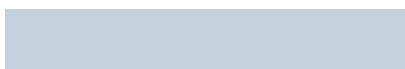


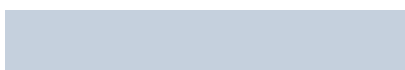




*call themselves*







# Madurai i



more 14vair



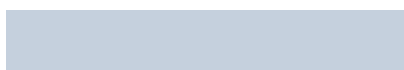
any significant growth, resulting in increased competition for more lucrative positions.<sup>18</sup> The ambiguous, and ambivalent, effects of







population.<sup>27</sup> In Madurai, some Chettiar sub-castes tend to specialize in business (as do many Nadars) more than other castes, and Dalits are said to hold almost all of the municipal sanitation jobs (which





the middle; and Naidus, Pillais, Chettiars and Brahmans are high-



# When they look the same



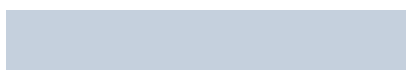


# about the

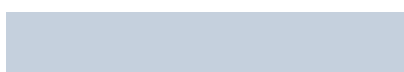




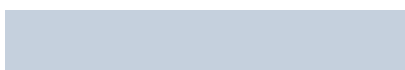
## The good and the bad of being in the middle

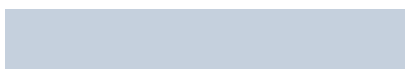


as pleasurable but also as crucial signs of a desirable modernity. Mankekar notes that in India in the mid-1980s, postcolonial modernity became increasingly articulated in terms of







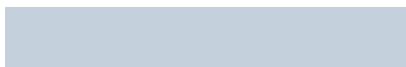




*Scrutiny and constraints*

To understand this perception of being squeezed and scrutinized in the middle, I now move to a more extensive examinHas19 oper.0.1887.6M



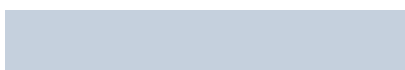


They all identified themselves as middle-class, and came to a consensus that being middle-class means having a monthly income, owning a small amount of property (such as a house), and having a two-wheeler



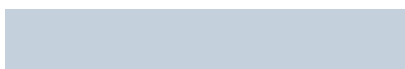


# middle class student







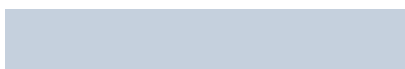






# decided to

Thus, at least from one perspective, the anxious instability inherent in middle-classness derives from the two sides of a performative coin: failure to perform well enough means falling in class, but performing



more notable for the self-ascribed middle class's diversity and for its divergence from conventional definitions of the middle class. Descriptions of what it means to be middle class reveal a deep ambivalence about circumstances. The middle connotes security, respect, and a deep sense of rightness. There is pleasure to be found in being centred between extremes. There must also be gratification in seeing oneself—or at least one's idealized image—reflected in television, newspaper, and magazine advertisements that depict happily consuming, modernizing, thriving middle-class families as the Indian ideal. There is also, however, the burden of expectations placed on the middle class: the constraint that is applied to spending also refers to keeping one's actions in check, never making mistakes, and always performing to one's class image properly. Added to this is the burden of finding the resources to finance the consumption that is utterly fundamental to upholding this image. Middle-class people must garner these resources at a time when, in their perception, acquiring sufficient income means that more household members must work, and often they must hold multiple jobs. Many find it difficult to find the jobs for which their educations have prepared them.

Roles, in Goffman's sense, shape who we are, and we become some of them. But to the extent that we recognize them as performances, we can easily be open to doubt about whether we are *really* what we portray ourselves to be. Without taking the performance metaphor too far, it seems reasonable to argue that such self-doubt may be especially prevalent when social life is seen as so explicitly performative as in Madurai. People in the middle do not spend every moment thinking

# middle cla



There is some disjunction between scholarly and native categories of the middle class. Including attention to local identities enhances an understanding of how changing economies and class processes shape everyday lives. Finally, we must consider the possibility that 'naming has real effect'.