locales has been via Bollywood films which use the Alps as backdrops for song numbers. Employees who have been in Captivate more than a few months will almost never say "Switzerland" (not a Captivate destination) but are more likely to be far more specific with a destination on an African safari route, or in the Amazonian jungle.

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, ideas about luxury, travel, and "the good life" are learnt through opportunities at work. Employees use the "off–season" (of tourism) to watch YouTube videos of destinations that Captivate offers and learn what a floating market is, or what rafting entails. Once employees have worked here for two years they begin to go on "test trips," visiting destinations and staying in the luxury suites and hotels that they place on guest itineraries everyday. Annually the entire Bangalore office visits a nearby resort where they play adventure games and do bonding exercises—my year we went white water rafting.

The CEO explained that at Captivate good ideas are implemented, whoever they

came from. The company focuses on work completed rather than mere hours clocked in: he emphasized work flexibility. In other words, no one is rewarded for working routinely or engaging in long hours to "show" they were working hard. Instead, in HR training manuals and workshops, flexibility and meritocracy are named as key values and benefits for Captivate employees. What counts is the work that gets done, the ideas that are generated and the productivity achieved.

In a larger historical context, the idea of prioritizing work done over hours clocked sits at odds with the nature of bureaucratic and government jobs that have defined the Indian middle–classes. "Babu" jobs, or jobs performed by the elite officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), a classic sign of middle–class success in India, are bound in the idea of routine bureaucracy. Countless films and novels mark the meaningless temporality of government work; officials who are at their desks but reluctant to work, pushing files and folders from one office to the other without any seemingly real accomplishment[34]. These films mark the slow movement of the Indian state and the apparent inefficiency of its officials, suspended in nets of bureaucratic paperwork that are a colonial legacy from British rule. Akhil Gupta (2012) suggests that in fact these bureaucratic procedures are not aberrations but discursive practices that constitute the state. Notably, several Indian movies depict active and energetic IAS officials as heroes who resist the dominant temporality of state machinery, acting swiftly to overcome the injustice and inability of government protocol to serve its people.

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[34] *The Lunchbox*, directed by Ritesh Batra (Sikhya Entertainment, 2014), DVD (Sony Pictures 2014); *English, August*, directed by Dev Benegal (Tropicfilm, 1994); *Jolly LLB.*, directed by Subhash Kapoor (FOX Star Pictures, 2013).

Post–Liberalization, India's private industries and entrepreneurial companies set themselves apart from popular understandings of the stupor of government jobs by articulating management initiatives such as flexibility and meritocracy. These two ideas undergird Captivate's company values: the CEO says that he wants to encourage talent and potential, and to unleash these from the rigidity of schedules or academic background as structural impediments to work. Even I.T. jobs, despite their association with technological entrepreneurialism, feel rigid and confining; one woman at Captivate explained to me that her husband had an I.T. job in which he had to clock certain hours. He efficiently completely his work far within the allotted time and snuck out to watch a movie in a nearby theater until his workshift was over. He would then come back and sign out. Government jobs too rigidly adhere to time completed rather than work done. During my fieldwork, Karnataka's Chief Minister Siddaramaiah began to penalize government employees who did not clock in at 9 a.m. In other words, entrepreneurial companies differ from others by imagining their practices as enabling employees to perform work in the best possible ways. As I show next, these policies affect employees on the basis of gender and class.

Cultural Capital in the Service of Sales

Work at Captivate begins with an enquiry from a prospective guest somewhere in the world. The Marketing team writes the company's websites with SEOs in mind—Search Engine Optimization (or SEO) enables websites to be a top response to a search query. For instance, if a prospective guest Googles "vacation+Patagonia" and Captivate gets its SEO right, one of the first few hits could be the Captivate South America website. The guest browses through the well–maintained and continually–updated website before

filling up an online form. Someone in the Captivate Buenos Aires office receives the request and responds with a personal international telephone call within the week. This is a crucial phone call made by a class–privileged employee who likely shares a similar habitus to that of the guest and the call is framed as a "chat" with the guest, during which the Captivate employee introduces the company.

The small team of "Travel Consultants" who make these phone calls offer the primary personal contact with guests: they are the "face" (or the voice) of the company. Travel Consultants are typically well–traveled, middle to upper middle–class employees who present themselves as warm, outgoing, and sociable—they become "friends" with the guest over phone calls. This is similar to the "emotional labor" of Arlie Hochschild's (1983) study of flight attendants. She argued that emotional labor is enacted via the transmutation of emotion work, feeling rules, and social exchange in which emotions that were integral to the pleasure and intimacy of private life are now commercialized and on public display. The candidates' capability for emotional labor is assessed right at the interview stage—they are screened to select those who display "an outgoing middle–class sociability" (Hochschild 1983: 97).

Yet at Captivate, elite Travel Consultants performing sales work are not "acting" as much as reflecting their own dispositions—drawing from Bourdieu's (1986) theory of habitus, employees can be understood as reflecting their own classed tastes, preferences, modes of communication, and privileged status. Williams and Connell (2010) explain the mushrooming of service sector jobs in the United States that hire class–privileged individuals to "look good and sound right," thus maintaining the brand image of elite retail outlets (350). They are "decommodified workers," paid low wages but maintaining

their lifestyles without relying on their jobs (Williams and Connell 2010). In the context of the United States, retail workers choose such jobs that have little hope of upward mobility or wage increase because they are hybrid "worker–consumers," finding temporary pleasure in being associated with a particular brand (Williams and Connell 2010).

In the Indian context, elite workers performing sales work at Captivate are drawn on to reflect the qualities of luxury and white–glove service with a personal touch that the company stands for. Many of them took a significant pay cut from their earlier jobs to work as Travel Consultants here and explained that they did not consider their sales calls to be "work." This is reflective of studies of aesthetic labor: "In hiring workers with the right aesthetic qualities—who look good and sound right—retail stores are mining and exploiting the product of social hierarchies. They are, in effect, looking for individuals who embody social class privileges" (Williams and Connell 352). This is also why making sales calls does not feel like work for elite Captivate workers; they are channeling their class privilege, travel experience, and social skills into performing sales calls, and their labor is invisibilized because it draws on classed backgrounds and experiences (Bourdieu 1986).

Elite Travel Consultants at Captivate named flexibility as a huge benefit of their jobs. It allows them the space to juggle families with work, they said, and they appreciated not being tied to 9 a.m.–6 p.m. work timings as the rest of the office is. None of them are primary wage earners, in fact some of their partners are employed in senior positions in transnational corporate companies. The Consultants too were formerly employed in corporate, media, or legal jobs and took pay cuts to work here. Most of them

justified the pay cut by saying they wanted to end the stress of meeting targets and being in hierarchical work environments. Captivate allowed flexi–timings and the space to conduct sales phone calls according to their own desires without being continually overseen. It seemed to me that not only did these sales jobs draw on classed forms of aesthetic labor, additionally they *enabled* further class consolidation as decommodified workers utilized flexible work timings to pursue afternoon yoga classes at one of their homes, left work early to enjoy a coffee at a new café, and drew on work networks to form informal groups to enjoy live music together.

Carla Freeman (2014: 131–132) describes the heady thrill amongst the women entrepreneurs whom she interviewed who left domineering bosses, and routine, hierarchical jobs. She understands the narratives of intense love and excitement amongst the entrepreneurs as akin to a form of "emotional labor" that plays a central role in the lives of the new middle–classes (Freeman 2014: 132). While for Barbadian entrepreneurs—as with elite Captivate Travel Consultants—the draw of the new labor is in its promised flexibility, in Bangalore this flexibility creates dense affective bonds that serve to tie workers closer to the company. Despite the pay cuts and limited opportunities for job mobility, flexibility is received as a "gift" and a benefit that is repaid by employee loyalty, as I show in a later section.

Although Travel Consultants are expected to be at ease interacting with upper class Western guests by way of their own "backgrounds,[35]" sales training was not entirely

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[35] Smitha Radhakrishnan (2011) describes "background" as an assessment of social class and caste.

absent. Before we hit tourist peak season, a sales trainer in Canada Skyped in to Captivate offices around the world to teach the sales team how to increase guest confirmations. He emphasized that listening is key to sales. Guests need to feel understood, as though they are talking to a friend. Once a guest's needs are understood, the Consultant will guide the guest away from expressing "needs" toward placing greater value on their "wants." This enables a simultaneous shift away from rational calculations and price-sensitive decisions into a realm that is "emotional," or feeling and perception-based. It is by listening carefully, understanding the guest and *becoming* the person the guest can relate to, that the Consultant engineers a shift from the column of "needs" to the opposite column of "wants."

SALES CHART GRAPH

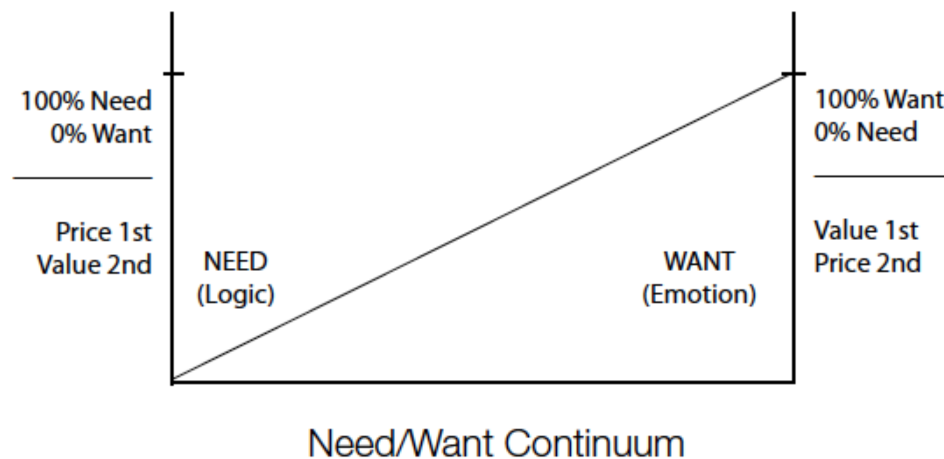

Figure 4. Sales Training Graph for Captivate.

Initial phone calls begin with the Captivate executive on the phone with a guest.

At this point the guest is hypothetically at the bottom left of the graph depicted above: someone just needing help with travel who has made an initial inquiry. Through the phone call the Captivate Consultant will gradually move the guest along the continuum to end at the top right, a realm saturated by want, not defined by need—somebody who greatly desires the experiences, photographs, and feelings possible with a specific Captivate holiday. This is similar to the "authenticity work" (Mirchandani 2012) of call center workers who transact with consumers around the world through a product that is itself the "responsive, caring, connected self" (2).

Mirchandani writes that such work involves both being oneself and being the person that someone faraway wants one to be. In the experience economy of the service sector, creating an authentic experience requires employees not to come across as fake or scripted; "by being themselves, workers can convince customers that they know and care about their real needs" (Mirchandani 2012: 5). Thus Travel Consultants (TCs) who are foreign nationals emphasize their own travels in India; TCs who are Indian nationals describe their familiarity with specific locations, offering suggestions for where to go or what to do that sound like "insider tips" by virtue of being shared by an Indian, based in India. A foreign consultant would describe how a trip matched with their own expectations before the voyage, thus allowing the guest to imagine their own experiences, relayed by someone like them who might have had the same standards, expectations, and tastes in travel. In both cases, authenticity is not taken for granted but demonstrated through the labor of establishing legitimacy and credibility with guests. Sameness and difference are negotiated in order to be both like the guest, or like a native within the same conversation (for example, having the same standards for restrooms, but being a

local expert in knowing specialty foods).

Crafting narratives of pleasure, desire, and satisfaction for guests constitutes the "affective or emotional labor," the production of deep feeling (Freeman 2014: 132) amongst the elite and upper middle–class TCs at Captivate. I see their work as extracting forms of cultural capital and using it as raw material to fashion a worker subjectivity that enhances the quality of their labor. Just as startup entrepreneurs cultivate themselves as urban cosmopolitan figures whose subjectivity lends value to the products they invent, so too does the (cosmopolitan, middle–class, privileged) subjectivity of the TC add value to their calls. In both cases it is the subjectivity of the worker that shapes or inflects the financial transaction.

'Having a Chat:' Travel Consultants on the Job

I met Poornima, an Indian TC, on a sunny afternoon in late September. She left work around 4 pm for the day, to carry on working from home. She had client phone calls to make and these were best conducted in the privacy of her home: most TCs need this privacy since the office only offers a few spaces that guarantee privacy and an environment of reduced noise. Poornima and I met at a new café near the office. Small groups of women were scattered around us in the open back area on wrought iron tables, sipping lattes and eating red velvet cupcakes, which were all the rage in Bangalore. Purnima was relaxed and friendly, although still in the middle of her working day, dressed casually in a sleeveless top and smart fitted jeans.

Poornima has been at Captivate for several years and always looks completely "at home" in the office. She often shouts out to other team members across cubicles, chats with colleagues about her—and their—personal life, and shows an avid interest in office

goings-ons. All she needs is a phone, a calling card, a data card and a laptop with Skype in order to work. On the way out from our meeting she told me laughing that she would do some work on her phone in the car, as her driver steered her through traffic. The Travel Consultants are an all-woman team: outgoing, chatty, and extremely social.

The role of a Travel Consultant is a feminized one, requiring the employee to listen carefully and attentively before making suggestions for itineraries, and always maintaining a veneer of hospitality, care and concern: hallmarks of the "Captivate Travels experience". Poornima told me that she left an earlier job in banking because of the stressful work life and the pressure of having to lead a team. Here at Captivate the work is pleasurable and she seeks it out. "The first thing I do when I wake up," she said, "is roll over and check my phone for new email. I don't have to, but I want to because there might be someone replying or asking more questions, and I'm curious."

These conversations are informal and "chatty," and rely on the employee's cultural capital to influence the guest. In other words, these consultants need to casually converse with their elite Western guests, understand their travel needs, relate guest desires and dreams into choices for concrete itineraries, activities, and hotels, and maintain a level of confidence that assures the guest that they are in good hands. Employees in this role cannot have lapses of English or grammar in the emails that they write guests, or appear uncertain and flustered. This labor is concealed, and although it is a sales job it is masked by the title 'Travel Consultant.' This is how Poornima explained to me what she does:

> Even though you're . . . getting in revenue for the company, its not direct sales. You

> don't do cold calling . . . or harassing someone to [buy]. For me it was more like an extension of my personality since I love talking, I love traveling and I like India.
>
> What I like about this job is that you're allowed to do it (work) in your own individual space and your own individual style. If you give us one guest, we'll all have different views on it, in terms of the itinerary, or what we would plan for the guest and how we would approach the guest as well. We are never asked to curb that, which is very important. Like our email writing styles . . . everyone is different (Fieldwork interview, Poornima, September 2013).

Although making sales calls is a primary part of her job, Poornima explained it to me as "an extension of [my] personality." It is the flexibility of the workspace and the flexible approaches each executive takes in approaching a guest that enables worker subjectivity to be channeled into the labor of sales. Poornima says she personally dislikes long emails; she prefers to just pick up the phone and "chat" with someone. She is not the only Consultant who referred to a work call as a "chat," reinterpreting labor as a personal set of actions that then assume a different affective dimension. Rather than being a stressful "sales call" it becomes a "friendly chat" with a stranger.

Radhika, another employee in a similar role, explained that even though she left her old job because it was a sales job, she stayed on in Captivate although she was doing sales here too:

> I quit my previous job because there were long working hours . . . now [at Captivate] I have long working hours! [The] previous job I quit because there were sales . . . now I actually do sales [at Captivate]! But I think what the difference is [is] that here there's ownership . . . (Radhika, Travel Consultant).

Radhika said that the ways in which the company's founders treated her, and the flexibility at work enabled her to feel that she "owned" her work. Even though she was

still doing sales—the very reason she resigned from her earlier job—it did not "feel" like sales. She thought it was because of the structure and freedom of the daily routine. Comparing it with her earlier job, Radhika noted that:

> . . . [E]arlier job, frustration was [that you are] one of a million, [there was] no recognition, [it was a] run of a mill job, everything was set, everything goes by rules and regulations. Even if I want to take a break I know what time I have to take a break. Every single day I knew what kind of work I would have to do (Radhika, Travel Consultant).

This routine and drudgery made a sales job all the more unmanageable: she was selling for someone else. The flexibility of work timings at Captivate enabled her to feel that she had ownership over her work. Flexibility is a technique of governance that conceals the ownership of salaried labor by the phantasmic creation of a sense of ownership amongst employees. When I spoke to Pushkar, the company CEO about his vision for the company, he said he wanted to equip workers to do their best work—to remove routine bureaucracy so as to enable individuals to create environments in which they will thrive. The most elite workers at Captivate are the ones who avail of flexible work policies. They combine individual desires for flexibility and management practices in vogue globally that rely heavily upon flexible ideals irrespective of their industry base, valuing in employees:

> . . . autonomy, spontaneity, rhizomorphous capacity, multitasking (in contrast to the narrow specialization of the old division of labor), conviviality, openness to others and novelty, availability, creativity, visionary intuition, sensitivity to differences, listening to lived experience and receptiveness to a whole range of experiences, being attracted to informality and the search for interpersonal contacts . . . (Martin 1995: 97).

Responsiveness and the flexibility to adapt one's work practices and persona are key to the new economy. During earlier Taylorist models, workers were expected to perform their tasks with machine-like efficiency and precision. There was a clear distinction between the worker and their work (Salzinger 2003). The new spirit of capitalism invites, and demands, a flexibility that draws from personal assets to enhance work. There is emphasis on authentic human relations, interactions, life skills, adaptability and in general a more "human" face to work (Chiapello and Elliott 2007: 98). It is by adopting this "human face" that both Poornima and Radhika feel that they are owners of their own labor, which does not any more feel like labor. Flexible work timings and methods of work allow them to take home a laptop and make a call in the late evenings—it is a "chat" rather than labor.

The classed nature of this labor is evident in the choice of Travel Consultants, all fluent speakers of one or more European languages to serve different world markets, but the job is gendered as well. As Louis Turner (1975) argues, the tourist is placed at the center of a strictly circumscribed world and travel executives act as surrogate parents deciding what experiences constitute appropriate objects of the tourist gaze, relieving the tourist of responsibility and protecting them from danger. Women perform this "parental" labor of conducting in–depth conversations, demonstrating patience, the skills of listening, and of reassuring the guest that (s)he would be guided through the duration of their stay.

As I have described it, Poornima's job is not only emotional and aesthetic but also comprises what is called "affective labor"—immaterial labor with intangible products

such as feelings of ease, well-being, satisfaction (in this case desire or want) and even a sense of connectedness and community (Hardt 1999: 96). Flexibility is essential for performing the kind of service work that involves affective labor, since it draws from the ontology of the service worker: what is offered to the guest is premised on Poornima's own experiences, her personality, her ability to get along with the guest and appear friendly and warm. In the entrepreneurial office, flexibility is not only reflected in the assigning of jobs, work schedules, and the back–office work of Indian employees. It is also reflected in the different forms of labor performed by Poornima: emotional, aesthetic, affective labor, and authenticity work.

The exchange with elite, typically elderly (in their late 50s and older), Western guests is an intersubjective one, implicating the Travel Consultant and the customer. Not only does the Consultant draw upon themselves to shape this exchange, their subjectivities are also in turn shaped by the nature of their labor, their perception of it, and their self–representation of it, as the next example shows.

Flexibility as Ownership

Radhika is an employee who left a high-pressure job in another service sector company to join Captivate some years ago. She disliked the work environment in her previous job, uncomfortable with the idea of Indian employees constantly deferring to white British bosses. "It was like colonialism all over again," she said to me. She came on board at Captivate as part of the initial team and is a Travel Consultant. The purportedly "informal" nature of her friendly chats with clients shapes her experience of work as one that is warm and desirable; she does not view her relationships with clients as one of servility. Instead she represents herself as an equal with the elite white

foreigners that she typically talks to everyday, sharing her expert knowledge of Asian destinations. She does not regard herself as employed by potential guests, speaking about her work instead within the terms of a gift economy, as a "return" of what she owes the company[36].

> Over here there's more ownership [of work]. It's not forced upon you; you do it on your own . . . [T]he moment you get flexibility, you want to return it back again, right?
>
> When we joined, our working hours were 9.30- 6.30. That was the office hours . . . because of our UK, US and Australian guests, we can make calls from home. The moment you get that flexibility, you get interested. I've always said that the flexibility you get over here is amazing. Literally amazing. This is mainly for travel consultants. (Fieldwork interview, Radhika, October 2013)

Although she works around the clock, the nature of the phone calls frames this labor as one that is convenient, desirable, and pleasurable. Radhika is not the only employee who describes her work in the personal and social terms of "gift-giving," which anthropologists interpret, following Mauss (2000), not as a duty-bound offering but the "cultivation of personal relationships and networks of mutual dependence; and the manufacturing of obligation and indebtedness" (Patico 2008, Yang 1994: 6). Mauss (2000) suggested that the reciprocity in gift-giving was in theory voluntary, but in fact obligatory (3): to give something is to give a part of oneself and it is dangerous to keep this moral and spiritual liability (which is a part of someone else). Yet within the terms of

[36] This approach to a "gift" reflects one that I commonly witnessed at Captivate. It was most notable in the tradition of birthday gifts. When you gift someone, they are obliged to "return" the gift either through a hosted birthday meal, or will gift you another gift. Thus even a gift of sweets upon visiting someone at home for the first time might be "returned" with a gift of clothes, a process that often left me feeling like I had swindled someone into giving me a much better gift than the one I had unwittingly initiated the exchange with.

contemporary capitalism, Radhika does not receive a significant personal gift—flexibility is a part of the work process after all, not a selectively distributed incentive—yet she feels compelled to give back through her labor.

In the previous chapter I showed how global neoliberal startup discourses around passion are reformulated by women entrepreneurs who justify their love for their startups within the terms of Indian womanhood, even as they actively reshape parts of it. By inflecting their labor outside the home with a sense of moral duty and service, they stitched together the expectations of a successful entrepreneur (passionate commitment to the startup) with those of reproductive and domestic labor. Here amongst employees at Captivate, I sense a similar move to interpret a neoliberal management ideology—that of flexibility—within gendered expectations around women's roles as nurturing and caring individuals.

Managers value flexibility because it enables workers to perform at their optimum capacity. In this sense it is a rational work process, geared to ensure maximum productivity. Yet it works recursively here: the more flexibility Radhika receives, the more she feels compelled to give back. She is now a senior manager, responsible for sales in Asia, and assuming substantial responsibilities for the company as one of its initial employees. Not only does the rubric of flexibility offer the illusion of being a "gift" thus extracting perhaps more labor, it also enables the characterization of work as "not-work." Radhika has entered an economy of affect in which flexibility as a technique of neoliberal governance (the next section) produces contingent neoliberal subjects (see Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009: 61).

As middle–aged and middle–class Travel Consultants come in late to work after making international phone calls at erratic hours, the calibration of their day between "home" and "work" become blurred. Unlike others who visit fitness classes at 7 p.m. after a working day, Consultants schedule classes earlier, at 5 p.m. When I requested interviews, they met me at 4 p.m. or for lunch at a neighboring café. As their activities spill out of the neat order of contained workdays, they could be mistaken for middle–class women of leisure, their days peppered with yoga classes, cafes, and nights outs. Their labor is performed at home, in private, since they need silence and private space, yet this retreat of labor into private space and the performance of leisure in public frames their work primarily in terms of an enjoyable pastime. Maria Mies' ([1982] 2012) historic study of women lace-makers in Narsapur, India, traces how women's labor comes to be seen as "leisure" or "part time" work as it is performed in home spaces, while middle men who sell their work and engage in the public world of commerce come to be seen as engaging in labor. Similarly, the retreat of labor into the home and its position as immaterial render it as a gift exchange or act of leisure—an informal set of actions that are tied to feminine attributes of care and nurturing, and mapped onto domestic space.

How do the norms of flexibility that enable Travel Consultants to work from home mediate the experiences of the other class of employees at Captivate? What does flexibility mean to those employed in routinized forms of work where they are physically rooted to their work computers and software?

Flexibility as a Technique of Governance

The literature on corporate management practices and flexibility in the new economy typically focuses on elite, transnational or middle–class employees (see Ong

2006, Leggett 2013, Martin 1995, and more generally Fischer and Downey 2006). In the first half of this chapter, I focused on how elite service workers at Captivate interpret and employ the benefits of flexibility that they enjoy in their jobs at sales. But what does flexibility mean for the lower middle–class back–office workers who do not interact with clients, and are not in managerial positions?

Many of the women who perform data entry and back–office work at Captivate competed first for jobs in Information Technology—the *mecca* for professional jobs, and the industry that self–represents as creating a large new Indian middle–class (Radhakrishnan 2009, Upadhya 2007). Yet their non–specialized college degrees from local colleges and their class background as children of drivers, security guards, nurses, and low–level government officials precluded their entry into the upwardly mobile ranks of I.T. engineers who are expected to already have the cultural capital to move across global projects (Upadhya 2007). Instead it is at smaller workplaces such as Captivate where headhunters and recruitment websites send them. Captivate only pays about Rs. 12,000 (or $200) a month for a “fresher” or recruit straight of an undergraduate course in a local college but for working women it is preferable to a job in a call–center where night–shifts are typical and threaten their reputation.

Although they could not acquire prestigious corporate jobs, they could still learn middle–class ways of living and consuming by working at Captivate. Through their work here they learn how to communicate professionally in English (through practice and by sometimes enrolling in special English for Business classes) and partake of opportunities to travel and consume in middle–class ways that the office organizes. Next, I explore how gendered ideologies behind the hiring of a “docile labor force” (Salzinger 2003, Ong

2010, Freeman 2000) such as the women who perform back–end work at Captivate intersect with the supposedly enabling modes of flexibility.

For the CEO of Captivate flexibility is a technique of governance and important for everyone at Captivate to enjoy—he wanted to extend his own experiences and pleasures of work within a startup entrepreneurial ethic to his team. As he explained to me:

> I don't like a very monotonous structured typical way of doing things; for me a job where you have to do everyday the same thing and be bound by a certain rigidity everyday . . . I'd feel trapped! . . . if I feel like that, it wouldn't be fair for other people to feel like [it]. It's important to equip people with skills and responsibilities and ownership but let them figure out how to do it and give them that amount of flexibility so that they actually enjoy it rather than saying "Oh my god I have to" — . . . clock in the hours and face time and all the things I hated. We didn't want to build a company that had that . . . But, for me, flexibility is genuinely trusting someone to figure out how they're going to do their jobs and succeed in their jobs with their own balance (Interview with company co-Founder, October 2013.)

In this passage Subramanian explained that flexibility is akin to work freedom: not freedom from work, but work *as* freedom—enabling and empowering for individual workers. It is in keeping with his vision of a flattened startup business where innovation and ideas are rewarded[37] and everyone is encouraged to contribute to company growth. Subramaniam imagines his workers as team members, in tune with the overall goals and values of the company rather than as Taylorist subjects waiting to be instructed and guided (Martin 1995, Salzinger 2003). The flat hierarchy is reflected in his approach of extrapolating his own work experiences to his employees: the expectation is that what works for him will apply to his staff as well. Subramaniam wants to give employees the

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[37] And in which employees could refer to him by his first name.

agency and training to make decisions that allow them to work at this or another time, at home or at office. Once they are empowered to exercise this kind of flexibility, the management rationale goes, employees maximize the use of their own time. This empowerment can be achieved by equipping employees with skills training, responsibilities, and ownership.

Emily Martin (1995) describes this need for employees to be skilled as a kind of flexibility that makes them more hirable in the job market: the more replaceable the labor, the more flexible it should be, like biological systems that have to survive in nature (208). At Captivate, teams meet monthly to assess their own performances and to update others on their plans for skills enhancement. I attended some meetings for the Marketing team where the Assistant Manager, Jyothi, sat us down in a conference room and asked us to list what we learnt this month and what our goals were, looking ahead. She herself has shifted roles over the years from a Product Executive role (laying out itineraries and coordinating bookings) to Travel Consulting, translations, and finally now to website work. Everybody contributed their "future goals" i.e. the skills that they learned most recently to the meeting via a Google document that was accessible to all of us. We read each other's lists before the meeting. One employee said he would learn more HTML coding skills, one would step up her SEO abilities. Each outlined specific steps they would take to achieve these goals.

Bonnie Urciuoli terms this the notion of "worker-self-as-skills-bundle"—not only is labor power a commodity but the worker's very person is comprised of commodifiable bits (2008: 211–212). Skills discourses, found on the Internet and in specialized classes (such as the ones Captivate employees visit) are based on a neoliberal imaginary that

workers are responsible for mastering skills, and that skills are quantifiable even when they refer to "soft skills" such as leadership and communication (Urciuoli 2008: 212–213).

Significantly, when Subramanian explains his rationale for how the office should function, naming skills–empowerment and flexibility, he is proposing a form of government. I find it useful to think about government, following Foucault, as "a 'contact point' where techniques of domination—or power—and *techniques of the self* 'interact,' where 'technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself and, conversely, … where techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion'" (Burchell quoting Foucault 1996: 20, italics in the original). Subramanian's imagination of employees is of free, entrepreneurial actors. They will conduct themselves through a rational and maximizing use of the liberty accorded to them: "…individual freedom, in appropriate forms, is here a technical condition of rational government rather than the organizing value of a Utopian dream" (Burchell 1996: 24). How exactly does the discourse (and promise) of freedom of flexibility act as a technique of governance? I found out from Apu when she offered a confounding definition of flexibility.

Apu is in her early twenties, armed with a Bachelor's degree from a local college, and a job at Captivate updating databases. She is part of a small group of women who speak in Tamil and know each other from college: they introduced each other to Captivate. Since I was used to hearing about flexibility from the Travel Consultants who breezed in and out of office, I associated it with flexi–timings. When Apu told me she enjoyed her job, I wanted to know what about it she enjoyed.

> Interviewer (HG): What do you enjoy about working here?
>
> Apu: Flexibility.
> HG: In what sense?
>
> A: You don't have too many restrictions here: 'You cannot do this, you cannot do that.' You have a lot of opportunities to try new things and learn new things. We had this thing with [CEO] one day [when he said to us]: "You have to give me ideas that you think if you do will improve someone else's work." I gave this idea: there are too many templates… we can simplify them and use just one.
>
> He liked the idea, not everyone encourages such ideas but he said you can go ahead. So that became my project… I came up with new designs and they liked it… we have five templates now in place of twenty-five.
>
> There's a lot of opportunity for you here to explore. If I had joined KPMG or Ernst and Young, my work would not have got recognized. (Fieldwork interview with Apu, August 2013.)

What Apu terms "flexibility" is the company's commitment to a rationalized work process. It is "flexible" in its ability to allow her idea to be incorporated. Unlike the corporatized work environments of KPMG or Ernst and Young (as she imagines them) Captivate employees are given "freedom" to innovate. Apu shows us how the discursive effects of imagining work as freedom end up reinscribing techniques of governance. "Free" to innovate, she generates an idea for a standardization of templates that she then becomes committed to implementing: it is her idea after all, not a demand made on her by management. Proud of her own idea, she is now committed to the extra labor of implementing it. Of course she does not see term this as the generative power of discourses of freedom—instead, quite simply, it is "flexibility."

Apu's use of the word "flexibility" follows Bonnie Urciuoli's (2008) concept of the "Strategically Deployed Shifter" or SDS: a word that takes on meanings that are context–dependent. When used by the CEO, "flexibility" means something very different

from when Travel Consultants who move in and out of office at all times of day talking to guests use it to describe their working day, and it references yet another set of meanings when used by junior employees seeking to align themselves with the company's core stated values—although they do not really avail of any of flexibility's intended benefits (work from home, flexi–timings, subjective modulations). Flexibility, as a shifter, can only be interpreted "in terms of the speaker's position, in a specific place, time, social context, or some combination thereof" (Urciuoli 2008: 214).

Apu's creative way of making meaning and of interpreting her assignments to leverage her imagination of her role in the company resonate with Melissa Wright's analysis of dispensable workers (Wright 2006). Wright suggests that even as the "myth of the disposable woman worker" proliferates to create her as a form of industrial waste, so too simultaneously is she a form of value. The worker herself additionally interrupts the dominant narrative, or "myth," through her everyday practices and imaginations of the value of her own work.

Flexibility does not extend to all employees. Natasha is another employee who works in a technology role for the company and lives far from office. She often termed her commute a "risk," because she crosses miles of potholed streets and travels to work on a small scooter that does not shield her from the street. She told me that she was dissuaded from working from home; although she had a laptop and an internet connection, she was expected to clock face–time. Perhaps the flexibility that managers talked about extends to workers only in certain roles, although it was notionally offered to all. Natasha found it increasingly difficult to commute and to reconcile herself to office timings. Soon it became an office joke that she was "working from home:" almost as

though everyone thought it was a ruse to conceal her slacking off. After my fieldwork ended, Natasha finally lost her job at Captivate. While startup entrepreneurs valorize and celebrate forms of risk–taking, fieldwork with those who operationalize startup business as salaried employees offers tangible evidence of how risk is in fact passed down to employees as they commute, engage precarious labor, and embody work stress.

Work as Illness

Despite the enthusiastic energy around me at Captivate, my own experiences at work sometimes felt oddly out of sync. My already weak eyes reddened and watered after hours at the computer, sifting and sorting through photographs to weed out the unattractive ones or those that seemed to depict standardized beauty such as from a five–star hotel chain. I spent hours looking for the “magical” photograph: a Rajathani haveli on a hilltop, nestled in between mountains and overlooking a small pool, or an eco–hotel with thatch roofs blending into a tropical forest scenery, lit with lanterns at night. As the affluent white tourists in the photographs traveled the world, warmly greeted with red powder teekas, marigolds, and aratis in India or sipped cocktails after a safari in the Kenyan outback, I was immobile, rooted to my chair, racing against time to clean up the photo albums.

Every now and again Susan would come up to me, looking over my shoulder into the screen: “How’s it going?” and I had to have more to show her than the fact that I had been chatting for the last hour with my teammates. I would feel a dull headache coming on as I peered continually at the computer screen, editing and compiling streams of text and photographs. By evening the sky would darken outside, and the white tube lights

flickered on: a sign for many women that it was time to leave work. They left in twos and threes, sharing rides or waiting at the same bus stop. Each group that left reminded the rest of us that we needed to hurry up our work even as cubicles around us emptied. By seven p.m., the office became quiet. The sounds that carried were phone conversations from the Logistics team, calling hotels, drivers and travel agencies to coordinate last minute deals and details. Sometimes the young men on the Logistics team wait in the office until midnight when they slide into a Captivate T-shirt and leave to pick up a guest at the airport.

More senior staff often work late, confiding that they cannot bring themselves to refuse tasks. As team managers granted the same "freedom" to innovate with work as Apu, they stay long hours finishing extra projects and tasks. Through my fieldwork two employees became weak with neurological ailments and muscle impairments although they themselves never explicitly connected their physical fragility to work-related stress and strain. Colleagues pointed out that they worked so hard that their injuries did not have time to heal—possibly prolonging their recovery period. During my interview one of them, Jyothi, gave me the familiar explanation that "flexibility" is one of the central reasons to work at Captivate, allowing her to learn different kinds of work and even engage in more than one job. She was recently recovering from a stress-related illness:

> I'm 100% sure it was stress and the way I was sitting like this [demonstrates] and doing my laptop work or whatever . . . Two months complete bed rest. What am I doing? I'm working for Captivate lying down and when it was worse then I'm calling up a friend . . . she was in constant touch with me and I'm saying, "I'm doing this [work] but I can't type." So she says, "You just speak it to me." I'm speaking to her on Skype and I'm just speaking to her and she's typing it out . . . [laughs] . . . I like to work . . . I like to be busy, I like to do different things and if

> I didn't do that I wouldn't enjoy life so much. Perhaps. (Fieldwork Interview July 27, 2013).

The flexibility–as–freedom approach of Captivate immobilizes Jyothi's body. Captivate's flexible schedule expands the extent of work she can—and does!—do, filling in the minutes of her day even when she is at home, and on the weekends. The "freedom" of flexibility engineers a physical breakdown as work seeps into her everyday life and well-being. Yet she considers this desirable; the satisfaction of doing "different things" helps her to "enjoy life so much." It is telling that she ends with "Perhaps": both trustful and a bit skeptical that the abundance of work is what makes her life worthwhile.

Two years later when I returned to Bangalore, Jyothi had resigned to take on a job teaching language. Her close friend confided to me that her endless work was not recognized or rewarded as she felt it should have been. Her enormous "flexibility" at Captivate involved learning different roles, taking on new projects, and working continuously. But too much flexibility is not rewarded; it breaks down the eager and pliant body of the worker, causes illness and impairment, and ultimately forces a departure from the company itself.

Flexibility as Gendered

In the examples that I have described so far, Poornima, Apu, Jyothi and others spoke about flexibility as a desirable aspect of everyday work in the entrepreneurial economy. Although they used the term in widely divergent ways, they aligned themselves with Captivate's managerial discourse of flexibility: they want it, and they say it benefits and enhances their learning and their work experience, even if it seems otherwise. After talking about flexibility to so many colleagues who identified as women, I became

interested in understanding whether flexibility was a gendered imperative or experience. Would those who identified as men similarly laud its value?

About twelve or so young men worked at Captivate. Like their other colleagues, they migrated to Bangalore for jobs from smaller towns and even villages. Of the eight that I came to know well, their fathers were priests, landowners, farmers, or businessmen. Captivate offers an opportunity for them to learn about modern and professional business styles. None of these men spoke about flexibility as an advantage to their work here; instead they emphasized how Captivate allowed them to become professional and modern.

In an interview with a 30-year-old employee of Captivate, Sanjay, he talked to me about moving to Bangalore with his wife, leaving behind the expectations that he would become a Brahmin priest like his father. He loves to travel and as a student had enrolled in a local college to learn Tourism Management. After that he spontaneously plans trips for his friends, and developed an interest in photography—developing the "tourist gaze" (Larsen and Urry 2011) through which to view his environments with the lens of the novel or unfamiliar. He got a job with a local travel company planning trips to nearby destinations before a senior from college told him Captivate Travels in Bangalore had an opening: he could learn how to plan global tours and be on the team that uses a software to draft itineraries for guests traveling to South America.

> Interviewer (HG): What kind of a place was Captivate [when you joined], was it different from Maquilab [his old local tour company]?
>
> Sanjay: Definitely. Vast difference actually. So Maquilab, it was a small company, and we used to talk in local language many of the time—that is Tulu

actually—because all local people . . . local faces. And after coming here it was so professional here. In our old office whatever you do, it is all your own work.

However it is, it is your own work, you can do however you want to do. But here it is not like that, it is so professional here. You have things to do, you have things to follow . . . very professional manner, so . . .

HG: When you say "professional," what exactly do you mean?

Long pause.

Sanjay: I can say "style," "working style." So there people used to come to our office and ask, "any tours?" and I used to talk to them, I used to get the booking, I used to get the hotels and nobody was asking me, "What you are doing?" Finally, they used to pay me . . . they used to pay the company, that's all done. Nobody will ask me, "What you are doing?" "What did you talk with them?" "How much you are quoting?" "What hotel you are giving?" Nothing! It is all my plan.

HG: Oh. So they just train you and you do whatever you want.

Sanjay: Whatever you want, you can do. Something like that. But here it's not like that. We have system, we have some software where all things are updated and we have to follow, we have to do the trip according to the rules and regulation. We have margins set up and . . . it is not like "I feel this guy [client] is very poor and I can … add just 5 - 10% margin or something like that." So it was not actually professional (referring to old job) but it was good experience because it was all my own; whatever I can do, freely I could do. Here it is not like that. Very professional in all the way. (Interview with Sanjay, November 2013.)

In other words, what Sanjay describes to me about his old company is what is offered to Travel Consultants at Captivate: the ability to chat with customers and decide what to offer them without following a set script. The middle–class women Travel Consultants at Captivate value this about their jobs—in a "chat" they can be "themselves," and share their personal experiences with guests. The flexibility that they enjoy at work both builds on their classed cultural capital, drawing on their experiences, forms of speech, and ease in interacting with Western guests. Additionally they interpreted work within the terms of friendship—so that it seemed like a "choice" to

work, rather than a necessity—and utilized their flexible job timings and protocols to cultivate classed pursuits of fitness and leisure.

Yet for a young man like Sanjay, flexibility's benefits of class mobility, consolidation, and their imbrication with emotional labor do not appear attractive. Instead, he terms the flexible practices of drawing from subjective experience and personal discretion to conduct sales a sign of *disorganization*; it is not rationalized efficiency as expected of a global company. To him this "personal discretion" that TCs employ resonated with the "local" practices of his old company. Poornima the elite Travel Consultant appreciates being able to wake up and roll over in bed to check her email; Sanjay, a migrant to Bangalore whose mother is a home–maker and father a priest, would consider the ability to be so flexible as a disgraceful lack of professionalism.

Sanjay's need for standarization, protocol, and procedure demonstrate what work means to him: it is a space and set of practices through which he can enter and learn about middle–class professionalism. In his words professionalism is standardization. He appreciates that his managers at Captivate use commas and periods consistently in their emails. Nobody cared in his old job about email composition, he said. If you were sending out a quotation for a tour, you sent an email anyhow. Here everything has to be perfect. If grammar lapses or a period is absent, managers send back emails requiring they attain perfection. Sanjay does not find this tiresome or needless. He values the appreciation to detail; he praises the fact that emails could be sent back if they are below standard. Thus flexibility maps on to his old company as a form of improvisation: business on the fly—"Any tours?" a customer asks, and Sanjay whips something up for them, deciding margins, hotels, and travel on his own. At Captivate the flexibility to "let

people figure out how to do it," in the CEOs words is a disadvantage for those from an emerging middle–class like Sanjay for whom standardization and protocol offer key learning and class mobility and confidence. Sanjay helped me to understand the relevance of work as a site at which to learn about middle–class professional etiquette and practices.

Conclusion

When startup entrepreneurs generate or privilege the notion of work as freedom, they locate it within their own needs and preferences as innovators and owners. Yet these neoliberal ideologies are encountered and negotiated by employees to foreground the material lived experiences emerging in and through forms of gender, class, migration status, and life stage. Purnima and Radhika are senior Travel Consultants and the employees who benefit the most from the flexibility of work timings and process. Flexibility at work enables them to conceal the aesthetic labor of their jobs and to interpret labor within the feminized and personal terms of friendship and "gift–giving" and to fold labor into their middle–class lifestyles.

The back–office workers at Captivate who come from less elite class backgrounds enjoy less flexibility at work, yet they claim and affirm it to imagine themselves as empowered and agentive workers. Aligning themselves with management initiatives, they celebrate flexibility, fashioning themselves as valuable and productive workers—thus challenging the trope of docile bodies that links them to routine and standardized labor which they are expected to perform with no complaints. By reinterpreting flexibility and demonstrating how they embody it (through innovative ideas and class mobility respectively), Apu and Jyothi grant a certain status to their own labor. Yet Jyothi's illness

offers the effects of the "body as an ontological mechanism for truth–telling" (Molé 2011): too much flexibility ultimately breaks her down and causes her to leave the company.

Sanjay show how flexibility at Captivate could be gendered. He rejects flexibility and work–as–freedom discourses because they presuppose a startup entrepreneur kind of worker subjectivity desiring privacy, flexi–time, and freedom. Instead, reflecting the meaning of such a concept for an upwardly mobile, ambitious, male professional, for him Captivate's benefits lie not in its discourse of flexibility but in its work standardization—its *inflexibility*—that can enable his growth and learning. Sanjay's story suggests that flexibility enables those with cultural and material resources. For those who learn about professionalization and classed behavior through interactions at work, the flexible ideal of enabling the individual worker is alienating and unhelpful.

For at least two decades, flexibility is a value believed to be critical to successful work (Leggett 2013). It demands reflexivity; when absent this must be cultivated and appropriate expertise is marshaled to craft reflexive[38] corporate subjects. At the macro level it details approaches to labor, capital flows and markets, at the micro level it speaks of new subjectivities concerning individual movements, ingenuity, performance and self-invention (Freeman 2007: 252). It is also an isomorphic metaphor that speaks of the relationship *between* the individual and the larger systemic structure within which it functions.

In a particularly evocative image from Emily Martin's (1995) ethnography *Flexible Bodies*, she finds herself slumped forward in a body harness, suspended from a

[38] Reflexivity is defined as an ability to redefine and recombine assets see Ong (2006).

tree during a training workshop for corporate employees. Martin uses this moment to return to a central question the ethnography poses: what does it means to be a person today (Martin 1995: 213)? She reminds us that the ideal for American corporate bodies (institutional and individual) is derived from a management approach called Total Quality Management (TQM) that requires a constant adapting to environments in flux in order to survive (Martin 1995: 143–214). In this chapter I analyze how flexibility fosters differential relationships between workers and their labor across the range of jobs at Captivate. It enables forms of emotional, aesthetic, and affective labor that build on cultural capital and consolidate class projects; for others, it is an imagined aspect of work through which they produce themselves as desirable workers. Thus the neoliberal managerial imagination of flexibility as a work tool to enable individual productivity is unevenly articulated across class and gender lines.

VI. Resisting Startup Individuality by Building Work–as–Family

The previous chapter described how some individual workers interpret, embody, and appropriate neoliberal startup discourses of flexibility in order to feel like they "own" and "belong in" Captivate, an entrepreneurial workplace. This chapter examines how salaried workers locate themselves within the structural and material aspects of startup life—within its office spaces, workplace interactions, and approaches to work. While startup ideas are articulated with entrepreneurs in mind (the focus of Chapter Three), here I center those at its fringes: migrant women who are the first professional women in their families to work. Startup culture envisions work–as–freedom, a concept that I introduced in the previous chapter. I now complicate this narrative by showing how some workers do not seek individual empowerment at, and through, work. They hope to be entangled within the company, deeply rooted to its spaces and people.

Tracing women's commutes to the office, their dreams around office work and its power of social mobility, and the creative labor that makes work "home" disturbs the idea of the workplace as an efficient and enabling machine. Instead the startup imperative to create a low–cost office devoid of corporate patronage and structure is willfully and consistently created by women workers as a feature of family life.

Gendered Negotiations of Public Space

Women workers who are newly incorporated into industrial work are unmoored from the strictures of domestic life and viewed as threatening symbols of modernity. Whether in factories (Lynch 2007, Mills 1997, Ong 2010, Rofel 1999), informal piece–meal home labor (Atmavilas 2008), or in air–conditioned offices (Freeman 2000) in Malaysia, China, Sri Lanka, Thailand, India, and Barbados, working women are under

the surveillance of corporate managers, family members, and each other as they enter factory and office work environments. Not only have young unmarried women historically been documented as sources of cheap, docile and flexible labor (Tilly and Scott 1987), this particular figure is also sexualized and stigmatized as it becomes unmoored from the watchful space of the home and embedded in wage work within global regimes of labor and capital.

This is true of many of the lower middle–class, back–office workers at Captivate too, who often worried about their commute to work—their fathers and husbands dropped them to work when possible, and they traveled in groups to mitigate the dangers to their safety that they perceived as young, single women. How and why they undertake these extensive efforts tells us about the meaning and value of work in the everyday lives of a newly emerging professional class of workers in the startup economy.

There is a significantly postcolonial gendered dimension attached to middle–class mobility in the city. Women's public presence in urban spaces threatens their middle–class status—a result of nationalist efforts to produce the "superior" Indian nation by emphasizing the spiritual purity of its women (Donner 2008: 42). From the colonial period, Indian women have negotiated complex navigations between acquiring and demonstrating European accomplishments, while presenting themselves as emblems of national culture, as traditional yet modern (Jayawardena 1986: 13).

If in fact women have always moderated and negotiated their contentious presence in the public spaces and sphere of postcolonial India, what effect do emergent forms of labor have in conceptualizing or reworking the perceived, felt, and expected distinctions between public and private spaces? In the current economy, I argue, the expansion of

labor into a varied set of practices dispersed across spaces enables the production of a new kind of worker and challenges prevalent understandings of class.

In India, women across classes describe their movements outside the home for both work and leisure as threatening (see Phadke et al. 2011), requiring them to adapt and negotiate public spaces in creative ways. Even elite women entrepreneurs who use private transport continually navigate the uncertainties of public space as I discovered early in my fieldwork when I organized a focus group that discussed street sexual harassment in India. One of the participants compared her experiences walking freely on the streets of San Francisco as an entrepreneur with her experiences in Bangalore:

> There I could wear what I wanted and walk freely whereas here I feel embarrassed about showing my legs or wearing a skirt. I feel my body just turns inwards and tries to hide itself so that it won't be seen (Interview with Sakshi, January 2013).

She drove to the focus group in a small yellow electric car and explained that she first called her husband before she set out for home and usually kept him on the phone throughout the journey in order to feel safe, using her hands-free device to navigate her car. The public sight of a young woman entrepreneur traveling on her own in public, driving a car at night, does not reveal the many strands through which she creates connections to her family or friends. Watching Sakshi drive by I did not know—until she told me—how she located herself in an infrastructure of safety: with a pepper spray, her careful choice of clothing, a number on speed dial, and sometimes a friend tailing her car.

While in public Sakshi indexically referenced her connections to the private: her husband's number, access to a scarf or long *dupatta* to signal her "modesty," and a

pepper spray to literally distance aspects of public experience that she found threatening or distasteful. Susan Gal (2000: 41, also see Gal 2002) reminds us that distinctions between the public and private are not static but shifters: they are indexical signs that can be applied to varied contexts of interaction. They "can be used to characterize, categorize, and contrast virtually any kind of social fact: spaces, institutions, groups, people's identities, discourses, activities, interactions, relations (Gal 2000: 41). Sakshi, even in public, makes her car a private space through the use of devices, strategies, and connections to people that mark her as a "private woman." Her story signals the many ways in which middle–class women negotiate public spaces to enable their own feelings of safety.

Postcolonial Classed and Gendered Mobilities

Feminist research on classed and gendered mobility in India generally considers these as distinct identities and analyzes their intersectional effects. For instance, Henrike Donner traces middle–class women's public roles and movements through urban space to show how those shape class (2008). Rather than assuming middle–class women to be an a–priori socially constructed group that calibrates its movements in spaces according to heterosexual and classed expectations, Donner suggests that public movements shape class understandings. As she points out, in South Asia, the status of a family or community is directly related to ideas about women's mobility (Donner 2008: 14). For the back–office workers at Captivate, entering new conditions of startup labor also requires them to engage public spaces through commutes, leisure outings, and during pleasurable afternoon strolls on a break from work.

As the first generation of professionals in their families, and as women without class privilege, Captivate's back–office workers are especially conscious of what they wear, what paths they take to work, how they hold their bodies—women's inhabitations of public spaces, after all, indicates the role of spatial practices and movements in iterating public performances of class and gender (Phadke 2011).

Commuting in the Entrepreneurial Sector

In the startup sector, the scaffolding and corporate patronage of I.T. are absent. Small and mid–size entrepreneurial companies do not provide workers with food or transport. In the absence of institutional structures, individuals take on the initiative for their own safety and well–being, and they do this in creative ways. When I traveled with Lata, a Captivate employee, I watched as she removed her jacket and scarf from her scooter, wriggled into the jacket and began quickly winding the scarf around her face, her hair and her neck. She slipped on a pair of grey woolen gloves; she already had on socks. Finally, she placed a bulky black helmet on to her head and affixed a pair of sunglasses leaving just a tiny strip of forehead adorned by a *bindi*, a visible marker of Hindu culture for women.

Figure 5. Facing the city in "private."

Lata told me she did this to "invisibilize" herself. When she traveled around the city on her scooter, visiting a friend at night, going shopping or commuting to work everyday, she tried not to attract any attention to herself. She explained:

> You know when women ride on bikes sometimes you can see them and then—it's only natural—you want to look at them some more. So I try to cover myself up as fully as possible so that you don't even know whether I am a man or a woman. When I first came I didn't know this, but being here for a while I learnt all this (Interview with Lata, October 2013).

As the figure of the startup entrepreneur learns how to cultivate urban embodied practices to become visibly recognizable as a startup entrepreneur, Lata learns how to mediate and conceal herself in public spaces. Describing Muslim women's veiling practices, Lila Abu Lughod (2013) understands these as a symbolic separation between public and private spheres that marks a woman's body as belonging in the respectable domain of the private rather than public[39]. Lata prepares for each journey meticulously, wearing an oversize black jacket, a scarf and wrapping her waist-length hair inside her helmet. She wanders around the city after work, often taking me on small shopping expeditions to buy tights, religious books, look for jewelry and so on. On the way to these places, we sometimes stopped to eat some *chaat* from a roadside vendor or a plate of chicken nuggets at a KFC[40] outlet in a mall. Her entry into the modern worlds of consumption and leisure are mediated through an embodiment of femininity. Lata was the one who would suggest that a group of women from the office meet to celebrate the dancing that was a part of a major Indian festival. She veto'ed drinks plans to advocate that we ate a good meal instead. Her practices were consistent with her clothing choices.

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[39] Elsewhere Saba Mahmood (2001) suggests that veiling practices are *not* strategic tools that are employed in order to enable a subject's free will and desire to circulate but in fact should be seen as part of a repertoire of dispositions that constitute the pious Muslim subject. Here of course this is not the Islamic veil under consideration but the *dupatta*, used in fluid ways to shield women from the sun and rain, to cover breasts and signal decorum, and to conceal themselves. Therefore my interest is in the relationship between veiling and visibility rather than in the significance of the act of veiling and the veil itself.

[40] Kentucky Fried Chicken is a treat at many malls and in Bangalore a symbol of globalization. The first KFC was stoned and attacked in 1999 when it opened by a vigilante group of Kannada chauvinists protesting the destruction of "local culture."

Ritty Lukose understands how young women negotiate threats to their reputation in public spaces through the rubric of what she terms "demure moderns" (2009). In her ethnography of Keralan[41] college–going students, she found that the "demure modern" was an embodied and affective production involving narratives, comportment, clothing, and one's orientation to the world. Young men roam the city on their motorbikes as consumers, purchasing clothes and commodities; young women are required to mediate their sexuality through embodiments and negotiations of femininities that enact a cultural politics of globalization within Kerala. Lukose's interlocutors are in a small Kerala town: in Bangalore, these mediations of sexuality are inflected by the city's image as a globalized hub. For a different class, caste, and regional context, Smitha Radhakrishnan uses the term "suitably modern" (Radhakrishnan 2011). These are middle–class and upper caste I.T. professional women who thread sameness and difference to negotiate their circulation as respectable women in global workplaces.

For young entrepreneurs like Sakshi, being in public—smoking, driving, attending late night events—is a crucial aspect of belonging within the city's dominant production of itself as a Start Up City. Yet since decorum and being respectable in public are key to class belonging (Donner 2011), these desires are mediated by a symbolic orientation linking women to the private through special signifying markers—a long cloth, a cell phone, a car.

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[41] Kerala is a state in southern India that sends large numbers of working class migrant workers to the Gulf states and nurses to the United States and Canada. Women's symbolic production of themselves as rooted in the local needs to be contextualized within these larger patterns of migration. Lukose is especially interested in Malayali migration to the Gulf countries from where migrants send large remittances and are believed to be morally "corrupted." The rootedness of young women marks them as untouched by the influences of commodity consumption from transnational migration.

Dreaming of Upward Mobility: Crushed I.T. Fantasies

The back–office workers who often come from smaller towns and cities in India, and whose parents have low–level government or working class jobs are acutely conscious of work as a route to upward mobility and middle–class life. Although many of them could acquire jobs in Bangalore's burgeoning call center industry, they hoped for Information Technology jobs in gated campuses, with restricted access, ID cards, and manicured lawns offering symbolic value. The limited and protected mobility of these communities is desirable: it signals company investment in its workers and enhances their value. Questions of mobility thus fundamentally determine and shape women's entry into middle–class work. Without it you cannot enter such work; once you enter such work you are further guaranteed it, as Archana's story shows.

Archana was a young Captivate employee who moved to Bangalore for work, living in a Ladies Hostel, sharing a room with two others ($33 a month for board and two meals a day). When she passed her accountant exams, right after her undergraduate degree, "Bangalore *aana tha*, job *ke liye*," she told me. At first, "papa *ne mana kar diya par baad mein* agree *kar liya*." [I wanted to come to Bangalore for a job. My father forbade me from coming initially, but later he agreed to it]. She duly registered on Naukri.com (a job-hunting portal) and received many inquiries from prospective employers.

In April 2013 she came to Bangalore to interview with a dream job in the I.T. sector with one of the prestigious companies located in Electronic City on the outskirts of Bangalore. She successfully cleared the aptitude test and the Group Discussion. However, by the time it came to the Human Resources round, it was already 7.30 pm. Archana

could not stay on any longer at the campus because she had no transport. She and a friend, who was also attending the interviews, abandoned the process in panic, half-way through[42]. They made the decision to go back home since they would be lost with no clear bus maps or routes and a sense of unease at being lost in Bangalore. "*Hum log kho gaye the*," she tells me ["we had got lost"] and their host couldn't be reached by phone.

Without the requisite transport or mobility, Archana was unsuccessful in her I.T. job hunt. The big I.T. campuses are built to accommodate those who already belong in them and are commuting by private company buses or the swift air-conditioned public buses. For aspiring entrants like Archana, just getting to these privatized enclaves on the fringes of the city is a hurdle—not unlike reaching many American suburbs on public transport. When asked about the company she remembered its material environment. "It is a big company, it has a very good office," she said, and when pressed: "what to say… it has an awesome look".

Other companies she interviewed with did not get back to her or she failed the initial rounds, until finally she interviewed successfully with Captivate. Similarly, Natasha, another Captivate employee kept interviewing for I.T. jobs until she finally got an offer from one. For her, I.T. signified not only a beautiful and modern campus but a vehicle for upward mobility reflected in a range of desirable practices, forms of consumption, and aesthetics:

[42] Young middle–class women often worry about taking public transport or commuting without a known male escort by late evenings. This sense of unease was exacerbated by their being in Bangalore, a large and unfamiliar city.

> They are very professional… they come on time, talk very nicely… When I was in school I saw parents who were engineers: they talked sweetly to their children and would get them this and that. I also love their campuses (Interview with Natasha, September 14, 2013).

These were the characteristics of the I.T. professionals that differentiated them from Natasha's own parents. Punctuality marked their professionalism; their indulgence of their children signaled the abundance of their resources. Natasha often complained about her own parents: her father and grandfather owned a mechanic shop and her mother ran a working women's hostel from one floor of their home. They were not a direct part of the transnational economy that she found so desirable, and they did not understand her desire to consume—something she found infinitely frustrating.

Producing the Workplace as a Middle Class Family

Most women at Captivate could have secured comparable jobs in call–centers but did not want to risk the public stigma that accompanies call center work (see my Introduction for a discussion of this). When they elaborated, I realized that the jobs they had been offered were not the elite call–centers where high–consuming employees live at home and regard work as an extension of college. Instead, they were smaller operations run by small scale entrepreneurs rather than by large corporations and were likely focused on in–bound service and sales rather than outbound (see Batt, Holt, and Holtgrewe 2007 for the myths and realities surrounding global call center work). Captivate was an attractive alternative: as a global entrepreneurial firm, it offered the respectability of an office job without the requirements of late hours and night shifts.

Fernando and Cohen (2014) center respectability as the central contradiction for South Asian women who navigate expectations that they will behave with the docility

and restraint expected of "respectable" women along with being successful career women. Working at night is a compromise of this respectability for women. As Michiel Baas (2007) writes, "in Bangalore, working at night is both a burden and a sign of success, of making it happen, of working successfully hard" (66). When this high–paying nightshift work is performed by women, they find themselves at risk as good women.

In the contemporary economic climate of entrepreneurial ventures in Bangalore, there are thousands of jobs available to applicants like Archana who have a basic Bachelor's degree. Many of these are in companies of a similar size to Captivate and similarly located in bungalows, or in business centers or single-storey buildings, and run by energetic individuals seeking to excel in the service sector. Information Technology exists in large gated communities with facilities for leisure, rest, and fitness (see Baas 2007) that mark it as middle–class, a suitable and desirable place for women's work outside the home. Its material markers are easily identifiable through chartered buses with corporate office names taped to the windscreen ferrying in employees, white cabs zipping around with women employees working late shifts, and the sprawling lawns and campus canteens that ensure no one has to leave the gated community. In the contemporary neoliberal startup economy, workplaces have moved from large organizations with the infrastructure to offer women transport, food, gyms, and air conditioned offices to smaller flexible ones like Captivate. Here women assume the responsibility for their own well-being, leisure, and safety.

At Captivate women produce their respectability and that of their workplace through a narrative and affective construction of work as "family." The production of the workplace within the safe and contained boundaries of "family" life mediates the

"cultural struggle" (Ong 1991: 281) that accompanies the movement of young women away from family life into employed labor. Women negotiate work practices and spaces to create an environment conducive to their presence and work. This serves the double purpose of producing themselves as respectable professionals—not stigmatized call–center workers.

Employees who began working with Captivate when it was first launched explained that they worked long hours, from 9 a.m. often until midnight, with no formal timings. As they built teams and generated business, work hours were determined by when work was completed. In this context, thinking of colleagues as "family" legitimates the close interactions between unmarried men and women, rendering their interactions as always "harmless" and "innocent." As a media columnist in a national daily explains, a familiar tactic in India to publically remove the possibility of a sexualized relationship is to deploy a familial term with a stranger of the opposite sex (Krishna 2015).

Women routinely rely on this—calling someone a "brother" by tying a sacred thread on them on the annual Raksha Bandhan festival[43] for instance can categorize a relationship as familial, precluding a romantic liaison. While using public transport, women refer to male strangers who are in unavoidable close proximity to them—drivers, co–passengers, and bus conductors—using familial terms, "bhaiya," "anna," "uncleji" ("brother," "older brother," "uncle") to indicate publically and with no ambiguity that they deserve the respect one would accord one's own sister or niece. At Captivate, imagined as a small and intimate "family" space, the dangers and taboos associated with

[43] A festival in which women tie decorated thread around the wrist of men, declaring them "brothers."

being outside home—at work with strangers—are coopted within the familiar imaginaries and rhetoric of the heterosexual family: a dominant middle–class institution.

The trope of the heterosexual family simultaneously (and perhaps inevitably) locates the worker in a relationship with management as one of corporate paternalism, as others too have shown. Dorinne Kondo's (1990) gendered study of the workplace as a family shows its derivation from normative Japanese discourses in which companies are seen as families—even if this is more theoretical than felt in the post-War period. Kondo shows how the narratives of company as family conceal women's part–time and low–paid status even though their bodies are crucial aspects of the interpellation of the company as family. Workers however do not embody these narratives without negotiating them, and women workers sometimes take advantage of, and deploy, these narratives of family for the unexpected benefits it offers them. Companies appealing to young women to join their professional workforces may also fabricate the trope of the company "family" in order to entice women to work in a safe, comfortable and desirable environment—the "Data Air Family" in Carla Freeman's (2000: 181) study of informatics processing in Barbados.

I understand the family following Jane Collier, Michelle Rosaldo, and Sylvia Yanagisako as a "part of a set of symbolic oppositions through which we interpret our experience in a particular society…" (Collier, Rosaldo and Yanagisako 1982: 35). As they explain, ideologies of The Family are not isolated from people's experiences; their interest—and mine, here—is in how "people come to summarize their experience in folk constructs that gloss over the diversity, complexity, and contradictions in their relationships" (Collier, Rosaldo and Yanagisako 1982: 35).

Lata's Story: Growing Up in the Entrepreneurial Workplace

In Bangalore, as a "family," Captivate employees "grow up" here. Time spent in the company is remembered by some employees as a past childhood, and the employee as a child nurtured by the CEO, as an employee who joined early in Captivate's recruitment explained:

> When we were small [meaning when they first joined], he used to do lot of things on his own, which he passed on to me. He's [the company founder] a very good mentor who can mould you, train you (Fieldwork interview with Lata, October 2013).

By referring to her past as when she was "small," Lata articulates a coming-of-age narrative in which she grows up in the company, nurtured by the Founder. Despite the CEO's wish to establish a flat work structure, and for employees to take initiative for their own development, employees like Lata refuse the terms of this relationship. Instead, referring to herself as "small" and him as someone who can "mould" her imbricates them in a meaningful bond. It resonates with the paternalism of a corporate hierarchy in which seniors mould junior employees. Similarly Lata told me how she accepted this job because the CEO trusted her with financial matters just a week into her joining; she compared this with the lack of "trust" in her previous company.

Lata took the family metaphor further, by explaining how work colleagues were "brothers" who helped her and supported her during a personal crisis. The workplace is a source of moral and ethical guidance, directing her life in general. Lata moved to Bangalore from a small village where her parents worked in the informal labor market, selling produce for a daily wage. She studied for a Bachelor's degree in a local college

and then answered a job in a newspaper for a position that became her first job. While there, she made a contact who told her about a job in Bangalore. Her parents watched, somewhat helpless, as she boarded an overnight bus, took a standardized test for the position, and returned home. When she was offered employment, she moved to Bangalore. She was an important source of income: with three brothers, diffident and unambitious, Lata was a promising wage earner. Her parents allowed her to leave home, albeit with some reservations.

She describes her first visit to Bangalore, a city of some nine million, as one in which she alighted from the bus and "felt something in the air" that told her the city held promise. She rented a small apartment in Bangalore, with two others, paying about $63 per person per month. A stranger to the city, she knew no one else, and found a weekend spirituality class to give her free time some direction. There she met someone whom she fell in love with, and a year later, she married him. By now her parents were reconciled to the idea that they could not restrain her wishes and ambitions. She helped them financially, called them everyday, and maintained close family ties. Once married, something terrible happened that Lata (or anyone else who knew her) would not talk about to me except to say regretfully, "Such a sad thing to happen to someone like her." She left her husband the very next day after their marriage, and filed for divorce.

She told me this story—with key details missing—when we were lounging on my bed one evening, making small talk. She told it lightly, as if it was a story that happened to someone else. I did not want to tell her I had heard bits of it before, or that others in the office mentioned it discretely. "You didn't know anything about it, right?" she said, with a light laugh. I could sense she was proud of having so effectively concealed such a

significant detail of her life from me: someone she spent so much time with. With startling clarity she explained to me that Captivate gave her the financial independence to be able to make the decision of divorce. This is still a radical break for most middle–class Indian women who linger in an unhappy marriage on instructions from parents to keep public reputations intact or from their own private sense of duty and forbearance.

I tell this story of Lata in such detail because it is a reminder that not everybody in the startup economy seeks out the flexibility promised in entrepreneurial companies. Like Sanjay, the young man who valued the discipline, structure, and workflow of Captivate as a route to professionalization, for Lata too, it was the binding structures of the workplace "family" that make work pleasurable and meaningful.

Arlie Hochschild's (2001) thesis on US workplaces traces the changing boundaries between home life and work—she notes that professionals seek out support and companionship at work, making these the new families and communities. At Captivate however, in Lata's telling at least, it was the practices at work that alienated her from her natal family—and again, it was co–workers who could understand and support her through her travails. Further, it was Lata's sentimental attachment to work as "family" that offered a template through which she could think through a set of circumstances for which her biological family was little help—they thought she should stay on in the marriage. Lata explained her decision as a reflection of the entrepreneurial values inculcated in her at work:

> You make a mistake, they will never say anything [the founders]. They encourage you to learn from it. I think that is what I applied in my personal life also. I knew I made a mistake and I wanted to learn from it. That's how I thought I should

> move out of it. Some things you learn in your professional life and you apply in your personal life also (Fieldwork interview with Lata, October 2013).

The familiar entrepreneurial narrative embracing failure as only a temporary stage before the promise of the next startup idea has shifted to private life. When her ex–husband began stalking her on the phone it was her "brothers" at work (as she called male colleagues) who called him and threatened to report him to the police. It was work "brothers" who dropped in on her past midnight on some nights to make sure she was alright. They remained her close confidantes. Her family appear in her story as mute spectators to a wedding and divorce, which they attended and contributed to as much as they could financially and emotionally, but ultimately, involved a set of circumstances far removed from their own practices.

At her second marriage Lata was doing what I suspected she did at her first too—she bought gold jewelry and gifts from Bangalore and handed them to her mother who formally presented them back to her in the appropriate ceremonies. She explained to me that when her husband's relatives gossiped about what her mother had given, there would be the correct check–list to tick off. Through these ways that Lata continually enhances her family's status and contributes to their well–being that alleviate her respect in the family (also see Atmavilas 2008, Ong [1983] 2010).

Yet I would be hesitant to describe her as part of a new middle–class—Lata was still uncomfortable in middle–class spaces of consumption and leisure. She always took me and another colleague with her even if she wanted to go window shopping or to check out new cell phones at a store nearby. Store salesmen continually read customers for signs of middle–class consumer capacity and would direct their responses and attention to

me, even as Lata planned to buy a smart phone about twice as much as my own basic phone cost. She wanted my presence in the stores with her to legitimate and validate her own, a common enough occurrence during my fieldwork as I accompanied many women to elite neighboring stores when they wanted to browse or ask for something but were unsure about how to interact with sales staff. I accompanied the less class privileged workers at Captivate to buy saris, inquire about semi–automatic, half–price washing machines, cell phone plans, cell phones, bras, dresses ahead of an office Christmas party, and leggings to be worn with kurtas.

One afternoon, as three of us from the office stepped out to accompany Lata to check out new cell phones, a sudden monsoon deluge enveloped us. We stumbled through the rain looking for shelter but all we found were the upmarket stores that surrounded our office. I wanted to duck in to one of them but my two Captivate colleagues, both from lower middle–class backgrounds, hesitated. This is a store they would be cautious about even visiting for a casual browse, leave alone hurriedly running into to avoid a downpour. We argued for a bit, getting soaked all the while, and finally in exasperation I ran in, knowing they would follow. They did, but almost immediately one of my colleagues was mistaken for a salesperson: "Do you have this in a Medium" a woman asked him, waving a *salwar kameez* on a hanger. It was an awkward moment of misunderstanding that we all laughed off but we quickly left.

Another time I was out with Lata she took me on her scooter to Safina Plaza, a nearby shopping complex that was a popular commercial destination before the onslaught of mall culture in the 2000s. It was a large handicrafts sale where local craftsmen from around India sold reams of cloth, saris, jewelry and flip–flops. She was at home at the

sale, and wandered around open tables looking for things to buy her husband's family ahead of an upcoming trip to their home. Following this we got hungry and decided to eat a roll from a nearby fast–food chain. We picked up two rolls and noticed that a large central faux lawn area had outdoor seating with cane chairs and tables arranged on it. We decided to sit there but Lata became overcome with a fear that we would be asked to leave. We checked with the fast–food restaurant's manager if people sat there; we debated what we would tell the security guard whom we anticipated would throw us out; finally when we did sit down we expected to hear the shrill whistle of a guard asking us to leave—and thereby publicly embarrassing us—at any moment.

It is for many of these reasons linked to Lata's discomfort in middle–class public spaces of consumption that I hesitate to argue that her work at Captivate, her managerial position, and her international travel elevated her class status. I did see her as carefree and at ease when I visited her in the state where she grew up, where I was attending a conference. She had planned a visit back with her husband so we could all spend time together before I left to return to Atlanta. We went to the local beach one evening, and her husband bought us peanuts and we walked along the sea. She was completely at ease, taking photographs and fooling around. In Bangalore, she was this relaxed only when she shopped at local street vendors bargaining, and buying duplicate items for the sheer pleasure of the purchase.

Lata embodied neoliberal startup ethics in many ways—an unlikely marriage, a divorce, a love affair, all signs of "risk–taking" and flexibility. But these are precisely the ways that startup culture effects gendered transformations—migrant working class women like Lata take startup ideologies to heart, quite literally, even as they struggle to

translate their forms of labor and learning into class confidence or acceptance. Neoliberal ideologies of flexible labor are thus unevenly inflected, so that class, gender, family background, migrant status and ambition come together to offer a very different meaning of flexibility to those within the same company. As I described in Chapters Three and Four too, dominant neoliberal startup ideologies—including passion and flexibility—are unexpectedly refracted when considering the discourses, aspirations, and experiences of workers (rather than entrepreneurs) in the startup economy. Many workers at Captivate who did not have class or cultural capital to draw on prior to their work here embodied startup values quite literally in their everyday lives—through forms of love, imagination, aspiration, and desire.

Architectures of Religion and Family in the Corporate Workplace

For young women at Captivate who move away from homes in smaller cities to work here, the physical space of the office cubicles are as familiar, and sometimes as sacred, as a family home. Diwali is an annual religious festival celebrated in different parts of India to affirm the victory of good over evil with crackers, sparklers and lights. At Captivate the spaces of the office are receptacles for creative employees to express religious sentiment, far from their own homes and family celebrations.

By 8 a.m. on Diwali morning, Shanti, a young Captivate employee is in jeans and a T-shirt with sleeves rolled up, kneeling on the office floor drawing a design across the office entrance. She makes a circular pattern arranged around a brass lamp that someone has hauled in from home. The lamp is later ceremonially lit; cotton balls dripped in clarified butter produce tiny decorative flames. Shanti bends over the white tiled office floor, marks outlines in chalk and has us fill them in with colored powders. In an hour she

expertly traces the final lines of powder and steps back to survey her work. She found the tricolor pattern on the Internet and keeps referencing the original on her Black Berry as she draws. The gestures she uses to execute the design are ingrained in her cultural memory: her mother wakes up early on Diwali mornings when Shanti lived at home, washing the courtyard and outlining a similar design (*rangoli)*. Pattern complete, Shanti runs home to change into a sari and come right back.

Figure 6. Shanthi with her decorated entrance.

At 26, unmarried and living and working on her own, away from home, the office space is Shanthi's family courtyard. Captivate is a social community, addressing the emotional need for families to be together in large groups during festive occasions and life events. Following the ceremonial lamp lighting, we all take a massive office group photo, and troop off to a free lunch at a nearby restaurant. The women are dressed up in *saris* and *salwar kameezes*, and some of the men are in *kurta pyjamas*.

For several young women who move away from homes in smaller cities to work for Captivate, colleagues enact the role of family, and the physical space of the office cubicles become as familiar, and sometimes as sacred, as those of family homes. Young, single women envision Captivate *via* the trope of the family:

> By this stage Captivate was my life. I live and breathe it. I breathe the passion of the individuals in the office; the family. I always say Captivate is like a family . . . one big diverse global family. We don't always know each other that well because we live in different countries but we share the same values and passion . . . (Susan, October 2013).

Not only is this family that employees describe themselves as growing up in, employees also assume responsibility for nurturing the *company family*—which becomes inseparable from the brand the company exemplifies. They assume responsibility for its growth. While startup entrepreneurs own their businesses and take full responsibility for its growth and profit, *employees* of such organizations labor to produce the business as theirs, and to feel equally a part of it. They do this by producing the workplace as "family," a site to gather a range of emotions and attunements that motivates them to

work harder, and gives meaning to their labor as more than just salary–oriented: familial loyalties cannot be quantified and measured, after all.

While the literature on global workplaces as families has focused on the discursive ability of cultural and corporate discourses to discipline workers (Kondo 1990), or people's turn to work as a substitute for the satisfaction derived from family life (Hochschild 2001), in Bangalore the trope of "family" at Captivate lends work both stability and respectability. When colleagues are "brothers," and office walls are decorated with care on festive occasions, the small workplace is heteronormativized through familial idioms. Family narratives enable workers to feel a part of an entrepreneurial enterprise and to enter workplaces through relationships that exceed monetary terms, creating a fractal division (Gal 2002) by which even the semi–public workplace becomes fully "private" as a home, enabling a gendered inhabitation of the space.

Conclusion

As Bear, Ho, Tsing and Yanagisako (2016) point out, the anthropological study of kinship, initiated by Henry Louis Morgan transformed the historic use of the term "gens" to reference the matriarchal origins of kinship. It was transformed by Frederik Engels to analyze the patriarchal forms that ended matriarchal ones. Thus rooted anthropologically in the study of kinship, the term "gens" is also the etymological root of gender, generation, generative and so on (Bear, Ho, Tsing and Yanagisako 2016). The study of kinship—in the form of the heterosexual family—in the workplace is thus a study of gender as generative of processes of capitalism that exceed the strictly economic. It considers how narratives, discourses, and practices of kin in the workplace build a

different version of startup culture from the flexible, work–as–freedom model of the entrepreneur. Instead, through the use of kin and familial idioms, workers craft feelings of belonging and "owning" the entrepreneurial firm, they embody its values in their private lives, and they do not expect the company to extend its patronage by way of office drops, catered daily meals, and protected landscaped surroundings.

On a stormy monsoon night when women workers were trapped without transport and their phones began beeping with messages from parents wanting to know why they were not home, some employees considered calling the CEO to demand company transport. Yet in minutes, even as they searched for his phone number, one of them melted: "Poor fellow," she said. "He's already so stressed out this month. Let's not add to that!" They ended up sharing autos to the nearest bus–stand and taking buses back in the pouring rain. The dense bonds of Captivate "family" help women navigate urban spaces that are new and unfamiliar. Feeling an ownership of the company and the feeling that it is your family disables workers from unionizing or making demands on the company: it is family, after all. This was the intricate affective accounting of labor in the startup economy—typically gendered loyalties and commitments to the workplace and colleagues preclude acquiring or demanding material benefits. The emotional "owning" of work thus defers a demand for a material "owning."

The dense workplace bonds at Captivate create a "work body," crafting women's identities as workers—in the collective, rather than as singular. Women go everywhere in groups, enter new spaces of leisure and consumption together, and rely on each other to learn how to approach new food and drink at middle–class cafes. This group identity produces a collective body of workers who experience public spaces through group

rituals and behaviors rather than as deeply embodied experiences as with the middle and upper class entrepreneurs in Chapter Three of the dissertation.

VII. Learning Consumption, Practicing Leisure in the Startup City

Startup culture extends business practices into everyday life in the city. It is visible, visceral, and threaded through different sites; being an entrepreneur, as I have argued, is equally a performative production of being an entrepreneur in the city. This chapter shows how spaces of the city of Bangalore themselves are available as raw material for the construction and extraction of the value of startup subjectivity. The neoliberal startup self and the neoliberal city are simultaneously produced in this economy. Urban spaces and sites—the sidewalks, parks, shops, bars, and dating events—are available and "open" for startup entrepreneurs to use in practices of self–making and entrepreneurial performativity. Yet I show how the so–called "open" startup economy is premised on the acquisition and mastery of prior forms of capital and advantage, including a middle–class access to privacy.

Street Activism

A few months into my fieldwork, a friend invited me to join a group of entrepreneurial women whom I call "The Sorority Sisters." They are a group of professional and entrepreneurial middle–class and elite, middle aged women who meet every few weeks to enjoy drinks and dinner, an evening of dancing, or more focused sessions in which they share their business learning with others in the group. For instance, I attended a session on how to make a business plan over a Sunday brunch, went to several dance and dinner nights, and helped them with production assistance on a film on gender issues. Their events were always charged with feminine affect; women dressed in expensive dresses and skirts, and many members confided to me that they felt nervous or overwhelmed before an event, worried about how to dress.

In 2013, the group organized a feminist action addressing questions of public space and safety. The event was announced on the group's Facebook page: the text asked women to show up to a large street near a women's college at 8 p.m. one night. Further, we were all to wear risqué clothes, and to take public transport. By arranging ourselves on the street, occupying public space, and dressing provocatively, members hoped to affirm our gendered rights to circulate in public spaces without danger. Although many events organized by this group involve members dressing up in party attire, the instruction here was to dress "risqué" and "not take public transport"—an unlikely combination since dressing up for India's middle–classes also requires being chaperoned or transported in private vehicles.

I followed the instructions duly, picking out a short dress, but waived the "no public transport" rule to drive my car to the destination. Even as I drove through rush house evening traffic, I worried continuously about the bumper–to–bumper traffic, knowing that even if a car so much as grazed mine, I would have to emerge on the street dressed in my short dress to engage the argument that would follow. I parked my car and hurried to the venue, half–running as catcalls followed me and autos slowed down asking if I needed a ride. At the designated spot, the group Founder was already present; she waited alone in a red sari with no blouse excitedly laying out the plan for the evening.

The rest of the group began trickling in after 8 p.m., and I noted with some relief that most members, like myself, did in fact use private and even chauffeured cars. The group's Founder explained to me that some women had refused to participate in such a street action, and had expressed concerns about the safety of such an endeavor. One of their husband's had expressed his anxiety about the event; "can you believe it?" the

Founder asked me, shocked that the mobility even of the elite women in this group would be dictated by their husbands.

Soon we came together in a tight circle, and members waved away a young street urchin who danced in between us, singing and begging for money. Cars and motorbikes passed by without slowing down and we formed a circle in the dark, clutching on to printouts of Maya Angelou's *Phenomenal Woman*, illuminated by the light of our cell phones. We read it together, and the last line was followed by a huge cheer, and we then lined up to take photographs. Our backdrop was a wall that a feminist artist had decorated with graffiti that said "The F-Word."

Later, I talked to some women about the intervention as they lingered on to smoke on the street. One of them explained that it was liberating to occupy public space and smoke in public on the street in India:

> It makes me feel like I'm in some other country, y'know? It's nice! Nice not to have to worry about what people think of you as a woman smoking. I think if a man lights up—no problem! You know, you can light up anywhere, wherever you want but if a woman . . . But a woman? They have these certain notions of you if you smoke! (Interview, April 19, 2013).

Entrepreneurial women in this group can only occupy public spaces by emerging *together* from the privatized protection of their cars. This small group of entrepreneurs derived pleasure in an evening of risk–taking practices that do not only mark their approach to their businesses but shape their approach to city life as well. Startup publics like this evening of activism for entrepreneurial women call on their members to engage risky behavior in order to affirm themselves as part of a new public sphere. This event

was premised on the class confidence of its members; as elite women they could wear risqué clothes and parade on public sidewalks in "play" subverting dominant norms around public space through their choice of clothing and comportment. However it was a street action and protest precisely because it was explicitly an evening of subversion—none of the women would be mistaken as dressing risqué as a part of (sex) work, for instance.

Women's arrival to the event in private transport, and their presence in a large group of others who shared their aesthetic allowed for such a performance of risk–taking without fear of misunderstanding or their bodies being misread. Public performances like this one may call upon individual women to engage certain kinesthetic practices, modes of self-fashioning, and comportment that defy middle–class social norms but they are only possible through collective initiatives. Individual women who undertake them would be at risk of violence, threats to their reputation, and an inability to communicate their intentions.

Dating Clubs

Startup culture in Bangalore also actively produces itself as risky and dangerous, thus gathering together entrepreneurs around a common fear and narrative. When a startup news website announced that there was to be a dating event for entrepreneurs, I immediately recruited my single and sociable flatmate, Nayantara, into my fieldwork. On a Friday evening, we got into the car of a friend of hers who had just left his job at Google to begin a tech startup. The three of us drove out to a large repurposed industrial shed that was now a bar and performance space some miles from the city center.

We had spent some anxious moments outside the event, wondering whether or not to go in, and debating what it would be like. As a result, the event had already begun by the time we gathered our courage and signed in at the register. Inside a shed–like space, the CEO of India's leading portal for entrepreneurs, a former journalist, was already speaking. In the dark we could make out hazy outlines of faces, and sat through a few more talks around the general theme of being married to work and being married to your startup co–founder (a prevalent practice in India). The premise of the event was that startup entrepreneurship was a risk–taking and precarious form of existence that only other entrepreneurs would understand. If the benefit to entrepreneurial flexibility is that individuals can work alone, unfettered, the downside is being marked as a "risky" prospect when it came to dating.

Following the first short speech, a local English–language fiction writer took the floor to read an excerpt of her latest book. It was a sexy scene in which a young single woman falls in love with her muscular gym instructor and is graphically describing his body. The room chuckled nervously. In half an hour, the house lights finally came on and we were instructed to form two groups: one would learn ballroom dancing and the other would learn whisky tasting. Most women wanted to be at the whisky tasting since ballroom dancing required too much close physical contact with strangers. We all wandered outside where a representative of the Scottish company Glen Fidditch arranged us around four tables, with four or five seats each. He poured us out glasses and talked us through their flavors. At my table we were two women and three men; the woman reached out to talk to me instantly, but the men looked down at their glasses or made

small talk with each other. We were being "taught" how to consume whisky socially, and also being offered an opportunity to learn how to socialize while consuming whisky.

When the ballroom dancing session in the other space finished, food and drink were served and we were free to mix with anyone. People walked tentatively around the room, preferring to stay in large groups and converse about work. The founder of the company later told me that women members often complained to him that the male participants never talked about anything other than work, and were awkward and ill–at–ease at these events. I later attended a special session he conducted with a team member to conceptualize a "training" for Indian men in how to flirt, converse casually on dates, and generate interesting conversation topics. For men who are often the first–generation in their families who are dating women—rather than marrying someone through an arranged marriage—each element of socializing has to be broken down, communicated, and demonstrated.

Startup entrepreneurs in their twenties and thirties were often single, perhaps because it is difficult to meet and date people in Bangalore. Parents in India typically will begin to arrange marriages for their children once they are "settled" with a stable job. Startup entrepreneurs—especially serial entrepreneurs—never enter this market since their businesses are unstable and they do not have the time or money to enter marriage. For these reasons, jokes and jibes abound about the fate of being a single startup entrepreneur. Singles clubs like the one I attended are attractive to these startup founders who all agree with the event's premise that they are involved in a highly risk–taking endeavor that detracts partners and long–term commitments.

Single startup entrepreneurs frequently blame the riskiness, unpredictability, and late hours of their work for their inability to find dates. In fact this narrative and affective production of startup entrepreneurship as a "risky" gamble that threatens the hetero and homonormative fantasy of marriage and children is a concrete site at startup entrepreneurs distinguish themselves from other kinds of workers. Through the continuous affirmation that "no one wants to marry entrepreneurs," another node is generated at which startup work is produced as risky.

Startup entrepreneurs imagine potential partners too as being wary of "taking a chance" on innovators like themselves who might spend years on a business idea that fails; this imagination reproduces the early stages of a startup's growth during which investors consider the risks and gains associated with investing in a company. The new publics of dating sites and events offer opportunities to teach entrepreneurs how to conduct and craft themselves in specialized interactions such as these. These publics are significant sites for the production of the figure of the startup entrepreneur since they are coherent with the general fictions of startup culture. They cohere with the industry's discursive production of itself as risky, a "gamble," and a space for mavericks.

Running and Biking Groups

At 5 a.m. on most weekday mornings in Bangalore, just before sunrise, small groups of people head out to the city's parks and lake areas as part of running groups. They usually train for special events such as marathons before the sun gets too hot and traffic overwhelms the streets. The idea of running in public for the middle–classes is a relatively new one in Bangalore. It is gendered, as the woman founder of a running group remembered about her initial runs in the park:

> People used to think I'm completely crazy, this was 2007, so I thought "Why am I running like this?" There was this woman who saw me who said "Aren't you that crazy woman who runs in Cubbon [Park] all the time? Why do you do that? We all think you're completely crazy" (Interview with Samita, March 12, 2013).

Women running alone are considered "crazy," she says, reminding us of the risks to her reputation as a woman. This risk of the single maverick runner is countered by a new fitness culture of running in groups (the Gay Run And Breakfast (GRAB) runners, Runner's High, and Runners For Life). Runner's clubs provide a community and transform the stigma associated with a lone woman runner into a desirable group activity with its own social life. Often runners invited me to join their clubs, adding that they ate breakfast together, socialized, and often did volunteer work for community organizations. As one woman runner explained:

> Samita: The bad side to running is that I have no social life because Saturdays and Sundays we have to be out there [training]. I have to be out there by 5 a.m… so where is the choice? You can't have a late night on a Friday or Saturday. Initially it affected the family life but the good part is that my husband has also taken to it. He understands why I do what I do.
>
> Interviewer (HG): Is there a community that forms across the running?
>
> Samita: We finish and go out for breakfast, and sometimes go for a movie. We are a huge community now… There was a time in the airline industry when we used to go out a fair bit but now it's mostly gym and running and we have a whole community now, so we still have fun, we call it a social life but it's in the morning! (Interview March 12, 2013.)

Significantly, runners form a very visible, mobile, public. They run early in the morning to avoid traffic but this choice also signals the importance they place on

fitness—the rest of their schedules are rearranged to accommodate their running. By occupying city streets before most other people, they temporally separate themselves from other users of urban space—the homeless, the garbage collectors, street sweepers. As Manisha Anantharaman explained of biking communities such as Bums on the Saddle, a startup for bikers in Bangalore,

> For many cyclists, their immediate families are not supportive of their decisions to cycle. Access to a community of like-minded practitioners helps offset censure from family and can also help recruit family members to the practice (Anantharaman 2016: 11).

Fieldwork and interviews at these startup publics suggest how participants and organizers enable and practice their production of themselves as risk-taking startup entrepreneurs. Significantly the startup entrepreneur is not a literal work identity but an urban figure, crafted through a performative belonging in urban spaces and middle–class pursuits. Participating in carefully chosen publics is integral to belonging in the Start Up City. As an entrepreneur explained:

> If the community feels strongly enough about themselves and what they're doing and if all of us come together . . . drawing your identity from a bunch of people who are coming together as a community. It all started like that (Fieldwork interview with a startup entrepreneur, March 2013).

In other words, startup founders are not materialized as individual subjects or identities but instead take place through collective forms of iteration. Identity is derived from collective practices and urban forms rather than shaped by the individual. The

emergence of an identity (here, that of the startup entrepreneur) occurs via the performative practices of a group.

Gillian Rose (Gregson and Rose 2000) found that participants in an arts community in the United Kingdom become themselves, both individually and collectively, through the process of group work—this is an arts project as a performed practice (440). Some of those whom Rose interviewed mentioned that the process helped to articulate a sense of shared identity through shared practice (Gregson and Rose 2000: 44).

In Bangalore, at events and workshops around startup entrepreneurship, participants often raise their hands to ask an anxious question: "do you have any tips on how to become an entrepreneur?" They search for a pre-determined rationale for success that can enable them to be interpellated as entrepreneurs. Yet they are always given the same answer: "There is no script." Gillian Rose's research states that the process of participation in the arts project is never really complete because the more people join it, the more sense participants are able to make of it. In other words, following Butler (2011), it is through each practice that contingent, and changing, identities emerge depending on the particular issue addressed and process performed (Gregson and Rose 2000: 440). Similarly, startup entrepreneurs are not born as such. Becoming a start up entrepreneur involves mastering and summoning a diverse set of practices—enacted through privatized publics—that are ever in flux, and together solidify one's belonging in this economy.

Embodying risk, demonstrating flexibility, circulating through urban street publics and performing startup identity are all group practices through which classed

projects are enacted and consolidated. Further, they are gendered, as women face particular threats to their reputation and class standing in public. As individuals, participants face the risk of physical danger, (gendered) threats to their reputation as "crazy women," and the inability to be distinguished from working class others. In groups, people join others who are similarly willing to experiment with forms of self–making and in subverting dominant social norms around the gendered and classed occupation of public space. The elite Indian and foreign nationals at Captivate participate in the dating clubs, yoga sessions, and weekend activities alongside Bangalore's many startup entrepreneurs and new middle–classes. However the upwardly mobile workers at Captivate found creative ways to incorporate elements and aspects of the startup economy into their lives even as they existed on its fringes.

(In)Flexible Mobilities and the Dream of the Supple Body

Many Captivate employees wanted to go to the gym or a dance or yoga class in order to get fit and be strong and flexible. The search for a good gym or fitness class is becoming a widespread practice amongst India's new middle–class. When I began fieldwork in Bangalore, my entrepreneur roommate routinely went to yoga classes, CrossFit training, ran in the park, and trained for a marathon. Most of the elite and middle–class entrepreneurs whom I met during fieldwork had such a routine, and increasingly their practice took them into public spaces.

Yoga in the Park was one such startup initiative envisioned for public spaces that I attended at different parks in the city. It brought women in T-shirts and tights out into public parks frequented by working class men and in full view of scores of walkers and runners. The idea was to enjoy the outdoors and practice yoga under an open sky, an

unlikely enterprise for most middle–classes whose exercise regimens are conducted far from public view. As Carla Freeman explains of Barbados, entrepreneurial women occupy public spaces in ways hitherto reserved for black working class women, thus reconfiguring the classed, raced, and gendered terms on which the spheres of public and private are cleaved (Freeman 2014: 106).

In Bangalore, to avoid the heat, crowds, and attention that yoga sessions were bound to attract, they were scheduled for 6 a.m. Our yoga instructor, a slim young woman who trained to be a teacher in the Himalayas, was also the founder of the group. We were typically small groups of women who attended these events; each of us wanting to appreciate a different experience of the public than the fear and anxiety–driven approach that marks middle–class women's forays into the public.

Women who participated in Yoga in the Park maintained their distance from the public streets before and after the actual event. As Emmanuela Guano writes of public spaces in Italy, in Bangalore too, "Middle-class women's belonging in the public realm is largely limited by the unwritten rules of respectability" (Guano 2007: 54). She notices that acceptable behavior for women in public spaces involves them passing by and moving through public spaces rather than lingering and "filling" space as men do. I discovered that the norms around middle–class women's participation in a public activity that required them to "fill the space" (as Guano 2007 phrases it) of a park were structured around their arrival and departure there.

The first time I attended a session, I traveled to the location by an auto. All the other participants arrived by their own scooters or in cars, attended the session under the trees, and then left immediately. I had found it difficult to hail or even spot an auto at

5.30 a.m. to get to the event: it was still dark outside. As the session finished, participants cheerfully waved each other goodbye, jumping on to their scooters and getting into their cars, parked nearby. Walking around the neighborhood looking for a rickshaw I felt myself becoming increasingly visible. No autos stopped, and the neighborhood only became more dense with street stalls and markets; I began to be honked at and cat–called. For the next session of Yoga in the Park I borrowed my mother's car and walked confidently after class knowing that my only vulnerability in public was the few steps between the public of the yoga class and the privatized space of my car.

Those who take public transport, live with their parents, and belong to an emergent middle–class face similar hurdles that prevent them from participating in fitness and running activities. Mid-way through my fieldwork at Captivate I noticed an employee, Apu, a young Muslim woman from a lower middle–class background, looking depressed for several days—she was a far cry from her usual effervescent self. I asked her what was wrong and she brushed it aside, telling me it was a secret. Finally a few days later, she pulled me toward her and whispered: "I'm getting *fat*!"

As a young and unmarried employee who lived at home with her parents and did not pay rent or have educational loans to repay, Apu had the money to enroll in a local gym—something that she wanted to do. However, her parents had disallowed it. They said it was inappropriate for a young single woman to be working on her body in public, dressed in tights and a T-shirt. Unlike the elite employees of Captivate who attended a yoga class in the common area of one of their gated apartment buildings, Apu's visit to the gym would involve dense interactions with many strangers of both sexes. She could

not afford the privacy of middle–class leisure of her more elite colleagues. In the context of young kickboxing Dutch women whose families immigrated generations ago to the Netherlands, Niko Besnier suggests that "bodies are sites where assumptions, prejudices, subjectivities and constraints all collide, placing the meaning of gender, religion, and determinative structures of inequality on the table" (Besnier 2014). In Apu's case too, her family's class and religious beliefs collided on the site of her body as decisions around where it would be appropriate for her to be seen, when, and how determined her inability to attend a gym.

Apu then considered taking walks in her neighborhood but she lives in a low-income housing area and gets home only by 8 p.m. after changing two buses and traveling over an hour from the Captivate office. She would have to walk around in the dark and her parents thought it unsafe. Her mother advised her to sleep on her stomach to lose weight but this wasn't working so well. This was when she had finally decided to confide in me. "You know any exercises?" she asked. She needed some that could be done in the tiny space of the living room or on the bed of the one-bedroom house that she shared with her parents. I took her to a back corner of the office and showed her some simple abdomen-exercises, which she watched dubiously and said she would try at home. A web of social control determined Apu's mobility, her timings, and her options–and her desire for a flexible body. In Apu's case a social class habitus (shaped by religion) is transposed on to a gendered one (her position as a first–generation professional woman, mobile around the city for work and sometimes leisure). Pierre Bourdieu analyzes these relationships between subjectivity and the sporting body by reminding us that:

> . . . [T]he determining element of the system of preferences is here the relation to the body, to the way the body is put into action, which is associated with a social position and an innate experience of the physical and social world. This relation to the body is part and parcel of one's whole relation to the world . . . (Bourdieu 1990: 157).

Rather than relate bodily practice directly to social position, he suggests paying attention to the construction of the space of sporting practices, and argues that the space of sports is inserted into a "universe of practices and consumptions themselves structured and constituted as a system" (Bourdieu 1990: 159). Thus spatial sites and practices offer concrete nodes for the performative production of startup subjectivities. In Apu's case this manifest as an exclusionary practice but Archana and Lata had different experiences as Captivate professionals who lived on their own.

Gate–Keeping to Regulate Clothes, Bodies, and Presentation

Apu's colleague Archana lived in a Ladies Hostel for migrant professional women who could not afford the advance deposits required to rent shared apartments. She had more freedom over what kind of exercise to choose since she was under no direct supervision. From her bus window during one commute to work, she noticed the sign for a dance class flash by below her. The signboard advertised B-Boying[44], Hip-Hop and Breakdance lessons. She scribbled down the first half of the phone number quickly as the bus passed; on the way back along that same route in the evening she jotted down the other half of the number. She enrolled in the class to learn hip-hop.

Apu was not friends with many of the other women at Captivate—they made no special effort to be with her and since she was uncertain about her English and from a

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[44] Also called "breakdance" or "breaking," this is a kind of street dance popularized by working class African-American and Puerto-Rican youth in New York City.

small town in south India she preferred to stay to herself. I could sense that others in the office mistook her reserve for docile and tame behavior; when it slipped out that she attended a dance class, others gave a derisive snort. They did not consider her the "type" to do any form of Western dance and I realized that even within our 50–person office, there was active gate–keeping around class, consumption, and leisure as women commented and judged each other's aspirations and choices.

I faced this myself when I arrived in office draped in a sari on Diwali, the festival of lights. People smiled and greeted me as I walked through the office but when I got to my cubicle, Sneha who was unfailingly—and unflinchingly—honest gave me her opinion. "What's wrong with you?" she wanted to know. "You look like a local!" Unlike Ritty Lukose's description of Keralan women for whom being "local" is also to be rooted in local understandings of appropriate gendered behavior, Sneha used the word to chastise me. I looked unruly, she meant, like a working class woman whom she imagined as disheveled and unkempt. I had left my sari fold loose and unpinned as women in my family and all my friends did, but the threat of a fallen *pallu*, was to her a sign of being out–of–place in a professional environment. She dragged me into the office restroom and took out a plethora of safety pins to attach various parts of my sari to my blouse, keeping everything in place. This was the "professional" office look.

Apu too reminded me of this when I photographed her once. "Wait!" she said. "Let me look a bit more professional!" and then proceeded to adjust her *dupatta* to neatly cover her chest. These forms of unspoken and unwritten codes of conduct regulate aspirations, behavior, and relationships in the workplace. Women monitor and survey each other's clothes to ensure we meet the required standard (see also Freeman 2000 for a

discussion of women's regulation of each other's dress codes, and their self–awareness of their own clothing style in light of this, in the informatics industry). No wonder Archana kept her B–Boying class private—she did not want to risk the ridicule that would come from others knowing she attended one. It is a thrice–a–week class but she only visits on Saturdays—the barebones studio does not have room for her to change out of office clothes during weekday classes. The day I was to visit her class she didn't show up: her hand-washed exercise clothes had not dried in time.

Her class was in a densely crowded area, next door to an expanded stall that sold coconuts. The street at seven p.m. was empty except for a young man walking a dog that strained at its leash. Her class was on the top floor of a narrow building, one flight above a working class gym announced by a massive poster of a muscular man posing with his biceps foregrounded for the camera. The air was tepid with the pungent smell of sweat. The top–floor was essentially the terrace, barely covered by strips of wood and tarpaulin.

One wall was constructed from bare plywood, the strips of wood marked by red vermilion signifying that a *puja* (religious blessing) had blessed it. Another "wall" of blue-painted tin offered privacy from the street below and the use of tin extended to the roof as well. At the more expensive dance studios in other neighborhoods, members arrive straight from work and use the facility's showers and changing rooms. Here participants came dressed for class in street wear. After a brief warm–up, two women students dragged out thin sheets of foam as "dance mats" for floor moves. The young male instructor and his wife began teaching complex routines. Everyone learned quickly and then they moved on to "face–offs": two or three of them performing what they had just learned with the rest watching.

Archana told me that she initially wanted to join salsa class because she had seen it on TV but "salsa *ke liye* partner *chahiye hota hain, na*," she explained, ["for salsa, you need a partner, no?"] so she started with hip–hop class on Saturdays. I asked her, "Why salsa, because they have it in South America?" since Archana worked on Captivate's South America team. But she corrected me: "No, *vahan pein* belly dance *karte hain na"* ["No, over there—South America—they have belly dance, no"]. She had no particular reason for choosing this form of dance except that it was on her bus route home and she had spotted it, and knew she loved to dance. She would have liked to go everyday but her lack of clothes, changing facilities at the gym, and her junior position at Captivate that made it impossible to control work schedules prevented her from participating.

Lata was another Captivate employee, from a working class background, who was a migrant to Bangalore and now enjoyed a relatively senior position as a manager. She also wanted to lose weight. We ambitiously made plans to go running in public. Lata could never keep them: either she worked late or needed to get to an early morning German class. Finally she tried a quick solution, paying a hefty sum of money for a dubious weight loss service. It used electricity to create currents across her stomach for weight loss through a techno-massage. She went for a couple of sessions since she was on medication that made her put on weight, but the techno–massage had no visible benefit.

Sometimes Lata and a couple of others, all from non–elite class backgrounds, managed to go to a local yoga class behind the Captivate office. It was a slow yoga class focused on breathing and posture. An old home had been converted into a yoga space; the dark living room became a studio, and musty blankets folded up served as yoga mats. In

the dim indoors a somber–looking woman instructor with a long braid of grey hair sat at the head of the room. She instructed us remotely on our asanas and offered advice on how to improve postures.

Compare this with a startup yoga studio targeting new middle class consumers just a few kilometres away. The a1000yoga studio was on the second floor of a building, bright with light that streamed in through massive glass windows. The teachers were young Indian women and men, usually in their mid-twenties who ran their classes with merciless ferocity. They reprimanded, challenged, and corrected us, walking around to hold up a student's leg straighter or bend another's while the student squawked in agony. Classes that I attended after fieldwork were always full, students lined in four rows with just inches between them. The focus was on fitness and flexible options—the neoliberal mantras of our time—as one of the energetic managers explained:

> The whole thing—[the Founder's] vision is to bring yoga to everyone. Why would anyone come to do yoga when there is *zumba* or gymming? Get it away from their thoughts that yoga is boring, yoga is slow, get it away from their thoughts that yoga is taught by some old man in saffron robes, under a tree or in an ashram, get those stereotypical images out and get youngsters in. How do you get youngsters in? You want music? We have it! You want a swanky gym? Yes! There we go. You want young and peppy teachers? We'll give you that. You want variety? You want cardio? You want weight loss? Stress relief? Everything. We have different styles of yoga and different people teaching at different times of day… so it's different styles of yoga under one roof which never happened. Earlier there was one style when one person would teach, and it can be boring. So they keep it upbeat here, and slowly we instill the philosophies; if nothing else, come burn your calories and go.
>
> We have a lot of workshops about dietary health, exercises, anything non-intensive on the body. We try to bring in the traditional martial arts like *kalari*; someone teaching *bharatanatyam*, we definitely promote Indian tradition. We don't want to lose it and do our best to keep it going. We have a lot of youngsters between 22–45, moms trying to battle the bulge. The men are slowly picking it up, and the wives are bringing the husband and the husband is a hard-core

> gymmer: *nasha ban jaata hain* ("it becomes a habit"). Amazing! I wanted to hear that (Interview with yoga studio manager, March 11, 2013).

In the words of this manager, the yoga studio—self-described as a startup—enables the kinesthetic desires of its clientele. Traditional yoga classes are based on the practice of particular styles (Iyengar Yoga, Vinyasa Yoga etc.), yet here the primary purpose of the studio is to enable the individual pursuit or goal. This is neoliberal yoga, adapting to different needs, and channeled toward enhancing individual productivity.

The ability to participate in fitness, adventure sports, and dance classes is integral to the startup world of Bangalore. However participation in these publics involves embodied class practices. New startup forms of fitness cater to those who do not perform physical labor (at work or at home) and for whom a separate class of domestic labor will prepare dinner and take care of the house while they use the time freed up by outsourcing these activities to engage in leisure pursuits. For lower middle–class Captivate employees it is only the occasional visit to the hip–hop class or the slow yoga class that their schedule, resources, and commute permit. The expensive and flexibility oriented forms of embodiment that startup classes teach are inaccessible to them. It is only the six or so elite employees who can afford to have a yoga teacher come to their homes or attend an elite dance class that does not threaten their classed femininity. For lower middle–class Captivate employees the Start Up City affords transient opportunities to experiment with middle–class ways of life and living.

Sticking to the Itinerary

On one occasion I found myself invited to a birthday treat for a small group of close friends at Captivate, all of them were from lower middle–class backgrounds. All of

them were the first women in their families to have office jobs. I had gifted one of them a pair of earrings and a wooden jewelry box on her birthday. In addition, she received elaborate gifts of dress material and chocolates from her close friends. They brought her a cake, which was cut in the canteen, and since I had presented her with a gift, I was invited both to the cake cutting and the "thank you" lunch she took everyone to.

My invitation to the pizza lunch arrived in a discrete text message from the host, a young woman who sat in a cubicle across from me. I turned to her when I received it, and she mouthed, "Please come! Tomorrow!" Birthday lunches and treats for raises at the office were always small, discrete groups since one or two people were paying the bill for everyone. A group of us left the office the next day, and walked laughing and talking to the second floor of a Pizza Corner around the corner from the office. This was a fast–food pizza parlor near office, offering fixed lunch combination plates.

We seated ourselves with no hesitation. A large glass window flanked us on one side and the Bangalore metro rattled by every seven or so minutes. The host—Apu, the destination expert for South America—found herself seated next to Archana who had recently moved to Bangalore from a smaller town and was befuddled by the menu choices. She looked skeptically at the menu: she only ever ate South–Indian food and sometimes ate North–Indian when she was feeling particularly adventurous. The pizza menu was completely unfamiliar to her. Apu turned immediately to her rescue with a set of instructions. "You can order the Friday discount lunch deal," she told her. "You can choose the drink between a Sprite and a Coke, and you can choose which appetizer, either the chicken wings or the garlic bread option." Apu had barely looked at the menu

but she knew what everybody would eat (and what she would be paying for, as the birthday host): the lunch combo at Rs. 95 (less than $2) a person.

Similarly, everybody already knew exactly what they wanted. They had been several times before to this eatery and everyone always chose the same options. These were "safe" options: for young women who rarely eat out and rarely eat non–Indian food or fast–food, choosing the same menu option every time avoids the embarrassment that ensues when the waiter asks an unexpected question or when an item is unpronounceable. Captivate office lunches are often at nearby cafes, and entire teams eat lunch out to celebrate a week of good work every few months.

When I went out with my work team, each outing was invariably accompanied by moments of awkwardness. Team members would stare at the menu, with some of the senior managers offering guidance to the younger members who had never eaten Western food before. Managers corrected requests for a "mouse" to "mousse"; directed employees to ask for chilly and hot sauce to make their Western meals palatable at nearby cafes serving pastas and sandwiches, and made suggestions for what to order amidst a list of unfamiliar menu items. To avoid disappointment and the awkward moment of mispronunciation, many Captivate employees chose the same restaurant for every single outing. For the younger members this took them to the same neighborhood pub every Wednesday to avail of the two free drinks to ladies and a night of dancing. For the older members it meant the same set of three restaurants surrounding Captivate. Here the food was reasonable, and they had decided on what to order after the first few visits and conferences about the menu. Others who joined the office later were inculcated into these familiar rituals—like Archana was being initiated now.

When the food arrived, our colleague who had taken the host's suggestion immediately began to customize her order, pouring tomato ketchup all over the garlic bread, and some others did the same. Women who were married or were dating (there was only one woman in the entire office of 30 women who was in a relationship of choice at the time) customized their food less, and had sampled other dishes than the staple ones that everybody picked almost automatically.

Figure 7. Pizza lunch, October 2013.

For elite startup entrepreneurs, notions of risk and adventure are produced in and through participation in startup publics. They extend from the realm of finance and business to the ways that entrepreneurs inhabit yoga studios, bicycling clubs, and efforts at public activism. Corporeal practices reflect and shape the imagination of the Start Up

City and its ideal inhabitants. There are multiple sites at which to learn, practice, and perfect these ways of being in the city, but access to these spaces are themselves already mediated and determined by class and cultural capital. Apu, Archana and other women at Captivate take risks in their everyday life—work itself is a fundamental type of risk that involves signifying oneself with markers of respectability. Experimenting with new kinds of food at restaurants with elaborate menu choices (rather than the fixed "lunch menu" served in many local Indian restaurants) make visible the vulnerability of class others.

Uncertain about their movements and interactions at middle–class spaces of consumption and leisure, women often choose to move around in groups. Others in the group advise and "teach" appropriate codes of conduct and expand an understanding of what kinds of interactions are possible. Out at a bowling alley at an evening sponsored by Captivate, we were all confused about how to stand, how to bend, how to roll. Others who knew how to bowl taught us, and individual embarrassments and awkwardness were held at bay in a large group of 30 novices. Later, those who had to leave early learned that they could ask for their food to be packed and women began packing the snacks that Captivate had paid for to take home to their families. Women's engagements with these new spaces was tentative and focused on learning how to enter them, as I show in more detail in the next section.

Sneha's Story: Knowing the Body

Sneha, a divorcee with a teenage child, works at Captivate and lives with her parents in a small neighborhood cut off from major bus routes. It is hard to reach her apartment and for her to leave since the streets are too narrow for autos to reach. Her interaction with others in the office was limited since just venturing out of her

neighborhood is both challenging and expensive. When the office planned an event that Sneha really wanted to attend, she sometimes asked if she could stay the night at my home and attend it with me. We often planned a weekend together but with her daughter's school, homework, and extra–curricular schedule, this never materialized. One festival, her parents took her daughter to visit their hometown—this was our opportunity to finally spend a weekend together. Her primary request was that we visit a pub.

When our weekend began, I picked her up from the bus station and we took an auto back to my house. Sneha wanted to wax her legs and buy a strapless bra in preparation for the evening expedition. Finding a beauty parlor to do this was harder than I expected. It was a state holiday for a religious festival and the busy road that I lived next to was empty, most shops were shut. We walked across several streets looking inside buildings and in back alleys until we finally found an open parlor.

Once we entered, the usually confident and self-assured Sneha fell behind me. She waited for me to ask the male manager about the services she wanted: hands and legs waxing. She fingered the rate card and pored over it for a few minutes while we all waited. Finally, she turned to me. "Very expensive, no?"

I agreed. We left and kept walking. I was sure that nothing would be open but she persisted in her plan, finally prevailing upon me to walk down a leafy residential street. It opened out onto a small stretch of commercial buildings and surprisingly she found an open parlor. I leafed through a magazine outside waiting for her to finish. As I waited the night lights began to come on in the street and I knew our night was getting cut short. When she finished we began the hunt for a bra shop. She wanted a special strapless bra.

I took her to one on the next street: it was squeezed into a tiny building with stalls bursting with products from Bangkok. We wobbled up a tiny spiraling staircase, following a young male salesperson. Upstairs in a room that fitted a counter and a makeshift wooden changing room, I asked the salesman for a strapless bra. This store followed the older sales practice of bra sales in which customers interact across a counter with the salesperson who assesses your size and your needs and hands you what they think is best—a remnant of India's socialist state. In the newer neoliberal malls, customers wander around display shelves and racks, handling and selecting goods. Here Sneha's body was subjected to the gaze of the salesman as he decided her fit.

"32," he said definitely, moving to pull boxes from the racks.

"No, 36," Sneha said to me.

"36," I said to him.

We were all inches apart from each other in the small space; he was behind a counter rummaging through bra boxes.

"I can tell you that for a strapless it's definitely going to be a 32," he said to me, irritated. I looked at Sneha.

"36," she said again.

"OK, it makes no difference to me," he said, shrugging and switching boxes.

She went into the tiny changing room behind us and pulled the door shut. The bra salesman was an amateur photographer and asked to see my camera. He quickly scanned my past photographs, commenting on light and clarity and telling me about the model of camera he wanted to buy. Sneha came out in a few minutes. “It’s not fitting,” she said to me. “I told you,” the bra salesman said to me, handing me back my camera and bending into his pile of boxes. He emerged with another box and handed it to her. He turned to me, “Trust me, I know these things.”

Sneha’s entry into the bra shop was simultaneously an entry into a public world in which her body was rendered visible. She was hyper visible as the only customer in this small salesroom. Negotiating with the salesman was at once a dispute over how to calibrate her own body: its contours, depths, appearance, and ratios. Wanting to enter the public world of Bangalore’s nightlife required subjecting her body to scrutiny, both the pleasurable inhabitation of the pub to come later that evening but also the labor and awkwardness of preparing for it, in this encounter.

After Sneha’s purchase, we walked back to my apartment where she washed her hair and wore a red dress with a strapless bra, although the dress had sleeves. She asked if she could leave her wallet behind at my apartment since she thought it would be too dangerous to carry it out to the pub at night: what if someone stole it? Sneha was unfamiliar with what to expect from the streets of the city at night. She imagined them as a dangerous space, far from the safety and predictability of her home. She did not want to immerse herself completely in it, and mediated her participation by leaving her wallet behind although the pub was a four–minute walk from the apartment.

The bouncer opened the door for us, and we walked into a largely empty room with a cricket match playing on an overhead television and casually–dressed middle–aged men desultorily watching it from the few occupied tables. We seated ourselves, and I asked for a fresh lime soda for Sneha and a beer for myself. Senha sat self–consciously in her red dress with her newly blow–dried hair, and I fiddled around with my camera taking photographs of the drinks and the food. In about an hour, we had finished and decided to take a walk around the block before heading home.

Outside, Bangalore's central city street had to come to life after its afternoon stupor. A disco thudded music from deep inside a building; young students in tiny shorts and sleeveless tops laughed on their way back home; auto drivers lining the street hassled us asking if we needed a ride. It was a windy night with a full moon slipping in and out of cloud cover. Sneha and I walked down the busy street stepping across the strewn litter until the people and the shops tapered off. The vacant grounds of a public boy's school led into my residential neighborhood shaded with trees that blocked the streetlights. Sneha strolled leisurely, enjoying the quiet night and the empty streets.

Conclusion

Strolling down a street late at night is a simple enough pleasure, yet to be in public, roaming, walking, at leisure, and at ease is an evasive and rare occurrence for many lower middle–class women. Sneha's work world was defined by the labor, leisure, and consumption spelt out by the startup economy but her after–work hours were spent rooted to her domestic life. I knew that the next day Sneha's parents would return with her young daughter and she would be immobile and unavailable on weekends.

When I first met her and asked what she did in her leisure time she had told me, “washing clothes, eating, sleeping!” She was rooted to her home in all of these activities and when I visited her, I was rooted to the activities with her: helping to hang clothes out to dry on the terrace, or idly watching the TV with her parents, daughter, and us squeezed into a single bedroom. It took me two hours to get to her home and she almost never had the time or energy to take the multiple buses to get to my apartment.

Dreams of the Start Up City imagine urban spaces as ripe for the cultivation of entrepreneurial ideas and ventures, available for the fashioning of startup selves. Even as some parks, streets and sidewalks, are appropriated toward the cultivation of the startup economy, at other less visible sites women like Sneha learn how to enter public spaces. In a rare moment away from her family commitments and physical isolation in a working class neighborhood, Sneha enters the spaces of middle–class consumption and leisure to practice, experiment, and learns with, and through, her colleagues (or the pliable ethnographer) how to define and experience varied registers of individual pleasure and desire.

VIII. Conclusion

I have analyzed how neoliberal startup culture has been introduced to Bangalore, a former Information Technology city, in the years since India's liberalization in the 1990s. The turn to this new economy involves a production of complementary and sympathetic practices, circulations, affect, and future oriented temporalities that locate startup business, the startup entrepreneur, and the Start Up City in relation to each other. Globally the dominant discourse around neoliberalism imagines it as a political and economic rationale and form of governance that enables the individual to become empowered to achieve their highest potential. Deploying the methodological lens of mobility, I suggest that neoliberalism's fictions assume and rely on forms of temporal, physical, and spatial mobility that privilege elite masculine startup entrepreneurs.

How do others encounter neoliberalism's individualistic burden of flexibility? I answer this question by analyzing the Start Up City, startup entrepreneurship, and forms of entrepreneurial labor. Ultimately I argue that in India, even as neoliberal managerial and professional discourses and practices seek to empower and enable *individual* success and growth, its gendered effects are in the fostering of new social formations. By analyzing neoliberalism's less celebrated actors—i.e. not the male startup founder but women entrepreneurs, migrant workers, salaried employees—I show how startup values of risk, passion, and flexibility are differently encountered across the labor chain.

Neoliberal "logics" and "rationales" are splintered to accommodate and intertwine with class projects and realities, gendered circulations in public space, the demands of Indian womanhood, and the conflicting demands of religious and caste–based gendered norms. Individuals knit themselves into collective forms of social life, creatively

interpreting neoliberal tenets to create new fictive kin ties, and telling alternative "origin stories" about their startups. It is through class and gender–based forms of group affiliation that those in the startup economy enter the "risky" new landscapes of public life: forms of fitness, socializing, dating, and activism.

Ethnographic study of women's entry into forms of industrialized work similarly shows how groups of women rely on each other to navigate new worlds of consumption and leisure and creatively resist and reinterpret relations of power (Freeman 2000, Lynch 2007, Ong 2010). What is different about the neoliberal present in India is how questions of self–making, labor and value are integrated into a larger urban milieu. An analysis of the broader political economy of startup culture offers links between connected processes and ideologies that travel beyond the single workplace into the spaces and practices of the city itself. In the contemporary moment, labor cannot be understood as static or as a singular set of actions; it is dispersed across homes, workplaces, investor meetings, accelerator labs, social events, and the ways in which people materialize their dreams for the future.

The startup economy in Bangalore is located in a precise and historic moment—the turn from a back–end service sector location to become a center for innovation and creative enterprise. Thus in the postcolony here, startup business is equally an urban imperative, integrating labor practices and imaginations of one's future into dreams for the self, city, and nation more broadly. These questions of scale are evident in the narratives of women entrepreneurs and individual workers who insert their labor and aspirations into imagined relationships with community and nation—a gendered practice

that sutures women's bodies with national projects (for a discussion on the significance of such connections in times of globalization see also Oza 1992).

In India, I show that startup business is "taught" to wider publics through state and private efforts such as Start Up Festivals, weekend workshops, and through different startups that teach consumption and leisure practices, and forms of embodiment. The startup economy self–represents as a meritocratic and welcoming space that gathers together the "maverick" entrepreneurs, "quixotic" innovators, and "unpredictable" creative minds who love what they do. Middle class professionals and technology entrepreneurs imagine the startup self as the individual who challenges the formal caste and class–governed norms of doing business locally. Entrepreneurs are expected to embrace the mantras of global startup ideologies: do what you love.

Despite this construction of startup entrepreneurship as a welcoming and inclusive form of business, my fieldwork shows that the ideals of risk, unpredictability, innovation, and genius that assemble the startup economy are not arbitrary. I argue that they are specific, material, affective, and ultimately masculine and masculinized forms of self–styling and self–making that rely on and valorize public productions of startup ideals such as risk and flexibility. They are premised on the privilege of forms of mobility that seek to empower the individual entrepreneur.

Following women entrepreneurs and salaried workers allows me to understand how neoliberal ideologies of startup business are encountered and appropriated by those who do not command such mobility. Women entrepreneurs embody, imagine, and discursively create alternate neoliberal regimes of value by imagining their labor as an ethical and moral practice that supports their families, communities, and nation. In the

absence of the freedoms required to be mobile and energized startup entrepreneurs, women recreate startup environments in their everyday life and turn their neighborhoods into potential sites of work.

Similarly, at entrepreneurial workplaces infused and energized by startup ethics, workers reinterpret neoliberal management practices to render them meaningful and locally relevant. Startup entrepreneurs seek to give individuals the autonomy, initiative, and skills necessary to equip them to do the best work they can—what I call "work as freedom." Even while these startup ideals are not accessible to all employees, I show that workers claim flexibility, incorporate it into their imagination of their everyday work life, and celebrate it as techniques to closely knit themselves into the company, and reconfigure their value at work. This is a distinctly gendered aspect of entrepreneurial work, in which the neoliberal axiom of flexibility is read against the intentions of management and the material realities of work to crack open circuits of debt, gratitude, and familial love in labor relations.

As the startup economy fractures forms of class and labor identity, workers at Captivate respond by generating new social and fictive ties and by producing the workplace within the terms of the middle–class heterosexual family. These alternative imaginings of work enable and equip vulnerable workers to respond to the neoliberalization of their lives. Gendered forms of precarity—low pay, job immobility, retrenchment—are temporarily deferred as workers embody and enact kinship, religious life, friendship, and trust through everyday work relationships. Even while the startup economy displaces risk on to the most vulnerable workers, it simultaneously generates

new forms of socializing and relating as people creatively adapt to, and negotiate, its continuous mutations.

Threaded through the chapters is an analysis of how India's social and gender norms rework neoliberal forms of subjectivity and governance to understand and animate them through local understandings of gender, class, religion, life stage, caste, and migration history. In postcolonial and neoliberalizing India, gender can only be understood as always already imbricated in other forms of identity, belonging, and self–representation.

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