

# Sociology of Education

<http://soe.sagepub.com/>

---

## **Paradoxical Inequalities: Adolescent Peer Relations in Indian Secondary Schools**

Murray Milner, Jr.

*Sociology of Education* 2013 86: 253 originally published online 10 April 2013

DOI: 10.1177/0038040713480190

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://soe.sagepub.com/content/86/3/253>

---

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



American Sociological Association

**Additional services and information for *Sociology of Education* can be found at:**

**Email Alerts:** <http://soe.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

**Subscriptions:** <http://soe.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

**Reprints:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

**Permissions:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

>> [Version of Record](#) - Jun 24, 2013

[OnlineFirst Version of Record](#) - Apr 10, 2013

[What is This?](#)

# Paradoxical Inequalities: Adolescent Peer Relations in Indian Secondary Schools

Murray Milner, Jr.<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Peer relationships in secondary schools in two different cultural areas of India are compared. A general theory of status relations and a specification of the distinctive cultural features of each area are used to explain the observed differences in peer inequality, clique formation, petty deviance, putdowns, fashion consciousness, romantic relationships, and gossip. A surprising finding is that the degree of status inequality among school peers is inversely related to an ideological emphasis on equality and hierarchy: The more egalitarian the cultural ideology, the greater the inequality in peer relationships, and conversely, the more emphasis on hierarchy, the less the actual peer inequality. The apparent paradox is resolved by specifying the structural mechanisms through which cultural and ideological differences operate. Brief comparisons with the United States suggest that these findings are not unique to India.

## Keywords

inequality, adolescents, peer relations, status, India, secondary schools, status relations, teenagers, culture, comparative sociology

## INTRODUCTION: THE QUESTION AND THE ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

Research on peer relationships and peer status indicates that these factors often have very strong effects on the development, identity, and behavior of young people (e.g., Ali and Fokkema 2011; Faris and Felmlee 2011; Flashman 2012; Goza and Ryabov 2009); the future courses of their life experiences (Harris 1998); and even the nature and extent of social change (Rosenberg 2011). The effects of peers and status relationships seem to be especially strong among adolescents. In earlier work (Milner 2004), I developed a theory of status relations that offers explanations for the nature of peer relations in U.S. secondary school settings. In this article, I extend that analysis by asking three related questions: (1) Are the patterns of peer relationships similar in different cultures? (2) Does the theory provide useful explanations when the

cultural context is different? and (3) How does the cultural context affect peer relations?

To address these questions, secondary school peer relations in “Hindu India” (meaning most of India)<sup>1</sup> and “tribal India” (explained in the following) are analyzed. Hindu India, with its historic caste system, has long been characterized as having a cultural ideology that emphasizes hierarchy and ritualistic deference toward superiors. Tribal India shares the same macro political and economic structure as Hindu India but has a more egalitarian cultural ideology.

Although much of the observed behavior in these two settings can be explained with the theory

---

<sup>1</sup>University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, USA

### Corresponding Author:

Murray Milner, Jr., University of Virginia, 3 University Circle, Charlottesville, VA 22904, USA.

Email: [mm5k@virginia.edu](mailto:mm5k@virginia.edu)

of status relations, a fuller explanation requires taking into account differences in the cultural ideologies concerning equality and hierarchy. When this is done, a seeming paradox emerges: The more egalitarian the general cultural ideology, the more status inequality there is among school peers. This apparent paradox will be explained by specifying the mechanism by which cultural ideologies affect the structure of status inequality among student peers. Before presenting the data, the theory that guides the research and the previous findings must be summarized (see Milner [1994] and Milner [2004:29–33] for an earlier, fuller exposition).

## THEORY OF STATUS RELATIONS

Status is the accumulated approvals and disapprovals people express toward an actor or an object. It is virtually synonymous with prestige, esteem, honor, and dishonor, though each has slightly different connotations. The theory explains the key features of social relationships when status is a central resource and is significantly insulated from, and not reducible to, economic and political power. The theory has four elements.

First, status is relatively *inalienable*. It is “located” primarily in other people’s minds. Hence, it cannot be appropriated. Conquerors, robbers, or parents can take away your property or remove you from a social role or office, but to change your status, they must change the opinions of other people. This makes status a desirable resource, and those with new wealth or political power nearly always attempt to convert some of these resources into status to gain greater security and legitimacy.<sup>2</sup>

Second, status is relatively *inexpansible*; it is a relative ranking. If all students receive As, they become valueless. Because of inexpansibility, if someone moves up, someone moves down. Consequently, where status is a central resource, mobility tends to be regulated and restricted, as in the Indian caste system, the *Social Register*, and the National Academies of Science. One way of staying on top or moving up is by pushing others down. This is apparent in teenage gossip and putdowns, racism, negative campaigning, and intellectual critique.

Third, *conformity* to the norms of the group is a key source of status. Unsurprisingly, those with

higher status tend to elaborate and complicate the norms to make it harder for upstarts to become competitors. Elaborations tend to be about things that are hard to copy, such as accent and demeanor. American teenage groups often demand conformity with respect to clothing styles, slang, and body demeanor. Those with high status frequently change what is in fashion to “stay ahead.”

Fourth, *associations* are another source of status. Associating with those of higher status improves your status, and associating with the lowly decreases your status. This tendency is especially strong for expressive and intimate relationships. Sex and eating are the classic symbols of intimacy, and accordingly, the regulation of who marries whom and who eats with whom are the core features of most status groups. Accordingly, American teenagers are preoccupied with who “goes with” or “hooks up with” whom, who eats with whom in the lunchroom, and who parties with whom.

The theory also suggests an explanation of *pluralism*. When status systems become larger, it is harder to be a top conformer and to associate with those of high status. Those who lose out create alternative or counter cultures with different norms and criteria for attaining status. Such processes are seen in alternative cultural forms such as country, rock, and hip-hop music or pop and primitive art. The larger the status system, the more likely distinctive and relatively inalienable differences such as ethnicity will accentuate pluralism.

The theory helps explain the key social features when status is a central resource and hence helps explain many of the characteristics of secondary school peer cultures.

## PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Because we are interested in how cultural differences affect school peer relationships, two types of research are especially relevant: studies of Indian secondary schools and studies that highlight the differences between Hindu and tribal cultures.

There are a handful of careful studies of Indian schools. Beni (2008) provided an ethnography of schools and student life in parts of western India, but it was focused on elementary school students. Jeffery, Jeffery, and Jeffrey (2005) studied secondary schools in Bunor, focusing on unemployed

and underemployed young men after they had finished their education and whether schooling produced the positive results attributed to education (Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2008). Their study was not focused on in-school peer relationships or student culture. Thapan (2009) analyzed the identity formation of adolescent girls but did not focus on the school setting and peer relationships. There are ethnographic studies of two elite schools: the Rishi Valley School, founded by the Indian philosopher and religious leader Krishnamurti (Thapan 2006), and the Doon School, arguably the most prestigious secondary school in India (MacDougall 2000; Srivastava 1998). These are very atypical schools that turn out only a few hundred students each year. De Souza (1974) carried out a pioneering study of Indian public schools (which Americans would call private boarding schools). These are a type of total institution, and the nature of peer relationships is significantly different. Boarding schools graduate a very small percentage of the Indian students who attend English-medium secondary schools. Hence, one aim of this study was to highlight peer relationships and student culture in the kinds of secondary schools that are likely to play a central role in shaping the next generation of leaders.

The second relevant literature concerns the cultural ideology about equality and hierarchy. It was Dumont's ([1966] 1980) classic work *Homo Hierarchicus* that emphasized the centrality of the notion of hierarchy as a key ideological assumption of Indian society. Many have criticized and qualified Dumont's work, but there is little disagreement that historically, Indian culture has placed a strong stress on hierarchy. Although egalitarian notions have increased in importance, commentators as recent as Giridharadas (2011) continue to be struck by the continuing power of hierarchy and ritualistic deference.

These judgments rely on historical evidence or information about adults. But does the ideology of hierarchy continue to be important to the younger generations? Fortunately, there is a recent survey that gives an overview on the attitudes and self-reported behaviors of a national random sample of Indian youth, defined as those aged 14 to 34 years (DeSouza, Kumar, and Shastri 2009).<sup>3</sup> These data make it clear that hierarchy and difference are still quite salient for most Indian youth.<sup>4</sup> This does not mean that Indian youth always conform to hierarchical and traditional norms. In friendship groups and romantic relationships, hierarchy is

often qualified or made ambivalent by joking and flirting (Osella and Osella 1998). Nonetheless, an ideology of hierarchy is pervasive.

In contrast, the research on tribal groups in North East India indicates that generally, the cultural ambiance tends to be more egalitarian (Barkataki 1977; Bhattacharjee 1984; Bordoloi 1987; Chib 1984; Gassah 1984; Ghosh 1982; Hluna 1987). Historically, this region has been less hierarchical at the individual, family, and political levels, though this varies by tribes and clans. The emergence of Christianity as the major religion in the area and the increased power of the Indian state have reduced such traditional patterns as beating wives and tyrannical behavior by local chiefs. Notions of individualism are more developed, as indicated by relatively high divorce rates, a long history of individual religious conversion, and increasing rates of migration out of the region, especially by young people. Gender inequality is weaker though by no means nonexistent.<sup>5</sup> At the political level, traditional leaders had more limited power.<sup>6</sup> I now turn to the cases that are the foci of this analysis.

## INDIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

About 50 percent of 16- and 17-year-olds and 32 percent of 18- and 19-year-olds are enrolled in school, and about 15 percent actually complete the senior secondary level.<sup>7</sup> Students take exams administered by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) at the end of class 10 and the end of class 12. The latter exam is a prerequisite for admission to a university, and hence many, if not most, students in classes 11 and 12 hope to enroll in college. Classes 11 and 12 are roughly the equivalent of the last 2 years in the college track of U.S. high schools.

In this article, I focus on a school in Delhi, which I call Rampura Secondary School, and a school in Shillong in North East India, which I call St. Mark's Higher Secondary School. The data on these schools are part of a larger study that included three other schools in Delhi, one school in South India, and one other school in North East India. The broader arguments and interpretations are informed by the data from these other schools.

Rampura (Delhi) is coeducational. St. Mark's (Shillong), like many secondary schools in India,

is segregated by gender until the last two years. Such schools often admit students from the opposite gender into classes 11 and 12. Most high schools require students to specialize in a particular stream or track. The most common streams, in order of their prestige, are science, commerce, and the humanities.

Observations focused on classes 11 and 12, though some data were also collected on class 9 and 10 students. I focus on two private schools because 58 percent of India's more than 133,000 government-recognized schools are private, and most of India's future elites and upper middle class will come from such schools. Every city and most district towns have English-medium secondary schools that graduate several hundred thousand students each year. National papers discuss parents' "craze" to get their children into English-medium education (Gopal 2004; Gupta 2007:100).

## RAMPURA SECONDARY SCHOOL, DELHI

Delhi has 10 million to 15 million people, depending on how its boundaries are defined. People are from many regions, but Hindi and (for the educated) English are the *linguae francae*. Rampura is located between Delhi's inner and outer ring roads. The neighborhood is an older, and now densely settled, suburban area. The school has two large brick buildings with adjacent grounds. The nonprofit educational foundation that runs Rampura also operates 6 schools or teacher education institutes in Delhi and 22 institutions scattered around North India. The ambiance of this school is nationalistic; famous Indians of the past, including leaders of the Independence Movement, are featured on numerous bulletin boards in the halls. Only classical Indian music and dance are allowed; Western forms are banned. The school is officially nonsectarian, but all the members of the Board of Management have Hindu names, and all are men. Rampura is a coeducational day school with nearly 5,000 students. They are primarily from middle-class and upper-middle-class Hindu families. There are usually 35 students per section (i.e., classroom), and the number of sections for each class (i.e., grade) varies from 8 to 11.

The data on this school were collected by two graduate students in the sociology department at

the Delhi School of Economics. They were part of the team of graduate students who collected similar data at other schools. Team members attended training sessions in addition to their course work in research methods. Data were collected primarily in July and August 2007 by talking with students informally and observing their behavior at school. Fieldworkers wrote up extensive ethnographic fieldnotes and a paper summarizing their findings.

## *Cliques, Ranking, and Egalitarianism*

When students were observed in the halls, the classroom and the school grounds, there were no obvious popular crowds or elitist cliques, nor did there seem to be students who were openly shunned or isolated. Individuals had close friends, but there did not seem to be many well-established cliques—though, as we shall see, there were some. A fieldworker wrote that

Identifying a particular group was proving to be difficult. [In class] they sat randomly and the interaction was not limited to a definite set of people, but I saw people flocking together to catch up on any major gossip. As the lunch break was also relatively short there was little possibility of stable subgroups forming. Sometimes people did hang out together in large clusters, but they were very fluid and . . . in any given class there seemed to be considerable solidarity and camaraderie. While boys and girls tended to sit on different benches, there was considerable interaction between them. Frequently, the boys teased or mocked the girls, but it was generally the kind of antagonism that occurs between . . . people who know one another relatively well. Some of these people were together since nursery class so their bonds were pretty strong.

Some of this mocking and teasing was almost certainly a form of flirting.

A few families were quite rich, but family wealth did not seem to affect friendships. When asked about their expenditures, students were reluctant to admit that they spent more than others because they did not want their friends to think they were trying to show off.

There were, however, two ways in which students acknowledged status difference: grades and athletics. Those who did well were looked up to and admired. CBSE examination scores are made public, and students who score at the top become virtual heroes. The second fieldworker noted, "One of the sections had the tenth board topper [i.e., a student with the highest CBSE score] and . . . the entire class was very proud of the fact." Science students were usually considered more intelligent and committed. Few actually planned to be scientists. Most wanted to be admitted to one of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), which are India's equivalents of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology or the California Institute of Technology, and then become engineers. The first fieldworker said, "I was really amazed by the engineering craze. . . . Girls and boys alike saw IITs as their coveted dream." Evening coaching institutes were seen as the means to accomplish this, and students and their families considered them worth the considerable cost. In the two science sections observed most closely, more than 90 percent of the students were enrolled in these after-school institutes.

Rampura seems to go beyond most Indian schools in trying to eliminate students' attempts to claim or display any kind of social superiority. A fieldworker noted that

The rules and regulations of the school try to enforce an egalitarian[ism]. For instance, commuting by the school bus is made compulsory and there is no question of a student riding a bike or driving to school. The school does not have a canteen. . . . The students are not even allowed to buy ice cream from the vendor selling it right outside the school gate. If they are caught doing so, their identity cards are confiscated. Girls are only allowed to wear a simple pair of studs in their ears.

Mobile phones, radios, and compact disc players are prohibited and, if detected, are confiscated. Furthermore, the school does not allow students to celebrate birthdays or similar events by bringing sweets for classmates or exchanging presents, a practice that is fairly common in many Indian schools.

Religion, ethnicity, and caste did not seem to significantly limit friendly relations, at least in the school setting. When one fieldworker kept probing about possible discrimination, a girl

replied that "discrimination was in my head so I was asking them about it; for them it did not matter at all." The fieldworker went on to report,

I was very keen to find out if the students actually bothered about the caste and religion of their classmates. But none of them seemed interested and they thought it was quite a boring question. To them it was absolutely immaterial . . . and they actually claimed to have never thought on those lines.

They said they "even had an OBC in their class." OBC, which stands for Other Backward Classes, is an official government category that includes between 25 percent and 50 percent of the population. It is noteworthy that students joked that they "even had" an OBC. Notably, no mention was made of Dalits (formerly known as Untouchables), who make up about 15 percent to 20 percent of the population. Students are certainly aware of caste differences in the broader society. Caste categories are not, however, salient enough in the school setting for the students to have accurate information about most people's caste membership.

Students knew their own religions and were usually aware of the religions of others. Only a few Muslims were enrolled in the school, perhaps because not many Muslims live in this area of the city. There was little apparent discrimination against Muslims or lower-caste students. Nonetheless, the school's egalitarianism was primarily an equality between the relatively privileged Hindu middle classes.

In terms of gender inequality, the picture is more mixed. First, the humanities stream, which is seen as the lowest status specialization, was overwhelmingly made up of girls. Second, the boys in the science stream treated the few girls who were there as second-class citizens. Third, girls in the humanities may be seen as attractive potential girlfriends, but they seldom receive much intellectual respect. There are, however, ways in which traditional gender roles are being transformed. Sports such as football (i.e., soccer) were played by both boys and girls. The sense of solidarity and camaraderie that often occurs on the sports fields was observed for both genders. Both boys and girls participated in traditionally feminine activities, such as singing in the choir. These developments softened the dominant patriarchal biases of the culture, but they did not eliminate it.

Given the cultural context, peer relationships at Rampura are in many respects surprisingly egalitarian and are not characterized by a clear status hierarchy of cliques.

### *Discipline and Deviance*

The principal was very explicit about the centrality of discipline:

[He] held that when behavior is under observation there is discipline and when not then it is aggression. He said, "The school makes an attempt to discipline the students as much as possible. In this school we make sure that boys keep short hair. I feel good when [former] students walk up to me after years and thank me for instilling in them this habit.

He continued, nostalgically,

Discipline is not what it used to be ten years ago. . . . When the visitors used to come during lunch time, they used to ask if the school was on a holiday as it was so quiet. But now it is the opposite, at lunch times my office is blasting with screams and noises of the students.

Other principals in the Delhi area also stressed the centrality of discipline. These attitudes are implicitly linked to the cultural assumptions about hierarchy; it is assumed that superiors have a virtually unlimited right to scrutinize subordinates.

Rules about dress and hairstyles are strictly enforced. A fieldworker noticed two parents in the lobby talking with a teacher. Then the couple left, taking their two boys with them. She later learned that the boys' hair was longer than the rules allowed, and they were barred from classes until they had haircuts that conformed to the school's rules. Both boys and girls go through a nearly daily regime of frisking and checking by monitors and teachers. Boys face corporal punishment for violations of the dress code. A fieldworker reported that "There have been plenty of instances when boys have been hurled down the stairs for not wearing vests [i.e., undershirts] under their shirts and other violations of the rules." Girls are fussed or yelled at, but at Rampura, the teachers do not usually slap or hit them. The

fieldworker commented that "One of the humanities' teachers picked on girls if they . . . made [up] their eye brows." In the government school that was studied, however, a student monitor said "that the teacher keeps . . . pulling hair or giving slaps to the students, especially girls." "A teacher near class IX-B . . . caught a girl outside the classroom and asked her where she was going and before she could answer gave her two tight slaps." We did not observe such behavior at Rampura.

The emphasis on discipline does not mean that there was no resistance and deviance on the part of the students. The second fieldworker noted that "[This commerce section] was known to be rowdiest of the lot. In fact one of the teachers warned me against them and asked me to inform him if they were too disobedient." One small group within this section was especially unorthodox. They called themselves "Danchayat," which was derived from "Panchayat," which is commonly used to refer to a council or ruling body. The boys had changed the first letter from P to D because they were in section D. These boys did not care much about studies. Students in other sections told the fieldworker that this group was very "naughty." The other students shared a disdain for them.<sup>8</sup> That the Danchayat group was seen as "notorious" indicates that most students were fairly conventional and relatively serious about their schoolwork, or at least about their examination scores. In contrast to the Danchayats, other class 12 students said that they went out for birthday parties, but not for clubbing. "Smoking and drinking was a strict no-no." The Danchayat group may not seem terribly deviant by American standards, but where parents, teachers, and students tend to be obsessed with examination scores and deference to convention, such "rebellious" behavior is defined as "naughty," and "naughty" has more negative connotations than in the United States.

Although peer relations at Rampura may be more egalitarian than at most schools, it is not radically atypical in this regard. The fieldworker concluded, "I felt that the conventional Indian middle-class notion of what school life should be was well reflected in this school."

### *Other Aspects of Student Life*

*Consumption and fashion.* The apparent lack of concern about status differences does not mean

that students lived in an ascetic or provincial world. They seemed quite knowledgeable about national and global consumer culture and fashions. A field observer reported that

All seemed to spare some time for the Internet, which meant chatting online with friends and signing up for popular websites like *Orkut* and *Facebook*. . . . Forty percent of the total students claimed that they liked treating their friends at the popular eating joints, like *McDonald's* and *Pizza Hut*. . . . The boys admitted that they did window shop for brand sportswear when out with friends. For the girls a trip to the malls also meant checking out clothes and trinkets.<sup>9</sup>

Much of their knowledge of global trends seemed to come from a combination of the movies and television. Kabir, a humanities student, remarked, "I like VH1, it plays good songs; Star World is watchable, you get to know where the Indian reality shows are coming from [he giggles]."<sup>10</sup> Another group of students commented negatively about American high school culture, at least as it is portrayed in the movies, indicating that they are familiar with a number of such movies.

Despite their familiarity with and interest in international fashions, friendships and status among peers were not strongly linked to the possession of consumer commodities. It remains to be seen whether with growing prosperity this will continue to be the case in the future.

**Romance.** "One of the topics which boys were enthusiastic talking about was girls. They called it 'bird watching' . . . the boys do have fun in checking out girls." The girls were by no means uninterested in the boys, but they were not as open about this as the boys. The looks and status of a romantic partner affected the other partner's status. This is illustrated in the behavior of Siddha. He was quite successful at acquiring girlfriends but was usually interested in new possibilities. His friends offered to arrange a blind date for him, showing him what they claimed was a photo of the potential date. When he met his date, she was not the attractive girl in the picture. Obviously, his friends had played a joke on him, and he exited the date as soon as he got the chance.<sup>11</sup> Other research on Indian youth also shows that good looks are important (Thapan 2009:42–50). There were couples with more ongoing

relationships who tended to meet in the hallways during the lunch period. A fieldworker noted, "I spotted a few couples holding hands in the corners and having their own small talks." There seemed to be two or three students in each classroom who had such liaisons. Other students and the school officials generally ignored them as long as they restricted themselves to surreptitious handholding.<sup>12</sup> Ethnicity and language seemed to play little role in the selection of romantic partners, but this may well have been because the student body was for the most part relatively upper-caste Hindus who were fluent in Hindi and English, even though their families may have had different mother tongues.

**Gossip.** Gossip about romantic pairings occurred, but this was not a central topic for most groups. More frequently, students gossiped about teachers, often mocking their various eccentricities. This was the flip side of the deference and respect they had to show them in public. Seldom did students openly criticize or put down other individuals or groups, though such thoughts might be shared with intimate friends.

In sum, although consumption, fashion, romance and gossip were a definite part of students' lives, these did not produce intense inequality and clique formation. Higher status students might be condescending toward others, but rarely did they engage in obvious putdowns. More generally, Rampura had relatively low levels of status inequality among peers and few cliques with rigid social boundaries. Next, I turn to a parallel description of the other school that is the focus of the analysis.

## ST. MARK'S HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL, SHILLONG

Shillong is located in North East India, which is an official designation for seven states located north or east of Bangladesh. The region is geographically remote and culturally quite different from most of India. In five of these states, most people belong to various tribes that are traditionally animist (rather than Hindu or Muslim), though about half have become Christian. Their languages are Tibeto-Burman or Austro-Asiatic rather than Indo-European or Dravidian, as are the languages of most of India. Much of the region is hilly or mountainous, and slash-and-burn agriculture was the most common traditional form of production. I refer to this area as "tribal India."<sup>13</sup>



Indians originally from other regions of India are often resented because they have been vastly overrepresented in commerce, government bureaucracies, and educational institutions. Many think that the central government has neglected the region, especially with respect to development funds. The states of Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Tripura have had armed insurgency groups demanding greater autonomy or independence and the expulsion of "outsiders."<sup>14</sup> In some areas, though not in Shillong, bombs go off with some regularity. There is a large military presence, though most personnel are posted for specific periods and live in the vicinity of the cantonment, which is relatively self-contained. Hence, although their political and economic impact is significant, their effect on the local culture seems limited.

Shillong is the capital of the state of Meghalaya, which has long been characterized as "the Scotland of India" because of its scenery and moderate temperatures. Khasis (and closely related tribes) make up about two thirds of the population in the state.<sup>15</sup> Yet because of its educational and military facilities, large numbers of non-Khasis live in the Shillong area.

St. Mark's Higher Secondary School was founded early in the twentieth century by a Catholic order and has about 3,000 students from grades 1 to 12. It is an all-male institution through class 10, but it admits women into classes 11 and 12. These grades usually have three sections (i.e., classrooms) for each of the science and commerce streams. St. Mark's is a relatively prestigious school for this region, roughly comparable in stature with Rampura.

The data were gathered by asking students about their peer relationships and how they spent their time and by directly observing their behavior. Most of the conversations and observations were carried on at the school between classes, during study periods and lunch breaks, and at the end of the school day. Fieldworkers wrote up detailed fieldnotes. In addition to my own fieldwork, 24 college students who were third-year undergraduate sociology majors conducted fieldwork under my direction. Students made observations on one to four occasions. In addition to their regular training in methods, all participated in an all-day workshop at which they were trained in how to carry out observation in a secondary school. The observations were conducted primarily in the months of May and June 2007. I also interviewed the principal, vice principal, and several teachers.

### *Cliques, Ranking, and Egalitarianism*

St. Mark's peer structure is more pluralistic than Rampura's. To give the flavor of this, I briefly describe five groups.

*Group 1:* Five Khasi girls, all seventeen, said that they always hung out together as a group, eating lunch, going to the wash-room, and sitting together. They did not meet after school, because they lived quite a distance from one another. "They did not mix . . . much with other groups of non-Khasi girls. When asked why, they simply said that they did not get along very well." They perceived the nontribal students as "much smarter and more intelligent."

*Group 2:* Six boys from Nagaland, which is about 250 miles from Shillong, conversed in Nagamese. They liked to party on the weekends, which could include drinking and smoking. Because they lived in a hostel, they said that their parents could not control this, but some parents asked them to keep this within limits.

*Group 3:* This group of two Bengali and two Khasi girls said that they were friends with everyone but had one or two "best friends." They used Khasi when speaking to other Khasis but English for everyone else. They had no boyfriends ("don't have time"); they had to get younger siblings ready for school and go to tutoring classes from 7 to 10 p.m. They followed the latest fashions as much as they could with respect to dress, earrings, and hairstyle. They went to friends' birthday parties and other special occasions but not to clubs.

*Group 4:* This group of class 10 boys included six Khasis, one Mizo, and two Bengalis who had been friends since class 4. They usually spoke English. Two said that they had girlfriends. They admired hip-hop fashions and liked Western music, including punk, rock, hip-hop, and heavy metal. They specifically mentioned the B-52s, an American new-wave rock band.

*Group 5:* One Khasi and four Bengali boys were all busy solving math problems. Four claimed to have girlfriends. They complained about their parents (who apparently did not want them to have girlfriends), and

they asked the interviewer to explain to them the notion of “the generation gap.” They claimed, “Being ‘cool’ centers around having spiky hair styles, being stylish in walk and talk, and, of course, being good in studies, [and] . . . going for branded stuff.” According to them, “Gossip is for girls as partying is for boys.” The female fieldworker asked them to characterize their group, and they replied, “Sister, listen! We are like . . . the title of the Hindi movie . . . *Good Boy, Bad Boy*.<sup>16</sup> We are the shining gems and the rugged stones of our class.” Later, some girls nearby said that they were “the most intelligent as well as the naughtiest boys in the class.”

These five groups constitute only a small portion of the total number of identifiable groups. They claimed that parents’ status and wealth did not matter for school friendships. When asked about status differences within friendship groups, most claimed, “We are all equal.” Initially, they said the same thing about status differences between groups. Another group said the same, but when the topic of fighting came up, they said, “Fights are invariably inter-group and often the issues are trivial.” The fights often serve as a way of asserting group superiority. Another fieldworker questioned a group of three Assamese students about inequality:

They all said that there is no such thing [as ranking and inequality among the students]. I told them . . . I do not believe you. . . . You’re saying there is no distinction between tribes?! . . . Gradually this guy began to open up. . . . He said there is inequality between students, the smart, the average, the weak. . . . He went on saying there is a gap between the rich and the poor also. The rich are always with the rich . . . and mostly [people] go with their own tribes . . . because of the security. . . . He said for him it is to avoid being humiliated and abused by other tribes and this is very much relevant from adolescence onward.

One of the girls in group 1 confirmed this:

She confessed they [derisively] termed the other group in their class “the intelligent

group” and considered them to be “different,” which is not far from a notion of geeks or nerds. The boys in the class at times bullied the non-tribal “intelligent” boys and would often copy down their homework.

### *Discipline and Deviance*

The principal of St. Mark’s did not mention the issue of discipline, but students were expected to adhere to a dress code and were regularly inspected. Classrooms were generally orderly, but the hallways were frequently noisy. A fieldworker reported, “Students were laughing, murmuring, shouting—just like a fish market. . . . The corridor was . . . a playground for the junior students.” In short, St. Mark’s was a relatively large and reasonably ordered school, but the students still expressed plenty of youthful exuberance, especially during lunch periods and while changing classes.

Many students were quite concerned about their academic performance, but others were not. Some hoped to be engineers and doctors, usually the dream of their parents, but there was not the “craze” for engineering and IITs apparent at Ram-pura. Others admitted a lack of academic interest and commitment. Nine Khasi boys claimed that they were largely indifferent about their studies. A fieldworker reported,

I asked whether they had a group motto or theme. They replied their motto was “TLOT” (i.e., “weak” in Khasi). They . . . tried to sleep a lot during class. When in Class 9 seven of them failed the final examination . . . though they claimed some of them were quite intelligent.

One of these students used to be first or second in his class. There were certainly other students who only halfheartedly pursued their studies. This seemed to be especially the case among some class 11 students because, unlike class 10 and class 12 students, they did not have to take external examinations.

### *Other Aspects of Student Life*

*Consumption and fashion.* St. Mark’s students were well aware of national and international styles and trends. The five Khasi girls in group 1 were probably more provincial than many

groups, but they were very fashion conscious. As groups 4 and 5 indicate, the boys were at least as style conscious as the girls. Large shopping malls were nonexistent, so their knowledge of global trends came in part from television, the Internet, and movies. The latter seemed a central source of the local youth culture. Although they certainly watched Hindi movies, Western movies seemed more important than in other areas of India. A fieldworker reported that “[A girl said] she loved the dressing sense of boys and girls [in America]—punk and off-the-wall styles. Prom nights also interested them. They were quite disappointed that schools in India didn’t have such opportunities.” Music was another important source of their global consciousness. I was invited to the school picnic of another school in Shillong. A student band played during the event. Of the 13 pieces of music played, all had originated outside of India from places as diverse as the United States, Ireland, Canada, Denmark, Columbia, and Jamaica, though many of these had been popular in the West several years earlier. Despite their awareness of trends in style, fashion, and popular culture, the lower incomes in the North East retarded students’ consumption expenditures. As one group of Khasi boys said, they partied a lot “when they had money,” but they could not usually afford to do so. They were vague about what partying meant, but consumption of alcohol is more traditional and accepted among tribal groups than it is among upper-caste Hindus and Muslims.

**Romance.** As the following account indicates, students varied in their attitudes about romantic relationships. Most of those who had boyfriends or girlfriends were proud of the fact, but usually they described the relationships as “not serious.” They usually kept these secret from parents and teachers. One Khasi boy said that he had a girlfriend, but only to avoid being teased by the other boys for not having one. Another claimed that he had had various girlfriends but did not love any of them. Another admitted that he had liked and admired a girl but had not had the courage to talk with her. Three said that they were not interested having girlfriends, that it was “not yet the time.” Another said he met with his girlfriend every day but that his parents thought they were just good neighborhood friends.

Many of the girls denied having boyfriends, but some were open and even forward about having such relationships:

The fieldworker asked [a group], “Do you have any boyfriends?” They all said yes. One girl confidently said, “I even go for datings and parties.” I asked her, “What about your parents?” She said, “They all know about my relationship, so there is not much problem.”

In another incident, “A girl comes up and very openly says she had a boyfriend at St. Edward’s, but has broken up with him.” She went on to say she liked one of the fieldworkers very much. On the whole, it would be accurate to say that romance was less of a forbidden behavior for students at St. Mark’s than it was for those at Rampura. Tribal girls were less likely to hide their romantic relationships than were nontribal girls, though this varied by the family involved.

**Gossip.** “When I asked [a group of five Khasi girls] what they loved doing together the most, they replied, [laughing] . . . gossiping and sharing secrets.” A different group of six girls in the commerce stream (one Bengali and five Khasi) readily admitted that they gossiped and shared secrets. A third group of six 12th-grade science students said they gossiped and added, “That’s girls’ nature.” In contrast, a group of three Bengali girls said that they liked gossiping but that they never share secrets. When a group of nontribal girls—one Bengali, one Marwari, and one Assamese—were asked what most distinguished their group, they said that they “did not gossip too much about others.” The implication was that gossip was typical of other groups. This may reflect the greater importance many nontribal students attribute to female virtue. Gossip was seen by both male and female students as more common among women. It is probably accurate to say that gossip is common among both genders but more frequent among the girls. Interestingly, in contrast to Rampura, teachers were seldom mentioned as the focus of gossip; students seemed more preoccupied with their peers.

## EXPLAINING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

The structural similarity in the formal organization, the curricula, and the examination systems of the two schools is due to the cultural model, including laws and bureaucratic rules, of what an

**Table 1.** Summary of Differences in Peer Relations for Rampura Secondary School and St. Mark's Higher Secondary School.

Rampura	St. Mark's
Grades very important for most students	Grades much less of a concern for a number of students
One "deviant" group that is considered "notorious" by teachers and other students	A number of groups that regularly deviate from norms advocated by the school and their parents
Few cliques with definite boundaries	Many cliques with definite boundaries
Rarely do students or cliques express their sense of superiority	Although claiming that "all are equal," a number of groups extol their own status and implicitly demean others
Little or no conflict or fighting	Ongoing conflict and occasional fighting
Aware of fashions, but not a primary source of peer status	Aware of fashion and a definite source of status among peers
Notions of coolness seldom mentioned	Notions of coolness frequently mentioned
A few surreptitious couples	Many couples and much more talk about boyfriends and girlfriends
Little gossip about peers	Much gossip about peers
Much gossip about teachers	Little gossip about teachers

Indian secondary school should be. As Gupta (2007:93) wrote, "All the States . . . have adopted a uniform structure of school education." This common structure places students of approximately the same age together for most of the day. It nearly always leads to small groups of friends who spend time together at lunch and other times during the day when they can move about freely.

There are, however, substantial differences in the nature of peer relationships in the two schools. These differences are summarized in Table 1. To explain these differences, I begin by drawing on the theory of status relations, which focuses on structural tendencies that operate in any status system.

### *Applying the Theory to the Data*

**Conformity.** At Rampura, nearly all students accept the norms that extol academic performance. Most are very preoccupied with grades, with the exception of one "notorious" group. This does not mean that students offer no resistance to the norms and authority of adults. Nonetheless, their acknowledgment of the authority of parents and teachers places limits on both their motivation and their ability to deviate. Hence, as the theory would predict, there is not a distinctive peer culture with norms that significantly conflict

with the academic concerns of teachers and parents. At St. Mark's, conformity is less complete; many are less committed to academic achievement. This is especially so among boys living in hostels, and some tribal girls who see themselves as less "intelligent." St. Mark's cliques are often focused on popular culture and fashion and concerned about conforming to these alternative norms. Accordingly, they reinforce their boundaries by the *elaboration* of norms concerning hairstyle, cosmetics, music, and partying. Gossip about peers is another form of elaborating status differences and boundaries. These characteristics are what the theory would predict where instrumental norms are seriously challenged by the alternative norms of a distinctive youth culture.

**Associations.** At Rampura, peer ties are often shaped by relatively instrumental concerns (e.g., whom to study with, who rides the same bus, or who goes to the same coaching center). There are very few opportunities for expressive activities (e.g., no canteen, short lunch periods, very limited time before and after school because of the required school bus system, and coaching institutes in the evening). Although a minority of students have romantic relationships, these seem largely limited to surreptitious hand-holding between classes. After-school expressive

relationships are difficult because Rampura is in the midst of an enormous metropolitan city, and families are geographically scattered. At St. Mark's, there was frequent mention of romantic relationship, not only by boys but also by a number of girls, and considerable talk about partying. As the theory would predict, at Rampura, the status differences that do exist have less impact on associations, and subgroups are relatively fluid, whereas at St. Mark's, cliques and subgroups are common.

**Inalienability.** At St. Mark's, the clique boundaries are further reinforced by differences in ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. From a macro perspective, ethnicity may be socially and historically constructed, but from the point of view of most secondary school students, it is an inalienable identity. Although relatively inalienable ethnic and linguistic difference exist in both schools, they are greater in St. Mark's. Multiple cultural cliques form, but inalienable attributes increase the probability of subgroups with relatively distinct boundaries. Hence, greater is the inclination of students to form cliques at St. Mark's. Moreover, once they are formed, the status differences and boundaries of cliques tend to become more inalienable.

**Inexpansibility.** If one clique claims an exalted status, it suggests that other groups are lower in status. Clearly, there are cliques at St. Mark's that attempt to be cooler than others; they may or may not attempt to explicitly put down others. When clique differences are linked to tribal ethnicity, this increases the probability of conflict between these groups. Most students at St. Mark's do not openly demean others, but some do. Moreover, "intelligent" students are frequently bullied, especially if they are nontribal students. Hence, as the theory would predict, status competition and the levels of conflict are more prevalent at St. Mark's than at Rampura.

Inexpansibility also affects the relative status of adults and students; the status distance between adults and youth is less in tribal India than in Hindu India. In turn, the authority of adults over youth is more problematic. The tribal parental authority is further weakened by two other factors. Ten to 20 percent of the students are from other states or districts, and their sons or daughters live in hostels, which reduces direct parental supervision and authority. A significant minority

of students with less parental supervision can change the dynamics of student behavior for the whole student body. Second, a number of tribes are traditionally matrilineal, and the household authority figure is the uncle, not the father. Hence, the authority structure that children face is more fragmented, resulting in less rigorous forms of social control. Most tribal students respect their parents and teachers, but in general, tribal adults do not have the same status superiority and unchallenged deference as Hindu parents. Hence, as the theory suggests, a distinctive youth culture is more prevalent at St. Mark's than at Rampura.

**Pluralism.** Rampura and St. Mark's are not qualitatively different in size, so this is not a distinctive source of pluralism. St. Mark's students are from a greater variety of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, and these relatively inalienable characteristics contribute to a more pluralistic peer culture.

### Cultural Effects

In addition to the structural effects that are the focus of the theory of status relations, variations in history and culture also shape the differences in the two schools. As already noted, the ideology of hierarchy is stronger in Hindu India than in tribal India. This difference in general orientation is accentuated by differences in gender relations. The matrilineal and matrilineal traditions in St. Mark's area lessen gender inequality. In the North East, where ethnicity is linked to language, it is easier to communicate with those of the same ethnicity and to attain mutual understanding and intersubjectivity; this in turn has the structural effect of increasing clique formation. A second cultural difference is that though there are many tribal young people who are bright and committed to academic excellence, studies comparing tribal and nontribal students consistently report that on average, tribal students seem less motivated and perform less adequately.<sup>17</sup> Unsurprisingly, some tribal students have internalized these notions, as the comments by the girls in group 1 indicate. A third difference is traditions about alcohol and revelry. Many tribal groups traditionally made and consumed alcohol and had various forms of bacchanalian celebrations.<sup>18</sup> Unsurprisingly, a number of the male tribal groups are more likely to mention partying and drinking. For example, groups 3 and 5 express concerns about

partying, fashion, and coolness and make little direct mention of academics.

In short, compared with Rampura in Hindu India, St. Mark's operates in a cultural context that has less emphasis on hierarchy, more equal gender relations, a less instrumental orientation, greater ethnic variety, weaker teacher and parental controls, and a long tradition of revelry. These all contribute to stronger clique formation, more romantic relationships, and more intergroup conflict than is the case in Rampura.

### *Paradoxical Inequalities*

An especially striking and counterintuitive finding is that peer inequality is least intense in Hindu India, where hierarchy is a key cultural assumption that governs many relationships, and more prevalent in tribal India, where hierarchy is not a dominant ideological construct.

Why is there a seeming inverse correlation between cultural ideology and students' interpersonal relationships? The primary effect seems to operate through the concrete structural relations between those with formal authority and those subject to it. The more hierarchical the cultural assumptions, the more deference subordinates show to superiors. Teachers and parents in hierarchical Hindu India tend to repress and retard inequality in students' expressive relationships with their peers. This maintains relatively low levels of inequality and high levels of solidarity among peers. This is, of course, a version of Simmel's (1955) famous argument. It parallels Durkheim's ([1912] 1995) argument that the complete otherness and superiority of the sacred mutes profane social differences and contributes to social solidarity.<sup>19</sup> It is also roughly congruent with some contemporary research on U.S. schools (e.g., Arum 2003). A version of this is also apparent in military basic training, in which hierarchy of command is the ideology, and solidarity among peers is created by subjecting them to the near dictatorial power of their drill sergeant. What these examples show is that when the mechanisms linking a culture's ideology about equality and hierarchy and the actual observed degree of peer inequality are specified, the apparent paradox disappears. It is not that such ideologies have no effect, but often these effects are indirect and produce counterintuitive outcomes. What might be the long-term consequences of an adolescent culture that has less peer

inequality? The present data cannot speak to this question, but it would indeed be ironic if a culture that emphasized hierarchy best prepared young people for contemporary work cultures that emphasized teamwork and minimized hierarchical relations. Perhaps it is no accident that so many of the employees of Silicon Valley and other high-tech industries are people from Hindu India.

Obviously, more research in other cultural contexts and with other methods is required to determine whether these findings are robust. Yet even a cursory comparison of these two Indian cultural areas with the United States suggests that the inverse correlation between ideology and peer relations is not unique to India. The United States has long been noted for an egalitarian ideology that minimizes ritualistic deference between superiors and inferiors (de Tocqueville [1835] 1954). Not even the most exalted U.S. official, employer, or celebrity expects others to doff their hats, much less curtsy or bow. Nor are even authoritarian American parents likely to make their children engage in such behavior. Yet when it comes to relationships between adolescent peers, U.S. society is infamous for status competition, cliquishness, and mean-spirited putdowns. Movies and TV programs about teenagers may exaggerate this, but they point to a real phenomenon. Nor is there much doubt that schools in India have less of this peer inequality. A girl who attended the most status conscious and cliquish Delhi school that we studied spent a year in a U.S. school. She characterized the American peer culture in the following way:

Groups there were very watertight. There was this group that was just into academics and was made fun of and called geeks; and then there was this group that was just into sports. If you are good at academics you can't be good at sports; you have to choose one.

She went on to say that they often were mean to others and that this was not the case in her Delhi school. In short, even though she attended the most-status-conscious Delhi school that we studied, she perceived the school she attended in the United States as much more so. This brief comparison is not a substitute for systematic comparative data. Nonetheless, the Indian data and this cursory comparison with the United States at least raise the question of whether in certain contexts, egalitarian ideologies may have the paradoxical consequence of increasing certain forms of inequality.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Supplemental endnotes for this article located online at <http://soe.sagepub.com/supplemental>.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very indebted to Meenakshi Thapan, Maitrayee Deka, Pamposh Raina of the Delhi School of Economics, and Iamonlang M. Syiem and 28 sociology majors of St. Edmund's College, Shillong, for assistance in collecting most of the data used in this article.

## NOTES

1. In the census, about 80 percent of the population of India identify themselves as Hindu. By using the term *Hindu India*, I do not mean to deny the largely secular nature of the Indian state or the presence and cultural importance of many non-Hindu groups.
2. See the *Sociology of Education* Web site for elaboration and clarification.
3. See the *Sociology of Education* Web site for elaboration and clarification about the nature of these data.
4. Unfortunately, none of the states in North East "tribal India" were included in this 2007 survey.
5. See the *Sociology of Education* Web site for elaboration and clarification of gender relationships.
6. The Khasis, for example, were divided into 15 autonomous ministates headed by a hereditary leader called a *siem*. His succession and all major decisions had to be approved by a *durbar*, or council, and he had no rights to land revenues, in distinct contrast to the rajas and *zamindars* (i.e., large landlords) of Hindu India.
7. Census of India; for specification and links to the relevant tables, see the *Sociology of Education* Web site.
8. See the *Sociology of Education* Web site for additional and supporting data.
9. See the *Sociology of Education* Web site for additional and supporting data.
10. VH1 is a music video channel owned by MTV/Viacom. Star World is an English-language channel owned by News Corporation and is related to its Fox Broadcasting Corporation.
11. A concern about the status of one's girlfriend or boyfriend was indicated in data from another Delhi school. The fieldworker reported that "If a girl dates a popular boy, she too then is considered popular. For example . . . a girl from the Hi-Fi group was dating the 'best' guy from the neighboring boy's school, that is, a guy who is good looking, very good at sports, and very rich. Since the time she started dating him, more people acknowledged her in school, and according to some girls she even acquired 'an extra layer of attitude!'" Although students at this

school tended to be more status conscious and cliquish, a concern with the looks and status of one's romantic partner was also present at Rampura.

12. School officials, police, and other adults might well intervene and sanction more blatant displays of affection on or off the school premises.
13. Tribal groups are scattered all over India, but this is the only region in which they are the dominant population in five closely adjacent states. Of course, the concept of the tribe is problematic because it is sometimes applied to small bands of hunter-gatherers and sometimes to groups that include several million people. For a discussions of this issue with specific reference to India, see Bétéille (1994) and Mishra (2008:145–48).
14. See Barua (2006) for the historical background of these conflicts and of the development of education, focusing on Assam and its changing boundaries and composition. The Indian Army's Eastern Command Web site lists and describes 15 different insurgent groups. See the *Sociology of Education* Web site for the link.
15. Historically, there have been identifiable distinctions between Khasis and other closely related groups including the Lyngngams, the Bhois, the Wars, and the Jaintia. Likewise, tribal labels such as Naga and Mizo refer to clusters of different groups that are linguistically related but traditionally had distinct identities. These more local distinctions are declining in significance and are of relatively little concern to students in secondary schools.
16. The movie is about two college students with the same first initial and last name and whose ID cards have gotten switched. One is a good-boy nerd and the other a rowdy playboy. The movie revolves around the supposedly funny happenings due to the confusion.
17. See the *Sociology of Education* Web site for elaboration and clarification.
18. Of course, Hinduism has its own traditions of revelry, such as Holi. These traditions, however, are usually defined as temporary relaxations or deviations from normally accepted behavior.
19. Established dominance among some monkeys and primates also seems to strengthen peer ties and reduce aggressiveness (de Waal 1996:31, 101–102).

## REFERENCES

- Ali, Syed and Tineke Fokkema. 2011. "The Importance of Peers: Assimilation Patterns among Second-Generation Turkish Muslim Immigrants in Western Europe." Centre on Migration, Policy and Society Working Paper WP-11-83. Oxford, United Kingdom: University of Oxford.
- Arum, Richard. 2003. *Judging School Discipline: The Crisis of Moral Authority*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Barkataki, S. 1977. *The Khasis*. Pathsalā, India: Bani Prakash.
- Barua, Lalit Kumar. 2006. *Education and Culture in North-East India (1826-2000)*. Shimla, India: Indian Institute of Advanced Study.
- Benei, Veronique. 2008. *Schooling Passions: Nation, History, and Language in Contemporary Western India*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Béteille, Andre. 1994. "The Concept of Tribe with Special Reference to India." In *Indian Tribes and the Mainstream*, edited by Sukant K. Chaudhury and Soumenendra Mohan Patnaik. Jaipur, India: Rawat Publications.
- Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan. 1984. "Changing Khasis: A Historical Account." In *The Tribes of North East India*, edited by Karotemprel Sebastian. Calcutta, India: Frima KLM Private Limited.
- Bordoloi, B. N. 1987. *Tribes of Assam, Part III*. Guwahati, India: Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes.
- Chib, Sukhdev Singh. 1984. *North-East India, Vol. 8: Caste, Tribes and Cultures of India*. New Delhi, India: Ess Ess Publications.
- De Souza, Alfred. 1974. *Indian Public Schools: A Sociological Study*. New Delhi, India: Sterling.
- DeSouza, Peter Ronald, Sanjay Kumar, and Sandeep Shastri. 2009. *Indian Youth in a Transforming World: Attitudes and Perceptions*. New Delhi, India: Sage.
- de Tocqueville, Alexis. [1835] 1954. *Democracy in America*. New York: Vintage.
- de Waal, Frans B. M. 1996. *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Dumont, Louis. [1966] 1980. *Homo Hierarchicus*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Durkheim, Emile. [1912] 1995. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: Free Press.
- Faris, Robert and Diane Felmlee. 2011. "Status Struggles: Network Centrality and Gender Segregation in Same- and Cross-Gender Aggression." *American Sociological Review* 76(1):48–73.
- Flashman, Jennifer. 2012. "Academic Achievement and Its Impact on Friend Dynamics." *Sociology of Education* 85(1):61–80.
- Gassah, L. S. 1984. "The War Jaintia in Transition." In *The Tribes of North East India*, edited by Sebastian Karotemprel. Calcutta, India: Frima KLM Private Limited.
- Giridharadas, Anand. 2011. *India Calling: An Intimate Portrait of a Nation's Remaking*. New York: Times Books.
- Ghosh, B. B. 1982. *History of Nagaland*. New Delhi, India: S. Chand & Company.
- Gopal, B. Madhu. 2004. "English Medium Schools—A Big Biz." *The Hindu*. Retrieved January 10, 2008 (<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/mp/2004/06/21/stories/2004062101990100.htm>).
- Goza, Franklin and Igor Ryabov. 2009. "Adolescents' Educational Outcomes: Racial and Ethnic Variations in Peer Network Importance." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 38(9):1264–79.
- Gupta, Amita. 2007. "Schooling in India." Pp. 66–111 in *Going to School in South Asia*, edited by Amita Gupta. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Harris, Judith Rich. 1998. *The Nurture Assumption*. New York: The Free Press.
- Hluna, J. V. 1987. "Socio-Political Changes in the Mizos in Mizoram." In *Tribes of North East India: Spectrum of Changes*, edited by Sudhanshu Biksha Saha. Agartala, India: Rupali Publishing.
- Jeffery, Roger, Patricia Jeffery, and Craig Jeffery. 2005. "Social Inequalities and the Privatization of Secondary Schooling in North India." Chap. 1 in *Educational Regimes in Contemporary India*, edited by Rahika Chopra and Patricia Jeffery. New Delhi, India: Sage.
- Jeffery, Craig, Patricia Jeffery, and Roger Jeffery. 2008. *Degrees Without Freedom? Education, Masculinities and Unemployment in North India*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- MacDougall, David. 2000. *Doon School Chronicles: A Study in 10 Parts*. Canberra, Australia: CCR Media.
- Milner, Murray, Jr. 1994. *Status and Sacredness: A General Theory of Status Relations and an Analysis of Indian Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Milner, Murray, Jr. 2004. *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids: American Teenagers, Schools, and the Culture of Consumption*. New York: Routledge.
- Mishra, Ramesh C. 2008. "Education of Tribal Children in India." In *Educational Theories and Practices from the Majority World*, edited by Pierre R. Dasen and Abdeljalil Akkari. New Delhi, India: Sage.
- Osella, Caroline and Filipo Osella. 1998. "Friendship and Flirting: Micro-Politics in Kerala, South India." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4(2): 189–206.
- Rosenberg, Tina. 2011. *Join the Club: How Peer Pressure Can Transform the World*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Simmel, Georg. 1955. *Conflict and the Web of Group-Affiliations*. New York: Free Press.
- Srivastava, Sanjay. 1998. *Constructing Post-Colonial India: National Character and the Doon School*. New Delhi, India: Routledge.
- Thapan, Meenakshi. 2006. *Life at School: An Ethnographic Study*. 2nd ed. New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press.
- Thapan, Meenakshi. 2009. *Living the Body: Embodiment, Womanhood and Identity in Contemporary India*. New Delhi, India: Sage.

## BIO

**Murray Milner, Jr.**, is at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture at the University of Virginia and professor emeritus of sociology.