Step,
Choose
& *Play*

by

SHRUTI GUPTA

Master *of*
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a *note*
OF THANKS

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Step,
Choose
& *Play*

A DESIGNED INTERVENTION
TO CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO

supervised by
DEBORAH SHACKLETON *&*
HÉLÈNE DAY FRASER

table *of*
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1. the *beginning*

abstract

The global climate of #METOO AND #TIMESUP has forced us to recognise that violence against women has a long and dark history that needs to be acknowledged. Antithetical to this are the number of crimes against women recorded by the India National Crime Record Bureau (thirty nine per hour) (NCRB, 2016). The brutal rape of Nirbhaya shocked countries world over. It forced Indians to take notice - this had more to do with the breeding of a culture of violence than a case of a one-off incident. In this context, the objective of this dissertation and its outcomes have been to expose a few examples of where this violence towards women potentially stems from. Within a research framework grounded in design and material praxis, this thesis used a narrative based enquiry along with embodied ways of knowing to develop a series of interventions that cite historical and contemporary examples. These informed three rounds of redesign of the well known game Snakes and Ladders. User participation and testing were used to refine schemas of chance to choice within the game. Throughout this design process I have aimed to challenge behaviors and provide spaces to have discussions about problematic biases that subjugate women. Moving forward this work will continue to be developed. It will shift, with care and attention, to India where it will be further developed to better reflect the nuances of the context it is meant for.

note *to*
THE READER

Over the past two years women have become increasingly vocal, more assertive and exceptionally defiant in their fight against injustice and inequality. Individuals such as Harvey Weinstein, Louis CK, Kevin Spacey and Aziz Ansari have been called out with charges of sexual assault, misconduct and untoward behavior towards women. 2017 has seen raging movements on social media like the #METOO and #TIMESUP campaigns which have sent out crystal clear messages that women will no longer stay silent.

One in three (35%) women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime (WHO, 2017) . This statistic also suggests that women who have been abused in childhood are more likely to experience and accept intimate partner violence.

But while many contemporary women are vocal, articulate and in positions to stand up against powerful people and organizational structures, this is not the case for all. *Collier Meyerson* (2017) recently noted that there is a crucial wrinkle: People on the margins—women of color, poor women, undocumented women, and trans men and women—are uniquely impacted by sexual assault and harassment. (MEYERSON, 2017)

This thesis acknowledges the global conversations that have been informing my journey and explorations. It seems what is needed now is a shift in mindset, not as a space to teach and inform but towards making noise - a real change in discourse and action. The expectations of women for the most part remain the same across the world - of being treated as equals, with dignity and with the freedom to be who they aspire to be.

introduction

Marginalized: (of a person, group, or concept) treated as insignificant or peripheral.

So, very distinct from the North American perspective, this document is about those women of India- who are less privileged, less educated and so often marginalised. It aims to expose and find means to address the factors that influence women's systemic oppression and perpetuate stereotypical role expectations in society. It has been, for me, as a woman, a means of considering ways in which we might be able to bridge the gender divide and reclaim our place in society - in a place I call home. The following sections will describe the progress of this body of research which was generative and grounded in material practice. Initially, this project, which addresses the Indian context, began by seeking means to address child safety and protection from sexual abuse by empowering caregivers. Quickly however, secondary research and a shift of focus amplified the extent to which women in India are still largely shackled when it comes to their autonomy. Hindu doctrines and epics have specifically defined roles for women.

When challenged, these expectations are met with great opposition and sometimes even death. This confusing and restrictive environment is further complicated when the portrayal of women in Indian popular culture is considered.

I will draw you through my process in stages. The first section addresses the Indian context and speaks specifically to the existence of the Hindu Caste System and its historical and contemporary repercussions on women. This will be used to provide the reader with the contextual framing that guides this dissertation. The next section discusses the use of stories and storytelling in India and details aspects of my material, studio based practice, including craft based activities and video prototypes that explore representations of women in Indian Bollywood Masala films as well as the daily reality they inhabit. The last section discusses the development and iterative redesign of the popular board game: Snakes and Ladders as a tool for sensitisation and a means to ignite needed discourse about alternate futures for women in India.

glossary

Masala: Literally known as a blend of spices. In this thesis it alludes to the presence of a variety of song and dance sequences, some drama, romance, action, a lavish wedding and item numbers.

Kaavad: It is a box made to resemble a shrine or temple and has various visual narratives hand painted on each door. Gyan Chaupar:

Mahabharatat: One of the two major Sanskrit epics from India and also considered the longest poem ever written. Amongst Hindus it has philosophical and devotional relevance.

Manusmriti: Dharmashastra is a genre of Sanskrit texts, and refers to the treatises (shastras) of Hinduism on dharma. The Manusmriti is the most important and earliest metrical work on the Dharmashastra.

Patriarchy: A system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it. (PATRIARCHY, N.D.)

Cognitive dissonance: Cognitive dissonance refers to a situation involving conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviors. (MCLEOD, 2014)

Fourth wall: The fourth wall is a performance convention in which an invisible, imagined wall separates actors from the audience. While the audience can see through this wall, the convention assumes, the actors act as if they cannot. (FOURTH WALL, N.D.)

Gesture: Moving a hand, head, eyes or any part of the body to express an idea, feeling or emotion.

Making: The process of constructing meaning, ideas and thought through the manipulation and creation of tangible artefacts.

Chance: An opprtunity for action

Choice: The opportunity to make a decision that will lead to action or inaction

Advantage: A favourable outcome; one that creates an opportunity to gain from

Diadvantage: An unfavourable outcome; one that hampers productivity or progress

2. the *grounding*

methods *and*
APPROACH

Over the past eighteen months I have intuitively set up a creative framework made up of Narratives, Gestures and Making. These have helped me sort through knowledge and insight I have encountered and has shifted me through different stages of my work.

My approach has parallels to work taken on by many other researchers. In a recent paper Wilde, Vallgårda & Tomico detail aspects of Embodied Design Ideation (EDI). They note that practices that "work with relationships between body, material and context, enliven design and research potential" (WILDE, VALLGÅRDA & TOMICO, 2017). The framework they detail is a useful one to consider my own work. Grounded in the approaches of Phenomenology which is the study of experiences from a first-person point of view by Merleau - Ponty and Estrangement - which has to do with "relearning" situations that are familiar and turn them upside down to "enable reflection on the innate and tacit". EDI methods include - kinaesthetic interaction, embodied sketching, bodystorming and co-designing with users amongst others (WILDE, VALLGÅRDA & TOMICO, 2017). Several activities from my studio practice that are detailed below and lead to my most recent design intervention - Snakes and Ladders (See section on Snakes & Ladders) employ similar tactics to EDI methods. In my case, Narrative, Gesture and Making have governed my research journey. As these aspects have been key to my progression it is worth looking at my inquiry through the lenses of these three central themes.

narratives

In their paper, Golsteijn and Wright (2011) refer to Bruners' concept of Life As Narrative. Bruner arguess that-"human beings construct meaning, make sense, and engage in 'world making' through 'narrative' – that is, through creating, telling, hearing, recording, and reading stories." (GOLSTEIJN & WRIGHT, 2011, PG. 2)

Inviting stories into my studio practice helped me activate my making process and break down complex and messy problems. My visualisations of a village (see section number 3), use of a cloth parrot, redeployment of the Kaavad, invitation for others to participate in stitching circles, mapping of the lives of children (See appx A) and finally the stories and experiences discussed in a revised version of Snakes and Ladders detailed in the final sections of this thesis document all exemplify this. In each of these cases I use language, visuals, and modulation of voice and gestures to help set scenes and invite myself and others to contemplate what would have been otherwise difficult to consider. I was not always present in the storytelling. The process of pulling on narratives was both an internal exercise and a social invitation.

These narratives provide the scaffolding on which I build layers of understanding that inform the artefacts I make.

embodied knowledge

Dewey, (as cited in Bresler) refers to 'body-mind' as a means of identifying the deeply connected paths of knowing, where body and mind intersect and become entangled. He asserts that - "body-mind is not simply the acknowledgement of the sensory input that goes into the brain, but is based upon the interaction of subject within a complex and challenging environment." (BRESLER, 2014) Unwittingly my studio practice was contingent on embodied gestures throughout. These drove key insights and approaches in my work. Interestingly I did not identify this repetitive pattern until the very end.

gestures

Experts in Embodied cognition emphasize that knowing arises from physical interactions of the organism with its world. Bodily experiences are said to lead to sensorimotor schemata that are extended, by metaphor and metonymy (LAKOFF as cited in Roth and Lawless, 2002).
The gestures we make inherently play a role in this synthesis and pattern recognition.

The Oxford Dictionary defines gesture as - "A movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea or meaning" (GESTURE, N.D, PARA 1). Perhaps owing to my theatre experience I tend to use large gestures and expressions - so it wasn't surprising that it creeped into my studio practice as I tried to ground my work and sort things out.

In an intervention titled visualisation of a village, I consistently used gestures to explain and sort. My hands helped me to speak to where objects, homes, people and institutions were placed geographically and on the floor. The gesture of displacing characters and placing them on the boundaries of the village, because of their Caste, referenced assumed and established power dynamics. In the making and storytelling connected to this design intervention I sometimes took a doll who represented a higher Caste and placed it in front - at the prime spot - of what represented the school, the inside of a temple, etc. This allowed me to articulate notions of accessibility. Later, I observed that I frequently repeated this gesture of lifting up, shifting, and resituating an artefact on a floor setting, in other studio explorations: Mapping of the lives of children and later user testing of the designed intervention- "game" - Snakes. Ladders. Choice! This tactic of situating work on a different plane (the floor) and communicating through gesture was useful. The performative element in my gestural movements allowed me, as researcher, to shift my role to that of narrator, storyteller and performer. Doing so drew out different types of responses. Non-verbal cues often helped me fill essential gaps that I was unable to identify with words. I established meaning and marked out issues by manipulating myself and the artifacts I was designing. I began to realise that gestures were essential pauses that allowed both viewers and myself to fill in and contemplate uneasy experiences.

making

> Making occurs in multiple forms, contexts and is at the core of art, design and craft practice but is not limited to just these. The act of making is powerful, as through making we also make meaning, communicate meaning and share meaning: the act of making has a corporeal cognitive dimension. In sense-making through handling, shaping and interacting with various materials, our hands form the connection between mind and material. (GROTH, 2017, P. 1)

From the onset I engaged in a varied material practice I made use of: paper, cloth, thread, paint, masking tape, post it notes. Eventually I shifted to explorations in digital realms. Even then, in my video prototypes, I continued to manipulate and moved things around. Throughout, in all my explorations, the narratives and gestures layered my making and designing of artefacts. This, in turn, became an external response to thinking, conversing, observing and experiencing. It became my means of propelling me forward.

3. the *contextualizing*

context: *origins*
OF THE HINDU CASTE SYSTEM

As a means to contextualize and frame the material practice that will be detailed below, this section will discuss the aspects of the Hindu Caste system that have been crucial in positioning the roles and statuses of women in contemporary India.

The census on religion conducted in 2001, identified that 80.5% of the Indian population is Hindu. Having been exposed predominantly to Hindu ways of living, this thesis is concerned specifically with roles of Hindu women. It is believed that in Ancient India (3200 -2500 B.C.) the Caste system was not practiced. At that time learned men and women had varied occupations. Women were considered equal to men in intellect.

"But in order to protect this universe He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate (duties and) occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet."

A woman at that time would have had the independence to make her own choices about marriage, parties to attend, competitions to take part in and people to socialise with (THIND, as cited in Mahey, 2003). The equal status between men and women, however, changed with the addition of Hindu scriptures such as the Vedas, Upanishads and the Manusmriti. (MAHEY, 2003)

The Manusmriti or The Laws of Manu offers valuable perspectives. Considered an important and authoritative book on Hindu law , the Manusmriti "acknowledges and justifies the Caste system as the basis of order and regularity of society" (BBC, 2017). It articulates the rules and regulations for Hindus, discusses ontological framings and includes several chapters on: Initiation, Sacraments, Studentship, Householder, Marriage, Duties of Women, Purification, Civil and Criminal Law.

Within the Indian Caste system there are four main Varna's (types): Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya , Shudra. All are said to have originated from Brahma, The God of Creation. Within each of the four Caste distinctions there are 2000 - 3500 sub Castes. In 1888, Georg Bühler, a German scholar of Indian languages published a translated version of the Manusmriti from Sanskrit to English. The section below quotes from Bühler's translation of the Manusmriti, help to detail several main tenets that ground Hindu belief structures and that also have implications on social relations and political structures.

In this statement "He" refers to Lord Brahma, the creator God. Due to his elevated status as an abstract and metaphysical entity Lord Brahma does not appear in Hindu myths where Gods take on humanly forms (CARTWRIGHT, 2015). The separations of duties and occupations that are specific to sections of the Caste system and implied in this quote include: the Brahmanas, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, the Sudra *(See Fig.1)*

88. **"To Brahmanas he assigned teaching and studying (the Veda), sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting (of alms)"**

Fig. 1: Origin of Caste System

93. "As the Brahmana sprang from (Brahman's) mouth, as he was the first-born … he is by right the lord of this whole creation."

The Brahmanas are designated with a task of being in charge of learning and teaching the sacred law. No other Caste member can adopt this duty. As such this Caste is considered the most powerful Caste.

89. "The Kshatriya he commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures."

*"A wanton woman
is a blazing fire...she is
the sharp edge of the razor;
she is posion, a serpent,
and death all in one."*

The Kshatriyas are designated to be the kings, rulers, warriors and administrators. "It was paramount for a Kshatriya to be learned in weaponry, warfare, penance, austerity, administration, moral conduct, justice, and ruling." (JOSHI, 2017)

90. The Vaisya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), to trade, to lend money, and to cultivate land.

The Vaishyas consisted of agriculturists, money lenders and traders. Historically, cattle rearing was also an esteemed occupation. The Vaishyas were expected to work closely with administrators to improve quality of life for all of society (JOSHI, 2017).

91. One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Sudra, to serve meekly even these (other) three Castes.

The Manusmriti does not describe the duties of the Sudra in a positive way. Having emerged from the feet of Brahma, the Sudras are designated to a life of service to the other three Castes: Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas.

Apart from the four Caste distinctions described above, there are further gradations of hierarchy and responsibility within Hindu society that have been delineated over time. Brahma also articulates divisions based on gender. These are referred to in other sections of the Manusmriti. According to a story in the Hindu Epic, Mahabharata, one day the Gods plead to Brahma worried that men could one day become too powerful and challenge their reign. In response and as a counter to this possibility Brahma created woman.

"A wanton woman is a blazing fire...she is the sharp edge of the razor; she is poison, a serpent, and death all in one." (CARTWRIGHT, 2015).

In addition to delineations based on caste and gender is a segregation of a group of people completely outside of the system - the Untouchables. Members of this non Caste are treated as

pariahs because they are forced to remove human waste and animal carcasses (QUEEN, 2008). Also referred to as the Dalit to mean "broken people". (NCDHR, N.C) In the 1920's Dr. B.R Ambedkar was the first Untouchable to finish junior school. He went on to gain degrees in social sciences and law from Columbia University and London School of Economics. Ambedkar was instrumental in spearheading the civil rights movement for Untouchables. Situated outside the Caste System,

Dalits form seventeen percent of the Indian population (NCDHR, N.C) and are officially given the name of Scheduled Castes. Today, India's reservation policy or "quota system" reserves a certain percentage of seats in public funded colleges and elected assemblies for Dalits and Indigenous populations or scheduled tribes. (A.R, 2013). According to the law, dominant Castes are no longer able to legally force Dalits to perform any "polluting" occupations. Despite this these are still the prevailing occupations of Dalits who are regularly "threatened with physical abuse and social boycotts for refusing to perform demeaning tasks" (NCDHR).

Dalits are also affected by a plethora of societal based regulations that affect their conduct in public. The National Campaign of Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) website lists types of Untouchability practices and restrictions that are still unofficially at play in Indian society:

• Separate glasses for Dalits in village tea stalls
• Discriminatory seating arrangements and separate utensils in restaurants
• Segregation in seating and food arrangements in village functions and festivals
• Prohibited from wearing sandals or holding umbrellas in front of dominant Caste members
• Devadasi system - the ritualized temple prostitution of Dalit women
• Prohibited from entering dominant Caste homes
• Prohibited from riding a bicycle inside the village
• Prohibited from using common village path
• No access to village's common/public properties and resources (wells, ponds, temples, etc.)
• Segregation (separate seating area) of Dalit children in schools
• Prohibited from contesting in elections and exercising their right to vote
• Forced to vote or not to vote for certain candidates during the elections
• Prohibiting from hoisting the national flag during Independence or Republic days
• Substandard wages
• Bonded Labor
• Face social boycotts by dominant Castes for refusing to perform their "duties"

Divisions and rules not only happen between Castes. As detailed above different expectations are set for different genders (men and women). In the Dalits' case, this is particularly notable. Human Rights Watch (2014) states that India is home to 100 Million Dalit women noting that while laws to protect them exist, these are rarely implemented. "The reality of Dalit women and girls is one of exclusion and marginalization, which perpetuates their subordinate position in society and increases their vulnerability, throughout generations" (MANJOO as cited in Human Rights Watch).

As Hinduism is the most widely practiced religion in India, the discussions on Caste are relevant because it is the most deep rooted system to exist in our country. The section below will discuss the duties of Hindu women detailed within the Manusmriti. Using passages from the Manusmriti I will draw connections between the laws within the book and examples of women's rights and duties in the contemporary Indian Context.

visualisation *of a village*:
MEANS OF EXPLAINING

Walter Benjamin (as cited in The Pearl Diver, 2016) defines storytelling as one of the oldest forms of communication. It does not convey information as such, but provides it with a storyteller's point-of-view, so that information becomes an experience –and the storyteller's handprint a part of the story like that of a potter's on a pot. (BENJAMIN as cited in Pearl Diver, P. 9) Right after high school, I pursued theatre travelling to various cities throughout India telling stories through poetry, prose, in different languages and often through the language of silence. It is magical to see how quickly imaginations can be transported and everything is believable; no matter how old the audience was, the result was always the same - fascination. I have brought stories and their telling into the way I design experiences - it has trickled into my work in the studio.

The following section discusses my material exploration that has been strengthened through the art of storytelling and sets up the foundation for my final piece.

The mind immediately starts to make mental notes of differences in a new place. Mine was hard at work when I first moved to Vancouver. Apart from the obvious ones like what sides people drive cars on – the first thing I noticed was diversity. In the transit in Vancouver you can hear at least five different languages, people speaking to relatives, catching them up on what their day was like. People from different nationalities all coexisting, all making their way to or from somewhere, making space for someone to exist. This was new to me, something that I didn't often see in India, I was constantly noticing differences, whether it was education, child rearing practices or the values people had. With regard to my course, I was clear from the very beginning that my project would be situated in the Indian context – but what did that mean to me?

In the studio, we participated in bi-weekly peer reviews. After a first taste of review (of my own work), I realised that most of my time and energy was spent contextualising and clarifying (through discussion) systems that were alien to my peers. I needed to find a more efficient means to communicate - a shorthand of sorts. I decided to visually represent life in a typical Indian village as a means of opening up and inviting others to consider the context I was trying to address.

Lisa Grocott (2012) notes that figuring is a design-led research strategy which enables and amplifies the back talk of designing in a research context. Grocott has identified that figuring allows for the negotiation of complex ideas, that it is a useful strategy for drawing attention to the often-times tacit process of designing (GROCOTT, 2012, P. 3). The work I took on with visualizing a village, and that I will discuss below draws on this insight.

I attached two discarded curtains together and placed them on the floor. The long stretch of cloth blocked off the entrance to my studio space, as if to say – I'm still trying to figure this out. I demarcated sections on the cloth - using discarded textiles + found materials - to create/map out a typical Indian village. I used discarded styrofoam boxes to represent structures for homes. Dolls, to represent human forms, were made using stuffing and held together with discarded

fabric, stitched with long running stitches in a haphazard way.

This done, I began my mapping at one end of the cloth on my studio floor. "This." I thought to myself would be the location for the homes of the out Castes or Dalits. Closer to the centre of the cloth would be a government school - again not a very impressive building, usually just a single block with classrooms and students sitting on the floor in front of a blackboard, but separated nonetheless from the Dalits homes by a fence." *(See Fig.2)*

Reality

In a paper that discusses a village in the state of Uttar Pradesh, researcher Samsher Singh observed the disparity between the homes of Dalit and non-Dalits of the region(2015). Singh goes on to note that the homes of the Tyagi's and Dheemar's (upper Caste) have pucca homes are built in concrete, and have access to drainage systems. Unlike the homes of the Chamar and Balmiki's (Dalit) that are situated in the floodplain, these homes are built on elevated land that are protected during one monsoon season. In this case the Tyagi's and Dheemar's (upper Caste) also have access to a Hindu temple, a government ration store and piped water. The Dalit, in contrast, have no street light and hardly any open spaces. The Chamar (Dalit) settlement in Saaraspur has neither electricity distribution poles nor piped drinking water supplies (SINGH, 2015, P. 128).

Back to my own storytelling…

Outside the school would be an Anganwadi (a crèche for small children), and further along, on the other side of the cloth, the homes of the upper Caste and alongside that, the homes of the other Castes. Further on a village well, a hospital, merchants and their shops. The common meeting place for men in many Indian villages is a spot to smoke the hookah - under the shade of a large tree. The women, in my narrative, on my cloth, would catch up on each others lives while working collectively, collecting water from a well or tanker or while washing clothes on the river bank. These details arranged, I moved to another storytelling tool. On a spinwheel I wrote the names of the main Caste demarcations in Hindu society that determines geographical position and status: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra and Dalits, the outcastes. However for the storytelling, my intent was to use the spin wheel to help viewers navigate the extremities in village life, specifically between the upper and lower Castes.

If the wheel landed to the position of Brahmins - they could enter temples, access all the services within the village like the hospital, markets and temples. And when the wheel landed on Dalits, access to the village became difficult. Relegated to the perimeters, they are not allowed access to the village well, places of worship and must take off their slippers if they cross paths with upper caste folks. The reason for visualising Caste within a village was simply because geographical and social boundaries are relatively distinct when compared to cities, where populations are more homogenized owing to lack of space and becoming crowded.
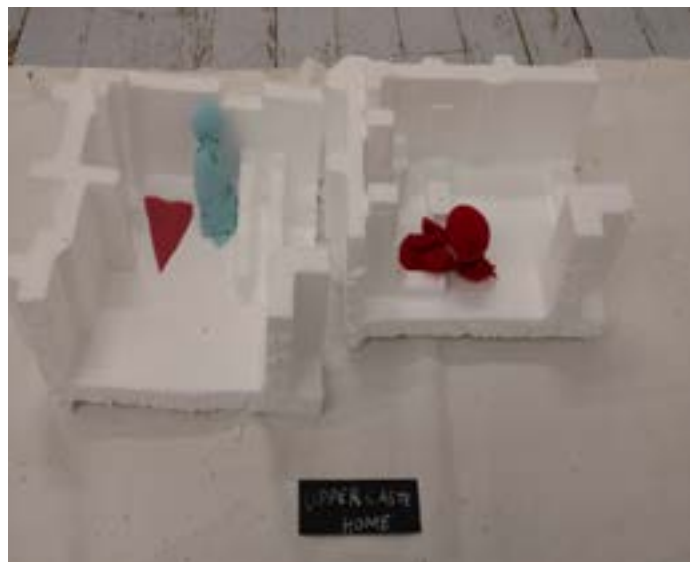
Fig. 2: Visualisation of a village, version one

Before I formally introduced my visualization of a village I noticed that people in the studio were already curious and wanted to know what the scene on the floor was about. It became my way of getting to know peers in my new environment at Emily Carr. People would tell me about forms of segregation amongst people in their home countries. Below is an exchange between a senior graduate student and myself:
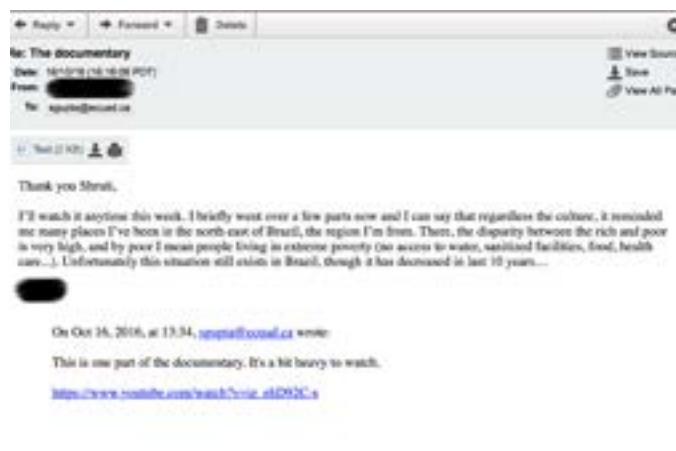
Fig. 3: Screenshot of email correspondence with senior at Emily Carr

Later on, I reworked the visualisation of the village for an open studio presentation. This time my village was composed on a large piece of a cardboard (instead of cloth). Rather than situated on the floor I brought the 'village' level higher up on a table and off of the floor. *(See Fig.4)* The interaction between people and myself were very different in the two iterations. In the first, both parties were down on the floor. As the storyteller both of my hands were occupied - sometimes moving the rag doll to the school then lifting it up from there and moving it into the Brahmins house or the village center - and sometimes gesturing towards a part of the village.

Fig. 4: Open studio visualisation of the village

The listener was far more involved in this first version when they had a birds eye view of the set-up. The second version of the village visualization, in contrast had a museum quality to it. It provided a more objective view - like a doll house, which mostly you don't touch. Both the listener and myself tended to stand and view from afar. In retrospect, both iterations were crucial for my process allowing me to understand the best means of offering up a space for engagement.

Noticing: Summer Felt Dolls

As discussed at the onset, in the note to the reader and my introduction my work began concentrating on child safety. In summer 2017 while working on a probe, which consisted of a card sorting exercise, a postcard exercise, an assembling exercise (with felt dolls) and a semi-structured interview.
(Ref to Appx B)

Out of the three components, the assembling of the felt dolls catapulted me forward to my next phase through a specific insight that changed my path. I had been interacting with the tactility of the felt material, and then watched the laser cutting machine transform it into dolls which I then packed to send to various NGO's. When the probes were returned and through the assessment process, I was looking for very specific answers to the questions I had posed. And so, when the clothed doll flipped on my table to reveal the image of what looked like an undressed child.

Fig. 5: Noticing flipped dolls

I finally saw in front of me what I had missed seeing because I was looking for something else. I speak to how gestures act as essential pauses in contemplating uneasy experiences and wondered what role the designed object played in meaning making and thinking through artefacts. Up until this point, my approach was to inform through discourse but what if the artefact presented questions about uneasy topics, to the people who engaged with it, removing the designer from the equation? The doll that fell on its undressed side opened up a set of possibilities: What is the role of the designed object in presenting opportunities that move away from possible futures towards preferable ones. The doll pushed me towards observing and thinking about the role of the object as a tiny provocation. How could I amplify this for myself: what was I trying to get at? How may I use design to be effective? in the context I was trying to address. Remembering objects are everywhere, sometimes ones that are familiar or remembered have an equally strong capacity to offer up a new route. Thinking about provocations visuals and gestures, I remembered something from life back home, a transient but relevant one.

Remembering

The man who ironed our clothes back in India, had a makeshift shop on wheels, parked under coconut trees. In addition to clothes folded in piles, his shop also featured the most recent film magazines. Read on his breaks he would stick up pictures of his favourite actresses on the walls of his mobile shop. Add to this the visual narrative of the street - the walls of neighborhoods filled with multiple copies of the latest commercial hit film - content notating particular types of "acceptable" narratives. "Film in India is a prolific and inundating medium. Film stars' faces adorn fruit-juice stands, and film music reverberates in shops, public buses, taxis, and auto-rickshaws. Indian film directors and actors continue to use the spectacular, visceral, and social appeal of Indian cinema to their economic advantage." (JAIKUMAR, 2003) Remembering how it felt walking on those streets and passing by frozen expressions stretched on thin sheets of newsprint paper – of seductive actresses admired by dashing hero's for passer-by's to ogle at - offensive? provocative even. I felt a need to amplify this visceral experience, to set in my current context of Vancouver. When I recalled the sheer volume of this imagery and the sizes of the posters, banners and cut - outs of film stars - I wondered about this dissonance. There is a dramatic shift in the expectations we have for women on screen (ones that we enjoy watching) and the rules set up for women who are closer to home. The next section, will talk briefly about this double standard which is perplexing even to me, as an Indian woman.

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Fig. 6: Popular culture: Film posters in a street in Madurai, a city in India & life size cut outs of actors by a Railway station.

context: *expectations of women*
OF GOOD AND BAD GIRLS

"164. She must always be cheerful, clever in (the management of her) household affairs, careful in cleaning her utensils, and economical in expenditure." (from the Manusmriti)

The patriarchy has ingrown systems that afford men the capacity to wield control through force, direct pressure, tradition, ritual, law, language, customs, etiquette and education - over those subordinate to them, like women and children. It defines the roles that women should and should not play. (MIRKIN, 1984, P. 42)

Control is levied on womens demeanour and conduct, both indoors and outdoors. This for women speaks to a culture of constant surveillance. "Local opinion states that any woman who even slightly asserts herself and voices an opinion rather than meekly accepting male advice or (in effect) his "orders," must be dealt with using ridicule, denigration, and finally violence. Confronting such a challenge, the men quoted an oft-repeated proverb that goes as follows: " nāngī büci samte ünci" ("a shameless [lit. naked] woman is always superior as you cannot shame her any further") (CHOWDHRY, 2015, P.10)

"213. It is the nature of women to seduce men in this (world); for that reason the wise are never unguarded in (the company of) females." (from the Manusmriti)

This characterisation of women as seductresses is common in popular narratives and has become a part of pop culture in India. Fig. 7 spin off this familiar idea to depict a *sanskaari woman* i.e. one who is traditional and rooted to her culture as opposed to the *bekaar* or useless woman. One who is modern, opinionated and wears clothes that go against what it means to be traditional. *(See fig. 8)* Visuals like these have been co opted to challenge skewed expectations where graphic elements and sarcasm are used to make a point.

Fig. 7: Popular Culture: An illustration that describes the qualities of a Traditional versus Modern woman, from the book *Oh Naari So Sanskari*, *(*HARDIKAR. A, 2017).

Fig. 8: Popular Culture: A Bad Girl poster by students of an Indian University,
(Jawed. F, Saxena. S, Kothari. S, & Pradhan. J, 2015)

She went out at night, hence she was asking for it.

December 2012, was a dark day for the twenty three year old Medical student who was gang raped on a moving bus in New Delhi, the capital of India. For weeks, following that incident there was uproar amongst the public and they had had enough - protests, marches, candle light vigils and seething anger; it was one of those incidents you couldn't shake off just owing to how violent the crime was. But at the same time there were reports of politicians and the defence lawyer on the case, who made knee jerking comments blaming Nirbhaya (alias) and her parents for allowing her to go out and watch a movie at night.

ML Sharma the defence lawyer compared women to "flowers and diamonds" suggesting that if you leave precious things on a street, eventually dogs will come to sniff them out. But it this comment of his in the documentary on Nirbhaya - India's Daughter which reflect the troubling ideologies of men like him - "We have the best culture. In our culture, there is no space for a woman." (MIRELLI, THE QUARTZ, 2015)

The sections above have illustrated the links between historical, spiritual conventions and situations faced by women in the contemporary Indian context. There are numerous factors that determine whether a woman's life could be filled with opportunities, respect and growth. Archaic practices and cultural beliefs that are deeply entrenched in religious Hindu dogmas such as those illustrated in the Manusmriti play in to this.

As such, Hinduism can be said to perpetuate the notion of Patriarchy. This is reinforced through inherent belief systems that enable men to retain superior positions in society and supports the subordination of women through control, ownership, socialization and the continual male dominated transfer of power - from father to husband to son.

Assumed behaviours that exist within families relegate women to particular occupations and positions in society and also provide openings for a culture of violence born out of and propped up by misogynistic prejudices.

context: *expectations of women*
OF FATHERS & MARRIAGE

"148. In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent."

In many conservative Hindu families, men have rights over a woman's conduct inside and outside the home . Steve Derne (1994) professor of sociology conducted qualitative interviews in the late 80's with forty nine upper Caste Hindu men in Varanasi and noted restrictions levied by men on women.

"A family's honor is confirmed by a daughter's marriage into a family of appropriate status.

let him wed a female free from bodily defects...gait of a Hamsa...small teeth and soft limbs.

To protect marriage prospects for their daughters, men carefully monitor their unmarried daughters' behaviour to limit their interactions with unrelated men. Nandu Gupta, an interviewed candidate who heads a nuclear family is careful to limit his unmarried daughters interactions outside the home -"the outside is closed to them. Of course, they can go to school with friends, but they do not go alone." (DERNE, 1994, P. 207)

The father's role in Hindu culture is significant. As the quote above demonstrates, it is tightly connected to patriarchy. Patriarchy can be described as a type of male-dominated family where women, younger men, children, slaves and domestic servants were all under the rule of the dominant male, the patriarch. The term can mean both the "rule of men" and the "role of the father." (RUBIN, 1975; ENGLES, 1977) (OMVEDT, 1986, P. 31).

Adrienne Rich, American poet and radical feminist calls this "power of the fathers" as a difficult concept to grasp. It is diffused and concrete, symbolic and literal at the same time. No matter if a woman lives in purdah, drives a truck or is the single breadwinner, she is constantly living under the "power of the fathers" and is only able to access privilege or influence based on what the patriarchy is willing to afford her. (MIRKIN, 1984, P. 42)

"10. Let him wed a female free from bodily defects, who has an agreeable name, the (graceful) gait of a Hamsa (swan) or of an elephant, the moderate (quantity of) hair on the body and on the head, small teeth, and soft limbs." (from the Manusmriti)
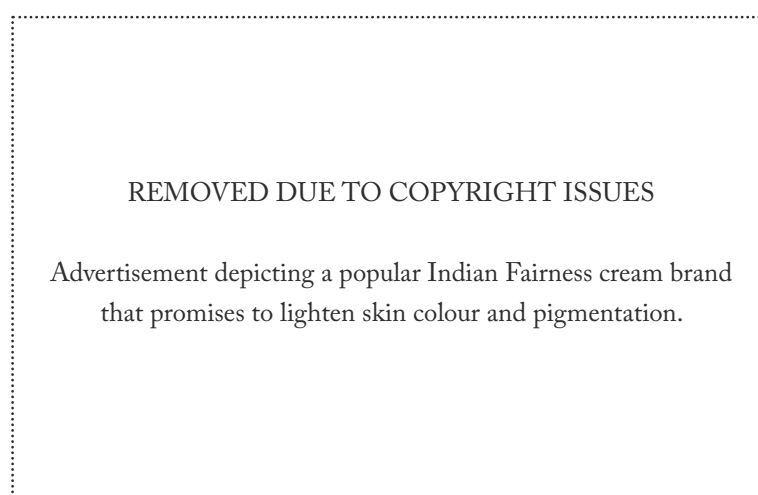
Srilakshmi Ramakrishnan (2012) a scholar in the Anthropology of Education discusses the Matrimonial advertisement, which according to her are - "formulaic texts of identity that follow a specific schematic structure and are replete with culturally nuanced lexical items referencing Caste/Sub-Caste, patrilineal descent, and planetary positions at birth." In her paper, she offers an in-depth analysis of a specific matrimonial advertisement by - "situating the corpus within a specific sociocultural context and then explicating the cultural significance of its constituent lexicon."

Below is an example of a 'Brides Wanted' column from the weekend edition of The Hindu, a popular newspaper in Southern India. (RAMAKRISHNAN, 2012)

> IYER, VADAMA, Koundinya, Sadhayam, BL, MBA, Manager, MNC, 1978/180 cms, Clean habits, Highly placed, Affluent family, seeks Fair, goodlooking, well educated, home loving, tradition bound, cultured, Vadama bride, respectable family, 21 24 yrs, above 165 cms. Preferred stars Poorattadhi (kumbham), Barani, mrigaseersham, Punarpoosam (Mithunam), Pooram, Chithirai (Tula), Avittam (kumbha). Send Bio-data, Horoscope & Photo.

Newspapers in India will often print double spreads dedicated to Matrimonials like these. Beyond details about the eligible people the information is further subdivided into Caste & sub Caste. Parents of potential bride and grooms will scour the morning paper identifying and circling ads that match with the qualities of their own offspring. 'Koundinya' - refers to the gotra, or lineage; 'Sadhyam' refers to the "nakshatra" or specific constellation in the sky at the time of birth. Parents will list in these ads the most compatible "nakshatra" that will assure a perfect match.

According to Deignan (as cited in Ramakrishnan, 2012) 'Clean is used to describe behaviour, talk and texts which do not deal with sexual desire' (P. 36). In matrimonials, 'clean habits' indicate that the groom does not indulge in the four common vices typically associated with the phrase – smoking, alcohol, gambling, or women." Ramakrishnan also points out that the order of the descriptors that the grooms side is seeking in a bride is key. She needs to be light skinned in complexion (*See Fig 8)* and at least match the education level of the groom, usually professional degrees like law, medicine and engineering are preferred as they are "steady" careers, over and above this she is required to be "traditional" and "home-loving" which means that she should be able to cook, clean, keep a good home and manage daily life, be simple and not overly ambitious.

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Advertisement depicting a popular Indian Fairness cream brand that promises to lighten skin colour and pigmentation.

Fig. 9: Popular Culture: Advertisements like these promote fairness creams, which are very popular in India, because dark skin is stigmatised.

The daily life of a woman in India is punctuated by sets of codes - by both formal and informal expectations and restrictions on behavior. As noted above, she must be cheerful in composure and domesticated. She is also characterised as having an innate nature to seduce men, as such she must always be controlled.

When we juxtapose this to how daily life in public spaces (and in the ironing cart) are taken over by sexualised and raunchy images of women, it creates a cognitive dissonance that needs to be further examined. Beyond the posters on the streets, the sheer number of Bollywood films - an estimated 1,500-2,000 films a year - more than anywhere else in the world. (THE ECONOMIST, N.D., 2017).

This provides confusing representations of women that is significant and pervasive. Perhaps identifying themes connected to the representation of women, Caste, class and gender politics within popular culture might help the development of my own work. I decided to look further into aspects of Indian Film. I took it upon myself to critically watch the following films: Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham (K3G), Masaan, and Udaan (SEE APPX C)

I isolated some of my observations connected to the patriarchy at play in the film genre and drew out examples cited in studies by sociologists and historians situated in the real, lived everyday Indian context. I responded by making video prototypes, these will be discussed further on.

on indian *film:*
AND THE STATUS QUO

Films in India can be divided into two distinct types: masala films and parallel cinema. According to Wikipedia, Parallel cinema originated as a movement in the 1950's in the state of West Bengal as an alternative to mainstream cinema. (PARALLEL CINEMA, N.D., PARA. 1)

In The Hindu, a popular and daily newspaper in Southern India, Srikanth Srinivasan notes the objectives of parallel cinema center on a 'fixation on social critique' it is often referred to as 'complaint box cinema'. In some filmmaking circles parallel cinema productions are predominantly funded by state-owned institutions. "Many of these films are first and foremost screeds against feudalism, corruption, nepotism, patriarchy and religious intolerance. More radical, politically-engaged ones deal with modernisation and class warfare and regularly lean towards the left of centre" (SRINIVASAN, 2012). Parallel cinema films consistently reject mainstream styles and tropes such as song and fight sequences. These films have an "affinity for rural settings or working class". They use method actors, deploy close-ups, lengthy shots, minimal use of musical scores, toned down colour palettes, and a formalist approach to composition which occasionally involves experimental editing patterns (SRINIVASAN, 2012)

Masala films sit in contrast to parallel cinema. A masala is commonly known as a blend of spices and this mixture alludes to the presence of a variety of song and dance sequences shot in destinations abroad, some drama, a lot of romance, lavish weddings and finally an item number to top it off.

Item numbers play a significant role in Masala films, especially since the early 90's. Item songs consists of lewd/brash lyrics, a woman in very minimal clothes gyrating in a sea of men ogling at her and making vulgar gestures. These songs are composed to be catchy and make it to the promos - as a way to entice viewers into buying tickets to the show. Needless to say most commercial films insert these into their narrative.
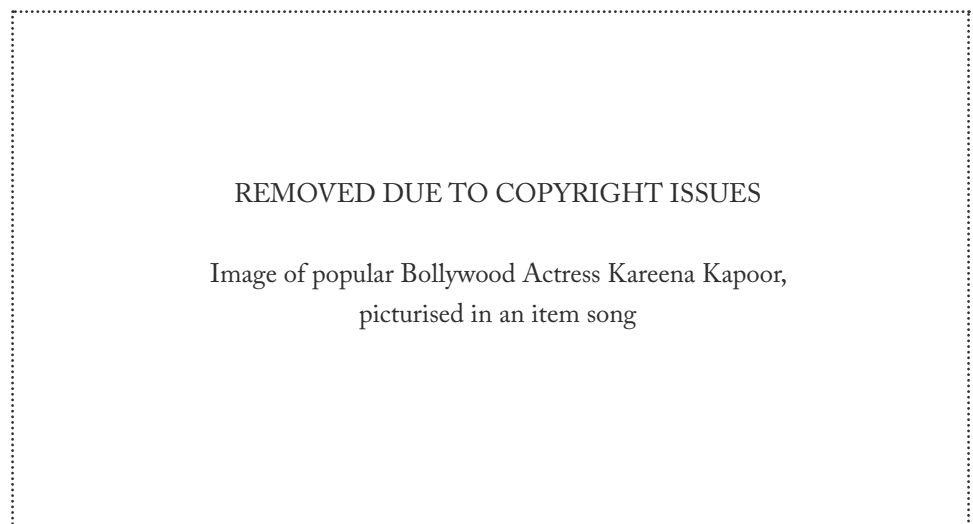
Below is a translation of a popular item song - Fevicol Se

Angadaiyan leti hoon main jab zor-zor se
When I stretch my body with huge motions

Oh aah ki awaaz hai aati har aur se
I can hear wolf whistles from all corners

Main toh chalun is kadar, Ki mach jaaye re gadar
I walk in such a manner, It creates a storm

Hosh wale bhi madhosh aaye re nazar
Even those in senses seem intoxicated

Mere photo ko mere photo ko seene se yaar
Take my picture close to your heart and stick it with Fevicol.

As I critically assessed the masala and parallel film contributions to Indian popular culture I was struck by the extent and overt illustration of the Indian patriarchal system. Social expectations and stringent boundaries that are set for women in reality and life portrayed in the visual medium of film and anomalies that I could pull on for later interventions.are not always consistent. This creates an odd tension in everyday life.

The following section will detail two prototypes that I created to try and to sort things out. I recognized disparity between women in film - I prototyped to see if there were patterns and anomalies.

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Image of popular Bollywood Actress Kareena Kapoor,
picturised in an item song

Fig. 10: A still from the song Fevicol Se, described above.

on indian *film:*
AND THE IMPLICATIONS

Film Posters: Video Prototype I - View here: https://youtu.be/Kj3hcUKNc0c

In early Fall 2017, stemming from my own recollections of growing up and watching films, I decided to delve into the visual content (and analysis) of film posters. The process of searching out these posters was not pleasant - "I opened incognito windows and typed in a series of keyword phrases: "sexy posters from bollywood, raunchy women in indian films to top 10 hottest film posters from India". The images I was faced with on the screen were perturbing and left me feeling sick to my stomach. I wanted to translate this irksome feeling. I chose to create a response. Others have observed that Indian films have the capacity to act as an inundating medium (JAIKUMAR's 2003). This resonated for me. I chose a series of film posters that depicted underlying themes of lust, sex, play, romance, angst - all aspect that Indian families frequently reject in real everyday life. Using these I then began to arrange them on a digital software. Applying the basic film editing tool - iMovie I stitched thirty five odd film poster images together. The software has an option to direct the viewer's eye as each image transitions. I used this to my advantage, manipulating which aspects would be highlighted. For example: in one poster the man is holding the woman in a way where she is visibly uncomfortable - the viewer first sees her expression then the camera pans to his gaze, as he looks at her longingly. I linked these transitioning visuals to the audio of the Konnakol. This classical South Indian mode of vocal percussion - ta ka di mi, ta ki ta tha offered up a particular beat and timing that helped with the transitions, a traditional auditory context and a particular type of racing rhythm that seemed appropriate.

"It's just romance!" - exclaimed a male classmate after I showed the video to a group of peers in the studio. Another colleague chimed in noting that posters from western culture and films were even worse. It bothered me that in a group of four men and one woman no one thought there was anything explicit with the images, and that my assemblage was viewed as just another collection of romantic gestures. I began to question myself - was I being "hyper-sensitive" and overly reacting to cues around me? I was not interested in a competition to see which country had the raunchiest film posters. Rather, I wanted to incite a discussion about the normalisation of these images that objectified women and the means used to do so: repetition, zooming, panning. This particular studio discussion occurred at mid section of my Master studies. While it did not achieve what I had intended - it is located close to a key transition point in my to discussion about the other elements of material practice.

This section has outlined roles and expectations of Indian women through the review and reflection of aspects of visual popular culture connected to blockbuster masala films and parallel cinema in India.

Shame O'Clock - Video Prototype II, view here: https://youtu.be/cOZDo6KEk7Q

Nicole Wilson (2013) in her paper around arranged marriages talks about the system that still exists in some parts of India and specifically cites a real life example of Priya a girl who went against the wishes of her family and married outside her Tamil heritage - "According to cultural stereotypes, the fact that middle-class Brahmin Priya had chosen what is locally called a "love marriage" was perhaps more surprising than it would have been among other social groups. Tamil cinema and television often portray "love marriages" as predominantly occurring among two particular societal categories—those who are "modernized" and "Westernized" (that is, immodest, unchaste and hence, un-Indian), and those who are lower class and caste. In their favoring of "love marriages," these two social groupings are also then conceived of as discourteous towards cultural laws of parental duty and filial devotion" (WILSON, 2013, PG 46, PARA 2)

The social expectations, differences in upbringing and rules applied for boys and girls can be stark in India. Rather than being the exception they are more frequently the norm. I had been urged by numerous people to find a means to illustrate and convey this aspect of Indian society to people unfamiliar with this context (in my current location context at a North American University of Art + Design). I chose to work with gifs from popular Indian films. My intent was to create a series of alternate messages for others using these short clips. Indian parents 101 features an analog, cardboard clock, deployed as an indicator of the significant role 'time of day' plays in the lives of Indian girls who are taught to self regulate and behave in specific ways on a daily basis. A very loud, tense background score that is popular in Indian TV series, interspersed with the ticking of a clock sets the tone. Bold type titles over the video images offer up common phrases and sayings often heard in Indian households. When a girl leaves her house at 5 PM, the neighbours raise eyebrows and wonder where she's going. A coercive statement commonly deployed by parents with children "log kya kehenge?" - what will the neighbours say/think? covers the image on the screen. Maintenance of image and place in society via constraining rules applied within the home and skewed reciprocal notions of respect and care/a children's best interest is mocked.

As the video progresses and it gets "later" in the day based on Indian standards of time are alluded to - it becomes harder for girls to gain permission to do anything that requires being outdoors. Eventually the video ends with a change in scene where the brother of the female narrator is out at midnight for a drive with his friends and her parents are rejoicing. Even though vastly exaggerated, this polarity does creep into some Indian households where is it reasoned that a girl can bring dishonour to the family by getting teased, raped, assaulted or kidnapped.

Lankanlal Mishra a respondent in Derné's (1994) interview spoke to the general restrictions for women, especially married women in his joint-family household - "women here are not left independent. Women are not free. They are under control." (DERNE, 1994, P. 208)

The fourth wall in film, is an invisible wall that separates actors on screen from their audiences (WIKIPEDIA, N.D.) - this gives ordinary people a break from their own realities, it gives them

a two -to three hours to imagine themselves elsewhere in: the homes of the rich, at a lavish wedding, in a fancy car, in a foreign country- singing and dancing in sub zero temperatures. While it does all of these things, popular and masala films contain item songs that commodify women and film makers use the songs for their own benefit - because men will definitely come to a film that guarantees a dancing girl in skimpy clothes. Families watching these films are thoroughly entertained however when their daughter wants to wear a sleeveless top or go out to a club with her friends, she is either going to do it on the sly or not go at all. Conservative parents will often be heard saying "yeh sab filmo mein hi hota hai!" - " all this is okay and happens only in films, not real life!" Almost all Bollywood films rely on heavy doses of romance but in some real life scenarios- dating and love marriages are a strict no- no - because what if your daughter or son fell in love with someone from a different caste or religion? - nothing could bring more shame on to the family than that. (ref to The Contextualizing section)

As long as Indian families do not object to rules imposed on women by the patriarchy, we will continue to see limited and binary portrayals of females. Women will continue to be cornered into roles such as the housewife, expected to keep families together and constantly distinguishing between the good and bad girl. This made me question, if films like the ones I have been studying intensely keep being made and consumed by unquestioning audiences how do we introduce, incite ways for audiences to critique what they are watching, what they are experiencing? The last section of this thesis is an attempt to create a space for such dialogue to ensue.

4. *play* it

the *game*

The insights gathered from understanding the historical and cultural codes of India, coupled with the reflective nature of my making in the studio have all informed the most recent set of design interventions. In the subsequent section I will take the reader through the significant examples of Snakes & Ladders and its origin in the Indian game of Gyan Chaupar. After which the reader will get an understanding of the added elements in my version of Snakes and Ladders, followed by examples of user testing, recommendations, insight gained and future directions.

Rules of the game

Traditionally a multiplayer game S & L begins at the bottom left corner on a grid like board game, made up of hundred squares. Chance plays a huge role in this narrative. A dice is used to allow players to move forward one square at a time. The game mechanics allow the player to advance towards the finish line. However, if the player hits the head of the snake, they slide down a few rows - sometimes, all the way to the bottom. The number of snakes to ladders is always 2:1 - therefore there are more chances of sliding to the bottom.

Historical Perspective

Keeper of Eastern Art at the Ashmolean Museum, Andrew Topsfield (1985) states that the "simplified and secularised" version of Snakes and Ladders has its roots in the ancient game of Gyan Chaupar - "was played in several sectarian versions in northern and western India during the 18TH AND 19TH centuries." Further, Topsfield describes the earliest Gyan Chaupar board game to be an - eighty four square board, painted on cloth and located in the Museum of Indology in Jaipur, India. (TOPSFIELD, 1985, P. 213 -214)

Gyan Chaupar originates from a society and a time where the objective of freeing oneself from the shackles of humanly concerns was a key means to progress towards moksha, also known as liberation. While things have shifted this perspective continues today in certain segments of indian society - notably amongst conservative Hindus who believe in the cycle of rebirth (STOBER 1990, SINGH & HAIGH 2015)

"Pilgrim-like, each player progresses fitfully from states of vice, illusion, karmic impediment, or inferior birth at the base of the playing area to ever higher states of virtue, spiritual advancement, the heavenly realms, and (in the ultimate, winning square) liberation (moksa) or union with the supreme deity." (TOPSFIELD 2006) He also mentions that the playing areas of the boards from the 18TH AND 19TH century were meticulously painted and made of materials ranging from cloth, paper, inlaid wood and embroidered on cloth. According to him, there are "Three main sectarian types are found: Jain and Hindu, each with their own variants, and, more rarely, a Sufi Muslim version.". (TOPSFIELD, 2006, P. 143)

Topsfield (1985) is of the opinion that - "the snakes and ladders device was a borrowing from gyan chaupar, examples of which are likely to have been brought to England by returning colonial families." One of the first examples of an English game using the snakes and ladders device was recorded in 1895 in a game called Kismet - which translates to destiny in arabic/persian. Produced by the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, the squares had inscriptions of virtues and vices, which had its roots in a different morality game. After the reign of Queen Victoria, the inscriptions from the squares were removed and the playing area was also simplified. "An early 1920's board at the Bethnal Green Museum has a central illustration of a snake-charmer, a clear allusion to the Indian origins of the game." (TOPSFIELD, 1985, P. 213 -214)
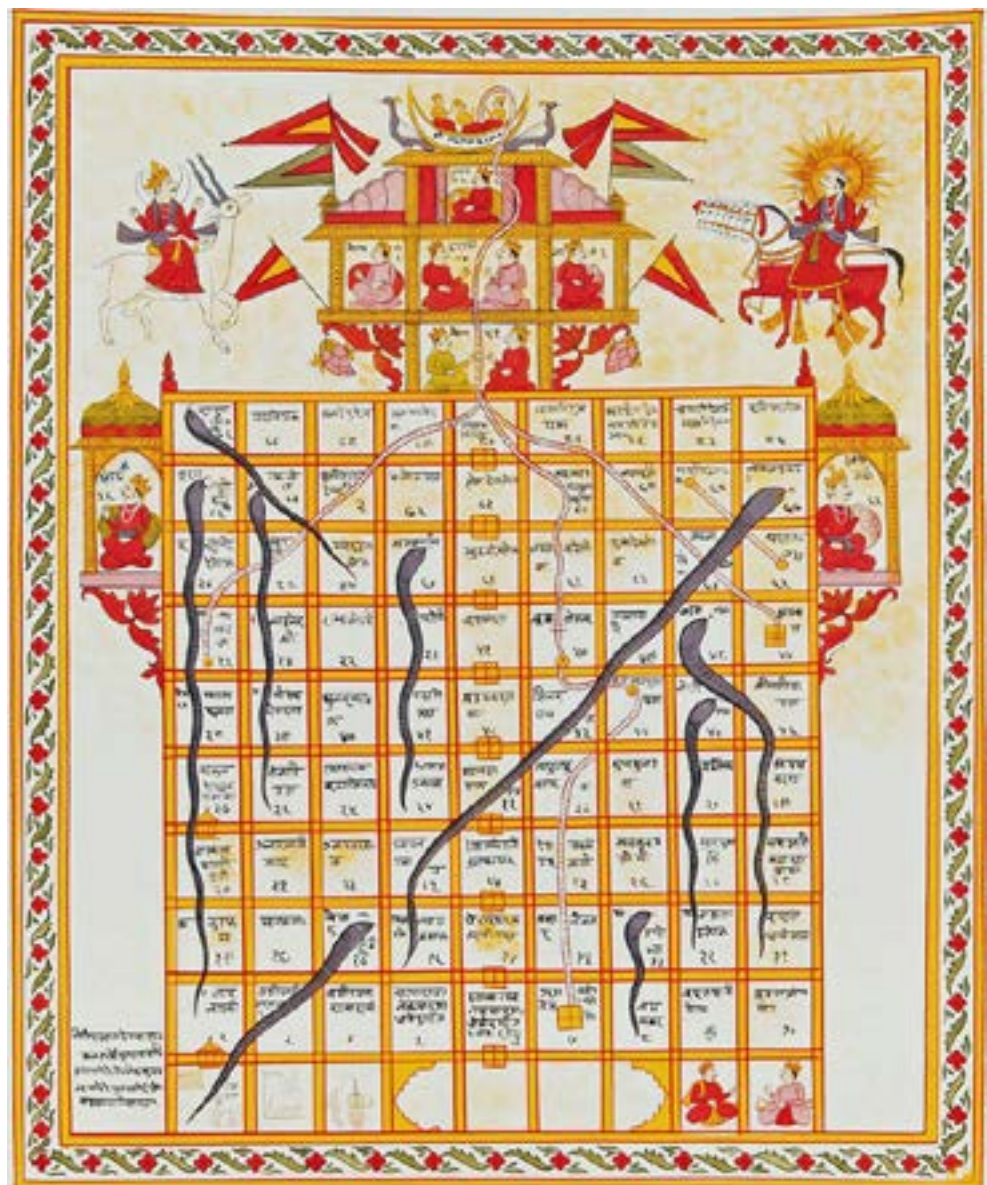
Fig. 11: Jain version Game of Snakes & Ladders. Gouache on cloth, India, 19th century

Precedents

While it originated in India, the game of Snakes and Ladders has become iconic globally. It is a visual trope of sorts made up of a set of easily recognisable symbolic forms, implied actions and consequences. Over the past year, I have seen this format used as a tool for provocation in different fields: Sakthi-Vidiyal an NGO in India that works with street children - redesigned the whole board as a teaching tool to learn their rights as per the Convention on The Rights of the Child by UNICEF. Michelle Nahanee, an Indigenous graphic designer and SFU Masters scholar designed a game based on Snakes and Ladders to discuss the "Decolonisation of her identity from an Indian girl to a Squamish Matriarch". I saw value in building on this tactic taken by others to broach topics and concerns pertaining to rights and assumed hierarchies. As a blueprint, re-conceptualised, the game could potentially act as a means to nudge people to reconsider socially 'acceptable" responses that subjugate Indian women - to empathise with and discuss the implications of the small events, gestures, everyday occurrences that act to subordinate.

Fig. 12: Sakthi Vidiyal's Child Rights Snakes & Ladders Poster Game
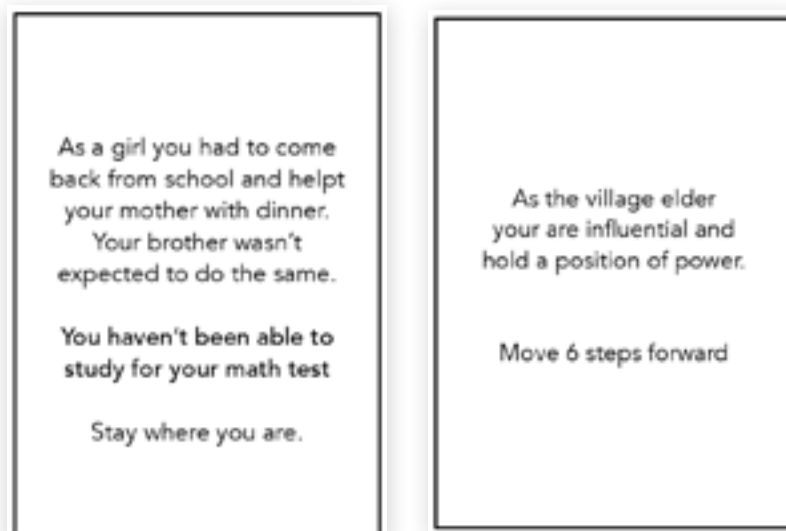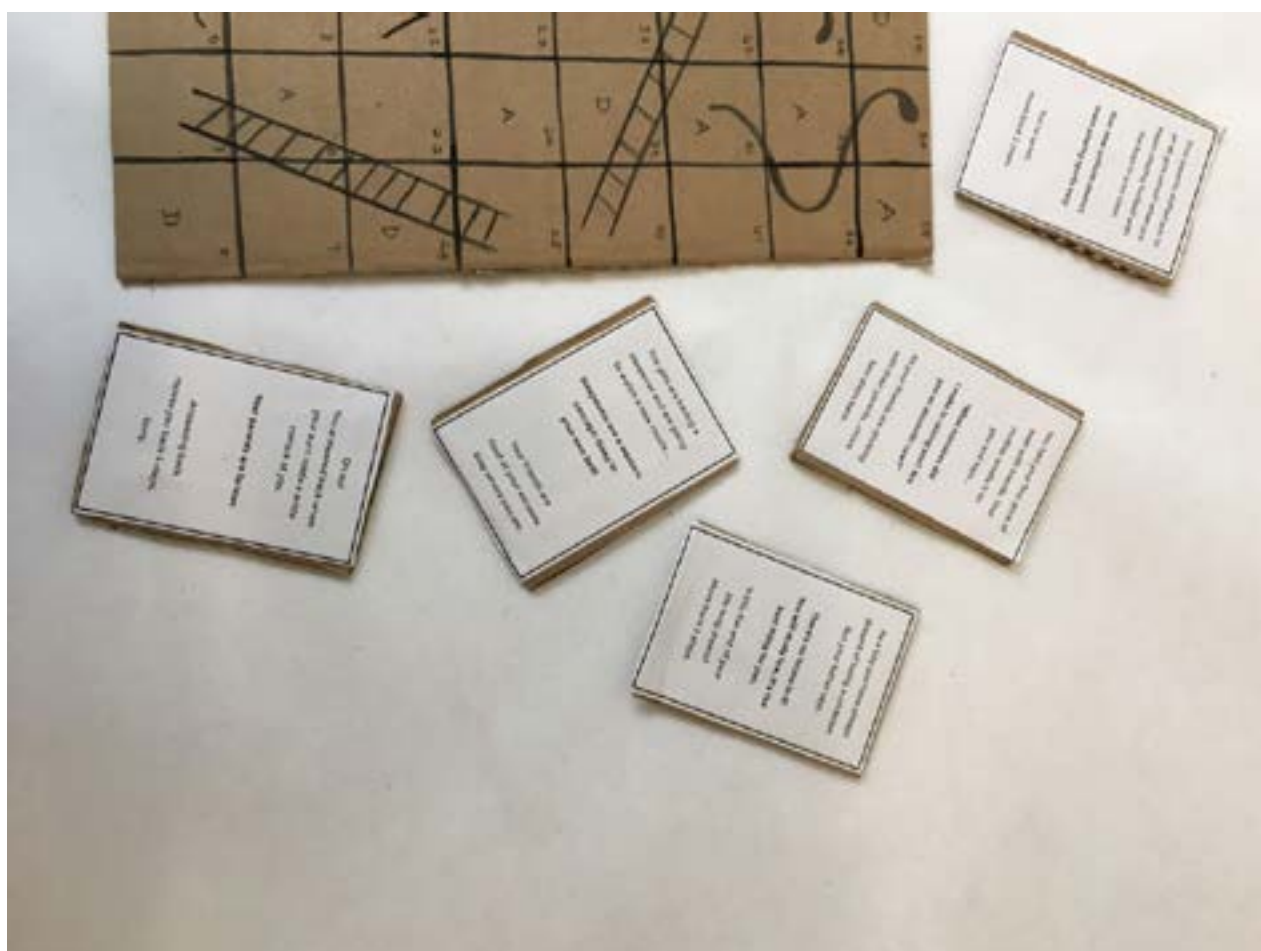
the *game:*
AND CHANCE

Using the blueprint of this game as the jumping off point, I began with my first iteration using a piece of cardboard. The artefact I developed was stripped of embellishments. The gameboard was a rudimentary 4x4 grid painted with indian ink. Remembering that the contemporary version of Snakes and Ladders rarely provided players with opportunities to linger, I decided to add a set of "advantage" and "disadvantage" cards. The content of the cards had a bias based on my own past personal experiences and reaction to explicit favouritism towards males that I was aware of, growing up. Having been brought up in a fairly modern set - up, my brother and I were given enough liberties to make our own choices. And for the most part we were allowed to be vocal if we didn't agree with our parents' ways. It is important to note that my experiences of male favouritism was a lot more subdued but this wasn't/isn't the case for other patriarchal families.

Insights:

The artefact and accoutrements were set but the mechanics were not decided. At this early stage I also observed that people were not responding to the game in terms of of an end objective of winning. It seemed, based on responses from others, that my focus should not be on "the winning" but rather on the discussions along the way via the mechanisms of the game board. Colleagues and peers who reviewed the game board asked me to consider the design of the cards *(See fig. 13)*- to highlight the separate voices in them. Since this first version of The Game was designed as a "first response" to test the validity of the idea - the artefact wasn't used as a gameboard.

> As a girl you had to come back from school and helpt your mother with dinner. Your brother wasn't expected to do the same.
>
> You haven't been able to study for your math test
>
> Stay where you are.

> As the village elder your are influential and hold a position of power.
>
> Move 6 steps forward

Fig. 13: First version of the advantage and disadvantage card, reactions of others to this first small scale prototype exposed issues pertaining to clarity of voice and representation.

Fig. 14: First iteration of The Game, prototyped on cardboard

In the sections below I will illustrate and break down the nature of voices in the cards, and display how user testing, peer reviews and my own reflection on earlier studio work shifted this initial lense.

Statement/Dialogue

"You will study law and then join the

Family business."

Context

There is no arguing with your Dad....is this

the end of your life long aspiration?

Outcome

Move back 2 steps

Fig. 15: Breakdown of voices in the Card

While patriarchal societies like India support the progress of men they can also hinder and limit opportunities and potential to take on alternate, fulfilling routes through life. The card on the left speaks to the latter perspective. There is pressure put on men to take on the role of family provider. Faced with this many opt for careers that are stable and respected versus alternate routes through life. Minor in comparison to the systemic oppression Indian women face must be acknowledged. The card on the right depicts an alternate vantage point - the advantage afforded to young men and boys in conservative indian homes, where their strength and growth is privileged over that of girls of the same age.

the *game:*
AND CHOICE

In order to engage with multiple perspectives and pulling on my past experience of the useful nature of embodied participation (see section on the Visualisation of a village, where I moved objects and dolls based conditions I had set on a floor artefact) I scaled up the the game board to a 6 FT X 5 FT size and located it on the studio room floor. This time I taped down yellow hand spun thread to a cement floor. *(See fig. 16).*

Fig. 16: Second iteration on the floor with a yarn grid

In the studio I began by introducing the game to my peers (fifteen Master of Design students). As this version was intended as a means to test some of the content and wording of the cards the snakes and ladder details were not included. In order to move away from an introspective consideration of the cards contents and as a way to set the context prior to play I invited players to read some of the disadvantage cards aloud. This done, I then explained the basic rules of play, the yarn grid on the floor had tape in the centre of some squares to denote when a player had to pick a card. Four of my peers (two male and two female) volunteered to try the game out. Another peer offered to roll the dice on a computer program and I placed myself near the players and the gameboard holding the stack of disadvantage cards in my hand. As the purpose of this round was to to formulate more content for the advantage cards, I only used disadvantage cards for play.

"5!" - my peer called out.

I motion with my hand towards the first player to enter the grid. They do so, making sure they are entering on the correct side, from square number 1.

I notice there is considerable suspense as the rest of the individuals in the studio watched from the sidelines.

"3" - the second player had landed on a square with masking tape.

I stretch out the deck of disadvantage cards for Player 2. People lean in as this person reluctantly picks a card from the top of the stack.

The boys in the slum you live in whistle

and tease you on your way to school.

Your mother wants to put an end to it.

"If you don't go to school

you won't get teased."

The end of your education.

You're out of this game.

I hear a collective sigh from my watching peers, Player 2 remains standing still in the same square. We have finished four rounds of play, nearing the end of the stack of cards, player 3 picks out this card:

Cross your legs!

How many times have I told you

to sit properly! Like a GIRL!

Your brother watches TV in the other room.

His legs sprawled on the sofa.

The hypocrisy infuriates you.

Stay where you are.

Disbelief - Really? "Are you serious?!" exclaims player 3, hands up in the air, there is a commotion from amongst the observers in the studio - snorts and a few laughs indicative of a a sense of incredulity at this statement. I had been interested to see how this card would be received by

this international mix of designers outside of the Indian context. What appears odd to a set of educated individuals in the Canadian context, however, is often the reality for young girls walking to school in Indian communities.

"Meena (not her real name) didn't tell her parents when the older boys started harassing her on the hour-long walk to school from her home in Madanpur Khadar, south Delhi – grabbing her hand and shouting "kiss me" – because she knew she would get the blame, as if she had somehow encouraged them. She was right: when her family found out, they banned her from going back to school, worried about the effect on their "honour" if she was sexually assaulted." Once removed from school her parents decided to get her married, she was only 16 at the time. (WILLIAMS, 2013)

The scale of the iteration and the round of play offered insights - embodied actions and gestures (See section on Embodied Knowledge and Gestures) by the individuals playing the game. People's reaction to being asked to move forward or backward on the grid depending on the card, was evident: disappointment - at moving backward - pleasure at moving forward. Set in the studio context, it is important to note that while the group was well aware of the nature of my work most of the them were not from India. I was asking them to consider a set of cards drawn from outside of their own lived experience - the Indian context. Additionally, and worthy of note, when these individuals picked up cards that spoke to a gender they did not identify to in real life -they were confronted with a perspective they were unused to. Their responses conveyed this cultural and gender related distancing - exclamations connected to the absurdity and unfamiliarity of the situation they were invited to consider.

Recommendations:

When all the players had finished the game i.e, exited the grid, we engaged in a short discussion about their experience. Some of the feedback was centered around the content of the cards, and a concern that some content sounded like over generalisations. As these initial cards were based on my own personal experiences and on past discussions had with friends from India over an extended period of time I did not have a means to back them up with facts and figures. Related to this, other questions that arose included: Does contextual knowledge and lived experience need to be backed up with theory to be legitimate? Where and how do we represent lived experiences tacit forms of knowing. There was also a suggestion to include positive futures that could exist within the game, moving women forward as a way to think about the present.

Insights:

Cards read out aloud brought about a fair degree of dramatization - and helped participants differentiate between the voices *(See fig. 15, break down of voices in The Game section)* - moving physically on a board as pawns in the game enabled participants to identify and empathise with the characters on the cards. The playing of the game was helpful to me, enabling me to reconsider a range of aspects pertaining to the game scenario: traditionally, in Snakes and Ladders once the

first player leaves the board they are deemed the winner - why does the game cease to be after this set of events? What happens to the players who are left behind on the board? What would the game look like if the remaining players continued the board trajectory after the first player, the second, the third have left the board? What would it mean to the last player left on the grid to continue playing the game?

"You will study Law and then join the family business"

There is no arguing with your Dad, he doesn't understand your dream of being a Cricketer.

Is this the end of your life long aspiration?

Move back 2 steps.

Disdvantage Card

As a boy, your grandma gave you 2 extra eggs. Your sister always got one.

Move 4 steps forward

Advantage Card

Fig. 17: Revised Cards for second iteration of the game

snakes. *ladders.*
CHOICE.

In the third testing phase of the game, four players (two males and two females) with little to no context of the previous studio outcome were invited to play and provide feedback. A choice was made to increase the size of the board and this time, to place it on muslin canvas. An 8x8 ft grid was stitched with a straight stitch machine. My intent to construct straight lines was somewhat thwarted due to tension issues. The outcome was a grid made up of the lines where not straight lines that had a squiggly low fidelity appearance. Numbers for the individual squares were printed partly using a photo transfer technique and the rest were pasted on. *(See Fig. 19)* To achieve a 3D effect the snakes were stitched on black and white printed cloth and made in varying lengths. Ladders were represented with red wool. The cards were redesigned to differentiate between the voices and the outcomes.

Before we began this iteration of the game, I chose to show my two video prototypes 1 & 2 (see section (on Indian film and the implications above) as a means of contextualizing my own work. Unlike my immediate classmates, who had been "clued in" and had the advantage of months of critique and discussion these individuals did not. I was unsure how much contextualisation was needed in order for this group to understand the frame of reference within the cards.

Replicating an aspect of the traditional game, I offered the felt dolls (with gendered embellishments) as markers/pawns to the players to pick from. The individuals who volunteered to give feedback on this iteration of the game picked these markers at random, not correlating them to their own identity. They set their chosen markers/pawns at the left hand base of the cloth. The group sat on chairs around the the cloth game board that was spread out across two desks The two stacks of advantage and disadvantage (A&D) cards were placed on the table close to me. I rolled a digital dice on my computer and the game began. Following the role of the die the players began to move through their maker/pawns dolls.

Fig. 18: Images of the third iteration of the game

Early on in the game, some players wanted to say something but were quietened by another to compile all their feedback and discuss at the end of the game. A new set of rules was set. Unwittingly this initiated a completely different tone of play from the previous test. It was quiet - the players concentration - their thoughts - had become internal. The game ran for about thirty minutes, longer than the previous test and longer than I had expected. One out of four players was out of the game, very quickly. Outnumbered by the disadvantage cards, the advantage cards ran out first.It was clear that this social scenario and the intent to keep playing the game until all of the players had left the board was awkward.

Recommendations:

Despite the limitations of this version of the game the feedback from the players was very useful. This is discussed below -

- Consider renaming the two stacks of Advantage and Disadvantage cards to one stack of cards labeled as Chance - allowing room for a discussion about the situation a (whether not content on the card was a positive or a negative social assumption) If Advantage and Disadvantage cards continue to be used care as to where the ladders and snakes are placed on the board will be needed – for example: making sure that a ladder isn't placed before a disadvantage card where moving back would mean moving up on the board.

- Finding a means to allow the players to decide where they move on the board would potentially open up a means to empathise with the situation as opposed to being told where to move.

- The difficulty of the choice in the scenario needs to be reflected in the game; the game mechanics need to display more difficulties. For example, if the card is about child marriage then the outcome of landing on that card needs to reflect the gravity of the situation.

- Consider the possibility of starting the game genderless with the facilitator assigning genders to the players which would only be known to the facilitator. This would means that whenever a player landed on a chance card, the outcome would differ based on the gender. But the player would have to consider which role/situation they had been placed into

- Consider arranging the chance cards in a way that the events that occur during prepubescent, pubescent, young adult, adult, elderly coincide with where you are on the board. For ex: something that happens to you as a young adult would be placed in the middle of the game. The scenarios in the cards are bordering on being stereotypical: how can they be more nuanced?

In addition to these points the players also questioned the audience this game was designed for. I had originally intended Snakes and Ladders as a means to address the Indian context, ideally amongst Indians, but feedback from this and the earlier iteration of the game make it clear that it could be located in other cultural contexts as a way to understand human behaviour and experience through others' lived perspective, norms and beliefs. 'Non-competitive play' a term coined by Anderson refers to an uncompetitive playing activity ; like playing with a doll house for instance. (ANDERSON, 1988, P. 2)

Insights:

The rule of having a player who has left the board unable to re-enter meant that -
"the players outside of the board had to live through others experiences." - said the player who had gotten out first. However, situated as an observer the motivation for discussing the Caste system, sexual violence, gender bias, and sexism is hard from this detached perspective of the game. After the feedback from this peer group, I amalgamated the advantage and disadvantage cards into one pack and shifted my referencing of these cards away from the notion of Chance and referred to them as the Choice Cards. Additionally, in the revamped card the player would see a spectrum of choice allowing them to decide on the degree of disadvantage or advantage that they want to play with.

Fig. 19: Spectrum of Choice

According to Stephen Nachmanovitch musician, author and educator (2009), games are usually built on the basis of non verbal meta communication. This term coined by Gregory Bateson an English Anthropologist, Social scientist and Cyberneticist is relevant too. Bateson noted that "a message can only be produced in some particular context and manner, thus implying a relationship. Even a simple message like "please pass the salt," said at dinner, implies some relationship between the speaker and the hearer." (BATESON AS CITED BY NACHMANOVITCH, 2009)

For example: Cross your legs! Don't you have any shame?! This implies that a girl sitting with her legs apart is shameful and is inviting attention. Shame is often associated with bodily gestures in Indian culture.

the *cards:*
CHOICES TO BE MADE

CARD 1: **Gender Bias**

According to Rao (AS CITED IN BHATIA, H.M, 2007) The strong desire for male heirs within Indian culture leads to bias in various aspects of life between boys and girls. This has been corroborated in various studies. In Rao's studies it was demonstrated that boys were regularly given the privilege of good food, education over girls, Rao also notes that girls were regularly given household chores such as: collecting water, cooking meals - that boys were not expected to do. (RAO AS CITED IN BHATIA, H.M)

Further supporting this gender bias, a Unicef (2007) publication on the State of the World's Children identifies "institutional discrimination" resulting from "cultural traditions" in which problematic gender stereotypes go unnoticed and "remain accepted and unchallenged"
The report goes on to state:

> "The unequal division of household labour, such as requiring girls and women to trek many kilometres to fetch water and firewood, or the uneven allocation of household resources, such as giving women and girls less food or medical care, are examples of more subtle forms of inequality. These ingrained forms of discrimination often keep individuals, families and societies trapped in poverty and undermine economic, political and social development." (THE STATE OF THE WORLDS CHILDREN, UNICEF, 2007)
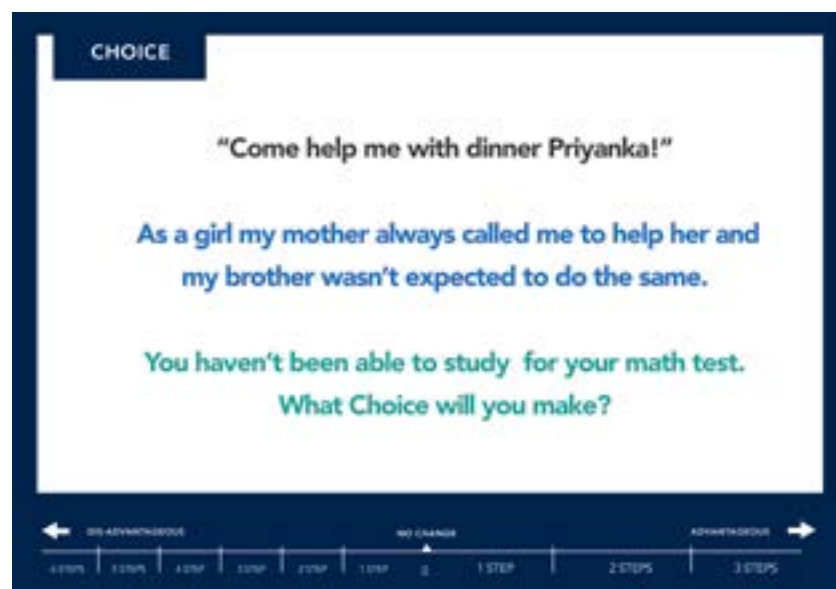
Fig. 20: Gender Bias: Choice Card

CARD II: **Girls, Sports & Stigma**

Kotschwar (2014) a research fellow with the Institute of International Economics talks about the barriers women from developing countries face to participate in sports, owing to the "strictly enforced" gender roles and restrictions on movement.

Kotschwar notes that – "In India, for example, where although women like wrestler Sonika Kaliraman and tennis star Sania Mirza are paving the way for women in sports, girls do not participate widely in athletics. Among the reasons are lack of encouragement from parents and family members and tradition: Because women have not commonly participated in sports in the past, girls face criticism for wanting to do so." (KOTSCHWAR, 2014)

Fig. 21: Girls, Sports & Stigma: Choice Card

CARD III : **Restrictions to movement in public spaces**

The book 'Why Loiter' documents three years of research on the inaccessibility of urban spaces for women in metro cities like Mumbai. Shrivastava (2012). A review of this book notes how a city like Mumbai despite "radically transforming" with respect to infrastructure still "grants" women secondary status. Shrivastava also notes - "low visibility areas, poorly lit spaces, deserted streets and public transportation after sunset all constitute for unsafe environments. To counter, women alter their movement and restrict accessing urban spaces, maintaining a compromise. This "modification of behaviour" includes - covering their chest with a book, file or dupatta, walking while gazing down and pretending to be on the phone while moving swiftly away into private spaces are common glimpses. Michel Foucault (as cited in Phadke, 2011) calls this "disciplined bodies". Foucault contends that, people in institutions such as schools, mental asylums, prisons are so used to being watched constantly that eventually they "no longer have to be watched" because they monitor themselves.

Fig. 22: Restrictions to Movement: Choice Card

CARD IV : **Attitudes towards public performance**

In the book Wanted Cultured Ladies Only!, Majumdar (2009) describes the rise of film production in colonial India and identifies its association with the lower rungs of class in Indian Society at that time. "Generalised gossip about cinema as a disreputable institution was tied to its class status and to anxieties of female public performance". *(See fig. 22)*

This culturally routed norm is also identified by Anna Morcom (2017), a professor who studied Ethnomusicology and the Song and Dance of India and Tibet. In her paper The Cure is Worse Than The Disease she mentions - "Prior to modern reforms, performing in public as a professional was incompatible with marriage for a woman. A woman who danced or sang in public or in front of men was not only outside domestic space, and thus violating basic rules of patriarchal control, but engaged in an activity that was sensual, strongly affective and focused attention on the body." (MORCOM, 2017, P. 501)

Fig. 23: Film Callout for Fazli Bros. Ltd.
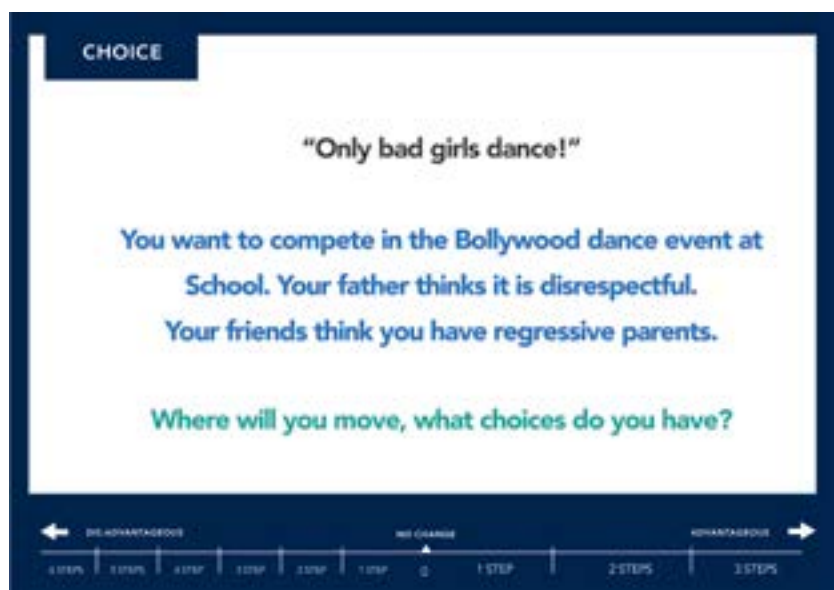
Fig. 24: Attitudes towards Public Performance: Choice Card

5. next

looking *forward*

In the next iteration of the game, I hope to build in further degrees of challenge and focus on the way the chance cards operate. During the visualisation of the village exercise (see section Visualisation of a Village) I was confronted with a similar dilemma - the challenge of communicating the nuances of the Hindu Caste system. In that studio exploration, visual storytelling aided and brought to focus what I was struggling to communicate to my peers. In a similar vein, this rendition of the S&L uses the telling of "short stories" to amplify the subtleties of the Indian way of life that need reconsidering.

In order to increase moments of engagement between players, the next iteration will be used to open the "value section" at the bottom of every chance card as a means to provoke debate and discussion amongst players. Therefore, depending on the scenario presented the game should afford players means to decide whether each scenario presented is in fact an opportunity to move forward, stay put, or step backwards . Deliberating and making a case for the decisions made during the game, becomes a key aspect of the play and interaction amongst the players.

Apart from the mechanisms the game runs on, I hope to pull from the rich visual language of the Gyan Chaupar boards and test on various types of fabric and applique styles. The forms of the snakes and ladders are important even if their presence on the board is ornamental - they communicate quickly what the game can be about. One might note, that the content on the Choice cards are a bit overt, however, this was to accommodate the foreign players who may or may not have had context of where these dialogues were coming from.

In the following iterations that might follow, I envisage using regional languages and the aid of colloquialism and nonverbal cues, that have become shorthand to better communicate concepts. I will possibly begin by engaging the Indian diasporic communities in Vancouver, as a first level testing ground.

not *an end note*

Complacent: (adjective) pleased, especially with oneself or one's merits, advantages, situation, etc., often without awareness of some potential danger or defect; self-satisfied.

The only good thing that came out of the inequality and unfairness I saw and experienced as a child, then as a girl and now as a woman is that it has made me angry. My anger has been important in my journey as a Designer. In a country like India, where violence, violation and religious fundamentalism have become the norm, complacency can quickly lead to apathy.

The purpose of this thesis has been to add to the dialogues taking place around the status and roles of marginalized women in India. Using this as a starting point I set the context through a comparison of historical and contemporary expectations we have had for women. Against this background discussing the portrayal of women in film and popular culture allowed me to see, how different they were expected to be, in reality.

The redesigned Snakes & Ladders creates opportunities for dialogue and dissent, it challenges the impetus to move back and forward (metaphorical and physical) through inbuilt spaces for discussion. Indian popular culture contains stereotypes of the "activist" persona – the one who cares too much, who does not fear to raise their voice. These depictions are often - almost always - female. Parallel to this is a particular culture of discomfort. In my experience, negative reactions to feminist ideologies and expressed concern for women's rights are rife in the Indian context. As an Indian myself, it is still not clear to me if this unease hinges on individual desires connected to freedom or a collective fear of loss of control. I do know that Women who stray away from the norm are almost always criticized by both genders. (ref to fig. 8)

While the Patriarchy functions on the subordination of women by men, women are equally complicit in endorsing these views. Actions such as holding open a door, expecting the man to pay for a meal, waiting/longing to be saved and protected by a man are subtle but not inconsequential. They are tied to deeper societal implications and are casually transferred through film, stories and familial/community-based expectations.

It is these mindsets that Snakes, Ladders and Choice hopes to disrupt– the deep-rooted belief systems that are dangerous and internalised. So, while I acknowledge the role of women and men as protectors of the Patriarchy, I do not believe that only women must spearhead the movement to change. The road to equality and freedom is long, meandering and a difficult one. It requires generations of Indians to come together – Snakes, Ladders & Choice is a small call to that freedom and seeks the attention of an entire race to march together.

The idea for this game and its subsequent iterations were born in Canada. Important discussions were had. If my anger and concern is to be addressed, however, these need to shift to another place. My work will invariably stay with me and make its way to India. There it will be rehashed to generate primary content, better game mechanics and then, go through further rounds of user testing.

My anger is important because as we speak there are women whose basic human rights are being violated. There are young girls dropping out of school because their parents don't want the burden they symbolise, it is important because when they marry, they will be told that their place is in the domestic sphere. My journey as a Performing artist and Designer have been instrumental in defining the scope and focus of this dissertation. I feed this emotion into my practice and hope to be a designer that advocates for the welfare of women and children, world over.

Every woman deserves all the freedom given to men – my anger is important.

6. the *references*

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list of figures

appendix A: STUDIO MAKING

Here is a table that describes the key studio projects that propelled me towards the final Game, and how external factors like conversations, experiences and observations led me to make within the studio.

A Cloth Parrot

I did this exploration in the studio at the time when I was still pursuing the space of child safety and protection from sexual abuse. I used old rags and tissue paper to stitch together a parrot like doll. In India, Parrots are well known to repeat what they hear and used by fortune tellers as well. So what if I could use a toy parrot as a teaching tool? Conversations and messages about the body that are difficult for a parent to have can be directed through the parrot, almost like a puppet. The technique of repetition would help the child remember an integral safety rule. In this studio exploration I asked my peers to gather around and sit in a circle, I had a raggedy bird in my hand and asked everyone who sat in the circle, what were some of the body safety rules their parents introduced to them, or taught them as a kid and we tried to repeat the same rule with the parrot - I changed my voice and there were some giggles. Some of my peers seemed to like the bird a lot and they enjoyed the proximity of sitting around a circle and listening to me changing voices, they were of the opinion that it definitely grabbed their attention to what the parrot was saying and that the theatrics had value. This feedback was important as it informs my final output later on, everytime I went back into the studio I tried to recreate the magic the parrot brought into that circle.

Kaavad : Storytelling Temple

India has an exceptionally rich heritage when it comes to storytelling or Katha as it is is called in Sanskrit. Writer, researcher and storyteller Nina Sabnani in her paper The Kaavad storytelling tradition of Rajasthan (2011) says: "Kaavad Banchana', an oral tradition of storytelling is still alive in Rajasthan where stories from the epics Mahabharata and Ramayana are told along with stories from the Puranas, caste genealogies and stories from the folk tradition. It is essentially a box that is made to resemble a shrine or temple and has various visual narratives hand painted on each door. The Kavadiya or storyteller opens each door to reveal a different part of the story. I was motivated to try out an unseen format from the parrot and looked towards the Kaavad - simply because it was so engaging and had such a rich story to tell. I used a discarded cardboard box and scored it to make doors, I had to use a lot of masking tape to fortify the object. Then I stuck yellow sheets to form the base on which I would paint the story.

For the purpose of this particular iteration, I made the doors resemble temple doors and didn't paint the front, but made designs using coloured paper - then with black and red gouache I painted over my pencil sketches. Using an existing story around the birth of Ganesha, I painted on a large scale format keeping in mind the peer review and being able to tell the story to a larger audience. In the following peer review I demonstrated the Kaavad in front of the whole class - it was a very energizing and electric experience - by now I was seeing the value that prose was bringing to my work and still continuing to fascinate, not just them but me too.
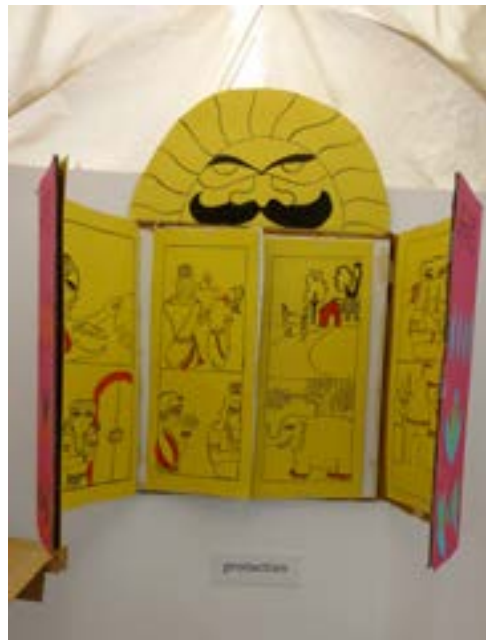
Stitching Circles

During my winter break in 2016, one semester into my thesis project, I chanced upon the beauty of stitching. It had a calming effect on me and there were moments of deep reflection - where I was thinking about its history in Indian culture, of my grandmother who knit and smocked frocks for me as a baby.

The following Spring, I spent delving into India's tryst with textiles. One of the fascinating things was that I was surrounded by resourceful peers and faculty who had strong ties, knowledge and experience with textile. Emily my peer and Helene my studio faculty together provided me with mountains of resources that helped me dive into the rich world of fabric. I looked at women's movements around the world situated between warp and weft and traditional forms of embroidery and understood the symbolism of the needle and thread. Betsy Greer (2014) a writer and maker talks about women from Bihar; who as a part of a Women's cooperative...sought to revive the domestic art of quilt-making or sujini, as it is known in that region, realising that the quilts were a potential source of income for women living in poverty who were prevented from working due to social customs. When the project first began, the handful of women who joined were met with ridicule but little resistance. Men permitted their wives to participate because they viewed quilt-making as a woman's hobby, not a source of income. Greer writes that the project brought positive change for the women who participated. By earning an income they became more empowered and met less resistance from men and began to show their faces in public. Under the protection of doing non-threatening "women's work", they (women) were able to gather and learn from one another, they found solidarity and empowerment by working together. (Greer, Craftivism, 2016)

It helped me look at embroidery less as a decorative element and more as a medium for activism, which set change. My initial summer research plan was centered around the concepts of stitching circles as potentially safe spaces and as opportunities for women in rural and semi-rural India to gather around and tell stories. These meetings could then be orchestrated to encourage women to address safety issues of children and women in general. The idea was that, sitting and stitching around a piece of cloth would shift their gaze but not attention from the difficult conversations surrounding violence in their community and help them be more involved.

In preparation for my summer research and also to gain the experience of conducting a co-creative workshop, I planned two simultaneous workshops for my Spring 2017 studio class. One of the sessions was to sit in 1 of any 4 squares drawn out on a floor with chalk and demarcated with emotions. The objective was to take any colour of thread and pattern of cloth from a basket of supplies and to stitch in that emotion square thinking of a memory when you either felt happy, sad, angry or fearful. In this paired exercise, I wanted to encourage but not enforce discussion. After fifteen minutes a bell would be rung to indicate that people could move on to do their stitching in another square with another word to consider. My hope was that if there were other people in that square and that individuals would feel open to sharing their

memories/thoughts with one another other.

My key goal for this activity had been to understand if the mark making and stitching on cloth afforded individuals the space to think through the word they had been invited to consider. If the activity of working on the cloth might allow a different type of focus. And provide a visual marker (their stitching) that would provide people safe way to consider at a later date the context of their discussion? In retrospect if the objective was to observe the connection between where stories were inspired from and the memories associated with mark making on cloth, the same experience could also have been achieved through alternate means such as, giving them words and phrases or placing down objects that they could respond to.

Day in the life of...

During a particular exercise in the studio, I was trying to understand how many interactions do children actually have in their daily lives. How many people do they meet and interact with and how mobile can they be. I wanted to study the lives of children belonging to slightly varied socio-economic backgrounds. I spoke to my cousin who has a six year old and asked her to list out what a typical day looks like in her daughter, Maya's life and how many people does she interact with on a regular basis. Maya is born to upper middle class parents who have steady incomes and access to free education owing to her father's career in the Indian Navy.

In contrast, I spoke to my friends house help Pooja- a widow with two teen aged children. From extremely poor backgrounds and almost below the poverty index Poojas daughter Neha and son Amit are enrolled in government schools – Neha is a in a co-educational school while Amit is in an all boys school. From both these conversations I noticed a few things – girls in general live in extremely protected conditions. Neha is escorted to school because she lives in a slum that has a lot of male gangs and she goes home on a cycle accompanied by friends and returns to her aunts house. Maya is picked up by a nanny from the bus stop who feeds her, changes her and makes her do her homework until her mother returns from work. Amit on the other hand has total freedom before and after school. He has a mobile phone with data, is able to go to the local grocery store to recharge his phone. His mother also sends him on grocery errands and he and his sister take the local train to visit their grandmother on weekends. While I did notice the obvious differences, this got me thinking about the rules that govern how girls and boys are raised in India and pushed me to explore this through another video prototype. From both these conversations I noticed a few things – girls in general live in extremely protected conditions. Priya is escorted to school because she lives in a slum that has a lot of male gangs and she goes home on a cycle accompanied by friends and returns to her aunts house. Aanya is picked up by a nanny from the bus stop who feeds her, changes her and makes her do her homework until her mother returns from work. Jagan on the other hand has total freedom before and after school. He has a mobile phone with data, is able to go to the local grocery store to recharge his phone. His mother also sends him on grocery errands and he and his sister take the local train to visit their grandmother on weekends. While I did notice the obvious differences, this got me thinking about the rules that govern how girls and boys are raised in India and pushed me to explore this through another video prototype.
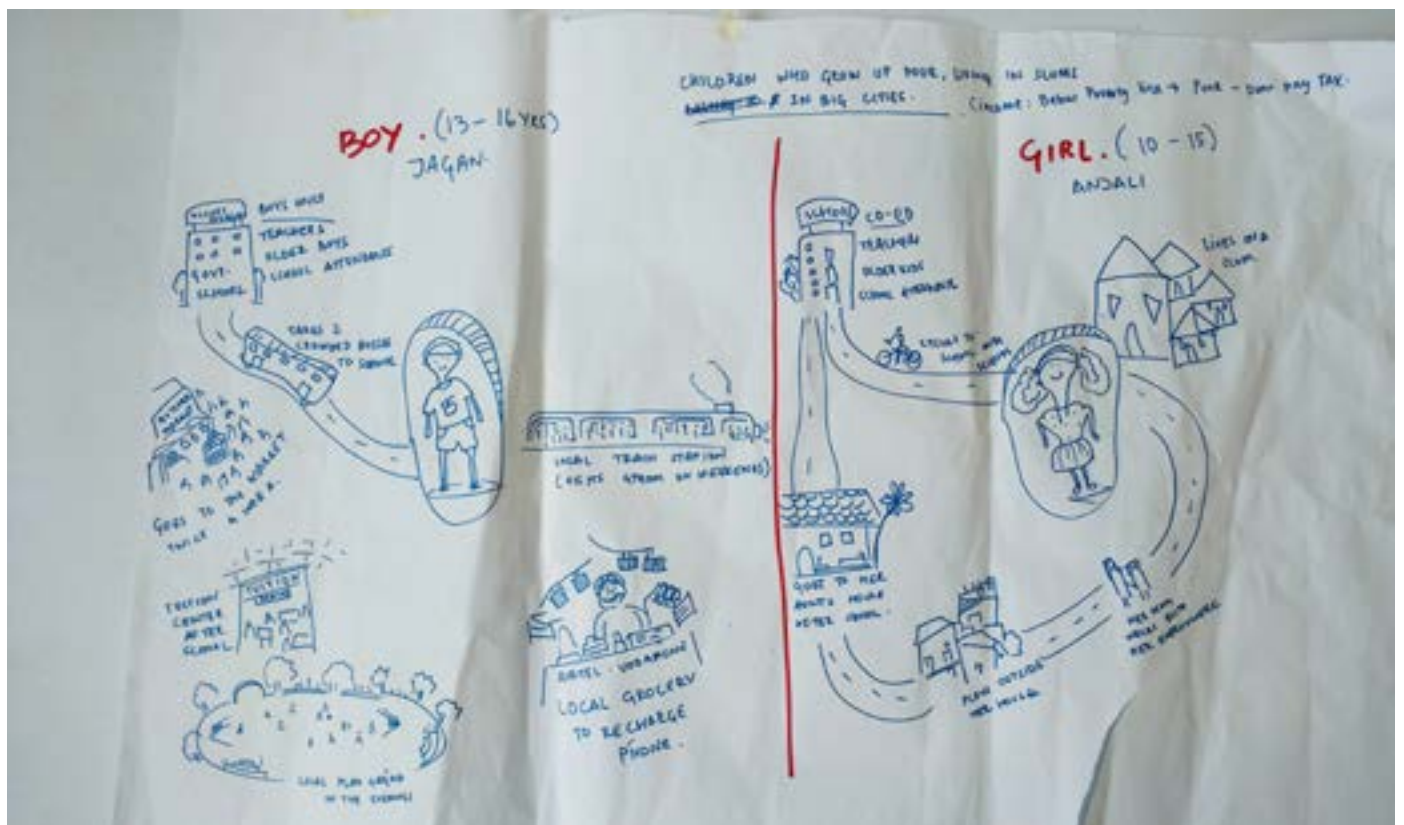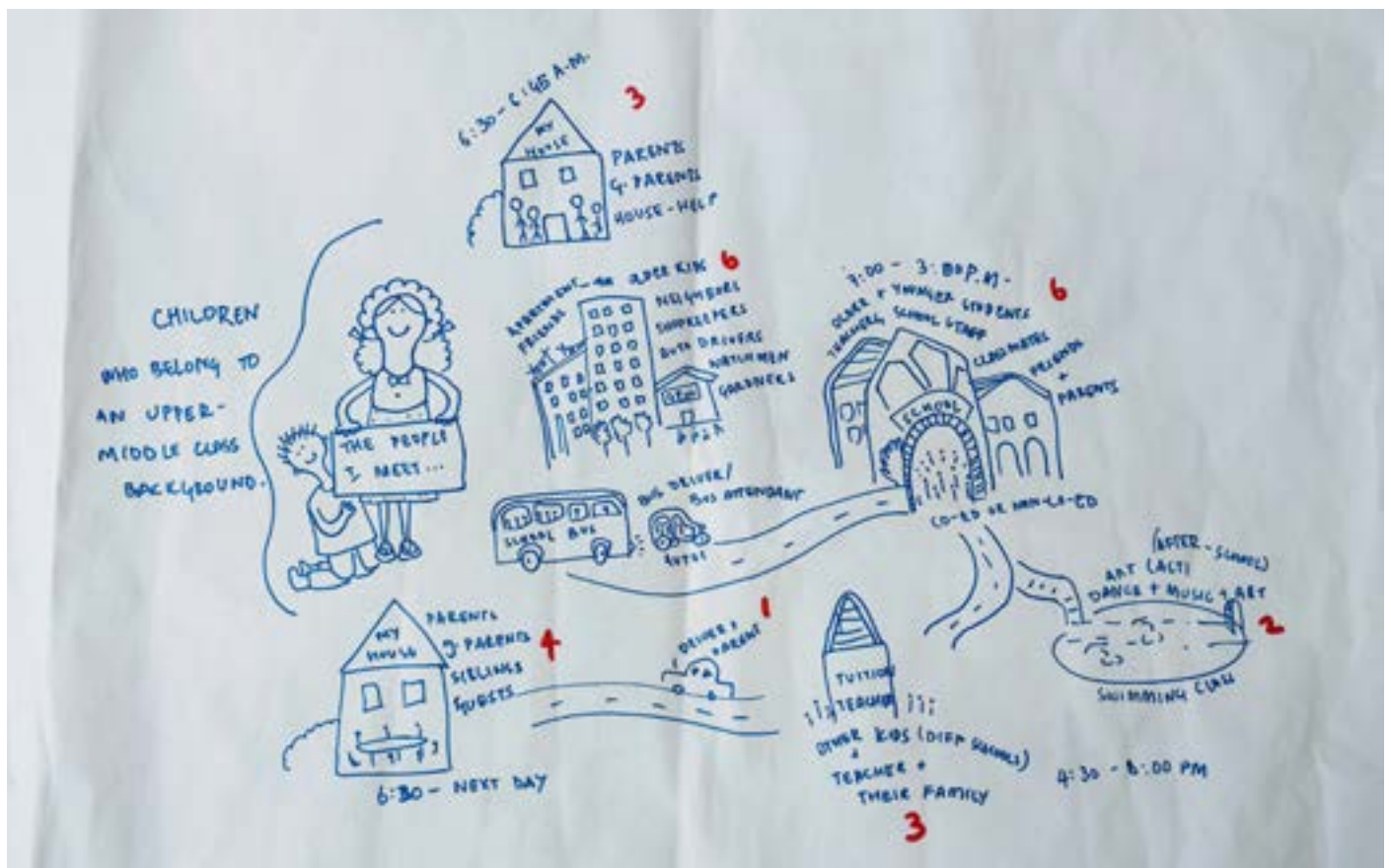
appendix B: RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION

This research will be conducted using semi-structured interviews, a cultural probe and a material practice focused on storytelling. Ms. Vidya Reddy a child protection specialist, who runs Tulir – A Center for the Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse in Chennai, India has agreed to champion my project as an expert on this subject.

I. SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS I will individually invite NGO personnel to answer my queries and converse with me in a semi structured interview. In order to afford for a dialogic sharing of information that is two-way 60 – 90 minutes will be set aside for the interview. This might be conducted face to face, over telephone or Skype. The primary goal would be to better understand the objectives of NGO's and how this has or
hasn't translated into their communication material. Direct questions along with several themes to guide more informal dialogue during the interview meetings, for example: objectives of their organization, hurdles being faced, choice and impact of communication channels used, role of technology.

II. CULTURAL PROBETullii Mattelmäki (2005) in her book Design Probes refers to the 4 reasons for conducting a probe, which are: for Inspiration,
Information, Participation and Dialogue. This designed cultural probe concerns itself with collecting information in order to arrive at new questions, create alternate outlines and to find patterns in expression. Additionally, to provide NGO's with an opportunity to participate. The probe will be made up of 3 activities designed to help me better understand the NGO personnel's beliefs, cultural concerns and aesthetic preferences.

1) Card Sorting
The probe will carry a set of designed cards with different imagery of stakeholders on them (Ex: Inspector, Lawyer, Mother, Child, Community). There will be a range of 12 to 15 cards and participants will be asked to arrange the cards twice. In the first instance they will be asked to arrange them according to how important they feel these stakeholders and members of civil society are in the child safety network; starting from most important to least important. The second question will prompt them to open a set of empty blank cards that they could add to the existing stack; they can also remove cards they don't feel are important and then stack them in any order they deem fit.
The objective will be to gain a better understanding of how participants
view other stakeholders and members of society in the child
safety network.

2) Postcard
A postcard activity will encourage each participant to share their thoughts on the images of different kind of mass media; with prompts such as – 'What do you think of this?' Or 'Tell me something about what you see'. These questions are intended to elicit a more casual response from the participant, similar to ones found in everyday conversations. The postcards will have a mix of

illustrations or photographs of objects and ideas such as - internet, radio, camera phones, posters, street plays, loudspeaker rallies, puppet shows etc.

3) Assembling Activity

The intent behind this exercise is to better understand how participants represent children internally to themselves and in turn, how they see this in relation to communication material that is widely seen in their work. The probe will have a set of paper/cloth cut outs of girls and boys in varying skin colour – from light, wheatish brown to dark skinned.

Clothing for the boy and girl forms will also be provided; the participants will be asked to create as many combinations as possible. They will then be asked to add words onto empty cards that relate to their assembled

pieces and a space to reflect on any feelings or thoughts that overcame them during the activity.

III. MATERIAL PRACTICE, STORYTELLING & OBSERVATIONS

In the DESIS (Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability) Network publication 'The Pearl Diver'; the editors identify the designer's role as a storyteller. They say - as designers and design researchers working in the field of social innovation we often make use of storytelling to involve, engage and create fruitful dialogue. Stories can be considered as a means through which to share visions, desires and expectations of the actors involved. One of the key factors that one notices while skimming through child safety resources is the use of narrative to explain key concepts, which are otherwise hard to communicate. Using these essays as a way to anchor my research; I hope to observe, respond and use my material practice to sort through the stimuli coming my way and understand how stories can play a larger role in this exchange.

appendix c: FLIMS & PLOT LINES

Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham:

Rahul an adopted son of rich parents - Yashwardhan Raichand and Nandini goes against their wishes and marries by his own choice, a girl from poor backgrounds. Rich father will not accept their union and kicks Rahul out of the family and the business. Rahul, moves to London with his new wife, Anjali and proceeds to have a family there. In the meantime, Yashwardhan's younger son, Rohan who has now completed University finds out about Rahul's banishment from India while overhearing his grandmothers talk. Rohan goes through a lot of trouble and reunites the family. Yashwardhan apologises and welcomes Rahul back into their lives and Rohan falls in love with Pooja who is Anjali's younger sister.

Director: Karan Johar
Genre: Drama
Runtime: 210 minutes

Masaan:

Masaan

Multiple narratives intertwine in this film. The first story is of Devi Pathak and her boyfriend, who disguise themselves as a married couple and enter a cheap motel only to be interrupted by police. Half naked, the police storm in and take videos of Devi as a tactic to blackmail her later. Her partner runs into the bathroom and commits suicide, knowing that the shame would shatter his family. Devi's father, Vidyadhar is called to the police station and made aware of the consequences of her daughters actions. In exchange for the police's silence, Vidyadhar has to pay off the cops and is given 4 months time to pay three hundred thousand rupees as a bribe. Deepak Kumar is from the Dom community, which consists of lower caste peoples who burn bodies on the ghats of the ganges. He finishes engineering at the top of his class and is looking to get out of the family occupation and make a name for himself. He falls in love with Shaalu Gupta a upper caste hindu girl. When he does reveal his identity, to his surprise Shaalu isn't deterred and is willing to run away for love. Unfortunate events kill Shaalu and her entire family in a bus accident. That night, Deepak is called to the burning grounds to help out with excessive dead bodies and recognises Shaalu's ring on one of the dead bodies fingers, he is distraught and cries out in pain at the loss of his love. The film ends with Deepak offering Devi water when he sees her weeping at the river banks. They get on a boat and ride to the Sangam - which is the confluence of three rivers in India - Yamuna, Saraswati and the Ganges.

Director: Neeraj Ghaywan
Genre: Drama
Runtime: 109 minutes