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Agency to Feel, Feeling for Agency:
Emotional Dimensions to Gendered Selves in Indonesia and India

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Introduction

1. In this paper I examine the expanded possibilities for selfhood, and hence of agency, of two types of women: volunteers in a community development program in Medan, Indonesia, and municipal councillors in Dehradun, India. Both types of actors are involved in acts of care or service towards others, and most typically describe these actions as central to who they are, or to who they are becoming. Ethnographic research in both sites reveals the importance of 'feeling the right way' in providing care or service activities for the realisation of women's self-fashioning projects. The warm sense of satisfaction that comes from making a difference to the lives of others, or the pride of having managed tasks competently and efficiently, reaffirm that such work is 'right for them', or that they are 'right for the work'. In examining how feelings make possible certain forms of selfhood, I call attention to the role of emotional experiences in shaping women's agency.

In this paper I examine the expanded possibilities for selfhood, and hence of agency, of two types of women: volunteers in a community development program in Medan, Indonesia, and municipal councillors in Dehradun, India. Both types of actors are involved in acts of care or service towards others, and most typically describe these actions as central to who they are, or to who they are becoming. Ethnographic research in both sites reveals the importance of 'feeling the right way' in providing care or service activities for the realisation of women's self-fashioning projects. The warm sense of satisfaction that comes from making a difference to the lives of others, or the pride of having managed tasks competently and efficiently, reaffirm that such work is 'right for them', or that they are 'right for the work'. In examining how feelings make possible certain forms of selfhood, I call attention to the role of emotional experiences in shaping women's agency.

2. In describing the different opportunities for emotional experiences for men and women, as well as the gendered nature of emotional repertoires (the range of emotions one can feel and/or express), I point to the limitations of self-realisation beyond prescribed gendered norms. The range of emotional experiences available tends to reaffirm and allow for the achievement of, rather than significantly expand, 'gendered selves'.[1] I argue that agency is therefore not expanded simply through women occupying socially recognised roles from which they were previously excluded; women must also have access to emotional experiences that can potentially transcend prevailing self-narratives, prompting new self-imaginaries. I find that although the emotional experiences of both positions—volunteer and municipal councillor—reinforce 'gendered selves', both also offer moments of new emotional experience, or allow for expressions of emotion that can be seen to transgress gendered norms.

3. My findings are drawn from ten months of ethnographic research in Medan, North Sumatera, between April 2013 and April 2015, and six months in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, North India between May 2015 and June 2016, and in April 2018.[2] In Medan, I worked with two local researchers, Yumasdaleni and Aida Harahap in the generation and interpretation of the ethnographic notes of a

community development program, and in the co-construction of 17 profiles with men and women involved as volunteers or 'beneficiaries' of the program. In Dehradun I worked with a local non-government organisation (NGO), the Panchayati Raj Gender Awareness and Training Institute (PRAGATI), to generate empirical material on the experiences of women municipal councillors, which included the co-construction of 10 in-depth profiles. Personally experienced emotions are particularly difficult to capture methodologically, and therefore we undertook purposeful reflection on our pathways from affect, to emotion, to thought, in order to understand how we reached certain interpretations, while also deepening them.[3] Biographical details also matter for the way people are affected or moved,[4] and the in-depth understanding of participants that were gained through the co-constructed profiles was critical for understanding the resonance and intensity of the scenes that we observed. An intimate understanding of the lives of the women we studied alongside direct observation, interrogated through reflexive research practice, therefore informs my interpretations. At the same time that I recognise that the difficulty of researching emotions necessarily means there is a degree of speculation.

Reconsidering agency

4. My position, that an expansion in the possibilities of selfhood is a starting point for enhanced agency, requires some explanation. Agency is conventionally thought of as an increase in capabilities or choices—choices that enable women to take actions or hold positions previously foreclosed to them.[5] Prior to making choices or acquiring capabilities, however, one becomes a 'self' for whom such thinking and acting is internally conceivable and socially recognisable. The 'selves' we can become are shaped by the cultural and discursive context that are the sites for self-formation, within which ideas about what are socially appropriate and internally conceivable ways of being are defined.[6] These possibilities are bound by characteristics such as gender, race, class, sexuality and so on, such that we can describe the possible ways of being for men's and women's 'gendered selves'.[7] Agency does not mean the recovery of an 'authentic self', the release of the actor from social norms, or liberation from the discursive constitution of the self,[8] but rather agency provides an expansion of the possible selves that any one individual can become.

5. Elsewhere, I argue that the possibilities of self-becoming can be located in three measures: first, an increase in the number of socially recognised positions from which one can act, recognising the importance of discourse and culture in prescribing or proscribing certain identities;[9] second, an expansion of self-imaginaries, that is the capacity to conceive of being an alternative 'self' or an alternative to self,[10] and; third, enhanced opportunities for self-enactment, the action and experience of being. This paper examines two types of female actors who have been afforded the opportunity to occupy socially recognised positions (volunteer and municipal councillor), which become the starting point for action. I want to explore how the ability to hold these positions translates into an actual expansion in the possibilities for self; that is in the reaffirmation of who one is, or who one wants to become,[11] or the expansion in conceivable ways of being.

6. In particular, I examine the role of emotions in shaping the possibilities for self. The importance of the affective and emotional dimensions of becoming has recently been emphasised by Judith Butler, who points to the primacy of the senses in the formation of selves. The way 'we feel things, undergo impressions, prior to forming any thoughts, including any thoughts we might have about ourselves,'[12] underlines the relational processes of becoming, the way we are formed through our interactions with the real or imagined environment. My own research has underlined the importance of 'feeling the right way' in moments of self-enactment, as well as during the threats to self (or affective injuries) that occur when one is impressed upon in ways that challenge one's

sense of self.[13] Here, I want to more closely consider the possibilities and limitations for emotional experience (experiences that engender emotions, which, I argue, are resources in the process of self-formation), with a focus on how gender shapes these experiences.[14]

7. Differences in emotional experience may occur in two ways. First people have differential opportunities to engage in activities that can engender a particular emotional response. Not all people have the material resources or social standing to engage in activities in the manner of their choosing, and therefore they lack the opportunities for embodied experiences of being that they desire or imagine. The affective dimension is important, as it is through the way that one is moved, touched or affected that reaffirms or casts doubt as to whether such action is 'right for me'.[15] For example, a person's self-understanding may be of someone who enjoys adventure sports, who gets a 'thrill' out of putting their life in danger. Without, however, the opportunity to actually engage in such activities, this self-imaginary remains essentially untested: a self-narrative that lacks affirmation. Alternatively, a self-narrative that one will enjoy the sensation of plummeting towards the earth on a bungee cord predisposes one to interpret one's bodily sensations in such a way.

8. The second set of differences relate to what I describe as 'emotional repertoires'—the range of feelings that people qualify (that is name and therefore identify) as emotions.[16] Processes of socialisation encourage men and women to perform or express different kinds of emotions in particular circumstances; men and women are rewarded differently for these displays, with further differences according to race, class and so on.[17] Limitations are not only understood as displays or performances, but also in the range of emotions that differently positioned individuals can actually have. The difference lies in the movement from affect, to feelings, to emotion. Affect captures embodied modulations, the 'passage … of forces or intensities' beyond consciousness and prior to qualification as emotion.[18] 'Feelings mark the embodied modulations' from one state to another,[19] while emotions capture how one processes the experience, by drawing upon cultural-linguistic repertoires embedded within power relations.[20] Emotions are pre-eminently cultural; we make sense of the way we feel through particular socio-cultural contexts, even as they are personally experienced.[21] As feelings are processed, they are shaped by gendered ideologies and discourses that prescribe and limit the range of emotions.

9. As I am interested in gendered possibilities for self, I focus on *emotional* experiences and repertoires that are more tightly bound to ideology and culture, rather than *affect* that has greater potential for excesses and escapes from systems of signification.[22] In this paper, I examine the emotions experienced by volunteers in Medan and municipal councillors in Dehradun as a means to understanding how their socially recognised positions afford emotional experiences that expand (or not) their possibilities for selfhood. By examining how emotional experiences both reinforce, as well as potentially transgress the 'gendered selves' of women in India and Indonesia, I aim to highlight the centrality of emotional experiences to understandings of agency and gendered hierarchies.

Volunteers in Medan

10. Community development programs (CDPs) have presented opportunities for men and women to occupy positions as decision makers and implementers of 'development'. Such is the case for Indonesia's National Program for Community Empowerment Independent—Urban (PNPM),[23] which has the aim of 'fostering community participation, improving local governance, and delivering basic needs at the community level,'[24] with 'empowering women' as an additional objective.[25] The implementing agents of the PNPM at the local level are called the Badan Keswadayaan Masyarakat (BKM Board of Community Welfare), with one BKM comprising between seven and 12 members for each Kelurahan: an urban administrative unit with a population of between 10,000 and

30,000 residents. BKM members are volunteers from the locality, elected by local residents, who also elect the BKM coordinator. BKMs are responsible for developing a Community Development Plan and implementing projects in three areas: infrastructure (building of roads and drains etc.); economic (rotating funds and small enterprise development) and social (small gifts of welfare and training).

11. I focus here on BKM members in the city of Medan—an ethnically diverse city of over two million inhabitants in North Sumatra, Indonesia. Although there are exceptions, BKM members in Medan are typically lower middle class, earning their livelihood by, among other things, working as security guards, driving *becak* (similar to rickshaws), running home-based laundries or small *warung* (street-side restaurants). Although most volunteers were educated to year 10 or 12, few had gone on to further study. BKM members, including BKM coordinators, therefore typically did not have the economic and cultural capital to engage in other similar activities, such as working for an NGO, or engaging in acts of charity. Both men and women valued the opportunity to become members of the BKM as it enabled them to engage in social work, which they saw as being aligned to who they are, but otherwise unrealisable given their economic circumstances. As one volunteer put it, 'We want to give money but there is none. So with our energy [*tenaga*] and our thinking we can do social work' through the PNPM.[26]

12. Many volunteers said that joining the program was tied to their understandings of self, or their ambitions to become better people. Ibu Rosa, a BKM coordinator, explains: 'I received a *panggilan jiwa* [call of the soul] … [that] I should use my hands to serve the people. Maybe, indeed it is because I have a characteristic of compassion in my *hati* [heart].'[27] Being called by the *jiwa* was a common phrase used by BKM members to explain why they had joined the program, and their ongoing motivation. *Jiwa* directly translates into English as soul or spirit, but used here, has the connotation of being more like one's nature. Joining the program enables volunteers to engage in action that is true to their nature, their *jiwa,* their sense of self. Where the *jiwa* represents one's calling, the *hati* aligns the individual to this calling by ensuring that they are affected in appropriate ways. The *hati* means the emotional seat of the individual, which I translate into English as heart.[28] BKM members referred to the *hati* as something that affected them, that moved them when they saw poverty, and that they sought to satisfy with their good works. Affective and emotional responses thereby reaffirm one's understanding of self.

13. Being able to undertake actions that 'felt good' or 'brought satisfaction' were significant for men and women volunteers from lower-socio-economic backgrounds who otherwise lacked the opportunities to have such emotional experiences. The types of emotions engendered by BKM activities differed, however, according to gender. In part, this is due to the activities that male and female volunteers are assigned to. Within the BKM there are three fields to the program: infrastructure, economic and social. In BKMs, women are far more likely to be in charge of social programs that are based on small acts of care. Activities include the provision of small gifts: for example school bags for children, groceries for widows, and prayer mats for the aged. Events are organised so that small charitable gifts can be directly handed over to 'worthy' recipients. On these occasions, BKM members become animated, stand taller and wear large smiles. Ibu Asmira describes the pleasure she feels from these activities: 'I am happy, Bu, *terharu* [moved] … I was so touched; I cry from happiness … with the PNPM, we can help many people.'[29] The identification of 'worthy recipients' entails being 'moved by their plight', engendering a response of 'care'. The activities, and the emotions engendered in them—empathy, compassion, satisfaction—are aligned with gendered norms, in which women take on, and gain satisfaction from, caring for others.[30]

14. Religion is important in orienting and intensifying women's emotional responses to volunteer activities. Most BKM members are Muslim; *wirid* sessions (Islamic teachings delivered to women in

mosques) are a key site for the recruitment of female volunteers. Ibu Hanum explains this process: 'They asked for socially oriented people … Some people like to do social activities, and others do not. It depends on whether they have a generous heart [*hati*]'.[31] Ibu Hanum self-identified as someone with a generous heart (who found satisfaction from social work), but as important as this understanding of self, is her ambition to become a more pious Muslim. Ibu Hanum said that she receives no benefit from her volunteer work, only '*gaji sejuta*' (a salary of one million): an acronym, consisting of *senyum* (smiles), *jujur* (honesty) and *taqwa* (Godly conduct). *Senyum* indicates the smiles they receive in gratitude from recipients, but also their own satisfaction. *Jujur* is the opportunity to undertake their activities in an ethical and honest way. *Taqwa,* the ability to engage in Godly conduct through charitable acts, is the most important element of Ibu Hanum's salary. In Islam, she tells us, social work is compulsory; the opportunity to perform *taqwa* is therefore 'a blessing from Allah, right?'.[32] Lacking material resources to engage in other acts of charity (such as *zakat*)[33] the PNPM has provided a means for her to become a better person and a more pious Muslim.

15. Having the appropriate emotional response to charitable activities is critical to this achievement. Many women and some men BKM members say that acting with *ikhlas* is critical to volunteers who are truly committed to social work. *Ikhlas* is an Islamic concept that BKM members describe as sincerity, not desiring of any other benefit other than that which comes after death. To desire or seek material or social benefit would be to negate the worthiness of the act before Allah. The emotions engendered in PNPM activities are not spontaneous, but shaped by the concept of *ikhlas.* Ibu Hanum interprets and qualifies her feelings (the bodily modifications she experiences) in ways that reinforce the sense of *ikhlas,* and therefore her own sense of self as someone with a generous heart. Ibu Hanum seeks experiences in which she can feel *ikhlas,* or put differently, such experiences are beneficial in the reaffirmation of who she is and is in the process of becoming. Athough male and female BKM members both mentioned *ikhlas,* it was much more prominent in the narratives of women.

16. Rather than evoke *ikhlas* as an animating force in their work, men are more likely to discuss their desire to feel 'useful'. For example Pak Alrasyad said, 'Actually I used to feel that I was not useful. But after becoming involved in the BKM, it is evident that I am of benefit to the community.'[34] *Bermanfaat,* being of benefit, or *manfaatkan,* benefiting others, were the most common frames for men in explaining the satisfaction they received from their work. In part, this difference derives from the kinds of activities that male BKM members were engaged in. Men were more likely to oversee the infrastructural component of the PNPM, which has tangible benefits in the form of material improvements in roads, drains and so on. Usefulness was also framed in relation to 'helping the government in development [*pembangunan*]', as Pak Anto described.[35] As a BKM coordinator, he was particularly proud of his ability to manage the program competently, to successfully complete projects, and ensure high rates of repayment for the economic component of the program (rotating loans). His work was helping him to achieve his life principles: 'I am extremely happy to be a BKM member, that in the context of my life, I can be very useful for the people.'[36]

17. For men such as Pak Alrasyad and Pak Anto, the PNPM provided opportunities to occupy a social position and status to which they would not normally have access. Pak Alrasyad works in a bar, while Pak Anto is a carpark attendant.[37] Pak Anto long had ambitions to engage in social activities, but in previous positions was not taken seriously. Pak Alrasyad said that he was little known in the locality prior to becoming the BKM coordinator, but now all people know and respect him. Their narratives suggest that the position is important not only for their social standing, but also for the feelings of self-confidence and 'masculine' pride that they experience through the program. Particularly for men in low-status occupations, the ability to do something 'useful' in the community is a positive emotional experience, and perhaps reaffirming of their masculinity. In other

words, the emotions engendered in their work as BKM coordinators reinforced, or enabled them to achieve a sense of self: one that I argue is tied very much to gendered ideologies.

18. Although there are differences between men and women BKM members in the types of emotional experiences they have, and the elements of those experiences that they emphasise in their narratives, there are also exceptions. Indeed, when women are placed in the position of coordinator they also experience the satisfaction, if not glee, associated with doing the work competently. Ibu Muslimah was made a BKM coordinator when the former coordinator, and the only man in the BKM, left Medan. A woman in her sixties, Ibu Muslimah holds various positions in state development programs. She is a health cadre at the local health centre, a teacher at the local crèche, and the head of the social program in the BKM. All of these roles involve acts aligned with gendered ideologies positioning women primarily as mothers and carers in the family and community.[38] The emotional experiences through their positions reinforce 'gendered selves' in Indonesia. After becoming coordinator, however, Ibu Muslimah told us she was able to do more: 'Then we can do something for the people, and feel happy, satisfied … [for example] after some work the BKM did, a clogged drain is working again. We are proud. "Who did it? Oh BKM did it".'[39] Ibu Muslimah did not seek out the role of coordinator; as she puts it, it was thrust on to her. She nonetheless feels immensely satisfied and proud of her activities and achievements, in ways, I suggest, that expand her sense of who she is, and who she can become.

Municipal councillors in Dehra Dun

19. In India, reservations in local government have enabled women to take on socially recognised positions of authority. As per the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1993) a third of the seats are reserved for women in local village governance and urban local bodies respectively.[40] Seats are also reserved for people belonging to historically marginalised sections as per their proportion in the population: scheduled tribes (STs), scheduled castes (SCs) and other backward classes (OBCs). Seats within these categories are also reserved for women; for example, a seat can be reserved for a scheduled caste woman. Political parties can only give one person from their party the ticket to contest an election, and 'getting the party ticket' is a highly contested process. In fieldwork during the lead up to the 2018 elections,[41] both men and women candidates were tense over the announcement of tickets. Reservations add additional tension, as potential candidates can have their hopes dashed when a seat is, or is not, reserved.

20. Men often overcome an inability to contest a seat that is reserved for women by convincing their wives, or less commonly mothers, to stand on their behalf: a situation supported by parties who often select the wives of powerful male party workers over hard-working competent women (a point I return to below). Public and academic commentators have used observations of this to conclude that *most* if not *all* women are 'proxies'.[42] My own and other accounts present a more nuanced picture, revealing that many women have become elected based on their own qualities and hard work, while even women who run for election to fulfil political ambitions of husbands develop their own capacities and political ambitions during their term.[43] In Dehradun, seven women have been elected into general seats (unreserved), making the total number of elected women municipal councillors (MCs) (2013—2018) 29 out of 60.[44] Out of 29 women MCs, only three fit a strict description of 'proxy'.

21. Reservations in politics provide opportunities for women to occupy socially recognisable roles of authority and power, but the way this opportunity extends ideas of self depends upon the meanings women ascribe to that position. Many women MCs describe their role not as related to politics, but to social work, *seva samajik.* Social worker, is a common political 'style' for both men and women politicians in India, but is particularly effective for women due to its compatibility with socially

acceptable models of femininity.[45] For example Padma is a loyal party worker, but explains, 'It is not for the party, it is from working for society that I get personal satisfaction … that I have this feeling … And it is not only today that I feel this way … it is from childhood.'[46] Women hoping to contest the upcoming elections told us without exception that they were driven by a desire to extend their social work by holding a position of power, and not vice versa. When asked why they personally had such desires, they described social work as a part of their habit, or nature: 'the feeling [to do social work] comes from within'; 'it is my habit to do social work since childhood'; 'the only benefit is satisfaction'.[47]

22. Much of the literature is cynical of such self-representations, viewing 'social worker' as solely a strategic political identity.[48] I suggest that much of this literature—which focuses on male politicians—overlooks how, for women in particular, *seva semajik* is central to their self-imaginary, the very core of who they believe themselves to be.[49] For someone like Padma, helping people as a MC engenders many positive feelings, and it is these positive feelings, the sense of satisfaction wrapped up in being a good and honest person, that animates her work. In just one example, we were chatting with Padma in her front room when a Muslim man from an adjoining ward came to request her help with an electricity connection. His own MC (a man from the Congress Party) had delayed completing the simple letter he required, and demanded payment of 500 rupees. Padma had no hesitation, quickly and graciously completing the work while mumbling about the morals of the other MC. As a BJP member, Padma knew that the man who had sought help was unlikely to vote for her party; the BJP's Hindutva ideology and treatment of minorities has made them the last choice of Muslims in Dehradun.[50] Indeed the man said as much, but added that if he was in her ward he would vote for Padma because she is a good person. Padma swelled upon hearing this, giggling shyly as she does when she is trying to be modest in the face of a compliment. For Padma, undertaking social work not for political gain provides emotional experiences that reinforce her sense of self. At the same time, understanding oneself as a social worker, rather than being politically ambitious, reinforces the gendered selves of women, as being caring, giving, selfless.[51]

23. The emotional repertoires of women party workers are in this way different to those of men. The tension surrounding who will be given the party ticket in the upcoming elections laid bare these differences. When we asked women hopefuls how they would feel if they did not get the party ticket, the response was restrained. While a small number said they would run as independents, the vast majority professed to not being too concerned. '*Theek hai*', it's okay, they would say, in a neutral tone and with no visible emotion on their face. 'If I get the ticket, or not, I will continue my social work. Whoever the party selects, I will help in their campaign', was a common response. No amount of prompting could change their tune. We spoke to too few male hopefuls for any useful comparison, but it is noteworthy that both men and women spoke of how men were more likely to get frustrated, become angry, and even switch parties if denied the ticket. The position of candidate for men was tied to ambitions of political advancement and hence an arena for disappointment, whereas for women the position was related to selfless social work, and hence whether they got the ticket or not *should* not engender strong feelings.

24. Although this '*theek hai*' (it's okay) attitude was unbreakable in one-on-one interviews, frustration and anger seeped out when hopeful women candidates came together. As part of a capacity-building program for women municipal councillors run by PRAGATI,[52] pre-election workshops were held for women who were considering becoming candidates. Women from across the political divide shared accounts of their social work, and their aspirations to do more for the people by becoming a MC. But there were also spontaneous expressions of frustration, especially as many women feared that men would be given the tickets for all unreserved (general) seats, and that even the tickets for seats reserved for women would go to the wives of male party workers. In one

memorable workshop, the discussion was frequently interrupted by women lamenting this situation; an invitation for a group interview after the workshop turned into 70 minutes of women talking over the top of each other about the issue. Rekha was one of the loudest. She explained that she had been a loyal party worker for over 20 years, devoting time and money. When the party needed busloads of 'supporters', she always arranged at least one, paying out of her own pocket. She sacrificed time with her family to help people at any time of the day: social service in the name of the party.[53] Now her children were independent, she felt it was her time to be rewarded with the ticket. Even before decisions could be made, however, she was tense, frustrated and clearly very angry. The issue of party selection provoked an outpouring of emotion about the treatment of women in the party more generally. 'Men will never let women get ahead,' Rekha said.[54]

25. The differences in the expression of emotions underlines, rather than contradicts, the different emotional repertoires of men and women. As Kaitlin McCormick et al. demonstrate, gender differences in emotional responses are greatest when women and men are placed in conditions in which the femininity/masculinity binary are perceived as being judged.[55] Unlike the women MCs that I have known for some time, the interviews with candidates in 2018 generally occurred on only the second time I had met them. Their personal motivations were in the spotlight, and socially appropriate responses provided. Group discussions offered a different scenario, with safety in numbers allowing repressed emotions to be expressed. These emotions were not solely related to the frustration associated with the treatment of women in the party, but they also betrayed the political aspirations of the women, the sense of entitlement that they had to a position of status, beyond the feelings of satisfaction that they said they desired from social work. That is, these sessions allowed women to express a different self, and I would cautiously suggest, allowed them to have *feelings* that on other occasions they refused to name and acknowledge. These emotional seepages do not, however, mean that other emotions are not genuine, either in their expression or self-interpretation. And indeed the reaffirming of one's gendered self through emotional experiences of being a MC was empowering for many women.

Discussion

26. Although the context of each case study is different, women in Medan and India share the experience of occupying a socially recognised position that might otherwise have been unavailable. The positions of volunteer in a community development program or of municipal councillor provide opportunities for new emotional experiences that are, I argue, critical to the reaffirmation of self, or realisation of self-fashioning projects. Women of low-socio-economic class in Medan are able to realise ambitions of becoming more pious Muslims through acts of charity that were previously foreclosed to them due to a lack of material, social and economic capital. In India, women were able to expand their social activities, thus reaffirming their idea of selves as social workers. Such expanded possibilities and reaffirmations for self are not only significant for women, but also for men. For many, realising 'gendered selves' and achieving normative models of femininity and masculinity represent an expansion in possibilities for self, or rather the overcoming of foreclosures of self that are related to their socio-economic condition.

27. Religion, and in this case Islam, plays an important role in orienting and intensifying the emotions engendered in certain scenes. For many women BKM members, having the chance to engage in charitable acts with feelings of *ikhlas* was critical to their ambitions of becoming more pious selves. They sought opportunities to have these emotional experiences, while *ikhlas* also oriented the qualification of feelings as emotions, so that women *felt* sincere when they engaged in social activities. In India, Islam had a different affective force, especially in the charged atmosphere of Hindutva politics. Ignoring religious difference reinforced for Padma the sincerity of her act,

reinforcing her sense of self as someone motivated primarily by social work. As an important part of the symbolic and discursive terrain, religion is an important constituent in possibilities for selfhood.

28. In both cases, however, the opportunities to enact self, as well as the emotional repertoires available in such enactments, are highly gendered. Women find satisfaction in activities that are aligned with their gendered roles, which position women as more 'caring', rather than technically minded or politically ambitious. Such gender-affective mobilisations are not distinct to Indonesia and India. Andrea Muehlebach shows in post-welfare Italy that it is primarily women who are 'moved' to take on the burden of care for the elderly in what she describes as a 'soulful' citizenry 'that translates the corporeal stirrings of the heart into publicly useful activity'.[56] Similarly in Indonesia, many women are unpaid volunteers, mobilised through their naturally caring dispositions to deliver state development programs in a cost-effective way.[57] In India, parties rely on the labour of party workers motivated to do 'social work', with women less demanding than men in the political rewards they seek in return. Gendered repertoires therefore seemingly help to reinforce gendered hierarchies, while also facilitating relations that can be broadly conceived as exploitative. In this way ideologies both gain their intensity from and intensify the power of emotions.[58]

29. It is particularly important to examine emotional repertoires if opportunities to hold socially recognisable positions translate into enhanced agency. In a review of the psychology literature on emotions and gender, McCormick et al. find that displays and self-reporting of emotions were more aligned with gender stereotypes in countries with higher rates of women's 'empowerment', and where women held more positions of power. I agree with McCormick et al. that 'beliefs about emotion may serve to maintain gendered hierarchies',[59] when these are seen as being under threat. Women therefore need to be supported in having new experiences that engender different types of emotions, and offered further possibilities for self-expansion. As the empirical material suggests, this is not achieved solely through the occupation of different positions (such as BKM coordinator), but through new experiences within these roles (such as doing tasks competently), and the creation of safe spaces for women to explore and express emotions that transgress and maybe even extend gendered emotional repertoires. Enabling women to occupy socially recognised positions is only part of the answer to enhancing women's agency; we need to ensure that women have emotional experiences that can help them expand their possibilities for self.

Notes

All URLs in these references were operational when the paper was first published.

[1] The term 'gendered selves' was developed in relation to the literature on women in Indonesia and is a rephrasing of extant ideas, rather than my own intervention. See Rachel Rinaldo, 'The Islamic revival and women's political subjectivity in Indonesia,' *Women Studies International Forum* 33 (2010): 422–31, DOI: 10.1016/j.wsif.2010.02.016; Kathryn Robinson, *Gender, Islam and Democracy in Indonesia,* Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2008.

[2] The two sites were selected as part of larger project on decentralisation due to their status as large, diverse cities, that are outside the main national centres. The researcher also has enduring relations and connections in both Medan and Dehradun.

3 Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004; Tanya Jakimow and Yumasdaleni , 'Affective registers in qualitative team research: Interpreting the self in encounters with the state,' *Qualitative Research Journal* 16(2) (2016): 169–80, DOI: 10.1108/QRJ-04-2015-0026.

[4] Andrew Beatty, 'How did it feel for you? Emotion, narrative and the limits of ethnography,' *American Anthropologist* 112(3) (2010): 430 –43, DOI: 10.1111/j.1548-1433.2010.01250.x; Andrew Beatty, 'Anthropology and emotion,' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 20 (2014): 545 –63, DOI: 10.1111/1467-9655.12114.

[5] Jason Hickel, 'The "girl effect": Liberalism, empowerment and the contradictions of development," *Third World Quarterly* 5(8) (2014): 1355 –73, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2014.946250; Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

[6] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997; Tanya Jakimow, 'Beyond "State Ibuism": Empowerment effects in state-led development in Indonesia,' *Development and Change* 49(5) (2018): 1143–65.

[7] I focus on heteronormative sexualities and gendered norms in this paper due to the limitations of my empirical material, while also recognising that examining gendered selves needs to go beyond. [8] Hickel, 'The "girl effect"'; Mahmood, *Politics of Piety.*

[9] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics,* 2nd edn, London: Verso, 2001.

[10] Henrietta Moore, *Still Life: Hopes, Desires and Satisfactions,* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011.

[11] Here, I am referring to practices of self-cultivation. See Michel Foucault, *The Care of Self: The History of Sexuality Volume 3,* New York: Random House, 1986.

[12] Judith Butler, *Senses of the Subject,* New York: Fordham University Press, 2015, p. 2.

[13] Tanya Jakimow, 'Being harmed while doing good: Affective injuries in a community development program, Medan, Indonesia,' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 24(3) (2018): 550 –67.

[14] I focus on heteronormative men and women due to the limitations of my empirical material. The way other genders shape emotional experience may be a productive area for future research.

[15] Butler, *Senses of the Subject.*

[16] Ben Anderson, *Encountering Affect: Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions,* Farnham: Ashgate, 2014.

[17] Kaitlin McCormick, Heather MacArthur, Stephanie Shields and Elaine Dicicco, 'New perspectives on gender and emotion,' in *Feminist Perspectives on Building a Better Psychological Science of Gender*, edited by Tomi-Ann Roberts, Nicola Curtin, Lauren E. Duncan and Lilia M. Cortina, 213–30, Lucerne: Springer, 2016, DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-32141-7_13.

[18] Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, 'An inventory of shimmers,' in *The Affect Theory Reader,* edited by Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, 1 –28, Durham: Duke University Press, p. 1.

[19] Anna Hickey-Moody, 'Affect as method: Feelings, aesthetics and affective pedagogy,' in *Deleuze and Research Methodologies,* edited by Rebecca Coleman and Jessica Ringrose, 79—95, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013, p. 81.

[20] Anderson, *Encountering Affect.*

[21] Beatty, 'Anthropology and emotion'; Catherine Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions: Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and their Challenge to Western Theory,* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988; Margaret Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding,* London: Sage, 2012, DOI: 10.4135/9781446250945.

[22] I understand human affect not as lying outside of systems of signification, but rather linked to meaning making and the discursive, augmenting these power configurations without being entirely captured by or reducible to them. See Anderson, *Encountering Affect;* Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion.*

[23] Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Mandiri—Perkotaan. The PNPM was discontinued in its present form at the end of 2015. As this was after the period of data collection, it does not impact on the findings.

[24] World Bank, 'Indonesia: Evaluation of the Urban Community-Driven Development Program: (PNPM-Urban), Policy Note, 2013, p. vi (accessed 19 March 2015).

[25] S. Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, 'Gender inclusion strategies in PNPM: Consultancy conducted for World Bank Programme Support Facility,' 2014.

[26] Interview with Ibu Hanum, January 2014. Ibu, or bu, literally translated as mother, is a polite form of address for women. Pak, or Bapak (meaning father) is the equivalent for men. I therefore have not said in each case if it is a man or woman.

[27] Interview with Ibu Rosa, November 2014.

[28] *Hati* is literally the liver, but I prefer to use 'heart' as the English term that accurately captures *hati* since that is how English speakers conceive of the origin of emotions.

[29] Interview with Ibu Asmira, May 2015, and observations, field notes April 2013, June 2013, December 2013, April 2014.

[30] Andrea Muehlebach, *The Moral Neoliberal: Welfare and Citizenship in Italy,* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012.

[31] Interview with Ibu Hanum, January 2014.

[32] Interview with Ibu Hanum, January 2014.

[33] *Zakkat* is the compulsory giving of a proportion of savings and wealth that is one of the pillars of Islam

[34] Informal conversation with Pak Alrasyad, November 2013.

[35] Interview with Pak Anto, March 2014.

[36] Interview with Pak Anto, February 2014.

[37] Occupations have been changed to protect their identity, but are indicative of the socio-economic class of both men.

[38] State Ibuism is a gender ideology promoted by the state during the New Order (1967–1998) that reinforced motherhood as the primary role of women in society, and the basis of their membership of the polity. See Robinson, *Gender, Islam and Democracy in Indonesia;* Julia Suryakusuma, *State Ibuism: The Social Construction of Womanhood in New Order Indonesia,* Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2011.

[39] Interview with Ibu Muslimah, May 2015.

[40] Almost half of all states in India have mandated 50 per cent reservations for women in village governance, with a handful also increasing reservations in urban governance. The national law is: *Constitution of India (Bhāratīya Saṃvidhāna) 1949, (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992* on 24 April 1993 and the *(74th Amendment) Act, 1992* on 1 June 1993. In Uttarakhand, 50 per cent of seats are reserved for women in village governance, but only 33 per cent in urban governance.

[41] The elections were scheduled to be held before 3 May 2018 when the current term of the MCs expired. They were postponed and had not been held at the time of writing.

[42] Joop De Wit, *Urban Poverty, Local Governance and Everyday Politics in Mumbai,* London: Routledge, 2017.

[43] Archana Ghosh and Stephanie Tawa Lama-Rewel, *Democratization in Progress: Women and Local Politics in Urban India,* New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2005; Tanya Jakimow, 'The "servants" of Dehradun: A changing relationship between municipal councillors and voters in India,' *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 49(3) (2019): 389–409, DOI: 10.1080/00472336.2018.1527388; Mary E. John, 'Women in power? Gender, caste and the politics of urban governance,' *Economic and Political Weekly* 42(39) (2007): 3986–93.

[44] Part of the reason for the delay in the election is the process of delimitation across Uttarakhand. The number of wards in Dehradun is due to increase to 100 following this process.

[45] Manuela Ciotti, 'Resurrecting *Seva*(social service): Dalit and low-caste women party activists as producers and consumers of political culture and practice in urban North India,' *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71(1) (2011): 149–70, DOI: 10.1017/S002191181100297X; Ghosh and Lama-Rewel, *Democratization in Progress;* Anna-Marie Goetz, 'Political cleaners: Women as the new anti-corruption force?' *Development and Change* 38(1) (2007): 87–105; Pamela Price and Arild Englesen Ruud (eds), *Power and Influence in India: Bosses, Lords and Captains,* London, Routledge, 2010. For an Indonesian example see Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi, *Indonesian Women and Local Politics: Islam, Gender and Networks in Post-Suharto Indonesia,* Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2015.

[46] Interview with Padma, June 2015.

[47] Taken from informal conversations and interviews, April 2018.

[48] Bjorn Alm, 'Creating followers, gaining patrons: Leadership struggles in a Tamil Nadu village,' in *Power and Influence in India: Bosses, Lords and Captains,* edited Pamela Price and Arild Englesen Ruud, 1–19, London, Routledge, 2010; Ward Berenschot 'Political fixers in India's patronage democracy,' in *Patronage as Politics in South Asia,* edited by Anastasia Piliavsky, 196–216, Delhi, Cambridge University Press, 2014; Price and Ruud (eds), *Power and Influence in India*.

[49] See also Ciotti, 'Resurrecting *Seva.*'

[50] Shivani Azad, 'Muslims, Dalits hold key in 11 seats of Haridwar district,' *Times of India,* 15 February 2017; and for a similar trend in Uttar Pradesh, see Subodh Varma, 'Myths of Muslim, Dalit and Jat votes busted,' *Times of India,* 15 March 2017. It is not the case that *no* Muslims vote for the BJP. In recent fieldwork, we met two Muslim women who were seeking the BJP party ticket, and were active in the party.

[51] Ethnographically derived accounts of personhood in India have shown that persons are highly relational, rather than bound and self-contained individuals, inextricable from the social contexts in which they live. Women's sense of autonomy within agentive processes of personhood has therefore been observed as relatively constrained: an observation across many parts of India, but not necessarily in every part of India. See Ciotti, 'Resurrecting *Seva';* Sarah Lamb, 'The Making and unmaking of persons: Notes on aging and gender in North India,' *Ethos* 25(3): 279–302).

[52] An outcome of our previous research collaboration between the NGO, PRAGATI, and the author, was the development of a capacity-building program, funded by the Australian High Commission, New Delhi. See Tanya Jakimow, 'Empowering women municipal councillors in Dehradun,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, lii(23) (2017): 120–26.

[53] I am reluctant to use the term brokerage for these activities, as the line with genuine social work is blurred. See Jakimow, 'Servants of Dehradun,' for more on this point.

[54] Group interview, April 2018.

[55] McCormick et al., 'New perspectives on gender and emotion.'

[56] Muehlebach, *The Moral Neoliberal,* p. 18

[57] Ghazala Mansuri and Vijayendra Rao, 'Community-based and -driven development: A critical review,' *The World Bank Research Observer* 19(1) (2004): 1–39, DOI: 10.1093/wbro/lkh012.

[58] Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion.*

[59] McCormick et al., 'New perspectives on gender and emotion,' p. 224.

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