

The Erotics of Pedagogical Spaces: Schools, Sexuality and the Desiring Body in India and Turkey

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines how everyday schooling practices in India and Turkey create normative gendered and sexual citizens, erasing the complicated histories of caste, class, race, religion, gender, and national belonging that constitute the sexual body. It draws on theoretical insights from postcolonial and indigenous feminist, feminist phenomenological, sexuality studies, and critical race/caste scholars to conceptualize the historical, racial, desiring body as always becoming and transforming itself and the world. Based on three years of extensive participant observations in schools and interviews with teachers, school administrators, non-profit workers, government officials, and education scholars in Istanbul, Hyderabad and New Delhi, this dissertation places corporeality and erotics at the center of analyses of schooling practices. It makes three major scholarly interventions. First, I argue that the body needs to be understood as a historical racial corporeal schema that is co-constituted by histories and articulations of race and nation and understands itself as such. I demonstrate the limits of the objective, individual, scientific, biological model of the body, which is a historical product of the project of European colonialism, nationalism and modernizing ideologies and institutions, including schools. Understanding the body as objective and biological entails ignoring the

consequent biological teleologies of childhood development and civilizational narratives of progress which maintain violent hierarchies of patriarchy, race and heteronormativity. By showing adult educators' failure to engage with the sensorial ways that children understand self and belonging to each other, nation and the world and their desiring excesses, I reveal how schooling and even progressive lessons like comprehensive sexuality education continue to understand the body as biological and thereby maintain historical biases of race and belonging in the name of development and 'proper', moral, sexual citizenship. Secondly, and based on the body as a historical racial corporeal schema, I propose gender as a lived, phenomenological experience. Drawing on in-depth interviews with experienced school teachers, I demonstrate how gender as their lived bodily experience is always shifting subjectivities or "becoming" and is always experienced based on their own historical corporeal schemas and relations to others. While gender maintains articulations of caste and (new) middle class belonging, the corporeal excesses of these women's lives also challenge hierarchies and linear spatiotemporalities of time and modern schooling. Finally, I draw on the theorization of the body as a historical racial corporeal schema, body becoming, and excess desire and flow of sensorial connections to imagine unruly, uncivilized possible lifeworlds. I urge transnational feminist scholarship to harness a form of critical feminist praxis that doesn't assume the separation of nation, borders and subjectivities but rather takes the body as the site where the (trans)national is lived and transformed in the everyday and is inseparable from historical articulations and unruly, inarticulable, corporeal excesses.

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Spot the Erotic? Some Glimpses of School Life



1. The school playground at Global Schools,
Secunderabad, India



2. A special issue of National Geographic on
Sexuality at the school library, Alliance
Middle School, Istanbul, Turkey



3. Students taking exams at a government
school, Istanbul, Turkey



4. A 5th grade school timetable,
Secunderabad, India

INTRODUCTION: Searching for the Erotic in Schools

It is my last working day at Alliance Middle School in Istanbul and I feel unbelievably sad. Over the past academic year I have developed strong friendships with the teachers and students. Working there from 7 AM- 5 PM every weekday (and some weekends) has meant that Alliance has literally become my home. My last stop for the day is my favorite grade 5 section. I am showered with handmade cards and presents from my students as we take silly selfies and exchange emails. One of my naughtiest students, Onur, comes running towards me out of the blue and hugs me really tight. “Please don’t go Ms. Akanksha,”¹ he cries. A bit taken aback, emotionally touched but also remembering all my teacher friends’ warnings from the beginning of the year to avoid physical contact with students as it was just too “risky” these days, I try to extricate myself. “It’s ok Onur, we’ll keep in touch,” I say consolingly. “No,” “you don’t understand!” he cries out again. “You are the only teacher who speaks to us...you know...normally...like we are people.”

Onur’s comments have stuck with me over the years and highlight the erotic casualties that accompany modern schooling, which is driven by our unquestioned zeal for progress and knowledge. When we think of schools, we seldom think of desiring bodies, feelings and erotic energies. As a matter of fact schools, conjure up images not dissimilar to the images we see in the preceding section. Images 1, 3 and 4 are the first thoughts we have when we think of schools- dull, drab building walls; rigorous timetables; and relentless assignments and exams that children

¹ All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. All names have been changed to protect privacy.

take sitting in rows on hard, wooden benches. Image 2 might raise some eyebrows and seem misplaced with the others, but is an image that is by far the greatest extent to which (and perhaps the only way) we can think of and engage with the erotic in schools, which is through the sexuality education of modern students. Other than that, schooling seldom brings to mind the idea of the erotic and desire and the questions of if and how the desiring body might actually drive the project of education.² If anything, education is always seen as a modern tool for disciplining desire and training the body through physical exercise and ritualistic performances such as singing of national anthems, in order to create proper, moral and fit future citizens.³

I similarly asked a group of feminist scholars about the erotic in schools as a part of a talk I was invited to in one of New Delhi's prestigious universities a few years ago. I asked everyone to think about the words "school," "erotics," and "body" together at the beginning of my talk and almost immediately met with looks of confusion, exasperation, and some of open disapproval. One of the older faculty members who identified as a woman told me that as an older person who attended a Catholic mission convent school in the 1960s, she just couldn't associate anything erotic or sensual⁴ with her school memories. The younger faculty and students fared no better

² Here I wish to acknowledge education studies scholarship that has engaged with desiring bodies by studying for instance corporeal practices of (middle) class formation in schools (Sue Ellen Henry, *Children's Bodies in Schools: Corporeal Performances of Social Class* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)). Many have also acknowledged that whilst sex and desiring bodies are ubiquitous in schools and are sources of anxiety, they also have to be denied in a world knowledge system that privileges the mind over the body (Carrie Paechter. " "Mens Sana in Corpore Sano": Cartesian Dualism and the Marginalisation of Sex Education," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 25, no. 3 (2004): 309-20).

³ For more on body discipline and carceral logics of schooling, see: Subini Annamma, Deb Morrison and Darrell Jackson, "Disproportionality Fills in the Gaps: Connections between Achievement, Discipline and Special Education in the School-to-Prison Pipeline," *Berkeley Review of Education* 5 (2014).

⁴ Throughout the dissertation, I use the term 'erotic' and 'erotic energies' interchangeably with 'desire', which I theorize along with the body on pages 28-35. My use of the term 'sensual' and

either and followed suit. However, I prodded them on, guiding them through the memory lane of their school lives. And then, just like that, as they remembered incidents, people and places they missed the most; the kinds of traumas they experienced (which was completely voluntary to share but was still shared by quite a few of those present); the kinds of sights, sounds and images they still held on to; the kinds of friendships or romances they could still vividly describe; there emerged a picture of schooling very different from what everyone had initially described. It became very clear that schooling meant more than just images 1, 3 and 4, and that it not only left a lasting impression on one's being but there was an intermingling of bodies and schools that still permeated these sensual memories.

I was also similarly struck by my own memories and experiences of visiting schools both during my tenure as a school teacher in Turkey from 2008-2010 and 2011-2013 and then during my pre-dissertation fieldwork in the summer of 2014 followed by my dissertation fieldwork from 2016-2018. In contrast to the most common sense understanding of schools as mundane institutional state apparatuses meant for mechanical production and training of future citizens, I was struck not just by the incredibly vibrant and social lives of schools but also equally by how much the bodies of the children and teachers who occupied them were in the center of these lived experiences of schooling and how schools represented the microcosm of larger political tensions in both India and Turkey. Schools are lifeworlds in and of themselves that encapsulate lived time and experiences of people, social and emotional relations between them, and the very visceral

'sensorial' is also similarly interchangeable but different from the erotic/desire. Sensual or sensorial in my articulation has literally to do with the physical body's five senses and sensations they produce such as pleasure and pain. In other words, the sensual body physically manifests desires or erotic energies that are our life force, which cannot be articulated or captured in words and always remain in excess of our knowledge production, as this dissertation endeavors to show.

ways in which they relate to each other, the nation, and the world. And pedagogy- the ways in which teachers understand and (are willing to) teach subject matters and the ways in which students learn- both are very visceral and sensual experiences. Irrespective of the curriculum and quality of textbooks, what I encountered in all these years of traversing school spaces and continue to encounter as an educator and sexuality trainer, is that the bodies of teachers and students are the primary medium through which erotic flows of energies, feelings and desires determine pedagogy. In my multiple capacities as a teacher, scholar, and sexuality trainer and in my multiple journeys across schools and spaces connected with them- nonprofits working on schools, after-school learning centers where pupils go to prepare for competitive exams, parent-interest groups, and educational material supplying companies- I encountered a fundamental disjunction. This was between how we think of schools as (often disembodied) places of learning that we leave behind as adults and how schools are in reality microcosmic, political and erotic lifeworlds where in spite of systemic disciplining of the body and active de-sensualizing of children's bodies, desiring excesses permeate and inform not just children's but adults' sense of self and belonging.

In this dissertation, I demonstrate how the desiring body is at the center of quotidian lifeworlds of schooling and how focusing on the bodies of educators and students challenges inherited ideologies of modernity represented by institutions like schools and its resultant teleologies of time and space. In other words, I demonstrate schools both as social, sensual but also as political spaces, where the politics of development, nation and creating 'modern' citizens works through the sensual bodies of students and teachers as they actively make school spaces and also sometimes disrupt its linear temporalities and physical infrastructures . By doing a

phenomenological reading of children's and teachers' lived experiences in and out of sexuality education lessons and everyday school life, I propose that schools are critical transnational sites where meanings of self and belonging to nation and the world are made and unmade through bodies and where hegemonies of caste, ethnicity, religion, and gender are invisibilized and often re-established as newer articulations of middle-class belonging emerge. Drawing on one-on-one interviews with teachers, participant-observations of middle school classes, observations and presentations of sexuality and sexual abuse prevention trainings, close-reading of policy documents and news reports, and interviews with education policy and curriculum makers and activists, I urge transnational feminist endeavors to start with the body. The body of the child and the teacher are active sites of experiencing, creating, and essentializing articulations of self, culture, gender, sexuality, caste, religion, and national belonging.

I make three main arguments in this dissertation. Firstly, I demonstrate how the "lived and interpreted" bodily experience mediates the "space between selfhood and social order" and it is through our bodies and lived experiences that "we understand change and continuity."⁵ Drawing on feminist phenomenological perspectives on the body inspired by the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty,⁶ I argue that the body is not just an objective, individual, biological unit but a historical corporeal schema that is created often by violent histories and is always becoming as it continues to make and unmake histories, producing newer articulations of

⁵ Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering, *The Mnemonic Imagination: Remembering as Creative Practice* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 8.

⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1945; New York: Routledge Classics, 2002; India: Replika Press, 2013), 157.

belonging, such as caste, class, religion, gender and nation. Using Fanon's phenomenology of race⁷ and indigenous, women of color and *Dalit*⁸ feminist scholarship, I also insist that this historical corporeal schema is fundamentally racial. I argue that as long as we see the body as a biological entity divorced from histories of becoming, the white⁹ and heteronormative body will remain unchallenged and 'natural' as its own histories of violence against the non-normative 'other' become invisibilized. Lived experiences of the body emerge from historical contexts that inform its present articulations and past reminiscences as it hopes and acts upon the future, which too becomes history. Time therefore is the historical racial corporeal schema and is lived through it.

Secondly, I argue that children's bodies as beings and becomings trouble our linear narratives of time-as-progress and the development of the biological body from not-knowing childhood to all-knowing adulthood. Similar to arguments posed by feminist scholars of childhood like Erica Burman,¹⁰ I too argue that this way of seeing the biological development of

⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952; New York: Grove Press, 2008); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963; New York: Grove Press, 2004).

⁸ *Dalit* refers to the 'untouchable' castes in Vedic Hinduism. The term has been politically reclaimed in recent years especially in response to growing upper-casteist (Brahminical) Hinduism in Indian politics. However, not everyone belonging to the 'untouchable' castes prescribes to the term: Shailaja Paik, "Mahar–Dalit–Buddhist: The History and Politics of Naming in Maharashtra," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 45, no. 2 (2011): 217-41; Anand Teltumbde, *Dalits: Past, Present and Future* (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2017).

⁹ I use 'white' here as the dominant racial articulation of a nation and its social formation, which in India is upper-caste, Hindu and in Turkey is Sunni, Turkish. I am drawing here on Shefali Chandra's comparison of colonial whiteness with upper-casteness and how both act through the control and demarcation of 'proper' female sexuality and the sexual body: Shefali Chandra, "Whiteness on the Margins of Native Patriarchy: Race, Caste, Sexuality, and the Agenda of Transnational Studies," *Feminist Studies* 37, no. 1 (2011): 127-153.

¹⁰ Erica Burman, *Developments: Child, Image, Nation* (Routledge, 2008).

bodies goes hand-in-hand with civilizational teleologies of modernity that deem certain bodies and practices as ‘modern’ and therefore, more acceptable. Children, through their sensual interactions with people and the world and their palpable and unruly desires, challenge not only these teleologies but also the project of education that aims at ‘proper’ moral and sexual citizenship formation, which urban, middle-class schooling in both countries represents. Their bodies reveal that what’s ‘proper’ itself is a). determined by and assumes biological bodies in which the normative national body is already marked by privileges of caste, ethnicity, gender, ability and religion and b). a result of shortcomings of adult educators’ ideological beliefs in the scientific body and of adulthood as all-knowing that inhibits educators from engaging with children’s sensual truths.

Finally, I argue that the ‘gendered’ body is intimately tied to lived experiences of the sexual body- the body as the historical racial corporeal schema- that is always becoming, making and unmaking spaces, and understanding itself in relation to other bodies around it. Based on female school teachers’ lived experiences, forms of gendered labor in home-school lifeworlds, and embodied emotions and desires, I argue that ‘gender’, just like the body, is a series of becomings; a set of subjectivities that are performed in different spaces that most often replicate ideologies of patriarchal capitalist modernity but also occasionally disrupt and challenge them. I craft gender as a phenomenology, a lived experience of the phenomenal body, which I show through teachers’ labors, bodies and desires to be intrinsically co-constituted by articulations of caste, race and religion and an experience that cannot be understood by separating the body from physical places and temporalities of people’s existence. As these teachers, and I focus on four teachers’ home-school lifeworlds and stories, traverse multiple spaces and subjectivities, they

become one with those spaces- whether it's the actual physical structures of their schools or temporalities of their larger lifeworlds that include school schedules, reproductive lives, and traumatic pasts. Their gendered lives are intimately constituted by these spaces even as they transform them through their reminiscences, hopes for a better future, and desires for love and intimacy. In proposing a phenomenology of gender, I extend well-established black, women of color, indigenous and transnational feminist theories of intersectionality and standpoint¹¹ that have long histories of emphasizing lived experiences and perspectives of women whose bodies occupy multiple systems of oppression. In addition, I also try to capture how newer articulations of middle-class gendered belonging are emerging in the globalized capitalist twenty-first century in two countries inundated with social aspirations for modernity and increasingly narrow ethno-religious visions of nationalist belonging. On a more hopeful note, I try to capture the corporeal excesses of these women's bodies- the desire to dress up, the need to hug and touch, the restlessness within their lifeworlds, and the need to infuse their spaces with beauty- that escape spaces and civilizational ideologies, which might help feminists envision more intimate, sensual, and uncivilized lifeworlds.

In short, this dissertation shifts feminist scholarship and attention to teachers' and

¹¹ Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241-1299. This seminal work owes allegiance to a longer Black Feminist tradition of connecting gender oppression with systemic forms of racist oppression. For example, checkout: Combahee River Collective, *The Combahee River Collective Statement: Black Feminist Organizing in the Seventies and Eighties* (Albany, NY: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1986). Examples of US Women of Color, Indigenous and 'Third World' feminist standpoint theorists include: Patricia Hill Collins, "Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited': Where's the Power?" *Signs* 22, no. 2 (1997): 375-381; Sunaina Arya and Aakash Singh Rathore, eds., *Dalit Feminist Theory: A Reader* (London; New York: Taylor and Francis, 2019).

children's bodies as sites where the politics of modernity, nation, and middle-class belonging in a globalizing world plays out in intimate, often violent ways. It reveals schools as spaces that are 'alive' with corporealities and desires and where bodies as historical racial corporeal schemas continue orientations and ideologies of heteronormativity and civilizational modernity through suppression of the erotic and belief in scientific, objective perspectives of the body. However, desiring bodies and erotic energies also exceed and sometimes transform spaces, like schools, as they challenge their spatiotemporalities, notions of the scientific body, and civilizational teleologies. In the coda, I delve on these exciting corporeal excesses- the sensualness of children's bodies and the restlessness, desires and aesthetics of teachers' gendered and laboring bodies. I do so to first of all imagine a transformative form of education that honors children's sensual worlds and helps adult educators un-learn, albeit in small ways, ideological beliefs in scientific modernity and time-as-progress and understand systemic articulations of gender, caste, religion, class, and sexuality, which are experienced in very corporeal and often painful ways. Most importantly, I contend that as a microcosm of politics, the institutional apparatus of schooling can help us imagine a transformative form of transnational feminist politics that is more intimate and uncivilized. The 'uncivilized possible lifeworlds,' that I open up as a theoretical possibility draws on and drives a "critical transnational"¹² feminist praxis that concerns itself with people's desire, sensations, relationships, touch, and aesthetics that have the power to dismantle hierarchies of belonging and grand civilizational and biological narratives.

¹² Here I draw on and expand Swarr and Nagar's theorization of "critical transnational" feminist praxis, which I explain in the *Methodological Interventions* section: Richa Nagar and Amanda Lock Swarr, *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010).

Main Inquiries and Theoretical Engagements

This dissertation, like most forms of labor, has a life of its own. Years before I started my Ph.D., I had conducted Masters fieldwork where I had interviewed civil society activists and counselors working with adult survivors of incest in Istanbul and Diyarbakır in Turkey and New Delhi in India.¹³ All the folks I had interviewed from Turkey to India had expressed an unwavering faith in the power of schools to teach children comprehensive and positive sexuality and knowledge of the body in order to prevent abuse. This unwavering faith and assumption of education as a panacea for all social evils and of sexuality as something teachable was to become the inspiration for my middle school teaching and subsequently my doctoral work. In the interim, India and Turkey also saw a proliferation of public cases on child sexual abuse (henceforth CSA), which has since led to a greater demand of comprehensive sexuality education (henceforth CSE) and CSA prevention work at schools. So, I started off my dissertation fieldwork with a simple, 2-part question, *how do students ‘learn’ gender and sexuality in CSE lessons? How does the knowledge of gender and sexuality make them aware of their bodies, their bodily rights, and teach them to respect the rights of all kinds of bodies around them?*

However, this question was based on assumptions that were challenged as I encountered children and their questions, their screaming noises that permeate even the most silent hallways in schools, their remarkable visceral reactions to even the most mundane comments, and their constant struggles to become whatever normative categories we expect them to be. This question assumed that we, as adults, know-it-all, that we know what ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’ are and that

¹³ Akanksha Misra, “Challenging Social Attitudes and Making a Change: The Struggle of Feminist Organisations in Turkey and India against Incest,” *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 21, no. 3 (2014): 329-52.

these concepts are teachable, and that somehow the teaching and learning of these progressive, ‘modern’ ways of conceptualizing our bodies would automatically make our children, ‘proper’, progressive and moral citizens. There was a dissonance between what we as adults imagine the role of schooling and social, sexual development of children to be and what children actually feel, express and desire. As Kavita, with her years of experience shaping India’s first formal sexuality education curriculum for schools and working on issues of juvenile justice and education for underprivileged children casually remarked in one of our interviews, “the general notion is we understand children.”

Therefore, as I set about investigating the epistemologies of gender and sexuality in feminist scholarship and juxtaposed them with my own observations of CSE lessons and CSA prevention work- the ways in which gender and sexuality were being taught in relation to the body and the ways in which children were imbibing these lessons- I swiftly encountered two problems: One was that while I was struggling with the epistemology of ideas, these programs were assuming a certain ontology of the body that was going unchallenged. At the same time, I was struck by the ways children were actually responding to these lessons that were very viscerally disruptive- puking, laughing, fainting- as well as sensorially engaged- revolving around sight, smell and touch. This I was to find was the way children were receiving all kinds of lessons in schools, not just CSE lessons. Therefore, the very first set of questions I had to ask were: ***what kind of body is assumed in CSE lessons and more generally, in schooling? Why don’t we question this assumption in quotidian school life and what are the implications of not questioning?***

Queer and feminist scholarship has long exposed the gendered, able, heterosexual body

and also shown how this ‘normative’ body occupies hegemonic articulations of belonging (caste, race, religion, etc.) by deliberately and violently suppressing the non-hegemonic ‘other’ through processes of colonialism, modernizing development and nation-state building.¹⁴ At the same time, seminal works have also shown how gender and sexuality as social construction and mechanism of control respectively, get mapped onto the biological sex-ed body.¹⁵ Whilst these theories explain the assumed ‘normative’ body, they still cannot explain what drives people to not question assumed norms and what the implications of not assuming are. This is where phenomenological perspectives on the body seemed to offer answers. During my fieldwork in both countries and intense involvement with feminist and queer activists from Kurdish backgrounds in Turkey and *Dalit* and Muslim backgrounds in India, and as an upper-caste, cisgendered woman myself, I realized how intensely experiences of oppression are lived through the body, and how the body understands the self and mediates its relation to others in the world. Drawing therefore on my own experiences and the work of women of color, indigenous, postcolonial, and *Dalit* feminists which emanates from real lived experiences of historical oppression,¹⁶ in combination with feminist phenomenology, enabled me to understand not just

¹⁴ M. Jacqui Alexander, “Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy,” in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, eds. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York: Routledge, 1997), 105-42; Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free Press, 1999); Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Jasbir K Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

¹⁵ Catharine A. Mackinnon, “Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory,” *Signs* 7, no. 3 (1982): 515-44; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990).

¹⁶ Some notable examples: Cherríe Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa and Toni Cade Bambara, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983); Audre Lorde, “The uses of anger: Women responding to racism,”

how the biological, scientific body marked with gender, sexual and racial privilege becomes the norm, but also how modern institutions like schooling continue to propagate this norm through CSE, school lessons, and quotidian school life. The phenomenal body, whose articulations of belonging (including gender and sexuality) are determined by histories and upon whose flesh race and any ‘difference’ to the norm has been essentialized, remains invisible to us as it continues to see itself as an objective, biological entity.

The implications of not questioning the body, of not seeing the body as historical and racial are huge, especially in schools. In my own research, the first implication was evident in CSE lessons. When the body is assumed as an objective, biological entity, as I demonstrate in chapter 2, ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’ become characteristics of the body and are mapped onto it as identities, invisibilizing the deep historical co-construction of ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’ with other articulations of race, religion, region, and nation, for instance. This prevented the children from connecting gender and sexual rights and bodies with privileges of race and religion, which some of them did do, of their own accord and through their own sensual engagements with CSE, as I demonstrate in chapter 3. This also enabled, as I was to find out over the course of my research, both in the larger political lifeworlds in both countries and at the microcosm of political life at schools, a certain discursive co-optation of ‘gender equality’ and sexuality education which

in *Sister outsider: Essays and Speeches* (NY: Crossing Press, 1984): 127-131; Combahee River Collective, *The Combahee River Collective Statement*; Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005); Sharmila Rege, *Writing Caste, Writing Gender: Reading Dalit Women's Testimonios* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2006); Urmila Pawar and Meenakshi Moon, *We Also Made History: Women in the Ambedkarite Movement* (New Delhi, India: Zubaan Books, 2008); Handan Çağlayan, *Analar, Yoldaşlar, Tanrıçalar: Kürt Hareketinde Kadınlar Ve Kadın Kimliğinin Oluşumu* [Mothers, Comrades, Goddesses: Women in the Kurdish Movement and the Creation of Women's Identity] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009).

invisibilized heteronormativity and erased the gross forms of violence against non-normative bodies, including sexual violence against women and queer folks. For instance, in Istanbul, the religion teacher Ali at the school I was conducting observations, insisted, and not unlike his ‘secular’ counterpart Caner who is one of the school’s co-founders we encounter in chapter 3, that schooling is a “like a triangle,” with the family and school working together for the welfare of the child and should provide knowledge to children about gender, body and the sexual. Ali I soon found out is also a sympathizer of the currently ruling *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* [AKP, Justice and Development Party], which has been in power since 2002. Under the AKP regime in almost twenty years, acts of sexual violence against women, children and queer communities have seen a rapid increase.¹⁷ In other words, in reproducing the body as an individual biological entity, in mapping different identities like caste and sexuality onto it instead of seeing how they are articulations of a historical body, relegates these concepts to the discursive realm which people with any political agenda can co-opt, in order to fit their own ideological persuasions. I will be coming back to this implication in the coda.

Finally, if the body is objective and develops from childhood to adulthood biologically and teleologically, unlike the historical body that is constantly producing newer articulations as histories are (re)written, then adults already know everything and that results in a certain complacency of knowledge. However, as I mentioned earlier, I was observing in the field a great

¹⁷ “2001’den 2015’e AKP’ in LGBTİ Tarihi [From 2001 to 2015: AKP’s LGBTI History],” *BIAMag Cumartesi*, September 26, 2015, <https://m.bianet.org/biamag/lgbti/167837-2001-den-2015-e-akp-in-lgbti-tarihi>; Deniz Kandiyoti, “Locating the Politics of Gender: Patriarchy, Neo-liberal Governance, and Violence in Turkey,” *Research and Policy on Turkey* 1, no. 2 (2016): 103–18; Zeynep Kurtuluş Korkman, “Castration, Sexual Violence, and Feminist Politics in Post–Coups Attempt Turkey,” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 13, no. 1 (2017): 181–85.

disconnect between what we know and can teach and how children are responding and learning. This actually prompted the second question: ***why aren't we engaging with children's desiring bodies and the very sensorial ways they learn?*** My ethnographic work in the mundane, everyday of schooling reveals that our failure to engage with children's bodies and ways of being in the world is fundamentally informed by our refusal to see them as beings in their own right and also becoming, just like adults, which stems once again from civilizational narratives of development and modernity. Everywhere I went, children's behavior, in and out of sexuality education and all other classrooms, was a source disruption and mandated control. The role of 'proper' education was to make children 'proper' moral citizens by taming children's unruly desires because they were either a-sexual or hyper-sexual. And this idea of who and what is a 'proper'(ly) sexual and moral future citizen, as I was to find out and as scholars in childhood and education studies scholarship have repeatedly pointed out,¹⁸ is already established as the adult, normative national body marked by privileges of caste, ethnicity, region, language, and religion. As global capital fuels new middle-class aspirations in both countries, it promises parents and children from all backgrounds the possibility of becoming the 'modern' national body through consumption of 'education'. Therefore, the lines of privilege and normativity have to be re-established by 'educating' 'backward' parents and children and dismissing the very sensual ways in which all children engage with each other and the material world, in favor of 'proper', 'modern' education, which once again assumes the scientific objective body.

¹⁸ See for example: Jayne Osgood and Kerry Robinson, *Feminists Researching Gendered Childhoods: Generative Entanglements* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2019). More recent scholarship, especially through sexuality education, has started to approach childhood as a series of becomings, as I argue in this dissertation: Pam Alldred and Nick J Fox, "Assembling Citizenship: Sexualities Education, Micropolitics and the Becoming-Citizen," *Sociology* 53, no. 4 (2019): 689-706.

Therefore, schools are erotic spaces where body politics of belonging and desire enact and negotiate ideologies of civilization, nation and modernity, informed by existing articulations of gender, sexuality, caste, class and religion, and also create newer articulations. Children's desiring bodies fundamentally challenge the privileges of the national body and the body of the adult as all-knowing. However, in my fieldwork, it wasn't just the children's bodies that were challenging schooling ideologies of nation and modernity and the biological model of development. Teachers' bodies, mostly female and laboring under schooling regimes that are increasingly privatizing and outcome-driven in both countries, just like children's bodies, were not being heard, in spite of the fact that most teachers I met had something to complain about. These complaints ranged from extremely personal bodily traumas to more mundane forms of physical exhaustion caused by working long hours. The greatest irony was that many of these teachers didn't have to work. A lot of the teachers in the private schools where I conducted extensive participant observations but also some in the government schools that I visited in both countries, were working because school spaces offered them the convenient schedule of looking after their children and families. Teaching is considered a safe, easy and "noble" profession for women and coming to school was a way for these teachers to supplement their incomes, make them feel independent (because a lot of them, mostly married, had worked prior to getting married), while escaping the monotony of home life. School spaces offered these teachers sociality and the opportunities to form intimate friendships with other teachers, and for those who loved teaching, to feel contentment in teaching children. Therefore schools are both spaces of joy and trauma, spaces of gendered exploitation of labor but also spaces where the laboring bodies of teachers create joy, friendships, hope and in the process transform themselves and

schools. And the teachers' bodies seemed central to these contradictions, to these extremely gendered forms of labor, intimacies and alienation. Therefore, I had to ask: ***what is the relationship of embodied labor and desires of female teachers with their school-home lifeworlds and their relationships to self and others? How can we theorize 'gender' from their bodies that seem to be occupying ironical spatiotemporalities- one of the linear, progress-driven schooling ideology and the other of their own desires, relations, and often excesses that are frustrated by school spaces?***

Critical transnational feminist studies of female workers' lived lives and labors and their gendered and sexual effects across nation states unevenly immersed in networks of global capitalism has been a pre-occupation in long established Marxist feminist studies of (women's) labor, (in)formal economies and social reproduction.¹⁹ In more recent years, the concept of "intimate labor"²⁰ has further sharpened our understanding of not only how global inequalities along lines of nation, class, religion, gender, race, and sexuality inform labor and economy but also how larger macroeconomic global processes create newer forms of intimate labor.²¹ The labor of female teachers can be classified as intimate labor that precariously²² re- produces future

¹⁹ The literature here is too vast, but a classic text connecting gender, sexuality and labor: Mackinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory". Example of a similar argument from a transnational perspective: Gita Sen, "Subordination and Sexual Control: A Comparative View of the Control of Women," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 16, no. 1 (1984): 132-42. Some anthologies of development that focus on feminist analysis of reproduction and labor: Cecile Jackson and Ruth Pearson, *Feminist Visions of Development: Gender Analysis and Policy* (NY: Routledge, 1998); Wilma A. Dunaway, *Gendered Commodity Chains: Seeing Women's Work and Households in Global Production* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014).

²⁰ Eileen Boris and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, eds., *Intimate Labors: Cultures, Technologies, and the Politics of Care* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2010).

²¹ Ibid., 9.

²² See Guy Standing on the idea of precarity and class: Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2011). For application of this idea of labor

social and sexual citizens. Therefore, theories of intimate labor, alienation and social reproduction²³ remain implicit and are borne out of the life stories of the teachers that I discuss in chapter 4. However, my focus in reading these teachers' lives remains on their phenomenological bodies. In my ethnographic observations, in-depth interviews, and deep friendships with the teachers whose stories I share, it was their bodies that were laboring and experiencing alienation, love, stress and in the process of trying to perform gendered forms of labor expected of them, were inseparably diffusing school spaces with their erotic energies that often exceeded these spaces. Therefore, I investigate the phenomenological bodies' lived experiences and inseparability with (school) spaces and the ways bodies understand and enact different gendered subjectivities as they constantly become, make and unmake their lifeworlds.

Last but not the least, ***why should we as feminist scholars be interested in learning from the erotics of pedagogical spaces? And how do we translate the lessons learned from intimate social, political and sensual schooling lifeworlds in two countries to inform a critical transnational feminist praxis?*** This has been an enduring set of questions during the course of my fieldwork and ones that I have had to confront in multiple seminars, workshops and conversations with colleagues and faculty mentors. I believe that transnational feminism must engage with the erotics of schooling and there are three reasons that are borne out of feminism's own commitment to politics, education and understanding change. Firstly, while feminist scholarship has deeply engaged with institutional analysis of people's lived subjectivities in

precarity in schools, see: David Harvey, "Value Production and Struggle in the Classroom: Teachers Within, against and beyond Capital," *Capital & Class*, no. 88 (2006): 1-V.

²³ Concepts that are all legacies of Marxist thought which arguably and deeply resonate with phenomenology- with questions of ontology and being- due to Marxism's focus on history, social relations, embodiment and labor, and Hegelian dialectics: David Levin, "The Body Politic: Political Economy and the Human Body," *Human Studies* 8, no. 3 (1985): 235-78.

understanding formation of nation and other articulations, the attention to schools has been relatively limited. That is not to say that feminists haven't had sustained engagement with schooling; on the contrary, across the world and especially in India and Turkey, there has been influential feminist work looking at schooling outcomes, curricula and infrastructure.²⁴ There is also vast feminist development scholarship on the "poor child"²⁵ in the global 'South'. I add to these endeavors by not only performing an ethnography of lived experiences and phenomenological bodies²⁶ that occupy schools as sensual, erotic spaces, but also by looking at private schools in the center of my ethnography where (middle) class aspirations, that have been so central to the rise of authoritarian regimes in both countries,²⁷ make and un-make other markers of belonging through bodies. For example, during one of my lessons at Global Schools in Secunderabad in which students were studying Social Studies and framing quiz questions to

²⁴ Some notable examples from India and Turkey include: Marie Carlson, Annika Rabo and Fatma Gök, *Education in 'multicultural' Societies: Turkish and Swedish Perspectives* (London; New York: Svenska Forskningsinstitutet I Istanbul; Distributor, I.B. Tauris, 2007); Arnd-Michael Nohl, Arzu Akkoyunlu-Wigley and Simon Wigley, eds., *Education in Turkey* (Münster: Waxmann Verlag, 2008); Chaise LaDousa, *Hindi is our ground, English is our sky: Education, Language, and Social Class in Contemporary India* (New York: Berghahn books, 2014); William F. Pinar, *Curriculum Studies in India: Intellectual Histories, Present Circumstances* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

²⁵ Arathi Sriprakash and Lucy Hopkins, *The 'Poor Child': The Cultural Politics of Education, Development and Childhood* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015).

²⁶ Véronique Bénéï does this for schools in Western India. While Bénéï's work focuses on children, disciplining through the phenomenological body, and politics of regional/Maharashtrian and national/Indian identities, I expand the scope of phenomenology to incorporate the role of erotics and sensual pleasure to dig deep into the notion of 'body' itself and its relation to articulations of belonging in a transnational context: Véronique Bénéï, *Schooling Passions: Nation, History, and Language in Contemporary Western India* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008).

²⁷ Neşecan Balkan, Erol M. Balkan, and Ahmet F. Öncü, *The Neoliberal Landscape and the Rise of Islamist Capital in Turkey* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015); Smita Tewari Jassal and Halil Turan, *New Perspectives on India and Turkey: Connections and Debates* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018).

test each other on an upcoming exam, one of the brightest students in the class, Vikram, asked the question, “Who said Rahuls [sic] Khans [sic] family to Keep [sic] Gandhi after Rahul?” While I grappled with the meaning of this question as I read it out loud to the class, all the other students had no difficulties in understanding it and almost immediately blurted out, “Gandhiji!,” referring to the well known figure of Indian independence. It soon dawned on me that the children were referencing the rumors that had at the time been circulating on the social media platform WhatsApp, which is very popular in India. Rightwing Hindu nationalists, who have been trying to besmirch India’s ‘secular’ Nehruvian legacy by trying to paint the Nehru-Indira Gandhi family as Muslim, had been claiming that Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the ruling party’s main opposition and also Indira Gandhi’s grandson, is Muslim (hence the last name “Khan”). What struck me about this incident is not only the implicit assumption that to be a Muslim is to somehow be an inferior citizen or even an enemy of true ‘Indian’-ness, but also how effectively children are plugged into all these communication channels, through their families or by using cell phones themselves, and bring this information to school, where they discuss it, and in spite of the Social Studies curriculum not making any such claims, this information becomes their truth! I had to gently request Vikram to frame another question based on their actual textbook and next time, refrain from believing hearsay. This is but a small glimpse how what happens in the mundane, everyday of schools is deeply political. Therefore in the coming sections and chapter 2, I outline the political exigencies for feminism to engage with schools and their microcosmic, erotic political lifeworlds.

Secondly, feminism has always been an educational project. Transnational feminism especially has been committed to “radical, nonnormative transnational feminist solidarity

pedagogy that is attentive to the genealogies and spatializations of power across multiple borders.”²⁸ While this solidarity has taken many forms and continues to blur academic/activist and theory/method dichotomies²⁹ in feminist epistemological production, the politics of pedagogy and knowledge production at the very basic level, in the quotidian in schools, especially schools in the ‘South’, remains largely unquestioned. As those of us engaged in critical transnational feminist projects who “seek to understand pedagogic failure of inherited nationalism,”³⁰ we must look at quotidian school lifeworlds across nations and the ways children learn, not as repositories of our imagined, uniform ‘future’, as I argue in chapter 3, but- as Vikram in the anecdote above demonstrates- active, feeling, sensual political agents in our present, who are also remaking history.

As a matter of fact, the politics of feminism, as much as it works towards changing heteropatriarchal regimes of global capital, also understands change through the present, through the bodies and lived experiences of those most marginalized by these structures. In my theorization of the body as well, I challenge temporalities of progress and argue for an understanding of time as ‘lived’- in the past and present- and experienced through the body as it becomes and imagines a future. Therefore, I pivot feminist endeavors of understanding change from larger structures of oppression that work through human bodies across time to more intimate bodily practices as sites where change is experienced, lived and transforms time and meanings of larger structures such as schools, nation and also the transnational. By showing how biology,

²⁸ Nagar and Swarr, *Critical Transnational*, 41.

²⁹ Ibid., 2.

³⁰ M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Introduction: Genealogies, Legacies, Movements,” in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, eds. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York: Routledge, 1997), xxviii.

national belonging, global development and aspirational modernity are articulations of a body that imagines itself within a global world order driven by capital and nations, I demonstrate how histories of privilege and violence enable certain bodies to become desirable and ‘normal’ (trans)national citizens. Also the erratic ways in which body subjectivities change based on constant flows of erotic energies, desires and need for human connection, release transnational feminist endeavors from structural power and analysis of discursive regimes of capital to more hopeful ways of thinking about how people’s bodies and sensations hold the key to transformative change. Especially as I demonstrate in chapter 4 with teachers’ bodies, engaging with the body’s desires, sensations and reactions in quotidian lifeworlds makes us turn towards “‘objects’ of feminism (such as sex or gender)” so that we think and re-think them, “allowing them to acquire new shapes and forms.”³¹ By analyzing the “perplexity”³² of teachers- the ironical ways in which their gendered labor is exploited by increasing middle-class consumptive practices of schooling while they too aspire to be middle-class *and* their ambiguous gendered subjectivities across different spaces- we can conceive a more ambiguous, intimate and sensual praxis of becoming and belonging, which I open up in the coda.

³¹ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 187.

³² I draw on Priti Ramamurthy’s concept of perplexity here because it captures the ambiguous and changing nature of subjectivities, desires and ontologies (ways of being), within the context of global capitalism where labor both produces and desires/consumes what it produces. This is similar to the productive-consumptive space of schools where teachers’ desires to ‘be’ middle-class, gendered, and so on both drives their labor but also frustrates it, leaving corporeal excesses: Priti Ramamurthy, “Feminist Commodity Chain Analysis: A Framework to Conceptualize Value and Interpret Perplexity,” in *Gendered Commodity Chains*, 38-52.

Schools, Lives and Bodies in India-Turkey: A Case for Comparison

Schools in Turkey and India present fertile ground for understanding how the desiring body learns, teaches, and understands itself and others in the process, as it shapes and reshapes meanings of nation, modernity, and belonging. As I demonstrate in chapter 1, schools are central to modernization and nation state projects of both colonial/independent India and Ottoman/Republican Turkey. More importantly, the establishment of schools in these geographies from the late-nineteenth century onwards, also establishes a process of individualization of the human body as a biological entity inscribed with characteristics of civilization, inferiority and sin, and the idea of sending children to school for learning, which fundamentally alters people's relationship to their bodies. These histories continue as frugal support for schooling from both governments,³³ accompanied by rapidly liberalizing markets and increase of private schools as markers of middle-class consumption are impressed upon and lived (and in the process alter meanings of gender, sexuality, race and class belonging) through the phenomenal bodies of teachers and students.

Even though India and Turkey have distinct nationalist historical trajectories and entanglements in networks of global capitalism and Islam,³⁴ these processes, created by desiring

³³ "Eğitim-Sen: 2020 MEB bütçesi temel ihtiyaçlara yanıt vermiyor [2020 Ministry of Education Budget doesn't fulfill basic needs], *T24 bağımsız internet gazetesi* [Independent E-newspaper]," November 13, 2019, <https://t24.com.tr/haber/egitim-sen-2020-meb-butcesi-temel-ihtiyaclara-yanit-vermiyor,847967>; Prerna Sindwani, "The rise in budget allocation for education is just not enough," *Business Insider India*, January 13, 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.in/budget/news/education-budget-2020-the-rise-in-budget-allocation-for-education-is-just-not-enough/articleshow/73182288.cms>.

³⁴ Cemil Aydın, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire: The Intellectuals Who Remade Asia* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux,

bodies and aspirations as we will see in chapter 1 in the case of schools, have resulted in similar publics, gendered formations,³⁵ and ways in which people have related and continue to relate to the newer political and global order. India and Turkey as modern, secular nation states have crafted people's relationship to the state- in India as members of a heterogeneous 'unity in diversity' community and in Turkey as members of a homogeneous, ethnocentric state³⁶ - that work, as I show in chapters 1 and 2, primarily through the sexual body. These processes of belonging have become really evident in the case of these two countries specifically, as they embark on very similar paths to economic liberalization, environmental destruction, and masculinist, ethno/casteist-national politics,³⁷ working through bodies to demarcate citizenship via discrimination and (sexual) control. Therefore, theorizing from the body and everyday lived experiences in these two countries makes a few significant contributions. First of all, it demonstrates how the neoliberal configurations of 'third world' nationalisms and historical legacies of systemic violence and scientific modernity work in particular Southern contexts through universal understandings of the body as biology, at the expense of more regional, local understandings. It rejects universal methods in favor of approaching the body as a method to read imprints of our "entangled...yet distinct histories"³⁸ on ourselves- local histories of caste in India

2012); *New Perspectives on India and Turkey*, ed. Smita Tewari Jassal and Halil Turan (Routledge, 2018); Sumantra Bose, *Secular States, Religious Politics: India, Turkey, and the Future of Secularism* (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

³⁵ Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed, 1986).

³⁶ Şerif Mardin, *Religion, Society, and Modernity in Turkey* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002); Srirupa Roy, "Seeing a State: National Commemorations and the Public Sphere in India and Turkey," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48, no. 1 (2006): 200-32.

³⁷ Banu Gökarişel, Christopher Neubert and Sara Smith, "Demographic Fever Dreams: Fragile Masculinity and Population Politics in the Rise of the Global Right," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 44, no. 3 (2019): 561-87.

³⁸ Mary E. John, "Feminisms and Internationalisms: A Response from India," *Gender and*

and ‘white’ Turk [*Beyaz Türk*] in Turkey for instance- that get lost in the bigger ‘transnational’ framework- and how our dynamic desires and bodies can help us re-imagine a globalizing future that is common and yet “unevenly shared.”³⁹ In other words, instead of employing theoretical approaches obsessed with “border crossing”⁴⁰ phenomena (usually North-South) that view people as embodiments of fixed ‘cultures’, I engage in South-South comparative theorizing to a). demonstrate how specificities and differences within national cultures get articulated within a transnational space and b). how bodies are in the center of these articulations as national politics, global capitalism and their own desires leave them perpetually in a position of change, ambiguity and often violence as they re-affirm essentialisms and sometimes shatter them. In that sense, quotidian practices of schooling that are seeped with desiring bodies and erotic energies of students and teachers as “comparative analytical”⁴¹ spaces of study can shatter culturally essentialist⁴² notions of national citizenship and belonging and reveal similarities in human embodiment, desires and body as phenomenon across nation state borders.

Istanbul and the twin cities of Hyderabad-Secunderabad that I specifically focus on within these countries, also provide a strong basis of comparison. As large metropolitan centers, with burgeoning, aspirational middle-class populations, schools and especially private schools in these cities are the prime markets for selling and consuming modernity and molding modern

History 10, no. 3 (1998): 546.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Leela Fernandes, “Toward a Feminist Analytic of the Post-Liberalization State,” in *Feminists Rethink the Neoliberal State: Inequality, Exclusion, and Change*, ed. Leela Fernandes (New York: NYU Press, 2018), 225.

⁴² Uma Narayan, “Essence of Culture and a Sense of History: A Feminist Critique of Cultural Essentialism,” in *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World*, eds. Uma Narayan and Sandra Harding (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 80-100.

citizens. Both Istanbul and Hyderabad churn out the highest number of students attending American universities from their respective countries, partly explaining the vast number of private schools that have mushroomed in both cities in recent years and indicating the need to look at how schooling in conjunction with bodies, markets and sustains dreams of civilization and modern futures. Of course, modernity is a thread that has connected these two urban centers for a while now, even as the articulations of ‘modern’ belonging have changed over the years. In the early part of the twentieth-century, it was in the Nizamate of Hyderabad where exiled Ottoman princesses Dürrüşehvar and Niloufer found home and influenced the cityscape through their charitable work and fashionable bodies. They are still remembered fondly by Hyderabadis and have left a permanent impression in the culture of the city. In our present times, cultural connections between the two cities and countries continue, as I was about to find out during the course of my research, through ‘cultural’ organizations that draw on connected Ottoman/Nizamate, Islamic pasts and presents.⁴³

In spite of these connections and the centuries of traveling bodies that have traversed in and between these vast geographies, including the famous Turkish nationalist leader Halide Edib, who wrote extensively about her visit to Gandhi’s British India and reflected profusely on and compared the state of the country and its women to the realities in newly Republican Turkey,⁴⁴ people in both nations seem to know surprisingly less about each other. As I reflect through a teacher Filiz’s story in chapter 4 as well, India remains orientalized in the modern Turkish

⁴³ Here I am referencing a particular cultural foundation whose meetings I was invited to attend in Hyderabad and that also runs a school in the city, where Turkish lingual and cultural education is being imparted. Unfortunately, I am not at liberty to disclose many details and whereabouts of this Foundation.

⁴⁴ Halide Edib Adivar, *Inside India* (New York: Macmillan, 1938).

imagination and people in Turkey are viewed by modern urban Indians as “Muslims,” some of whom are “progressive.” During the course of my fieldwork, I also conducted inter-school projects between Istanbul and Hyderabad and spoke with students from each about the other. In the course of these conversations, I realized how histories of nation building and modernity have erased our connected pasts and marked racial difference/superiority onto bodies, reducing a vast array of diverse peoples and cultures to ‘dirty’ bodies mired in and marked with poverty, fanaticism, and oppression. My research that connects bodily desires and lived experiences across these geographies, reveals precisely these processes of invisibilization of histories and sensualities that keeps our objective bodies tied to reductive national borders, even as the national politics in these countries and across the world continues to destroy lives and livelihoods.

Finally, a transnational comparison between Indian and Turkish schooling experiences that centers the phenomenological bodies of children and teachers adds to the vast and rich feminist studies scholarship on women and sexual violence in both countries. This scholarship has demonstrated striking similarities in the construction of the national Indian/Turkish woman in connection to the patriarchal Indian and Turkish nation states framed via exclusions of ‘women’ and folks from non-upper-caste/middle class/Turkish/Hindu backgrounds.⁴⁵ Through a study of middle-class teachers’ lived experiences and bodies in both countries in chapter 4, I hope to add to this scholarship by showing how gender as an intense bodily lived experience enables us to see how in both countries, new middle class womanhood is in similar ways being

⁴⁵ See chapters 4, 7 and 16 in: Ayşe Gül Altınay, María José Contreras, Marianne Hirsch, Jean Howard, Banu Karaca, and Alisa Solomon, eds., *Women Mobilizing Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

written at the expense of intersections of other articulations of belonging, even as sometimes these women remain ambiguous and ambivalent about gendered expectations. I believe that the phenomenology of gender that I craft through these narratives that also informs a critical transnational praxis around desires, sensations and historical bodies, can be a fresh vantage point to conceptualize South-South feminist collaborations. Similarly, sexual violence against children that has been increasingly reported and politicized in both countries and has occupied feminists for some time, can benefit by this research's theorization of the body. The school-going child's body in both countries, now more than ever, is the site for narrow nationalism and unfettered capitalist modernity, a "multidirectional citation,"⁴⁶ which not just connects material and aspirational flows but also very similar ways in which adult teachers' express their own nostalgia for the Turkey or India of their childhood. This nostalgia is in both cases for places that were not-as-developed but better in their imagined childhoods, as phenomenal bodies move back and forth in time and resist the onward march of progress that seems to be too fast, as a lot of older teachers during my fieldwork complained about, and yet leaving everyone with too little-materially and emotionally.

Theoretical Debts and Interventions

1. Beyond Biology: The Desiring Body as a Historical Racial Corporeal Schema

Drawing on Sara Ahmed's approach to bodily "orientations,"⁴⁷ and feminist philosophers

⁴⁶ Alys Eve Weinbaum, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeleine Yue Dong, and Tani E. Barlow, eds., *The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Duke University Press, 2008).

⁴⁷ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

that approach the body phenomenologically inspired by the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty,⁴⁸ I approach the body not as an objective entity but as a phenomenological substance in the center of making sense of itself and the world. The body is a composite whole of the various aspects of its being and is always becoming - Woman, Man, Gay, Poor, Hindu, Kurdish. I say 'becoming' because it is always living, performing, experiencing; in other words, embodies these structural conditions of being (of class, race, caste, ethnicity, religion, gender) that have been historically created and understands itself through them. Therefore, the body is our primary mode of accessing, being in, and even creating the world. For instance, an upper-caste, North Indian girl is thus because her body is orientated in the ways it moves in spaces, thinks, builds habits, desires and aspires through structures and ideologies historically created that have naturalized and normativized her own body to herself. She is a living embodiment of what was articulated at some point as the Hindu caste system and other articulations of her being- North Indian, girl, middle class- are inseparable from this historical body or "corporeal schema" that encompasses "desire[s]...past [histories]...future...physical, ideological and moral situation..."⁴⁹

Therefore, "racial, cultural, and class particularities" or articulations "mutually constitute" the body⁵⁰ as a composite whole that cannot be separated into individual identities. I borrow the use of "articulation" from Stuart Hall⁵¹ because history is pivotal to this view of the

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Shannon Sullivan, *Living across and through Skins: Transactional Bodies, Pragmatism, and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Helen Fielding and Dorothea Olkowski, eds., *Feminist Phenomenology Futures* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2017).

⁴⁹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 157.

⁵⁰ Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 19.

⁵¹ Lawrence Grossberg, "On postmodernism and articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen

body as corporeal schema. Different times in specific social formations have and continue to give rise to different articulations of being. For example, even though I didn't see myself as one back home, I became a woman of color in the United States as a racialized, sexualized immigrant subject in this country. These articulations of my being are both the effects of and inform my body, my historical corporeality that has made me and permeates my visions of future life and desires. Articulations such as sexuality, gender and nation are therefore embodied and "entangled" processes, that are co-produced in a "volatile constellation of intersecting forces" as "embodied individuals move through space and time."⁵² In other words, Carla Rice captures this dynamic view of the body as historical schema, the body as "becoming"- a dynamic view of the body where history as embodiment or body as lived history occupies and creates a world that can be accessed only through it, forever changing with time, space and its contingent articulations.

Most importantly, this historical corporeal schema is a racial one. Here I draw on Frantz Fanon, as a phenomenologist of race *par excellence* as Butler suggests, in his conceptualization of the body as "the embodiment of social conditions."⁵³ My intention in incorporating Fanon is not to map race as black-ness one-on-one with differences of caste in India, although much scholarship recently and in the past has persuasively done that,⁵⁴ or gender differences, or for that

(Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), 131-150.

⁵² Carla Rice, "The Spectacle of the Child Woman: Troubling Girls and the Science of Early Puberty," *Feminist Studies* 44, no. 3 (2018): 537. In this article, Rice analyzes the construction of early puberty through the twentieth century and how the association of sexuality with early puberty over-sexualizes non-normatively race-ed, class-ed, able-ed bodies of girls. She proposes instead a more embodied and "intra-sectional" (as opposed to intersectionality, intra-sectionality sees identities as internal, embodied and co-constituted) reading of girls' bodies as "becomings."

⁵³ Judith Butler, "Violence, Non-Violence: Sartre on Fanon," *Graduate faculty philosophy journal* 27, no. 1 (2006): 15.

⁵⁴ Kancha Ilaiah, *Untouchable God* (Kolkata: Samya, 2013); Purba Das, "'Is Caste Race?' Discourses of Racial Indianization," *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 43, no. 3 (2014): 264-282; Shailaja Paik, "Building Bridges: Articulating Dalit and African American

matter ethnic differences in Turkey. I use Fanon's notion of the embodiment of race as a methodology more than a theory, a tool to demystify the mechanisms of racism in structuring bodies. In other words, while we know that bodies that follow normative categories of being are better oriented to their surroundings because of "histories of arrival"⁵⁵ that have mapped privileged bodies to spaces, and while we acknowledge hidden "histories of labor"⁵⁶ and violence that have enabled arrivals (and privileged bodies), how does one go beyond teaching about difference and 'respecting differences' to showing how privileges get invisibilized and differences naturalized over time? Fanon reminds us that there is nothing "ontological" or innate about blackness- it is culturally and historically ingrained.⁵⁷ It is the forgetting of history, its "concealed perversion" that race and differences get essentialized onto the body and "questions concerning the *biological* ground of race arise."⁵⁸ The question of difference then especially foregrounds engagement with larger histories of becoming bodies that continue to shape our corporeal schemas.

The historical racial corporeal schema or the phenomenological body is inseparable from desire. It is "the life of desire or perceptual life."⁵⁹ While there exists fascinating scholarship on the ontology of desire, whether as cause of all human activity in the individual, psychoanalytic

Women's Solidarity," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3-4 (2014): 74-96; Arundhati Roy, *The Doctor and the Saint: Caste, Race, and the Annihilation of Caste: The Debate between B.R. Ambedkar and M.K. Gandhi* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017); Cornel West and Suraj Yengde, "A Shared History of Struggle should unite India's Dalits and African Americans in the Fight for Equality," <https://www.theroot.com/a-shared-history-of-struggle-should-unite-india-s-dalit-1795973401> (accessed July 28, 2020).

⁵⁵ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 9.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 63.

⁵⁷ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*.

⁵⁸ Jeremy Weate, "Fanon, Merleau-Ponty and the difference of phenomenology," in *Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2001), 175.

⁵⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 157.

sense⁶⁰ or as an effect of neoliberal shaping of individual subjectivities,⁶¹ a phenomenological reading of the body demonstrates any distinction between the body and desire as forced. If the body is infused with desire then desire as libido, need, excess can never be captured since it permeates our beings and is inseparable from them. Hence, I am more interested in the working of desire or desiring bodies, the composite whole, and its disrupting effects on liberal, scientific and modern discourses of the body on which much (sexuality) education is premised. In my fieldwork desire was ever present as erotic energy, the energy that cannot be defined and is immanent in our corporeality.⁶² It was there amidst excited discussions between students and teachers or the ways some teachers decorated their hair with flowers or in the clandestine sexual encounters between children behind library bookshelves at break times. These erotic eruptions of desiring, feeling bodies shape people's lives and certainly shaped the sensuality of my fieldwork, and disrupt simplistic notions of the body that can be fully understood and taught in biology or sexuality education lessons.

Limited understandings of the body as biology and sexuality have been greatly pushed recently through the turn to new materialist approaches in critical sexuality education.⁶³

⁶⁰ Here I refer to a longer psychoanalytic feminist tradition reflected in the works of Luce Irigaray, Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler.

⁶¹ Lisa Rofel, *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Naisargi Dave, "To Render Real the Imagined: An Ethnographic History of Lesbian Community in India," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 35, no. 3 (2010): 595-619.

⁶² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 154.

⁶³ Mary Louise Rasmussen, *Progressive Sexuality Education: The Conceits of Secularism* (New York; London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016); Louisa Allen and Mary Lou Rasmussen, *The Palgrave Handbook of Sexuality Education* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017); Louisa Allen, *Sexuality Education and New Materialism: Queer Things* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

However, “living of the phenomenal being”⁶⁴ as the historical body making sense of itself and the world and non-Western, indigenous feminist scholarship that has repeatedly emphasized inseparability of humans and their worlds is marginalized in these approaches. By taking a feminist phenomenological approach to the study of “body and emotion”⁶⁵ in (sexuality) education in and out of schools in the global South, I hope to both acknowledge feminist legacies and un-settle any complacency of knowledge, whether materialist, discursive or both,⁶⁶ that seek to understand life experiences and the human condition.

I have also been inspired by some groundbreaking work in recent years on embodiedness and pedagogy in education studies that has drawn on critical race, affect and memory studies scholarship, as well women of color feminist perspectives.⁶⁷ However, most of this work continues to be focused in school spaces in the ‘North’, in spite of its brilliant reading of race and difference through the body and problematizing biological understandings of children’s bodies. In my reading of bodies of children and teachers in two contexts in the ‘South’, I intend to similarly disrupt received biological notions of the body, this time of people and especially

⁶⁴ Helen A. Fielding, “A Feminist Phenomenology Manifesto,” in *Feminist Phenomenology Futures*, xiii-xiv.

⁶⁵ Bénéï, *Schooling Passions*, 22.

⁶⁶ Sara Ahmed, “Open Forum Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the ‘New Materialism’,” *European Journal of Women's Studies* 15, no. 1 (2008): 23-39; Noela Davis, “New Materialism and Feminism's Anti-Biologism: A Response to Sara Ahmed,” *European Journal of Women's Studies* 16, no. 1 (2009): 67-80; Sari Irni, “The Politics of Materiality: Affective Encounters in a Transdisciplinary Debate,” *European Journal of Women's Studies* 20, no. 4 (2013): 347-60.

⁶⁷ Nancy Lesko, *Act Your Age!: A Cultural Construction of Adolescence*, Critical Social Thought (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2001); Esther Ohito and Shenila Khoja-Moolji, “Reparative Readings: Re-claiming Black Feminised Bodies as Sites of Somatic Pleasures and Possibilities,” *Gender and Education* 30, no. 3 (2018): 277-94; Jen Gilbert, Jessica Fields, Laura Mamo, and Nancy Lesko, “Intimate Possibilities: The Beyond Bullying Project and Stories of LGBTQ Sexuality and Gender in US Schools,” *Harvard Educational Review* 88, no. 2 (2018): 163-257.

children who are almost always ‘discursively’ colonized⁶⁸ by global development discourses, in schools that are at best seen as sites of critique and intervention but seldom as sensual, erotic lifeworlds of their own. Theorizing Turkish and Indian bodies from “the flesh”,⁶⁹ bodies deemed as development objects in Northern epistemologies, I focus on their individual, lived subjectivities and desires to critique and further the transnational feminist agenda and promise of challenging not only the violently patriarchal, heteronormative, racist and colonial bases of nation states, but also demonstrating that the phenomenological body is where these differences and violences are inscribed, understood, and challenged through its desires and senses. This is precisely why in chapter 2 where I look at CSE and CSA prevention classes, both my anecdotes privilege analyses of the desiring bodies of a student and teacher over classroom practices and curricula. While excellent ethnographics and curricular studies in education, including in the Indian and Turkish contexts abound,⁷⁰ here I want to demonstrate how the body is in the center of implementing even the most progressive CSE and CSA prevention lessons. Ultimately even the most amazing lessons depend on how people teach, learn and experience these lessons, indicating the role of the body and erotics in knowledge, which has been extremely

⁶⁸ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra T. Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 51-80.

⁶⁹ Cherrie Moraga, “Entering the Lives of Others: Theory in the Flesh,” in *This Bridge Called My Back*, 23.

⁷⁰ Some notable examples include: Radhika Chopra and Patricia Jeffery eds., *Educational Regimes in Contemporary India* (New Delhi; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005); Meenakshi Thapan, *Life at School: An Ethnographic Study*. 2nd ed (New Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Sam Kaplan, *The Pedagogical State: Education and the Politics of National Culture in Post-1980 Turkey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Meenakshi Thapan ed., *Ethnographies of Schooling in Contemporary India* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014); Iren Özgür, *Islamic Schools in Modern Turkey: Faith, Politics, and Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

under-theorized, especially with regards to bodies in the global ‘South’.

2. Phenomenology of Gender

Based on my theoretical conceptualization and understanding of the body above, I theorize ‘gender’ as an articulation of the historical racial corporeal schema that is infused with desire and the erotic. Therefore, and by necessity, ‘gender’ is always changing as bodies make and un-make histories and live their desires. In the current geopolitical moment and realities of lifeworlds across the globe, including Turkey and India, ‘gender’ as an embodied schema, a lived experience, gets increasingly intertwined with articulations and desires of middle-classness in the lives of cisgendered women living in global cities like Istanbul and Hyderabad. These middle-class desires and articulations are most evident in private schools in these cities where I conducted my observations, where increasingly a young, new aspirational middle class that is driving the economies and determining political power at the center in both countries is sending its children to these schools to become ‘proper’ normative/middle class citizens. Teachers then have to physically look and imbibe these aspirations and performances of the middle class as well. Hence their gender often gets articulated in ambiguous ways as the desire to ‘be’ a middle-class woman, the physical traumas of gendered labor that that entails which is lived through the body, and all the inarticulable corporeal excesses that refuse to be ideologically and spatially confined, work together to create gendered experiences. As bodies become with changing articulations, desires and social-political formations, so do gendered subjectivities, in the course of people simply living their lives. Women consciously or not perform gender, reproducing modern heteropatriarchal ideologies but their erotic energies also drive them in directions where ‘gender’ is transformed.

Therefore gender is a lived experience, an embodied schema, an articulation of body becomings that is intimately tied to place and time, or in other words, to space. Here I draw on Lefebvre's conceptualization of space. For Lefebvre, space is not something "in itself" but is actively produced and produces social relations. Also, spatiality includes not just physical place but three essential components: Spatial Practice, Representations of Space (this is what we perceive as our world- signs, codes, orders imposed by relations of production), and Representational spaces ("embodiment of complex symbolisms," which includes art). Time or time of production, our perceived time, is essential in Lefebvre's analysis and according to him the "advent of modernity" marks a very specific relationship between bodies, space and time. Time vanishes from modern spaces; it is artificially imposed as clocks, calendars- linear time- and "concealed in space."⁷¹ By approaching gender through and as corporeality, I claim the inseparability of bodies and spaces- both in how spaces are lived through the body- through memories and life (experiences)- but also in how bodies are infused into spaces- physical infrastructures and time- through their labor, aesthetic desires, and erotic expressions. Phenomenology of gender is thus an attempt to understand 'gender' through body becomings, through spaces, and most importantly through the erotic body and the very lived, relational and intimate ways in which it sees itself and others. Even as body becomings often reproduce and sometimes trouble and transform the experience and articulations of 'gender' that are inextricable from historical articulations of caste, class, religion, race and nation, my intention in proposing a phenomenology of gender is to delve on the body's lived experiences- as embodied,

⁷¹ See especially pp. 3-95: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1974; Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991).

gendered schema- as it moves with desire, inextricable from space and other corporeal schemas. Following gender phenomenologically leads us to this ambiguity of gendered lives that helps us tap onto bodies not just reproducing normativities but also promising unruly, uncivilized possible lifeworlds.

This theoretical formulation of a phenomenology of gender is informed by feminist legacies of women of color feminisms in the United states, indigenous feminisms, and feminisms in India, Turkey and the ‘South’, which have grappled with the notion of ‘gender’ through the body and its emotions and lived experiences. Even though I draw on feminist phenomenology inspired by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty and acknowledge the rapidly increasing interest in affect, new materialisms, and the body in the gender and education literature about female and queer teachers and principals in schools,⁷² most of this work remains wedded to Northern epistemological understandings of gender and sexuality and focused on schools in the ‘North’. Additionally, the historical body disappears in these studies and corporeal legacies of violent historical formations that have made our bodies legible to ourselves and constituted our subjectivities as certain sex-ed, gendered, and social beings to begin with are seldom questioned.

⁷³ This is where the work of women of color, indigenous, postcolonial, and *Dalit* feminists is

⁷² Aoife Neary, Breda Gray and Mary O'Sullivan, “A Queer Politics of Emotion: Reimagining Sexualities and Schooling,” *Gender and Education: Shifting Education's Philosophical Imaginaries: Relations, Affects, Bodies, Materialities* 28, no. 2 (2016): 250-65; Lucy Avraamidou, “Stories We Live, Identities We Build: How Are Elementary Teachers’ Science Identities Shaped by Their Lived Experiences?” *Cultural Studies of Science Education* 14, no. 1 (2019): 33-59; Simone Ispa-Landa and Sara Thomas, “Race, Gender, and Emotion Work among School Principals,” *Gender & Society* 33, no. 3 (2019): 387-409.

⁷³ Esther Ohito’s work is a notable exception in this regard. For example: Esther Ohito, “Mapping Women’s Knowledges of Antiracist Teaching in the United States: A Feminist Phenomenological Study of Three Antiracist Women Teacher Educators,” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 86 (2019): 1-11.

invaluable because it emanates from real lived experiences of historical oppression that are rendered through their bodies as pain, as anger, that they have used to imagine newer forms of political action through challenging systems in the present. Similar to Merleau-Ponty's and the subsequent phenomenological turn to the "flesh,"⁷⁴ these feminists have always used the flesh as a starting point to theorize the world and have used the body's anger and sensations to challenge systems historically inherited on and through our bodies. They have defined these systems and affects as patriarchy and gender oppression and have fought against them. They have always understood the inseparability of history, time, space with the body and its articulations of caste, class, race, religion, and gender and continue to give objects of their politics, as Ahmed reminds us earlier, newer shapes and forms by rethinking patriarchy, gender and sexuality in the changing world and our own transforming corporeal schemas and definitions that are implicated in this change. For instance in her work on Turkish State power and the sensorial body, Aslı Zengin specifically focuses on the tactile body to demonstrate how dominant categories of sex and gender are (re)produced by state workings through the bodies of trans people and gay men.⁷⁵

3. *Uncivilized Possible Lifeworlds*

Based on the sexual body as historical racial corporeal schema, children's and adults' sensualities and the lifeworlds they create and are created by, and gender as lived and embodied, I conceptualize possible lifeworlds based on unruliness, sensations and the flesh. Here once again I conceptualize the "flesh" both in its ontological musings in phenomenological philosophy

⁷⁴Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*; Judith Butler, "Merleau-Ponty and the Touch of Malebranche," in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, eds. Taylor Carman and Mark B.N. Hansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 181-205.

⁷⁵Aslı Zengin, "Violent Intimacies: Tactile State Power, Sex/Gender Transgression, and the Politics of Touch in Contemporary Turkey," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 12, no. 2 (2016): 225-45.

⁷⁶ and in its real lived experiences, as theorized by US women of color, *Dalit*, and indigenous feminists.⁷⁷ My commitment to the latter is borne out of important theoretical, methodological, and personal reasons. While I elucidate the second and third reasons in the next section, let me briefly explain the first. Theoretically, this project has conceptualized the historical body, sexuality and gender through the lived experiences of children and teachers in two countries in the ‘South’. These regions and nations are also spaces of vast and violent colonial encounters, sedimented histories of racism, and ongoing articulations of nationalist belonging connected to them. Therefore, I wish to theoretically align this project very clearly with bodies of those who have used their own historical schemas and lived experiences to express discontent and radically challenge systems in our present lifeworlds, instead of disciplines such as White Affect studies, which have also used phenomenology, but to analyze “...affects and social emotions...constituted through the enslavement and genocide of Black and native indigenous populations, in addition to colonial practices of violence and terror.”⁷⁸

The body lends itself to a theory of un-civilizing but not one that adheres to civilizational teleologies as I demonstrate in this dissertation. For then un-civilization becomes the binary opposite of civilization, a dichotomy, which once again reinstates linear temporalities of being

⁷⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*.

⁷⁷ Norma Alarcon, “The Theoretical Subject(s) of This Bridge Called My Back and Anglo-American Feminism,” in *Criticism in the Borderlands: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology*, eds. Héctor Calderón, José David Saldívar and Rolando Hinojosa (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 28-39; Dian Million, “Felt Theory,” *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008): 267-272; Joshil K Abraham and Judith Misrahi-Barak, “Literatures of Suffering and Resistance: Dalit Women’s Testimonios and Black Women Slave Narratives – a Comparative Study,” in *Dalit Literatures in India*, eds. Joshil K Abraham and Judith Misrahi-Barak (Routledge India, 2016), 266-78.

⁷⁸ Claudia Garcia-Rojas, “(Un)Disciplined Futures: Women of Color Feminism as a Disruptive to White Affect Studies,” *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 21, no. 3 (2017): 258.

and metaphysics of mind/body dualisms that premise modern forms of political economy.⁷⁹

Un-civilizing is a process that is borne out of the body that regularly disrupts any dichotomy of body/mind, space/body and forced temporalities of modern existence. Spaces like schools as microcosmic political lifeworlds are not just sites of disciplining and inculcating modern political values, they are political because the historical racial corporeal schemas that make them, actively create political values in the ways they understand themselves and those around. In other words, I imagine political lifeworlds around the body, a body politic, that work towards un-civilizing. These are lifeworlds already indicated by corporeal excesses in our present lifeworlds- unruly desires, sexual appetites, sensualities, erotic energies, aesthetic performances- that are inarticulable by current systems of racial hatred and heteronormativity. Uncivilized possible lifeworlds that emerge from a body politic have four essential characteristics. First of all, they are deeply cognizant of histories, of time and space that is (lived through) the corporeal schema. In other words, uncivilized lifeworlds etched out of corporeality and flesh doesn't just drop histories of the lifeworlds they emerge from- they don't forget as histories live through our corporeality. They emerge out of our contemporary lifeworlds with established human/nonhuman/object relations, inequalities and violences that our corporeality invariably carries, as Fanon reminds us in *The Wretched of the Earth*, as "continued agony [rather] than a total disappearance."⁸⁰ Therefore in each of the chapters, I highlight the historical construction of the body as race-ed, gender-ed, sex-ed, and so on; a body that continues to be constructed through histories that are constantly being (re)written through its desires and actions.

Secondly, the emergence of and existence of uncivilized possible lifeworlds is contingent

⁷⁹ Levin, "The Body Politic".

⁸⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, xxxvi.

on the phenomenal body, which as I theorized earlier, unlike the objective, scientific body, is not only historical, racial, but also deeply relational. In other words, the phenomenal body from the moment it understands itself as existing, understands itself in relation to other sentient beings, materials, spaces.⁸¹ As feminist scholars of indigeneity have repeatedly pointed out as well, this relationality informs the ontological existence of bodies, instead of how we understand bodies as individual agents of objectivity and human rights.⁸² Specifically in chapter 4 through teachers' bodies and in crafting a phenomenology of gender, I demonstrate how teachers' desires for love and a better life are actively shaped by connecting with and imagining the lives of their closest teacher friends. Thirdly, uncivilized possible lifeworlds can only metamorphose from our present lifeworlds if we change the systems of relation that inform them⁸³ to *sensations of relations*. In other words, what we understand as "cultural, social or personality facets"⁸⁴ of our lifeworlds, which are based on visual and literacy-based knowledges, need to connect to other sensations of touching, hearing and movement.⁸⁵ This I demonstrate amply in chapter 3 through children's sensorial engagements with each other and the world and how those engagements disrupt binary, rational and progressive knowledge systems. Finally, uncivilized lifeworlds are only "possible" lifeworlds because one can never know the 'future' since the phenomenal body is temporal, as time emerges through the body, which is our agent in the world and primary way of being, always becoming. Acknowledging only the possibility of uncivilized lifeworlds based on the

⁸¹ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*.

⁸² Rosa-Linda Fregoso, "For a Pluriversal Declaration of Human Rights," *American Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (2014): 583-608.

⁸³ Constantin Ion, "Husserl, Habermas, and the Lifeworld as the overall horizon within which Individuals Act," *Linguistic and Philosophical Investigations* 14 (2015): 115-120.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Levin, "The Body Politic"; Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

body politic- lifeworlds “without guarantees...without answers” as Stuart Hall once used to describe the dynamic and unpredictable terrain of class struggles in epochal social formations⁸⁶ - rejects all complacencies of scientific knowledge and objectivity in favor of rhythmic and unpredictable flows of our body-becomings. This view of futurity, of what may or may not be possible, stands in stark contrast to the idea of a determinate future realized by an objective body or “unfolding of a essence or being”⁸⁷ since the body is always becoming by being-in-the-world. It is this sense of urgency, ambiguity and uncertain politics that I hold on to throughout this dissertation.

Methodological Debts and Intervention

Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis: Agenda for Politics and Research

My research across South-South geographies and global capitalist spatiotemporalities that determine lifeworld rhythms and ideologies, which has enabled me to theorize the sexual body and gender at the center of living and imagine uncivilized possible lifeworlds, has only been possible through a form of feminist praxis and methodology that I refer to throughout this dissertation as a *critical transnational feminist praxis*. Not only has this praxis informed the course of my own research, it is both enabled by and enables my theoretical interventions, viz. the body beyond biology, phenomenology of gender, and uncivilized possible lifeworlds.

I borrow the essence of naming this critical transnational feminist praxis generously from

⁸⁶ Stuart Hall, “The Problem of Ideology-Marxism without Guarantees,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (1986): 28-44.

⁸⁷ Elizabeth Grosz, “”Becoming...An Introduction,” in *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory, and Futures*, ed. Elizabeth Grosz (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 8.

now seminal works on transnational feminism- Mohanty and Alexander's *Feminist Genealogies* and Swarr and Nagar's *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis*. Mohanty and Alexander conceptualize a feminist praxis thus:

To talk about feminist praxis in global contexts would involve shifting the unit of analysis from local, regional, and national culture to relations and processes across cultures. Grounding analyses in particular local, feminist praxis is necessary, but we also need to understand the local in relation to larger, cross-national processes.⁸⁸

In trying to understand how desiring bodies work under national ideological systems of schooling across India and Turkey which are connected by global capitalist circuits, neoliberalizing school regimes, and middle-class aspirations, I analyze not just the 'national body' or conversely the 'global body.' Instead my analysis considers children's and teachers' bodies as transnational sites where the sexual, gender, and all other articulations of bodies that are becoming, are deeply modern and global, whilst remaining resolutely bound to national borders and ideologies, even as they frustrate them. Therefore, my praxis reveals a transnational world where the nation now, more than ever, works through the bodies of its citizens resulting in narrower articulations of belonging, but also where the study of the transnational holds the key for change- for imagining (uncivilized) possible lifeworlds. As this research studies the nation through the body, it moves the transnational "into the realm of embodied knowing,"⁸⁹ that de-essentializes nations, body objectivity, gender and sexuality.

This transnational praxis is also "critical" because, as Swarr and Nagar remind us:

...praxis can acquire its meaning and form in a given place, time, and struggle...we resist the inclination to position transnational feminisms as some teleological end result of progress narratives. Instead, we work within a crisis of representation that relies on critical transnational feminism as inherently unstable praxis whose survival and evolution

⁸⁸ Mohanty and Alexander, *Feminist Genealogies*, xix.

⁸⁹ Aimee Marie Carrillo Rowe, "Be Longing: Toward a Feminist Politics of Relation," *NWSA Journal* 17, no. 2 (2005): 36.

hinge on a continuous commitment to produce self reflexive and dialogic critiques of its own practices rather than a search for resolutions or closures...⁹⁰

In suggesting feminist futures that start from the body and sensations to un-civilize our hateful systems, I conceptualize a critical transnational praxis that is not only reflexive and constantly evolving, but also borne out of the flesh and erotics itself, even as it engages with very 'real life' concepts and systems. I have employed this critical transnational feminist praxis in my own fieldwork (that I explain a couple of sections below) as it evolved with the theoretical formulations that emerged as a part of the praxis and went on to inform it further, which I share in the coda of the dissertation.

Therefore, my critical transnational feminist praxis is a phenomenological praxis that imagines the body as the material site that produces and populates meanings of nation and belonging and takes its erotic energies at the center of feminist knowledge production. The praxis is 'transnational' in that as much as it works within the contours of the existing world order to demonstrate how national imaginaries are reified through the body but it also fragments the transnational. By moving beyond the discursive, postmodern and postcolonial conception of the nation-state and 'trans'national flows of bodies and capital and 'local' contexts,⁹¹ I show how the national and global are embodied differently in different contexts even within nations by bodies that are constructed along historical axes of difference and desires that emanate from them that also are also unruly and excessive, as much as they are national, regional, global and modern. I propose an agenda for transnational feminist research and political imaginaries of

⁹⁰ Nagar and Swarr, *Critical Transnational*, 9.

⁹¹ See: Mohanty and Alexander, *Feminist Genealogies* and Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

uncivilized possible lifeworlds that employ a critical transnational feminist praxis that listens to bodies and encounters them with, what Sara Ahmed terms, “wonder.” For Ahmed, “wonder” is “an affective relation to the world,”⁹² and I posit the centrality of wonder as one encounters the mundane and the quotidian and approaches people’s ordinary lives with extraordinary curiosity and listens to their desires instead of dismissing them. And it is not dismissing desires that makes the erotic central to a critical transnational feminist praxis politics and research. In addition to claiming that transnational alliances are permeated with erotic energies,⁹³ I contend that transnational research agendas driven by a critical transnational feminist praxis have to *begin* from the erotic to understand what drives people’s lifeworlds as they make and unmake meanings and regimes through their desiring, sexual and sensual bodies.

This also then raises the question of ethics- both the ethics of representation in fieldwork and the ethical implications of theorizing from the erotic and the body. While I talk about the former two sections below where I discuss my fieldwork methodology, I would like to delve for a moment on the ethics of a critical transnational feminist praxis that imagines lifeworld based on bodies and sensualities. As a phenomenological praxis, a critical transnational feminist analysis acknowledges the immense privileges that some bodies, as historical racial schemas, are composed of, which have emerged from violent subjugations of other bodies. At the same time, it also connects feminist engagement of systems with body becomings to open up the possibilities of change, where feminist thought moves to the body as “a site of practices,

⁹² Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics*, 179.

⁹³ Kareem Khubchandani, “Caste, Queerness, Migration and the Erotics of Activism,” *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 20 (2019): 1-14, <https://doi.org/10.4000/samaj.5118>.

comportments, and contested articulations.”⁹⁴ Thus the ethical implications of theorizing from the erotic and the body mean that ethical terms also emerge from the body as we continue to imagine uncivilized possible lifeworlds, something that I come back to in the coda.

Setting up the ‘Field’

As mentioned in the beginning of this introduction, my journey with schools began years ago as a middle school teacher in Istanbul and as a Masters researcher of child sexual abuse and incest in India and Turkey. My own work with middle school children from 2008-2010 and 2011-2013, along with my volunteering work and activism around gender and sexual abuse prevention of children in both countries, provided the inspiration for this research, which brought me to the shores of the United States in 2013. I conducted some preliminary fieldwork with my initial set of questions that I have discussed earlier- questions that were soon to change when I started my main fieldwork in 2016. My preliminary dissertation fieldwork conducted across two summers in 2014 and 2015, consisted of interviews with nonprofits and organizations working on issues of education, sexuality and gender empowerment in New Delhi and Istanbul. My sustained engagement with related issues as a long-term volunteer with a Delhi-based nonprofit that I had interviewed during my Masters fieldwork and numerous contacts in the nonprofit world enabled by fellow teachers and academic peers from my Masters days in Istanbul, enabled me to enter the most prominent civil society spaces in both countries. Through these interviews I very soon realized that not only was there no official and consistent engagement with CSE in

⁹⁴ Abigail Bray and Claire Colebrook, “The Haunted Flesh: Corporeal Feminism and the Politics of (Dis)Embodiment,” *Signs* 24, no. 1 (1998):37.

schools (because I was only focused on sexuality education back then), but also that beyond activist calls for CSE, schools were hardly deemed sites for ‘sexual’ intervention. It was at this time that I also got to meet the amazing sexuality trainers at Istanbul’s Family Planning *Vakfi* [Foundation] (henceforth FPV), some of whom remain close friends to this day. FPV is one of the first organizations to have started providing CSE to schools in and around Istanbul and Alliance School in the city had been one of their first interventions.

So, between August 2016- April 2017, for the first leg of my research, I worked as an English teacher for 5th graders at Alliance middle school in Istanbul. Alliance, a private school in Istanbul, was founded in 1998 and currently comprises several branches including its middle school that is located in a sprawling suburb north of the city and caters to around 500 students from grades 5 to 7. It is a part of one of Istanbul’s most popular chains of private Turkish schools that offer high quality English education and cater to largely middle to upper-middle class populations. FPV’s CSE program called *bedenimizin sınırları* [limits of our body] had started in 2011 at Alliance and, during the period I conducted my research, comprised of two lessons of 40-minute each per academic year, one conducted by educators from FPV and one by individual class counselors. CSE lessons started in grade 3 and by middle school in grade 5, students started learning about reproductive organs and puberty changes. Through grades 6 and 7, while the emphasis remained physical and emotional changes during adolescence, educators slowly started discussing sexual orientations, gender fluidity, patriarchy, and other concepts that were further developed once the children moved to high school. Due to its openly feminist educators, these CSE classes constantly challenged binary understandings of sex and desire. It wasn’t uncommon, for instance, for educators to talk about intersex bodies and discuss fluid gender and sexual

desires even in grade 5.

Apart from observing these classes and teaching at Alliance, through which I got to know the teachers and students intimately, I soon realized of course that the erotic permeated spaces outside of the CSE classes. Therefore, I had to expand my observations beyond the CSE classroom to everyday school life and the ways school spaces- buildings, corridors, classrooms, playgrounds- were occupied by students and teachers, and how students and teachers too interacted with each other. I also conducted in-depth personal interviews with 8 teacher-administrators, all female, and more informal interviews with several other teachers in the Alliance middle school campus and two other campuses (high school and primary school). Except 4 of the 8 in-depth interviews (which were conducted in English), all other interviews were conducted in Turkish. In addition to the female teachers that I interviewed, I also interviewed the male middle school religion teacher and math teacher. The teachers were chosen based on three criteria. One was their status as homeroom teachers, since that meant that they were senior teachers who knew the children and the school system better than others. The other was their subject matter and how willingly they engaged with the body in their own areas of pedagogical expertise. Finally, it was the teachers' own willingness to talk and share their personal and professional stories and their recommendations of other teachers who were willing and even eager to speak to a US-based researcher about sexuality and schools, which was most instrumental in choosing the teachers, who I was fortunate enough to conduct in-depth interviews with.

Alliance schools, just like many private schools I would encounter in Istanbul and Hyderabad, including Global Schools (which I describe below), started off as a single school in a

rapidly privatizing market of the late 1990s to offer, at that time, more upper-middle class and wealthier families a kind of “global” and modern education that would prepare their children for the increasingly competitive and globalizing world. The school fees reflected this kind of ‘exclusive’ promise of education. However, over the years, and this is something that older teachers at Alliance constantly bemoaned, Alliance has transformed into any other private school that is out to expand, maximize profits, and is now increasingly accessible to emerging newer middle class families that may not carry the same social and cultural capital of the older families. In addition to this reality and even though Alliance’s older name and fame continues to grip most people’s imaginations in the city- a respected private school with modern, secular ideals- sexuality is a stumbling block for even a school like Alliance that continues to brand itself as a “progressive” and “democratic” institution. As I discuss in detail in chapter 3, when it comes to engaging with children’s sensual and sexual entanglements with the world, all kinds of schools, including ‘exclusive’ ones like Alliance, fall short of promise and continue to commit to progressive ideals only in discourse.

All through the duration of my fieldwork at Alliance in Istanbul, I remained actively involved with feminist activist friends in the city, which also enabled me to tap into conversations about sexuality and education and led to some fortunate contacts. One of them was with *Bilgi Sendikası* [Knowledge Union], the most politically active and leftist state (government) school [*devlet okulu*] teacher union in Istanbul. I am forever grateful to these brave and intelligent women for giving me their time and sharing the most intimate aspects of their work lives in infrastructurally impoverished government institutions across the city, at a time when the Turkish government was suppressing dissent in all educational institutes. This was

right after the July 15 coup d'état and the teachers at Bilgi *Sendikası* were amongst the handful of government teachers who had been willing to talk to me about “risky lessons”⁹⁵ like sexuality, gender and the systemic devaluation of public education in the country. In chapter 3 especially, where I delve on the implications of modern schooling on children’s bodies and the zeal of middle class parenting and aspirations, the context of the coup in Turkey and the upcoming election frenzy in India in 2018 while I was there conducting fieldwork, become especially significant as middle-classness aligns with hypernationalist, ethno-religious and conservative imaginaries of nation.

Between August 2017 to April 2018, I conducted participant observations and also worked as a substitute teacher at Global Schools in Secunderabad, the twin city of Hyderabad, which is the capital of the southern Indian state of Telangana formed in 2014. As I laid out in my India-Turkey comparative framework earlier, Istanbul and Hyderabad are intimately connected-historically and contemporaneously. In addition to that, Global Schools is similar to Alliance in several ways. Also a chain of schools across Hyderabad and Secunderabad, Global has over the years, much like Alliance, gained a favorable reputation with middle-class parents and its graduates boast consistently good grades in the annual competitive examinations. I was based on the campus that caters to children from pre-K to grade 10, but most of my observations, just like in Alliance, were confined to grade 5, and occasionally grades 6 and 7. Also similar to Alliance, Global is the preferred school of highly aspirational parents who can afford it (see chapter 3 for approximate fees) and emphasizes overall development of children, which includes sexual development. Although Global didn’t have a dedicated CSE class, it did have a full-time

⁹⁵ Jessica Fields, *Risky Lessons: Sex Education and Social Inequality* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

counselor when I conducted my fieldwork there, and the principal, Mahima, is herself a trained counselor who was open about discussing gender and sexuality issues with children. At Global, I conducted 5 in-depth and personal interviews with teacher administrators, all female, along with several more informal interviews with and observations of teachers across the school campus. I employed similar criteria as I did in Alliance in choosing to interview the teachers that I did.

My decade-long collaboration with the Delhi-based nonprofit working with incest survivors enabled me to gain access to and become a volunteer at the Hyderabad-based SNCSA (Say No to Child Sexual Abuse) citizens' initiative group. I worked as a CSA prevention trainer in schools in the twin cities of Hyderabad-Secunderabad, primarily giving trainings to K-12 students about protecting themselves from sexual abuse, and occasional parent, teacher and support staff trainings as well. Run entirely by volunteers based in Hyderabad-Secunderabad, SNCSA is active in spreading awareness about CSA in schools and regularly collaborates with other organizations and local initiatives in the state of Telangana as well. With a core group of older, wealthier volunteers, SNCSA is constantly welcoming younger people from diverse backgrounds to train school communities on how to spot and prevent CSA. Volunteers are also regularly invited to schools outside of the Hyderabad metropolis. It is through my work at SNCSA that I got to travel to numerous government, private and special foundation and semi-aided state schools, including central schools (special schools that I discuss in chapter 3) across the cities and also got a chance to make observations and interview teachers, administrators and staff in some of them.

Through SNCSA I also had the opportunity to meet the freelance sexuality trainer Ramya (who we meet in chapter 2) whose life story and our mutual conversations enabled me to see the

myriad of ways women negotiate subjectivities in societies like India and Turkey, which just cannot be conceptualized through static notions of ‘gender’. Ramya’s identity that was strongly intertwined with the city of Hyderabad and motherhood and her clandestine explorations of forbidden sexual desires, along with the life story of the teacher Lalitha who we meet in chapter 4, urged me to investigate ‘gender’ in my explorations of the sexual body as corporeal schema. I will be forever indebted to Ramya for this and also, for leading me to my beloved friend and social justice mentor, Suraj. It was through Suraj that I was introduced to the vibrant and diverse queer and feminist communities in the city engaged in critical conversations around intersections of sexuality and gender with caste, region, language and religion. I learned a great deal through my friends in these spaces, whose questions and passions forced me to educate myself on the silenced and violent histories of caste, of the incorporation of Hyderabad to the Indian state, and the more recent regional articulations of Telangana-ness and its intersections with queerness.⁹⁶

The many evenings spent on Suraj’s balcony and the conversations, meetings and seminars we attended or provided along with our common friends, have greatly deepened my knowledge and given voice to the embodiments and contradictions I was observing at Global and other schools.

During the course of my research in Hyderabad-Secunderabad, I also made numerous trips to the capital of India, New Delhi. As an AIIS (American Institute of Indian Studies) junior fellowship scholar, I was affiliated with Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi, which partly necessitated these trips. However, most of my trips to New Delhi were to interview government officials and nonprofits working at the national level on sexuality education, schooling and gender equality. It was in Delhi, and primarily through my interviews with folks at

⁹⁶ To view Telangana’s first pride march as an independent state and articulations of intersectional identities please watch Moses Tulasi’s 2015 documentary *Walking the Walk*.

the nationally renowned nonprofit for children, Child Rights and You (CRY),⁹⁷ and some friends' family contacts, that I chanced upon meeting government school teachers, which resulted in several trips to government schools across the city. In Delhi, as in Hyderabad and Istanbul, I also benefited greatly from speaking with feminist, sociology and education scholars at conferences and universities, such as Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Delhi University in New Delhi, University of Hyderabad and Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Hyderabad, and Boğaziçi and Sabancı Universities in Istanbul. Their questions forced me to engage with the latest scholarly debates and their helpful suggestions help broaden the theoretical and methodological scope of my research. I also conducted interviews with people working in/for and former employees of educational government institutions, including National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) in India and Ministry of National Education [*Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı*, MEB] in Turkey.

Methodology: Transnational Ethnography as Feminist Praxis

The methodology for this research has traced the methodological becomings of the dissertation project, which I have termed as *critical transnational feminist praxis* two sections above. As I mentioned in the *Main Inquiries* section, like most scholars, I had entered the field with a set of theories and questions that were soon to be undisciplined and disrupted by the bodies that I encountered in the field. As I theorized along the way, with the 'flesh' and bodies, I was disciplined once again to look for theories, for answers for what I was encountering.

⁹⁷ I have used the original name just in this case and in the names of the governmental institutions right below.

However, my theories, much like the desiring bodies that informed them, refused to be contained by a single discipline, which is why my quest for answers took me to different disciplines. The critical transnational feminist praxis that emerged, informed by disciplines of feminist, sexuality, queer, childhood, education, literature, history, area, and development studies, once again got undisciplined as bodies forced imaginations of uncivilized possibilities.

My own transnational body has had to become as I have traversed different geographical, physical and emotional spaces, and in doing so, has deeply informed my critical feminist methodological praxis. For example, I visited Istanbul between April-May 2018 for a follow-up research trip, primarily hoping to get more state school observations and interviews, since those plans had been thwarted by the coup in 2016-2017. While I was able to do that, I was also given a task by teacher Razia at Global, who we meet in chapter 4, to carry messages of her grade 5 students to their pen-friends in a particular private school deep in the Anatolian side of Istanbul. Since I had initially arranged this project collaboration between the schools through a friend at Alliance, whose friend at this particular Anatolian school had been looking to have her students collaborate with English-speaking students from a foreign country, I was more than happy to be the messenger. Once I got to the school though, all my plans to deliver the message and then simply sit back and observe a few lessons and chat with some of the teachers, went out the window. When I arrived at the school, I realized that I was being expected to not only deliver the students messages from their Indian pen-friends but also, as a representative of India, educate them about the country and explain to them why their Indian friends were able to speak “such good English.” I had to immediately become a teacher, a cultural educator of India, trying to shatter orientalist myths about the country, switch from Turkish that I had been using to speak to

the teachers to English with the students (this was their English lesson), while at the same time patiently entertaining children's questions such as, "do all Indians believe in cows?" These questions were asked in Turkish, a language that over the years and every time I am in Istanbul, feels at home on my tongue, and yet I had to pretend to not understand Turkish (so that students are forced to speak English I was told by their teacher). I had to become as foreign as I could, a modern dress-wearing teacher from India, even as the classroom walls of this typical Turkish classroom with Atatürk's piercing portrait found in every Turkish school felt as comfortable as home. My original methodological plan of sitting and observing the students 'became' an interactive session, in which my own body occupying multiple transnational spaces, could teach and learn from these children. I ended up seeing and hearing and sensing much more than I would have been able to as a mere observer since the children too opened up in this transnational space where our embodied knowledges connected us. In the coda, I delve on another such becoming at a field trip to Orhan Pamuk's *Masumiyet Müzesi* [Museum of Innocence] during this same follow-up visit where transnational alliances ended up disrupting neat spatiotemporalities of knowledge production, enabling a critical transnational feminist praxis as methodology.

Therefore, a critical transnational feminist praxis as methodology follows erotic energies and moments of becomings, while, as I have explained earlier, holding onto the wonder of the everyday and connecting those everyday, intimate and political microcosmic lifeworlds in schools with the larger news and political changes in both countries. In Hyderabad as well, it was my initial disorientation in a city I had never lived in, even though it happens to be my ancestral family's city, my transnational desires of belonging and returning to Istanbul that pulled my erotic energies, that initially subdued me but then forced me to learn more about Hyderabad's

history and about the politics of belonging of people who occupied these spaces. These invaluable lessons that I learned greatly informed the questions and ways- my praxis, methodology- in which I approached my observations and interviews at Global and other schools. Most significantly, it was the erotic energies of my own activism in social justice circles and struggles to un-learn my upper-caste orientations that drove my methodological praxis to constantly educate myself first, observe and interview, delve on those sensually- through hearing, smelling, feeling- just being-in-the-world- and connect them to everything I was reading and seeing unfold in front of my eyes in Hyderabad, in India, in Turkey and in the world.

As a cis-, upper-caste woman theorizing mostly with and through my own and other bodies, I have been cognizant of the immense privileges I carry by virtue of my social position in India and U.S. academia, even as I am racialized in some elitist civil society and private school spaces in Istanbul and back here in the United States. Therefore, methodologically, the ethics of representation of my critical transnational feminist praxis has forced me to delve deliberately on incidents, connect people's emotional outbursts and visceral reactions to their larger lifeworlds, and often leave open room for ambiguity in analyzing people's bodily subjectivities. I intentionally, as Kamala Visweswaran reminds us, both acknowledge what my own shifting embodiments represent for my interlocutors and how all of us as body becomings are also bound by our own contexts and spatiotemporalities.⁹⁸ I also acknowledge that while everything connects back to our bodies from where I theorize, the body as historical racial corporeal schema that marks and denies our privileges, there are also the corporeal excesses and embodied knowledges that connect us transnationally.

⁹⁸ Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, 40-59.

Whilst most discussion of the ethics of representation revolves around acknowledgement of positionality and privilege in collaborative transnational feminist scholarship, my deterritorial, embodied conception of the transnational also troubles such simplistic accounts of representation. In her recent essay on “Schizoanalysis and Deterritorializations of Transnational Feminism,” Janae Sholtz, who similarly focuses on bodies and uses Deleuzian notions of desire as flow to connect people across borders, subjectivities and identities, envisions a feminist political agenda to build “a global alliance which does not necessarily remain focused to sexuality and which prioritizes postcolonial and subaltern perspectives.”⁹⁹ While this move to desire overcomes the limitations in traditional transnational conceptualizations of ethics that is built around static subjectivities bound to pre-given national and global borders, “postcolonial and subaltern perspectives” are once again boiled down to “oppression” and “resistance”, as they are in most transnational studies. My critical transnational feminist praxis that is built around theorizing and understanding from the body and lived realities where people’s loves, lives, thoughts and actions- their bodies- occupy the ambiguous space of simply ‘living’- makes it hard to imagine a grand feminist political agenda that clearly defines ethics of representation in collaborative work. Therefore, while acknowledgement of historical privilege remains crucial to my work, using the praxis to imagine lifeworlds connected by bodies and desires will require ethical practices that will have to keep on emerging from the body as we unpack notions of the body, gender, sexuality, subjectivity and belonging in the following chapters.

⁹⁹ Janae Sholtz, “Schizoanalysis and Deterritorializations of Transnational Feminism,” in *Deleuze and the Schizoanalysis of Feminism: Alliances and Allies*, eds. Janae Sholtz and Cheri Lynne Carr (London, UK ; New York, NY, USA: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 150.

Chapter Summaries

The first chapter, “School, Nation, Body in India and Turkey,” provides an overview of the histories of schooling through the established historiography but also reads these histories corporeally. It establishes how the project of schooling historically and as it continues to work through normative assumptions of a ‘national’ body, is one deeply invested with passions and erotic energies that both sustain ideologies of modern development and progress but also challenge them. This chapter frames the context of modern schooling and the erotic energies that imagine the normative ‘national’ body and in the process demonstrates how schooling came to occupy the hegemonic position it does in shaping childhood. It shows that schooling was and is a deliberate nationalist project that not just sustains normative imaginaries but also one that historically established very particular ideas of the body (as objective, scientific) and its relation to others through education. As a macro-historical-reading of schooling lifeworlds, this chapter opens up subsequent chapters for more intimate readings of schooling as microcosmic sensual, political lifeworlds where meanings of self and belonging are made and remade through bodies that form them.

The second chapter, “Embodied Histories, Erotic Disruptions, and Sexuality Education in India and Turkey,” expands conceptualizations of the body and sexuality through analysis of CSE lessons and CSA prevention work in schools in Istanbul and Hyderabad-Secunderabad. By approaching the effects and assumptions of these programs through individuals’ lived experiences that disrupt the narrative of sexuality and desire, it compels us to see the body as a corporeal schema that is informed by histories of becoming and articulations of social differences such as caste, religion, and gender, and one that is constantly at the center of making

and unmaking its world. It imagines a form of sexuality education that goes beyond teaching the biological body and sexual desire as identity, to one that truly centers corporeality and erotics and connects them to larger histories of bodily practices and meanings. By connecting the sexual body to historical systems of discrimination that sustain abuse and by conceptualizing the body as a dynamic system that is constantly creating newer articulations of desire, this chapter also opens up alternative ways of framing sexual violence. These go beyond discourses of power and patriarchy to open up the body as an important historical, racial site of making and unmaking violence.

The third chapter, “Children’s Bodies and Sensual Disruptions of Modern Schooling,” builds on the theory of the body as historical racial corporeal and the critique of biological objectivity and sexuality as identity, by focusing on the bodies of children in schools across Istanbul, Hyderabad-Secunderabad, and to a limited extent, New Delhi. It argues that children’s bodies become future repositories for civilizational and biological teleologies of development, as modern schooling continues to perpetuate these colonial ideologies that now take the form of increasingly privatized schooling and middle-class aspirations. Children’s sensual and desiring bodies though trouble these teleologies and reveal the contradictions of the national body assumed by modern schooling. On the one hand, it is a body marked by normativities and privileges of caste, race, gender and religion and on the other as schooling promises modernity for all bodies, it is threatened and tries to re-establish its normativity through the desensualizing of children’s lifeworlds and education of ‘backward’ and poor children and parents. By juxtaposing children’s bodily disruptions alongside interviews with teachers and policy-makers and their reminiscences, this chapter urges schools and a critical transnational feminist praxis to

more actively engage with children's sensual desires and to see children as beings who, like adults, are also becoming. This chapter claims that engaging with children's sensual lifeworlds can not only help disrupt cultural essentialism and normatives of the objective body but queer time and space and help us imagine (uncivilized) possible lifeworlds and politics based on touch and connection.

Chapter 4, “(Re)producing Schools: Teachers’ Bodies and the Phenomenology of Gender,” moves from children’s bodies to teachers’ bodies to look at how the same teleologies of time-as-progress work through bodies of adult educators who are assumed as ‘beings,’ even as they are themselves constantly becoming. It focuses on intimate school-life stories of four female teacher-administrators- two from Alliance and two from Global- and analyzes their gendered labor to demonstrate how through their labor, teachers transform school spaces and are transformed by them, usually reproducing patriarchal and modern ideologies of rapidly neoliberalizing school regimes and sometimes challenging them. As teachers’ labor and gendered performances in school spaces continue to reproduce old lines of caste, ethnic and religious difference, they also demonstrate struggles to fit into newer articulations of middle-class modernity that ironically also exploit their bodies and labors. In the process, their bodies struggle as their corporeal excesses and erotic energies escape the spatiotemporalities of school. Through their changing gendered subjectivities as their bodies become, intimate connections with friends and family, and constant reminiscences of days past and desires for a better future, these teachers live their lives in the everyday, driven by their bodily sensations- pleasures and pains. The phenomenology of gender that emerges from their stories reveals gender as an intensely lived experience and becoming that sometimes follows and sometimes

disrupts linear spatiotemporalities of our existence and is only realized in relation to other bodies and spaces. At the same time however, gender remains inextricably constituted by other articulations of belonging such as caste and religion and it is through bodily disruptions and excesses that it is challenged, enabling us to imagine not just different gendered subjectivities but uncivilized possible lifeworlds where belonging and relations are intimate, excessive, and unruly. Therefore, gender as a phenomenological experience reveals gender not just as bodily orientation as Ahmed posits¹⁰⁰ and not just as an articulation of belonging informed by other axes of difference such as class and race, as posited by intersectional theory. Gender is the ways these differences come together as lived through the body that is already orientated but also constantly becoming in relation to other bodies and spaces, unknowingly, ambiguously and constantly, transforming spaces and meanings of self and belonging. Gender therefore captures and is captured by this more dynamic view of the body.

The coda, “School, Body, Uncivilized Possible Lifeworlds: Notes from a Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis,” is an attempt to pause and reflect on the main arguments of the previous chapters. Along with reflecting, this final chapter also incorporates the critical transnational feminist praxis that has both informed and evolved with this study, to sketch out the contours of the theoretical possibility of uncivilized worlds, which have been indicated in the preceding chapters. By drawing on two schooling scenarios with students each in India and Turkey, I use children’s own sensual responses to questions and situations to first imagine school lifeworlds that center desires, sensations and becomings. Using schools as examples of microcosmic sensual, political lifeworlds that we have seen throughout this dissertation, I then

¹⁰⁰ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 60.

extend these imaginations of unruly schooling to imagine uncivilized possible lifeworlds. These lifeworlds are always possible but not guaranteed, emerge from body as historical racial corporeal schema, cut across national borders, are based on relations with other bodies and spaces, and are completely and thoroughly un-civilized through our erotic energies and sensations.

CHAPTER ONE: School, Nation, Body in India and Turkey

The nation state is a “pedagogical state.”¹⁰¹ Institutions like schools are the more “mundane” sites where “subjectivity and subjectivism” is performed in quotidian negotiations with the state.¹⁰² Schools articulate a “moral order” of the state and are spaces where political interests compete with each other to define the state and the role of civil society in it.¹⁰³ The impossibility of modern, global sensibilities to think beyond formal institutions of learning and question the intrinsic worth of schooling¹⁰⁴ is a testament to the near complete hegemonic project of school education. In addition to being ideological state apparatuses which aim to produce imagined moral, national citizen subjects, schools are also microcosmic political lifeworlds that are influenced by larger local, national and international socioeconomic and political changes and are constantly accepting, adapting and changing them through the bodies of people that occupy them. Therefore, historically, even before they became hegemonic, schools in British India and Ottoman Turkey were also sites of creating subversive nationalist politics and dissident identities that were to inform the contours of the national, normative body that drives the project of modern schooling in these countries.

¹⁰¹ Kaplan, *The Pedagogical State*.

¹⁰² Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *The Scandal of the State: Women, Law, Citizenship in Postcolonial India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 29.

¹⁰³ Kaplan, *The Pedagogical State*, 13-14.

¹⁰⁴ Here I am not referring to people who have actively challenged colonial schooling to establish ‘alternative’ schools in both countries and even a growing body of parents who are increasingly expressing dissatisfaction with traditional schooling. I was fortunate to be a part of some of these parent groups in Istanbul and Hyderabad. Instead here I allude to the most ordinary, commonsense understanding amongst most national populations that schooling leads to ‘success’ or is the necessary first step to achieving anything in life.

In this chapter, I first very briefly trace the historical rise of formal schooling in the Orientalist-Anticolonialist-Nationalist Indian state till its independence in 1947 and the Reformist-Ottomanist-Nationalist Ottoman Empire till the establishment of the republic in 1923. After this brief historiography of schooling in both countries, I also present a more corporeal reading of schooling history, where I try to capture corporeality, erotics and the sexual body that has been so thoroughly divested in the history, language and imaginings of schooling. I try to demonstrate the processes through which schools, like all institutional spaces, came to be seen apart from the body and emerged as spaces where individual biological bodies come to give and receive instruction. I also try to capture how sexual desires and erotic passions get invisibilized and read as ‘love of nation’,¹⁰⁵ by our racialized bodies through history and congealed on to their orientations¹⁰⁶ as practices of discipline and morality that schools are supposed to create.

Therefore, I read the history of schooling as a process of individualization of the human body as a biological entity inscribed with characteristics of civilization, inferiority and sin, and how the idea of sending children to school for learning fundamentally altered our relationship to the body. I then demonstrate how the pedagogical modern nation states of India and Turkey continue to systemically exclude some bodies, maintaining the racial, colonial contours of the national body established before independence and the republic, respectively. In the case of India, I briefly look at the fraught history of compulsory primary education that was relatively

¹⁰⁵ Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (NY: Crossing Press, 1984, 2007), 53-59. Lorde in this essay effectively demonstrates how the erotic permeates all our behaviors- from religious fanaticism to fighting in football games- but always gets read through the languages and systems we have in place and never as a powerful life source or the “erotic.”

¹⁰⁶ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*; Diana H. Coole and Samantha Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2010).

recently passed as the Right to Education Act (RTE) and the language debates around the emphasis on Hindi as the national language reflected in school curricula across the country. In the case of Turkey, I briefly analyze the Law of Unification of Education (1924) and other education related changes that happened right after the establishment of the republic that were to lay the foundation of its exclusionary nationalist, secularist and modernist identity. The fraught normative national body imagined in these debates and laws that continues from colonial/Ottoman times meets civilizational teleologies of global development to create the heteronormative, sexual body of the ‘proper’ citizen subject as we see in the next chapter. This normative national body imaginary continues to perpetuate violence against children’s sensual worlds and non-normative bodies as we explore further in chapter 3.

My aim in this chapter is not to revisit what has already been comprehensively studied about the establishment of formal schooling in both these countries, even though I lay out the history briefly in order to make my points. I intend instead to read the documented history of schooling in India and Turkey from the perspective of the corporeal energies invested in the project and to show that unlike our assumption of the natural-ness of schooling, historically the contours of schooling are constantly being determined by our bodies and passions. I want to demonstrate that this almost self-evident idea of going to school is the articulation of a culmination of historical processes that have actively constructed time as linear progress from primitivism to modernity and of childhood as a time of ‘becoming’ an adult,¹⁰⁷ of individual biological (children’s) bodies as national citizen bodies ‘in the making’, and of schools as separate spaces to achieve the same. We need to remember that upto the early twentieth century,

¹⁰⁷ Benjamin Fortna, “Education and Change in the Late Ottoman Empire and Turkey,” *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 10, no. 1 (2018): 44-62.

it was not at all ‘natural’ to go to school and like most processes of modernization, of which formal schooling was an integral aspect (in India and Turkey as elsewhere), established, as Şerif Mardin demonstrated so comprehensively years ago,¹⁰⁸ a very specific relation of people to their own bodies and societies. Neither was what became the model of modern, formal schooling in independent India starting 1947 and the republic of Turkey from 1923 a foregone conclusion, and alternative visions of education, different visceral energies, challenged and continue to challenge these normative visions.¹⁰⁹

Schooling the Body in British India and Ottoman Turkey

In the case of both India and Turkey, the emergence of what was to become modern, public education has its roots in the late eighteenth century. However, concentrated efforts and the rise of schooling really kicked off in the nineteenth century. Clause 43 of the 1813 Charter of the East India Company allowed missionaries to come to colonial India¹¹⁰ and marked the beginning of the establishment of missionary schools that would go on to proliferate across the subcontinent and exist upto the present day. Some of the earliest social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy started the Anglo Hindu School in Calcutta (Kolkata) in 1822 that combined ‘Hindu’ and Western subjects. From the mid 1820s, the rising tide of utilitarian officers within the Company marked the shift from an orientalist approach to education (that respected Indian

¹⁰⁸ Şerif Mardin, “The Just and the Unjust,” *Daedalus* 120, no. 3 (1991): 113-129.

¹⁰⁹ A couple of historical examples of ‘alternative’ institutionalized forms of learning and understanding the self and world order include (in the context of India): Indrani Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends : Monks, Marriages, and Memories of Northeast India* (New Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) and (in the context of Turkey): Ali Yaycıoğlu, “Guarding Traditions and Laws—Disciplining Bodies and Souls: Tradition, Science, and Religion in the Age of Ottoman Reform,” *Modern Asian Studies* 52 no. 5 (2018): 1542–1603.

¹¹⁰ Suresh Chandra Ghosh, *The History of Education in Modern India, 1757-2012* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2013).

‘high’ culture and languages) to one that would emphasize a system based on English teaching for the betterment of the “lazy” and “passionate”¹¹¹ natives and for provision of the Company “native” workforce. Thomas Macaulay, a utilitarian himself, became the chairman of the General Committee of Public Instruction in 1834 and in 1835 delivered his famous minute that involved replacing Persian with English in schools and administration and stopping all “oriental” educational endeavors.¹¹²

After the colony came directly under the British crown and the rise of the “ethnographic state”¹¹³ in the late nineteenth century meant that a distinction arose between moral, obedient education for masses and literary, skill-based education for the classes, all to be facilitated by the state.¹¹⁴ However, in reality, it was really the upper-caste male elite that benefitted the most from such discourses and policies,¹¹⁵ as the rise of English as a medium of instruction, the lack of improvement in vernacular and vocational education, and the abysmally low percentage of students in elementary education in the period 1860s-1880s demonstrate.¹¹⁶ The rhetoric around education as the savior of “natives” who were now not only “lazy” and “passionate” but also racially inferior was fueled in this era along with the rise of ‘secular’ education marked with textbooks and school buildings that masked its Christian origins.¹¹⁷

Radical social reformers from lower castes such as Jotirao Phule and the Hunter Commission appointed by Viceroy of India Lord Ripon in 1882 appealed to reduce Brahmin

¹¹¹ Krishna Kumar, *Politics of Education in Colonial India* (London: Routledge, 2015), 28.

¹¹² Ghosh, *The History of Education*, 30.

¹¹³ Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹¹⁴ Kumar, *Politics of Education*, 21.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 22-28.

¹¹⁶ Ghosh, *The History of Education*, 85-90.

¹¹⁷ Kumar, *Politics of Education*, 31.

control and increase opportunities for education of masses. The Commission report included suggestions such as encouraging indigenous schools; encouraging education of females, tribal and Muslim populations; and improving teacher training (Normal) schools; amongst others.¹¹⁸

Efforts around female education also intensified in this period leading up to the twentieth century and were intricately connected to the rise of nationalism, lower caste reform movements, and other social reforms around ‘women’s’ status, especially in regions such as Maharashtra, Bengal and Madras that had strong social movements that actively involved women.¹¹⁹ Reformers start viewing education as more powerful than legislation for changing gender and social issues.¹²⁰ At the same time, extreme Hindu and Muslim nationalists like B.G. Tilak and Syed Ahmad Khan were strongly against female education and as a matter of fact, the Indian National Congress split in 1906 following the nationalist *Swadeshi* movement (in 1905) was based on several issues, one of the most prominent one being “National Education”¹²¹ supported by the “extremists” like Tilak and opposed by “moderates” like Gopal Krishna Gokhale.¹²²

The Government of India Act or Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 established dyarchy and moved education matters to individual provinces. However, schooling remained

¹¹⁸ Ghosh, *The History of Education*, 95.

¹¹⁹ Padma Anagol, *The Emergence of Feminism in India, 1850-1920* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Kumar, *Politics of Education*, 119.

¹²⁰ Radha Gayathri, “Silent Voices: Women’s Perceptions about Self and Education in Late Nineteenth-century India,” in *New Perspectives in the History of Indian Education*, ed. Parimala Rao (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan: 2014), 117.

¹²¹ This movement was inspired by the DAWN Society established by Satischandra Mukherjee in 1897 that tried to combine Western rational, scientific education with ‘Hindu’ values. This trend continues today and I mention one such program in which Hindu nationalist values in Modern India are being merged with Scientific values and beliefs in the body, through a nation-wide citizenship program in chapter 3. The New Educational Policy, unfurled in August 2020, seeks to institutionalize this combination of science, technology and Hindu values across the nation now.

¹²² Ghosh, *The History of Education*, 134.

mostly urban and funded by private sources, deepening the elitist nature of education.¹²³ The 1920s gave a boost to education with nationalist movements such as the non-cooperation movement on the rise, and in 1921 the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) was created to coordinate educational matters between central and provincial governments created as a result of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. From 1935-1947, CABE was active in reconstructing Indian Education.¹²⁴ In its fourth meeting, radical education measures such as home-based education and sex education were discussed, but due to “several constraints” such recommendations could not be pursued.¹²⁵ The Government of India Act of 1935 ended the system of dyarchy and introduced direct elections and provisions for the establishment of the federation of India to be made up of British India and the princely states, with the responsibility for education falling on both the center and states. In 1944, just before independence, the education restructuring plan, the Sargent Scheme report that sought to align India’s education system along the lines of England, was widely criticized for the amount of time and cost it suggested in achieving universal primary education,¹²⁶ something that would be hotly contested in Independent India as well.

Unlike India, the Ottoman Empire was not colonized although beginning late eighteenth century,¹²⁷ the growing influence of Western European powers and the perceived need to

¹²³ Tim Allender, “Colonial Anxieties,” in *Education in Colonial India: Historical Insights*, eds. Deepak Kumar, Joseph Bara, Nandita Khadria and Radha Gayathri (New Delhi: Manohar, 2013), 353.

¹²⁴ Kumar, *Politics of Education*, 29.

¹²⁵ Sushil Prasad, “Advising Indian Education,” in *Education in Colonial India: Historical Insights*, eds. Deepak Kumar, Joseph Bara, Nandita Khadria and Radha Gayathri (New Delhi: Manohar, 2013), 311.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 317.

¹²⁷ Or even earlier as some scholars like Niyazi Berkes put it: Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964).

reorganize the military led to the establishment of such institutions as the Naval Engineering School [*Mühendishane-i Bahri-Hümayun*] in 1773 under the French military expert Baron de Tott. The first steps towards formal education can be seen in the *firman* or decree issued by Sultan Mahmud II in 1824 making primary education compulsory. Education was conceived along religious lines and Quran schools had to be introduced in and around Istanbul to spread religious knowledge.¹²⁸ But it was really after the treaty of *Balta Limanı* in 1838 that would trap the Empire within economic contracts with European powers and in 1839, which saw the emergence of the major *Tanzimat* or modernizing socioeconomic political reforms by Sultan Abdulmecid, where education starts being re-conceptualized. The difference between *Maarif* [learning things unknown] and *İlm* [religious learning under the state theologians or *Ulema*] started emerging along with the rise of *Fen* or scientific knowledge.¹²⁹ Inspired by the Egyptian system of education, the *firman* of 1839 resulted in a two tier system, with civilian education staying in the hands of the *Ulema* and non-religious one focused on creating military personnel.

The *firman* of 1845 was the first to think about secondary schools and expansion of education to the provinces. The reform edict to the *Tanzimat* in 1856 saw the role of education to foster the notion of Ottoman citizenship and for the first time explicitly laid out the status of non-Muslim subjects of the Empire at equal footing with the Muslim ones. All Ottoman subjects were allowed to enter civil and military schools and members of all recognized religious communities [*cemaat*] were allowed to open schools. As a result, the Ministry of Public Education (MPE) was formed in 1857 and also a Mixed Council with members from across

¹²⁸ Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2001), 25.

¹²⁹ Berkes, *The Development of Secularism*, 99.

communities to govern functioning of schools and curricula.¹³⁰ The period between the reform edict to the beginning of the reign of Abdul Hamid II (Hamidian era, 1878-1908), saw significant changes in the scope and content of education. The Hamidian era further consolidated the centralization of education, while simultaneously marking a rapid spread of the same to far away provinces. Officials such as the influential Mehmed Kamil Paşa were convinced that education was key to resuscitating the economically weak “sick man of Europe,” the Ottoman Empire.¹³¹

A group of educated young men emerging out of the medical school in Istanbul in 1889 formed the *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* or Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) that would align itself with the revolutionary Young Turks, oust Abdul Hamid II, and bring about the second constitutional period (*İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi*) from 1908-1919. The Young Turks although initially started off with ideologies of Ottomanism, gradually developed more Turkish nationalist attitudes during the Balkan war of 1912-13 and the tumultuous years following it. Therefore, this period along with seeing increasing secularization of primary education and the role of women in education—in 1913 primary education became compulsory for girls—also saw growing nationalist sentiment in school books and literary journals.¹³² In 1920, while the independence war still raged with Greece and its allies, the Ministry of National Education (MEB) was established and in 1921 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was assigned head of the education commission.

¹³³ Atatürk would use education right after the formal establishment of the republic in 1923 as one of the most prominent means of asserting his secular, ‘modern’ vision for the nation state.

¹³⁰ Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education*, 43.

¹³¹ Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial classroom: Islam, the state and education in the late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 83.

¹³² Benjamin C. Fortna, *Learning to Read in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 27.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 20.

What do we make of these histories of schooling leading up to the Indian and Turkish nation states, of times when the nation had to be created literally through the schooling of bodies? Clearly these histories are seeped with people across ideological spectrums whose energies endeavored to shape the politics of education in the directions they desired. And what stands out from the brief historical sketch above, the results of these investments were never guaranteed in what turned out to be national schooling in both countries, and as we will see in chapter 3, continues to be up to the present. What kind of corporeal energies were invested, sunk or lost in these formative years of schooling that went on to shape the vision of the national body of the citizen for independent India and Turkey?

Recent scholarship in education and childhood studies in both countries has revealed through powerfully documented memories of a widely varied group of people from British colonial missionary school administrators to school students that schools were sites that were very actively shaped by people's desires, needs, and feelings and provided, for some, much needed respite from a society that was undergoing monumental changes in politics, economy and modes of living, and for others a place of disciplining and being disciplined, torture and pain.¹³⁴ Numerous such accounts that abound in historical studies of education in both countries amply indicate that the spatiality of schools that these days appears almost natural to us- a building with gates and a place of learning for the mind and physical disciplining of the body- was in fact actively shaped by the bodies that occupied it. Even beyond the level of individual lived

¹³⁴ C.E. Tyndale-Biscoe, "The Imperial Touch: Schooling Male Bodies in Colonial India, Part I" in *The Book of Touch*, ed. Constance Classen (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2005), 168-170; Duygu Köksal, "Escaping to Girlhood in Late Ottoman Istanbul: Demetra Vaka's and Selma Ekrem's Childhood Memories," in *Childhood in the Late Ottoman Empire and After*, ed. Benjamin C. Fortna (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), 250-74.

experiences and desires of people at that time, there are also indications in the historical accounts that I have presented earlier, regarding school policies, that these were implemented directly in response to people's bodies and feelings. For instance, during the Hamidian regime in Ottoman Turkey, the content of schools and their physical environment was increasingly policed to conform to the Ottoman (*Sunni*, Muslim) 'moral' order. This wasn't only because of the failing Ottoman state in light of the rise of European capitulations, but also due to the physical presence of American, British and French missionaries through the latter half of the century, whose schools catered to a variety of students across religious and ethnic divides all across the Empire by providing good quality education. The regime's way of responding to these alien, 'western' proselytizers was to start closing foreign schools, to use "traveling" *Ulema* as teachers in schools across provinces to preach against growing missionary and foreign influence, and most importantly, to come up with better school alternatives.¹³⁵ Such bodily panics and visceral desires and disgusts that they evoked are also clearly visible in colonial India through the actual physical segregation and ostracization of early schooling practices of *Dalit* children.¹³⁶ Also, around the same time in the late nineteenth century when schools for lower castes, girls, and non-Hindu populations were being demanded usually by people from those groups, there were also increasing colonial anxieties around racial mixing of white and brown bodies that actively

¹³⁵ Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 88.

¹³⁶ And of course such instances of caste apartheid are far from over. Several modern school studies in India, including my own interviews with education scholars, indicate that informally children of 'untouchable' castes in several schools in villages and towns continue to be segregated from their upper-caste peers, humiliated, and indeed punished brutally. This truly reveals how articulations of caste continue to be expressed through the body as a historical schema that is already oriented around caste and bears imprints of caste violence that is invisibilized, naturalized over time.

informed separate schooling spaces and government control thereof for *Eurasian* children.¹³⁷

In addition to this embodiedness of the physical space of schools, one of the strongest articulations of modernity, which is evident in its ‘naturalness’ in our lives that has made schools, as Althusser once said, the most silent forms of institutional state apparatuses or indeed the church of our modern times,¹³⁸ schooling fundamentally altered meanings of individual bodies and relationships. The rise of the sense of self as an individual is deeply intertwined with the rise of European-led colonialism, modernization and liberalism, that is by now well-documented in postcolonial and critical development studies. Childhood studies scholarship has further demonstrated time as a linear narrative of progress that aims to move individual (racialized) bodies¹³⁹ from being primitive to civilized and really unfolds through the biological body of the child.¹⁴⁰ Modern schooling emerges as a primary means to train and transform the unruly, the primitive, the naive, and the dirty child body to the fully formed, civilized and responsible adult citizen body. We see this in the histories of schooling above as well. In India, it is most evident through the discourse of racialization and education to uplift the “natives” and even within the category of natives, the caste-system and Brahminical patriarchy in India meant that schooling remained an elitist, male and upper-caste phenomena and as we saw above, this both fueled the demand for education, often by reformers from oppressed groups, as it started being seen as the way to ‘uplift’ and achieved dignity for lower caste, indigenous, Muslim and

¹³⁷ Philip Constable, “Sitting on the School Verandah: The Ideology and Practice of ‘untouchable’ Educational Protest in Late Nineteenth-century Western India,” *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 37, no. 4 (2000): 383-422; Allender, “Colonial Anxieties.”

¹³⁸ Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984), 29.

¹³⁹ Revathi Krishnaswamy, “Evangelists of Empire,” *Race & Class* 34, no. 4 (1993): 47-62.

¹⁴⁰ Claudia Castañeda, *Figurations: Child, Bodies, Worlds* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Burman, *Developments*.

female populations. In Ottoman Turkey, the distinction established between *Maarif* and *İlm*, itself reflects a distinction beginning to be made between those who pursue religious education and those engaged in ‘secular’ pursuits. Studies also abound in both British Indian and Ottoman and Early Republican Turkish contexts about how both British and ruling elites in both sets of geographies constantly romanticized and infantilized rural landscapes and indigenous populations that needed education to be uplifted into the folds of civilization and humanity.¹⁴¹

The body’s changing relation to itself and to the community as a part of becoming a civilized, modern national subject through education, and of childhood as a time to hone this relationship through sending children’s young, biologically growing bodies to school, cannot be underestimated. Not only were people’s bodily orientations towards themselves and each other fundamentally altered,¹⁴² the notion of childhood really emerged as a distinct phase of human, linear biological development and a period of investment in which building a community of national citizens would reap rewards in the long run. We have examples of this investment not just in the historical literature on children’s magazines and school textbooks where education of children for the nation is emphasized,¹⁴³ but in very visceral accounts of how modern nation

¹⁴¹ Doğan Gürpınar, “From the Bare and Arid Hills to Anatolia, the Loveable and Beautiful: Kemalist Project of ‘National Modernity’ in Anatolian Countryside,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 48, no. 6 (2012): 903-26; Helen May, *Empire, Education, and Indigenous Childhoods: Nineteenth-century Missionary Infant Schools in Three British Colonies* (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014); Yasin Yunc, “Puériculture Education and the Contours of the Republican Child Question and Politics of Sexuality,” in *A Political Sociology of Educational Knowledge: Studies of Exclusions and Difference*, eds. Thomas S Popkewitz, Jennifer Diaz, and Christopher Kirchgassler (Routledge, 2017), 38-52.

¹⁴² Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

¹⁴³ Benjamin C. Fortna, “Bonbons and Bayonets: Mixed Messages of Childhood in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic,” in *Childhood in the Late Ottoman Empire*,

building through school going entailed major re-orientations of adults and children towards each other and established both literally and metaphorically a new language of understanding the self and nation. There are examples from people's own accounts for instance from 1930s in the Northern Indian British provinces where Hindi was being crafted as the nationalist language of the (upper-caste Hindu) country, even though people were speaking Urdu and Hindustani. According to these accounts, schooling was central in establishing the Hindi agenda as identities had to be reoriented around Hindi, a process which becomes a problem as we shall see for independent India too.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, schooling emerged not just as a project of modernity but, going back to Althusser's church analogy, a project of secular, national morality, where nation and modernity emerged as Gods and the language of reading, writing and learning were the means, and (quite contrary to what we normally believe) infused with corporeal energies of desiring bodies. On the one hand were the racialized bodies of those being 'uplifted'- lower caste, Muslim and women reformers- and their desires to achieve dignity and equality through education. On the other hand were the local elites fighting to establish an independent nation or republic, who would use education's liberal understanding of human equality to demand independence. Then there were the rulers and colonizers such as the British, whose zeal to promote colonial capitalism necessitated building a market of educated natives. All these differently placed and desiring bodies diffused their passions, desires, and resistances, through ideas of nation, progress and its ultimate vehicle and reflection- education. The language of progress and modern morality was therefore a culmination of these conflicting and embodied material processes that have over time become so naturalized as to obscure from us the national

173-188.

¹⁴⁴ Kumar, *Politics of Education*, 148-152.

fervor, heteronormative anxieties, and primacy of the sexual body- the schooling of girls and ‘backward’ castes, the separate schooling of Eurasian children, the disciplining of Kurdish tribal boys¹⁴⁵ - that went into the making of schools. At the same time, as the demand for schooling from people across caste, ethnic, class and religious divides illustrates, this language of progress and the desire for modernity and above all equality was also what actively drove people’s energies.¹⁴⁶

Finally, because we think of schools as ahistorical, natural parts of our lives instead of an embodied set of historical events, we forget that the project of schooling, just like any human change, was never complete. Similar to the present moment, as policymakers and governments debate the contours of schooling and as we are currently seeing in India and Turkey, actively promote visions of the desirable national body by attacking schooling practices and curriculum,¹⁴⁷ schools in both places have always been at the center of dynamic energies and different visions of self, community and national belonging. This is evident even in the brief historical sketch above where we saw different factions fighting over different meanings and differential access to schools. There was also the fear of completely losing one’s roots and becoming ‘westernized’ through schooling which was a deep pre-occupation of policy making elites in the

¹⁴⁵ Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 213.

¹⁴⁶ For example, *Dalit* leaders like B.R. Ambedkar, who was also highly educated and was an ardent believer of the American educator Dewey’s philosophy of education for social good, firmly believed that education could help *Dalits* come out of caste oppression: Kumar, *Politics of Education*, 111-112.

¹⁴⁷ Mushirul Hasan, “The BJP’s Intellectual Agenda: Textbooks and Imagined History,” in *Pluralism and Democracy in India: Debating the Hindu Right*, eds. Wendy Doniger and Martha C. Nussbaum (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 243-266; Gamze Çavdar and Yavuz Yaşar, “Education,” in *Women in Turkey: Silent Consensus in the Age of Neoliberalism and Islamic Conservatism* (Routledge, 2019), 114-145; Ismail Güven, “Neo-Conservative Islam and Transition of Secular Education in Turkey,” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 18, no. 53 (2019): 37-59.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as was a great desire to look at each other's schooling practices during this period of immense trans-national transformations, as Ottoman Turkey and colonial India actively did. For example, the Lancaster system, developed in British India and used by American missionaries in the 1830s in Greek and Armenian schools in the Ottoman empire, started being used for military and professional schools for Muslims in the mid-latter half of the century.¹⁴⁸ Conversely, articles like "The Women of Turkey and their folk-lore" published in the Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College magazine in Aligarh in 1890 saw Turkey as a model of Muslim female education. Turkey's education model would also be cited by several Indian reformers in the twentieth century.¹⁴⁹ Following independence in India in 1947 and establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 as well, corporeal energies continued to define schooling, further consolidating normativities of the national body as bodies continued to align along historical markers of difference and rearticulate belonging to the nation.

The 'National' Body in India and Turkey

The exclusions on which democratic citizenship is premised¹⁵⁰ is clearly reflected in independent Indian and Turkish nation states through the imaginations of the national body that both inform and are historically informed by people's visions of schooling. In India, the trajectory of debates from historical times to 2009 when the right of children from 6-14 ages to free and compulsory Education (RTE) Act was passed by the parliament and came into effect in

¹⁴⁸ Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education*, 54-55.

¹⁴⁹ Ghosh, *The History of Education*, 174.

¹⁵⁰ Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

2010, is particularly illustrative. The continuity of debates from historical times to the contemporary moment highlights the elitist, exclusionary nature of formal schooling and reveals how the roll back of state investment in schooling in recent years has actually always been used as a pretext to deny education to some. Parimala Rao, who analyzes the historical debates around compulsory primary education, highlights 3 distinct phases: prior to 1840s when landed gentry and British officers opposed compulsory primary schooling on the grounds that it would create social unrest and be expensive, 1870 when a similar bill was passed in England but opposed in the colony on grounds similar to the ones above, and finally Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill proposal in the legislative council in 1911 that was protested once again by conservative nationalists on the grounds of disrupting social hierarchies and by the British on account of expense¹⁵¹. Through each phase, Rao demonstrates the complicity of "native" upper-caste political leaders with the colonial state in preventing this progressive piece of legislation from passing, for it threatened to disrupt child labor, interests of landed gentry, and coalescing ideas of acceptable middle-class Hindu femininity. After independence, article 45 of the constitution promised free and compulsory education till 14 years of age to be implemented into law and subsequent education commissions sponsored by the government such as the Kothari Commission (1964-66), the highly nationalist and limited Resolution on Education (1968), and the more progressive National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1986, all emphasized the need for a state guaranteed right to primary schooling. Gaining currency in the 1990s, partially through global World Bank driven development emphasis on universal primary education, several programs like the DPEP (District Primary Education Program) (1994) targeted sending girls and

¹⁵¹ Parimala Rao, "Compulsory Education and the Political Leadership in Colonial India, 1840-1947," *New Perspectives*, 152-171.

members of the lower and *Dalit* castes and indigenous communities to school. DPEP's successor the *Sarva Shikshan Abhiyan* (SSA), India's flagship program for universalization of primary education launched in 2001 by the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led to several initiatives to spread schooling to most needed populations and in 2002 free and compulsory primary education was declared as a fundamental right under the 86th amendment (article 21-A) of the constitution. It was this article that was passed as RTE in 2009, 62 years after independence. Many debates to pass the act were stalled because of its reservation clause, which required schools to reserve seats for children from under-privileged backgrounds. It demanded a higher number of seats before dropping to the current 25%. Therefore, there is a clear historical line that continues through the bodies and beliefs of upper-caste people and policy-makers from before independence up to now, that premises citizenship on exclusions of other bodies and defines the national body as upper-caste, Hindu, male through its claims to decide which and how many bodies can access schools through the RTE. Moreover, as newly emerging "everyday" ethnographies of schooling and higher education increasingly reveal, giving equal access in places of learning doesn't necessarily translate to equality. In their study of educated yet unemployed North Indian rural young men, Jeffrey, Jeffery and Jeffery demonstrate how caste, class and religious inequalities shape the hegemonic visions of modernity of these educated youth, how upper-castes remain dominant, and how education as acquired "capital" helps lower castes gain prestige and yet traps them into further structures of inequality.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Craig Jeffrey, Patricia Jeffery and Roger Jeffery, *Degrees without freedom? Education, Masculinities and Unemployment in North India* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

Similarly, the ‘language wars’ in India after independence against the imposition of Hindi as the national language in schools are demonstrative of the ways in which the national body continues to be imagined through specific articulations of belonging, in this case not just religion, caste and gender, but also region and language. It also demonstrates that human corporeality is dynamic as it continues to challenge these articulations and redefine belonging of the self and nation. The issue of linguistic belonging is intricately tied to the larger linguistic division of states in India following independence when the country was divided along linguistic lines and a variety of regional languages even within linguistic states were further marginalized to “dialects.”¹⁵³ The emergence of the status of Hindi as the “national” language has a larger history in the Hindi-Urdu divide that emerged in Northern India from the late nineteenth century, fostered by schools such as the *Arya Samaj* schools and the British, and really reached its peak in the 1930s through schooling. In combination with the larger anticolonial and nationalist mobilizations, Hindi increasingly became the language of the nationalist “Hindu” associated with the Hindi ‘heartland’ states of the North and just like Hindi, Urdu became a religious marker associated with Muslims.¹⁵⁴ This Hindi identity was established of course, not just at the expense of Urdu, but other local languages of Northern regions.¹⁵⁵ Following independence a temporary resolution was reached in 1949 to achieve national status for Hindi by 1965 and use English until then as the national language.¹⁵⁶ In 1963 with the Official Languages Act, Nehru allowed English to continue as official language after 1965 and chief ministers from different states met and the

¹⁵³ Kumar, *Politics of Education*, 160.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 144.

¹⁵⁵ LaDousa, *Hindi is our ground*, 72.

¹⁵⁶ Shalini Advani, *Schooling the National Imagination: Education, English, and the Indian Modern* (New Delhi; Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 34.

3-language solution (Hindi-English-regional language) for states was arrived at.¹⁵⁷ However, the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, which had already had a strong ethnic identity and language-based movement since the 1920s opposed this indirect domination of Hindi and riots followed in the state from 1964-65. There have always been debates since then on how the compulsion to learn English and Hindi is marginalizing regional languages and even dialects¹⁵⁸ and the fact that the formula doesn't work in the reverse—North Indian schools are never offered other Indian languages as an option and in some places, especially with the rise of right wing Hindu politics, Sanskrit is offered instead.¹⁵⁹ This reveals how the imagined North-Indian, Hindu, Hindi-speaking body is constantly revived in schooling future Indian citizens. The latest announcement in the National Education Policy of 2020 to have instruction in “mother tongue” across all states at least till grade 5 is also being viewed by many as ongoing Hindu imposition of Sanskrit in schools and intentional de-valuation of English that has hitherto been used as a means to resist Hindi and upper-caste domination by southern states and *Dalits*, respectively.¹⁶⁰

In the case of Turkey, the normative national body was very clearly imagined as secular (specifically laic) and ‘modern’ and Atatürk used the Law on Unification of Education in 1924 precisely for that. By formally ending the legacy of distinction between religious and secular

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 36.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 40.

¹⁵⁹ LaDousa, *Hindi is our ground*, 75.

¹⁶⁰ “Centre's push for Bharat: Study in mother tongue or regional language till class 5,” *Deccan Chronicle*, July 29, 2020, <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/290720/study-in-home-language-till-class-5-other-takeaways-from-national-edu.html>; Shivam Vij, “The mother tongue fanatics are keeping India a poor, backward country,” *ThePrint*, July 31, 2020, <https://theprint.in/opinion/the-mother-tongue-fanatics-are-keeping-india-a-poor-backward-country/471997/>.

education from the Ottoman Empire, the new law brought all educational institutions, including foreign schools, under the MEB and all religious schools and training institutions ceased to function.¹⁶¹ Between 1924 and 1932 a series of educational changes would completely alter the notions of ethnic and linguistic identity of the population within one generation¹⁶² and firmly establish the monolingual Turkish state. Some prominent examples include: co-education in primary schools (1926), abolition of Arabic and Persian in secondary schools and making the new Latin alphabet compulsory in all public communications (1929), and the new Turkish historical thesis in schools (1932). Such suppression of religious beliefs and ethnic identities that established a homogenous national body which didn't represent the vast diversity of peoples and cultures in the country continues to affect schooling up to the present day. For instance, the debates on education in mother tongue for Kurdish children¹⁶³ and the debates around the religious preacher schools or *İmam Hatip Okulları* (İHO). In the case of the latter, on the one hand secularists are viewing the rapid rise of İHOs under the ruling AKP¹⁶⁴ with some alarm. İHOs are imagining and creating their own exclusive national body as opposed to secular schools, one which is Islamic and gendered. Some studies have shown that the way children are made to socialize in these schools along strict gender divides might be intensifying forms of patriarchal controls over girls' bodies.¹⁶⁵ On the other hand, more 'conservative' factions are

¹⁶¹ Fatma Gök, "The History and Development of Turkish Education," in *Education in 'multicultural' Societies*, 247.

¹⁶² Hale Yılmaz, "Learning to Read (Again): The Social Experiences of Turkey's 1928 Alphabet Reform," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 4 (2011): 677-97.

¹⁶³ See for example: Nicole F. Watts, *Activists in Office Kurdish Politics and Protest in Turkey* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).

¹⁶⁴ Several leaders of the party including the former Prime Minister and current President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan are graduates of İHOs.

¹⁶⁵ Yeşim Arat, "Religion, Politics and Gender Equality in Turkey: Implications of a Democratic Paradox?" *Third World Quarterly* 31, no. 6 (2010): 873.

hailing İHOs as the perfect combination of religious and secular ideals and İHOs have become model schools for national imaginaries of several Islamic nations.¹⁶⁶ In the meantime, as debates over the imagined national body intensify through İHOs, their school graduates go on to occupy positions of power in the government, especially MEB and the Office of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, DİB) and emigrate abroad in large numbers as students in foreign universities, further intensifying the wars over what counts as the ‘Turkish’ national body.¹⁶⁷

Conclusion

In this brief chapter, I have attempted to infuse life and the erotic into the history of schooling and to demonstrate the dynamic nature and inseparability of schooling with bodies and how the desire to educate and be educated across different articulations of belonging have rendered schools crucial political sites for educating and creating national citizens. The imagined national body, as we have seen, has always been fraught from the times of colonial India and Ottoman Turkey, up to the present day. On the one hand, it continues to be imagined along hierarchies of caste, class, gender, religion and ethnic belonging; on the other, its imaginations are always challenged as it re-articulates itself, invisibilizing its own historical hierarchical articulations, and creating newer ones. So for instance, the Indian national educated body was always upper-caste, Hindu and male, but as we have seen creating a Hindi-speaking body was a

¹⁶⁶ İbrahim Aşlamacı and Recep Kaymakcan, “A Model for Islamic Education from Turkey: The Imam-Hatip Schools,” *British Journal of Religious Education* 39, no. 3 (2017): 279-92.

¹⁶⁷ Deniz Kandiyoti, “The Travails of the Secular: Puzzle and Paradox in Turkey,” *Economy and Society* 41, no. 4 (2012): 519; Özgür, *Islamic Schools in Modern Turkey*, 163-168; İsmail Çağlar, *From Symbolic Exile to Physical Exile: Turkey's Imam Hatip Schools, the Emergence of a Conservative Counter-elite, and Its Knowledge Migration to Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013).

deliberate process that began in the 1930s and continues now, even as it is challenged. Similarly, schools are active political sites of challenging the Turkish national body and reflect the larger political and public arguments that remain split between ‘secularist’ and ‘religious’ imaginations.

Therefore, bodies, desires and ever changing senses of self and belonging render schools as incomplete political projects where meanings of selfhood and nation are constantly negotiated and have the potential to change. Hopefully, this has unsettled our complacent ideas of schools as ‘natural’ spaces of knowledge production by demonstrating that there is nothing ‘natural’ about schools. They were and continue to be deeply political projects to educate children and create national bodies that maintain hierarchical articulations of belonging, even as they are challenged by people’s bodies and desires. Schools are corporeal spaces where the sexual body is at the center of being disciplined but it is there precisely because heteronormative, middle-class, and racial anxieties and desires have deemed so, and even the bodies that don’t fit those normativities desire schooling because going to school is the ‘natural’ path to normative-ness and modern citizenship. Hence, the body is at the center of political lifeworlds of school and it both informs it even as it is shaped by schooling ideologies of civilization and progress. This has now hopefully set us up for what is to come next- a revaluation of urban, middle-class (normative) Indian and Turkish bodies through schooling. In the next chapters, through intimate quotidian schooling practices, events, relations and stories, we see how the microcosmic political, social and sensual lifeworlds of schools continue to challenge the normative national body that is essentially a sexual body (chapter 2), through children’s sensual displays (chapter 3) and the gendered lives and labors of teachers (chapter 4). The articulations of belonging that are constantly negotiated in these spaces, the inseparability of bodies/time/space of schooling, and the corporeal excesses and

desires that escape the confines of schooling and remain inarticulable, help us re-imagine not just the practices of modern schooling but drive a critical transnational feminist praxis in imagining uncivilized possible lifeworlds. In other words, the everyday of schooling, in spite of being spaces where normative articulations of the body get reified, also offer- thorough the bodies that seep it, their desiring excesses, and the ways they frustrate the national body- other imaginings of a lifeworld based on corporeality, erotic energies and intimate connections.

CHAPTER TWO: Embodied Histories, Erotic Disruptions, and Sexuality Education in India and Turkey

On a beautiful November morning in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad, I sit attending a sexuality education class for adolescent girls belonging to a *Dalit* community in the neighborhood. The well-dressed and articulate trainer Ramya has just finished explaining the scientific model of the body, puberty, and the mental development that continues beyond the physical development. At this point, however, she is confounded by a question by one of the girls. “Do we have to be married to have sex or babies?” Ramya is in a fix and answers hesitantly, “Your body is ready to have babies and sex after periods, but your mind is still growing. So you should decide on marriage only then.” Ramya’s response here is indicative of the limitations of the broader historical, sociocultural alignments of the desiring body in India within institutions like marriage. However, the girls’ responses, as they nod their heads but keep giggling, unconvinced, also indicates how the body escapes these alignments by the sheer want of the adolescent body to have sex. Meanwhile, thousands of miles away at Alliance middle school in Istanbul, Turkey, the 5th grade Biology teacher emphasizes the need to distinguish the “physical” (*fiziksel*) body from the “cultural” (*kültürel*) body, the former being the biological body that matures, menstruates, reproduces and the latter being the one that regulates physical functions within institutions like law, family, and marriage.

This chapter focuses on how desiring bodies both resist and reveal larger socio-economic-cultural histories of body becoming in global, national and regional contexts in

and out of sexuality education¹⁶⁸ and sexual abuse prevention lessons. It contests the limited view of bodies and sexuality taught to children divorced from larger histories that shape and are shaped by erotic energies and drive ideological underpinnings of nation and schooling. Utilizing feminist postcolonial, indigenous, and phenomenological perspectives of the body, I analyze two anecdotal moments when the desiring bodies of a student and teacher, in the context of FPV's Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) lesson at Alliance Middle School in Istanbul and Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) prevention work at SNCSA in Hyderabad respectively, rupture the neat, progressive narrative of sexuality education premised on a limited biological view of the body that develops linearly and is divorced from history. I do so to impress upon us the exigencies of theoretical re-conceptualizations of the historic-socio-cultural corporeality of living, desiring bodies in transnational feminist activism and scholarly production.

These exigencies are in response to two main challenges of our times. The first and most urgent is to counter the political and ideological rise of the global right that continues to perpetuate through essentialist notions of the 'violent', 'terrorist' and 'ignorant' body of non-Western, brown and religious 'other'. The second is to add to transnational feminist

¹⁶⁸ I use the term "sexuality education" instead of "sex education" to describe the kinds of lessons I observed, since all of them went beyond just talking about sexual organs and safe sex to encompass teachings about sexual identities, gender roles, human rights, and several other topics that fall under the larger ambit of 'sexuality'. In contrast to abstinence-based approaches, these programs were comprehensive since they promoted positive messages about sex and sexuality. Also, since these programs in the global 'South' have explicitly emerged from population control, sexual health, and other national or international development driven initiatives, I use the language of 'sexuality education' widely used in global development (U. N. Women, UN AIDS, UNFPA, WHO and UNICEF, *International technical guidance on sexuality education: An evidence-informed approach* (UNESCO Publishing, 2018)). 'Sexuality', as this chapter will demonstrate, also holds a radical potential for rethinking the body that is central to these programs and is also central to larger social change. I therefore stick with the usage of "sexuality education" consistently throughout the chapter.

scholarship on gendered sexual subjectivity which, in spite of bringing to the fore much needed discussions around the role of histories in determining gendered and sexual formations,¹⁶⁹ still tends to overlook sites such as schools and formations of childhood sexual subjectivities.¹⁷⁰

Schooling and school-based lessons such as sexuality education work through the body in delineating ‘proper’, ‘normal’ gendered and sexual citizenship, while establishing who, how and what constitutes the ‘abnormal’. The violence of sexual abuse is a significant instance of the latter since prevention trainings for children overwhelmingly focus on the biology and biological explanations of psychological harm but ignore histories of body becomings under racial systems, thereby keeping violence trapped at the discursive level within the language of power and immoral wrongdoing. Re-thinking the body through CSE and CSA prevention lessons taken together therefore, demonstrate the child’s body not only as a site where teleological and colonial narratives of scientific modernity unfold through the emphasis on the biological, but also where erasures of histories bind the body so inextricably to biology that it becomes impossible to see unruly desires beyond sexual identities and sexual violence beyond individual, biological manifestations of power and ‘abnormality’.

My own personal experiences as a CSA survivor and professional commitment to social and sexual justice projects and work as a sexuality trainer have driven the desire to focus on CSE and CSA prevention work in schools. During the three-year period of my fieldwork where I was

¹⁶⁹ Some notable examples include: Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Lucinda Ramberg, *Given to the Goddess: South Indian Devadasis and the Sexuality of Religion* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Asli Zengin, “Violent Intimacies.”

¹⁷⁰ Erica Burman and Jackie Stacey, “The child and childhood in feminist theory,” *Feminist Theory* 11, no. 3 (2010): 227-240.

immersed in school and training spaces both as a researcher and practitioner, I slowly came to the deep realization that effective sexuality education necessitated a fundamental rethinking of the body as living history that is constantly making and unmaking itself and its environment. People in quotidian spaces like schools are experiencing interventions like CSE and political agendas through their desiring bodies that influence and are influenced by the ways they articulate themselves within their social formations. Unfortunately, most educational efficacy studies and reports in both countries are focused on learning outcomes and teacher professionalization and fail to seriously account for people's lived, corporeal experiences. In numerous formal and informal conversations with NGO workers, policy makers, academics, and teachers; my own activism in queer and sexuality groups;¹⁷¹ and discussions around children's (sexual) bodies and schooling policies in newspapers and government, feminist and civil society organizational websites; it also became evident that civil society insights on everyday experiences of CSE rarely get translated to policy, curriculum, and government legislation.

Therefore, my decision to pause and focus on specific, intimate anecdotes in this chapter is a deliberate one. These incidents are by no means unique and reflect many teachers' and students' lived realities and feelings in experiencing programs like CSE and while doing CSA prevention work. My own observations of schools, students and teachers, along with the secondary observations I draw on of scholars, activists and policy makers that have dedicated

¹⁷¹ Queer and sexuality-based activism in urban Istanbul and Hyderabad-Secunderabad is intelligent and thriving (see especially: Arvind Narrain and Gautam Bhan, *Because I have a Voice: Queer Politics in India* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2005) and Evren Savcı, "Who Speaks the Language of Queer Politics? Western Knowledge, Politico-cultural Capital and Belonging among Urban Queers in Turkey," *Sexualities* 19, no. 3 (2016): 369-87.). However, they often diverge around differences of caste, class, ethnicity, language, religion and region. As I have elucidated in the introduction, I was fortunate to be involved with some groups that, whilst working on sexual rights, deeply questioned how sexuality intersects with gender and other differences.

their lives to researching school spaces have led to me to make this rather broad claim. I am not claiming the generalizability of experiences of CSE and CSA abuse prevention lessons, for that would be too arrogant and complacent a claim to make given that this research project is precisely about challenging generalizable, scientific and universal epistemologies and urges us instead to shift our focus on lived experiences of transitory bodies and desires. Rather I am claiming that the centrality of the body and desires is common to everything that I was seeing and hearing during my extensive fieldwork even when it was hidden under layers of discursive practices and mundane routines of de-sexualized, sanitized school spaces. Therefore, by narrating specific moments of “rupture”¹⁷² in the larger liberal discourse of sexuality education, I shift the focus from the lessons themselves to individual lived subjectivities and crises when bodies confront their own desires. Desiring bodies, the erotics of pedagogical spaces, and everyday lived experiences and emotions of children and educators forced me to reckon with the body at the center of meaning-making in the world and inseparable from it.

The Erotics of Pedagogical Spaces

During my fieldwork, all the bodies that I encountered, including my own- ‘woman’, mother, teacher, Turkish-speaking upper-caste Hindu- troubled educational spaces by exceeding commonsensical understandings of the body as a unitary, scientific living organism and liberal human subject marked by the mind/body duality. Not only did the emotional and rational very often blend into each other and find corporeal expression through laughter, unruly behavior, and

¹⁷² Marisol De La Cadena, “Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections beyond ‘Politics’,” *Cultural Anthropology* 25, no. 2 (2010): 334-370.

pain,¹⁷³ it became impossible to think of individual, objective scientific bodies as learned in biology and sexuality education lessons. People living and working in schools and sites where educational trainings such as CSA prevention are provided have connected lives and view themselves and other bodies from deeply ingrained understandings of nation, religion, caste, class, gender, and belonging that are often hard to separate.

Very often, in both countries, teachers would not have actively thought about differences in teaching children from different backgrounds until I explicitly asked them to. “They are all children to us!” as one teacher in Delhi exclaimed. Yet, differences *did* matter. As several Kurdish and Armenian state school [*devlet okulu*] teachers told me about being bullied at school themselves, ethnic differences in a country like Turkey that officially and in public discourse denies minoritarian oppression, are like “labor” [*emek*] and “trauma” [*travma*] for some bodies who constantly need to blend in, especially in nationalist institutions like schools.¹⁷⁴

Simultaneous with living oppressions based on differences that fell outside normative categories of citizenship or the national body that we have seen in the previous chapter- *Sunni* Muslim Turkish and Upper Caste Hindu India, hetero-reproductive – people were also just living their lives and loving. Even supposedly banal quotidian school life was seeped with desiring bodies, erotic energies, and passions with teachers dressing up to come to school, students having crushes, strong friendships, and sharing of personal pain. Educational spaces, like life, are

¹⁷³ Andrew Strathern, “Organs and Emotions: The question of metaphor,” *Canberra Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (1993): 1-16.

¹⁷⁴ It is not my intention here to conflate minoritarian experiences of national belonging of Kurds and Armenians (themselves not a homogenous group) in Turkey and more specifically in Istanbul. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to elaborate on different Kurdish and Armenian histories, politics and lived realities in the country, I am using here simply the teachers’ own words to demonstrate how any ‘difference’ to normative citizenry is directly marked onto the body as everyday trauma and labor.

dynamic with ever-changing methods of pedagogy, passing generations of students and teachers, and consequently shifting ideas on social issues and teaching that entail constant “bargaining” in order for people experiencing them to live meaningful lives.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, any conceptualization of the body has to capture the ways people’s bodies are aligned differently in their worlds, both acknowledging the corporeality of difference as lived experience while not reducing differences to biological essentialism where an objective, natural body has race, gender, religion simply mapped on to it. At the same time, what is the role of desire, its relation to the body and knowledges that are always changing, becoming?

In the following pages, I first briefly trace articulations of the biological sexual body and its development and how it’s intricately intertwined with teleologies of colonialism and subsequent sedimented histories of scientific global and national development. I then narrate two anecdotal moments of rupture in which bodies exceed objective, normative categorizations to reveal themselves as phenomenal, desiring embodiments of history continuously making sense of their social worlds. In the first anecdote, through a student’s angry eruption in FPV’s CSE lesson in a grade 5 classroom at Alliance in Istanbul, I argue that the modern and scientific conception of the body that results in articulations of the sexual as sexual identities, erases histories of how the body as a corporeal schema is always becoming and other ways of understanding bodily practices. In the second anecdote involving a CSA prevention educator and founder of SNCSA in Hyderabad-Secunderabad, I further delve into the erasure of caste as historical privilege that fundamentally constitutes the Indian corporeal schema and further marginalizes non-normative

¹⁷⁵ Deniz Kandiyoti, “Gender, Power and Contestation: ‘Rethinking bargaining with patriarchy’,” in *Feminist Visions of Development: Gender Analysis and Policy*, ed. Cecile Jackson and Ruth Pearson (London: Routledge, 1998), 135-151.

bodies, severely limiting innovative ways of thinking about sexual abuse and violence. I have been so fortunate to attend FPV's CSE lessons during my teaching tenure at Alliance in Istanbul and be a part of SNCSA's volunteering team in Hyderabad-Secunderabad, respectively. These programs are doing brilliant work in teaching gender and sexual freedom and bodily rights to children under a deeply divisive and disturbing political climate in both countries. Therefore, any attempt of mine to re-conceptualize the body and sexuality in and through these lessons is only because they center and provide the most fertile sites to re-think the body.

Historical Difference, Scientific Modernity and the Making of the National-Sexual Body in India and Turkey

The present day articulation of the 'sexual' in India and Turkey, as most modern nation states, is inextricably tied to the nineteenth century emergence of nationalist ideologies and efforts in state-backed postwar development projects supported by the World Bank and other international donor agencies from the mid-twentieth century. The rights bearing individual found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the United Nations in 1948 was a product of a particular historical articulation of rational and secular individual bodies that rose to prominence after European hegemony facilitated rapid advances in mercantilist capitalism, technology, and of course colonialism. The 'savage' others that colonial encounters enabled were in fact crucial in consolidating the 'developed' ideal of a rational, free-thinking individual¹⁷⁶ that all peoples could achieve in the linear path to progress and modernity.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Michael Cowen and Robert W. Shenton, *Doctrines of Development* (London: Routledge, 1996), 27-43.

¹⁷⁷ Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

However, the project of development and modernity that is so fundamental to contemporary sexual articulations was and will always remain necessarily incomplete, as we also saw in one particular instance of this, in schooling, in the previous chapter. European hegemony thrived on colonial expansion of raw materials and labor that in turn fed scientific developments in Europe and its enduring forms of economic and scientific knowledges. These, however, became the bases of theories such as Social Darwinism and Malthusian population control that classified human beings based on racial hierarchies and placed a cap on the kinds of bodies that were deemed livable. This inherent contradiction- the drive to develop and achieve modernity articulated as human rights and scientific growth and the inevitable failure of certain bodies to ever achieve that status- informed UN supported postwar national development projects and postcolonial nation state building, and continues to inform ‘humanitarian’ work to the present day.¹⁷⁸ Nation state building in countries like India and Turkey and the related treatment of bodies in the twentieth century therefore needs to be understood within these twin contradictions of development and modernization. “Reproductive futurity”¹⁷⁹ of modern, rational biological bodies has to be maintained through heteronormative social, moral and legal structures¹⁸⁰ and limited through family control programs. These processes of disciplining and punishing national bodies have to happen, at least in principle, while protecting and promoting human rights of individuals in a ‘democratic’ nation.

¹⁷⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Use and Abuse of Human Rights,” *Boundary 2* 32, no. 1 (2005): 131-189.

¹⁷⁹ Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*.

¹⁸⁰ Chandan Reddy, “Asian Diasporas, Neoliberalism, and Family: Reviewing the Case for Homosexual Asylum in the Context of Family Rights,” *Social Text* 23, no. 3-4 (2005): 101-19; Jyoti Puri, *Sexual States: Governance and the Struggle over the Antisodomy Law in India*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

The modern-day understanding of ‘sexuality’¹⁸¹ has thus emerged from these contradictions of postcolonial, post-War (inter)national development. One is the view of rights bearing, biological, individual, rational bodies, in which sexuality has to be a deeply individual characteristic articulable as a human right. Sexual Rights as Human Rights (SRHR) emerged in the 1990s precisely at a historical moment in the new post-1980s global capitalist world order that we retroactively label as “neoliberalism”.¹⁸² This was partly in response to the excessive emphasis on health management and reproductive control that postcolonial, ‘developing’ bodies were being hitherto subjected to.¹⁸³ The SRHR discourse was an attempt to balance global development’s contradiction that had gone too far in the population and disease control of ‘third world’ bodies in the aftermath of post-colonization, with the idea of biological bodies as bearers of innate sexual desires, pleasures, and rights. While the control and maintenance of disease free biological bodies, HIV infected bodies, “bleeding” bodies,¹⁸⁴ and reproducing bodies remains crucial, the neoliberal global subject has emerged as a sexual subject with “actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics”¹⁸⁵ where sexuality is

¹⁸¹ akshay khanna, *Sexualness* (New Delhi: New Text, 2016). khanna articulates that which is ‘sexual’ as “sexualness,” insisting and comprehensively showing through an analysis of modern Indian legal and health regimes how “sexuality” is just one particular way of viewing and categorizing people based on “sexualness.”

¹⁸² Amy Bhatt, Madhavi Murty and Priti Ramamurthy, “Hegemonic Developments: The New Indian Middle Class, Gendered Subalterns, and Diasporic Returnees in the Event of Neoliberalism,” *Signs* 36, no. 1 (2010): 127-52.

¹⁸³ “Fourth World Conference on Women Beijing Declaration,” UN Women, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/declar.htm> (accessed July 25, 2019).

¹⁸⁴ Shenila Khoja-Moolji and Esther O. Ohito, “Containing the Leakiness of Impure Inhumans: Bleeding Third-World Bodies and the Confining Cultural Politics of Menstrual Hygiene Campaigns,” in *Youth Sexualities: Public Feelings and Contemporary Cultural Politics Volume 1* ed. Susan Talburt (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, an Imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2018), 107-127.

¹⁸⁵ “Preamble (YP+10),” *The Yogyakarta Principles*, <http://yogyakartaprinciples.org/preamble-yp10/> (accessed July 25, 2019).

explicitly recognized as an individual human right. This also explains how in ‘developing’ countries like Turkey and India, it is not uncommon to find urban, English-speaking and well traveled young people active in gender and sexuality groups in cities, since they are able to clearly articulate the language of gender and sexual identities and rights.¹⁸⁶

However, the embodiment of modern sexuality enabled by global governance, finance, and travel is connected to larger living histories of nationalisms that have already set up some bodies to arrive as free-thinking, rational, individual, democratic and modern citizen subjects. Feminist scholars from both India and Turkey have shown how reordering of caste, class, ethnic, and religious differences through the sexual and gendered body was central to the making of the ‘Indian’ and ‘Turkish’ national body. In the Indian context for instance, the structuring of Bengali, middle-class *Bhadralok* femininity in colonial India didn’t only respond to the anti-colonial, nationalist imperative of the Bengali male elites to depict India as a more traditional, morally spiritual society, it fundamentally set sexual wantonness as a characteristic of the prostitute and reproductive heterosexuality within the home as the norm.¹⁸⁷ After independence in 1947, it was the upper-casteist, spiritually pious, and sexually abstinent ideology of Gandhi and the consolidation of government and power by developmentalist upper-caste elites that set the tone of the legislative and social articulation of independent India’s

¹⁸⁶ Savcı, “Who Speaks the Language of Queer Politics?”

¹⁸⁷ Partha Chatterjee, “The Nationalist Resolution of the Women’s Question,” in *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), 233-253. Feminist scholars such as Mrinalini Sinha have challenged Chatterjee’s argument by demonstrating that it wasn’t just the anticolonial male imperative, but also an anticolonial upper-caste feminist movement that used the liberal discourse of feminism to define the contours of normative Indian womanhood that was based on caste and class hierarchies and sexual assumptions (Mrinalini Sinha, “Refashioning Mother India: Feminism and Nationalism in Late-Colonial India,” *Feminist Studies* 26, no. 3 (2000): 623-644).

polity.¹⁸⁸ In spite of a liberal constitution, the constant policing of sexual subjects, policymaking, and rhetoric of citizenship at every level constantly reveals the assumption of a Hindu, upper-caste, middle-class, sexually moral or invisible individual. Indeed, ironically the feminist movement itself in India came under fire in the 1990s for its upper-caste, middle class leadership that was uptight about sexual issues within Indian feminism.¹⁸⁹ Whilst sexuality and queerness have long since been taken up by the movement, the most recent controversy where prominent male academic names were leaked by a US-based *Dalit* woman Raya Sarkar and the caste-lines that it exposed amongst Indian feminists,¹⁹⁰ just goes to show that caste difference in India is historically significant and central to the sexual body.

Similarly the shift from the Ottoman Empire to the modern Turkish republic not only entailed a fundamental altering of family structures that completely transformed the domestic space (and therefore spaces of intimacy),¹⁹¹ but secularization working through the bodies of *Sunni* Muslim, ‘Turkish’ women, effaced “differences by demarcating the boundaries of the ‘true’ community and excluding the “‘Other within’.”¹⁹² In modern Turkey, perhaps even more than in India, state modernization and secularization was heavily based on modern science and limited visions of European enlightenment that demanded homogeneity in strict contrast to the

¹⁸⁸ Sunder Rajan, *The Scandal of the State*.

¹⁸⁹ Nivedita Menon, “Sexuality, Caste, Governmentality: Contests over ‘gender’ in India,” *Feminist Review* 91, no. 1 (2009): 98.

¹⁹⁰ Supurna Banerjee and Nandini Ghosh, “Introduction. Debating Intersectionalities: Challenges for a Methodological Framework,” *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, no. 19 (2018): 1-2.

¹⁹¹ Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 194-196.

¹⁹² Deniz Kandiyoti, *Women, Islam, and the State (Women in the Political Economy)* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 8.

multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic histories of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹³ We have seen this in the context of schooling and its role in shaping the national body in the previous chapter. In addition to the intense secularization of education, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's drastic and often violent suppression of ethnic Kurdish and Armenian differences, dress code changes, and many, many more upheavals following the establishment of the republic in 1923, fundamentally transformed peoples and their sense of communal belonging. While European-style modernization reforms were in response to increasing European hegemony and financial capitulations on the Ottoman Empire, they also became the aspirational framework for the emergent Turkish republic. The framework within which much academic and political discourse occurs in modern Turkey is one in which Turkey is forever in the waiting room of modernity¹⁹⁴ that secularists or *Kemalists* are desperate to move beyond and join the ranks of the 'developed' (read: 'Western') world and conservatives (read: Islamists) such as the ruling political party, want to abandon in favor of a more pious and Islamic form of governance. Once again, we see this dilemma through the national body in the context of the Islamic schools in the previous chapter. Concurrent with these historically established polarizing debates that saturate people's views in Turkey and their interpellation within state apparatuses deliberately divorced from multiethnic and messy pasts, has been the "sexual erasures"¹⁹⁵ of certain bodies and behaviors. Little wonder then that even rich feminist and sexuality scholarship critical of Turkish republican

¹⁹³ Reşat Kasaba, "Kemalist Certainties and Modern Ambiguities," in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 15-36.

¹⁹⁴ Meltem Ahiska, "Occidentalism: The Historical Fantasy of the Modern," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2 (2003): 351-379.

¹⁹⁵ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 49.

modernity that relegated women and sexual violence to the private sphere of home¹⁹⁶ and more recent emphasis on nationalist erasure of a vibrant multiethnic feminist scholarship,¹⁹⁷ has only recently started to look at other sexual and bodily histories of the land in earnest.¹⁹⁸

One must not forget that the ‘othering’ of bodies to “outlier” positions of citizenry, such as lower caste in India or Kurdish in Turkey that require institutions like schooling to work up to becoming the normative national body (again, see chapter 1), or worst still to “abject” subject positions such as prostitutes, pervers or diseased¹⁹⁹ that are not even considered livable, was not just a discursive process but a very scientific, biological one. Ethnic cleansing of populations and skull measurements in anthropological surveys aimed at establishing supremacy of the Turkish race in early republican Turkey²⁰⁰ or eugenic population control ideas proliferating in colonial India²⁰¹ reveal established racial biological imperatives in the making of the Indian and Turkish national, sexual body.

Our bodies, our entire corporeal schema through which we access the world and feel pain, desire, and love is based on such intertwined complicated and violent histories of colonialism, global development, and nationalism. These histories, by denying different bodies,

¹⁹⁶ As one example see: Yeşim Arat, *Rethinking Islam and Liberal Democracy: Islamist Women in Turkish Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

¹⁹⁷ One example is: Lerna Ekmekçioğlu and Melissa Bilal, *Bir Adalet Feryadı: Osmanlı'dan Türkiye'ye Beş Ermeni Feminist Yazar, 1862-1933* [A Cry for Justice: From the Ottomans to Turkey Five Armenian Feminist Writers, 1862-1933] (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2006).

¹⁹⁸ For example see: Serkan Delice, “The Janissaries and their Bedfellows: Masculinity and Male Friendship in eighteenth-Century ottoman Istanbul,” in *Gender and Sexuality in Muslim Cultures*, ed. Gül Özyegin (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2015), 115-136.

¹⁹⁹ J. Devika, “Bodies Gone Awry: The Abjection of Sexuality in Development Discourse in Contemporary Kerala,” *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 16, no. 1 (2009): 30-36.

²⁰⁰ Nazan Maksudyan, “The Turkish Review of Anthropology and the Racist Face of Turkish Nationalism,” *Cultural Dynamics* 17, no. 3 (2005): 291-322.

²⁰¹ Sanjay Srivastava, *Passionate Modernity: Sexuality, Class, and Consumption in India* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2007), 39-78.

sexual bodies, and delineating ‘acceptable’ sexual practices within the confines of upper-caste, middle class, bourgeois, hetero-reproductive matrimony, set up privileged postcolonial national subjects for citizenry. Globally institutionalized projects of development exceedingly favored these subjects in speaking the language of rights and articulating modern sexual identities. The national sexual biological body embodies these structural conditions of colonial and national development. Any knowledge of this body therefore, its articulation, as one finds in CSE lessons, that is reflected in the language of “sexual anatomy”, “physiology”, and “sexual identity”,²⁰² is the embodiment of histories of colonial and global development premised on the idea of a rights bearing, individual subject, and violent, racial histories of nation formation. I am not arguing against teaching of anatomies and articulations of gender and sexual identities in CSE lessons, for these are the histories that have constituted our schemas, and this is the way we understand our desires and ourselves. However, what about the excesses that don’t sit complacently with our knowledge of the sexual and body that also testify to histories of becoming, of other ways of being that have been and what has become? It is to such excess desires, inexplicable erotic energies, and moments of confounding ruptures that I now turn to in the next two sections.

Scientific Bodies and Unscientific Desires: Bora’s Story

The day Tayfun from FPV delivered the CSE lesson to this particular 5th grade section normally known as a disruptive class, I was surprised at how most students were listening and engaging with the lesson. Apart from the children, it was just Tayfun, myself, and the friendly

²⁰² “Comprehensive Sexuality Education”, TARSHI, <http://www.tarshi.net/index.asp?pid=321> (accessed July 25, 2019).

grade 5 counselor Alara in the classroom. A typical CSE lesson flow for grade 5 offered by FPV involved the trainer introducing themselves and asking students what they remembered from grade 4, followed by laying of ground rules such as raising hands for questions and not using bad language. Distinctions between sex and gender were then elicited from students by asking leading questions such as, “what are the distinguishing external features between men and women?” The trainer then proceeded to break socially conditioned gendered notions about toys, clothes and so on, and moved back to physical, bodily differences such as waist to hip ratio between the two sexes. After this discussion, the focus shifted to internal organs, where the trainer again emphasized the similarity of all organs between the sexes, except the reproductive ones. The rest of the lesson focused on scientific terminology and working of different parts of male and female reproductive organs (aided by large diagrams on the classroom board). During this explanation, myths about periods, wet dreams, and other biological phenomena that are used socially and culturally to shame adolescents were also debunked and students were discouraged from using *argo* or slang language for private parts.

Bora, one of the brightest and most articulate kids in class, was sitting at the back, uninterested, doodling in his notebook, totally oblivious to and unperturbed by the incessant questioning of Tayfun by his classmates, flippant remarks, and giggling every time Tayfun uttered words like “penis” or “vagina.” Towards the end of class, one of his classmates who had clearly been getting progressively bothered by the lesson, especially by the explanation of the female anatomy, was asked by Alara to go to the restroom to wash his face. It was only then and in response to the rest of the class asking, “where is he going?” Bora suddenly looked up and yelled out, “He is leaving the class because he is *disgusted* [emphasis original]!”

I was a bit taken aback by Bora's behavior. Considering Tayfun's interactive teaching style that had captured the curiosity of even some of the most unengaged students in class, Bora's response was surprising. As his English teacher, I had always been struck by Bora's exceptional gift for languages and learning. We used to spend many a break time together in the classroom since Bora refused to go out during break when most children rush out, choosing instead to stay in and chat with me or sketch his brilliant drawings or engage in games with some other boys in the class. Never one to be shy of discussing "relationship" issues (he once told me about a mysterious girl he found cute), showing his affection (he was always constantly hugging a particular boy in class called Semih), and expressing physical aches and discomforts (he once raised his shirt in the middle of a lesson to show me red rashes on his torso that had been bothering him!), Bora's lack of interest in listening about the body followed by the final angry eruption was striking.

Over the nine months I was at Alliance for my research, I had had a chance to learn more about Bora and his background. The only child of affluent parents, Bora, slightly built and short for his age, had told them in grade 4 that he was a girl but had apparently been 'convinced' by a counselor outside of school that he wasn't one. However, throughout his 5th grade year, I had periodically noticed how he would ask me gender-related questions in English lessons, usually pertaining to story characters we had been discussing, or sometimes in the many breaks we chatted, he engaged me with deeper questions about life, love, and relationships. Whatever was happening in his family life with his parents over the question of his gender identity was compounded by issues he was having in a particularly difficult class that year, where the homeroom teacher was herself going through personal issues and couldn't support her students.

Bora's parents decided to pull him out of Alliance at the end of the year. When I went back for my follow up research trip the following year and met most of my students, now in grade 6, I was struck by the conspicuous absence of Bora. I remember feeling a sudden stab of sadness in realizing how this school that I had grown to love myself had failed to nurture an incredibly wonderful albeit 'differently' oriented child.

In narrating this story, I don't wish to put the onus of student nurture and empowerment entirely on two 40-minute CSE lessons a year that Alliance offered. Instead by lingering on Bora's anger and eruption for a little longer I want us to move our attention away from the CSE lesson itself and its objects (children), to individual subjective experiences such as those of Bora, whose being and desires clash with the conception of the biological body on which CSE is based. Whilst it remains important to understand the biological body, there also emerge problems with this view of the sexual, scientific body.

One limitation is the closing of all other understandings of the body and "domain[s] of sexuality"²⁰³ that may not be the body as we know it. One day while talking to Yasmin, the coordinator of FPV's CSE program, I remember her telling me that homosexuality [*eşcinsellik*] was the most difficult thing to make teachers accept. She said, "I usually tell them look, a hundred years ago women didn't have the right to vote but now we accept that, right? Then why shouldn't homosexual [*eşcinsel*] people have their rights?" Upon being asked by her what I would do, I told her that I would clarify to teachers that a hundred years ago same-sex desires also existed. However, newer forms of governmentality and global capitalism have since changed topographies of sexual practice and notions of the body and have thus led to newer

²⁰³ Srivastava, *Passionate Modernity*, 349.

articulations of sexual desire (gay, lesbian, bi- etc.). Accepting these modern day articulations, I added, is important since it provides non-normative people in our world today with social dignity and legal-medical services. She simply stared at me with wide-eyed confusion. As far as Yasmin was concerned, as most good hearted, liberal folks doing sexuality education work in both countries, someone had just interrupted her neat linear narrative of scientific progression- the present has to fix what the archaic ignorant past didn't- give rights to bodies 'naturally' homosexual.

“Naïve scientism”²⁰⁴ or our belief in the linear narrative of scientific modernity where we see the scientific present as a naturally better version of the past and consequently the bio-medical body as the ‘natural’ seat and access point of sexuality and desires (labeled as such) automatically forecloses all other visions of bodies and desires. For instance, quite often teachers and counselors looked upon Bora’s intensely emotional and physically playful relationship with two other boys in class suspiciously as some indicator of his blossoming sexuality. Whether the teachers were projecting their knowledge of Bora’s gender identity and by extension *assumption* of (homo)sexuality onto his playful acts, or just equating pleasurable play between boys as a definite sign of Bora’s future sexuality, both indicate our assumption of the biological body as the domain of sexuality and sexuality itself consisting of a rather limited set of physical acts. This is also illustrated by another conversation I had, this time with the Alliance counseling team coordinator Meltem, one of the key people involved in introducing FPV’s CSE lessons at the school. Meltem informed me that in Alliance preschool parent protests had once got a gay male teacher fired. Apparently, his “body language” and gestures [*hareketler*] such as dancing in the

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 347.

rain, which the children loved, triggered a deep rage and concern in their parents since some of them didn't want "their sons to turn into him."

However, the body with organs or the biological body has not always been the sole domain of sexuality. Courtesans in Venice, for instance, or the beloved beardless youth [*emred*] and their besotted male lovers in Ottoman Istanbul were considered a major "turn on" to use modern parlance, if they had mastered the art of seducing through words, socializing, flirting, and of course, writing beautifully lyrical *Gazel* poetry.²⁰⁵ Neither have certain acts, such as young boys playing with each other as in Bora's story, necessarily always been a signifier of one's sexual identity.²⁰⁶ In the extremely homosocial public spaces of Ottoman Istanbul, it was very common for 'men' to have sexual, spiritual, intellectual or emotional connections with men, those connections themselves being inseparable from one another, while getting married and having children. As a matter of fact, Ottoman *Divan* poetry rarely specifies the gender of the 'beloved'. There is also evidence that women's bathhouses [*hammam*] were highly erotic spots where 'sexual' acts were common but so were rituals, such as older women greeting newly-wed brides [*gelin*] in complete nudity.²⁰⁷

Therefore, there have existed other ways of understanding bodily practices outside of the 'sexual', and sexual practices outside of biological bodies and personal sexual identities. In

²⁰⁵ Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai, *Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

²⁰⁶ This in fact was the core problem in teachers' treatment of Bora and his own struggles in trying to fit into a gender binary- as if that wasn't enough- his exploration of gender was immediately conflated with a sexual identity (in this case homosexuality), demonstrating the severe drawbacks of our reading of the body.

²⁰⁷ Srinivas Aravamudan, "Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in the Hammam: Masquerade, Womanliness, and Levantinization," *ELH* 62, no. 1 (1995): 78-86.

detailing the time when “ ‘sexuality’ floated free” in pre-colonial monastic traditions in the Indian subcontinent, Indrani Chatterjee illustrates “the diverse ways in which our selves have been shrunk to fit puny bodies, and how a discourse of ‘sexuality’ has disciplined scholars and activists alike” as we read back modern categories of gender and sexuality into historical practices, and indeed we have lost the ability to “comprehend the multiple cadences of speech, song, dance, and silence.”²⁰⁸ Such losses and disciplining of modern articulations of sexuality are evident in CSE lessons at Alliance, which is overwhelmingly run by urban civil society activists such as Yasmin who I mention above.

I evoke histories of desires and bodies not to arouse a sense of nostalgia for the pre-colonial, pre-modern past that one can simply go back to. Indeed these are also histories of violence and exploitation.²⁰⁹ However, indigenous and *Dalit* feminist standpoint scholarship has repeatedly revealed through the focus on lived realities of the marginalized that history is not an obsolete chunk of time but embodied and living matter that is experienced through people’s lived oppressions and strongly informs articulations such as caste and gender.²¹⁰ The uniqueness of these standpoint theorists has been precisely to upturn the linear teleological narratives of modern, colonial development that have trained us to see history as a time left in the past and our bodies separated from that time, striving towards better futures. As Moreton-Robinson reminds us in developing an indigenous Australian standpoint that even white western feminist standpoint perspectives assume a split of body and earth, and hence I add the body from historical time and

²⁰⁸ Indrani Chatterjee, “When ‘Sexuality’ Floated Free of Histories in South Asia,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71, no. 4 (2012): 956-957.

²⁰⁹ Walters and Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds*, 251-269; Delice, *The Janissaries and their Bedfellows*.

²¹⁰ Sharmila Rege, “A Dalit Feminist Standpoint,” in *Gender and Caste*, ed. Anupama Rao (Zed Books: London, New York, 2005), 98.

space, making “gender/sex the epistemological a priori” within which women or human oppression is discussed.²¹¹

I evoke history therefore precisely to show how meanings of bodily practices, sexual preferences, and ideas on love have shifted with time and are not ahistorical “a priori”s waiting to be populated by “puny” bodies based on their sexual orientations. In a time before European colonial modernity, sex, love and poetry in Ottoman Istanbul were central to one’s economic livelihood and social aspirations and heavily dependent on one’s social class and location in a way that our modern mindsets have rendered unimaginable. Securing political favors through love poetry, or indeed using the body in its “multiple cadences” such as dancing in the rain as a male teacher, without being labeled ‘gay’ is unimaginable to us now. How have we come to this point in our articulation of the body and sexual desire? How do Bora’s teachers fail to consider his potential *trans*-ness and instead view his desires as a marker only of his ‘sexual’ identity; in other words, view his desires as ‘sexual’ and sexual identity emerging from the biological body?

The answer to these questions necessitates tracing genealogies of sex and desire in Turkey. This includes engagement with histories of transition from Empire to Republic, rural to urban migration and ensuing change in family structures, legal transformations in the 2000s for Turkey’s EU bid that made categories like child sexual abuse, domestic violence, gender equality “discursively coherent”²¹² and commonplace in the larger society, and making connections with ongoing authoritarian politics that promotes singular visions of reproductive heteronormativity and development. One cannot understand the remarkability of gestures that get labeled ‘sexual’

²¹¹ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, “Towards an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 28, no. 78 (2013): 335.

²¹² khanna, *Sexualness*, 314.

without understanding histories that have set up ideas of masculinity, romantic love and nuclear families, all of which were necessitated during the establishment of modern Turkey. These histories continue to live through the body and our corporeal schemas and orientations bear traces of histories, even as newer articulations of social belonging and desire and newer subjectivities emerge. As a study of lower class rent boys [*Varoş*] that migrate to Istanbul reveals, materiality of living conditions and histories of homosociality that interact with ‘Western’ gay culture in the city leads to displays of multiple masculinities, which enables them to both solicit sex from men and protect their “ ‘natural’ heterosexuality.”²¹³

Therefore a dynamic view of the body as a historical corporeal schema, a phenomenological body that is making meaning of its world through newer articulations of historically contingent realities, completely vanishes when one focuses solely on the management of biological bodies that bear gender and sexual identities. Desire, the core of the phenomenological body that is one with the mind, tactile and emotional together,²¹⁴ constantly erupts as unruly passions and erotic energies that remind us of our histories and also humble us into accepting that even the most dynamic view of the phenomenological body as corporeal schema cannot explain everything. This fundamentally challenges the complacency of the modern scientific view of biological bodies that is foundational to the project of modern nation states. In light of these arguments, we can perhaps then read Bora’s angry eruption as an erotic eruption, the eruption of desire that challenges even the very progressive CSE lesson given by FPV which aims to label desire. While giving students like Bora solid, scientific knowledge of

²¹³ Cenk Özbay, “Nocturnal Queers: Rent Boys’ Masculinity in Istanbul,” *Sexualities* 13, no. 5 (2010): 657.

²¹⁴ Sedgwick and Frank, *Touching Feeling*, 17.

biological bodies and hormonal changes and a host of ‘natural’ gender and sexual identities to pick from, perhaps this CSE is not giving him enough. It is not providing him the histories of different ways of knowing the body that have existed in Turkey and what has necessitated the present articulation of the sexual body. It is not giving him the time to work through his own desires in light of this knowledge and the process of growing up and understanding his own lifeworlds (school, family) and how those are also historically evolving and changing. Bora’s eruption reveals history as embodied and body as living history, a corporeal schema that is constantly making meaning and knowledge, and most importantly the desire or erotic energies that disrupt scientific, modern epistemological arrogance, while revealing the constantly changing nature of our world and articulations of belonging.

I turn now to another such erotic moment of eruption where desire reveals the problematics of caste difference in India through CSA prevention work.

Corporeal Schemas and Dirty Desires: Raghu’s Story

SNCSA in Hyderabad was started in the mid-2010s by Raghu as a part of his own CSA healing journey. Even though by the time I started volunteering for SNCSA there were quite a few volunteers, the core SNCSA team remained Raghu and some of his old time friends who were also busy running non-profits across the metropolis. Although SNCSA’s emphasis was always to reach out to maximum number of schools in the Hyderabad-Secunderabad metropolitan area, irrespective of socioeconomic and religious demographics, it wasn’t uncommon for SNCSA to sometimes liaison with individuals or organizations working with

target population groups such as poor, *Dalit* or Muslim children. SNCSA regularly recommends its volunteers to attend sexuality education classes for professional development. As volunteers we were constantly urged to reckon with our own bodies and notions of sexuality as a part of our roles as trainers. Due to my extensive work experience as a school teacher, my role at SNCSA was usually confined to classroom sessions with children, and, in a rather limited way, with parent and teacher training. In sessions with children, the focus was heavily on ‘touch’, where students, depending on grade level, were taught the differences between “safe” and “unsafe” touch that were also sensitive to cultural contexts.

Raghu hails from a Tamil Brahmin family in Bengaluru, India. In the Hindu caste hierarchy, Brahmins are the highest caste. Charming and passionate about tackling CSA, Raghu and I hit it off immediately and apart from being co-workers also became good friends. It became evident to me very early on in our friendship that Raghu carried his Brahmin identity with pride. When out for lunch after a volunteering session, he would ask for “pure vegetarian” food and also joke about eating a lot because he was Brahmin. Under the current political climate in India where upper-caste, Hindu, Brahmin sentiment is widely pitted against Muslims and *Dalits*, it wasn’t surprising either to hear an affluent Brahmin like Raghu being critical of the reservation policy or affirmative action in India which had ‘forced’ him to send his children to the U.S. for higher education. When one considers the fact that highest caste Indians are already set up through caste privilege and access to better education to make it to the United States for higher professional degrees and subsequently procure white-collar, IT jobs, and that they account for over 70% of Indians in America,²¹⁵ the language of ‘force’ loses credibility. It illuminates

²¹⁵ Devesh Kapur, *Diaspora, Development, and Democracy: The Domestic Impact of International Migration from India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 82; Sanjoy

instead the fact that some privileged bodies can choose to leave for higher education.

Sara Ahmed reminds us of the oneness of space and body, how “...bodily orientation...a way in which bodies get directed by their actions over time”²¹⁶ not only naturalizes habits and behaviors that invisibilize certain privileges, but also that action depends on space and space is also produced through actions.²¹⁷ In India, spaces of education and opportunity have been set up by upper-caste elites pre and post-independence such that it has been a struggle not only to enter those spaces for *Dalit* and Other Backward Caste (OBC) students (quite contrary to the fear of upper-caste people like Raghu) but also a struggle to survive on a daily basis once they actually do get in.²¹⁸ The fact that Raghu as a Brahmin even has the space to choose (albeit out of ‘forced’ choice) to send his children to the United States is because his Brahmin privilege has set it up for him as a possibility. It is an option borne out of an irrational fear of the lower caste ‘other’ interrupting his Brahmin bodily orientations and spaces, disorienting him but not bringing him to question the immense privileges he holds in his orientations.

One early summer morning in March, I was scheduled to provide a CSA prevention session for children at a school at the outskirts of Secunderabad. Raghu had very kindly offered to pick me up and drive me there even though he wasn’t conducting the training himself. Raghu would very often offer to drive me to a session so we could “catch up.” That particular morning,

Chakravorty, Devesh Kapur and Nirvikar Singh, *The Other One Percent: Indians in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

²¹⁶ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 60.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 52.

²¹⁸ N.V. Varghese, Nidhi S. Sabharwal and C.M. Malish, *India Higher Education Report 2016: Equity* (New Delhi, India; Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2018); “My Birth is My Fatal Accident: Rohith Vermula’s Searing Letter is an Indictment of Social Prejudices,” *The Wire India* online, republished January 17, 2019, <https://thewire.in/caste/rohith-vemula-letter-a-powerful-indictment-of-social-prejudices>.

after picking me up from the center of Secunderabad and exchanging pleasantries, I could feel that Raghu really wanted to talk to me about something. It turned out that he wanted to discuss sexuality and its role in marriage and monogamy. He started by alluding to (male) friends who had had affairs, which in some cases had predictably led to divorce but much to his surprise, in some cases, the wives had been forgiving and the marriages had survived. One particular “friend” he really wanted to talk about was a successful, handsome, upper-caste, married, intelligent journalist, who Raghu had met at some event and had subsequently ended up becoming good friends with. This person had also been abused as a child by the family driver, and now (and as he said this, Raghu suddenly switched gears both in the car and in the pitch of his voice bringing it as low as a mere whisper so that I had to lean in to hear what he was saying), “he sleeps with anything that moves. Any one...it doesn’t matter...man, woman...you know...*any one* [emphasis original]...and I know I shouldn’t be saying this...how to say this...but he really wants to do it with...you know...all these servant, driver...working class people...because of his abuse by the driver.” On another occasion Raghu had expressed to me his fear of being seen with Malini, one of the most visible and prominent trans activists in the city, because he had a “reputation to maintain”. After all, what would people think if they saw him with a trans woman? And yet, he would repeatedly comment on her grace, beauty and intellect, calling her “awesome” and applauding her public speaking skills.

What does this erotic eruption of Raghu’s desire- the desire to talk about sex, sexuality and attraction in spite of being simultaneously repulsed by lower caste, non-conforming bodies, as a ‘respectable’, successful, upper-caste Brahmin man mean? How does his desiring body

struggle to stay “in line”²¹⁹ with these articulations of his identity²²⁰ within the nexus of social formation in India at this particular historical moment? In other words, in the current Hindu populist political climate where being a middle class, upper-caste Hindu male is so intimately bound up with morality, respectability, and biologically essentialist imaginations of ‘natural’ superiority to Muslims and *Dalits*, can Raghu’s desires and fascinations be seen as rupturing “the continuation of an old line”²²¹ or historical systems of caste, colonialism, miscegenation, nationalism and gender along which bodies are typically oriented and expected to stay so?

Like Bora’s story, Raghu’s case also reinforces the importance of the thinking, feeling body as a corporeal schema shaped by histories and articulations of social belonging such as caste, class, religion and gender in the center of living and making sense of its world. But it also brings our attention to two additional factors. One is the forgetting of history and subsequent ‘naturalization’ of racial difference articulated as caste in India and the invisibilization of caste privilege. In one of my earlier interviews with school teachers in the twin cities, one particular Brahmin male Social Studies teacher in St. Thomas, a Christian mission school in Secunderabad which we encounter in the following chapter in greater detail, remarked on the ‘natural’ superiority of Brahmins. He linked Brahmin intellect to better genes and blood, and quite literally equated blackness in the United States with *Dalit*-ness in India and both with backwardness. As shocked as I was after this interview ordeal that had lasted over an hour, I realized over the period of the next few months that such feelings amongst people were not an exception but rather the rule. While this teacher had obviously not minced his words and had

²¹⁹ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 15.

²²⁰ Grossberg, “On postmodernism and articulation”, 141-143.

²²¹ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomeology*, 102.

been quite upfront and even proud of his racism (!), several people I spoke to both in and out of schools hinted in more subtle ways on the ‘natural’ order of superiority that was represented in the caste system. Born and raised in this system and living in the current political climate that even further naturalizes it and indeed actively promotes a Brahminical version of Hinduism based on social distinctions, sexual morality, and control of women, people don’t question the history of caste. The public intellectuals and journalists who do of course have their texts and speeches and sometimes even their lives taken²²² for being anti-nationalist and anti-Hindu, since belonging to the Indian nation is now increasingly seen as being a Hindu that uncritically and ahistorically subscribes to caste and the limited visions that caste-driven, Brahminical Hinduism entails.

However, strong anti-caste movements in the country both in the past and currently have repeatedly de-naturalized caste and shown how the caste system and what we now understand as mainstream Hinduism is the result of violent historical processes that “wrecked and muted”²²³ specific bodies and egalitarian religious practices that had dared to challenge caste based distinctions in the Hindu Vedic scriptures.²²⁴ As a matter of fact, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a lawyer and leading *Dalit* figure in anti-caste struggles during Indian independence, in no uncertain terms connected the historical processes that have made caste an embodiment of human condition in

²²² Anna Jacob, “Proposed Ban on Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd’s Books in DU Raises Questions about the Future of Critical Thought,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 53 no. 47 (December, 2018); Johnson T.A., “Explained Dhabolkar-Lankesh murders—What the investigations into violent right-wing activism show,” *The Indian Express*, May 26, 2019, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-dabholkar-lankesh-murders-investigations-right-wing-activism-cbi-sit-pansare-kalburgi-5749338/>.

²²³ Judith Butler, “*Violence, Non-Violence: Sartre on Fanon*,” Graduate faculty philosophy journal, 15.

²²⁴ Braj Ranjan Mani, *Debrahmanising History: Dominance and Resistance in Indian Society* rev. ed. (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2015), 59-188.

India- a point emphasized to this day by *Dalit* feminist scholars as well- the *Dalit* as dirty, untouchable, lowly, sexually available- embodiments that seem natural and are sustained by historically sanctioned practices such as prohibition of inter-caste marriages.²²⁵ In fact, the panics associated with caste mixing and religious (Hindu-Muslim) mixing that are ubiquitous in media and public discourses in the country, really reflect the strong biological basis of viewing bodies where differences are mapped on to the body and hence natural and cannot be mixed to sustain the natural order of things. What vanishes is the embodiment of historical processes of violence that continue everyday, both to keep bodies “in line” within the imagined Hindu, caste-based India and punish those who fall “out of line.” Therefore, Raghu’s desires in troubling the ahistoricized ‘natural’ line of caste cause him anxiety since his privilege as a Brahmin man has been invisibilized or collapsed into this view of the body that make him see his Brahmin-ness, his masculinity, his wealth as innately superior to others.

Secondly, the failure to see the body as a historical racial corporeal schema has huge implications for the copious amounts of prevention work being done against CSA in ‘developing’ countries like India and Turkey. During my own SNCSA work in Hyderabad with Raghu and others, a city with a significant Muslim population,²²⁶ there were several concerns around Muslim bodies. The lower socioeconomic status of Muslim children in the old city center where large Muslim populations have been historically concentrated, along with their religious difference mattered. “Muslim girls” I often heard were more repressed and “Muslim boys” were

²²⁵ B. R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste with a Reply to Mahatma Gandhi; and Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis, and Development* (Jullundur City: Bheem Patrika Publications, 1968); Rao, *Gender and Caste*.

²²⁶ According to the 2011 Indian census, around 43% of Hyderabad’s population is Muslim, which is overwhelmingly *Sunni*: <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/religion/district/122-hyderabad.html>.

most “naturally disposed to” lasciviousness and hence most in need of CSA prevention and sexuality training. The history of systemic ghettoization of Muslim populations in the city that was ushered in after the princely state of Hyderabad was forcibly incorporated into the new Indian union in 1948²²⁷ never once figured into these discussions. On very rare occasions when I did bring up Muslim ghettoization as an urban reality that has led to a host of issues including CSA and violence against women with my colleagues, they dismissed the history as a necessity owing to the ‘natural’ tendency of Muslims to be violent and hypersexual.

A limited view of the individual body as a biological entity that can be scientifically studied and in whose existence certain histories of becoming and ways of social being are invisibilized promotes such imaginations. In the failure to see the sexual body co-constituted by articulations of class, caste, religion, race and gender through history or in other words the historical racial corporeal schema, sexuality is reduced to a “coded and decodable system”²²⁸ that can be understood, identified and studied. It becomes a feature of supposedly natural biological bodies, but as we have seen, the natural body is a creation of historical processes of racialization, nation state formation and invisibilization of privilege, and therefore those who are different become the visible ones whose difference will always be suspect. This is clearly reflected in current debates around the definition of citizenship in the recently passed Citizenship Amendment Bill in India, which, based on implicit historical legacies of ‘secular’ belonging, automatically marginalizes Muslims, whose ‘naturally’ hypersexual and violent ‘outsider’ bodies are a constant threat to the Indian nation.²²⁹

²²⁷ Taylor C Sherman, *Muslim Belonging in Secular India: Negotiating Citizenship in Postcolonial Hyderabad* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

²²⁸ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 310.

²²⁹ Rahul Sambaraju and Suryapratim Roy, “Indian citizenship has now been reduced to ‘us’

Sexuality as an articulation of the sexual body then is indispensable to crystallizing differences and a handmaiden of the privileged in maintaining the ‘natural’ superiority of certain bodily orientations and practices. Postcolonial and women of color feminists have on numerous occasions shown in the context of both India and the US, the ways hypersexuality and immorality of black, Muslim, and *Dalit* bodies is always suspect and subjected to education, legislation and social probation to maintain dominant (white, Brahmin) “heteropatriarchy”²³⁰ of the nation state. However, what remains unchallenged is the understanding of sexuality that fundamentally assumes bodies as ‘natural’ biological entities instead of embodied histories constantly making and unmaking the world and meanings around them.

This understanding of sexuality urges us not to look at sexuality as a natural, fixed articulation of desire of a ‘natural’ body but rather as a contingent articulation of body as dynamic embodied history, a historical racial corporeal schema, a phenomenological body. This consequently begs us to see sexual abuse from a different perspective. In the case of Raghu, it is not, in spite of Raghu’s insistence, only past sexual abuse that can explain his friend’s or even his own fascination with sex or struggles with sexual identities because abuse is not just abuse of the physical organism. It is misuse of bodies by bodies that are a product of certain historical legacies, social worlds, and forms of modern knowledge that make them understandable to themselves only as biological bodies. Since we have come to a point in history in our modern articulations of the body as a physical organism bearing sexual identity as a natural trait and human rights, we can only imagine and articulate abuse using the same language. But what if we

versus ‘them’,” *The Conversation*, February 27, 2020, <http://theconversation.com/indian-citizenship-has-now-been-reduced-to-us-versus-them-130422>.

²³⁰ M. Jacqui Alexander, “Erotic autonomy.”

were to invoke the body as a historical racial corporeal schema and acknowledge how it is always becoming? Would that open up more productive conversations about how definitions of sexuality and abuse can and are indeed changing, for instance through children's access to sexual information through technology? What if we were to study how difference is historically naturalized onto the body? Would we then be asking different questions – not why are Muslim communities naturally more abusive, but instead how have changing spaces of intimacy and work in the twenty-first century re-shifted the “cultural”²³¹ contours of child sexual abuse, making it easier to blame ‘Muslim’ communities and neighborhoods?

The Pedagogy of Erotic Spaces: Towards Critical Transnational Feminist Perspectives on Body, Sexuality Education and Sexualized Violence in the global ‘South’

Separated by continents and time, Bora and Raghu's erotic disruptions and orientations fundamentally challenge the neat, linear narrative of human development that relies on civilizational teleologies of national and global progress. In spite of attending one of the most progressive CSE lessons in the city in the case of Bora, and in the case of Raghu in spite of being a pioneer educator in tackling CSA, both the anecdotes reveal that learning or teaching biology, sexuality, abuse and the body neither disciplines desires nor does it capture the range of emotions, dissonances and bodily orientations that shape the human body. Conceptualizations of the biological sexual body fail to account for histories of race and nation that constitute it. Bora and Raghu's anecdotes reveal how human corporeality that is racial and historical and its affect

²³¹ Amy Piedalue, “Beyond ‘Culture’ as an Explanation for Intimate Violence: The Politics and Possibilities of Plural Resistance” *Gender, Place & Culture* 24, no. 4 (2017): 563-74.

is at the center of everyday meaning making of its world,²³² and shapes our limited understandings of biology, abuse and sexual identity, is also shaped by them, and transcends them. In other words, bodies as historical racial corporeal schemas are indistinguishable from desire, never complete, and should never be complacent in their knowledge as they will always create newer articulations of being and belonging that simply cannot be captured by static notions of biology, sexuality and development. Before schools become institutions of learning and classrooms become spaces of training the body, they have already been erotic spaces shaped by bodies as we have seen in chapter 1, that determine what a pedagogy of the body might look like and continually transform knowledges through their own historical racial schemas.

Centering of the phenomenological bodies of Bora and Raghu transnationally also de-centers national borders that are taken as a given in traditional transnational feminist analyses. The nation-state in these studies endures as the unit of analyses, the site where narratives of development and scientific modernity play out and influence individual gendered and sexual subjects. We stand at a global moment where study of nationalism, ideology and neoliberalism as discursive concepts that act upon and are resisted by people has to give way to more embodied studies of how these concepts are inscribed in and through people's bodies, such as those of Bora and Raghu, as they make sense of them and in the process challenge them. What's happening in India and Turkey at the current political moment is in fact particularly illustrative. The current authoritarian, masculine populism in both countries is not only ideologically appealing to a wide range of populations, it continues to perpetuate through ahistorical essentializing of differences and reinvention of 'culture' through the body that is constantly becoming and articulating newer

²³² Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

and more dangerous forms of belonging to the nation. The ‘pure’ body of the cow-protecting upper-caste Hindu in India or conversely the dissenting body of ‘western’ inspired academics in Turkey²³³ are some narrow categories through which belonging to a national polity are currently being articulated. Therefore, a shift to the phenomenological body as the site of processes of national belonging and scientific modernity across nations is imperative, especially the bodies of students and teachers who, in each national imaginary, are central to creating national and global citizens through CSE and CSA prevention lessons.

A critical transnational feminist perspective on sexuality also enriches the rubric of ‘sexual violence.’ Most transnational feminist studies of sexual violence continue to focus on neoliberal subjectivities and/or discourses of power and patriarchy which, while having tremendously deepened our understanding of violence, still continue to ignore sexual abuse of children and continue to privilege dominant race, class and ethnic normativities in South-South comparisons.²³⁴ By demonstrating the desiring body as a dynamic, historical racial corporeal schema, this study demonstrates how systemic violence and privilege map on to the body. This is not the biologically essentialized, pathologized body of the ‘abuser’ but a body that is constantly producing newer articulations of sexuality, sexual desire, and patriarchy, inseparable from embodied histories of differences along lines of caste, class, gender and religion. Changing urban topographies and types of CSA, such as increasing online abuse and abuse by older children of younger ones, are some examples of the complicated intertwining of newer

²³³ Elizabeth Redden, “Peace Protection Signatories Face Continuous Persecution,” *Inside Higher Ed*, July 1, 2019, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/07/01/about-700-academics-have-been-criminally-charged-turkey-their-signatures-petition>.

²³⁴ Purvi Mehta, “Dalit Feminism in Tokyo: Analogy and Affiliation in Transnational Dalit Activism,” *Feminist Review* 121, no. 1 (2019): 27-28.

articulations of desire and violence with various socioeconomic and cultural locations. Raghu's anecdote is illustrative of such intertwinings of caste privilege, racialization and unruly desires on the body that hopefully illuminate more radical possibilities of conceptualizing sexual violence and abuse of children, which go beyond the language of power and morality by releasing the sole perception of the body as a biological entity and showing how violence itself is contextual, historical and racial.

If we are invested in the feminist project of “erotic justice,”²³⁵ justice for erotic bodies not just marked by sexual identities but that are marginalized in heteronormative modern societies for their desires- the queer youth in Indian schools or the trans women on the streets of Istanbul- and marked by visible differences of caste, religion, ethnicity, and class, then we need to engage in historical readings of systemic oppressions on the body in order to radically transform the way we view bodies, sexualities and sexual violence. Otherwise the most progressive sexuality education and most well-intentioned efforts to prevent child sexual abuse will become a means to teach both the privileged middle class children in Alliance and the non-privileged *Dalit* girls in the introduction the same sexual ideologies and limited lessons of sexual health and hygiene that keep everyone “in line” and do very little to challenge history that we constantly make and unmake through our bodies.

²³⁵ Pushpesh Kumar, “Introduction to the Special Theme: Erotic Marginality and Erotic Justice,” *Explorations e-Journal of the Indian Sociological Society* 2 (1) (April, 2018): 44-59.

CHAPTER THREE: Children's Bodies and Sensual Disruptions of Modern Schooling

Abdullah was in deep trouble. The word going around the corridors of Istanbul's Alliance Middle School was that he had forced Hakan to reveal his penis behind the library shelves during lunch break. As Abdullah's class teachers, we were soon summoned to the office of the 5th grade school counselor Alara. Confirming the rumors, she emphasized to us again the urgency of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), so that children can learn to express their feelings in a "healthy" manner. A few months later, a bit farther afield in suburban Hyderabad, I was sitting in a café with fellow volunteers from SNCSA who were discussing the horrors of child sexual abuse (CSA), especially the increasing news reports of abuse of minors by minors in schools, which included but were not limited to touching, groping, and inserting objects into each other.²³⁶ In both instances, the discussion of children's sexual behaviors by adult educators displayed some strikingly similar convictions. One was the resolute belief in either the de-sexual nature of children or it's opposite, that childhood sexuality was unruly, inappropriate and disruptive. Another was the utter conviction in systems of education like schooling to train children to display proper sexual behaviors. Third, that proper sexual behavior is, like other soft skills and school subjects, teachable and a necessary prerequisite to the production of normative, respectable, modern citizens.

The two examples above are by no means unique and offer a small glimpse into everyday realities of school life. In countries like India and Turkey, rapid urban development, economic

²³⁶ For one of many examples, see: "How to parent in a hyper-sexual world," *The Times Of India*, December 10, 2017, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/sunday-times/how-to-parent-in-a-hyper-sexual-world/articleshow/62001302.cms>.

growth, and demand for corresponding social changes have made schools increasingly prominent in political, developmental and public discourse. ‘Skill’ development, gender sensitivity, and sexuality training are the new buzzwords and kinds of knowledge that schools are expected to provide to children to make them well-rounded, “sexual” citizens.²³⁷ However, as the examples above suggest, children’s bodies and desires are inherently unruly and already operating in their own ways within school spaces- in exploring, bullying, loving, and sometimes violating. As such, children’s bodies and desires, the ways they understand and express these, and the ways they emotionally feel and respond through their bodies often stand in opposition to sanitized school spaces and teachings of modern, professional, moral, and ‘proper’ behavior.

In the previous chapter, I talked about how phenomenological bodies of students and teachers disrupt linear narratives of biological development, sexuality as an identity connected solely to biology, and sexual abuse conceptualizations. I showed how these were consequences of our failure to account for the body as a historical racial corporeal schema informed by privileges like caste and ethnicity, which get naturalized (and consequently invisibilized) over time. I used erotic eruptions each of a student in Istanbul and educator in Hyderabad as a methodological tool to rebut grand universalizing narratives found in transnational feminist and development studies that either ignore or generalize child development and schooling as a means to self and national improvement. In this chapter, I delve deeper into phenomenological perspectives on the body and draw on childhood and education studies scholarship to inform feminist understandings of culture, violence and education. I demonstrate how the oft-ignored body of the ‘child’ is an essential site through which notions of nation and belonging are made

²³⁷ David T. Evans, *Sexual Citizenship: The Material Construction of Sexualities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

and re-made, especially in our current populist political moment, and how specifically the investment in the a- or ‘hyper’-sexualness of children is a reflection of our own limited understandings as adults of the role of education, sexuality and violence. By deepening our engagement with memory, nostalgia, and tactility of the phenomenological bodies of students, I show how children are actively challenging adult investment in schooling and ‘proper’ pedagogy of sexuality and the body.

While institutional studies of state building practices in transnational feminist scholarship²³⁸ have immensely improved our understanding of how institutions sustain and promote nationalism and gendered and sexual subjectivities, they still fail to ask how the people occupying these spaces experience social, economic and legal changes through their desiring bodies and shape them in return. This chapter gives way to more embodied analyses of human feelings and desires that actively shape spaces of school and nation. It demonstrates how we stand at a global moment where the body of the child- in this case the child in India and Turkey- is the active transnational site for propagating teleological global capitalist narratives of progress. Whilst it is the repository of nationalist schooling and middle-class aspirations of modernity, it also disrupts, troubles and teases them with its palpable desires. By juxtaposing the unruliness of children’s desires, curiosities and sensualities of their worlds with educators’ and parents’ investments in creating ‘modern’, middle class, and well-rounded citizens, this chapter reveals

²³⁸ Here I am not referring to a specific work or author but rather to the rich canon of transnational feminist work on state building practices, national ideologies and forms of governance. An excellent example of recent work on the legal construction of “girlhood” in India is: Ashwini Tambe, *Defining Girlhood in India: A Transnational History of Sexual Maturity Laws* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019). Another good example of how education or schooling becomes the site of “New Turkey”’s citizenship production, read: Deniz Kandiyoti and Zühre Emanet, “Education as Battleground: The Capture of Minds in Turkey,” *Globalizations* 14, no. 6 (2017): 869–76.

the contradictions of modern schooling that in its attempt to create homogenous global-national citizen bodies threatens adult corporealities and articulations of difference in caste, class, ethnicity, gender and religion. It also reveals how the objective ‘scientific’ body that we saw in chapter 2 is assumed and maintained through adult imaginings and practices of schooling and national imaginaries that are based on the fundamental separation of bodies and spaces which children’s desires actively challenge. As the march of national ‘progress’ and middle-class aspirations of life and consumption in global capitalist networks continues unfettered through institutions like schools, children continue to be robbed off their sensualities and punished for discovering themselves and their bodies. This in turn perpetuates teleological fantasies of progress and biological development divorced from space, memory and time that continue to deny corporeality and sensuality in the center of our lives and mean-making of our lifeworlds.

An embodied analysis of schooling that takes the phenomenological body seriously and goes beyond national borders, has been described by me in the introduction as a critical transnational feminist analysis. A critical transnational feminist analysis of the desiring child’s body lends credibility to the feminist endeavor of understanding the current global crisis of capitalism and rise of the right²³⁹ and using education as a tool to transgress.²⁴⁰ While feminist inspired scholarship on schooling in the global ‘South’ has addressed school culture, infrastructure and gendered curricula as I have also indicated in the *Introduction*, the more recent engagement with childhoods, lifeworlds and quotidian practices in school communities,²⁴¹ has

²³⁹ Agnieszka Graff, Ratna Kapur and Suzanna Danuta Walters, “Introduction: Gender and the Rise of the Global Right,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 44, no. 3 (2019): 541-60.

²⁴⁰ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

²⁴¹ Example: T. S. Saraswati, Shailaja Menon and Ankur Madan, *Childhoods in India: Traditions,*

emerged mainly in childhood and education studies scholarship. Ironically, a lot of this scholarship draws directly from postcolonial and feminist work that has effectively challenged colonial legacies and the role of racist scientific modernization in the creation of gendered and sexual subjectivities. Yet somehow the body of the ‘average third world’ school going child, unlike the body of the “average third world woman”²⁴² or the “poor” “(girl) child”²⁴³ has failed to generate sustained interest as a site where civilizational teleologies of modernity and violence play out.

In the following pages, I first briefly present the contemporary imaginaries of child, childhood and schools that continue to propagate ideologies of colonial progress and scientific modernity. As we saw in the *Introduction* and chapter 2, these ideologies work through violence against the body of the racial ‘other’. The ‘other’'s difference to the ‘norm’ is naturalized onto the biological body and modern institutions such as schooling set up objective individual bodies separate to the spaces they occupy, thereby invisibilizing the erotic and re-orienting and blinding corporeality to its own desires. This march of ‘progress’, civilization and violence continues in the twenty-first century through articulations of (middle) class belonging and aspirations where children metaphorically and quite literally become educational ‘investments’ in the present towards a better and imagined future. Based on linear notions of time as progress and children as ‘becoming’ adults, school educators, policymakers and parents strive to create global and modern citizens, justifying inordinate amounts of fiscal and emotional investment in ‘good’ and

Transitions, and Transformations (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018).

²⁴² Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes”, 56.

²⁴³ Erica Burman, “The Abnormal Distribution of Development: Policies for Southern Women and Children,” *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 2, no. 1 (1995): 21-36; Katie Macdonald, “Calls for Educating Girls in the Third World: Futurity, Girls and the ‘Third World Woman’,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 23, no. 1 (2016): 1-17.

increasingly private schools that provide education in ‘soft skills’ such as sexuality education. However, any engagement with soft skills, bodies and sex also troubles the violently established normative upper-caste/dominant ethnic/Hindu/*Sunni* Turkish ‘national’ citizen body (see chapter 1) and the historical racial corporeal schema whose articulations are created through these violent histories but fails to see itself as a producer and product of time and space. Therefore, the national body and its assumed teleologies of progress and civilization and body/time/space distinctions can only be maintained by reinscribing normativity. This is achieved by schooling to ‘uplift’ aspirational masses of poor parents and children, continuing to look ‘forward’ even as the past continues to inform the present, and denying children’s own sensual experiences and desiring bodies. I demonstrate how children through their comments, actions, use of tactility, feelings, bodily desires, and all five senses trouble civilizational teleologies of progress that re-inscribe normativities, failing to focus on children as beings and present ‘becomings’. This reveals the contradictions in modern schooling that whilst aiming for global and equal citizenship and progressive education of the body, still maintains inequalities of race, class, caste, religion and gender. I conclude by reflecting on the de-sensualization of children’s worlds in schools to argue that in order for modern schooling to go beyond discursive commitment to progress and democratic citizenship, it needs to confront its own racist and colonial teleologies and engage with students’ sensual desires.

Time-as-Progress and Becoming the Middle-Class National Body

Caner cannot be bothered to give me the time of the day. He has a school to run, a business now teeming with pupils and profits in contrast to its more humble beginnings in the

late 1990s. Alliance is now one of the most popular private chain of schools in Istanbul. Caner, in his late 40s, handsome, sophisticated and a well-educated, upper-class, Francophone Turk, finally extricates himself from one important meeting and before going to the next meets me and agrees to speak with me only if he can speak in Turkish and if I promise not to record him. Clearly this is serious business and I prepare myself to take swift notes as we begin.

As one of the four co-founders of Alliance, Caner sees Alliance's mission as creating a school based on "universal" principles for the "young population of Turkey." The citizens [*vatandaşlar*] he hopes to create at Alliance are "democratic"- they will know their rights, be critical thinkers and will be able to make choices. He insists that such a visionary school is only possible if each child is treated as an individual and it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that that happens. He calls this model of schooling the triangle of education. The school [*okul*], family [*aile*], and student [*öğrenci*], each represent the 3 vertices of the triangle. For the proper working of the triangle, Caner claims, the school and family have to work together as one unit to enable the "holistic [*bütünsel*]" development of the future democratic citizen-child. This holistic child, as I was repeatedly informed during many school meetings, ceremonies, and personal interviews with the middle school principal, vice-principal and department heads, was composed of the emotional, mental, physical , and, according to the 5th grade counselor Alara, the sexual. This is why Alliance had chosen, before most schools in the city, to introduce the radical CSE offered by the Istanbul-based FPV in 2011.

However, the parents are a problem, especially when it comes to working with them to help their children on issues of body and sex through sexuality education. FPV's CSE classes that I was so fortunate to attend during my own tenure as a 5th grade teacher and researcher at

Alliance, seriously challenged Caner's hopes of parents and schools working together as reflected in his triangle vision. Rather unsurprisingly, when I went back a year later for some follow-up research, I was informed by Nezihat *Hanım*, the head of FPV's division running the program, that the program would not continue from the following year. Apparently some parent complaints of the class content being too "sexual" for the children had created a big divide between parents, students and the staff and management of the school, and in order to ensure the full-functioning of the triangle (and to not lose wealthy parents), Alliance had decided to discontinue the program.

The twenty-first century model of schooling, especially private schooling in cities that caters to educated, middle-to-upper-middle class parents, seeks to involve parents in the holistic development of children. As colonial and capitalist market relations have and continue to transform children to commodities,²⁴⁴ parents need to be shown both their money's 'worth' in sending their children to expensive schools and their own corporealities have to be re-aligned as consumers of schooling to sustain their aspirations of consumption and sense of "civic" politics-of investing in schooling to have their children become better citizens of the nation.²⁴⁵ Less than a year after my conversation with Caner and while conducting my fieldwork at Global schools in Secunderabad, I came across the following advertisement for a school fair in the national newspaper *The Hindu* (fig.1). The young father in smart casuals, wearing a school backpack, is

²⁴⁴ Viviana A. Rotman Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

²⁴⁵ For a comprehensive discussion of middle-class consumer citizenship that characterizes countries like India and Turkey on the path to rapid economic liberalization, rise of civil society middle-class aspirations, and fraught religious/secular public politics, and how these work through education institutions and negotiations of existing caste, class, religion and gender boundaries, please refer to: Ritty A. Lukose, *Liberalization's Children: Gender, Youth, and Consumer Citizenship in Globalizing India* (Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2009).

ready to take on the “Horizon” fair that brings “South India’s finest schools under one roof” as *The Hindu* claims. His corporeality reflects his consumer-student orientation- willing to be schooled into making the best choice for his child and become an avid learner and participant of “democratic” citizenship. It also aligns him as an investor in his child’s future as he puts himself out in the schooling market- “Admissions Open For Parents”- to come and pay and choose the best future for his child. The dad stands with his back towards us with the bag- both a symbol of consumer citizenship as well as a burden of the past- that is now behind him and looking into the horizon- the future- a bright future for his child, imagined and achievable- delineated by schools and school fairs such as the one above.

Therefore, parents consume schools by paying literally a high price both monetarily and in terms of investing their own emotions and bodies toward a better future and therefore, schools, build on middle-class consumership and aspirations for ‘proper’ civic citizenship that parents have for their children. Both vertices (school and family) of the triangle get locked into a market capitalist relationship, where the ultimate stakes are the bodies of the children, the future repositories of citizenship. Deeply tied with the histories of global market liberalization and the rise of objective individual bodies marked by sexual and gender identities as we saw in chapter 2, children- the future global citizens- have to be not just good, national, middle-class consumers like their parents but also good gendered and sexual citizens. Offering “soft skills” or “life skills” or “sexuality education” then as a commodity becomes a major selling point for schools and yet another consumable demand from parents who pay through their noses to have their children schooled in ‘modern’ values. As the following excerpt from Mahima, the principal of Global Schools in Secunderabad city below illustrates:

...a really great teacher [is] how you interact with the children, how you relate to them, how you relate to the parents that's more important than that I think...and nowadays I think that there is a lot more focus on the soft skills in education...I think expectations from parents have changed to a large extent over these years I find. Earlier they were ok with what the kids did but yet to a large extent they wanted their kids to go into the select fields like engineering or medicine...very few into anything else. But now over the years I find you know the openness to different fields is there but the expectations on the schools have increased a lot. They expect a lot more in terms of every aspect of school life, whether it's the teacher, it's the child's behavior, it's counseling them or their academics or...you know...their extra activities...sometimes I tell parents when they come to me that you know you are not going to get a finished product at the end of ten years. The parents are the first teachers. The teachers in school come second, they imbibe their main values from the parents. The core values are going to come from you not from the school...

Therefore, as market capitalism, privatization of schools, shifting articulations of middle-class belonging and subsequent education demands orient and re-orient bodies and practices of school educators and parents, the ultimate investment is on the bodies of children. The idea of teachers and parents working together to school children in the twenty-first century as Mahima's excerpt above reflects, is based on extremely teleological notions of civilization and adult "fantasies of futurity"²⁴⁶ where the future is imagined to be better than our pasts because that's what the progress narrative is. And this narrative is completely embodied by the figure of the child, children, who are not yet complete 'beings' like us but are becoming²⁴⁷ better versions of us and what we were as children. Everywhere I went, from Alliance to Global, from private schools to government schools, from Istanbul to Hyderabad, teachers, principals and parents were constantly talking about how lucky children "these days" are because they can enjoy the hallmarks of modern education, such as computers and technology, that were not available to us

²⁴⁶ Hannah Dyer, *The Queer Aesthetics of Childhood: Asymmetries of Innocence and the Cultural Politics of Child Development* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2020).

²⁴⁷ Allison James and Alan Prout, *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood* (London; New York: Falmer Press, 1990).

and were hence “evolving” into better versions of what we are. As children become the repository of civilizational futurity,²⁴⁸ it is through their bodies that our anxieties around “the political economic, geopolitical, and environmental future [is] relayed”²⁴⁹ into schooling for a better future. However, what future is this that children embody and don’t bodies, our corporeal schemas, which are based on histories of becomings and violences not inform this future?

Firstly, we assume that the future is necessarily a ‘better’ version of our past and present lived experiences. The horrors of environmental destruction, growing national and global economic inequalities, and ever-increasing crises of the present such as the covid-19 for instance that are constantly securing absolutely abysmal (non-)futures for a large section of the global population amply demonstrates that this might not be the case.²⁵⁰ Even without explicitly stating these realities, our phenomenological bodies that are a part of the making of this contradiction of futurity are articulating fears of the future in their own ways. The above comments about children getting smarter with each generation were also equally frequently accompanied by panics around children’s futures. The same technology that was constantly being hailed as a hallmark of our progress was a constant source of anxiety for parents and teachers who were simultaneously blaming it for churning out a generation of anti-social children emotionally disconnected from their elders, peers and surroundings. Not only are children’s bodies and personalities shaping what looks like a not-so-great future for these adults, as the English teacher

²⁴⁸ Cindi Katz, “Cultural Geographies Lecture: Childhood as Spectacle: Relays of Anxiety and the Reconfiguration of the Child,” *Cultural Geographies* 15, no. 1 (2008): 5-17.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁵⁰ Facundo Alvaredo, Lucas Chancel, Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman, *World Inequality Report 2018* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018); Arundhati Roy, “The Pandemic is a Portal,” *Financial Times*, April 3, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>.

Filiz from Alliance and a young male Math teacher Akshay from a popular central school²⁵¹ in New Delhi once told me in similar and no uncertain terms, future generations of children are quite literally “defective”²⁵² due to social and environmental changes of the twenty- first century!

The second assumption behind our belief in civilizational futurity is the linear idea of time that sets up the future as a better version of the past and assumes the past to be behind us, a chunk of time that we leave behind as we age. However, this couldn’t be farther from the truth when we think of schooling. The past as memory, reminiscences, traces of past experience, trauma, and nostalgia is always present and looming large in our imaginations of schooling. Here I am talking not only about the numerous teachers and school administrators who were constantly reminiscing about their own childhood pleasures and pains in determining lesson plans and attitudes towards children, but also about education policy makers at the non-profit and government levels, who implicitly and quite often explicitly brought in their own childhoods and past experiences to play in actively shaping or opposing policy changes.

On a particularly humid September day in New Delhi, I sit waiting for Prof. Gauri outside her office at Delhi University. Gauri has years of experience working on issues of gender and schooling in the government schools of Delhi and used to be a school science teacher herself. Apart from being a prominent scholar in the field of education, Gauri was a consultant

²⁵¹ Literally translated *Kendriya Vidyalaya* (KV), the “Central School” is an institution of schools across the country managed by the government of India’s Ministry of Human Resources and Development. Intended mainly for children of the staff of armed forces, it also includes some seats for the general population and uses a nation-wide uniform Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) syllabus.

²⁵² This comment merits special attention. Disability, feminist and environment studies scholars have shown how definitions of (dis)ability are also grounded on scientific epistemologies of the body and development. Whilst analyzing this problematic comment is beyond the scope of this chapter, I wanted to pause here to acknowledge how bodily anxieties and beliefs are inseparable from teleological notions of time and progress through which we live and understand each other.

for NCERT and has been at the forefront of teacher education debates in the country. We start off on shaky footing. As someone who since the early 2000s has seen the genesis and transformation of debates around sexuality education, which still isn't a mandatory part of school curricula in the country, and as someone who is deeply invested in teachers' own pedagogies and lived experiences, Gauri is not too keen to talk to a researcher of schools and sex education from the United States. Based on my appearance and social location Gauri assumes, as I find out later, that I am part of the "bandwagon" of young scholars and civil society activists in India who are uncritically pushing for sexual rights and education without knowing the reality of schools. According to Gauri, one cannot push for sexuality education without engaging with the deeply gendered and religious ideas that still drive people, including students and teachers' lifeworlds in the country. She also indicates the big gap between education policy and practice in the country, where the former remains completely out of touch with the latter. Organizations such as NACO (National Aids Control Organization) she says, which is funded by Northern donors, are driven by Western psychological models of child development and are only interested in funding "behavior" issues. Therefore, they are hesitant to build teachers' capacities around sexuality education- teachers who actually interact with the children and have an established relationship with them- and instead fund "workshops" for sexuality education. These workshops as Gauri implicitly implies and as I was increasingly finding out during my own fieldwork, barely had any impact in schools. At worst they were poorly attended or, at best, teachers from various schools were forced to attend them but those teachers hardly ever had the time or energy to implement them with the children at their respective schools. All the while as we talk and as our conversations start to ease and Gauri starts to relax around me, her frame of reference for her

opinions and policy recommendations is always her own past, her “15-16 years of experience” as a teacher, scholar and consultant that shapes her hopes for the future.

Similarly in Istanbul, as I sit in the air conditioned office at FPV’s headquarters in an upmarket part of the city on a blistering May afternoon, Yasmin, the coordinator of FPV’s sexuality education program from schools whom we met in the last chapter, keeps on emphasizing the policy-practice divide. She insists on how hard their work is as an organization when on the one hand, the Istanbul Convention on children’s rights²⁵³ prompts an order from the Turkish Ministry of Education (MEB) to schools to have some kind of “sexual education [*cinsel eğitimi*]” to curb sexual abuse of children, but then nothing happens. Nobody knows how it is to be implemented in schools and that makes their work as a group that trains school children and teachers on sexuality and abuse prevention, extremely hard to conceive and implement.

So what happens in that space between policy and practice, that bridge [*köprü*] that should exist as Yasmin rightfully insists, but in practice and real life isn’t there? That space as I observed gets naturally filled by the day-to-day interactions between teachers and students and lessons are implemented primarily through the ways these adult teachers and administrators in schools themselves remember their schooling and the values they have learned to imbibe growing up. As Feride, a now freelance consultant that served on a big EU-MEB project on gender equality in education a few years ago rightfully remarked in our interview, “Awareness [*farkındalık*] also happens under conditions of inequality...so...region [*il*] and religion [*din*] were not such great factors when it came to the implementation of gender sensitization in

²⁵³ Council of Europe, *Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention): Children’s Rights* (2011), <https://rm.coe.int/children-rights-and-the-istanbul-conventionweb-a5/1680925830> (accessed March 30, 2020).

schools. *İzmirli* [people from the progressive city Izmir]...see themselves as [gender] equal. But they are not.” In other words, people’s lifeworlds and personal histories are a set of contextual constraints or choices that have already been historically set up, the violent processes of which have been invisibilized over time and through bodily orientations as we saw in chapters 1 and 2. Therefore people are nostalgically and uncritically looking back at this past, sometimes with a pang of sorrow or sometimes happiness, depending on their social locations, as they make choices for the future, in this case, as educators. The American phenomenological philosopher Edward Casey in his analysis of remembering, talks about how a person’s life history is rooted in [body] memory and ‘truth’ emerges in and through remembering, which is a very bodily process that occurs in the present and connects the past to the future.²⁵⁴ Therefore, as adult educators, as we go back and forth between the past and the present and future, as our bodies reminisce in the present context to inform a ‘future’ or truth that isn’t there but that evokes in us anxiety and simultaneous hope through our investment in children’s bodies and education, we ourselves disrupt this linear civilizational narrative of past to future, bad to good, under-development to development.

Therefore, the project of investing in a better future embodied by the child is a consequence of seeing bodies separated from time and time as a linear civilizational march of progress that also brings to the fore the contradictions of the ideological construction of nation and schooling as national ‘progress’. Feminists working on gender and nation have repeatedly shown how the ideological construction of the nation is premised on gendered and racial

²⁵⁴ Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

inequalities, labor, and violences that have ‘naturalized’ these divisions.²⁵⁵ As middle-class aspirations of parents all across the socioeconomic spectrum spurn demands for modern schooling as a tool for securing progressive futures, the question is who sets the normative nationhood, ‘proper’ and morally acceptable citizenship? If fig. 1 is a small reflection, this is already set up by dominant heteronormative, gendered, religious and white (caste and ethnically privileged) (and very embodied) ideologies of nation, progress and schooling.²⁵⁶ We saw a glimpse of these embodied processes of schooling in both countries in chapter 1. Hence, those who don’t belong to dominant ethnic/caste groups in both countries have to be educated and uplifted to ‘catch up’ with these ideological imaginaries (for fantasies of future imaginaries they are as we just saw), thereby re-asserting dominant casteist, ethnic, religious and gendered articulation of being and ways of belonging to the national polity.

In Istanbul, as I spoke with *devlet* [state] school teachers, both formally and informally as they opened up about their experiences and students, they almost always commented on how “lucky [*şanslı*]” my students at Alliance were. According to them, these kids had immense cultural and financial capital with parents who could speak English and/or another foreign language and although that meant more pressure on private school teachers to deliver, at least we

²⁵⁵ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation* (London: Sage, 1997); Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat, *Deconstructing Images of “the Turkish Woman”* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

²⁵⁶ For histories of how normative national bodies set up (schooling) ideologies in both countries, please refer to: Jeremy Cole, “Democracy exported, history expunged: John Dewey’s trip to Turkey and the challenge of building ‘civilised’ nations for democratic life,” *History of Education* 43 no. 4 (2014): 504-523; Jennifer A. Hamilton, Banu Subramaniam and Angela Willey, “What Indians and Indians Can Teach Us about Colonization: Feminist Science and Technology Studies, Epistemological Imperialism, and the Politics of Difference,” *Feminist Studies* 43 no. 3 (2017): 612-623.

were dealing with “cultured [*kültürlü*]” parents. For a lot of my state school peers, they felt that children in their schools could neither get the support at home for their regular school subjects because the parents, and especially mothers, were not educated, nor could these teachers ever imagine implementing ‘soft skills’ like sexuality education. Other than the bureaucratic hurdles, how could the children of ignorant parents be expected to learn progressive ideas on the body, gender and sexuality? Several times during these conversations, I remember biting my tongue as I thought about sharing but was unable to, my own experiences with these well-to-do parents of Alliance who in spite of being ‘modern’, anglophone and global travellers, continued to be critical of any thing radical in the school, including FPV’s sexuality education and introducing children to non-Western epistemologies and ways of being.

These sentiments travel transnationally to India as well and were abundantly clear in all my interviews with government school teachers and during my own CSA prevention work as a volunteer at SNCSA in Hyderabad-Secunderabad. Increasing rates of school privatization, especially in big city centers like Istanbul and Hyderabad, are reflecting and accentuating class, caste and ethnic divisions in each country.²⁵⁷ My 2-months fieldwork in St. Thomas and St. Agnes, the two largest and most established Telangana state-aided schools in Secunderabad, a fieldwork that started with a few interviews and led to extended invitations to visit classes and spend more time in these spaces, really gave me a sense of these accentuating caste, religion and class differences over time and enabled me to track the civilizational training of parents’ bodies.

²⁵⁷ Data on school privatization in each country: Ministry of Human Resource Development, *Education Statistics* (2018), https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics-new/ESAG-2018.pdf (accessed April 1, 2020); Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, *Milli Eğitim İstatistikleri: Örgün Eğitim, 2018-19* (2019), http://sgb.meb.gov.tr/www/icerik_goruntule.php?KNO=361 (accessed April 1, 2020).

Both St. Thomas and St. Agnes are classic Christian mission schools from the pre-independence era (see chapter 1) that one finds all across India and that still stand for good quality education. However, as a lot of the administrators in these schools attested to and from my own knowledge of folks who have attended these schools in the past, the parent-student demographics have drastically changed since the 1990s, a time also marked by India's market liberal reforms and deeper integration into circuits of global capitalism. A growing middle class that has since become even more fractured around ideological lines of caste, religion, language and region has meant that these schools are now overwhelmingly filled with middle-lower-middle class students with parents in non-tech, non-IT, traditional jobs who don't speak good English or children of working class people such as laborers and other wage earners. Middle and upper-middle class folks, many with IT-sector jobs, who are typically marked by caste and language privilege, prefer to send their children to more expensive private or even 'international' schools these days.²⁵⁸

This meant that in almost every interview I had with teachers and principals in these two schools (and a lot of these people had been working in these reputed old schools their entire careers), a constant lament was the "ignorant" parents. Of these parent bodies, the bodies of Muslim parents and those in lowest wage jobs (overwhelmingly from the lowest caste backgrounds), seemed to dominate in these anxiety-laden discourses. Most of the reasons for the

²⁵⁸ Just to put this into perspective, while the average yearly fees for the all-girls St. Agnes school is between Rs. 15,000-17,000 (approx. 200-250 USD) (depending on the grade level) and the school also offers limited number of scholarships and boarding facilities to girls from families who cannot afford this, Global charges around Rs. 60,000-80,000 (approx. 650-1000 USD) per annum. In stark contrast to even this, schools affiliated with international boards of education and curriculum (such as AP and Cambridge for instance) could charge anywhere from Rs. 3,00,000 and upwards (approx. 4000 USD and beyond) per year by capitalizing not just on their international academic curriculum but also extra-curricular activities such as horse riding, swimming, and special sexuality education, life skills classes, career counseling and so on.

poor quality of student work and for the reason why the students (and the teachers) were struggling to keep up with newer forms of pedagogical and technological innovations that had been passed by the government in recent years were somehow indirectly connected to these parents. A lot of these parents who couldn't even "read or write properly, how can they help their kids with homework in the evenings?" a lot of the teachers complained. According to them, it was little wonder that these children were sent to take extra "tuitions" or after school lessons to help with school work, which further led students to lose interest in classes at school because they knew they could complete the work in tuitions. "These" parents, especially, mothers, need to be educated first, I constantly heard. As a matter of fact, while volunteering for SNCSA, I was a part of the team to 'educate' these "backward parents" at St. Thomas on the perils of sexual abuse (fig. 2). Quite often, a few of us who could speak Hindi, Urdu and/or Telugu would be summoned for these parent trainings because somehow their backwardness manifested in their social and economic background and was etched onto their bodies, in the way they looked or dressed or dwelled in small houses with many family members, and that necessitated us as more progressive and aware English-speaking folks to enlighten them with the reality of abuse. Crammed into dark lecture auditoriums such as those in fig. 2, in the sweltering heat in large numbers, very often not even wanting to be there, many of these parents were checking their phones, yawning, nodding off and many mothers with screaming younger children checking their watches to make sure that they got back home to cook and be there for their school going children on time. Yet they were forced to listen to us in order to become better middle-class consumers and parents, while we kept our vision of education and sense of doing a good deed alive. Even when some of them articulated legitimate concerns and asked questions that

challenged the predominantly upper-caste SNCSA's educational visions, they were ignored. The strength of the civilizational teleology of schooling and educating 'backward' children and parent bodies remained unshaken in spite of statistical evidence that at least in the case of CSA it is proven that both occurrence of abuse and its denial is rampant in our societies irrespective of people's socioeconomic status.²⁵⁹

What's more, people who have worked for years in the field, such as the self-identifying feminist, bright-eyed, "religious and *Atatürkçü*"²⁶⁰ Büşra for instance, who worked for several years in a Turkish children's prison [*cezaevi*] and then went on to get a higher degree in trauma and CSA in the US and UK, told me once with great disillusionment, "*hocam* [honorific: teacher], gender equality is not equal to absence of abuse. Abuse is everywhere even in the most progressive European nations." And yet, and this time in a grade 7 class, as I sit attending FPV's sexuality education lesson, I am struck by the (hetero-white)normativity of bodies. The grade 7 counselor, who physically also embodies the whiteness that people in Turkey and India so desire- light-skinned, tall, slim and with (fake) blonde hair- assumes an air of importance as she introduces the much darker and socioeconomically and culturally less elite FPV trainer Hayat. "Now children," she says, "you don't realize that you are lucky, you come from good families, but many kids in our country are not so lucky and are (sexually) abused in their homes. That's

²⁵⁹ Akanksha Misra, "Challenging Social Attitudes and Making a Change;" Alanur Çavlin-Bozbeyoğlu, *Türkiye'de Encest Sorununu Anlamak (özet rapor)* [Understanding the problem of incest in Turkey (special report)] (Ankara: Nüfusbilim Derneği ve Birleşmiş Milletler Nüfus Fonu [Demographic Association and United Nations Population Fund], 2009), 15, <https://turkey.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ensesrapor.pdf> (accessed April 1, 2020).

²⁶⁰ *Atatürkçü* is someone who believes in the secularist principle of Turkey's founding father Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. For more information on Atatürk and articulations of Turkish modernity since the 1980s, please refer to: Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

why this lesson is important and Hayat teacher [öğretmen] has come all the way from FPV to talk to us about our bodies and how to look after our bodies...” By telling 12-13 year olds in their first sexuality education lesson that somehow their family and socioeconomic background made them less susceptible to CSA, the counselor not only automatically forecloses the possibility of children who might have been going through abuse to speak up, but also consolidates the idea that certain kinds of families and bodies- poor, religiously conservative, ‘backward’- are ‘naturally’ susceptible to committing and experiencing abuse. And indeed the impulse to educate these bodies is what drives initiatives like SNCSA in Hyderabad as well.

Finally, there is the education of mothers. Feminist scholars of development have long since argued against modernization’s linear narrative and claims of destroying patriarchy by uplifting women through education and employment²⁶¹ by demonstrating how just like any other epoch, modernity has created its own articulations of patriarchy.²⁶² These have involved loosening of patriarchal constraints in some areas of women’s lives but increasing control in others. This is clearly visible in schools as civilizational practices of parent upliftment continue the historical construction of modern schooling ideologies that in both countries, as elsewhere, identified the body of the mother with the nation and posited the onus of the nation’s development on the education of mothers.²⁶³ During my fieldwork and as I demonstrated in the

²⁶¹ Ester Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970).

²⁶² Lourdes Benería and Gita Sen, “Accumulation, Reproduction, and ‘Women's Role in Economic Development’: Boserup Revisited,” *Signs* 7, no. 2 (1981): 279-98; Aihwa Ong, *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010).

²⁶³ Nita Kumar, “Languages, Families and the Plural Learning of the Nineteenth-century Intelligentsia,” *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 38, no. 1 (2001): 81-103; Haris Exertzoglou, “The Cultural Uses of Consumption: Negotiating Class, Gender, and Nation in the Ottoman Urban Centers during the 19th century,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35, no. 1 (2003): 77-101; Burçin Çakır, “Gendering the Empire: The Discourse on the New

examples of educating ‘unclivilized’ parents above, it wasn’t just the poor, Muslim, uneducated mothers but also the ‘modern’, educated, middle-class mothers, who were constantly being called upon to help with school activities and to educate themselves on children’s well-being and school subjects. Both in India and Turkey, Global and Alliance, private and government schools, my field notes are saturated with the schooling and labor of mothers. Mothers from all backgrounds were constantly being called to attend nutrition sessions by doctors in order to cook healthy meals for their children or even when parents were invited for counseling sessions for their children, such sessions were overwhelmingly filled by mothers, who also ran exclusive WhatsApp groups in both countries to keep up with their children’s work. In spite of being educated themselves, the changing political economy in both countries and rise of nuclear families has meant that the onus of educating oneself to better educate children falls overwhelmingly on women.

So far I have demonstrated how civilizational teleologies that established formal schooling as a colonial/modernization project in both countries continue through the twenty-first century market liberalization of national economies, privatization of schools, and middle-class aspirations of consumer and civic citizenship. I have shown how these civilizational teleologies map onto teleologies of biological development of children, seeing them as ‘becoming’ adults, who know what the future looks like and understanding the future as a time separate from the past. Finally, as the normative national body is threatened through class aspirations and modern education like sexuality training premised on biological bodies and objectivity, it reinscribes

Woman and Emergence of Ottoman Feminism, 1860–1918,” in *Women’s Emancipation Writing at the Fin De Siècle*, eds. Elena V Shabliy, Dmitry Kurochkin and Karen O’donnell (New York: Routledge, 2019), 120-57.

dominant articulations of belonging through the educational upliftment of ‘uncivilized’ bodies of parents to keep the progress narrative and modern schooling ideologies intact. In the following section we encounter children with all their unruliness, curiosities, ‘improper’ desires and sensualities, as they challenge these civilizational and biological teleologies of development and force us to reckon both with the project of schooling and inform a critical transnational feminist politics and praxis centered around sensual bodies.

Unruly Desires and Sensual Entanglements: Children Disrupting Teleologies of the National Body

I am sitting all the way at the back in one of Alliance’s grade 5 sections for a one class period (40-minute) *mahremiyet dersi* [privacy lesson] run by Alara. Alara is conducting this lesson as a follow up to FPV’s CSE lesson just a few weeks ago that focused overwhelmingly on bodily changes during puberty. Since Alliance is committed to its children’s “holistic” development, the counseling team decided to add this lesson that engages with children’s feelings and teaches them to respect and maintain their and their peers’ feelings. I am sitting at the back so as to not draw any attention but I needn’t have worried. None of the children even realize I am there. This class, which is usually one of the best behaved grade 5 classes and was even well behaved all through the CSE lesson that normally has 5th graders over excited and squealing with laughter or embarrassment, seems to be unusually disruptive today. Trying her best to keep them calm, Alara pushes on with her agenda for the day. She asks the students a set of ten questions related to emotional changes during puberty, such as “problems I experience in my family” or “name of one person that I fancy.” In the course of the conversation, a question

arises about who the children should speak to regarding problems in their lives. The children predictably insist on their best friends but Alara interrupts them. “You should always go to your parents or teachers and not to your friends.” “But why?” Merve’s hand shoots up. Merve, blonde, blue-eyed and extremely precocious, has been quiet until this moment. “Because your friends are going through the same things as you but your parents and teachers are older and they have already lived these things. So you should go to them.” “But I am experiencing them now,” mutters Merve under her breath, insistently, unconvinced by Alara’s conviction. Her fleeting comment that goes unnoticed by most makes two strong points. One, it urges us to pause in the present and validate both the role of children as thinking, feeling ‘beings’ in the present moment instead of future investments in ‘becoming’ citizens. In addition to that, it is reminiscent of Feride’s comment earlier that really shows how the present moment that we live through our historical bodies informs our ‘truths’ or ‘awareness’ as we imagine the future. This future is always becoming the past and it is the spatiality and motility²⁶⁴ of the phenomenal body that assumes time or indeed objective time (past, present, future) is created through the passing of time that is our bodies, “in the mutual harmonizing and overlapping of past and future through the present...”²⁶⁵

Alara’s failure to engage with Merve’s feelings is symptomatic of our belief in the teleological notion of time mapped onto the biological notion of the scientific body, the bodies of children that we also see ‘becoming’ from undeveloped to fully developed, adult beings. However, this prevents us from seeing children as beings in their own right who are forcing us to reckon with our limited worldviews and urging us to pause and engage with sensuality and our

²⁶⁴ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 112-170.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 488.

tactile senses in our present time, a time that weaves our histories and future hopes together to create our desiring, thinking, feeling corporeal schemas. This takes me back to Alliance middle school in Istanbul, to the numerous CSE lessons offered by FPV that I sat through, observing children and their very viscerally engaged, sensual reactions to this new form of knowledge that they were being exposed to. Typically even before the FPV trainers had arrived for these lessons, the grade 5 hallways (all students at Alliance Middle School were housed grade-wise on the same floor) were buzzing with excitement. The children would frequently run up to us, teachers, screaming, “teacher [*hocam*], teacher! We have sex education [*cinsel eğitim*] today!” One day I remember being accosted by overexcited ten-year-olds in the corridor just as I was making my way to the school cafeteria for a cup of coffee during the first short recess. One of the students, who was my student, looked like he was going to pass out in anticipation of what a “sex education” lesson might look like. Finding his reactions hilarious, I laughingly made my way to the cafeteria and told some of the teachers there, “the kids are just too excited for the FPV lesson today. They are saying they are going to have sex education!” One of the homeroom teachers for grade 5, just slapped her hand across her face and said, “limits of our body [*bedenimizin sınırları*], that’s what we tell them it is. It’s about knowing your body, what you can and can’t do, changes in puberty, and yet these kids...” she left the sentence incomplete shaking her head. Whatever ‘proper’ terminology had been given to the children, all they cared about was “sex education” and they couldn’t wait.

In the actual lesson as well across all sections and grades in middle school, the children’s visceral reactions were nothing short of spectacular. In grade 5 sections, even as the trainers explained the scientific terms of body parts and puberty processes such as “wet dreams” and

“ovulation” with the aid of huge life-size pictures of the male and female anatomy, the children’s senses were buzzing with all kinds of questions unrelated to these explanations, titillated often by the pictures on the board. In one grade 5 section, Ela, a precocious and chatty 10-year-old is convinced that women’s eggs are like pizza in shape and texture. When the trainer talks about menstruation, she also complains about the stench of her elder sister’s sanitary napkins in the bathroom. “When my sister leaves the bathroom after changing her sanitary napkin when she has periods, you can’t even enter it after. It stinks!” This elicits a lot of “ooo”s and “aaa”s and “ewwww”s (sounds of disgust) from other students. While on the topic of menstruation, Semih, who has been quiet so far, has to mention that his sister’s friend started her periods at the age of 8! There is surprise and momentary silence in the classroom as students digest this information. However, before the FPV trainer Tayfun can capitalize on this silence and push forward with the lesson that is repeatedly being interrupted, one of the girls punctuates the silence with her shrill voice, “*ama vajinadan bebek **nasıl** [emphasis original] çıkıyor* [but *how* does a baby come out of the vagina]?” Everybody starts giggling; an embarrassed few hide their faces under their desks or in their hands and one or two even try escaping the class to wash their faces or use the restroom, only to be gently reprimanded by Alara who is in the classroom, to go back to their seats and calm down. Tayfun, clearly an experienced trainer, who has been very open with the children right from the beginning about his own sex and gender identity and has patiently endured the children’s reactions, just laughs off the incident and carries on.

In yet another CSE lesson by the same instructor Tayfun, this time in another grade 5 section, Hakan, the boy from our introductory anecdote, in his typically innocent fashion insists that women smell better than men in response to Tayfun’s question about biological differences

between “men” and “women.” When Tayfun respectfully disagrees, Hakan once again is persistent, adding, “my mother said so...it is because of hormones [*hormonlardan dolayı*].” Tayfun agrees to look into this in detail later and Hakan is, at least for the time being, convinced. In the same class, another student Levent, like most students I have observed across all grade 5 sections, is thoroughly confused between sex, gender and sexuality. Tayfun is one of the few instructors who sets up the lesson by acknowledging his gender privilege and by introducing intersex and transgender bodies as “normal”- something that other CSE trainers from FPV don’t do with 5th graders. However, the ten-year-olds do have trouble with these concepts and like Levent, ask questions like “are intersex people gay and lesbian?” Before Tayfun can clarify, another boy jumps in and says, “no! They are unisex!” To this, another boy responds, “that’s for clothes that everyone wears you idiot!” Tayfun is much amused and once again picks up the discussion from the beginning, clarifying the concepts, even as most students remain confused and more interested in the physical, material realities of bodies marked by various sex/gender/sexuality identities. In yet another grade 5 section, also taught by Tayfun, one of the students asks, “If a woman wants to be a man, will her shoulders change?” As Tayfun begins to answer the question, another student interrupts him with yet another question, “so what does this [transgender] person wear?” “We can’t decide, they decide it,” Tayfun answers. As some students process this information with others hurling a volley of follow up questions at Tayfun, in spite of Alara’s presence and her attempts to calm them down, Merve, the same precocious girl we met earlier asks, “If the [transgender] person doesn’t have money for surgery, what happens?”

The children’s desires, sensualities, and excessive visceral reactions- often in the form of

incessant giggling, screaming, and sometimes nausea and disgust to the point of passing out or having to leave the classroom- punctuates and sometimes completely disrupts the trainers' serious attempts to explain the working of the biological body, child development, and the "scientific" terms of body organs and processes. However, the examples above also demonstrate that instructors like Tayfun who engage with children's visceral and sensual worlds instead of being embarrassed by them also trigger deeper and more meaningful engagement between children and the content of what they are trying to teach. Merve's question above is duly answered by Tayfun and even when he is unable to provide answers, as with Hakan, he promises to look into the topic, thereby validating children's sensual engagements. He also uses his own body as a tool to engage students in issues of sex, gender and sexuality by describing his gender and frequently as I observed, pointing to his shoulders, adam's apple, and other 'non-private' body parts to provide children with anatomical explanations. As a matter of fact, I was told by Meltem, the head of the Alliance counseling team, that the FPV trainer who started giving these CSE lessons to children years ago was "so physical, so comfortable with her body that she freaked out the teachers who refused to do what she was doing...but the children loved her and learned a lot." Similarly Tayfun honors children's desires and the entanglements of their senses (smell of blood or texture of women's "eggs" or as some students repeatedly focused on, the movement of the sperm and egg and their meeting) with the biological concepts they are being taught and uses his own body as a tool to enhance learning. Just as one of the boys towards the end of his lesson looks like he is going to explode with excitement, Tayfun tells him gently, "it's ok now, you can say it..." "Penis!" yells out the boy, sending the class into splits of laughter and looking proud and relieved by the momentary release of his erotic energies.

Needless to say, children's experiences with educators like Tayfun are rare and even in the other CSE lessons I observed at Alliance where Tayfun wasn't the trainer, children's sexual entanglements with sex were either dismissed as "foolish," "immature," "naughty behavior," or punished by having them sent to the detention room or by being gently reprimanded by Alara. "It's a phase, it will pass," Alara once told me in private after a particularly "rough" CSE lesson we had just had in one of the 5th grade classes with the trainer Hayat. The children had been all over the place, screaming, giggling and constantly interrupting Hayat. One particular student, the extremely bright and naughty Kaan, was fascinated by his own comparison of the size difference between chicken's eggs and women's eggs, constantly making egg shapes with his fingers and asking Hayat if he had got the correct size. He had been fascinated throughout the class by the fact that "egg"- a food item- could be used to describe a woman's "*üreme hücresi* [gamete/reproductive cell]." Alara sitting all the way back had to call him to chat in private while Hayat continued the class, exasperated, and asked him to be quiet or go out and wash his face. When I spoke with Alara later, it almost felt like this wasn't a phase that will pass naturally but a phase that the school teachers will make sure passes for "disruptive" and "naughty" students like Kaan. Children's fascination with the body and its environment and its entanglements with food, motion, sense, sound, taste, smell and touch, is looked upon as improper behavior and a phase that children will lose on their way to 'becoming' adults in the future and modern lessons like CSE is supposed to teach them the 'proper' way of understanding their body and desires. Very rarely do adult educators pause in the present to acknowledge children's present realities (remember Merve's comment earlier about her living through her body now?) and their physical engagements with the sexual body to listen, engage and perhaps reassess their own ideas of

pedagogy, development and futurity.

Studies of childrearing practices in early twentieth century Europe demonstrate how children got “disembodied from their own bodies”²⁶⁶ and from those of their parents. Modern schooling with its emphasis on the scientific objective body, its linear development from childhood to adulthood that parallels and merges onto the child’s body with ideas of civilizational progress and national modernity, continues to disembody children and their learning not just in sexuality education but in other regular school subjects as well. This time I want to give an example from a regular English lesson at Global. In this example, I am observing a grade 6 classroom of the English teacher, Ms. Mary, who by this time knows me very well as I have also substituted for her on some occasions and therefore the children know me too. They are reading an old English poem called *Casabianca*, about a boy who doesn’t abandon a burning ship and his captain father. While Ms. Mary does an excellent job of bringing out the obvious themes of this poem- obedience, patriotism and parental devotion- and the vocabulary, she fails to engage with some students who are reading the poem especially viscerally and sensually and asking valid questions. For instance, in response to the following stanza:

The boy stood on the burning deck

Whence all but he had fled;

The flame that lit the battle's wreck

Shone round him o'er the dead.

One student asks, “isn’t the boy scared?” and keeps on saying “I would be really scared” even when her question is not answered. Another student in response to another stanza:

²⁶⁶Anthony Synnot, “Handling Children: To Touch or Not to Touch?” in *The Book of Touch*, 42.

He called aloud—'say, Father, say

If yet my task is done?'

He knew not that the chieftain lay

Unconscious of his son.

asks a very valid question, “Is the father dead or just fainted?” He keeps on asking this and is repeatedly, just as the previous student, ignored and then finally silenced by the teacher by being made to re-read the lines and ultimately told that the father is dead. What captures the children’s curiosity in each of these cases is their very embodied response to the boy’s situation- how can one bear the heat of a burning ship and not be scared? Isn’t ‘unconscious’ a realm between life and death, the state of being passed out, as well? By not engaging with children’s embodied ways of learning and meaning making, this early nineteenth century English poem remains just that- a disembodied text, a poem. It becomes an objective entity, just like the scientific body, a body that can be taught and made ‘properly’ sexual and one that invisibilizes the histories of race and gender that have shaped it and ongoing violences of modern schooling that work through bodies of children to secure, as we have seen, an impossible development dream or futurity.

While I focus on specific classroom lessons and anecdotes here, all school spaces are saturated with children’s embodied erotic energies, desires and fantasies. Sometimes it is the ‘secret’, out-of-sight places such as behind the bookshelves of the Alliance middle school library in our introductory anecdote where Absullah lured Hakan into, while other times it is places in plain sight- classrooms, corridors, playgrounds, and other sites where children, always in close physical contact and yet always forcibly distanced from their proximities and desires by mundane school schedules and rules, in various visceral and sensual ways infuse life into the

ordinary and lifeless physical structures and materials. Fig. 3 is a typical classroom at Global Schools where children are seen working on a science project on their benches under the supervision of their teacher. In the same classroom as in countless other classrooms across schools that I visited, the same benches that were used by students to hold notebooks and class projects, the same mundane benches, were also etched with a whole variety of artwork and phrases that usually brought a smile to one's face. In this particular class during one tedious early morning science lesson when the students, some half-awake and some nodding off, can barely feign interest in what the teacher is saying, I can see some of them starting to doodle and some others, if not asleep, poking each other with pencils. The teacher occasionally looks at one of them sharply and yells, "be quiet!" but it is hard to sustain their attention on the dull blackboard that the teacher is filling with complicated diagrams and equations. As my mind starts wandering too, I notice the desk where I am sitting and much to my amusement, it is scratched with hilarious drawings of students themselves, some other 'aesthetic' pictures, and also comments like X "loves" Y or the less aesthetic "you are a donkey!" and much more. Some of the drawings and comments are what would be deemed 'inappropriate' and as I look up only to listen to the teacher's sonorous voice explaining some fact and look around the sea of faces with their grim, sleepy expressions, trying to listen to the teacher, it is hard to imagine these same children etching such explicit and physically engaged material onto the materiality of their classroom. Soon after when the bell rings and I am getting up to rush for another class observation, Bhargavi, one of the girls from this class comes running towards me, "ma'am, ma'am, wait! Look what my mother made today!" Quite often between class periods, children would open their packed lunch boxes, even though they weren't supposed to, ravaging huge mouthfuls of food

before having to quickly put their boxes away lest they be discovered by the teacher coming in to teach them their next lesson. Bhargavi's mother always gave her one banana along with some other food in her lunchbox and everyday she would etch a message on the banana peel for her. Everyday Bhargavi would excitedly search for this message and most of the times, come running to share it with me, her face smiling, her heart bubbling over with love for her mother. Today is no exception. As Bhargavi stands next to me, indicating to the spot on the banana peel where her mother has etched a message, I can see the faint outline of a heart shape. "That's lovely Bhargavi, are you happy?" I ask. "Yes!" exclaims Bhargavi, "I miss my mother so much here," as she points to the small, dingy classroom in fig. 3, with its angular walls, crammed desks, and colorless surroundings.

Children's desires and sensual (literally encompassing all senses) experiences therefore, force us to reckon with the sexual, sensual body in the center of schools and learning. In other words, even though teleologies of development and science demand the 'proper' education of the (sexual) body, more recently through increasing emphasis on sexuality education, sexual and sensual desires that are immanent in the phenomenal body, the body as a historical racial corporeal schema, force us to see the children as beings in the present, whose desires disrupt whatever we see as 'proper' future adults. These desires are always in excess of our conceptions of body and time and are inseparable from the physical structures and lived experiences of schooling. Additionally, children's sensualities also trouble and bring to the fore the irony of 'proper' education, which includes but is not limited to the sexual naming and taming of children's bodies, and aims to create modern citizens. As we saw in chapter 2, European enlightenment, colonialism and scientific modernity combined in uneven and region-specific

ways through discourses of civilization, nationalism and Northern donor-aided global development through the lived body to invisibilize histories of violence on some bodies and objectify the body as a biological entity, marked by gender, sexual, ethnic and other 'identities'. The effect of seeing our bodies as scientific, objective entities has led to our inability to see our own bodies as historical racial corporeal schemans, part of a larger history in which we are not only connected to other bodies but also one where what we understand as normative- gender, sexuality, race, ability for instance- is not 'natural' but rather naturalized over time. Therefore, when Justice N. Kinubakaran of Madras High Court in India recommends sexuality education and quite correctly accuses the government for, "Denying youngsters, the correct and scientific information, [that] would result in them acquiring half-baked and incorrect knowledge from other sources such as Internet, friends and movies,"²⁶⁷ what "scientific information" does he have in mind? If science is 'truth' because it is "objective" as all teachers in both countries also kept on telling me, then the scientific biological body, the body unmarked by differences in caste, race, religion, and other articulations of being; or, in other words, the normative national body (that's already the articulation of dominant caste, ethnic and religious beliefs) must be the truth we are teaching children. Any challenge by the children then, that starts questioning the assumptions, the many other articulations that mark bodies and get suppressed, can only trouble our modern 'scientific' endeavor to educate them. But at the same time, modern education also works to to create "democratic citizens" as Caner says and is driven by middle-class aspirations for equal consumer citizenship of the world, a world where education can be used to bring all

²⁶⁷ A. Subramani, "Madras High Court calls for 'age-specific' sex education," *The Times of India*, October 26, 2015, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Madras-High-Court-calls-for-age-specific-sex-education/articleshow/49531335.cms>.

children into the folds of modern humanity, especially by giving them skills and languages of gender equality and sexuality. The unruly bodies of children and their sensual entanglements, especially children marked by non-normativities of caste, class, gender and religion, bring this tension- the tension between democratic, unmarked, normative national body with its assumed teleologies of progress and civilization and body/time/space distinctions and the body composed of articulations of race, religion and other factors of belonging that is inseparable from its histories and environment- to the fore. And as I show in the next few pages, through the bodies of less privileged children, educators respond to this by re-inscribing (caste, class, racial, religious, gender, hetero-) normativity that at best ignores and at worse, violently suppresses children's sexual bodies and sensual lifeworlds.

Scholars of education and gender have convincingly shown how the project of modernity with its teleological notions of progress and development works on the bodies of children through schooling, especially those of marginalized children.²⁶⁸ While education reports have accurately documented the humiliating discrimination against children in schools, especially *Dalit* children in India and Kurdish children in Turkey,²⁶⁹ very few scholarly studies have demonstrated how ethnic markers of 'difference' directly play out through progress narratives of

²⁶⁸ Sarada Balagopalan, Erica Burman and Jackie Stacey, "Rationalizing Seclusion: A Preliminary Analysis of a Residential Schooling Scheme for Poor Girls in India," *Feminist Theory* 11, no. 3 (2010): 295-308; Cynthia Veiga, "The Body's Civilisation/Decivilisation: Emotional, Social, and Historical Tensions," *Paedagogica Historica: Special Issue: Education and the Body* 54, no. 1-2 (2018): 20-31.

²⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Denying an Education to India's Marginalized* (April 22, 2014), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/04/22/they-say-were-dirty/denying-education-indias-marginalized>; Nurcan Kaya, *Türkiye'de Eğitim Sisteminde Ayrımcılık: Renk, Etnik Köken, Dil, Din ve inanç temelli* [Discrimination in Turkey's Education System on the basis of Color, Ethnicity, Language, Religion and Faith] (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, Minority Rights Group, 2015), <https://www.egitimreformugirisimi.org/turkiyede-egitim-sisteminde-ayrimcilik/> (accessed April 2, 2020).

children's developing biological bodies. This point was brought home to me one day in September when my own privileged body- upper-caste, light-skinned, English speaking- successfully managed to penetrate the otherwise well-protected gates of an established central school in Secunderabad (henceforth referred to as KVP). As a SNCSA volunteer, I had learned that central schools, which followed the country-wide uniform CBSE curriculum, were required to execute the Adolescence Education Program (AEP), one of the first systematic attempts by the Indian government that started in the late 1990s to teach children about gender, health and the body.²⁷⁰ As a former central school alumnus myself, I had somehow managed to use a combination of loyalty, charm and privilege to get permission for visits to these schools in the greater Hyderabad-Secunderabad area from the headquarters controlled by the Ministry of Human Resources and Development (MHRD) in New Delhi. The chief officer in Delhi handing out the permission to me actually said that she would like to encourage researchers like myself to help central schools become a space with "equal opportunities" for girls and boys and children from all backgrounds.

However, in KVP one morning, as I sit listening to the primary school principal's first-hand experiences of children's bodies and behaviors, I am seriously confronted by the irony in the chief officer's hope in 'modern' researchers such as myself and the power of schooling. The principal, a well-dressed and elegant woman, on the one hand is an embodiment of a 'modern' woman- she speaks English fluently, has tons of family in the United States, and is all about smashing patriarchy and gender-equality. She passionately chats with me about teaching

²⁷⁰ For more information on the AEP and the various controversies surrounding it and list of references, please refer to: Arpita Das, "Sexuality Education in India: Examining the Rhetoric, Rethinking the Future," *Sex Education* 14, no. 2 (2014): 210-24.

her daughter who is now in the United States too, years ago when she was a child, about “good and bad touch” and how to look after her body. She openly acknowledges to me that it’s totally normal for children to be sexual, “...we are inherently physical beings. You can see that in children too.” As the clock ticks and as we get more comfortable and deeper into her many years of experience as a principal and teacher, she suddenly starts talking about the challenges that certain kids’ sexual bodies pose in schools. She tells me about an incident when two 3rd grade girls took off all their clothes and were exploring each others’ bodies in the bathroom, while having a “mentally challenged” girl keep guard outside the restroom. Having found the incident to be extremely “disturbing” she admits to having called both sets of parents and while one of the girl’s parent’s response was disappointing, the other girl who was from a “lower class...already had issues.” She leaves the story at that and doesn’t bother to tell me about this girl’s parents and how they reacted, implying and thereby naturalizing the girl’s assumed hyper-sexualness on her lower class body. She then goes on a further rant about how as a government entity, central schools are supposed to strictly adhere to the RTE,²⁷¹ which means increasing numbers of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (SC/ST)²⁷² students at school. “Do you know how these children are and how they behave?” I am suddenly reminded of a similar question posed to me by a St. Thomas teacher just a few months previously, this time regarding Muslim boys. “Do you

²⁷¹ For debates and critiques about RTE implementation and how it is impacting the most marginalized children, please refer to: K.M. Joshi, “Indigenous Children of India: Enrolment, Gender Parity and Drop-out in School Education,” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 30, no. 9/10 (2010): 545-558; Sadhna Saxena, “Is Equality an Outdated Concern in Education?” *Economic & Political Weekly* 47, no. 49 (2012): 61-68.

²⁷² Indigenous or Tribal populations in India are referred to as Scheduled Tribes (ST) and *Dalit* populations are categorized under Scheduled Castes (SC). According to the 2011 census data, 16.6% of the Indian population is SC and 8.6% is ST: http://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/population_enumeration.html.

know how these boys are ma'am?" she asked me in hushed tones, "these Muslim boys are very rough...very bad [implying sexual behavior]...I will never send my granddaughter to study with these Muslim fellows!"

In a similar vein and sentiment, the KVP principal continues, "these SC/ST children..the way they behave...have we seen their background? There are still people in this country, tribes in Odisha [state], where women don't wear blouse, where pre-marital sex is ok...I mean whatever...but look...this kind of modern even we aren't here..." and as her voice trails off, I realize that her "we" is accompanied with a gesture towards me. My tall, light-skinned, English speaking 'modern' 'female' body is for her modern but not immoral and fulfills the criteria of 'proper' citizenship- of matrimony, (assumed) heterosexuality and monogamy, unlike the pre-marital sex practices of the 'uncivilized' indigenous folks. Also, I am wearing a *sari*, which despite being an extremely revealing garment, is worn 'normally' with a blouse, thereby covering my Hindu-woman-modesty, instead of immodest displays of the flesh by the tribal women and their children who are sent to KVP. My Hindu upper-caste privilege that informs my corporeal schema and enables my position as an educated scholar in a 'modern' world (and sets this world as the norm) remains invisible. For the principal my body is the desirable stark contrast to the promiscuous bodies of these children, especially "girls," whose 'immoral' behaviors and "not normal" practices and lifestyles pose a threat and need to be veered, sometimes forcibly, through schooling,²⁷³ into the folds and linear narrative of modernity.

²⁷³ International organizations working on universal education across the world and country specific studies of universalizing primary education have shown the multiple levels of violence against poor children, especially girl children, that occurs in bringing them to school, separating them from their families and domestic work, and keeping them at school as well. For example: Sheila Aikman and Nitya Rao, "Gender Equality and Girls' Education: Investigating Frameworks, Disjunctures and Meanings of Quality Education," *Theory and Research in*

Indigenous folks who are officially referred to as Scheduled Tribes (ST) in India fall outside of Vedic, Varna (caste-based) Hinduism, which in the current political climate in the country is a civilizational teleological narrative in and of itself. Vedic Hinduism in political and popular discourse, the religion of ‘peace’ and ‘progress’, as opposed to ‘savage’ religions like Islam, defines the national Indian body. Hindu fantasies of the nation are mapped onto the body of the child not just through curriculum, in-class pedagogy, but also school performances, where little children are very often dressed as Hindu leaders or mythological figures and juxtaposed next to the Indian flag to demonstrate little citizens bodies being educated to become future, modern, Hindu bodies. As one can see, the image of the Vedic Hindu Goddess of knowledge Saraswati painted across almost all the central schools I visited, including KVP (fig. 4) and a school annual celebration where a little girl is dressed as the same honoring the Indian flag (fig. 5). And yes- they are both wearing *saris* with blouses!

Feminist scholarship on nationalism, ‘pious’ neoliberalism, and gender in India and Turkey has shown how women embody discourses of nation through performances of strength and ‘womanhood’.²⁷⁴ However, very little feminist attention has been paid to schools as primary spaces where biological bodies of children are marked by backwardness, marked by ‘becoming adult’, marked by ‘not normal’ sexual performances that are aimed to be uplifted through modern national schooling. The flesh of the marginalized child and very often the ‘girl child’ is

Education 10, no. 3 (2012): 211-28 and also: Balagopalan, Burman and Stacey, “Rationalizing Seclusion.” For Turkey, please checkout: *İlköğretime Zamanında Kaydolmama: Nedenleri ve Önlenmesi için Öneriler* [Not Entering Primary School on Time: Reasons and Preventive Recommendations] (Ankara: UNICEF-MEB, 2011).

²⁷⁴ Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Jenny B. White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: A Study in Vernacular Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002).

the site where these discourses of modernity, class, nation and child development, literally find their ‘natural’ justification and get invisibilized to form the natural discourse of modern schooling or “education for all” as a means of upliftment, without us ever questioning it. Lower caste, lower class and indigenous children’s, girls’ (hyper)sexuality, a character of their bodies, informs their ‘backwardness’ that needs to be uplifted by ‘modern’ schooling and sexuality education. This is precisely why the principal’s modern life which is already based on “condition[s] of inequality” to quote Feride again, which has already set the norm of a certain kind of sexual and (racial) national body as modern, enables her to adopt the discourse of gender equality and progressiveness while discriminating against bodies of her most marginalized students at school. Even though in every single school I went in both countries, teachers knew very well about all children getting fascinated by sex and many even masturbating against classroom desks all the time, it is remarkable how the sexual body of some children embodies unwanted, uncivilized excesses that can be fixed through schooling and CSE.

Teachers of the politically active and leftist state school teachers’ union in Istanbul, *Bilgi Sendikası* [Knowledge Union], most of whom are women from lower socioeconomic status and several of whom are Kurdish and Armenian, once told me something that really summarizes modern schooling. They said that very often children from less privileged families do grow up in more *demokratik* [democratic] environments with more religious tolerance and gender equality (probably because their mothers are working as well), but shut themselves up and change their ideas when they come to schools. In other words, our schools successfully manage to map the narrative of civilization and progress into children’s lives and onto their bodies, of which their sexual education is one part of a larger project of disembodying their ideas, their beings and

sensualities that fundamentally threaten the normative articulations of class, caste, religion, gender and ethnicity of the national body. This was very evident to me in one particular state school visit in Istanbul, an experience that I share below.

Located in a poor neighborhood not far from the busy center of the European part of Istanbul, *Taksim*, Hasan Yücel *Ortaokulu* [Hasan Yücel Middle School, henceforth HYO] caters to neighborhood children who hail from working class Kurdish, Turkish and Laz (Black Sea region) families, some of which also happen to be very devout. The school is severely underfunded as are many other state schools [*devlet okulları*] in the city's poorer neighborhoods and runs on a shift-system- some students attending the morning session and some the afternoon. This enables the school to provide education to a larger number of students. One of the school's Turkish language teachers, Fırat, who is Kurdish and from the city of Mardin in southeast Turkey, invites me to visit his classes one afternoon, as he teaches in the afternoon shift from 11 AM- 7 PM. I know Fırat through a mutual friend and have also met some of his 7th grade students during a field trip to Orhan Pamuk's *Masumiyet Müzesi* [Museum of Innocence] and the students are very keen that I visit their school. Before I stop by grade 7 though, Fırat wants me to say hello to his 6th graders too as they are a "fun bunch" and would love to have me in their class.

Even before we enter the class, the students' senses are buzzing with excitement. They have seen me walking around the school corridors earlier with Fırat and have many questions- who am I? where am I from? what am I doing here? One of the girls screams out in joy when we enter the class, "*Ay! Çok güzel!* [Wow! So beautiful!]," most likely referring to my colorful Indian skirt and jewellery. It's the end of the school year and with all the syllabus covered, Fırat

has decided to develop his students' critical thinking skills. He is asking them questions about the novels they have read during the school year and how these books act both as a mirror [*ayna*] to their own lives and window [*pencere*] to the rest of the world. Thanks to his creative questions, the children are also responding very creatively, using poetic vocabulary to describe their books and using their imaginations to describe parts of the world that remain unknown to them. As they speak, I realize they are staring at me, as I probably represent the unknown. Sure enough, very soon one of them asks me, "*hocam* [teacher], where are you from?" Thus begins the guessing game as I give them clues and challenge them to show me their knowledge of the world. It is interesting to observe how sensually children form ideas about places and peoples unknown- "you could be Spanish *hocam*, because of your [curly] hair," "*hocam* did you have to walk or drive a car or take a flight to get here? How far is your country?" "your Turkish has an accent, are you German?" and so on. Finally, when I tell them I am Indian, their excitement reaches a crescendo. Funnily enough, compared to the upper-middle-class children at Alliance who I am used to teaching, these working class urban Istanbul kids know much more about Indian geography, festivals and of course, Bollywood movies. Some of them are fascinated by *Ganpathi Visarjan* festivities, where a giant statue of Lord Ganesha is carried through a mighty street procession and submerged into a water body. But most of the questions and comments are about more sensual pleasures of food and Bollywood dance. A couple of students insist on giving me a demo of a popular Bollywood actor's dance routine and I oblige, upon which they start twirling their hips and moving their arms and legs frantically while babbling incoherent Hindi lyrics. The show is a huge success. Some other students keep on punctuating the show by asking me if they can touch my dress or what kind of food I like- "have you tried *Adana kebab*

hocam?” “I am from the black sea [*karadeniz*], I just can’t hack spicy food” and many, many more questions and comments follow. It is interesting to see the celebration of and curiosity around Indian, non-European aesthetics and lifestyles in this small state school in the center of urban Istanbul where the children are growing up in poor families with very little money to travel the world, unlike my Alliance students who travel all the time. And yet, they clearly seem to know a lot about India and popular Indian culture, indicating differences in class consumption and different bodily orientations to belonging. My body too strangely feels more at home here.

Just when the children’s performances and sensual displays are at their peak, Firat, probably embarrassed by their volley of questions and probably also mindful of my time, interrupts them- “Akanksha *hoca* has come all the way from the United States where she is working at a University. Ask her how she got there...wouldn’t you all like to go to the United States of America?” There is a palpable energy shift in the room. The students are suddenly serious and those who were dancing and jumping and waving their arms to ask questions go back to their desks and sit down demurely. Yes, this is what they are supposed to be doing, asking an Indian teacher, a woman, who made it all the way to the United States about how she did that, so that they could also make their (assumed) dreams and aspirations of going abroad, going to the United States come true. And for my part, I instantly know that I am supposed to be drilling the value of schooling and higher education so that they too have a chance of winning the golden ticket that can help them achieve the ‘American dream’. “Yes *hocam*,” one of them who had just been describing the flavor of *karadeniz pidesi* [Black Sea Turkish pizza] to me moments ago asks me, “how did you end up going from India to the United States?” Before I can say anything, another child interrupts, “*para lazım dimi* [you need money, isn’t it]?” Again, before I can say

anything else, another student adds, “*ama para herşey değil ki...*[but money isn’t everything right...]” looking at Fırat for approval. Smart kid. I then go on to tell them about how hard I worked at school and also indicate my socioeconomic privilege that enabled me to go to English-medium schools in India. I finally end by saying, “work hard children, but yes, you also need money.”

Fırat’s intentions are noble and as a Kurdish man from a poor family, he is only too aware of the struggle that these children, much like him, will face in the world if they didn’t aspire to and figure out a way of accessing ‘traditional’ middle-class jobs and lifestyles, such as moving to the United States. As an aspiring filmmaker himself forced to teach Turkish at a state school in order to make ends meet, Fırat’s concern is very real. And children’s sensual displays and entertaining mood and revelry that betrays any serious concern for the future automatically threatens the future, adult national body that these children should be aspiring towards and Fırat gently tries to nudge them back in-line. However, this whole scenario- the children’s sensual worlds and the teacher’s reaction- also reveals glaring class distinctions in our society spite of modern schooling’s promise of equal opportunity and access for all children to become global citizens. As the one student immediately points out- “you need money, isn’t it?”- yes, money is important. For these children who are so systemically failed by the state into getting quality education²⁷⁵ and are born into families that are not only financially poor but also embody ethnicities that have been brutally violated by the Turkish nation in the past and that continue to negotiate their ethnic articulations of Turkish-ness through inter-ethnic violence,²⁷⁶ how is going

²⁷⁵ Nurcan Kaya, *Türkiye’de Eğitim Sisteminde Ayrımcılık*.

²⁷⁶ Please read selections from: Müge Ayan Ceyhan and Kenan Çayır, *Ayrımcılık: çok boyutlu yaklaşımlar* [Multidimensional approaches to Discrimination] (Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2012). Also read: Mine Eder Özlem Öz, “‘Problem Spaces’ and Struggles Over the

to America just a question of attending school and working hard? Feminist analyses of economics and development has long spoken of structural constraints that situate different (historical) bodies differently in the new world economic order.²⁷⁷ Fırat's response then, in some ways typical of a school teacher's response, that indirectly asks children to snap out of their fantasy world and dancing and tomfoolery to look for inspiration from an American-dream success story, really reveals both the threat of non-normative articulations of the national body and the violent (racist) histories that have gone to comprising the national corporeal schema that keep on subduing the ethnic, religious 'other' in national discourse and institutions such as schools. Soon after the conversation above, the children start jumping up and down again, eager to change the topic back to India and my travels to the many countries I have just told them about. But alas, we are out of time, and as Fırat ushers me out of the classroom, he thanks me for sharing my "success" story with them and inspiring the children. If truth be told, that wasn't my intention at all and I had simply enjoyed my interactions with them. Some of the children come running behind us to take selfies, asking me to pose and make ridiculous expressions with them, and we part, exchanging emails, and promises to keep in touch.

Right to the City: Challenges of Living Differentially in a Gentrifying Istanbul Neighborhood," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 42, no.6 (2018): 1030-1047; Ayşe Serdar, "Strategies of Making and Unmaking Ethnic Boundaries: Evidence on the Laz of Turkey," *Ethnicities* 19, no. 2 (2019): 335-369.

²⁷⁷ For a more general feminist analysis of how macroeconomic policies act as a structure of constraint for gender and other inequalities, please read: Günseli Berik, Yana Van Der Meulen Rodgers and Stephanie Seguino, "Feminist Economics of Inequality, Development, and Growth," *Feminist Economics: Inequality, Development, and Growth* 15, no. 3 (2009): 1-33. For a more nuanced understanding of debates within development economics that fails to account for people's histories and social contexts/constraints, please read Kabeer's critique of 'Randomista' economics: Naila Kabeer, "Women's Empowerment and Economic Development: A Feminist Critique of Storytelling Practices in 'Randomista' Economics," *Feminist Economics* 26, no. 2 (2020): 1-26.

I would like now to take us back to my encounter with FPV's Nezihat *Hanım* one busy weekend on Istanbul's most crowded *Istiklal* road in the city center *Taksim*, when she informed me of the CSE program ending permanently at Alliance. Based on my interviews with teacher friends, Nezihat, and the counselors at Alliance, this was an expected eventuality. After all, sexuality presented the final frontier, even for the very modern, wealthy, English-speaking parents at Alliance. As Meltem once told me, "parents are still conservative and are not comfortable with talking about these things with their kids." However, one wonders now if teaching the sexual body in school is the final frontier as the linear narrative of progress that these parents embody, claims? Or is it that the sexual body is the *only* frontier and that perhaps the parents' anxieties are a reflection of privilege and progress' deeper fear of stirring children's sexual bodies, of encountering sensual beings who through their phenomenal bodies challenge narratives of civilizational progress and biological models of 'adult becoming' that erase historical privileges and disembody their sensual worlds?

At the start of my research in India, hot on the heels of my research in Turkey, when my own unquestioned faith in schooling and progressiveness of modern pedagogy and sexuality had just begun to crack, I went to visit one of the most famous feminists in the country. On that warm, muggy day in August in New Delhi, I sat timidly across the table from her as she looked at me disapprovingly, this young-ish America-returned scholar, here to study sexuality in schools. Why not study structural problems, failing school facilities and infrastructures, what's with this new fashion of studying sexuality in everything? I remember her muttering words to that effect. I wish now that I could have only hoped to say in response then: How can we *not* study schooling's entanglements with the sexual, sensual body? Sensuality in schools has to be

denied at all costs because the child's body with all its sensualities and sexual desires exposes the fragility of the normative national body. It threatens linear narratives of progress and scientific understandings of the body as biological instead of historical; a body which has been deeply constituted by histories of violence and becomings that continue to be violated by deepening global networks of capitalism and notions of national belonging. The child's body brings to the fore the irony of modern schooling regimes and middle-class aspirations for consumptive global citizenship by revealing gross systemic inequalities against non-normatively marked bodies as racial and heteronormative patriarchal supremacies try to re-write histories of violence, once again through the body, by claims to educate and 'uplift' 'backward' parents and children. As the normative national body struggles against the weight of the child's sensual desires, it tries to reinscribe its supremacy by promoting moral anxieties around sexual bodies and 'proper' education of children, especially children from historically marginalized backgrounds, as well as constantly and actively de-sensualizing children's schooling and learning universe.

Conclusion: Children's bodies, Sensualities of Schooling, and Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis

In my final follow-up trip to Istanbul, an old and dear teacher friend, Sahar, who teaches at a state school on the Anatolian (Asian) side invites me over for some lunch and chat with other teachers for my research. As I take the short and beautiful ferry ride across the Bosphorus on a balmy May morning, I am looking forward to having good conversations and also observing some of my friend's classes with students she calls, "a dream to teach." However, an incident soon follows that takes over all my memories from my trip to the school that day. Rather

unexpectedly, my body starts menstruating in full earnest and as I leave one of the grade 6 classrooms after just being introduced to them by their Turkish English teacher Ayhan, one of the girls comes running after me and gently whispers in my ear to check out the back of my skirt. She also slips a drawing (fig. 6) quietly into my hands, smiles and disappears. Ayhan, the Turkish male teacher also realizes what has happened and rather embarrassedly disappears into the staffroom and my friend Sahar, who eventually lends me a sanitary napkin, also embarrassed, applauds me for not crying, in spite of being told by a student about my stain, and for handling the situation “like a trooper.” The story of my “shame” spreads across the school staffroom like wildfire, reaching the ears of some mothers volunteering as helpers on the ground floor as a part of the *Okul Aile Birliđi* [School Family Association], and even ends up in the restaurant a few meters down the road where Sahar and I stop by for lunch. “I saw the stain when you came here in the morning for coffee with Ayhan *hoca* and even had my daughter run behind you but it was too late,” says the older woman running the cafe, who we refer to as *abla* [older sister]. She then looks me in the eye and says, “Nevermind, this is God’s gift to us. Being a woman means having this [periods], no one can say anything to us,” and she smiles, adjusting her headscarf. I am slightly rattled by the whole incident. Unlike the adults involved in this story, I am not at all embarrassed by the leaking of my menstrual blood and stain on my skirt, inconvenienced yes, because it is a white skirt, but not embarrassed. I am just not able to understand why my modern, educated and secular friends like Sahar and Ayhan are so embarrassed by the minor transgression of my body, while the religious *abla* is the one who supports me and normalizes the incident- albeit through problematic ideas of gender and sex. It’s almost like the bloody display of my stained skirt in the middle of the quotidian, mundane and sanitized school

surroundings filled with innocent children's bodies that are still becoming, has shaken the fundamental disavowal of sensuality in schools and the sexual body in the teleological narrative of progress and civilization.

Some months later as I once again mull over the particularities of this incident, this time in my living room in suburban Secunderabad, I am suddenly reminded of the drawing (fig.6) that the girl in Sahar's school gave me and one that had hitherto completely vanished from my memory because of the disturbance that my own body had caused by accident. So I dig out the drawing and stare at the child's vision of my body, thankfully one of my front and not my blood-stained rear, and her sweet heart-shaped sketches around my picture, and the way she has written "A-KAN-SHA." Very often for my Turkish students, I would break my name into three syllables, dispensing the other 'K' in my name, in order to make it easier for them to pronounce it. I must have done the same when I introduced myself and wrote my name on the board, which the girl has copied and juxtaposed with "Teacher"- a literal translation from the Turkish- "*Akanksha hoca*"- which is the way students refer to their teachers in Turkey. I am pretty certain I told the students where I am from, but the girl's corporeality and imagination, shaped by her own fantasies and realities, imagine me as a Spanish teacher. Spanish, along with French and German, would be the natural guess for a foreign teacher for most Turkish students after English. This is demonstrated in her simple question: "are you Spanish teacher?" I am also pretty certain the outfit I wore on the day is not exactly the outfit depicted in this picture and neither is my hair, but the student has liberally used her imagination to draw someone like me. Her drawing is her way of connecting to this foreign teacher who she chases down after the class to hand over her token of love and appreciation, as well as to notify her of her stained skirt, to try (albeit in vain)

to save her from further embarrassment in her school. As we draw to the end of this chapter, I juxtapose these two related incidents with seemingly unrelated consequences for two reasons. One is to recapitulate what examples of children's desiring bodies and sensual lifeworlds in this chapter have taught us. The other is to envision a more radical form of transnational feminist politics and praxis that starts from the phenomenal body of the child and its quotidian lived experiences in institutions like schools to investigate questions of development, belonging and subjectivity.

The twin incidents above, the girl's drawing and my bloody stain taken together center, as we have seen throughout the chapter, both the centrality of the body as the primary vehicle through which we access the world and the ways in which it disrupts school spaces. It also reveals the divide between adult/children, being/becoming that are a consequence of our teleologies of civilization and biological development and have to be constantly policed and enforced to maintain the contours of the normative national body. My bloody display not only challenges acceptable codes of gender performance but the incident is 'un'becoming precisely because it emanates from the body of someone who has become an adult and should know 'proper' bodily behavior. The irony of its revelation by the girl must not be lost upon us as well. This is a girl who has also probably started her menstruation or at the very least familiar with it, and in her process of connecting with me as a human (giving me the drawing) irrespective of our different national locations, also takes it upon herself to inform me and save me from what she is already sure of (and rightly so!) would become a huge embarrassment. The student acts not only as a being in her own right, a thinking, feeling, desiring subject- but a body like all of ours that yearns to connect and one who expresses itself through sensual, visceral engagements. Her

beautiful drawing and “are you Spanish teacher?” question along with the “yes” and “no” checkboxes similar to a multiple-choice school exam, reflect both the limits of her lifeworld (a lower class student from a poor neighborhood and state school in Istanbul) and the potential of expanding the horizons of her being and what she already knows. As I stare at the drawing, I think in fact about how to use it as a teaching resource, using children’s own tactility and sensual ways of seeing the world to teach them more about being and belonging to a place. Her drawing reveals the centrality of human corporeality in both shaping and determining the limits of its lifeworlds through which it understands itself, and also a desire and sensuality that exceeds it. This further brings to the fore the role of history in shaping human corporeality and the liberating potential of its desires that challenge established historical phenomena and articulations, forcing us to constantly re-make our articulations and ways of belonging.

This chapter has highlighted the limits of our ideas of the objective body separated from space and time that ‘develops’ linearly from becoming (child) to being (adult), uncivilized to civilized, a legacy of historical racisms that continue to be re-inscribed by schools through the mapping of these teleologies on the bodies of children, educating poor parents and children, and de-sensualizing children’s schools and lifeworlds. Through children’s anecdotes and teachers’ responses, I have revealed instead the body as a phenomenon that is comprised of histories and their resultant articulations- a body inseparable from space (imprints of children’s drawings on school desks) and time (teachers’ reminiscences)- and one that is constantly becoming and producing newer articulations. I have shown how old lines of heteronormative patriarchy and racist supremacy re-draw boundaries that middle-class aspirations of all kinds of bodies try to cross by insisting on educating parents, sexual naming and taming of all but especially poor

children's bodies, and ignoring children's sensual lifeworlds in the name of 'proper' education. The child's body becomes the site both for telologies of development and biology and also their contradictions as newer histories that are being made and becoming our schema, our articulations- histories of global capitalism, consumption, right-wing nationalism, and introduction of sexuality education and other "soft skills" at school- challenge older articulations of race, class, religion, gender and nation. The phenomenal body of the child reveals the similarities in human embodiment across borders as children become aspirational repositories of imagined futurity in our global capitalist times, while highlighting the specific contours of different national bodies- the upper-caste Hindu or the upper-middle-class *Istanbullu* Turk for instance- that both struggle and reassert their hegemony through exclusionary schooling politics and suppression of children's sensual worlds.

Investigating children's sensual entanglements in schooling and mechanisms through which they are denied by telologies of development becomes an important endeavor for a critical transnational feminist praxis invested in critiquing essentialist notions of culture and belonging, Northern epistemologies of development, and re-imagining human embodiment, articulations and knowledge production. The everyday investment in schooling and the child's body really shows the phenomenal body as the site where national 'culture' is inscribed and consolidated. The desire to make modern citizens of immoral tribal children in KVP India or the delineating of working class children's aspirations in HYO Istanbul or creating democratic, "holistic" Turkish citizens by providing sexuality education to privileged Alliance children while ignoring their visceral englements with sexuality, all reveal the centrality of the body to nation and development and also its excess desires that resist normative articulations of belonging. This

enables us as feminists to see the inseparability of the body with its historical, cultural environment and imagine transnational alliances, activism and knowledge-production centered around bodies, desires, and uncivilized non-essentialisms.

The study of the erotics of pedagogy in school spaces, of children's desires and senses, also pushes us as feminists to imagine a new "pedagogy of politics."²⁷⁸ The body of the child as method discards linear narratives of social and biological development, "origin stories" of ethnic belonging or fantasies of finished products of modernity, to focus on "current relations, and inter-relations."²⁷⁹ Children use their sensual engagements and erotic energies to transcend sometimes the limits of nation and time, such as the students reading the English poem in *Global*, or the girl who handed me the drawing above, to really connect with people, things and places, while staying within the confines of their lifeworlds and articulations. Therefore, their relational view of their bodies demonstrates how the body and its desires cannot be seen without accounting for how we got here and how we continue to articulate our beings through categories of social belonging such as gender and ethnicity, while providing a corporeal politics of hope that is based on touch, intersubjectivity²⁸⁰ and erotic connection.

As I have shown in this chapter, the child's body fundamentally begs us to rethink our assumptions of time, space and nation and to engage with corporeality and erotics in the center of learning and meaning making in the world. People live through their bodies and unless we ask

²⁷⁸ Erica Burman, *Fanon, Education, Action: Child as Method* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 37.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

²⁸⁰ Long before the new materialist and phenomenological turn in education studies, women of color and indigenous feminisms challenged Western epistemes and knowledge production to acknowledge the body and intersubjective relations of human and earth at the heart of our existence. See for example: Dian Million, "Felt Theory;" Fregoso, "For a Pluriversal Declaration of Human Rights."

how do people live their mundane lives, understand ideas, use their senses to engage with objects and each other, no scholarly work, no political project, no radical pedagogy can make our existence worth living for. It is here that the study of children and honoring their sensual bodies, engaging with their palpable desires like flashing each other as Abdullah in the beginning of this essay, and paying attention to their curiosities that disrupt our neat narratives of time and space, holds the key. Children perform a much needed queering of our times through their bodies, desires, and sexual, sensual entanglements.

My aim in this chapter has not been to romanticize childhood as a time of joy, unbridled intellectual curiosity, and asexual innocence; if anything, I have advocated throughout this piece for children to be seen as ‘beings’ and not just ‘becomings’ in our adult fantasies of progress or as acting repositories of our future anxieties. I have shown how our investment in modernity, schooling and time-as-progress, and indeed our failure to see our own selves as ‘becomings’, maps onto the visions of biological bodily development of children as sexual beings by greatly inflicting civilizational violence on some bodies and completely disembodimenting children’s sensual lifeworlds. Critical transnational feminist scholarship has to look at children and schools in order to rethink our engagement with nationalisms, rise of the global right, and global capitalism, that cannot be achieved without engaging with corporeality, sensual desires, and our relation to each other and other species in this world.

CHAPTER FOUR: (Re)producing Schools: Teachers' Bodies and the Phenomenology of Gender

“How did you get the permission? Normally Mahima doesn't give permission.” A close teacher friend from Global Schools stared at me incredulously as she asked this question, unable to accept the fact that the Global principal Mahima had indeed given me the permission to conduct observations at the school. It was the month of March and the school year was about to end. All I could manage was a shrug. “I don't know,” I muttered. “I guess I just got lucky.”

Almost two months later in my follow up research trip to Istanbul, I was reminded again of the importance of, and difficulty in, gaining permission to do research in schools. I was supposed to interview the counselor of a prominent school in the city that had also run the FPV program in the past. I had managed to procure the interview through a close teacher friend who used to work at Alliance and was now working for this school. It was only after I arrived at the counselor's office and started asking more detailed questions about counseling and sexuality education that I could see her tensing up and sensed her hesitancy in answering some questions. Later during the interview, she told me that she was only expressing her personal views because if I wanted to learn about the school's views and philosophy, I needed permission [*izin almanızı lazım*].

Schools are institutions with very tightly protected borders, even more so recently with increasing number of reported cases of child sexual abuse (CSA) within schools in both countries.²⁸¹ Apart from student security purposes though, school borders also enclose certain

²⁸¹ For example, just when I was about to start my fieldwork in India, the much sensationalized murder of Pardyuman Thakur at Ryan International school in Gurgaon, Delhi NCR (<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/pradyuman-thakur-murder-ryan-international-school-gurgaon-cbi-1081642-2017-11-08>) led to most schools across the country, including Global, to

lifeworlds- ways of doing things, knowledge production and practices, procedures, and varying intimacies and rivalries. These include not just the friendships between and desiring bodies of children whom we focused on in chapter 3, who are constantly disrupting linear narratives of schooling as progress and infusing sanitized school spaces with their sensual energies. Teachers, mostly female, also carry their bodies, desires and aspirations between home and school. They labor in school spaces to provide education and care to children and secure a means of living, or at the very least, source of income independent of their husbands and/or families. Quite often as I was to find out during my fieldwork in both countries, the most zealous gatekeepers of school spaces were indeed these female teachers, who looked upon foreign-retained ‘modern’ scholars like me with suspicion and at least at the beginning of my fieldwork, didn’t appreciate my tiny intrusions into their school lives and worlds.

In this chapter, I focus on the lives and worlds- lifeworlds- of four female school teachers-turned-administrators and mothers to demonstrate how the intricacies of “figured worlds”²⁸² of teachers’ life histories are deeply intertwined with the space (place and time) of schools. Female teachers seamlessly traverse home and school, shifting labor between the two and transforming them into spaces of emotional, professional and gendered investment in raising their own and school children, hitting achievement targets, and following the historically gendered lines²⁸³ of behavior and teaching. Negotiating patriarchal ideologies of home and school, these teachers’ bodies labor to maintain gender lines and blur public/professional and

tighten security at the main gate and started conversations on surveillance and background check of non-teaching staff. In Istanbul too, I was informed by Yasmin, the coordinator of FPV’s CSE program, about the increasing demand in recent years by the government and schools in Turkey from FPV to conduct CSA prevention trainings for teachers, staff and students.

²⁸² Avraamidou, “Stories We Live”.

²⁸³ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 60.

private/domestic demarcations of the two spheres as they quite literally transform the physical infrastructure of schools through their desires, intimacies²⁸⁴ and pedagogical practices. Once again, I center the teachers' corporeal schemas that are historically and racially constructed as we saw in chapter 2, and constructed through civilizational teleologies of development and adults as all-knowing as we saw in chapter 3, to demonstrate how their corporeality, though oft-ignored, infuses their labor and transforms school spaces. Therefore, in this chapter I show the mechanisms through which schools maintain linear temporalities of progress and heteromormative ideologies are through the very embodied forms of labor of teachers that they perform through their desiring, corporeal schemas and lived experiences constituted by articulations of caste, class, ethnicity, religion and gender. As teachers' own personal life experiences coincide with their school life and journeys, not only do schooling ideologies but the actual physical school space, the infrastructure gets inextricably intertwined with their corporeality and desires. Yet for some of these teachers, as their bodies break out of normatively gendered lines of sexual and moral behaviors, they also struggle to fit into school spaces, sometimes desiring to escape and often challenging the spatio-temporal, linear logic of school development through their nostalgic re-imaginings of education, gender, love and labor.

I contend that this restlessness of the sexual, erotic body and re-imaginings of life and sensual labor reveal how modern telologies of time (time as linear progress) and human

²⁸⁴ Here I draw on Ara Wilson's connection between infrastructure and intimacy. According to Wilson, just like feminist and queer scholars have shown how 'intimacy' goes beyond the public/private distinction to reveal people's connected lifeworlds and the political economy of material life, infrastructure too is 'intimate.' It "eschews a technological determinism or a materialist naturalism," or, in other words, infrastructure too, like intimacy, is determined by political economic flows, while also disrupting them and being infused with 'intimate' desires: Ara Wilson, "The Infrastructure of Intimacy," *Signs* 41, no. 2 (2016): 247-280.

biological development (adults as ‘beings’) work through bodies but also how sexual, desiring bodies disrupt linear temporalities, separation of bodies and spaces, and human development. In other words, the adult body is ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ and whilst it maintains and reproduces nationalist, modern, middle-class ideologies of schooling and labor, it also disrupts them through nostalgic reminiscences, hopes, unruly imaginations and remakes place, in this case the “infrastructure of intimacy” such as schools, and time- space- that it inhabits and is inseparable from. Gender is intricately tied to these desires, ideological performances, and spatiotemporalities of the body that is the corporeal schema as we have seen in chapters 1 and 2, comprised of larger histories of violence that have been invisibilized to create the ‘naturalness’ of the historical racial, and in this case the gendered schema. These ‘larger histories’ include not just past sedimented histories of colonialism, nationalist modernity, and even older systems of caste, religion and ethnic domination, but also histories that we are constantly (un)making through our bodies in the present moment. Newer meanings of what it means to be ‘Indian’ or ‘Turkish’ for instance or even *İstanbul* or North vs. South Indian or someone from Telangana or Delhi, including markers of caste and religion, get re-articulated through increasing middle class aspirations in both countries of which schools, as we saw in the previous chapter, are a major site.

These histories, past and ongoing, create ‘gender’ as an intensely lived experience, a corporeal articulation that is often ambiguous. It is sometimes in-line with and sometimes in opposition to the corporeal histories of rapidly neoliberalizing school spaces, inseparable from other articulations such as caste and religion, and is always ongoing. For instance, a lot of the older cadre of teachers such as the ones whose stories I present, in both countries. expressed

increasing dissatisfaction with two effects of neoliberal schooling and middle-class parenting practices. One is the changing expectations of teacher-student interactions. After years of expressing affection for their students by patting their heads or accepting their hugs and disciplining them with quite often questionable means (which included corporal punishment), these teachers seemed critical of their loss of authority over the students and also confused about how to respond to student affection that involved physical forms of contact. The second is increasing “professionalization” of the work space. In both countries, as governments move to more quantitative forms of assessment of teaching skills and pedagogy, it was most often the older teachers who expressed anger and dissatisfaction with their worth being reduced to some metric markers of teaching success or curriculum changes that according to them were superficially advanced but did little to increase student understanding of basic concepts. These two effects necessitated fundamental realignment of the older teachers’ gendered performances of maternal love towards their students and labor as they struggled to fulfill school and home expectations. Once again, those from privileged caste and class backgrounds were usually able to negotiate these gendered lived experiences with relatively greater ease. Therefore, this ongoing and dynamic lived and corporeal experience ‘gender’ works through ‘becoming’ bodies as they relate to other bodies, beliefs and ideologies, and also the spaces they occupy, infusing them too with corporeality and erotic energies. Even as gender articulations remain tied to institutional ideologies, nation and patriarchy, the corporeal excesses of desire that escape them indicate radical possibilities for our bodies and worlds. They enable us to imagine uncivilized possible lifeworlds based on desires, remembering the past, and touch- worlds that both emerge from historical systems of knowing and being and yet are premised on ontologies of desire and sensual

connection.

How does the phenomenology of gender based on four cis-gendered teachers' lived bodily experiences and school spaces enable us to imagine 'uncivilized possible lifeworlds'- why do we need to imagine these worlds to begin with as a part of our critical transnational feminist praxis? And why is 'gender' important to the theorizing of the desiring body that can enable us to imagine schools as erotic spaces and as sites of radical, transgressive education, as we have been endeavoring to do in the previous chapters? The first and foremost reason is that gender is real! Gender remains the dominant articulation of our corporeal schemas that inhabit patriarchal worlds and continues to be propagated through gender ideologies, as we will soon see through teachers' bodies and lives in schools, through their labor of caring and teaching children. But it is also resisted and sometimes openly ignored or opposed, quite often with violent consequences for those who do so. My field notes are saturated with observations of teachers flouting gender norms for instance by wearing "revealing" outfits, which usually just meant sleeveless *sari* blouses in India or slightly tight fitting shirts in Turkey, or choosing to stay single or childless, and being implicated by extension as "bad teachers" by school staff and their own peers. Additionally, it is no secret in both countries, that female teachers from 'minority' backgrounds and transgender students and teachers continue to be verbally and physically assaulted.²⁸⁵ As

²⁸⁵ For discrimination against school teachers in Turkey based on various factors including political opinions, ethnicity, language, religion, age and gender see: Söner Polat and Gülşah Hiçyılmaz, "Sınıf öğretmenlerinin maruz kaldıkları ayrımcılık davranışları ve bu davranışların nedenleri [Discriminatory Behaviors against Classroom Teachers and the Reasons for these Behaviors]," *Eğitimde Nitel Araştırmalar Dergisi* [Journal for Qualitative Research in Education] 5, no. 2 (2017): 46-65. In the case of India, even after the Supreme Court recognized transgender individuals as the "third gender" in 2014 and schools have been officially encouraged to increase and support transgender students and teachers, discrimination is rampant: "At interview in Kolkata school, transgender teacher asked 'if breasts were real'," *TheWire* online, June 18, 2018, <https://thewire.in/gender/transgender-teacher-harassed-kolkata-school>;

feminist scholars committed to social justice work and preventing all forms of violence, the liberatory potential of our ‘uncivilized possible lifeworlds’ has to engage with gender.

The second reason is that the way gendered ideologies work through the sexual body in schools in both countries, do have limiting effects in honoring children’s own sensual lifeworlds (as we saw in chapter 3) and providing them with meaningful gender and sexuality education that will enable them to see the body (along with gender and the sexual) as a historical and subjective entity (as we saw in chapter 2). The 2010s has seen an increasing emphasis in the training of pre-service and in-service teachers on gender and sexuality issues.²⁸⁶ The rationale for these trainings by teacher trainers, education scholars at universities, and civil society activists is that school teachers, mostly “women,” have very strong patriarchal notions of gender and negative ideas on sexuality, and therefore, in order for such trainings to be successful with children, they need to first be executed for teachers. This was true in my own experience of teaching and talking to teachers, who mostly supported gender equality but were very hesitant to

Ministry of Human Resource Development Government of India, *National Education Policy 2019*, <https://mhrd.gov.in/nep-new>.

²⁸⁶ In my own fieldwork, both as a researcher and teacher, I was required to attend these trainings at Alliance and Global and also got to conduct a couple myself for teachers at both schools and some government schools in Hyderabad. I would also like to thank Dr. Ayşe Gül Altınay, who as the then-director of the Sabancı University Gender and Women’s Studies Center of Excellence (SU Gender) in Istanbul, gave me the permission to interview personnel deeply involved with the *Mor Sertifika* [Purple Certificate] program, an established program running now for over 10 years in collaboration with the Turkish Ministry of Education (MEB) to provide gender sensitivity training for high school teachers across Turkey. The training was unfortunately canceled the year I conducted my interviews because of the July 15 coup but resumed the year after. For pre-service teachers, the established teacher training degree courses in big cities across both countries, including Istanbul, Delhi and Hyderabad, where I conducted fieldwork, offer mandatory classes on gender and education. Once again, I would like to thank Dr. Altınay for inviting me to attend one such recurring session on gender and history of feminism in Turkey for Boğaziçi University teacher training students and Dr. Smriti Sharma and Dr. Poonam Batra at Delhi University for sharing with me their invaluable experiences on training teachers on gender and gender curriculum in education at the university level.

engage with gender. For them, gender seemed to be an important concept that students had to learn but one that didn't configure their own lives and discussing sexuality made even the most 'modern' of teachers uncomfortable. As a matter of fact, as we saw in the previous chapter, Meltem, the head counselor of Alliance, had to bring external trainers from FPV to teach children about their bodies because their own teachers were deeply hesitant and ashamed of doing so. Theorizing gender as a lived experience that locks bodies to spaces and ideologies that have been historically determined but also how teachers' bodies escape 'gender' through their excess desires or challenge gendered articulations, could help us rethink approaches to gender and sexuality training of teachers, in order to make them better educators.

Finally, and much like what transnational feminist scholars have repeatedly indicated,²⁸⁷ what I confronted in the field forced me to un-discipline my disciplinary understandings of 'gender' and 'sexuality' and reconceptualize them. In chapter 2, I have already demonstrated the idea of biological objectivity of the scientific body and sexuality as sexual identity that gets marked onto the body, which prevents us from seeing the body as a historical racial corporeal schema infused with dynamic desires. Similarly, in this chapter I want to delve on the phenomenology of gender because the sexual body and the ways it lives and relates to other peoples and spaces was central to the ways in which I encountered 'gender' in the field. Apart from the obvious and assumed gender ideologies and performances through which people lead their lives, gendered subjectivities are deeply imbued with the sexual body and changing, more than other articulations like caste and religion, with changing spaces. This is why I have deliberately chosen experienced teachers' stories. It is through the stories of the older teachers

²⁸⁷ See for example: Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Beyond the Americas: Are Gender and Sexuality Useful Categories of Analysis?" *Journal of Women's History* 18, no. 1 (2006): 11-21.

does one get the deepest sense of alienation and challenges of modern teleologies of progress and objectivity that worked through teachers' bodies, dis-embodiment their relation to their students and work spaces and de-eroticizing their beings that are constantly struggling to stay in line with the nationalist, moralistic contours of schooling but also often challenging schooling temporalities by reminiscing times past, 'acting out', and sometimes reimagining their own lives and changing gendered subjectivities. Being of a generation that has seen increasing privatization of schooling and rising middle-class moral aspirations that have distanced them from the love and intimacies of teaching (if they existed in the first place) and reduced their worth to (underpaid) wages, have forced these teachers to change their bodily and gender orientations towards students and work. As this older generation encounters rapidly developing global economies of education, technological transformations, and generations of students shaped by these changes, their own articulations of 'gender' and belonging to (trans)national spaces are constantly (re)written through their lived experiences and bodies.

In the following pages, I enmesh and fold teachers' bodies and spaces to show the impossibility of delineating the 'objective' world, while emphasizing the need to study mechanisms of how these artificial distinctions are made in order to release gender from false distinctions of body/space and reconceptualize it through the body. I use the idea of "folding" here as used by Merleau-Ponty.²⁸⁸ For Merleau-Ponty the object and the subject, unknown and known, consciousness and unconsciousness are inseparable from each other as they "fold" in and out of each other, thus rendering: a). our knowledge of the world as thoroughly corporeal, i.e. there is no world without the body and b). the quest for knowing and questioning our world as

²⁸⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*.

futile for it's never independent of subjectivity and yet it's an important quest for it is through this dynamic tactile need to know and touch and feel that we emerge as human.²⁸⁹ The focus on the body and re-conceptualization of 'gender' that remains the primary articulation of individual subjectivity as an analytical category in the current 'messy' moment of political, economic and environmental crises, forces us to challenge the limits of forced linear spatiotemporalities of our existence, false Cartesian distinctions between mind/body/objects/spaces, and our own categories including "social reproduction", "labor" and "gender" that are often unable to contain the contours of our changing corporealities, desires and worlds.²⁹⁰

In the story of Lalitha, an upper-caste Brahmin woman from Southern India, we see how the articulation of gender is inseparable from the articulations of caste privilege of the historical body and how the desiring sensual body escapes gender ideologies and linear spatiotemporal logics of becoming. Similarly for Sibel as a diasporic German-Turkish returnee, while she embodies the schooling philosophy of Alliance and gendered essentialisms of middle-class Turkish womanhood, she also challenges those. Her desire for a better life and love moves her from Germany to Turkey and finally back to Germany, showing how quotidian life, moments of shared love and sorrow, and future imaginations move us to see both the inseparability of the lived corporeal schema and space that has already set up the conditions in which our conceptions of 'gender' and 'love' can emerge. Just like Filiz in the story after, Sibel also transforms the very same school spaces of surveillance into spaces of sociality and human connection that disrupt

²⁸⁹ Butler, "Merleau-Ponty and the Touch of Malebranche."

²⁹⁰ As an example of such critical feminist work that pushes conceptualizations of labor and capital in Marxism by centering bodies, orientations and lived experiences, please refer to: Vinay Gidwani and Priti Ramamurthy, "Agrarian Questions of Labor in Urban India: Middle Migrants, Translocal Householding and the Intersectional Politics of Social Reproduction," *The Journal of Peasant Studies: Special Issue on Agrarian Marxism* 45, no. 5-6 (2018): 994-1017.

spatiotemporal teleologies of modern schooling. Perhaps more strikingly than the other stories, it is Filiz's story of personal and physical loss and disenchantment with modern schooling that reveals the deeply embodied and lived aspect of gender, in which the body both holds on to the secular Turkish past, while creating newer articulations of modern middle-class Turkish womanhood in a religiously conservative new Turkey, very often collapsing and escaping into its own 'safe' space ensconced within the increasingly demanding neoliberal regime of schooling. Finally Razia, as a middle-class Muslim woman in a predominantly Hindu school, also performing middle-class Indian womanhood stripped off its religious markers, both embodies the de-sensualized lifeworlds of school (administrator) and home (matriarch, manager) even as her sensual body both makes and breaks through the drab infrastructure of Global and cracks its disciplinary walls in her own little sensual, aesthetic office space. I end these stories by etching out the phenomenology of gender as a theory that drives 'uncivilized possible lifeworlds' in our "not-yet futurity"²⁹¹ (whatever that might be) "in the here and now."²⁹²

Lalitha, early 50s, Teacher/Administrator, Global Schools, Secunderabad, India

Lalitha is the reason why I started recording life stories of teachers. Within the first fifteen minutes of our first meeting, it was speaking to Lalitha that I realized how intimately connected teachers' lives and school labor were.

We met right after a school cinema²⁹³ class that she had finished conducting with a bunch

²⁹¹ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

²⁹² Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 187.

²⁹³ School cinema is Global Schools' version of "life skills" lessons. Although the CISCE (Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations, formerly known as ICSE) board of

of unruly 8th grade teenagers one morning. Her warmth, beautiful *sari*, and perpetually sparkling eyes brought much energy and vibrancy in the otherwise typically dull surroundings of a school classroom, especially that dark, airless “auditorium” at Global where older children supposedly had their school cinema classes. It was her birthday that day and from the minute we started speaking, I could sense an energy, a desire on her part to connect and to share stories, her story.

The opportunity came very soon when a few days later she caught me standing outside the school assembly hall, listening to the students’ morning assembly before classes began. It was evident even when we began chatting about how intimately she knew all the other teachers as we were interrupted constantly by some wishing her belated birthday wishes, one of them commenting on her yet another beautiful *sari*, and another asking her if she had liked the present she had gifted her. Lalitha turned around to me after this last teacher had passed to say, “anything that comes from the heart [resting her hand on her chest] is beautiful, *ma*.”²⁹⁴ “You seem to be very popular *ma’am*!”²⁹⁵ I exclaimed, upon which, laughing sheepishly she said, “I have been working here for eleven years now *ma*, since this school began.” Her story that followed soon after, right there outside the assembly hall around 8 AM in the morning, shook me to my core.

Lalitha was born into a middle-class, upper-caste Brahmin family in the city of Chennai, Tamil Nadu in Southern India. As is customary in many upper-caste traditional families, she was married off in her twenties to a well-to-do groom working for a big corporation in Hyderabad

education that Global is affiliated with doesn’t officially mandate any kind of life skill training (unlike the CBSE or Central Board of Secondary Education under the central government that officially provides life skills curriculum), the principal Mahima has made it mandatory for her school to have some kind of “soft skills” lesson. For more information on school cinema, please visit: <https://lxl.in/schoolcinema/>.

²⁹⁴ “*ma*” in Southern India is used informally and affectionately to refer to women.

²⁹⁵ It is customary in India to address female teachers as “*ma’am*” or “*madam*” and male teachers as “*sir*.”

and by the time she was in her mid-thirties, she had had two daughters. Her elder daughter was born with cerebral palsy and it was on the way back from the temple at *Tirupathi*²⁹⁶ where the family had gone to offer prayers for the elder girl that they met with a terrible car crash. Thankfully, both the children had survived with minor scrapes but Lalitha suffered more serious injuries and her husband passed away. “I carried his bleeding body in my own hands to the hospital,” she told me, “but it was too late. I was left alone with no job and two kids, one special needs.” As if that wasn’t enough, her natal family refused to help her as well and left alone in this world, she “stopped believing in God, what is this God and *puja* [prayers] and everything...there is no God [!] I said.” And this is where Global comes in. Having tried fruitlessly to look for work, it was Jyothi, the founder of the larger chain of schools of which Global is a part (and the mother of Global’s current principal, Mahima), who offered her a job as a teacher back when the school started in 1997. She also allowed for both of her girls to study at the school. As one of very few mainstream private schools in the city that offers classes to students with “special needs,”²⁹⁷ the prospect of not only having a job but also of being able to educate both her daughters, must have proven to be invaluable for Lalitha as a single working mother.

²⁹⁶ Considered the world’s wealthiest Hindu temple, the Sri. Venkateshwara temple is one of the most popular destinations for devout Hindus in India and is situated in the state of Andhra Pradesh, which before 2014, also incorporated the now independent state of Telangana and its capital Hyderabad.

²⁹⁷ According to Mahima, Global’s logic for students with “disabilities” has always been to integrate them at some point with the “regular” classrooms. Whilst in practice that differs from student-to-student and there is very limited space for differently-abled children in the school (just 2 tiny classrooms), Mahima insists that “something is better than nothing” and that it is also important that the “regular” children can see these other kids in their midst so that they don’t bully or discriminate against them. In my experience at Global, I neither came across nor heard of any untoward incidents between students although my few observations of the “special needs” children left much to be desired from the perspective of teacher attitudes and pedagogy.

As a matter of fact, at all the schools I visited between Hyderabad-Secunderabad, Delhi and Istanbul, the two most common reasons that female teachers gave for being teachers were that a). it is a “noble” profession and b). it is “convenient.” Whilst the former reason is related to the longer historically gendered line of teaching that begins with the need for female teachers to educate girls in newly established girls’ schools and the need for educated mothers to raise educated future citizens, both of which are very intricately bound with discourses of female emancipation in both countries,²⁹⁸ it continues to perpetuate in the present moment in no small part because of the second reason. School schedules fit neatly with domestic expectations and responsibilities of women, enabling them not only to work as professionals and earn money but also allowing them to pick up their children from school, which very often is the same school where they work and to go home to fulfil their domestic chores.

However, as I also observed in the case of many teachers and very poignantly in the case of Lalitha, school teaching isn’t just a gendered and feminized profession that builds on and perpetuates gendered expectations of women, the labor of these women and their bodies and lives are very deeply and systematically locked into school buildings, schedules and spaces that enables the whole schooling system to work. In the case of Lalitha, her body and labor not only found a new lease of life through the opportunity afforded to her in the then-nascent Global schools in the center of Secunderabad city, it also got trapped in that space, even as the school space physically grew along with its growing reputation. In each visit to Global, where it is fairly easy to find a particular teacher- either in a lesson or in the social spaces of the staffroom where

²⁹⁸ Tim Allender, *Learning Femininity in Colonial India, 1820–1932* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); Meryem Karabekmez, “A Case Study of Women Instructors and Their Education in the Reign of Abdulhamid II,” *Paedagogica Historica: ISCHE 37 (Istanbul) Special Issue: Culture and Education* 53, no. 1-2 (2017): 71-79.

teachers meet to chat, drink tea or coffee, and do school work such as grading- it was always difficult to pin down Lalitha's whereabouts. She was either circulating in the corridors barking out orders at school peons to run school errands or sitting with the accounting staff to calculate school finances or taking care of logistical items such as school textbook deliveries in the depot room or substitute teaching for an absent teacher or, as it had transpired in our first meeting, being called upon to drop all her work to cover emergency situations such as demonstrating life skills lessons for US-based researchers. In the few instances when I did discover her fairly easily standing in the center of the school courtyard usually chatting with one of the other teachers or staff members, she would pull me aside to steal some moments to talk about her life and financial hardships, to talk of her younger daughter's college success and promising future in the United States, or to show me pictures of some family weddings and herself dressed in beautiful *saris*. Couple of her 'safe' spaces in the school included a temporary workspace in the kindergarten section of the school where we were relatively less interrupted by other people and where she once revealed to me her abysmally low paycheck, asking for my advice on how to demand a salary raise. The other was the school counselor's office that she occupied on some days when the counselor was not in and where despite the constant interruptions, she looked and felt at home. "My daughter was right in this next room *ma...*" she told me one day, indicating to the adjacent room, one of the "special needs" classrooms. It was in the same meeting that she informed me shortly after of her elder daughter's death a few years previously in her early twenties because of medical "complications." "It's ok, she is at peace now where she is," she sighed.

Just like that second morning when we had met outside the assembly hall and she had

told me about her husband's death- in a heartfelt and yet matter-of-fact way- I was all shaken up to hear her speak about her deceased daughter in a similar manner, the one who had studied just next door to us some years before. How can someone who has been through such trauma of losing not one but two members of her family speak about her loss so normally in the middle of a working day? Time heals, but how? As we saw in the previous chapter, the phenomenological body lives in time, connecting the past to the present working towards an imagined future. So while Lalitha reminiscences in the middle of a work day, her past informing her present and shaping her desires for a better life and for happiness of what has remained of her family, her younger daughter, it is the space- the place and time- of her life at Global Schools that becomes inseparable from her body and is incorporated into her corporeal schema. Physical places such as the counselor's room, right next to her deceased daughter's former classroom and temporal flows such as the time of her husband's death that marked the birth of the time of her life as a single mother working at Global Schools, quite literally become her and anchor her sorrow, just as they are inseparable from it. Time is healing for Lalitha as her body occupies and incorporates the space of Global Schools that is both a result of and also continues to inform her 'past' trauma and life.

In spite of losing her faith in God upon her husband's death, it was restored some time later when Lalitha discovered the *Brahma Kumari* religious sect.²⁹⁹ Premised originally on Hindu beliefs, the *Brahma Kumari* movement that started in the subcontinent in the early twentieth century is now a global movement known for its emphasis on female membership and the transcendental soul. In line with its beliefs, Lalitha told me how she wakes up at 4 AM every

²⁹⁹ For more information please visit: <https://www.brahmakumaris.org/>.

morning to meditate and “discipline” her soul and follows a strict vegetarian diet, that also aligns with her upper-caste Brahmin practices. As a matter of fact, every single morning of my stay in Secunderabad, I would be greeted by one or more “Good Morning” WhatsApp messages from Lalitha in which she would forward spiritual messages from the sect. As she admitted to me once herself in one of our many meetings, the key to her positive energy and happiness is all attributed to that “*oopar wala*” [the one above, God], the “divine energy” that keeps reminding her that she can only do good and the rest is out of her hands, “do your best and,” she says pointing up to the sky, “he takes care of everything,” ending her sentence with the same bright smile and mischievous twinkle in her eyes.

And yet those bright eyes and Lalitha’s immaculate bodily care and appearance betrayed her adherence to the *Brahma Kumaris*’ strict codes of worldly severance and denunciation of pleasure. Always dressed in beautiful *saris* of all fabrics- from the softest linen and cotton in the summer to exquisite silks in the winter- with her black hair adorned with fresh flowers in the morning, Lalitha was clearly someone who spent time and passion in dressing up. She would always spot the fabric of my own *sari*, complimenting me very often and giving me suggestions on what colors to wear and what matching jewellery to adorn. In spite of being a widow, which in her upper-caste Hindu society means being stripped off gendered ‘markers’ of marriage such as bright colors, flowers in one’s hair, and most importantly the *bottu* or *bindi* [the vermilion dot that adorns the forehead of married women], Lalitha had decided to abandon none of them. I would often be included amongst the receivers of her pictures on WhatsApp whenever she dressed up for a special festival or bought a new outfit. There she would be in every single picture, staring straight at the camera, smiling, her eyes gleaming, her hair adorned with flowers,

and her bangles and *bottu* matching whichever color outfit she had decided to wear on that day. Here Lalitha's body clearly defied both gendered norms demanded by her upper-caste widowhood and also the sexual purity norms of (upper-caste, Hindu) women demanded by the religious ideology of the *Brahma Kumaris*.

However, this religious ideology premised on strict gendered codes is actually one that her schema also embraces since it is upper-caste Hindu and it provides her refuge in the familiar divine against her past trauma and Global, which as we have seen has become her corporeality. Very often when we met she expressed her frustration for earning so little compared to the amount of work that she did. She had all her hopes pinned on her surviving daughter, always proud of her academic achievements and career aspirations. The year I spent at Global was the one her daughter was extensively applying to graduate schools in the United States. Sometimes Lalitha felt bad for her child, thinking about how sad the girl might be feeling seeing all her girl friends in their twenties being married off while she was stuck with a mother who couldn't afford the same for her. On other days she would express how proud she is of a daughter who refuses to marry without a good job and who has assured her that she would only be with a man who would accept both her and her mother. When she finally managed to procure her daughter a temporary job as a school counselor in one Global's sister schools, something she had been desiring for months, she once again was not satisfied as she rushed to tell me the news, "it will do for now *ma* but she should get away from this place for a better life...nobody is happy."

Here, Lalitha can be seen struggling between traditional gendered lines- feeling sad for not being able to marry off her still very young daughter- while breaking those lines as she feels proud of her daughter for wanting to marry a man who will accept both her and her mother. This

is not typical practice as a daughter normally leaves their natal family behind for her husband's home. Lalitha also never insisted that her groom must be upper-caste and/or Brahmin. Yet, the same middle-class aspirations and lifestyle that were cut short in her case due to her husband's untimely death, she projects onto her daughter, hoping that she can get a good job in the United States and whisk her mother away "for a better life" from where "nobody is happy." "What is this *ma*?!" as she once exclaimed to me, "even Parvathy makes as much as me." Parvathy was a peon at Global, one of its oldest employees from a much lower-caste and class background than Lalitha and yet one who like Lalitha handled multiple roles, except teaching since she didn't know English. For Lalitha, and she said this on multiple instances, one of the greatest injustices of being paid so low was to be treated as Parvathy's equal. "Tell me one thing *ma*, if tomorrow Parvathy gets promoted, will I suddenly start calling her 'ma'am'? Of course not!"

What do we make of Lalitha's restlessness, her material discontent within her lifeworlds and her daily displays of sensualness and perpetual erotic energy in spite of it? In the school space her body is fused with its expanding contours as she juggles multiple roles and moves between campuses and where her life time and trauma is inextricably meshed into its physical structure that both makes her sorrow ordinary and provides her much needed income and solace. The space of her spiritual healing is where she escapes to heal from past trauma and exploitation of her labor at school, a space that celebrates the divine female through renunciation, asking her to shrink her desires, her body and find contentment. And in each of the spaces, her upper-caste and middle-class construction of womanhood remains intact. Even though her upper-caste natal family abandoned her after her husband's death forcing her to take up menial wages at a school that at least provided education to her two daughters, and even though her religious sect too

works on upper-casteist Hindu control of female sexuality, Lalitha continues to aspire to go to the United States, earn more money, and also distinguish herself from her lower caste and class peers like Parvathy. Even though Parvathy is a part of the same exploitative schooling system that Lalitha very well-identified in our numerous meetings as a system that sucks from the parents and denies the teachers, her upper-caste privilege makes her see herself as ‘naturally’ more entitled to a higher salary than her lower-caste peer. All that Lalitha can do as an upper-caste woman who has been forced into working for menial wages to support a family upon the death of a husband and loss of a comfortable life (afforded by her caste privilege) are two things. One is to claim her place back in a system where her body is supposed to naturally align and when that fails- as it did when her requests for a pay raise were repeatedly denied- to turn to the *Brahma Kumaris*, to maintain her sense of social-sexual purity that is so wound up with upper-caste Hindu womanhood- her self.³⁰⁰

And yet as we have seen, her desires escape these spaces as well. Even as Lalitha’s

³⁰⁰ Not only was national normative ‘womanhood’ in India established through upper-caste, Hindu assumptions of sexual purity and morality of women (Durba Mitra, *Indian Sex Life: Sexuality and the Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019)), this purity was consciously and politically juxtaposed to the assumed impurity and hypersexuality of the bodies of lower caste, especially *Dalit* women, which was used to and continues to be used to violate their bodies and deny access to institutions such as schools (for example, see: Charu Gupta, “Intimate Desires: Dalit Women and Religious Conversions in Colonial India,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 73, no. 3 (2014): 661-87; Shailaja Paik, “Forging a New Dalit Womanhood in Colonial Western India: Discourse on Modernity, Rights, Education, and Emancipation,” *Journal of Women's History* 28, no. 4 (2016): 14-40). These visions of (upper-caste, Hindu) womanhood continue to dominate the national imagination and are intensified as right-wing *Hindutva* ideologies channel women’s supposed purity and resulting physical and emotional strength into communal hatred towards dangerous articulations of ‘gender’ (see some examples: Paola Bacchetta, *Gender in the Hindu Nation: RSS Women as Ideologues* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2004); Sikata Banerjee, “Armed Masculinity, Hindu Nationalism and Female Political Participation in India: Heroic Mothers, Chaste Wives and Celibate Warriors,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8, no. 1 (2006): 62-83)).

gendered schema remains bound to her upper-caste, middle class articulations, she also in her own small ways, unknowingly and rather ambiguously transgresses gender norms and her bodily desires to dress up and chat and touch defy the strict morality of a widowed, upper-caste, older, *Brahma Kumari* teacher. The excesses of her corporeal energies disrupt both the teleologies of adult as ‘being’ as she remains discontent and seeks more beauty and happiness in her life, while her corporeal schema remains tied to articulations of caste, gender and middle-class aspirations, even as her desires sometimes challenge them. Perhaps it is the sexual desires cut short by the loss of a husband in her mid-thirties or the aesthetic desire for adornment and beautiful garments or simply the desire to touch, hold, talk and build friendships with people in a life where she has been abandoned and left desperately alone. All these desires infuse her corporeal schema which in turn shapes, permeates and exceeds the confines of school and religion. Desires *are* the phenomenal body and not separate from it.³⁰¹ What drives Lalitha’s body, her corporeal schema, her life, is these flows of desire³⁰² through her body, which sometimes move her into conventions of ‘gender’ and other articulable systems and sometimes make her bend those same systems and

³⁰¹ Here, as I delineate in the *Introduction* and previous chapters, in opposition to the view of the body as individual, scientific, objective, where desire is seen as external and ‘lack’ constitutes the body, as in psychoanalytic traditions, the phenomenal view of the body doesn’t distinguish ‘desire’ from the body; in fact, desires produce bodies (or bodies as becoming): Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (New York: Viking Press, 1977).

³⁰² I draw on Dorothea Olkowski’s feminist phenomenological reading of Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*. According to Olkowski, Deleuze and Guattari see “desire” as an “explosive” machine, connected to other machines, that produces us- what we call bodies- but what can be better understood as a series of becomings- flows, molecules, energies, and so on. Whilst there is no guarantee where desire can take us and what gets produced over time, for Olkowski (drawing on Deleuze and Guattari), it is desire that produces social, political systems and what forms these will take is “unpredictable” precisely because desire is “unpredictable.”: Dorothea Olkowski, “Flows of Desire and the Body-Becoming,” in *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory, and Futures*, ed. Elizabeth Grosz (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 98-116.

sometimes simply explode through aesthetic manifestations of her form. Unlike man-made physical infrastructures and practices including spirituality that are premised on the denial of corporeality and transcendence of the soul, it is in fact Lalitha's corporeality that's transcendental and inextricably permeates her lifeworlds and drives her desiring body, her life and lived experiences as time.

In one of our last interviews, Lalitha was as always in the middle of doing a million things that marked the beginning of a new school year. Standing in the center of a huge pile of books, papers and files and indistinguishable from them, moving boxes, yelling orders to others to move stuff, gesticulating wildly with one hand, she argued over some delivery payment on her cellphone and indicating with the other, a spot for me to sit and wait for "two minutes," inaudibly mouthing the words as she continued to do everything else. Then shortly after, with the same energy and urgency that had by then come to define her, she walked over to me, stroked my *sari*, murmuring something about the beautiful colors and in a flash, whisked me away to a quiet spot for some tea and chat. I had been helping her daughter with American university admissions and she was clearly very keen to talk about that. The dreams of a better life, happiness for her daughter, and her own impending "old age" dominated most of our conversation. Finally, she just threw up her hands and looked at me straight in the eye and said, "Sometimes I think this is why only people committ suicide...what can they do, they are struggling and have no one to talk to...How much can you meditate? Mind will go here and there, to this problem and that problem..."

I end Lalitha's story with this comment because here Lalitha, unbeknown to herself, challenges the false distinctions between body/mind and suppression of corporeal desires that

civilization- her religion, school, upper-caste gender norms- demand from her. Lalitha's restlessness and real material worries (lack of money) that she attributes as reasons for her 'wandering' mind, much like her wandering body and desires, is ready to explode, emerging somewhere from the recesses of her body becomings, but not being fully articulated as resistance to civilizational suppression of corporeality, body/mind/space divisions, and linear temporalities. Her erotic energies drive us to imagine a realm of unbirdled sensuality and pleasure, a spatiotemporal space driven by body rhythms.³⁰³

Sibel, mid-30s, Teacher/Administrator, Alliance Middle School, Istanbul, Turkey

Just like Lalitha, Sibel is a single mother. In spite of just being in her mid-30s when we met, she had already been working for a decade at Alliance and had quite literally grown with the school. Petite and pretty, Sibel was known around all Alliance campuses, amidst teachers and students alike, for her efficient working style, leadership abilities, spitfire temper, and extremely ambitious personality.

Sibel comes from a working class family with roots in the Anatolian heartland of Turkey but her parents migrated to Germany during the great wave of Turkish migration to the country in the 1960s and 1970s.³⁰⁴ Growing up with two brothers in an *Alevi*³⁰⁵ family in Nuremberg, Sibel admits that as a girl she was never stopped from doing anything and as a matter of fact, her

³⁰³ Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time, and Everyday Life*, trans. Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore (Paris: Editions Syllepse, 1992; London ; New York: Continuum, 2004).

³⁰⁴ For a brief history for Turkish migration to Germany read: Erik Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 3rd ed. (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 270-272.

³⁰⁵ Shia sect of Islam with followers from Turkish and Kurdish groups and second largest religious denomination in Turkey after *Sunni Hanefi* Islam (<https://tr.usembassy.gov/tr/2017-uluslararsi-dini-ozgurlukler-raporu-turkiye/>).

father “always told us to stay away from other Turkish immigrant kids and hang out with German friends...be in good company and study.” However, Sibel never got a University degree. She studied translation studies from a language academy in Germany but “in some places it doesn’t count as a B.A.” she told me. Her love of languages, restlessness in small town Germany, and eventual romance with her third cousin from Istanbul led her to leave Germany to go and work first in Spain as a translator and later move to Istanbul.

“I came here for love,” she told me one morning, laughing rather sheepishly as we managed to find some time between classes to sit and chat in the beautiful Alliance library, with the sunshine pouring in and children and teachers going in and out in the background. By this point I had come to know Sibel really well. She was leading the English Middle School teachers’ team of which I was a part in my capacity as a 5th grade English teacher. This made her technically my boss but over the few months we had worked together, we had also become good friends. Sibel told me that she enjoyed talking to me because unlike her Turkish friends, I understood her better. As an Indian woman myself who has spent the majority of her life in different countries, Sibel said that I just “got her” since she never really felt completely Turkish or completely German and like me, occupied spaces “in between.” In addition to that, we bonded over shared experiences of motherhood and frustrations over imposed societal norms. While Sibel had moved to Istanbul for love and had started what was to become a successful career at Alliance, her love life didn’t mirror the same success. After having married her boyfriend years after they had started dating in Germany and had moved to an affluent suburb of Istanbul, she soon got pregnant and within a year of having her son, the relationship was over. As a successful career woman raising a child, she had had her fair share of frustrations of how people were

constantly judging her, something that I understood as a mother of two who had also taken her infant daughter with her to Istanbul during the duration of fieldwork and had left her son behind with her partner in the United States. Our relationship had become almost symbiotic, with Sibel looking forward to meeting me to unburden her frustrations of living as a German-single mother-Turkish woman in the city, while I too found in her a compassionate boss who asked after my children and about my temporarily separated family and life in Istanbul as a well traveled Indian-single mother-woman.

In the library that morning, I learned more things about Sibel's past life than I had managed to learn while working with her professionally at Alliance and in our many meetings outside of school. Two phenomena particularly struck me during the course of our interview. One was the way in which Sibel's lived experiences in Istanbul, of taking care of her son at home and working long hours at school, bled into each other, thereby challenging not only the nature of work and the distinction between private and public that has been abundantly criticized in the feminist literature,³⁰⁶ but also the inseparability of the body with place and time, with space. Sibel's thinking, feeling and desiring body was in the center of disrupting notions of labor and space as she struggled to fulfill her roles as a mother and educator and also as her emotions and desires to date again and experience love constantly cracked through her embodiment of strict

³⁰⁶ For an example of how Turkish feminists have criticized State patriarchy in Turkey from the late Ottoman/Republican times and the ways in which it 'liberated' (certain) women in public but relegated traditional gender roles to the home, only to be challenged by second wave feminists in the 1980s please read: Yeşim Arat, "From Emancipation to Liberation: The Changing Role of Women in Turkey's Public Realm," *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 1 (2000): 107-23. For examples of how women's care work at home shapes labor and welfare regimes in Turkey please read: Ayşe Buğra and Çağlar Keyder, "The Turkish Welfare Regime in Transformation," *Journal of European Social Policy* 16, no. 3 (2006): 211-228; Berna Yazıcı, "Social Work and Social Exclusion in Turkey: An Overview," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 38 (2008): 107-134.

discipline and professionalism. The other was her ambiguous gender articulation. On the one hand Sibel defied gender norms by being fiercely independent, raising a son as a single mother, and had throughout her relationship with her ex-husband, been the primary breadwinner for their family. On the other hand, she still yearned for a traditional gendered life with a husband and more children and seemed very out of touch with her own sexual desires and needs. As a Turkish woman, even as a diasporic German returnee, Sibel's expectations and lack of willingness to explore her sexual body could be easily dismissed as her adherence to Turkish gendered codes of morality and respectability³⁰⁷ and as many of my Turkish colleagues at Alliance often told me, "these German Turks are sometimes more conservative, more Turkish than us." However, talking to Sibel that sunny morning and thereafter learning more about her love and life, it became evident that the mechanisms by and reasons for which even the most educated and independent women like Sibel continue to rely on traditional gender tropes and disengage from their bodies is the consequence of a worldview that makes us see our bodies separate from institutions (such as schools), time (histories) and 'cultural' spaces of belonging (such as nation states) that we occupy. Education or schooling is an effect of this same transcendental worldview, just as religion and morality and other social structures that continue to maintain gender ideologies and performances through disembodiments of our selves and spaces. Below I shall delve on both these observations unraveling for us the the inseparability of teachers' bodies from the physical

³⁰⁷ Feminist development and cultural scholarship on Turkey abounds in how Islamic morality, patriarchal codes of honor, and modern political economy mix to create restrictive and often fatal consequences for women's gender and sexual freedoms. Some notable examples include: Nilüfer Göle, *Modern Mahrem: Medeniyet Ve Örtünme* [Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling] (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1992); Ayşe Parla, "The 'Honor' of the State: Virginity Examinations in Turkey," *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 1 (2001): 65-88; Dicle Koğacıoğlu, "The Tradition Effect: Framing Honor Crimes in Turkey," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 15, no. 2 (2004): 119-151.

space, time and place, of schools. Even as Sibel embodies Alliance's ideologies of modernity that are sustained through her own body's gendered labor, it also disrupts them through her corporeality and desires. In addition to that, the ambiguity of her gender articulations emerges from the lifeworld that is inseparable from her body and feeds and drives her desires for a better life.

When Sibel moved to Istanbul in the mid-2000s, she was struggling to belong. "I had left my family in Germany, I had been to Spain, and I wanted to be with D [her boyfriend]. We were planning to move to New York but he couldn't get a visa." Just like living in between Turkish and German identities, Sibel struggled to meet her lover's and her own career aspirations halfway by agreeing to settle in Istanbul since D's family (which was her own extended family) was based there as well, and found a job. Due to her flair for languages, she was easily picked up by a language school in the city's vibrant center *Taksim* and soon after found herself working as an English teacher to preschool children in an up and coming school in a posh neighborhood not far from *Taksim*. But she hated being in that school. "Oya [the school owner] was going through a divorce and was emotionally fraught and taking it out on us [employees]." So just as Oya's energies pushed Sibel away, the building across the preschool pulled her in. "I used to always stand at the window in Oya's school and look out at the school building right across the street and longed to work there. And guess what?" she asked me, winking. Apparently the school "right across the street" was none other than Alliance primary school. With just two branches in those days, Alliance was still in its nascent stages of growth and as soon as Sibel applied to work there, she was accepted immediately. Fitting right into Alliance's philosophy of the schooling triangle as Caner informed us in the previous chapter, the "holistic" development of children,

with her precise and efficient German work ethic, Sibel had become what she herself laughingly referred to as the “joker” of the school. “A couple of us have held multiple roles here over the years,” she said “teaching, management...you name it.”

Over the years, Sibel had become one of those educators who literally stood for Alliance. She embodied all of Alliance’s core philosophies, which in her own words were, “social responsibility, religious open-mindedness, importance of books and importance of languages.” With never a hair out of place and her impeccably smart casuals, Sibel was exactly everything that Caner and his co-founders had set out Alliance to be- a modern and “democratic” space where children could choose to be what they wanted to be with responsibility and knowledge. Unlike most schools in Turkey, including private ones, Alliance has a relatively relaxed dress-code for both students and staff. Barring sleeveless blouses and skirts above the knees and tights, pyjamas and (except on Fridays) jeans , female teachers can wear whatever they wish to. In keeping with Alliance’s philosophy of creating future “universal citizens” and teachers as adult models for children’s behavior, the way teachers dress has to be in line with the way students are expected to dress. The year I came to Alliance for my research, female students had just been barred from wearing tights and consequently, teachers were being urged to do the same. Sibel literally embodied this “democratic” philosophy of being able to choose anything to wear as long as it was the Turkish secular and gendered ‘modern’ and modest as deemed by Alliance, by dressing up in a mix that was both ‘cool’, casual and modern but yet feminine. In fact, much to our amusement, Sibel’s petite frame and her outfits quite often caused her to disappear amongst her female students, who were not that dissimilarly dressed.

Sibel, a natural leader, also embodied Alliance’s leadership goals. Seeing herself as the

embodiment of Alliance's values, "there is no school like this," she told me in our interview, she also regularly enforced school rules on students and staff. For instance the school's strict no-smoking policy for teachers, which is no mean feat to implement in Turkish schools, often had Sibel sniffing teachers' clothes for signs or physically catching a few in the act of smoking in secluded spots that smokers had mutually designated. She was sensitive to school criticism and often looked upon non-Alliance teachers with suspicion and was deeply territorial of Alliance's space and pedagogical methods. Thoroughly content with her job, whatever bit of longing that she did have to go back to Germany or discontent with certain aspects of her work, such as having to micro manage teachers or having to manage more than teach since "Turks aren't natural organizers," Alliance managed to keep her on. This wasn't just because of the perfect alignment of Sibel's body and embodiment of values with the school, but also the promise of a better future for her son. As a school-wide policy, once a teacher has worked ten years and over at Alliance, they get to send their children to the school for free, with graded discounts for years less than ten. This is a big incentive for many teachers with children since they can get their children high quality English education in an otherwise exorbitantly expensive private school and especially women, who as primary caregivers can bring their children to school with them in the mornings and have them around in the afternoons after classes end. There is also, as Sibel acknowledged, "huge social and cultural capital that he [her son] otherwise may not have access to but can by studying at Alliance and making friends with kids of successful parents."

In spite of Alliance being a school that could successfully contain Sibel and work its ideologies through her laboring body and 'natural' alignment for discipline and efficiency,

Sibel's desiring body would often burst through the structures of the school space. This included both the physical place that she so dearly loved and protected and yet yearned to leave to get home to her son, and the schedule of the school timetable and long hours that prevented her, once again, from being with her child and from having a love life, as she repeatedly complained to me about. Known for her freakish control of everyone and everything at school, Sibel was equally known for her emotional outbursts that occurred randomly, uncontrollably, excessively, anywhere and at any time. Laboring between home and school, often fretting about her son while at school, having had to leave him with a fever or having to control the movements of a new nanny via home security camera viewings in her office space, or taking loads of work from school to home and feeling guilty for not playing with her little boy, Sibel's body, as that of most laboring teacher mothers', was constantly dissolving boundaries between work and home. And very often at 'work', somewhere in the middle of a lesson when some naughty kid would refuse to cooperate or at any tiny pretext, Sibel would just lose it. She would start yelling at the kids, sometimes having to storm out of the classroom with tears in her eyes and very often with anger that couldn't be contained by her grim facial features. The children would call the space surrounding Sibel in those moments as "Ms. Sibel's zone" and wouldn't venture anywhere near her. She would also have verbal arguments with some teachers, one that I knew of which got violently abusive and ended up in the teacher leaving Alliance. Another teacher friend who was a friend of the teacher who quit told me, "she says she hates the school [Alliance] because of Sibel...the school is Sibel for her."

Clearly, in spite of the neat ways in which her corporeal schema aligned with the modern, 'democratic' spaces of this urban private school- her German work ethic and own life history of

having to position herself as a strong, educated woman who is better than the other Turks for instance- Sibel, like most teachers I got to know at Alliance, was also struggling in this space. In countries like Turkey that have seen a declining female labor force participation in recent years due to increasing economic liberalism and religious-ideological conservatism, women's productive labor continues to be exploited at work by ignoring their reproductive work at home and even though mandated by law, by not providing women with on-site childcare facilities.³⁰⁸ Even those not burdened by responsibilities of motherhood physically struggle to keep pace with the increasingly 'professional' work demands of schools. Teachers around me were constantly complaining of too much work, with one teacher tearfully admitting how stressed she was while organizing her impending nuptials and taking work home in spite of our nine hour work day and another once telling me, "I can't even change my sanitary napkin the whole day because of this school."

However, the school also afforded most of these women, by virtue of having set class periods, break schedules and numerous classrooms, spaces- places and times- of developing intimacies. Several years ago the school management had decided not to have traditional staff rooms in order to avoid "school gossip" as one senior teacher had informed me, but in spite of that teachers still found a way to meet, chat, have potlucks with homemade food, and even send around freshly made Turkish coffee from their respective classrooms to teachers in other classes. Sibel, as a team leader and administrator who was supposed to be following Alliance's philosophy and as we have seen often enforced strict rules, was herself a keen participant in

³⁰⁸ İpek İlkkaracan "Why so Few Women in the Labor Market in Turkey?" *Feminist Economics* 18, no. 1 (2012): 1-37; Ayşe Buğra, "Revisiting the Wollstonecraft Dilemma in the Context of Conservative Liberalism: The Case of Female Employment in Turkey," *Social Politics* 21, no. 1 (2014): 148-166.

these socializing events. In fact, she would actively seek out fellow teacher friends for a quick cup of coffee and chat in the cafeteria or in her office space or sometimes go to teachers' classrooms if they were empty to share her personal and professional grievances. On particularly bad days when her ex-husband was giving her a hard time about their impending divorce or if she had spent the whole day between teaching and planning and telephone conversations with her nanny with whom she seemed to be perpetually irritated, she would even sneak out with the same smokers that she normally reprimanded to the secret smoking spots for a cigarette. Very often on days when she was feeling blue, she would just walk up to one of the team members of our tight-knit English teaching team and ask for a hug.

Therefore, not only does the workplace emerge as a social place of intimacies but a sensual space, with new physical places of intimacies and sharing and touch and new conceptions of time that get written as teachers like Sibel navigate the boundaries of home and work through their laboring and desiring bodies. In school spaces that both historically and currently continue teleologies of civilization and scientific modernity, actively stripping away sensualness and desire as we saw in the previous chapters, teachers, just like children, reveal the centrality of the desiring body amidst and through the process of shaping these spaces. Not only are the physical places transformed by bodies- hidden smoking areas where barriers are bent and chairs are smuggled, particular teachers' rooms where afternoon tea equipment is stashed away in corners only to be discovered by students who over time start associating them with the sociality of their teachers, counselors' offices that also become consulting rooms for heartbroken teachers, and many many more- time also breaks free from established linear school timetables and academic years to be transformed, reimagined.

My conversations with Sibel often punctuated our mundane school routines. In spite of being a German-Turkish, intelligent, good-looking and fiercely independent woman, Sibel hung on to conventional notions of 'love'. She had grown up with stereotypical notions of finding the Prince Charming and as she put it in her own words "having children running around a beautiful backyard." Her ex-husband was the only person she had ever had sexual relations with as she once confessed to me and the online world of tinder dating had left her frustrated. She valued fidelity and commitment and was constantly disappointed by dates who were mostly after sex. All she wanted, she told me, was to "find a nice man to settle down with." In the meantime, her ex was already dating someone, adding insult to injury. Some days she would arrive at school especially frustrated after a bad date or after having seen pictures of her ex and his girlfriend on her instagram on her morning commute to school. Such days she would really seek me out to talk about her love life and more often than not to hear colorful stories from my past experiences. As I regaled her with anecdotes of dates gone awry, my skepticism of monogamy, and sometimes academic analysis of gendered pressures on women in dating which she wholeheartedly lapped up, I could see her world momentarily suspending. She was imagining herself in another world and vicariously living her love life through my slightly more colorful one. In spite of being one of the most punctual people I know, during these famous conversations we shared on love, it was me who had to remind her of the end of a class period or some work, where upon she would immediately snap out of her reverie and head back, usual Sibel style, efficient and perseverant, to her work. In addition to these small moments of disruption, in all our larger social conversations, gossip and chit-chat sessions with Sibel and many of the similarly aged or even older and experienced cadre of teachers at Alliance during tea, lunch or class breaks, time became for us

anything but the present. Our bodies occupied a different space as older teachers reminisced of the good ol' days at Alliance, while others hoped for even better days to come, and everyone continued, always imagining, always disappointed with the present, just being-in-the-world, living, in these sensual spaces of our creation, coming and going to school, our lifeworlds-bodies and schools- intertwined and always in motion.

Sibel left Alliance at the end of the academic year that followed after I had completed my research there. It was a tough decision, she didn't want to leave, but the increasing instability in Turkey, her lack of love life and her divorce that had finally come through, better schooling prospects for her son, and the chance of being closer to her family who could help her with childcare, made her decide to move back to Nuremberg. I was in Istanbul for her farewell. She was in tears, half crying, half laughing, hugging everyone, speaking a lot and sometimes speechless. There was hope and disappointment in her eyes and the knowledge that she would miss this school, miss Istanbul and yet that she had made the right decision to move. I met her for breakfast again a year later in Istanbul at one of our favorite breakfast joints. She looked well and had acquired a new boyfriend. "Turkish, of course!" she said when I asked where he came from. "I don't want to date German guys...they are so boring...then there is the cultural difference..." I was surprised as after a year back home in Germany she sounded more German than Turk and was also astounded that someone so brave who had decided to move to Istanbul for love and then after several years transfer her entire life and son from this city back to Germany, could still hold on so tightly to her 'Turkish culture' and womanhood. She missed Alliance and her friends and students and said she would continue to visit twice a year or more because of that and also so that her son could visit his dad. She sat across from me, smiling, still

occupying the in-between space we both so often talked about with reference to us, the space over which we had bonded. She was working hard in Germany, feeling-out-of-place, missing a school that had molded her and that she had molded in Istanbul, missing those moments and places we hung out, and yet not wanting to come back, hoping for a partner, a better future.

That evening as I saw her walking away, leaving me standing on a busy street for several minutes after we had bid each other adieu, her petite form and brightly colored summer dress fading into the distance, I realized that this is life. It is a series of desires, disappointments, and constant motion that is lived through our bodies and desires. Sibel's body and labor that both made Alliance, also unmade its places of discipline and linear time schedules by openly confronting its excesses- crying, screaming, fantasizing, and socializing with her friends. Her desires finally pushed her from that space that remains fused to her memories and corporeality into another space, where she remains both hopeful and discontented. Similarly, her body makes and unmakes 'gender' too as she chooses to transgress gender norms, knowingly and often unknowingly, driven by her desires to be in Istanbul, have a baby, even when she is the sole breadwinner, while continuing to desire a 'better life' where she is remarried with more children. Sibel's gender emerges from her desiring body as an articulation, as a set of performances, an imagined cultural construction- as a 'Turkish' woman preferring to date Turkish men, even as her Turkish-ness has been created through imaginations of diasporic belonging in Germany and ironically, in stark contrast to Turks who according to her dad don't work hard enough and even according to her she needs to "micromanage." Gender therefore in Sibel's life is a limit that is both borne out of her lifeworld and simultaneously de-limits it. Her gendered choices cannot be read as reflections of oppressive 'cultural', social and religious regimes, but are determined by

(to hark back to Feride in the previous chapter as well) structural, historical constraints already in place within her lifeworlds.³⁰⁹ In this lifeworld, which is secular and scientific and modern, transnational, driven by rational and democratic values, and where, especially as a ‘woman’, corporeality and the erotic have been suppressed by histories of ‘proper’ womanhood creation, Sibel cannot see how deeply her body and desires fuse her spaces and gender, even as they escape them, and she keeps on dreaming of a life and lover without necessarily centering her body and sexual self. And who knows where her desires take her next as she lives on- how many more gender transgressions, what new spaces and what new happinesses and discontentments await her?

Filiz, early 40s, Teacher/Administrator, Alliance Middle School, Istanbul, Turkey

Sandwiched between old Turkey and new Turkey, old Alliance and new Alliance, Filiz very often confided to me about her inability to keep her personal self, her body away from the school space. Filiz, a dear friend, just like me, was also a part of our English teaching team at Alliance Middle School and worked under Sibel. As a matter of fact, Filiz was one of the few teachers left at Alliance who had been there since its first opening in 1998. As a graduate from the foreign languages department of Turkey’s premier university in Istanbul, she was instantly hired at an up and coming school called Millennium. However, that school was “too far...and I was a young 23-year-old girl...” So she soon switched to Alliance, which was much more

³⁰⁹ Naila Kabeer, “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of the Third Millennium Development Goal 1,” *Gender & Development: Millennium Development Goals* 13, no. 1 (2005): 13-24; Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

centrally located in the city. One of the co-founders, Mustafa *bey*, had instantly taken to this young and ambitious Turkish woman who spoke excellent English. “We used to work very long hours in those days, sometimes leaving the school at 10 or 11 PM,” Filiz said reminiscing. There was a strange fondness in her eyes even though on that occasion, as on several other occasions, she had been complaining about how much labor she had given to the school over the years. “But those days were fun, we were setting up a school,” she admitted. However, soon after her joining Alliance, some problems with the co-founders had ensued. Known for her fiery temper and no-nonsense attitude, even back then apparently Filiz had found it unacceptable to just take the male co-founder Mustafa *bey*’s attitude lying down. “Mustafa *bey* was heavily involved with academics but you know he is so erratic and unpredictable and moody...I just couldn’t work like that.” So she quit and went back to Millenium. But as fate would have it, several years down the line Millennium went bust only to be acquired by Alliance! The same management that she had had issues with convinced her to work for them again while they fired other Millennium teachers. At the time of our meeting, Filiz had already been working for Alliance for seven years the second time around.

Filiz was well respected as a teacher both by students and her peers. With years of experience under her belt both as a teacher and English teaching team leader and a constant curiosity to learn, she had kept up with new pedagogical techniques. “I love teaching...love being in the classroom. It’s a tough job...but very satisfying.” Filiz physically and ideologically embodied Alliance’s philosophy and clientele and her commitment to pedagogy, hard work, and intellect kept her in place at the school. With her flaxen blonde hair, light skin, and Kemalist Ankara upbringing, Filiz perfectly fit the secular philosophy of Alliance’s founders and most of

its parent-student population, who hailed from upper-middle class families. “I understand these students and where they come from,” she would often tell me. A vehement opponent of the ruling AKP, she would continuously talk about deteriorating women’s rights under “Islamic” rule, the increasing Islamization of Turkish ‘culture’ and schooling, particularly school syllabus. “We are lucky we are at Alliance,” she would tell me. “The kind of things this government is making other schools do...it’s scary!” She was referring to AKP’s enforcement of religious celebrations in state schools and increasing emphasis on Turkish Ottoman past in school textbooks, which a lot of secular Turks see as rolling back Atatürk’s modernizing legacy.³¹⁰ She also invited me once, along with her friend Esma, another Alliance veteran and English teacher in the 7th grade just like Filiz, to come and talk to the children about female infanticide, arranged marriages and dowry in India. The students had been reading a book about an Indian village girl, one that I had been opposed to because of its white savior, orientalist overtones. In spite of that, Filiz and Esma had decided to go ahead and teach the book. Even though I tried to nuance gender inequality in India for the students during my talk, trying to explain regional variations and the role of history, Filiz came running to me after the talk and grabbing my hand exclaimed, “that was beautiful...and so sad!” I understood then that the nunacing had probably been lost on her. Just before I left Alliance, Esma and Filiz in their typically generous and friendly manner threw me a lovely farewell and presented me with a paper-weight adorned with Atatürk’s face. “He will always guide you,” they said. I was touched and also mildly amused. Clearly Filiz and Esma were smart, modern, educated women who rightfully cherished their rights as Turkish

³¹⁰ Elif Gençkal Eroler, “*Dindar Nesil Yetiştirmek*”: Türkiye’nin Eğitim Politikalarında Ulus Ve Vatandaş İnşası (2002-2016) [*Raising a Religious Generation: The Construction of Nation and Citizenship in Turkey’s Education Politics (2002-2016)*] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2019).

women and nostalgically longed for the secular Turkey that they remembered growing up in and that determined their orientations and their corporeal schemas. However, the secular histories of Turkey and ‘modern’ womanhood that inform their schemas and nostalgias are also histories of violent suppressions of certain bodies as we saw in the previous chapters and European aspirational modernity, which have set countries like India and Turkey on the linear path of development. However, those histories get invisibilized, as women like Filiz and Esma imagine themselves as products of a modern, secular past, while orientalizing what they see as the ‘backward’ ‘East’ like India.

Filiz had grown up in Ankara, attended University in Istanbul and had immediately after started working for Millennium then Alliance then back to Millennium and finally Alliance again. She had also met her future husband around the time she had started working and had gotten married and settled down very close to what used to be Millenium and was now Alliance middle school. Her husband held a steady, well paying job and both her children attended Alliance free of cost. Even though as most older teachers, she kept on lamenting the deteriorating standards of children in the “new Alliance” as she referred to it, the Alliance she had come back to work at, she said that she was still working there because she knew the system in an out and because it was so “convenient.” “This is my life,” she said, “I live close by, everything is around here.” Seldom keen to step out beyond the area where Alliance and her home were located, Filiz’s lifeworld was work and home, located in close proximity, often blending into each other. Unable to leave work on days when she had too much to do, Filiz would stay back at school beyond the official dismissal time for teachers, which is 5 PM. Her daughter and son who would finish school much earlier would be hanging around her classroom or with other teachers’ kids.

She and other teachers who were also staying late would bring food from home that day, have a potluck, or step out to a restaurant next to the school once they were done working along with the children. Filiz's classroom was also one of the most 'homely' spaces in the school. As a 7th grade homeroom teacher, she was lucky to have her own space unlike us who weren't homeroom teachers and as we saw earlier, staff rooms were prohibited at Alliance. Filiz had potted plants, wall hangings and paintings, a small cupboard in which she kept her Turkish coffee maker, cups, plates and glasses, silverware, fresh coffee, and snacks. The students knew about this cupboard as well and whenever some of them got too peckish or fell too ill and if Filiz was in a good mood and/or liked the particular student, they were treated with food from this cupboard. Her table was also full of family pictures of people she liked to keep "close to" her. Very often when I walked into Filiz's classroom after the students had left school, sometimes to get advice for a lesson plan, sometimes just to chat, I would find Filiz and Esma hanging out together, sometimes with another teacher in tow, exchanging recipes or checking the school calendar and making holiday plans together. Filiz would always welcome me with a big smile and immediately offer me something to eat and drink. As a matter of fact, inspired by Filiz, many of the younger teachers followed suit to transform their classrooms into not just places of learning with the usual notice boards and perpetually present Atatürk wall pictures, but also places of homely comfort and welcome where students and fellow teachers could relax and feel comfortable.

Just like physical places of work and homely comfort that render themselves inseparable through Filiz's desiring, feeling corporeal schema that occupies her home-school lifeworld- the physical space, emotional ethos and shared intimacies of schooling- time that often disappears within these physical spaces as daily/yearly academic schedule is lived through her body as well.

For several years leading up to the time I started working at Alliance, Filiz had been really overworked and depressed at this “new Alliance.” This was in large part due to the ways private schooling and professionalization is changing in Turkey, with older teachers constantly having to catch up with newer pedagogical techniques and teacher progress being measured against performance indicators to determine their paychecks. This in turn is also due to and completely related to increasing aspirations of middle class parents for their children. According to older teachers in both countries, the children these days are so spoiled and protected that they are “incapable of even crossing the road themselves,” thanks to “modern and helicopter parenting.” Over the years, Filiz had really noticed the change in Alliance’s parents and children, the latter of whom were just “too noisy and too disrespectful these days.” Even though Filiz understood these parents as mentioned earlier and was herself a middle-class parent, as a teacher she was constantly having to prove herself in an environment that she had built, competing with younger teachers, and constantly being transferred between teaching and management (the latter considered a promotion). This had left her confidence deflated. The physical toll on her body had reached a point where she had had to undergo a hysterectomy the year before I met her at Alliance for my research, something she firmly believed was a consequence of her poor mental and physical health at school. Since the procedure, the normally moody Filiz who was known by students and teachers to have good and bad days but was overall happy at school had gone to becoming the older, disillusioned Alliance teacher whose face always revealed the strain of work and pain of disappointment with the school she had served for almost twenty years. There were days on end when I would just greet Filiz in the hallway as she disappeared into her ‘home’ room and stayed there till the end of the school day, emerging only for lunch and snack time, and

interacting only with her nearest and dearest old timers at Alliance.

On the day I asked Filiz if I could interview her, her expression was confused, her face speechless. I had come to know her pretty well by this point and so her first question after a few seconds of silence was, “why me?” and she started laughing. “Because you *are* Alliance!” I added. “True,” she said, “sometimes I don’t know where this school ends and where I begin.” We agreed to meet in the next couple of days in the time between the students leaving school (around 3:30 PM) and teachers leaving school (5 PM). When I entered her room at the appointed day and time however, very soon after we had exchanged pleasantries and without any warning, Filiz started sobbing inconsolably. While I struggled to console her in her homeroom class, sitting across her from the table that was covered in notebooks, exam papers and pictures of her family, taken aback by the suddenness of her emotions, she finally told me what had happened. She had had another exhausting day at work and while thinking about this interview and her time at Alliance, somehow the memories of her first baby, a pregnancy that she had had to terminate due to health problems with the fetus, had come flooding back. She told me that oftentimes she thought about that child and how the incident had affected her relationship with her husband and apologized profusely for having no idea why those memories had come flooding back at that particular moment.

The rest of our interview went smoothly. However, as I left Filiz’s office that evening, I was touched by her loss, her sudden emotional outburst, and by her experiences of increasing alienation with the school and her physical pains, which resonated with the experiences I was hearing from a lot of female teachers in Alliance and at other schools, both in India and Turkey. As we saw in Sibel’s story, not only is the labor of teaching intensely physical that requires hours

of standing on one's feet and using one's voice constantly, just to mention a few examples, it is also one that's usually dismissed in the gendered imagination of teaching. Both in Turkey and India, teaching is a profession that young women and even bored housewives with kids are encouraged to pick up since it allows women to carry on with their household duties. I met quite a few teachers in both countries who told me about leaving big corporate jobs because of an accident or marriage or children and moving to teaching instead since it offered flexible working hours and was "easy." Several of the same teachers also confided later about how physically strenuous teaching actually was compared to their initial expectations. This phenomenon was particularly evident in private schools that often don't require teachers to go through a bachelor's degree in education in order to be hired. As women traverse home and school spaces that emotionally and physically become one and suffused with their desires and corporeal schemas as Filiz's example shows us, their bodies are at the center of experiencing pleasure- the pleasure of intimacies, of teaching- and the pain of physical ailments and trauma- in other words, they live spaces through their bodies. In addition to the double shift, emotional labor, and social reproduction- forms of intimate labor- that school teachers perform, they reveal time as a process that works through bodies to create a sense of self, life and relations to others. As a modern, 'secular' Turkish woman, Filiz embodies Alliance and infuses her erotic energies and passion in teaching children to make them modern citizens too (even if it is often by teaching problematic texts that orientalize non-Western spaces). However, as the same regimes of modernity that have invisibilized other violent histories that she lives through her schema work now through neoliberal schooling practices and middle-class aspirations that define her as well, to crush her body as a teacher, she once again escapes to her homeroom, to spaces where she can sometimes

just emotionally erupt at the thought of a lost fetus or stretch her legs with her friend Esma and enjoy a cup of coffee.

Time as lived experience is, and shapes, Filiz's corporeality and both sustains and challenges her articulations of gender, of modern Turkish womanhood. On the one hand, she reminisces the good "old Alliance" days when she was young and worked hard to build a school with modern values and her own secular upbringing in Ankara and traverses her home-school-home lifeworlds that on most days shield her from other universes even within the huge city of Istanbul. While newer pedagogies push her to her limit, she also insists on teaching, as we saw earlier, the same old orientalist texts she has been for years, which perhaps makes her feel good for being a modern Turkish woman in contrast to those women in faraway, 'uncivilized' spaces. On the other hand, her corporeal schema and its gendered articulations continue to remain products of histories of modernity in Turkey based on violence against certain peoples, based on segregation of body-space-mind and reconciliations³¹¹ that still bear traces on her body and get intensified through ongoing violences of global capitalist exploitation in schools like Alliance that use her gendered labor. Even though Filiz partakes in modern

³¹¹ Contemporary feminist, historical and literary works on Turkey have shown how the 'modern' is not a uniform epoch but a series of negotiations between bodies, times and spaces that constantly produce new articulations of gender and belonging. To see how schooling in Turkey is a result of such reconciliations, please refer to: Benjamin C. Fortna, "Islamic Morality in Late Ottoman 'Secular' Schools," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 3 (2000): 369-393. To see how different writers have understood and expressed the relation of the 'modern' to the self, please see: Kürşad Ertuğrul, "A Reading Of The Turkish Novel: Three Ways Of Constituting the Turkish 'Modern'," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 4 (2009): 635-652. Finally and more specific to gender as an articulation, the following work demonstrates how negotiating the perceived modern and traditional is a visceral and performative action for women: Gül Özyegin, "Virginal Facades: Sexual Freedom and Guilt among Young Turkish Women," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 16, no. 2 (2009): 103-123.

middle-class Turkish aspirations, her body also experiences it as violence, as dissonance from a time past when she was young and still had her uterus and Turkey was politically better- a country that created and sustained women like her. In between these two articulations of time that are both past and present, intertwined, and constitute her own lived perceptions, her gendered body explodes and shatters the linear spatiotemporalities of schooling. Memories of a lost baby come flooding in and she starts bawling, or when teaching has left her exhausted she escapes to her homeroom and has a singing session with friends over coffee. Suddenly everything is fine again, she re-imagines the school she loved and joined, her faith in teaching is restored, and the cycle begins again. Filiz's body becomes through time, both sustaining and troubling her gender, mourning, loving and finally accepting.

Her very last words to me as I left Alliance and she hugged me were, "You know where to find me. I will always be here. I am not going anywhere. Come back here next year and you will find me here."

Razia, late 40s, Teacher/Administrator, Global Schools, Secunderabad, India

"There is 'Ali'³¹² in Diwali and 'Ram'³¹³ in Ramayana. Then why fight?" asked Razia rhetorically to her 5th grade students. This was around the second time I had met Razia and the first time I was sitting in one of her grade 5 classes. She was conducting Global's life skills or school cinema class that we also saw Lalitha conducting for 8th graders. Through this particular

³¹² The son-in-law of the Prophet worshipped by Shia Muslim sects and also a common Muslim name for boys.

³¹³ Popular Vedic Hindu mythological reincarnation of God Vishnu, also a popular Hindu boy's name.

cinema class, the kids were being made to watch a video of two children- a Tamilian girl (from the Southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu) and a Northern Indian Sikh boy- whose friendship brings their biased and warring families together. Riddled with ridiculous stereotypes about the ‘North’ and the ‘South’ of the country (as if they are uniformly the same), I found this video to be problematic to the say the least. The not-so-subtle messages given by the video, such as the Tamilian family having all the prejudices, Punjabi food tasting better, and many more, were doing more damage than good to the already prejudiced and increasingly divisive political moment that these students were occupying and would live to see. For Razia ma’am though clearly a close analysis of the video was not as important. Much like the current central government’s de-politicization of India’s volatile caste and religious politics within the rhetoric of “unity in diversity”- a rhetoric nonetheless inherited from longer nationalist, Hindu, upper-casteist historical origins of the nation³¹⁴ - Razia too reduced this video to a message about human unity in the face of differences. Not only that, as Razia’s sentence above illustrates, she conflated regional differences with religious ones (Hindu/Muslim with North/South).

I found this slightly surprising given that apart from being the coordinator of the entire primary section of Global (grades 1 through 5), Razia was also the grade 5 social studies teacher and a Daudi Bohra Muslim woman herself. Raised in Ahmedabad, Gujarat within a large diasporic family, she and her two cousins from Mumbai and Sri Lanka respectively were all married together in a large ceremony in Mumbai, she once reminisced as we sat in her office sipping hot cups of sweet tea. She was married young and although barely a few years older than

³¹⁴ Vivek Chibber, *Locked in Place: State-building and Late Industrialization in India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003); Brian Roger Tomlinson, *The economy of modern India: From 1860 to the twenty-first century*. Vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

me when we met, she had a 26-year-old son, Farhan, also a graduate of Global schools and recently married to her best friend's daughter. Razia had never expected to become a teacher and work at Global. She once told me:

I never knew it [teaching at Global] was going to become my life's work. I *never* [emphasis original] knew. I am a B.Com [Bachelors of Commerce] graduate. I wanted to work in a bank...I wanted to do something like accountancy which was my forte..and just because my son was here and I started. I remember [when he was] in class 1 drew a beautiful Santa and put it outside the class as a part of the classroom revamping or décor. And the teacher was like...because I had put the full cotton display..cotton and all elaborate...she had never seen like such an attractive chart...and every one who passed the corridor would stand to see the Santa. Then it would be everyone, let's give Farhan's mother only the chart to make, let's call Farhan's mother...

So like many of the teachers I knew in private schools, Razia too didn't have a formal degree in education but had got into the school and teaching because of her child and in this case, because of her extraordinary artistic and organizational abilities. Her transformation of one of the school's drab walls one afternoon eighteen years earlier had led to a steady job and as she described it herself, her "true calling."

Aesthetics was a huge part of Razia's pedagogy and pedagogical space. For the twenty odd years she had been at Global, she had diffused the same grace and beauty that she brought on her person with her impeccable *salwar kameezs* and *saris* in the walls of the primary school, in the dull and lifeless blackboards of the school's classrooms. Oftentimes it felt like Razia was focused more on the form rather than the content of what she was trying to teach. In the same school cinema lesson that we saw earlier, after the children had finished watching the video, Razia in her beautiful handwriting wrote the word "Anthropologist" on the empty blackboard in bright chalk colors and big broad strokes. Instead of the dot above the 'i' she made a huge colorful heart. Then as she proceeded to ask the students about what the word meant, a lot of the

students seemed more fascinated by the aesthetics of what she had written, paying little attention to what she was saying, copying her style of writing in their notebooks. She had to gently reprimand them to get their attention back and then proceeded to explain the word, “people who study humans and culture...connecting us as people...who are only a speck in this universe.” While evoking the idea of ‘anthropologist’ and connecting it with this problematic video on regional Indian harmony seemed a bit strange to me, it had in its own way managed to get her limited life lesson on ‘unity in diversity’ out to the children. On another occasion, while disciplining unruly 5th graders in a class I had been substituting for her by lecturing them on the value of love, respect and discipline, she asked student volunteers to come to the board and draw a fish with fins. She turned to me saying, “this is our class fish ma’am. In the beginning of the year we drew this fish to represent our class rules and values.” Clearly this fish was some sort of mnemonic device for children to remember class rules. However, as students came to the board and one-by-one failed to reproduce the exact fish with fins that she had in mind, much to her exasperation, it looked like she was more interested in drawing the perfect fish, which finally she ended up making herself.

But perhaps the most aesthetic place in the whole Global campus was Razia’s office and the children loved being sent to her office to be ‘disciplined’. “What will Razia ma’am do if we send naughty students to her?” one Hindi teacher asked me once rhetorically. “She will just give them candy and a card and send them back!” Razia’s office was known amongst students and teachers alike as a world of colorful knick-knacks, beautifully handmade creations ranging from drawings to crochet, and millions of attractive stationery items that were sure to send any child into fits of excitement. Tiny but very neatly organized, her office was like a store of unlimited

delights for children. Not all children were sent there to be disciplined, some would come in to distribute sweets to her on their birthday for instance, as is customary in Indian schools. But for whatever reason they had come, even when they had been dismissed from class for bad behavior by their teachers and asked to go to her office, every child returned with a little token of advice and an actual physical token from her. This could either be a candy or a quickly and beautifully penned greeting card or another such equally creative and colorful creation handcrafted by Razia. In all of my visits to her office, there wasn't a single time we were not interrupted, not just by workers asking for her permission for repairs around the school or school peons and teachers wanting her signature on registers and documents, but mostly by children constantly coming in and out, to talk to her about personal or school-life issues, to be disciplined, to get her permission for some activity, and so on- the list is endless. And for every student coming in, she would talk to them patiently, kindly, giving them advice and handing them a treat, even if she had nothing, just picking up any material object at hand, quickly transforming it into something beautiful and sending students away smiling. Although this was an administrator's office, it felt more impersonal, looked beautiful, and for most children represented a respite from daily routines and strict disciplinary spaces of the rest of the school.

This didn't mean however that Razia took her administrative duties lightly. For Razia, her duty of running the primary section of Global was a continuation of her domestic duties at home, and she ran a tight ship in both. Extremely territorial of her primary section domain, she would always ask me to report back on my classroom observations and even on the classes I was substitute teaching for her and others. One day, when she was extremely late for her class and I went in to substitute since the children were getting restless, she walked in at the last minute,

embarrassed and quite irritated to find me there. “I thought this was my class!” she said sarcastically smiling and laughing it off when I apologized. She constantly addressed children as “*beta*” [literally son but colloquially child in Hindi] and talked of them as her own children: “Children are like soft clay I always feel. And I tell you Mrs. Akanksha for me my secret of education lies in respecting my child. If I respect my child that is the education I am giving him. I need to respect my children...” So deeply was her school and home labor, life and domesticity intertwined that one day when I complimented her on a beautiful *sari* she was wearing, the first thing that she said was, “Oh, I got this years ago to wear on the farewell of our high school kids.” At home too, where she resided with her husband, son Farhan and his wife, Razia apparently called the shots. Her daughter-in-law, who is a “lovely girl” and also a “school teacher” regularly consulted her mother-in-law Razia on personal and professional matters and this gave Razia immense joy and pride.

In spite of her gendered labor that got her into school and very gendered forms of leadership and domesticity that had incorporated Global into Razia’s lifeworld, Razia was quite outspoken about her support for gender equality, as were almost all teachers at Global and all the other schools where I conducted interviews, both in India and Turkey. Right after the same school cinema class, Razia herself mentioned to me how nice it was that the video was premised on the friendship between a boy and a girl and how at the end of the school year she was planning to conduct a session on menstruation for 5th graders. “Normally this is done by the counselor, but I want to do it this year,” she told me. “The girls are coming to me all the time, shy, standing at the door, not able to say...they just want sanitary napkins.” We had many discussions about the taboos surrounding menstruation in India, with Razia hailing the

Bollywood movie Padman that had just been released- a biopic about the social entrepreneur Arunachalam Muruganantham from Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu who revolutionized sanitary napkin production in rural India- as a step in the right direction. She was vocal about children's unhealthy food habits, environmental pollution, and hormones in food, which she believed were leading to early onset of menstruation. In fact, so eager was she to show me her support for gender equality that one morning, as we were taking one of her 5th grade sections for a social studies lesson on the school terrace and asked the students to form a line before we headed out of the classroom, she got very upset that the boys and girls had split into two separate lines. "Why are you making two separate lines?" she asked sternly. "Get into one line, please!" Once on the terrace, as the boys and girls once again huddled together in separate groups much to her chagrin she lashed out once more, "Please children! Let's sit in a circle boys and girls together. What is this?!"

Of course Razia could just be performing her belief in gender equality and giving children all these elaborate life lessons in front of me, a gender scholar from an American university, as I initially thought and as some friends also brought up in our conversations. However, I know for a fact from the students at Global and from having observed Razia myself when I showed up unannounced at her office or in school functions where she was addressing students and teachers alike that she very often did talk about respecting each other, boys respecting girls, sharing household chores between working parents, and many other issues of equality, as did other teachers. Throughout my research in fact, I struggled with these contradictions that Razia and so many teachers embody. On the one hand is their verbal and pedagogical commitment to concepts of gender equality and equality across all differences, such

as we saw in Razia's school cinema lesson. On the other hand is their own lifeworlds where restrictive understandings of gender and morality and overwhelming onus of reproductive labor that falls on their shoulders is accepted as 'natural'. For instance, in spite of all their gender talk, both Razia and the Global school counselor were always quick to remind me, especially before I conducted a survey with some 5th graders that I discuss in the coda, to not put any ideas in children's heads because "sometimes girls don't want to date for example but because of all the pressure nowadays they feel they have to..." It was also not uncommon to hear, in both countries, judgements around reproductive labor and the 'natural' disposition of 'women' towards motherhood and care. "So who is looking after your children?" was the most common question I encountered while conducting research in schools in Istanbul with my husband in the United States temporarily looking after our children. The vice principal of Global and a friend of Razia's also once told me about the "beauty in the way it [ideas on gender and sexuality] is conservative in India."

Just like Razia and the other teachers' bodies traverse spaces based on the gendered labor of their bodies but also in the process create spaces, can we see their simultaneous and often contradictory subjectivities as similar bodily disruptions of their orientations, intimately connected to their spaces and desires? In other words, just like these women run their home and school worlds through very traditional articulations of mothering, discipline and hard work to raise children but also creates spaces like Razia's office, where the desire for aesthetics and art and undisciplining for some moments a day suspend all these schooling ideologies, can this explain their simultaneous and contradictory roles of on the one hand being deeply invested in morality and sexual control and on the other also being 'gender equality' advocates? "There is a

time and place to talk to children about these things [gender, sexuality, menstruation, body],” as Razia would often say to me. May be gender then also figures in particular times and places-spaces- in their lives. But what spaces are these? In talking about children, Razia refers to their age (appropriate time to teach them “these things”) and specific places in the school- counselor’s office, special sessions, and as and when the need arises- because everyday classrooms and timetables are saturated with “regular” school work. While I have critiqued this attitude in the previous chapter as a part of a larger de-sensualization of children’s lifeworlds, what about the teachers? Perhaps for Razia, her everyday life at home and school is not the space where she desires for ‘gender equality’ because this is where her corporeality and space perfectly align and she continues to perform the same gender roles and forms of gendered labor. But it is sometimes in the space of schools, her investment in children and seeing them as ‘becoming’, where we see her desire to talk about gender, even if that can once again, only happen in certain spaces.

The desire to embrace the discourse of gender equality for Razia, as for many of these teachers, is also intimately wound up as her desire for middle-class belonging. Going back to the 5th grade school cinema at the beginning of Razia’s story, I had expressed my disappointment with Razia for conflating religion and region for her students. As a Bohra Muslim woman from a traditional family in a country where the Muslim ‘other’ has never been considered a full citizen and battles of belonging and modernity have always been waged through the bodies of Muslim women especially within a political moment that’s intensifying these processes of exclusion,³¹⁵ it

³¹⁵ See: Ratna Kapur, “The Citizen and the Migrant: Postcolonial Anxieties, Law, and the Politics of Exclusion/inclusion,” *Theoretical Inquiries in Law* 8, no. 2 (2007): 537-570; Tanweer Fazal, “Minorities and Their Nationalism(s): The Terms of a Discourse in South Asia,” *South Asian History and Culture: Minority Nationalisms in South Asia* 3, no. 2 (2012): 163-176. Muslim exclusions in normative Hindu citizenship imaginaries is most recently clearly been evident in the Citizenship Amendment Act and the protests and killings that have followed. The “Muslim

irritated me that she didn't nuance a lesson that problematically asserted regional and linguistic superiority in the guise of 'unity in diversity'. Why couldn't she use her own lived experiences to teach children about diversity in India? But clearly and for whatever reason, for we can never capture or understand desire, she sees herself as a modern, Indian middle-class citizen and teacher, teaching them desirable lessons of 'unity' just like 'gender equality', that have become the hegemonic and de-politicized desires of middle-class consumers in the country.³¹⁶ What's better, as she herself mentioned later, this particular lesson combined both (Tamilian girl and Sikh boy). This also explains her very middle-class rationale supporting Modi's social and fiscal policies,³¹⁷ such as *Aadhar* cards,³¹⁸ something that confounded me given that she was a Muslim

Woman" imaginary in independent India, irrespective of differences within that category, have fed on and reified beliefs of Muslim non-citizenship, foreignness, savagery and Muslim male hypersexuality, leading to Hindu White Savior discourses of protection, much to the detriment of 'Muslim' women. This is most evident in law through the landmark case of Shah Bano (see: Zoya Hasan, "Gender, Religion and Democratic Politics in India," *Third World Quarterly: The Unhappy Marriage of Religion and Politics: Problems and Pitfalls for Gender Equality* 31, no. 6 (2010): 943-945) and the more recent "The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act" of 2019 (see statement by the Bebaak Feminist collective condemning this act when it was a bill from a gender perspective, criticizing both right-wing Hindu politics and conservative Muslim male leadership:

<https://feminisminindia.com/2018/04/09/bebaak-collective-statement-triple-talaq/>).

³¹⁶ Bhatt, Murty and Ramamurthy, "Hegemonic Developments."

³¹⁷ India's "New Middle Class" articulation has increasingly been one of economic development marked with the "desire to rescue Indian democracy from corruption": Leela Fernandes, *India's New Middle Class: Democratic Politics in an Era of Economic Reform* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 179. For a comparative analysis of middle-class in both India and Turkey historically and their changing contemporary articulations, please read: Ceren Ergenç, "A political analysis of middle-class based social movements: India and Turkey compared," in *New Perspectives on India and Turkey*, 219-233.

³¹⁸ *Aadhar* cards are national identification cards that have been accused for data mining and increasing surveillance of citizens' personal lives: Varun HK, "SC's Aadhar Verdict: Privacy vs. Identity," *Deccan Herald*, September 26, 2018, <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/aadhaar-act-verdict-history-693614.html>.

woman from Gujarat.³¹⁹ Whether her middle-class aspirations that align with the secular, predominantly Hindu school space are driven only by her articulation of her own sense of national belonging as middle-class and not necessarily Muslim is hard to know. As a social studies teacher, she was also always eager to show to me how she wanted to emphasize Gandhi, the controversial casteist and pro-Hindu nationalist leader of the country,³²⁰ for the children and the need “for his teachings for us today.” How much of this is Razia’s articulation of national belonging as an Indian, unmarked by religion, or how much of this is her desire to fit in by un-marking her own Muslim identity can never be known.

And this isn’t the point I am making here. The point is that her desiring body- her desire for middle-class modernity, her desire to teach her students the lessons to make them better citizens, and her desire to continue her smooth running of her home and school worlds- drive her different gendered subjectivities in different spaces. Just like her desire to be the traditional administrator-matriarch and modern teacher, an educator that disciplines through interdisciplinary and aesthetic ways- giving presents to students in her office or drawing beautiful pictures on the board- Razia’s body makes and unmakes spaces for her different subjectivities. These spaces allow her to become middle-class, become a good teacher and mother, become a good Indian citizen and in all her becomings and spaces, to feel at home, always surrounded by the beauty of her aesthetic creations.

³¹⁹ Narendra Modi was the chief minister of the Western Indian state of Gujarat when its most violent communal riots between Hindus and Muslims broke out in 2002. He has been widely criticized for not only not curbing the violence in a timely manner but also orchestrating the mass murder of Gujarati Muslims (see: Upendra Baxi, “Revisiting Gujarat 2002 with Harsh Mander,” *Economic & Political Weekly* (April 3, 2010)).

³²⁰ Roy, *The Doctor and the Saint*.

Conclusion: Towards a Phenomenology of Gender

I am exhausted. After months of transnational fieldwork, after hours of my own gendered labor in looking after my children and being socially scrutinized for the moments I haven't been able to, after years of trying to justify my project to scholars and practitioners alike, I feel I simply cannot go on. I have been constantly bombarded by questions ranging from, "how can an Indian woman study her own spaces?" to "what is the value in thinking about gender and the sexual body in schools when there are bigger issues to fix?" to sometimes quite simply, "no one cares about students and teachers, what are you talking about?!" And on this particular day in November in Hyderabad as I sit under the shade of a leafy tree with Prof. Naveen, protecting ourselves from the bright sun as we sip tea and relish our samosas amidst the beautiful surroundings of the University of Hyderabad campus, my frustration reaches a climax. I get the same questions and as if those weren't enough, an added bonus, "feminist study of gender and sexuality in schools is in fashion right now," he says smilingly. But in spite of my frustrations, I am not completely deflated. Prof. Naveen with his years of experience working with school teachers and advising graduate students who also work on schools, leaves me with some food for thought. According to one of his students whose research involved schools throughout the state of Telangana, younger teachers shy away from gender and sexual topics but "older teachers just don't [care]." Prof. Naveen's theory is that since these teachers are about to retire they have nothing to lose and feel like they are "grandmothers" to the students and so therefore must impart knowledge to them before they leave. While this explanation makes sense, I still believe that there is something more happening with teachers' age and experience that Prof. Naveen hasn't captured, and I leave our meeting hopeful, my faith in looking at gender and the 'sexual' through

the body in schools renewed. Clearly it can't be that all older teachers feel equally comfortable discussing body and sex with their students. I can't help but think that it's something about the way some bodies transform through the process of ageing more than others. Can they read their own spatiotemporal rhythms and see themselves connected to the people and spaces they have lived with and worked in? I am reminded once again of why I started this research and the feminist stakes of looking at teachers' bodies and lived experiences as sites of gendered and intimate labor that transform modern, nationalist institutions like schools through their erotic energies and corporeal schemas.

In this chapter, through the stories of four experienced teachers' lifeworlds, I have attempted to demonstrate schools as living, social and sensual spaces, where bodies, in this case the bodies of teachers, not only align with modern ideologies of schooling and sexual morality but also quite literally transform the physical infrastructures and modern routines of their lifeworlds. In each of the stories, it is almost impossible to distinguish where the teachers' lives end and the schools' histories and presents and philosophies begin and vice-versa. As Razia infuses her artwork on the drab walls at Global, she breathes new life into the school. Teachers' desires, aesthetics and emotions not only drive the project of pedagogy and schooling, their labor and excesses often trouble the logics of spatial home-work divide and linear temporalities that institutionalization of everyday life assumes. For some teachers, school spaces struggle to contain the contours of their bodies- their desires, traumas and erotic energies- that escape and challenge the ways bodies understand themselves and their relation to spaces, to others. As we saw in the case of Filiz, her body experiences her struggles between two different 'times', as her intimate homeroom space and friendship with Esma and others comforts her. Teachers' bodies

are constantly becoming, sometimes maintaining and reproducing nationalist, modern, middle-class ideologies of schooling and labor, and sometimes disrupting them as they reminisce, hope, adorn, decorate, love and even transform school spaces. When Sibel and other female teachers gather to sit and chat in forbidden smoking areas on a regular school day, the school space and Sibel's disciplinary comportment both feed each others' unruly undisciplinings. Their gender is a lived experience through their corporeality and quite ambiguously usually reproduces dominant articulations of caste and religion and regulatory systems of nation and development and sometimes disturbs them. As we saw in the case of Lalitha, while her upper-caste womanhood reproduces gender ideologies through her following of the *Brahma Kumaris* and is premised on distinguishing herself from her lower-caste peers like Parvathy, she also challenges gender norms by disassociating herself from markers of widowhood and hoping for a non-traditional family set-up with her daughter and future son-in-law. However, it is the inarticulable corporeal excesses that escape linear spatiotemporalities and ideological schooling spaces- the WhatsApp selfies of Lalitha fully adorned with beautiful clothes and accessories or the momentary suspension of time as Sibel lives a vicarious love life or Filiz's impulsive traumatic outburst or Razia's sudden urge to craft an origami figurine for a crying child- where the lived experience, the phenomenology of gender leads us. Gendered subjectivities emerge in the way people experience life and change, which is intimately connected to their lives' pleasures and traumas and sensations of their bodies.

Gender as a phenomenological articulation of the lived body, points us then to the deeply physical, intimate, emotional, visceral, and often unruly desires, sensations and eruptions that bodies experience both while conforming to and in the process making and re-affirming systems

and ideologies but also while disrupting and unmaking them. Gender is ever changing articulations of the corporeal schema that is driven by flow of desires- desires that infuse our schema and our life and whose energies determine the directions our life takes- whether it's moving across countries like Sibel, multiple times in pursuit of a "better life," or it's moving towards and away simultaneously from religion like Lalitha, and from Alliance like Filiz. Therefore, the flows of desire through our corporeal schemas enable different subjectivities that are completely contextual depending on our spaces, but also unpredictable. However, desire doesn't operate in vacuum. Body flows, sensations and desires may be inarticulable but have histories. They create and continue old systems of caste, ethnicity, religion, and other social categories that inform our corporeal schemas, even as they determine newer articulations in the present. These middle-class teachers are very much products of their own contextual histories of caste, secularism and religion that continue to shape them, even as they create new middle-class gendered subjectivities in different spaces, often unknowingly and ambiguously, moving between the old and the new, their bodies always becoming.

A phenomenology of gender shows us therefore that a). Gender is a series of body-becomings. For instance, Razia becomes an artist when she paints school walls, becomes a stern administrator when meeting her teachers, becomes a caring teacher in her colorful office with the children, becomes a modern Indian woman when espousing gender equality in the school assembly. b). Gender is deeply inter-relational and occurs in moments of connection and intimacy. Not only are these teachers conforming to traditional forms of gender performance and gendered labor, they are doing so because that labor and system also sustain them. The opportunities they have to spend time with their teacher friends and the love they receive from

their students need to be acknowledged when we talk about these teachers' gender conformance. And non-conformance too. Lalitha is able to erupt in anger and admit that she hates meditating that her religious *Brahma Kumari* sect insists she does in spite of all her financial problems because by that point she is already deeply connected to me. Sibel too can confide in some of us teacher friends about her love life because of our intimate friendships c). Gender can only be understood by acknowledging the spatiotemporality of bodies or, conversely, the corporeality of space and time. As we have seen throughout this chapter, teachers' lifeworlds are inextricably fused with their bodies and lived experiences. Filiz's belief and performance of modern Turkish womanhood is totally enabled, sustained and reflected in the spaces of Alliance, for instance. Also, Lalitha's gender transgressions cannot be understood without acknowledging how her upper-caste body is one with the religious ideological spaces of the *Brahma Kumaris* and the predominantly Hindu Global school. Finally, d). gender is the articulation of a body that is both deeply historical but is also making and unmaking those histories by creating newer articulations of belonging. Razia's desire to situate herself as a secular, modern, middle-class Muslim school teacher, is both driven by her histories of her Muslim identity as she performs her gender while teaching children the values of 'unity in diversity' and while fervently supporting Modi's fiscal policies. However, her office space, where art suspends the linear time of secularization and the need to perform, she also connects with children across all backgrounds through her artistic creations, creating newer, more sensual articulations of belonging.

Therefore, this theoretical formulation of gender as lived experience, the phenomenology of gender, moves us towards a gender politics that is deeply intimate, sensual, rooted in space and histories and always becoming. While the macro feminist politics of engaging with

interlocking systems of oppression, intersectionality, and connecting the personal to the political remains more important now than ever, as I write this chapter quarantined from the rest of the world during the covid-19 pandemic, my body shaken out of its everyday orientations and cut-off from human connection, I am also stifled by the lack of choices and a foreseeable exit ticket from this situation and forced to re-interrogate the category of 'gender'. The 'discovery' of 'gender' for a lot of us has fueled our own becomings and understandings of our lifeworlds and has driven our corporealities and erotic energies towards political struggles for equality and social justice. But somehow the march of 'progress' has continued unimpeded. With global inequalities and violence at an all time high, it is time to revisit gender, rethink our world and systems through our bodies that breathe life into these systems and experience them through quotidian practices, and be prepared for whatever 'gender' becomes or doesn't in the future. As Johanna Oksala reminds us in her own investigations of the uses of phenomenology for gender, even the most radical analysis of an experience ultimately will only be "fragmentary and incomplete" as it is "irrevocably tied up with our language, methods of reflection and ways of seeing the world."³²¹ Yet she insists the work of "transcendental investigation"³²² and reflection of our world and systems remains important. A phenomenology of gender claims to know nothing; it doesn't follow linear spatiotemporal logics and therefore, doesn't claim a vision for a future that can never be known in any case. In a world of unsustainable imperatives of capital, it is the process of thinking and being that sustains hope in the present, a present that constantly lives

³²¹ Johanna Oksala, "A phenomenology of gender," *Continental Philosophy Review* 39 (2006): 241.

³²² Ibid. According to Husserl, transcendental is "a priori assumptions that structure our experiencing of the world": David Ross Fryer, *Thinking Queerly: Race, Sex, Gender, and the Ethics of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 54.

through the past, and continues to imagine what might become.

I therefore use phenomenology of gender to imagine a form of politics that doesn't look for gender in bodies, but rather looks at gender as ever changing articulations of the corporeal schema that reveal interlocking systems of oppression and processes ultimately created, lived and experienced through our bodies and flows of desire. In the everyday of our lives, during times of pandemic or even in the 'normal' of our lifeworlds where we, just like the teachers in this story, continue to be alienated from peoples and spaces that *are* us, perhaps just the act of imagining a 'uncivilized possible lifeworld' different from what we have could be a first step to start dismantling systems of civilization and violence that have robbed us off our sensualities and body rhythms. What if we read these teachers' desiring bodies and spatiotemporal disruptions not just as "subversive and pleasure"³²³ acts within our lifeworlds, but really as a way of imagining a new 'uncivilized possible lifeworld' "rooted in the sensuous mingling"³²⁴ of our bodies and desires, not driven by imperatives of civilization and development, which detach our bodies from our spaces of love and labor? How, as what, and would gender emerge as an articulation in this system? In other words, I imagine a politics itself that is yet unknown and open to change with changing articulations of our becoming bodies.

Therefore, the move towards a phenomenology of gender, is a feminist project of hope as it forces us to imagine not just a world free from gender and other oppressions, but a whole new world, premised on more intimate, unruly and sensual connections, sensations, in which flows of desires and our bodies move towards newer articulations of being, which may or may not be

³²³ Radhika Govindrajan, *Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India's Central Himalayas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 170.

³²⁴ Ibid.

gender. Just like those intimate pain and love sharing sessions between Sibel and her teacher friends at Alliance, where 'life' as we know it just kept on happening in spite of people's (dis)contentments and (un)happiness, through their reminiscences, wild imaginations of romance, and faith in a better tomorrow, our phenomenological project too will keep feminist praxis alive. Gender will remain or may be not or most likely be transformed through what our sensual bodies desire, feel and imagine as their futures.

CODA: School, Body, Uncivilized Possible Lifeworlds: Notes from a Critical Transnational Feminis Praxis

At first glance, no two people could be more dissimilar than Ali and Caner. Ali is the rather portly and ageing religion teacher at Alliance. As someone from the heartland of Turkish Anatolia who graduated from the Ankara School of Theology and taught for years at one of Istanbul's controversial Islamic schools *İmam Hatip Okulları* (İHO) that were briefly discussed in chapter 1, Ali is a quintessential patriarch who is ideologically aligned with the religious neo-conservatism that's come to define Turkey's politics these days. In stark contrast, Caner, who we met in chapter 3, is the fit and stylish *Beyaz Türk* co-founder of Alliance and a savvy businessman.

Yet in my independent interviews with them, both men are obsessed with the purpose of education and both emphasize the triangle, composed of the family, the student, and the school. We have already heard Caner's democratic vision of the triangle for creating universal citizens. For the religion teacher Ali, the triangle is more about individual balance and control. Instead of grand discourses on secular citizenship that Caner employs in describing his triangle, Ali focuses on the intimacies of people's bodies and relationships. Ali thinks that the triangle must be balanced for children to learn and grow. Religion and schooling are interchangeable for Ali and are means of disciplining children, just like the family. He explains this to me through the deployment of sexual examples—which permeate most of his narratives even without my asking him explicit questions on sexuality. “What constitutes a ‘healthy’ sexual life?” asks Ali

dramatically and continues without waiting for an answer, “one which happens within and for [the purposes of] family and is regulated. Religion is one mechanism of regulating sexual desire...masturbation is wrong in our religion [in Islam]...you can do it of course...but then you have to bear the consequences...just like when your mother tells you not to run around too much or you will sweat and get ill but you don’t listen and then you fall ill.” Sex education in schools for Ali is then just another mechanism of regulation and should be taught, especially to girls (he is all for equal educational opportunities for both boys and girls) because “schools should provide information about menstruation...without menses...just like without children...a woman is not a woman.” I am perturbed by Ali’s gender and sex essentialisms and the lascivious ways in which he has been looking at me. Several younger female teachers at Alliance have expressed similar frustrations. Ali has a free reign when it comes to commenting on teachers’ appearances and weight. But I am also fascinated. Here I am, a 30-something-year-old Indian academic and school teacher, sitting across from a 50-something-year-old male religion teacher from Anatolian Turkey, a former İHO teacher at that, having candid conversations about marital sex and masturbation.

In the introduction, I had evoked the Ali-Caner-School Triangle comparison to highlight the discursive co-optation of the body both under secular and religious discourses. In doing so, I had hoped to have us start thinking about how and even though debates around CSE usually boil down to a war between religious conservatism and ‘secular’ ideologies, both the ideologies are successfully able to use the discourse of sexuality education in the service of their own visions. For Caner, a modern, ‘proper’ citizen body- much like the national body envisioned by the establishment of the Turkish republic- is democratic and unmarked by religion, a body that is

‘properly’ sexual- in which what is ‘proper’ as we have seen, is already determined by heternormative, ethnically privileged middle-class bodies. For Ali who is a religion teacher in modern Turkey at a modern, private Turkish school, the ‘proper’ body is an individual body that is naturally lustful and sexual and needs to be disciplined in order to fit into his vision of a heternormative and highly gendered body. If modern schooling provides that through CSE, that’s fine, as long as it adheres to his own normative, gendered visions. Even though Ali’s own sexual desires are clearly not being regulated in a socially appropriate manner when he speaks to me, the fact that he is actually able to talk to me about the sexual body demonstrates many things, including his own patriarchal beliefs and ironically the very corporeal excesses that according to him religion and education can regulate. In all my discussions about the body with more ‘secular’ people like Caner, the tangible, masturbating, sexual body is largely absent or present only in very scientific, sanitized and biological terms.

I bring us back to Ali and Caner’s schooling triangle vision as we have reached the end of this dissertation precisely to show how the body and sexuality and gender and all other articulations of being and belonging can be discursively adopted by any ideological formation, precisely because they remain in our understanding identities and forms of discourse. Both Ali and Caner, in spite of their total ideological differences, still assume the body to be an objective entity, a ‘natural’ and biological seat of desires, that can be trained to become ‘proper’, to understand what ‘proper’ sexuality and gender is. However, as this dissertation has demonstrated, the body is a historical racial corporeal schema that is deeply related and inseparable from other bodies and spatiotemporalities of existence. Therefore, instead of starting from discursive concepts and identities of belonging such as gender and sexuality to educate the

body, we need to start from the historical, racial body to see how it produces these articulations of belonging. As Stuart Hall once commented of articulation and ideology:

...the theory of articulation asks how an ideology discovers its subject rather than how the subject thinks the necessary and inevitable thoughts which belong to it; it enables us to think how an ideology empowers people, enabling them to begin to make some sense or intelligibility of their historical situation, without reducing those forms of intelligibility to their socio-economic or class location or social position.³²⁵

In other words, this dissertation has been an attempt to understand how people make sense of their own self and belonging to a community or nation through their sentient bodies. It is ultimately people's bodies that accept, experience and sustain ideologies and sometimes challenge them in the act of simply, living.

The everyday of schooling and the lived experiences of bodies that occupy school spaces- children's mundane displays of sensuality, their interactions with each other and their teachers, and the teachers' own intimate relationships and energies that infuse schools- is where meanings of self and belonging are understood, performed and negotiated. In spite of modern schooling ideologies and civilizational teleologies of progress that imagine a normative national body and intend to produce citizens for an unforeseen futurity, the desiring bodies of students and teachers frustrate these imaginaries as their corporeal excesses often escape and disrupt linear spatiotemporalities of schooling. This is clearly visible in CSE and CSA prevention work where the body is at once the subject and object of knowledge and discipline. Students', teachers' and parents' visceral reactions to sexuality education and the sexual body demonstrate the limits of our conception of the body as a purely biological, objective entity. The scientific objective body not only invisibilizes histories of violence and racism, mapping 'difference' to biology, it also

³²⁵ Grossberg, "On postmodernism and articulation," 141-142.

conceals how that which is ‘sexual’ is not a ‘natural’ *apriori*, but co-constituted by articulations of race, class, religion, gender, and other factors of self and belonging.

It is the body as historical racial corporeal schema that is infused with desire and erotic energies that reveals how the body encompasses histories of becoming and orientations, which include historic systems of discrimination, colonialism, and the ongoing unimpeded march of capitalist modernity. The body as historical racial schema is a lived body that both makes these histories and is made by them as they inform articulations of body belonging. This view of the body as corporeal schema is missing even from the most progressive sexuality education work in CSE and CSA prevention. Even as these lessons provide children positive messages about the biological body and teach them about gender and sexual identities, the failure to see the body as historically and racially constructed and ongoing, forecloses possibilities of becoming for children and invisibilizes the histories that have made them and histories of non-normative desires. This invisibilization of histories also conceals the immense privileges of race and class that CSE and CSA prevention trainers, many from privileged ethnic/caste and middle-class backgrounds, themselves propagate in their work. Articulations of upper-caste*ness* or Hinduness or middle-class*ness* are not just identities mapped onto our objective physical bodies- our bodies are historically constructed by these articulations. Consequently we also feel, create and are capable of changing these articulations through our bodies.

The failure to see body as a historical and racial schema also has tremendous implications for the ways we conceive sexual violence against children. Sometimes conducted hand-in-hand with CSE classes and sometimes independently, CSA prevention work continues to grow in ‘developing’ countries like India and Turkey and sexual violence conceptually also remains big

in the feminist imagination. It is in fact powerful feminist work on power and patriarchy that continues to inform most understandings and trainings on sexual violence. However, in my own experience in conducting CSA prevention work at SNCSA Hyderabad-Secunderabad, I realized that the language of power, abuse and patriarchy once again fails to challenge the deeply objective understandings of the body. Not only do mostly urban, middle-class and (upper-caste) Hindu folks occupying positions of trainers in these organizations continue to propagate sexual moralities and anxieties of the assumed (heteronormative, middle-class, upper-caste Hindu) national body, the ongoing intensities of abuse and the new forms sexual abuse of children seems to escape intervention. For instance, online abuse or the abuse of minors by minors³²⁶ are not just abuse of biological bodies but also reflect how changing articulations of class and gender (masculinity) that are inseparable from urban geographies and other articulations of religion and region keep on changing the nature of sexual violence.³²⁷

In fact, the implications of not seeing the body as a historical racial corporeal schema extend beyond the sexuality education classroom and are reflected in the teleological narratives of civilization and biological development that continue to inform schooling beliefs and practices starting from the histories of colonial modernization, nation-formation, and upto the present day. Even as the scientific objective body is a result of historical corporeal processes that have invisibilized the body as a corporeal schema, this view of the body is sustained by the ongoing articulations of middle-class desires in rapidly liberalizing nations like India and Turkey and the

³²⁶ For a another recent example from India, see: “Bois Locker Room: Indian teens' lewd Instagram group causes outrage,” *BBC News*, May 5, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-52541298>.

³²⁷ An example of analyzing changing masculinities in the contemporary world across different geographies is: Andrea Cornwall, Frank G. Kariotis and Nancy Lindisfarne, *Masculinities Under Neoliberalism* (London, UK: Zed Books, 2016).

constant dismissal of children's sensual worlds. In other words, not only does the invisibilization of the historical body enable the normative national body to reinscribe itself along caste/ethnic/gender lines with increasing aspirations of middle-class belonging in urban centers, it remains invisible as children continue to be imagined as adults-in-the-making. As children's own ideas, feelings, and visceral and sensual responses to the world continue to be dismissed as improper or hypersexual, children reveal, through their bodies, the centrality of the historical, racial body, its inseparability from spaces, and desires that escape articulation. I have discussed many examples of children's desires in chapter 3, but would like to discuss one more, this one demonstrating the consequences of ignoring them in CSA prevention work in schools. In charge of mostly training school children on "safe" and "unsafe"³²⁸ adult touch as an SNCSA volunteer, I am fully aware as a survivor myself and based on children's own questions, that sometimes distinguishing between a touch that's safe or unsafe (let alone good or bad) can be challenging. "Why is my uncle rocking me on his knees as he helps me with my math homework always unsafe?" one child asks me. "Because it's unnecessary," I respond. "He can also help you with Math by sitting next to you on a chair." Sure, but I am still left wondering- is this further invalidating the child's sensuality and taking the onus of abuse away from the adult? In pedagogical spaces, in schools, that are so out of touch with touch, so dismissive of children's sensuality, how do we engage with touch? How do we acknowledge CSA both as a process where children's sensualities and the excesses of our unruly desires escape taming, while condemning it as the most violent act to be unleashed upon a child's body? This is not simply the

³²⁸ As the SNCSA group and generally as best practice in the CSA prevention civil society spaces in India, we refrain from distinguishing touch as "good" or "bad" for precisely the reason that's about to follow in the discussion above.

biological body but the child's phenomenological body, the corporeal schema that CSA inhibits from orientating around a world inseparable from it, by taking away its tools of communication and human connection.

The exigencies of honoring children as becomings and beings in their own rights and their sensualities in addition to enhancing abuse prevention and learning experiences, also extends to acknowledging the very embodied ways in which nation, culture and belonging is understood by children. Although this embodied learning also carries tremendous subversive potential that I explore in the next section, it also demonstrates the dangers of essentializing peoples and cultures that children actively do through their bodies. This is because of the disembodied and de-sensualized ways in which children are taught and emphasis on body objectivity, which as we have seen in the previous chapters, naturalize 'cultural' differences onto the body.

This has tremendous implications for a critical transnational feminist analyses. Grewal and Kaplan in their now iconic text on transnational feminisms,³²⁹ writing in the mid-1990s at an important geopolitical moment that saw the deepening of capitalist networks across the globe, bemoan both the lack of postcolonial critiques of colonialism and nationalism in the analysis of postmodernity and the lack of engagement with feminist epistemologies in postcolonial work, which have convincingly shown gender to be the site where culture is produced. As opposed to "global" feminism's universalizing and orientalizing methodologies that assume gender as a constant human experience and reproduces binaries of the West vs. the Rest, much transnational work since then has shown that political economies interact mutually with material and

³²⁹ Grewal and Kaplan, *Scattered Hegemonies*.

consumption cultures to overwhelmingly marginalize some and (re)produce newer articulations of gender, race and class in various locations. However, as we can see from children's own lived experiences and ideas (for instance students in India equating Muslimness with non-citizenship and inferiority, see Vikram in the *Introduction*), not only does culture continue to be exoticized as a marker of backwardness for some nations, its essentialism is consolidated, as Fanon reminded us, always on and through the body,³³⁰ where certain bodies are always violently marked as belonging to a (savage) 'culture' that is invariably opposed to that which is 'modern'. For example, at Alliance, during the discussion of gender both during the regular FPV class and then in the follow-up lesson with the counselor Alara, 5th grade children have a very clear sense of what's "Turkish" and what's not. One of the girls asks a clarifying question in one of the CSE lessons about painting the face white, "...some women do it...in China or Japan...I can't remember, but it's disgusting!" To this comment another girl retorts, "what does that have to do with us? This isn't Japan!" While face-painting becomes Japanese for Turkish students and for some of my students in Hyderabad eating meat becomes a quintessential character of people in 'Muslim' cultures such as Turkey (let alone the fact that Hyderabad itself is the home of the well-known *mutton biryani*!), wealthier nations become void of cultural or aesthetic markers. Some students in both countries, for instance, in response to where they would like to visit, talked about Canada or Dubai, because these are rich and "cool" places where they can have fun.

The students at Global and the Alliance were a fairly privileged and uniform group of children demographically speaking- middle-to-upper-middle class, mostly Turkish, Muslim at Alliance and Hindu at Global. While the uniformities between many of their essentialist notions

³³⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, vii-xli.

of ‘backward’ cultures and peoples and aspirations to travel to “cool” places is not surprising, there are also differences in their embodied schemas, which makes a transnational feminist analyses of schools a critical study as it demonstrates the histories of nation and belonging that still fundamentally inform our schemas, even as newer articulations of modern middle-class belonging emerge. The distinctive characteristics of Turkish and Indian nationalisms (see *Introduction* and chapter 1) that have gone on to inform corporeal existence and ongoing politics of religious neofascism, in turn continue to shape people’s ideas and desires. For instance, in a survey questionnaire conducted with my grade 5 students at Alliance by Alara and a subsequent modified survey based on the same that I conducted for my grade 5 students at Global in Secunderabad (some excerpts of which I present in the section below), the question on children’s favorite clothes revealed expected differences. For modern Turkish children, the idea of ‘traditional’ dress is invariably one which is worn by rural folks and/or by people before the establishment of the republic, whereas a lot of the modern Indian kids expressed great love for their ‘traditional’ Indian outfits that they wore regularly for festivals or even on a daily basis. The different paths to secular modernity adopted by both countries therefore very directly informs the corporeality of modern belonging for these children and indeed, the adults as well. At the same time, many of the Turkish children in the survey and in our everyday interactions also expressed their growing discontent with the Turkish nation, undoubtedly informed by their parents’ secular views, and were critical of increasing “Islamic” politics of the ruling AKP, whereas the majority Hindu students at Global, once again drawing on their parents’ political leanings, gloriously praised India for being a great nation- a tolerant “civilization” and “culture”- that celebrates all language and religions. Children are therefore learning from all

kinds of sources and by making all kinds of connections that they experience, filter and interpret through their bodies and senses. This reveals therefore, as I indicated in the India-Turkey comparative framework in the *Introduction* (p. 25), “specificities and differences with national cultures,” where children at Alliance and Global both essentialize certain ‘cultures’ through very embodied understandings of difference but also at the same time, owing to their specific privileged class backgrounds, understand belonging to the Turkish/Muslim and Indian/Hindu nation in ways that complicates static understandings of right vs. left, populism vs. liberal public discourse, and other binaries within which we continue to understand ongoing politics and people’s ideas of belonging in the world today. Throughout this dissertation, we have seen how the (trans)national is given meanings by different bodies marked by desiring excesses and different levels of privilege that determine their ability to become- unpredictably and ambiguously- many beings all at once. Here I refer us back to Vikram in the *Introduction*, who is both a modern, intelligent child driven by his belief in Hindu superiority; the religious Ali and secular Caner who both believe in sexuality education; and the KVP principal (chapter 3), who can both espouse a modern gender equality discourse and have racist ideas on sexual morality.

Therefore, it is not just children, but adults too that are always being and becoming through their bodies and relations to spaces and people around them. The phenomenal body lives through time and memories (see chapters 3 and 4) and is inseparable from time, which is always becoming the past, in our present, as we imagine a future. Therefore, adult bodies too are becoming, as the case of teachers’ bodies in schools illustrates. Traversing the intimate home-school lifeworlds, female teachers’ bodies not just reproduce patriarchal ideologies across these spaces through their gendered forms of labor, they also occasionally challenge them, often

unknowingly, as their bodies experience gender as lived experience. Their historical and racial schema articulates gender that is co-constituted by their caste, class, region, religion, nation, reproducing hierarchies of ‘womanhood’ and at the same time is constantly creating newer articulations of modern, middle-class ‘womanhood’. Experiencing gender intimately on their bodies as forms of pleasure and pain, these teachers’ bodies relate ambiguously to gendered expectations and ideologies as changing times, spaces and everyday flows of desire and life push them sometimes to replicate old lines of tradition and sometimes to defy them (see Sibel’s story in chapter 4). What’s more, as their bodies infuse school’s physical infrastructures and time-school spaces- with their aesthetic and erotic energies, they also escape the physical confines of the school- sometimes dreaming, sometimes socializing, sometimes reminiscing- as they disrupt linear spatiotemporalities of progress and routines. In often unexpected spaces and ways, their bodies also sometimes erupt with these excesses, crying, breaking gendered expectations, bonding, until the flow of life and desire makes them become one again with their spaces and lives.

The critical transnational feminist praxis that has both emerged from the flesh and lived experiences of people in this study and has also theoretically informed the ways in which this research has evolved, reflected on people’s desires, and connected “historically and geographically specific patriarchies to...transterritorial and transnational processes,”³³¹ has finally worked itself up to imagine a feminist politics and lifeworlds inspired by the microcosmic political, sensual and erotic lifeworlds of schools in India and Turkey. The “transnational” has been critical to this praxis (see also *Introduction*). This praxis has not started by assuming the

³³¹ Vrushali Patil, “From Patriarchy to Intersectionality: A Transnational Feminist Assessment of How Far We’ve Really Come,” *Signs* 38, no. 4 (2013): 848.

gendered, sexual implications of “various social, political, and economic processes...in comparative or case study terms” but instead it has questioned the assumptions of the gendered, sexual body “in terms of cross-border connections and relationships,”³³² that are defined by histories of nation, colonialism, development and modernity. By comparatively analyzing the ways in which the body as historical racial corporeal schema produces articulations of self and belonging to a nation at a moment of deep global flows of knowledge, capital and consumption, the critical transnational feminist praxis employed here reveals embodied energies across spatial histories, thereby blurring national borders, whilst explaining how the body reifies nation in the context of its local, regional, linguistic and other particularities. It both acknowledges gender, sexuality, and other articulations of belonging as important categories for understanding our lifeworlds, while showing that at the end of the day, they emerge from bodies that are living and desiring and constantly producing time, space and creating newer articulations, including newer meanings of being and belonging.

These include also, for the purposes of this particular transnational study, articulations of the body, sexuality, gender and schooling. Sexuality in its ‘modern’ conceptualization is the ‘sexual’ identity of the biological body instead of just one articulation of a historical racial corporeal schema that is infused with desire and encompasses a domain of ‘sexual’ which is also constituted by caste, religion, nation, and other articulations of belonging (chapter 2). Gender, which has formed the basis of (transnational) feminist theorizing too is an articulation and has been conceptualized in different ways across the canon but ultimately as an “analytic”³³³

³³² Ibid., 862-863.

³³³ I am referring here to Joan Scott’s influential piece: Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053-075. For Scott there are political stakes in analyzing gender because it forms the basis through which

constituted by power, that helps us understand why and how power works through certain ('sexed') bodies as it consolidates under larger systems of capital. At the level of lived experience though, when we center the body to actually see how 'gendered' bodies as sentient beings experience life; in other words, the phenomenology of gender, reveals gender as a set of changing and ambiguous subjectivities that is not the cause of but emerges as a result of life and the flows of desire that guide it. This is not to say that gender is not important. The lived experience of 'gender' is real and this critical transnational feminist praxis has enabled a reading not of 'gender' in each nation- India and Turkey- but rather the lived experience of gender constituted by history, time, memory, space and relation of sentient bodies with each other. In other words, it has enabled understandings of the ontological basis of the 'subject'- through desire, through relationality between bodies and spaces, through simply living- from which 'gender' emerges. And this 'gender' "is always already imbricated within multiple axes of power that are advanced by, complicit in, and often the vehicle for various border crossings,"³³⁴ whether it be crossing of spaces like home-school or nations or even memories (see chapter 4).

In the next two sections, I employ a critical transnational feminist praxis in conjunction with the theoretical interventions from this research- the body as historical racial corporeal schema and the phenomenology of gender- to imagine different school lifeworlds where children's sensualities are at the center of pedagogy, where adults and children are both becoming in the process, and where articulations like 'gender', 'nation' and 'sexuality' are

power works in our societies and certain beliefs become 'natural'. She therefore relies on history as a method to analyze how gender constitutes social relationships and emphasizes the use of gender as an analytic in historical work to understand the 'gendered' nature of social, political and economic formations.

³³⁴ Patil, "From Patriarchy to Intersectionality," 848.

understood through lived experiences and the desiring body. I do so in order to, in the final section, use this praxis and theories to bear upon imaginations of a feminist politics that strives towards uncivilized possible lifeworlds. In these lifeworlds, political systems in our present worlds give way to sensations around a body politic- one that is “uncivilized” precisely because it challenges teleologies of civilization- lived, sensual and relational and most importantly, always possible, but without guarantees.

In the section below, I draw on three excerpts from Global School’s 5th grade students’ own responses to an end-of-school year survey that I conducted with them. All three excerpts are student answers to the question: “The country/culture I love the most is _____ because...” For each answer I delve on students’ imaginations and ideas and their own sensual imaginaries of culture, country and belonging. I then employ these ideas in suggesting possible ways of re-imagining a school lifeworld that both engages with nation and belonging in a more sensual way and also centers the sexual, sensual and gendered body. In the section that follows, I draw on a memorable trip to Istanbul’s iconic *Masumiyet Müzesi* [Museum of Innocence] that mirrors Orhan Pamuk’s much acclaimed novel of the same name, with Fırat and his grade 7 HYO students (see chapter 3). Here, I juxtapose images from the museum with the discussions between us teachers and students to inform the contours of a possible sexuality education class that draws not just on the biological body, but also the historical, racial and gendered body. This example also demonstrates the becomings of both children and adults and provides fresh perspectives on (un)learning. Finally, using the suggestions from both the sections, I etch out the contours of future feminist uncivilized lifeworlds that hopefully provide transnational feminism more powerful, intimate and microcosmic ways of understanding and escaping our present

world's challenges and conundrums.

Grade 5, Global Schools @ Secunderabad, India: School Lifeworld Scenario 1

Fig. 1. For this student ‘Indian culture’ is variety of “sweets,” (Indian desserts) “traditional dress,” and Diwali (major Hindu festival) celebrations such as burning “crackers,” which is a major fun activity for Indian children, even though these days state governments across the country are banning crackers because of the pollution they cause. This excerpt can be a great segway to discussing and connecting ‘culture’ with taste, smell, aesthetics (food, clothes, celebrations) on the one hand and ‘culture’ with a deeper discussion of religious festivals on the other, to demonstrate to students both how ‘culture’ can be reductive and essentialist, whilst being meaningful and fun to people. This is a Hindu student and the epic *Ramayana* that informs Diwali, along with other Hindu mythologies, have already been amply criticized by feminists as a Northern-Indian, Brahminical and patriarchal ideology,³³⁵ even though Diwali has become hegemonic as ‘the’ Hindu festival. A lesson based on this excerpt can introduce children to other festivals in other parts of the country that Diwali masks (or if this is a particularly engaged class, even the patriarchal, racial nature of Diwali), and how the sensualness of Diwali can still be merged with other, less patriarchal festivals, and how the more environmentally destructive aspects- burning of crackers- be replaced with other forms of sensual celebrations.

³³⁵ Uma Chakravarti has written extensively on this, for example: Uma Chakravarti, “Conceptualising brahmanical patriarchy in early India: Gender, caste, class and state,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 28, no. 14 (1993): 579–585. For an especially pertinent example of how Hinduism and mythologies translate to families, child raising and parenting in India in modern times, please read: Shailaja Menon, “The Semiotics of Parenthood in India: A Lived Experience,” *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 24, no. 2 (June 2017): 194–216.

Fig. 2. This is an unusual excerpt and the only one of its kind from the survey. It demonstrates belonging to a region and opens up the possibilities of discussing the inseparability of bodies and spaces and histories of nation formation. The state of Telangana was carved out of the larger state of Andhra Pradesh in 2014 but the tensions between Telangana vs. Andhra identities have longer histories that are intimately wound up with the political-economic, religious and colonial dynamics of the region.³³⁶ The linguistic division of Indian states after independence further aggravated these tensions. But for the child, it is not belonging to the nation, but specifically belonging to Telangana and Andhra (because now they are split and she lives with her parents in Hyderabad, Telangana but presumably has extended family in Andhra) that is articulated. This could be an opportunity to engage children critically with bodies and borders and engage them deeply with their own regional histories to enable other ways of imagining beyond nation-state borders.

Fig. 3. Here the student goes beyond the standard ideas of nation and culture- country, clothes, festivals, and so on- to engage with parks. They first choose “food” only to replace it by “parks.” NTR park, which is a prominent park at the heart of the city, is described as “beautiful” and “clean,” precisely what Hyderabad city isn’t any more, and “huge” because finding a park this size in the middle of an urban city in India is so rare. By sensually highlighting parks, with their huge, open and clean spaces, the student unknowingly critiques urban spaces and blatant violation of environmental protection laws in cities like Hyderabad and Istanbul, in the name of “development,” which has seen shrinking community spaces such as parks in cities. One could ask the child to elaborate on this answer by designing a city entirely covered with parks- how

³³⁶ G Haragopal, “The Telangana People's Movement: The Unfolding Political Culture (Company Overview),” *Economic & Political Weekly* (Oct 16, 2010).

would that city or country look like?

As the above excerpts illustrate, there are a myriad of ways that children understand “country” or “culture,” in other words, belonging. The constant remains their bodies and sensations- impressions of touch, taste, smell, vision, sounds- and their desires that work through time and place to imagine past or future worlds- parks, regional borders- that their bodies straddle. A critical transnational feminist praxis that centers the phenomenological body would engage with children’s sensualities to visibilize the ways our bodies reify nation, even as we transcend all kinds of borders, how beauty of the senses goes beyond problematic ritualistic performances of religion and nation, and how a certain kind gender and sexual body is implicit in all these imaginations- of nation, of religion, and of more liberatory sensualities. For a feminist praxis aiming to transform the static and teleological ways in which children currently learn about their countries and ‘cultures’ that mask violences against sexual bodies, changes have to be vast but not necessarily huge. In other words, while transforming curricula, school infrastructures, pedagogy, and other philosophies around education remain important as ever, life is lived, as we have seen throughout this dissertation, at the more mundane, everyday and intimate level. Imagine then, a regular grade 5 social studies lesson on the festivals of India in an urban, predominantly Hindu, middle-class school. After quickly focusing on ‘traditional’ Diwali celebrations in the textbook, I make my students ‘listen.’ Maybe, I can dig deeper into the *Ramayana* and ask them to ‘feel’ the burning of Sita as she took the patriarchal fire-test demanded by Rama. Maybe, I can encourage them to ‘see’ how Diwali is celebrated differently in different parts of the country. Maybe, I can ask them to ‘smell’ their favorite Diwali smells to talk about ‘culture’ beyond nation and religion to food, clothes, flowers, makeup- to connect that

with nature and geography- changing urban topography. The intimate possibilities and the small moments of sensual entanglements are unlimited.

Grade 7 and A Trip to Masumiyet Müzesi, Istanbul, Turkey: School Lifeworld Scenario 2

“Why don’t you join us as well?” Fırat asks me with a twinkle in his eye. He has just invited my American friend Stephanie, who is sitting beside me and also in Istanbul for research, to join him and his group of 7th graders for a Saturday afternoon trip to The Museum of Innocence [*Masumiyet Müzesi*]. She is researching museums in Turkey and perhaps Fırat didn’t want to sound rude. Whatever the reason, I gladly accept. I am back in the city for some follow-up fieldwork with state school teachers and due to meet Fırat’s students at HYO in a week’s time. This trip, I feel, would be a great ice-breaker. And it is. It goes beyond breaking the ice to transforming not just the students’ but our (Fırat, Stephanie and my) engagements of our bodies with spaces. It transports all of us, albeit for a brief period of time, somewhere in the middle of Istanbul’s busiest and most central neighborhood where the museum is located , to another world, in our bodies, in another time.

Mirroring Orhan Pamuk’s celebrated novel of the same name, the museum is housed in a tiny building in the *Çukurcuma* neighborhood that is supposed to be the residence of the female-lead Füsun who is the male protagonist Kemal’s obsessive object of desire. Stephanie very kindly gets me into the building with a free pass and as we stand indoors waiting for Fırat and his crew to arrive, we discuss how interesting it is that Fırat has made some select grade 7 students read this rather challenging novel that is loaded not only with historical background but also heavy sexual content. Later on Fırat tells us that the students he chose to read the book were

academically excellent and personable children and except for one parent, a mother, no one else complained about them reading the book. His confidence in their maturity [*olgunluk*] is astounding and so is his rationale, “these kids are going through puberty [*ergenlik*]. What better way to learn about these [sexual] issues than through literature?”

Very soon Fırat followed by a noisy group of teenagers enters the building and our tour begins. What starts off with a cacophony of teenage giggling and selfie-taking exercise slowly turns into a more sombre and serious tour. Out of the corner of my eye, I can see the students taking in the objects, their descriptions, and occasionally asking each other, “*bunlar gerçek mi* [are these real]?” Each *vitrin* [showcase] in the museum represents each chapter. We stand and pause for the longest time at a particular display (fig. 4). Titled, “The Pain of Love Settling into the Body,” it talks about how the different emotions related to love take a physical, painful form as they course through the body. The students find this and another display with Füsün’s 4213 cigarette stubs that Kemal collects over the course of their relationship, fascinating.

After the tour, we all gather in a tiny cafe with our cups of tea for a chat and Stephanie, Fırat and I ask the students about the museum. Most of them loved it but we push them beyond first impressions to talk about specifics of what they really liked. A lot of them find Kemal’s obsession “heartbreaking” and suddenly I just ask them, “If it had been the other way around; if Füsün were 30 and Kemal were 18, would this love story still be acceptable?” Silence. Some students murmur, “it won’t be possible.” “Why?” I insist. Somebody says something about the story being set in the past. “Don’t rush to answer,” I say. “Think about it in your free time.”

At the mention of the “past” and “time,” Fırat asks the students about a particular *vitrin* (fig. 5). There ensues a discussion about Turkish modernity and the passing of time. One student

connects the type and number of cigarettes smoked in the novel and the museum display of the same with historical events. So, Stephanie asks finally, “do museums tell a story?” “Well this one does,” one student says, “this is a special museum with a story, but most museums...” her voice trails off. “But if history is a story,” Stephanie pushes on, “and museums have historical objects..” “Yes!” one of the precocious boys in the group interrupts. “Museums do tell a story...a collection of objects represent historical time...” However, he goes off on a tangent soon after and a few days later, when I visit their school, he tells me that he loved the museum trip and his real dream is to visit Tupac’s museum in California. He loves rapping.

And so just like that, for about an hour, our conversations, that are interspersed with tea service, jokes, and the students’ incessant curiosities about Stephanie and my personal lives, switch between the museum and our lives, between the past and the present, between Turkish history and American dreams (a lot of the students want to know how being a student in America is like). We finally take more selfies, leave the cafe, and make our way back to the busy *İstiklal* street where many of us will catch buses to or walk home. A group of girls decide to hang around this famous avenue with its many shops to do some shopping. Life goes back to normal.

As Stephanie and I make our way back to my place for some dinner, still thinking about the trip to the museum, the objects, the sense of nostalgia and the conversations with the students, we concur on one thing. In our initial skepticism about 12-year-olds reading this novel and visiting the museum when we stood waiting for them, we had never anticipated the students to be touched, and ourselves as well, with what they had read and seen and felt. Feeling slightly disoriented as our bodies are forced back into this world to go and buy groceries for dinner, we also both start imagining the possibilities of the museum and the book in schools. We both agree

with Firat that these students could handle the book. Sure, we are also a bit disappointed by the students not seeing the gender inequality and violence against women that is so blatant in the novel and some of the showcases in the museum. But we have got them thinking. We are also slightly frustrated with how quickly things went back to normal and students started using their cellphones to take selfies. But that is life and we are glad that we got those moments, albeit brief, to momentarily suspend time, disrupt our space of being, to become the characters in the novel. That evening, over dessert, we talk of a lesson where we can combine storytelling with lessons on gender and sexuality. I imagine how the amazing FPV trainer Tayfun might juxtapose the anatomical model of the male and female body with the anatomical picture of the showcase in fig. 4. The former is pure biology and the latter is inseparably intertwined biology and emotion. I imagine what a close reading of Füsün's sexual encounters in her historical context might reveal to us about the sexual body and gender in our present day. We haven't made a curriculum, but we have created an opening with our conversations and sensations today. And besides it looks like long before us, Firat, with this group of children in a poor city state school, has started many conversations already.

Towards Uncivilized Possible Lifeworlds

Places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state, symbolizations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body. "I feel good here," the well-being under-expressed in the language it appears in like a fleeting glimmer is a spatial practice.³³⁷

³³⁷ Michael de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 108.

I have endeavored in this dissertation to tell a story of “accumulated times” and “inward-turning histories” of schools that are “encysted in the pain or pleasure” of the bodies of people that occupy them and are inseparable from them. In the process of telling this story, of thinking through the flesh, I haven’t offered just a phenomenology or “embodied experience” of schooling, but also endeavored to show how the body “underlies the production of knowledge and grounds politics.”³³⁸ As schools continue to be ideological battlegrounds for production of national identities and citizenship- both explicitly through education debates and implicitly through their “inward-turning” histories and “enigmatic state” that have rendered them ‘natural’ in our modern imaginations- a study of their lifeworlds informs a critical transnational feminist praxis and theorization in fruitful ways. It demonstrates how the body is the site for reifying national belonging, orientalizing transnational differences, and invisibilizing connected histories of nations, spaces and bodies to each other. It shows the similarities of human embodiment as it works through common flows of global capital and desire that it itself creates through (re)writing history and invisibilizing belonging. The body becomes- national, regional, global, sexual, gendered- as so many of its sensations escape articulations and invisibilize its histories to itself- making us see ourselves as distinct biological entities belonging to nations.

Most importantly school lifeworlds demonstrate and offer more intimate possibilities of political change and mobilization- possibilities driven by desire and erotic energies. They show that irrespective of the most progressive textbooks and policies, schooling boils down to teachers’ own sentient bodies and connections to their students, their reminiscences of their own schooling days, and orientations of our historical, racial schemas that carry on to naturalize

³³⁸ Fielding, “A Feminist Phenomenology Manifesto,” ix.

violence and discrimination through teleological narratives of schooling in everyday, intimate practices. But children's own sensual engagements, their ability to imagine parks as culture for instance in the Global survey above, and teachers' own sensual displays and desires in spite of their gendered labor and traumas, offer hopeful, intimate possibilities of change. Therefore, schools as microcosmic political lifeworlds demonstrate bodies as political entities and render imaginations of politics centered around bodies possible. But what I am insisting on here, the possibility of change in the imaginations of unruly, undisciplined uncivilized lifeworlds, is not just a project of intimate body politics but also one of hope. Here I draw on Ahmed's theorization of feminist politics as a politics of hope, where hope through our bodies drives change not because of "the failure of the past."³³⁹ After all, the past is constantly becoming through our phenomenological bodies, and therefore, a project that desires through the body as phenomena is naturally hopeful as it, as Ahmed reminds us, "involves a relationship to the present, and to the present as affected by its imperfect translation of the past."³⁴⁰ If we engage with the histories of our becoming (see chapters 1 and 2), imagining uncivilized possible lifeworlds will be a political project of hope driven not just by the cognizance of violent histories but also of intimate sensations and pleasures of the body. The pleasures of reliving Kemal's masculine yet tantalizing obsession with Füsun in 1970s Istanbul in *Masumiyet Müzesi* or dressing up for Diwali or looking for love after divorce (see Sibel, chapter 4) or sipping tea with friends in the middle of an exhausting workday- all are excesses that escape civilizational demands of capitalist productivity and time and border on the unruly (why does a widow like Lalitha look so seductively at the camera and smile for her WhatsApp pictures?). I contend that such pleasures,

³³⁹ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 184.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

erotic energies and desires of the sexual body should drive and inform feminist politics and uncivilized possible lifeworlds.

So what would these possible lifeworlds look like? The two school lifeworld scenarios above that employ a critical transnational feminist praxis and employ theorizations of the body in the service of pedagogy, can inform them. First of all, this will always be a ‘possible’ lifeworld, a lifeworld that may or may not be achieved and even if it is, may not be what we imagined. As we saw in the trip to *Masumiyet Müzesi*, Stephanie, Fırat and I could drive the kids to a certain point to engage with their own sensual energies, which they did, but sometimes we stopped, for some becomings were not quite there, some imaginations still had to become and needed time. We were also frustrated when things ended anticlimactically in the middle of Istanbul’s busiest street, and could only hope that possible seeds of becoming had been sown. Since our political project of uncivilized possible lifeworlds is “enacted in the realm of unpredictable human relations,”³⁴¹ it will forever be without guarantees but dynamic and full of hope. Secondly and in addition to this point, and acknowledging once again Feride’s wise words (see chapter 3), our uncivilized possible lifeworlds will also always emerge from “the context and situation, the backdrop of history to which they [our ideas, actions] belong.”³⁴² The children in Global demonstrate this through their survey answers. Even as their sensual bodies traverse national, regional and religious and urban/nature borders and dichotomies respectively, they have also been informed by those histories. But it is precisely because of this that they can also rewrite them through their sentient bodies, a potential that I try to imagine in the alternative school lifeworld scenario musings (figs. 1-3) by engaging children sensually in a mundane social

³⁴¹ Fielding, “A Feminist Phenomenology Manifesto,” ix.

³⁴² Ibid.

studies classroom.

Thirdly, and at the core of its existence, uncivilized possible lifeworlds are transnational lifeworlds where flow of desires, body becomings and sensations traverse national borders and transform bodies, land, spaces into one or something else, we never know. Just like those brief moments when our bodies in the trip to *Masumiyet Müzesi* disrupted teleologies of time and being by pausing in front of the anatomical figure of love's pain or when the children became one with Füsun's bodily desires and pain in counting her 4213 cigarettes, our sensations became one and connected us, moving us closer and then suddenly apart with another sound or sight or smell that distracted us, becoming too, a part of us and our lives. Therefore, even though I envision deterritorialized lifeworlds as a critical transnational feminist project of hope and foreground the flow of desires and pleasures in its imaginations, I leave open the ambiguities of these sensations, the possibilities of what might become, not as a grand political vision, but as hopeful possibilities of smaller, more intimate and unruly changes.

The fourth and also another core characteristic of uncivilized possible lifeworlds is that they are thoroughly un-civilized- systematically as a process divested of civilization- of notions of biological objectivity and 'being' and progress narratives that place us apart from and above the living world. As an example, imagine a lifeworld where instead of 'schools' of knowledge like Global, we connect to the world- just like the children in the Global survey, through our smells, desires to touch and adorn flowers, desires to dress and dream of worlds- by constantly becoming through our senses and desires. A new language of being and ethics will emerge in this lifeworld, one that is different from the language of morality that relies on our present articulations of systems that oppress us, like 'gender' and one that we keep on perpetuating in

spaces like schools by trying to create ‘moral’ and ‘proper’ sexual citizens. New ethics and languages that emerge from the sentient body will transform with infinite possibilities that remain yet unknown to our present epistemes as we remain ontologically yet to become uncivilized.

Finally, our uncivilized possible lifeworlds have to be deeply inter-relational. If anything, this critical transnational feminist analysis and the praxis borne out of it has shown that any epistemological project is bound for failure, including schools that are the center of epistemic generation, unless it challenges our assumptions and the ontological basis of our beings, of how we live, learn and feel. In the process, this research has shown that to be human is to be cognizant of ourselves and to articulate our belonging to the world only in relation to other people and spaces, to whom we remain inextricably bound. The middle-class zeal for progress that we see reflected in the education of our children, a reflection with which I began this dissertation, continues to disconnect us from our labors, loves and relations to others and our earth,³⁴³ even as our desires, sexual bodies and erotic energies also escape those imperatives of progress. However, as tempting as this annihilistic urge to write off our existence is in our present world, it will have to wait. Maybe that is another story waiting to become through our bodies. In the meantime, what keeps us becoming in this world is hopeful imaginations of unruly lifeworlds, where our palpable desires take us to becomings yet unknown.

³⁴³ Estelle Ferrarese, “Precarity of Work, Precarity of Moral Dispositions: Concern for Others in the Era of “Emotional” Capitalism,” *WSQ: Women’s Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (2017): 176-92.

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APPENDIX

Chapter Three Images

fig. 1



fig. 2



fig. 3



fig. 4



fig. 5



fig. 6

Coda Images

The country or culture I love the most is India because
 food variety of sweets and etc. We have to
 wear traditional dress. For diwali we can
 burn crackers.

fig. 1

state
 The country or culture I love the most is Telangana and Andhra Pradesh because
 I have born in Andhra Pradesh and I love go to
 Andhra Pradesh now. ~~Because~~ Because I always
 in Telangana with my mother and father.

fig. 2

The country or culture I love the most is the ^{parks} ~~park~~ because
 they are beautiful and clean parks in India.
~~one~~ one = NTR park is the huge park and cleanest
 park

fig. 3

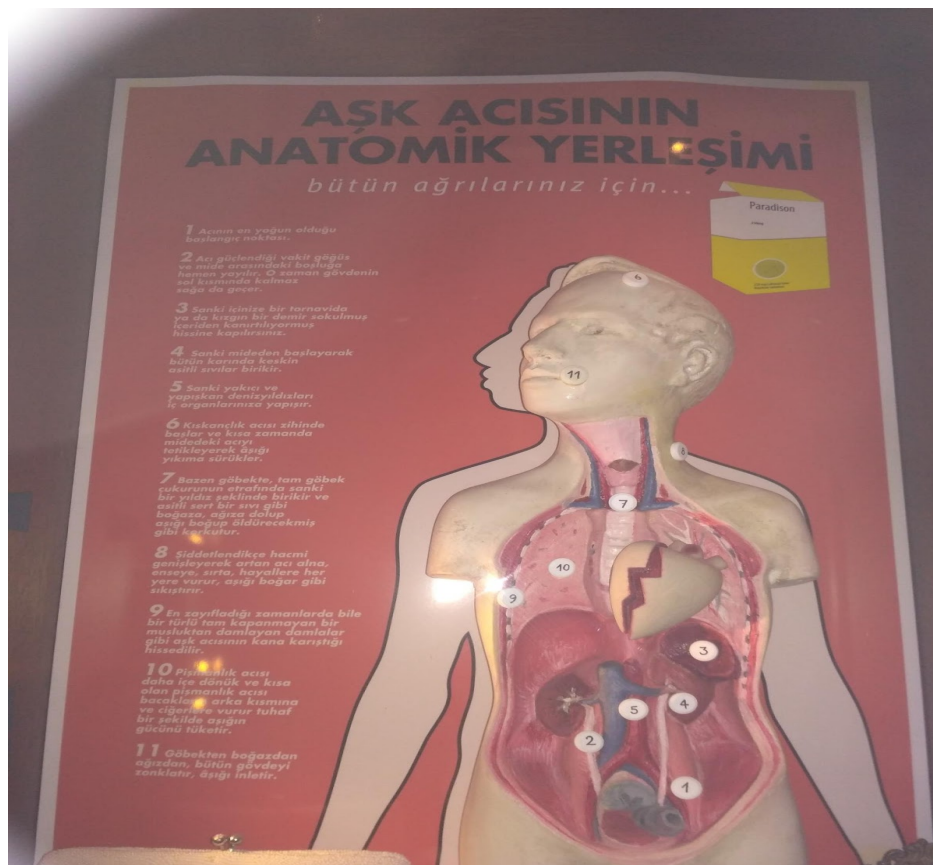


fig. 4

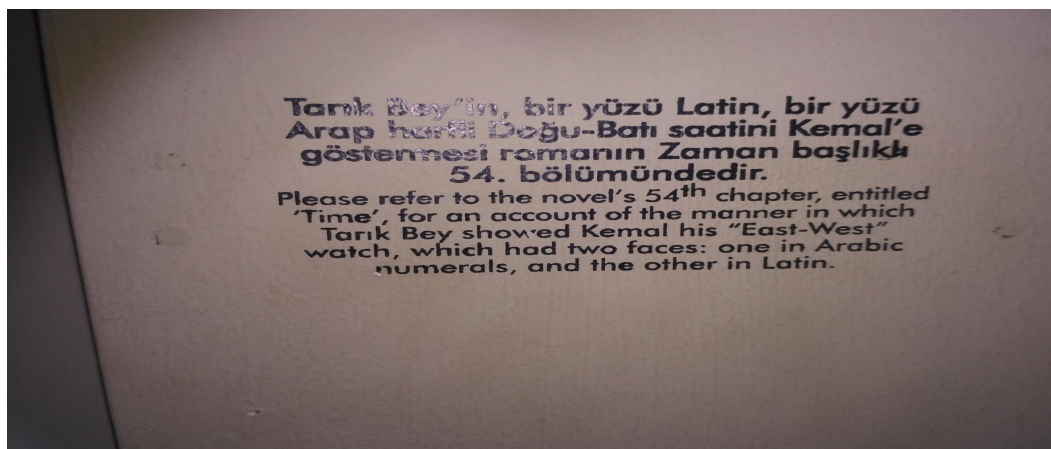


fig. 5