

**THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN SHAPING CHILDREN'S PLAY: MEMORIES OF A
PLAYING GIRL**

By

VANDANA SHARMA

(18804052)

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the research higher degree

Of

Master of Research

Graduate Research School

Western Sydney University

December, 2018

Supervisory Panel

Dr. Jorge Dorfman Knijnik (Principal Supervisor)

Dr. Eva Vass (Co-Supervisor)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin with expressing my heartiest gratitude and reverence for all the persons who have given their esteemed contribution, guidance and valuable time towards the completion of this project. First of all, I would like to say thanks to my parents Smt. Vijay Sharma and Late. Sh. Devender Kumar Sharma who not only brought me into this beautiful world but also enabled me to stand on my feet today. I will never forget the sacrifices made and the hardships experienced by my mother that have encouraged me to be the person that I am today.

I would also like to say thanks to my siblings and brother-in-law, Dr. Ranjana Sharma and Ms. Anjana Sharma and Dr. Dixit Prasher for their support and for motivating me throughout this whole journey. I also can't forget the encouraging words of my niece Prishu in writing this thesis.

I would like to offer my sincere appreciation to my in-laws Sh. Harish Chander Sharma and Smt. Shubh Sharma who allowed me to pursue my academic dreams in Australia. I am blessed to have in-laws like them who always appreciated their daughter-in-law's achievements and showered their blessings on me.

The person who has stood by me through thick and thin is my loving husband Mr. Munish Sharma. The journey of this project was not smooth due to my health issues, but he was the only one who not only cared for me a lot, but also encouraged me to complete this project on time. I would like to say thanks to my husband who is the true hero in my life. He is the one who always admires and respects me. Despite being a male he always shows high regard for women's achievements and knows how to respect a woman. I am blessed to have him in my

life. I can't forget the contribution of my little 'Madhav' in providing me the strength to complete this project. He is the one who brings solace to my life.

This project would have been impossible without the efforts and contributions of my extremely hardworking supervisor Dr. Jorge Dorfman Knijnik who always offered his extended help whenever it was needed. I am unable to express in words the efforts of Dr. Jorge in helping me to complete this project. The biggest hurdle in this project was gaining an ethics approval from HREC, and it was only due to the efforts of Dr. Jorge that this project got this approval. In many ways, he is the reason why this project came to life. He was the one who had full faith in my sincerity and hard work. I am very grateful that he was my supervisor and that he always spared his precious time to provide me with feedback. I am grateful that he made this project a possibility, and encouraged me in every aspect of this project.

Last but not the least; I would also like to express my sincere thanks to my co-supervisor Dr. Eva Vass who guided me at various stages of this project. Her unwavering support makes me believe that life is full of possibilities and I am capable of anything.

DECLARATION

I declare that except where due acknowledgement has been made, this research study is my own work and has not been submitted to any other university in any form. Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.



Vandana Sharma

December, 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS -----	i
DECLARATION -----	iii
ABSTRACT -----	vii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Chapter overview-----	1
1.2 Overview of the autoethnographer-----	1
1.3 Statement of the problem-----	3
1.4 Purpose of the research-----	4
1.5 Research questions-----	4
1.6 Significance of the study-----	5
1.7 Structure of the study-----	5
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 The social foundations of gender-----	6
2.2 Gender is plural-----	9
2.2.1 Gender is a social construct-----	9
2.3 Gender in education-----	11
2.4 Gender in India-----	14
2.4.1 Gender constructs in everyday life in India: A broad perspective-----	14
2.4.2 Female infanticide-----	15

2.4.3 Child marriage in India-----	16
2.4.4 Gender discrimination in the schooling of girls-----	16
2.5 Play and gender-----	18
2.6 Play in India-----	21
2.6.1 Play in rural India: Play with soil-----	21
2.6.2 Kabaddi-----	22
2.6.3 Kho-Kho-----	23
2.6.4 Pithoo-----	23
2.6.5 Gilli Danda-----	24
2.6.6 Props of Indian rural games-----	24
2.6.7 Play in urban India-----	25
2.7 Gender segregation and differences in Indian playing culture-----	26
 CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	
3.1 Chapter overview-----	28
3.2 Autoethnography: A tool for qualitative research-----	29
3.3 Why an Autoethnography?-----	31
3.4 Research participants and data collection-----	34
3.5 Data analysis-----	35
3.6 Writing an autoethnographic report-----	36
3.7 Ethical responsibilities as a researcher-----	37
 CHAPTER 4 MY NARRATIVE PART 1	
4.1 Chapter overview-----	40
4.1.1 Star baby of the hospital (0-1 years)-----	40
4.1.2 My first birthday (1-2 years)-----	42
4.1.3 My toy room: The worst place in my home (2-3 years)-----	44

4.1.4 My stealing activities (3-4 Years)-	46
4.1.5 Cricket: My first love (4-5 years)-	49
4.1.6 Selection in the cricket team (5-6 Years)-	52
4.1.7 Father's doll turned to a cricketer (6-7 Years)-	54
4.1.8 Barbie doll becomes Batman (7-8 years)-	57
4.1.9 A complete makeover of my old toy room (8-9 years)-	59
CHAPTER 4 MY NARRATIVE PART 2	
4.2.1 Migration brings sadness and pain (9-10 years)-	63
4.2.2 My experiences in the local public school (10-11 years)-	65
4.2.3 The last happy picture of my childhood (11-12 years)-	71
4.2.4 The worst experiences of my life (12-13 Years)-	72
4.2.5 The phase of transformation (12-13 Years)-	76
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION	
5.1 Introduction-	79
5.2 Summary of the findings of the study-	81
5.3 Benefits of the study-	82
5.4 Limitations of the study-	83
5.5 Suggestions for future researchers-	83
REFERENCES -	84

ABSTRACT

Culture has had an important role in shaping children's play throughout recorded history. The strategies for play are chosen by the set of customs of the particular society in relation to gender and culture. In societies like India, where gender boundaries are still rigid, children's play is under constant surveillance to comply with the unwritten gender traditions that build barriers to constrain gender expressions. This study aims to discuss how the cultural and societal context and specifically cultural understandings of gender affect children's play in India. By using an autoethnographic method, the study explores the relationship between gender and play in India. The childhood of the author is examined through the theoretical lens of Raewyn Connell's work, to deepen the understanding of the role that gender has in shaping children's play in India. This discussion will clarify the influence that gendering has in creating obstacles to the free expression of boys and girls while playing, from their earliest years. The findings of this study suggest that there are significant gender differences in Indian play settings which further restrict the playing options for children. The findings of this research will be helpful for early childhood educators in broadening their mental horizons and understandings of Indian playing culture.

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter provides a broad and brief overview of this research study. As this research is an autoethnography, the initial paragraphs of this chapter provide a brief overview of the autoethnographer's life. Later, this chapter states the main problem of this study along with the research questions addressed in this research. In this chapter, the researcher also addresses the purpose and significance of this research study, which will help the readers to better understand this autoethnographic study.

1.2 Overview of the autoethnographer

India- a land of gods and goddesses, and world famous for its rich cultural heritage. Being a citizen of India, I feel fortunate to have been born in this country. India is a country where everyone wants to have at least one son in their family as only a son can open the door of salvation to his parents (Gill, 2013). My mother told me that before my birth everyone in the family was hoping and even praying to God for a baby boy this time. In India, pre-natal determination is legally banned. Whenever would-be parents visit any ultrasound centre for regular screening, the doctors in India are not allowed to reveal the sex of the fetus to the parents. Hence, my parents were unaware that they were going to have a girl child again in their family.

I was born on the 24th October, 1984 as a second girl child in a middle class family. Everyone's hopes had been smashed to the ground. Time flew by, and I eventually realized that I was born into an 'orthodox society'. A society which put metaphorical chains on the soft, tiny feet of every child and forced every child to behave as per societal rules based on its gender. My mind often fantasized about freedom from this slavery and as a teenager I composed this poem:

I want to fly
Fly like a sparrow in the sky,
fly like mists in the sky.
Can I fly?
No, I can't fly
I have chains on my feet,
They tell me to do that,
I refuse to do that,
They forced me again,
I said, okay I will do that but in my way,
But, they urged me to do it in their way,
I cried, I resisted, I begged,
To let me do in my way,
They again urged,
I always asked 'why?'
They replied, this is the correct way.
I asked am I free?
My soul replied 'no' you are not free,

*You are bounded in chains,
My little innocent heart says,
I need to be free
Free to do what I want,
Free to play that I like,
Please! Let me free,
Please! Let me fly,
Please! Let me play.*

1.3 Statement of the problem

I was born in India- a country where people have more preference for having sons than daughters (Gill, 2013). I spent my childhood in a society where children are supposed to play the games associated with their sex. I always resisted such societal patterns and tried to develop my personality in the way that I wanted. I experienced several cultural phenomena pertaining to gendered practices in the arena of play. During my Master's studies I became aware of the critical gender studies field, and I further realized that an autoethnographic study would be a relevant way to explore gender and play in Indian culture. By drawing upon my own experiences as a playing girl, I believe I can discuss more broadly the gendered nature of Indian society. Children's play is considered to be a mirror, which not only reflects the cultural values of a particular society but also shows the expressions and attitudes of people towards play (Massey, 2013). In other words, children's play is undeniably influenced by the cultural traditions and social arrangements that exist within any human community (Connell, 2002). Hence, to understand Indian society it is crucial to understand its 'playing regimes' and how gendering regulates them.

These questions provoked me to identify how culture affects children's play, and how gendered practices of society, parents and peers restrict the playing options for children. The main question and research problem for this thesis is, how has my personality has been shaped by culture?

1.4 Purpose of the research

The problems I listed as a series of questions urged me to ponder the gendered practices that have significant influence on children's play. The gendered practices of Indian culture transformed my personality in a drastic way. My childhood experiences in Indian society have left a deep impact on me. A close analysis of my personality transformation was a genuine research arena for this study, as the study of my own childhood experiences would not only be helpful for me to better know myself, but also helpful in unveiling the important aspects of gender culture in India.

The knowledge I unearth about Indian culture might be helpful for insiders (Indians) and outsiders (foreigners) to better understand Indian culture, especially the playing culture of India. The main purpose of this study is to explore the role of gender in shaping children's play and to unveil the playing culture of India.

1.5 Research questions

My research was framed to explore the role of gender constructs in playing activities of children in India. It was a search for an explanation regarding how gendered practices restrict the playing options for children in India. Hence, this question urged me to explore the support research question mentioned below:

1. How do gender constructs and practices shape children's play in India?

The support research question is:

1(a) How play is enacted in India?

1.6 Significance of the study

Autoethnographic studies in the arena of play, especially in the Indian context, are rare. My study not only contributes to the existing research pertaining to social and cultural dimensions of play, but also gives input to the growing autoethnographic tradition within education and childhood studies. Through the analysis of my own childhood experiences, I succeeded in unveiling the playing culture of India, which is beneficial for others in the understanding of Indian culture.

1.7 Structure of the study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter-1 defines the aims and purposes of this study along with its significance. Then Chapter 2 discusses the relevant literature, which is mostly related to gender, play and education. Chapter 3 details the methodological procedures and ethical considerations of this research. Chapter 4 presents and discusses i.e. my narrative- which is based on my personal experiences in Indian culture. This chapter is further divided into two parts. Part 1 depicts my childhood experiences in an urban area and Part 2 depicts my experiences in a rural area, which forced me to give up my 'boyish' playing patterns. Then the concluding chapter provides a brief summary of my research findings and presents suggestions for future researchers in this field.

CHAPTER-2

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS OF GENDER

2.1 The social foundations of gender

The concept of gender is not new in contemporary society. This term has gained widespread attention in the works of various researchers (Aina and Cameron, 2011; Borve & Borve, 2017; Boskovik, 2014; Healey, 2014; Massey, 2013). People generally use ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ interchangeably. For example, in public speech, we often use the word ‘sexes’ to refer to both men and women. However, sex includes physical attributes such as internal organs and sex hormones, whereas gender is not solely or inherently associated with physical anatomy (Mayeza, 2017). Sex has its basis in biological features such as genes, chromosomes and other physiological characteristics we display as ‘males’ and ‘females’, whereas gender does not have its basis in biology. Rather, contemporary literature views gender as a social construction based on belief systems (Hollenbeck, 2016).

Gender is learnt and continually performed as we interact with different people in different contexts (Mayeza, 2017). Gender is a social practice which determines the performances of individuals on account of their birth status (White, Ruther, Kahn, & Dong, 2016). Traditional gender constructs imply that men should use their bodies to work to earn money, whereas it is expected of women that they should limit themselves to the boundaries of home and take care of the family and children (Hollenbeck, 2016).

Galipeau (2014) sees gender as a social construction; one that can be constantly created, recreated and transformed. A person's sex determination is beyond his/her control, but gender is shaped by society (Yieke, 2001). Gendering is an ongoing process which is governed and controlled by individual's social interactions (Chesley, 2011). Furthermore, Chapman (2016) and Massey (2013) argue that gendering is a continuing process that begins at birth and continues throughout the life of an individual.

The process of gendering is a never ending process. Individuals are influenced by social contexts which include family, school, peers and media (Galipeau, 2014). Parents' guide their children as per their associated gender roles through social interaction. For example, parents in specific social contexts direct their girls not to participate in cricket and soccer as, within their communities, these games are meant for boys only (Wingrave, 2016; Massey, 2013). Researchers claim that parents have strong inclinations towards biological accounts of gender and they highly discourage their children from behaving in a manner which is opposite to that normally expected for their biological sex status (Cubbage, 2016).

Media has played an important role in influencing gender identities of individuals. Galipeau (2014) argues that the media delivers gender specific messages. For example, make-up and household product advertisements are nearly always performed by girls, whereas boys are often represented performing in heroic roles. Moreover, women are often praised for their beauty, soft nature and charming smiles, whereas men are more likely to be admired for their stamina and their accomplishments in life (Clark & Hardacre, 2017).

Male characters in novels and magazines are usually described in terms of their general appearance, trustworthiness and strength. Moreover, the clothes and shoes they wear is

usually meant to indicate their individual personality. For example, polished shoes and formal attire of a man may suggest his high class sophistication (Yieke, 2001). On the other hand, women are often depicted in terms of their sexual appeal and in relation to others. When we read news of road accidents involving women, they are often something like: “The surviving lady is the mother of two children” (Yieke, 2001), as if being a mother is her main role in society.

Gender stereotyping is clearly evident in the promotion of user products, such as clothes, toys, bed sheets, towels etc. When we visit a shopping mall there is usually a separate section for male and female products highlighted by creating isolated pink and blue passageways (Aina & Cameron, 2011). We can easily read symbolic messages in bed sheets, clothes and toys which present images of Barbie dolls for girls, and “Monster X” for boys which reinforce gender identities (Aina & Cameron, 2011).

However, in recent years the concept of gender has gained new and subtler connotations. Social perspectives have moved beyond binary distinctions of male/female, man/woman. Centuries of social tradition are now being challenged by more nuanced understandings of gender as a social construct (Healey, 2014). However, in the contemporary world, shifting gender identities are still met with criticism. Gender identification markers of men and women have been radically changing in recent years. The first high heel wearers are believed to have been Persian horse riders around the 9th Century (Lehman, 2013). The extended heels were designed specifically for riding. High heeled shoes have at times been status symbols and men have worn high heels to look taller (Nagesh, 2016). Furthermore, the wearing of high heels by men became fashionable in various centuries, and in around 1630 women started cutting their hair, wearing jewelry and hats to adopt the fashionable

masculine styles (Lehman, 2013). By 1740, heels were seen as foolish, and men had stopped wearing them (Nagesh, 2016). High heels, wearing hats and jewelry - all of which were once primarily associated with masculinity and the 'male gender', are now largely embraced by the 'female gender' (Nagesh, 2016).

From the above discussion it is clear that gender is dynamic in nature, and that nowadays gender is considered to be more fluid (Healey, 2014).

In the next section, I will discuss Connell's concepts of gender and how it is socially constructed. Connell's analyses of gender not only enhance our knowledge about gender but also enable us to understand how we reinforce gendering among children from their earliest childhood.

2.2 Gender is plural

Raewyn Connell is a renowned Australian sociology professor. Her influential work on gender studies comprehends the fields of education, political science and history. Through her study she has made important contributions to the understanding of many areas of social life. The aim of this section is to briefly address her views on how gender is socially constructed and performed in our contemporary societies.

2.2.1 Gender is a social construct

The process of gendering starts at the birth of a child (Chesley, 2011). We instantly recognize a person as man or woman quickly on account of their physical appearance and behavior. Now the question arises: who created those distinctions between men and women? Who decided the patterns, norms on which we differentiate men and women? It is a common

belief that the distinction of gender is 'natural' but in reality it is society which marks distinctive boundaries between men and women. "Gender is above all, a matter of the social relations within individuals and groups" (Connell, 2002, p.9).

Society restricts men and women on account of their sex. The activities of men and women in everyday life are shaped by social patterns formulated on the basis of their biological status. Since birth, girls are usually recommended to preferably engage in household chores such as cooking, stitching, sewing and nursing their younger siblings. We do not see a larger majority of women working and holding prestigious positions in the public realm than men (Connell, 2002).

Men and women are both expected to behave as per societal patterns. Since birth, distinctive measures are applied to babies and they are called either male or female, and labelled by pink or blue baby clothes. 'Blue babies' (boys) are usually expected to behave differently from 'pink babies' (girls); boys are expected to be rougher and tougher, more violent and strong. 'Blue babies' are usually provided with toy guns, cars and computer games. In contrast, 'pink babies' are usually expected to be more calm and polite towards others as they grow. Their attire changes to fancy clothes, they are given dolls and make-up kits. They are advised by parents and society to be softly spoken and humble always. These gendering practices by parents and society give a strong message to children that every girl and boy has to follow the societal patterns of gender in their lives, from birth to death (Connell, 2002).

At later stages in their young lives, parents usually teach their daughters to learn household work, to be good at human relations and to follow the instructions of father, husband and brother. Girls are taught by mass culture that their main task is to lie on silk cushions and

dream about their Prince Charming who will come on a white horse one day to take them away. On the other hand, boys are not generally advised to make themselves attractive. Rather, they are taught to be tough and rough, run cars, earn money for the livelihood of their families and to pursue girls (Connell, 2000).

Gendering is a social process of acquiring masculine and feminine traits as per societal standards. Gender based social performances are reinforced by the various agencies of society, such as family, school, peer groups and the media. It is conveyed to boys and girls that there are societal expectations which they need to fulfil (Connell, 2002). The next section addresses how Connell's concepts of gender are applicable in the field of education. I employ Connell's and other researchers' ideas to explain how current education reinforces gender stereotyping of young children.

2.3 Gender in education

Gender plays a crucial role in the field of education. The education sector reinforces the gendering process among the students (Nagaraja et al., 2013). The provision of separate schools for boys and girls in India reinforces the gender biases among the children. This gender segregation is even present in co-educational schools. For example, in Indian classrooms, there are separate rows for the seating of boys and girls, and students are divided into boys' and girls' groups for participation in various curricular and extra-curricular activities (Mohanty & Rammohan, 2015).

The management policies of schools and teacher's behavior reinforce gender identities in educational settings. Currently almost every school in India has the provision of a play room

for their students. There are separate toys and games for girls such as dolls, soft toys, kitchen sets etc. in every school, whereas boys are supplied with toys of heroic figures and tough sports i.e. Doraemon, Spiderman, Monster-X, sports cars, football, chess etc. Teachers regularly emphasize gender in the classrooms. As a teacher organizes a classroom based learning activity, they usually segregate them into two teams on the basis of their gender. Thus, the teacher reinforces gender among the students through their acts (Connell, 2000).

Schools are regarded as important sources of information on gender appropriate behavior. Students learn by observing and imitating teachers' and administrators' roles (Connell, 2002). They learn their appropriate gender behavior through various positive and negative situations. Teachers often format discipline rules according to the gender of the student; girls are often be scolded for playing rough and dirty games, whereas boys are often rebuked for 'crying like a girl'. In other words, children become what, according to the teachers' expectations, they are presumed to be (Connell, 2002). Gender bias is evident in teacher's communication with students. Boys are likely may to receive more individualized teacher attention than girls. Teachers often reward girls' traditional behaviors such as sincerity, punctuality and cleanliness, whereas boys are often encouraged to be self-reliant. Gender differences are also evident in appreciation. For instance, teachers often praise girls for their rosy cheeks, lips, hair and dressing styles, whereas boys often receive appreciation for their physical strength (Connell, 2002). School curricula are also responsible for reinforcing traditional concepts of gender among students. Teachers present curricular materials which often refer to dinosaurs, pandas and other animals as 'he', conveying to students that all these animals come only in the male gender. On the other hand, motherly characters such as ladybirds, cats, sheep and peahens are often referred to as 'she'. As a result, such types of

curricula give students the impression that females cannot make a big difference to the world, whereas men can (Connell, 2010).

School's gender based activities have a deep influence on shaping children's future goals. Teachers' gender based assumptions mediate children's career choices. For example, girls and boys are usually advised to choose career options as per their gender. In traditional Australian society, girls were advised to take up teaching and nursing professions as their future career whereas boys were advised to choose engineering or sports as their future goals due to their associated gender behaviors (Connell, 2005).

Children's literature is one of the key influencers in reinforcing gender disparities in educational settings (McCabe, Fairchild, Grauerholz, Pescolido & Tope, 2011). School text books and children's fiction are also responsible for gendering. For example, text books are full of descriptions in which women are depicted holding stereotyped roles such as teachers, nurses and housewives, and as a result girls are often restricted by themselves and parents to doing household activities such as nursing siblings, helping their mothers in daily chores and playing with dolls and soft toys (Chapman, 2016). Gender practices are very crucial at this stage because children look to their role models when making decisions for future careers (Yieke, 2001; Mayeza, 2017).

From the above discussion we can conclude that stereotyped gender differences are evident and inevitable in the educational sector. Gender practices by communities; families and parents not only shape individuals' lives but also have deep influence on children's playing patterns (Borve and Borve, 2017). These gendered practices restrict the life options for both boys and girls not only in the education and career sectors, but also in the arena of play. Girls

and boys are advised to choose playing options as per their associated gender (Chapman, 2016; Aina & Cameron, 2011). Whenever children try to act as per their own wishes they often suffer restrictions from their peers and communities (Clark and Hardacre, 2017).

In the next section, I will address the concept of gender from the Indian perspective, especially how gender affects the lives of common people in India. I will explain the historical roots of gender in India and will also shed light on the gender issues prevailing in both ancient and contemporary Indian societies.

2.4 Gender in India

2.4.1 Gender constructs in everyday life in India: A broad perspective

This section deals broadly with gender constructs, especially in the Indian context. Gender plays an important role in the lives of Indian people, as it shapes and restricts the everyday lives of boys and men, girls and women. One can say that the lives of ordinary Indian people revolve around their gender. My reflections on gender clarify the picture of how gender restricts the lives of Indians.

Gender plays an important role in Indian society where the social roles of individuals are decided on account of their sex (Nagaraja, Reddy, Ravi & Shankar, 2013). Gender also affects the school life of children, as parents engage in gender biased practices in the schooling of their children (Mohanty & Rammohan, 2015). In India, people prefer to have boys as compared to girls, and their desire to be blessed with a son rather than a daughter leads to serious consequences such as female infanticide, child marriage and bias in

expenditure on education (Subramanian, 2018). The next section addresses how people's desire to have sons gives birth to other serious concerns in India.

2.4.2 Female infanticide

The practice of selective sex abortions is not new in India, as sons have long been considered to be a key to achieving spiritual salvation in Indian society (Hassan, 2016). A study by Subramanian (2018) revealed that India has 63 million fewer women than it should have and the reason behind this missing population is people's preference for having sons. A similar study conducted by Srivasana and Durge (2010) stated that almost 21 million Indian girls are unwanted by their parents due to the preference for having a male child over a girl child. In Indian society women not only face discrimination in every walk of life, but they are also denied the right to be born, and the principal reason behind this female infanticide is parents' strong desires to have male children who can provide more emotional and financial security to the parents in their old age as compared to daughters (Ahmad, 2010; Sekhar & Hatti, 2010).

Similarly, a study by Anupama and Durge (2010) indicated that another reason behind female infanticide is the dowry, where parents need to give a dowry to the future bridegroom of their daughter. Similarly, a study by Gill (2013) stated that the dowry and the desire to have a son are the major reasons behind female feticide in India. In Indian society it is the son who can perform the funeral rites for their parents, so the desire to have a son is common and natural (Gill, 2013). It is widely believed that a Hindu who dies without a son to carry out the family rites, is deprived of the opportunity of going to heaven (Natarajan, 1959).

Traditional gender constructs also play a key part in girls' marriage age decisions in India. In the next section, I explain why people fix early marriages of their daughters due to their gender perceptions.

2.4.3 Child marriage in India

Child marriage is the tradition in India and it is a matter of duty and prestige to get free from the responsibility of having a daughter as soon as possible by fixing an early marriage (Salvi, 2009). Although the Indian government has enforced the minimum age limit of 18 and 21 years both for the marriage of girls and boys respectively, there are still some families who are continuing the practice of early child marriages of girls in rural areas (Thomas, 2016). Thomas (2016) suggests that people are forced to fix an early child marriage for their daughters due to poverty as they do not have enough money to feed their daughters (Thomas, 2016).

Having a girl child is an expensive affair in Indian society (Thomas, 2016; Choudhary, 2013). Parents want to get rid of the responsibility of girls as, according to them, being a parent of a girl child is a costly event, as the parents will not receive anything in return for raising a girl, so they don't want to spend money on girls and prefer to fix early child marriages for their daughters (Salvi, 2009).

I will now throw light on the issues that force parents to be gender biased.

2.4.4 Gender discrimination in the schooling of girls

In the past, women were not allowed to have an education in the Indian society as it was believed that any girl taught to read and write would become a widow (Choudhary, 2013).

The education of women had been ignored in India for a long time, and the very first attempt to initiate women's education was made by Christian missionaries in 1824, who started a school in Bombay especially for girls (Desai, 1957, p.204). Other Christian missionaries and other Indian social reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Ishwar Chand Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Dayanand Saraswati also played important roles in spreading women's education in India (Mathur, 1973, p.25).

The ruling British government realized the need and importance of women's education and hence, in Wood's Dispatch of 1854, women's education was for the first time recognized as a subsidiary part of the state education system (Bhattacharya, 2005). Women gained permission in 1877 to sit higher education examinations due to the efforts of Mr. Hobbhouse, Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University and in 1882, two women named Kadambini Bose and Chandramukhi Bose graduated from Calcutta University (Desai, 1957, p.207).

Gender inequality continues to be common in modern Indian society (Whitehead et al., 2016,). Indian parents residing in rural areas are not willing to spend money on the higher education of girls, as women need to perform the roles of motherhood, cooking and other household chores, which do not require any formal education (Nagaraja et al., 2013).

In some areas of Himachal Pradesh, India women are responsible for collecting firewood, fodder and medicinal plants for their families, and as a result girls are still being withdrawn from schools (Minocha, 2015).

The traditional gender views maintain that women are best suited to the roles of mothers, sisters and wives. Indian parents believe that women have the responsibility of family nutrition, another reason why they do not spend any money on their education (Nagaraja et

al., 2013). According to these views, women only need to learn simple day-to-day calculations (Nagaraja et al., 2013). Indian parents believe that as the basic roles of women are limited to being a wife and a mother, they just want to provide basic educations to their daughters so that they are able to manage household related expenses (Kumari, 2015).

2.5 Play and gender

This section deals broadly with the gendered practices in the broad arena of children's play, within and outside official educational systems. Gender issues constrain the playing activities of boys and girls. It is not only 'broader society' that mediates children's playing patterns but the other agencies of society such as family, school and peers who constrain their play (Wingrave, 2016; Massey, 2013).

As with education, the arena of play is also affected by gender biased practices. School, parents and teachers also play important roles in shaping children's play during their early years (Mayeza, 2017). Parents' desire that their children take part in those games and activities which are socially approved as per their gender. For example, parents direct their girls not to participate in cricket and soccer as these games are meant for boys only (Wingrave, 2016; Massey, 2013).

A Norwegian study found that both girls and boys participate in the same play activities but when it comes to the matter of appreciation and attention, boys always are dominant over girls (Meland & Kaltvedt, 2017). Teachers' stereotypes shape the abilities of children in schools (Chapman, 2016). For example, it is expected of South African girls that they should not participate in soccer because it is a male dominant game (Mayeza, 2017). Girls are usually discouraged from participating in male dominant games in South Africa; moreover, it

is expected from the girls that they should behave according to social expectations, especially during play, and these expectations manifest themselves in ways that determine who is allowed to participate in soccer on the basis of their physical strength and stamina (Mayeza, 2017).

In Canada, kindergarten teachers reinforce gendered attitudes by encouraging children, especially the boys, to play and participate in games which are traditionally associated with their gender (Lynch, 2014). It is assumed that boys should choose games according to their heavier body and stamina, as they are considered to be stronger compared to girls. A study by Chapman (2016) conducted over two preschool settings in Melbourne (Australia) showed that teacher's perceptions of gender influence children's play. Teachers' reinforcement of gendered attitudes during play limits children's experiences and creates gender inequality in educational settings (Mayeza, 2017).

Teachers' gender stereotyped behavior has a significant impact on children's play. In Norway, Kindergarten staffs usually encourage girls to play indoor games whereas boys are encouraged to play in the outside playground. This behavior of teachers not only results in creating gender inequalities in educational settings, but also contributes to limiting children's opportunities to use the kindergarten resources in an equal way. It is not only school settings that promote gender biased practices in play and sports, but sometimes the media also plays an important role in shaping children's play (Borve & Borve, 2017).

The media is considered to be one of the most powerful forces in modern society (Bakan, 2014). Turkish female athletes are under-represented by the media due to the male dominant society where male athletes always get higher recognition for their achievements as

compared to female athletes (Bakan, 2014). Under-representation of sportswomen in mass media is associated with their commonly accepted social roles (Deshpande, 2016). The media usually portrays females as feminine objects, rather than professional athletes (Bakan, 2014).

However, a cultural shift is evident in the modern marketing of toys. Famous retailers such as Target, Kmart and Toys 'R' Us in Australia recently announced that they will replace their blue and pink aisles in the toy section with gender-neutral 'kids toy' aisles (Massey, 2013). This study suggests that although the majority of manufacturers have separate units for manufacturing toys for boys and girls, they are still happy to talk about and produce gender-neutral toys for children, although the manufacturers believe that people should talk about play patterns rather than gender (Massey, 2013).

New modes of play such as construction toys (Lego) and digital computer games and applications are helpful in blurring gender lines (Wingrave, 2016). However, Amazon, the famous online retailer, demarcates girls' toys from boys'. According to Amazon, the majority of online shoppers search the toys on their website by using keywords 'toys for boys' and 'toys for girls' which means that gendered stereotyping of toys is driven by consumers as much as by manufacturers and retailers (Wingrave, 2016).

From the above discussion it is clearly evident that gender differences exist in play settings; moreover, there is significant impact from the gender stereotype perceptions of school staff and media in legitimizing gender disparities among children. Although a cultural shift can be seen in playing patterns and toy marketing, still there is a long way to go as dolls and fashion-related play is explicitly marketed to girls, while cars, train sets and construction-

figured toys will generally still have boys' pictures on their packages (Wingrave, 2016; Massey, 2013).

Next, I will address the colorful picture of Indian playing culture. The upcoming paragraphs will throw light on the playing patterns of urban and modern India. I will discuss the problems in Indian sports along with the roles of gendered practices by parents and society in shaping children's play.

2.6 Play in India

Play is important in Indian childhood. It not only provides health benefits but is also helpful in channeling the energy of children in a positive way (Narayan, 1995). The playing culture of rural India is, however, different from that of urban India. This section unpacks the diversity of the culture of play in these two contrasting contexts in India.

2.6.1 Play in India: Play with soil

The playing culture of rural India is very unique. Children of rural India are adaptive in nature and they know how to utilize the available resources for the purpose of play (Narayan, 1995). The children of rural India have limited access to technology and media, and consequently they indulge themselves in simple play activities and convert/use existing resources for their play. For example, "the ponds in the villages are not only sources of bathing and washing clothes for villagers but children use these ponds for swimming and diving" (Narayan, 1995, P.27).

The earth or soil is considered to be very important in Indian rural areas as it provides food and shelter for peasants and their families. Games of rural India are mostly associated with soil. Children of rural India play simple games such as tree climbing, swinging on the trees, playing card and board games while sitting on the earth under the shade of trees (Narayan, 1995).

People worship earth and call it by the name of 'Dharti-Maa' (Mother) in India. People of rural India celebrate a festival called 'Raja Samkranti' for two days in which children swing on swings and sing songs in order to entertain and fan the personified earth to cool her heat. Moreover, during this festival, any kind of disturbance such as ploughing the earth in any way is forbidden and people even walk on the earth barefoot in order to give her the least pressure (Bowen, 2015).

The culture of playing with dolls is popular among rural Indians. The dolls are often made up of clay collected from the bottom of the ponds in the villages (Narayan, 1995). Various games associated with soil are played by children in rural India, some of which are as follows:

2.6.2 Kabaddi

Kabaddi is one of the most popular play activities in rural India. This game has now gained popularity across the world. This game originated in ancient India and was mostly played in villages. This game was originally designated for play by boys only, but today this game is even being played by women at both National and International levels.

This game is played by two teams having seven players each, who occupy opposite halves on a circular sand field. In this game, players attempt to tag or capture the opponents while

holding their breath while running, repeating the word ‘kabaddi-kabaddi’ (Narayan, 1995; Bowen, 2015).

2.6.3 Kho-Kho

Another popular game in rural India is ‘Kho-Kho’. This game is played by both boys and girls sitting on the ground in a row. Each team has 12 players out of which only 9 enter the field, who try to avoid being touched by the opposing team. There are marked lines which every player needs to play inside, or else the player will be considered to be ‘out’ and the point will be awarded to the opposing team (Narayan, 1995).

2.6.4 Pithoo

This game is popular in rural areas of India. There is no maximum number of players in this game. This game is generally played by boys and requires strong muscles and fit bodies, which is why it is not played by girls (Narayan, 1995). This game requires seven flat stones; each stone size should be smaller than other stone. These stones need to be placed on top of each other like a tower, while maintaining decreasing size order. The players divide into two teams and each team tries to bowl over a tower of stones with three chances. If they succeed, then their next task is to rebuild the tower while dodging the ball which is now in the hands of the opposing team. If the opposing team tags any member of the other team, then that member is ‘out’ of the game and the opposing team’s aim is to get all the players out before they can rebuild the tower. If opposing team manages to ‘out’ all the members of the other team then it is their turn to bowl over the tower of stones. If they rebuild it again before all their members are out, then they win the game (Bowen, 2015).

2.6.5 Gilli-Danda

This game is popular in rural India. This game is associated with soil and played on the ground by two teams consisting of boys. This game is quite similar to modern cricket. The main requisite resources for this game are two sticks, one of which should be 2-3 feet long and the second one should be 3-4 inches long and tapered at both ends. In this game both teams play within a huge, round circle in which one team bats while the other team fields, just like modern cricket. The team members make a hole inside the circle and place the small tapered stick over it. The players of the batting team will use the 'danda' (Long stick) to bat while the fielding team will spread inside the circle to catch the 'gilli' (short stick). If the gilli is caught by the fielding team then the player is considered to be out, and if the batsman strikes the gilli which no fielder is able to catch, then the danda (long stick) is used to measure the distance from the circle to the point where the gilli (short stick) fell. Each danda's (Long stick) length adds one point to the batting team (Narayan, 1995).

Children in rural India not only play simple games, but they also make and manage their game props out of existing resources or waste material.

2.6.6 Props of Indian rural games

Indian rural playing culture is vibrant not only in its playing methods, but also in its play props. Due to the unavailability of resources, children in rural India usually manage to make their own props for their play. For example, the ball used in the 'pithoo' game is made by mixing old clothes with poly bags, dolls are made of clay collected from the bottom of ponds, handmade bats and hockey sticks are used to play cricket and hockey.

Moreover, for ‘tossing’, Indian boys use flat stones, and cars and carts are either made of clay or old bottles, wires etc. The games requiring boards are generally played by drawing patterns on the ground itself (Bowen, 2015). While children of rural India play traditional games due to the scarcity of resources, on the other hand children of urban India use modern technological games for their amusement.

The following paragraphs will describe playing patterns in Urban India.

2.6.7 Play in urban India

Recent advancements in technology have brought various changes to children’s play. Where the children of rural India engage themselves in traditional games due to resources constraints, the children of urban India are now playing with advanced gadgets (Oke et al., 1999). Variations can be easily seen between the play of children of low social economic status (SES) and the children of high social economic status (SES). For example, children of high SES of urban India play with play stations, mobile phones and other computer based games for their fun and entertainment (Oke et al, 1999).

On the other hand, children living in slums in urban India play in crowded streets full of dirt due to sewage flows, as there are no separate play grounds for them, so they manage to make optimum use of existing resources. For example, ‘a parked car becomes an object for jumping and climbing upon, or a traffic signal, a pole to run around’ (Oke et al., 1999, p.216). Sometimes, children of low SES play around traffic lights, railway tracks and construction sites, which are often dangerous places for play (Oke et al., 1999).

Gendered practices can limit children's play, and Indian parents have their own perceptions regarding gender influences on children's play. Hence, next I address the gendered practices of parents and society as they relate to playing culture.

2.7 Gender segregation and differences in Indian playing culture

This section will unpack the gender segregation activities employed by parents, teachers and society. The gendered practices of society give rise to gender stereotyped behavior among its children. In the following paragraphs I will describe how boys and girls are forced to play within the limited options made available to them by society and its perceptions of associated gender behavior.

Gender differences can be observed not only in education and professional sectors but also in the arena of children's play (Roopnarine, J. L., Talukder, E., Jain, D., Joshi, P., & Srivastav, P., 1990; Warash et al., 2017). Gender differences can be easily seen in children's play. In India, whether in urban or rural areas, Indian girls are usually seen playing with dolls, miniature household items and skipping with ropes whereas boys are usually seen playing with balls, cricket, football, car racing or other computer based games (Oke et al., 1999).

Gender differences can be easily observed in the use of space within play. In India, the boundaries for girls are marked out, either by parents or society, as being inside the house, classroom, or around the teacher's table, whereas boys are advised to play outside in the playground (Roopnarine et al., 1990; Oke et al., 1999). It has been noted that, "gender differences in play reflect the distinct socialization of children" (Oke et al., 1999, p.217). Girls try to conform to the rules of games whereas boys are flexible and change the rules as per their convenience (Oke et al., 1999).

School settings also shape children's play. "Sometimes school regimes influence attitudes to gender and age mixing in games" (Bowen, 2015, p.344). For example, the games played outside the school include the children of both sexes aged between 5-14 years, but within school, children are segregated on the basis of sex, which influences the social-make up of groups of players during break time and school organized sports events (Bowen, 2015).

From the above discussion, it is clear that play has a special place in the lives of Indian rural and urban children. The playing culture of India is vibrant in nature and represents various unique shades of Indian traditional and modern gaming patterns. Although society and school both have deep influences on shaping children's play, play can manifest itself in many ways. We can easily find children singing rhymes while doing household work. Children's play is influenced by various external factors. In Indian society parents and school affects children's playing patterns by guiding their children to play as per their gender (Roopnarine, Lu & Ahmeduzzaman, 1989). The above discussion illustrates the fact that gendered practices in Indian society restrict the playing options for children. In other words, the whole discussion has made clear how gender plays a central role in shaping children's play in Indian settings.

CHAPTER3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter deals with the concept of autoethnography methodology used in this project. This study focused on my personal childhood experiences in Indian culture. In this study, I examined the different epiphanies related to my life that are responsible for the development of my personality as a ‘Tom Boy’. I designed this research by using an interpretive approach of autoethnography methodology (Gautam, 2015; Chang, 2008; Denzin, 2014). For this study, autoethnography is both a process and product. In this study, I analyzed my childhood memories through critical gender lenses to explore a few of the various cultural experiences that I had in my life.

By using a personal narrative and childhood experiences, I was able to explore the cultural issues deeply rooted in Indian society that contributed to shaping gender constructs in the country. This chapter initially provides a brief introduction of autoethnography as it is used as a tool for qualitative research in academia, and further provides a clear distinction between autobiography and autoethnography as research methods. The last paragraphs of this chapter include the methodological procedures and ethical considerations for this study. At the end, I provide a brief summary of the whole chapter.

3.2 Autoethnography: A tool for qualitative research

Autoethnography is considered to be a powerful tool in the field of qualitative research (Mendez, 2013; Chang, 2008; Denzin, 2014; Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). This methodology has been quite popular among researchers, especially in the field of the social sciences. Several definitions have been provided by the various researchers. Autoethnography has been defined as a systematic study of individual personal experiences in order to understand cultural experiences (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). Similarly, in the words of Marechal (2010), “autoethnography is a form or method of research that involves self-observation and reflexive investigation in the context of ethnographic field work and writing” (p.43). Autoethnography has also been described as a form of self-reflection that explores the researcher’s personal encounters and connects this autobiographical story to understand socio-political and cultural meanings (Spry, 2001).

Furthermore, Ellis and Bochner (2000), define autoethnography as an “autobiographical genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (p.79). Reed-Danahay (2007), defines autoethnography as a type of self-narrative in which a person puts his/her self within the social context; therefore it is both a process and product. For example, when autoethnographers write autoethnographies they involve their self and personal lived experiences in this process in order to explore culture. Furthermore, this process of unveiling the hidden realities of culture produce a thick description i.e. ‘product’ that can be accessible by the members of the society in order to understand the culture (Ellis et al., 2011). It is important to stress though that autoethnographies are different from autobiographies. Autoethnographies differ from autobiographies in numerous ways. It should be noted that although autoethnography as a method combines the features of both

ethnography and autobiography, autoethnographies are still variant from autobiographies (Ellis et al., 2011). In an autobiography an author writes retroactively and selectively about his past encounters although “usually he doesn’t live through these encounters to make them part of a published document” (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.275). The autobiographies are written by focusing on the author’s self (Chang, 2008).

In autobiography, an author requires a fine command over language and autobiographies should engage their readers by using conventions of storytelling such as plot, characters, scene and chronological story progression (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). In autobiographies, an author narrates his own life experiences but does not interrogate these experiences in the light of cultural practices (Richardson, 1994).

On the other side, ethnographers write selectively and retrospectively to explore the culture and its relational practices such as common beliefs and values to enable the insiders (Cultural members) and outsiders (cultural strangers) to understand the culture (Chang, 2016). Autoethnographies provide a thick description of culture for the sole purpose of helping the insiders and outsiders in their understanding about culture (Denzin, 2014). Autoethnographies not only try to establish strong connections between interpersonal experience and different cultures, but also to produce accessible texts for the mass audience which can be used as a tool for bringing social change (Reed- Danahay, 1997). Autoethnographies are not focused on the self alone, but on searching for understanding of others(culture/society) through the self (Chang, 2008). Autoethnographies are written to help others and to make life better (Reed-Danahay, 1997).

From the above discussion, it is clear how autoethnographies have gained popularity as a methodology in qualitative research. The above discussion provides a clearer distinction between autoethnography and autobiography methodology. Next, I discuss why I have chosen autoethnography as a methodology for this project.

3.3 Why an autoethnography?

Autoethnography is becoming a useful and powerful tool for researchers who deal with human relations in multicultural settings. This method has been extensively used by researchers due to its merits. In the view of Chang (2008), the benefits of using autoethnography lie in three areas.

Firstly, this methodology is researcher friendly. It provides the researchers a scope for having personal access to the primary data because the source is the researchers themselves. Apart from this, this methodology is user friendly to the readers as it appeals to the readers due to its personally engaging writing style, rather than conventional scholarly writing (Chang, 2008).

Secondly, this methodology serves as a powerful tool for the researchers through which they can easily understand themselves and others (Chang, 2008). Self-reflection and self-examination are considered as key sources in self-understanding (Nieto, 2003). Moreover, not only writing autoethnography but reading other's autoethnographies can evoke self-examination and self-reflection among the individual readers (Florio, 2001; Nash, 2002).

Thirdly, writing and reading autoethnography can also help to transform both readers and researchers (Chang, 2008). Sometimes, autoethnography helps to heal the emotional past scars of individuals (Chang, 2008). For example, the autoethnography of Foster, Mc Allister & O' Brien (2005) explains how the sharing of her painful and past experience with others, of growing up with a mother who had schizophrenia, helped her to experience liberation and relief from the burden of isolation, loneliness and shame. Reading and writing autoethnographies can have therapeutic effects on both writers and readers (Ellis et al., 2011).

Autoethnographies have numerous other benefits. The main advantage of using autoethnography is that it “allows the researcher to use first person accounts which enable his/her voice to be heard” (Mendez, 2013, p.282). Beyond that, this methodology helps the readers to know the hidden and under-researched themes of society and culture which might not have been thought of before (Mendez, 2013). Autoethnographies help to understand self and others, which enables people to rectify cultural misunderstandings, develop cross-cultural sensitivity and respond to the needs of culture effectively (Chang, 2008).

It should also be noted that there are several approaches to autoethnography that are being used by various researchers. The approach that I have used in this project is interpretive autoethnography.

The interpretive autoethnography approach has features of storytelling that allow the researchers to narrate their own personal experiences to study a cultural context. Interpretive autoethnography can be defined as the individual biographical study of personal life

experiences and performances (Denzin, 2014). Individual personal experiences are considered as core elements in interpretive autoethnography (Denzin, 2014).

Furthermore, the interpretive autoethnography also “refers to text presented in the form of stories that incorporate the ethnographers’ experiences into ethnographic descriptions and analysis of others” (Ellis et al., 2011). In the view of Spry (2001), interpretive autoethnographies can be defined as the recordings of the researcher’s thick description of personal and cultural experiences in descriptive, thoughtful and illuminating ways.

Interpretive autoethnographies are widely used by researchers to explore their connections within the culture. A study by Knijnik (2014) is an example of this interpretive autoethnographic approach in which an author explores his personal connection to the Western Sydney Wanderers Football Club, which helped the author to fit into a new culture after his relocation to Australia from Brazil.

Similarly, an autoethnographic study by Straughn (2016) based on the life of the African-American career military woman, provides a sensitive description about racial, ethnic and gender discrimination that the researcher has faced in her career as a military woman. A study by Klingaman (2012) based on ‘paying attention to culture’ explores how a new principal adjusted himself to the new culture of a school while maintaining a positive and high performing school environment. Interpretive autoethnography is useful in examining individual personal identity.

The interpretive autoethnographic approach has been used in exploring playing patterns too. The research of Ulibarri (2016) based on Latino students’ states how play is enacted in rural

New Mexico. This study also explores how play interaction represents, inverts and contests the everyday lives of Latino students as active participants in both their own peer culture and society as a whole.

Autoethnography is an adequate tool of qualitative research to explore an individual's personal connection with his/her culture. Autoethnographies enable us to "recognize and imagine ourselves, that we come to know how we are constituted and who we are" (Chang, 2008, p.12). One of the most unique features of using autoethnography as a method of qualitative research is that it has the power to address the most hidden, unanswerable questions pertaining to culture. This feature of autoethnography pushed my inner soul that, yes, this is the methodology which can give voice to my childhood experiences and bring to the surface the realities of Indian culture that shaped my life (Wall, 2006).

3.4 Research participation and data collection

I was the sole research participant for this autoethnographic study. When researchers "do autoethnography, they retroactively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by passing a particular cultural identity" (Ellis et al., 2011p.276).

In autoethnography, personal memories are considered as the main data source. Memories can serve as the main building block of autoethnography as the "past gives a context to the present self and memory open[s] a door to the richness of the past" (Chang, 2008, p.71). Hence, in this study I have used my own childhood memories and photographs as primary data sources to explore my inner self and culture.

Recalling memories has proved helpful in data collection (Chang, 2008; Ellis et al., 2011). Therefore, in this research study, I recalled my past memories with the help of my own childhood pictures. My childhood pictures helped me to revisit my personal experiences in order to recall those experiences which shaped my life.

For data collection, various researchers (Chang, 2008; Wall, 2006; Winkler, 2018; Denzin, 2014; Ellis et al., 2011) suggested different techniques such as taking field notes, maintaining entries in personal diaries, conducting interviews and self-observation etc. In this study, I have used my entries from my personal diary in order to recall my old memories. Whenever I saw my pictures of childhood, it reminded me of the experiences that I had in my life and I noted down those memories in my diary. Hence, I was able to utilize my diary entries and photographs as primary sources of data for this study.

3.5 Data analysis

In autoethnographic research, study data collection is considered a dynamic process. Moving to another stage of “data analysis and interpretation doesn’t mean abandoning the previous step, data collection, because data collection is likely to continue along with data analysis and interpretation to fill gaps and enrich certain components of data” (Chang, 2008, p.125). In the opinions of Denzin (2014) and Chang (2008) analysis and interpretation of autoethnographic data is crucial. The researcher’s main task should be to keep his/her narrative intent of gaining a cultural understanding. Hence, in this study, I carefully examined my inner self which is considered to be “a carrier of culture, intimately connected to others in society” (Chang, 2008, p.126).

In this study, I was not limited to existing methodologies to analyse my cultural experiences. Rather, I also considered the experiences of others which were similar to my own experiences (Ellis et al., 2011). By doing so, I was able to explore Indian cultural practices through my personal memories which enabled both readers i.e. insiders and outsiders, to understand Indian culture. The use of various references and descriptions made this analysis rigorous.

In the views of Denzin and Lincoln (2008) narrative should look like a crystal which “reflects externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions” (Richardson, 1994, p.522). I am fond of writing poetry; hence I have also occasionally used my poetic work, whose creativity hopefully provides more meaning for readers.

3.6 Writing an autoethnographic report

Writing an autoethnography requires a complete frame of mind and different strategies (Chang, 2008). There are various typologies for writing an autoethnography. However, it should be noted that every autoethnography is different as every researcher uses his/her own style in creating their autoethnographies (Ellis et al., 2011). Ellis and Bochner (2000) suggested the use of a descriptive style for writing, but I wanted to give more shades to my narrative. Hence, I deferred to Chang (2008) who suggested four different styles of writing that a researcher can apply in his/her writing i.e. “descriptive-realistic, confessional-emotive, analytical-interpretive and imaginative-creative” (p.143).

In this study, on some occasions I am descriptive, while on other occasions I am dialogic. For example, in my narrative chapter, I tried to present the conversation between me and the other children playing with me, so that the readers can imagine the real situation that I faced at that time. In other words, I have mixed all the styles of writing in this study in order to portray a real picture of Indian culture by using dialogues and poems. In my narrative one can easily find these different styles of writing and can feel the gender-biased intentions of Indian people towards children's play¹. However, on other occasions I have used a poetic style of writing which helped me to express my hidden inner feelings. Through poetry, I have tried to reveal the real picture of the Indian culture which shaped my life.

3.7 Ethical responsibilities as a researcher

As an autoethnographer, I have ethical responsibilities which I need to fulfil. I was aware of the ethical considerations for this highly personalised autoethnographic study. Although I was the only active research participant for this study, and haven't tried to reveal the identity of anyone in this thesis, still I was required to obtain ethics approval for this study from the Human Research Ethics Committee (H12817) as an autoethnographic study might have potentially been harmful to others (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Chang (2008) stated the difficulty in maintaining the privacy in autoethnographic research by claiming that "whichever the format you may take, you still need to keep in mind that other people are always present in self-narratives, either as active participants in the story or as associates in the background" (p.68). Like other autoethnographers, I tried my best to conduct a balanced storytelling as according to Chang (2008) an autoethnography should be a

¹ This study is approved by Human Research Ethics Committee (H12817).

balanced piece of writing. Ellis (2007) also stated that not only does conducting autoethnography come under ethical consideration, but autoethnography itself is an ethical practice (p.26).

In autoethnographies, researchers often use conventional ethical practices i.e. use of pseudonyms or taking written consent from the people involved in the autoethnography. I did so too. I didn't disclose the identity of any family member, relative or neighbour in this study. I referred to them as 'a boy', 'a girl', 'a lady', 'a man' etc. However, in this study, it was not possible to take the consent from people who appeared in my childhood pictures as these were taken in the early 1990s, a time when it was not common practice in India for people to take pictures of each other. I tried to contact some of the people in these pictures, but it was not feasible. Firstly because I am currently in Australia, whereas the other people might have been in India or elsewhere, but I didn't mean to locate them. Secondly, most of the people who were in the photos were not identifiable, as they are/were just children from the neighbourhood playing in a playground or in a park alongside my home. I did not have any contact with them then or now. Therefore, I applied for a consent waiver from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

The Human Research Ethics Committee was very concerned regarding the potential risks associated with this research. According to them I was not the sole custodian of my memories, as others were also associated with these memories and this analysis of photographs could disturb others as well. I agreed with the HREC view and hence I decided to delete any photograph which had any family member from my data corpus and analysis.

In this chapter I have discussed the methodology used for this study. I have addressed the various approaches of autoethnographies along with its features. This chapter also provided a detailed discussion on how autobiographies are different from autoethnographies. Later this chapter mentioned the process of data collection, analysis, writing an autoethnography report along with the ethical considerations related to this autoethnography. In the following chapter, I start my personal narrative in which I explore my personal connections to Indian culture. I try to paint a real picture of Indian culture through my own childhood memories that shaped me as an adult.

CHAPTER4

MY NARRATIVE

PART-1

4.1 Chapter overview

This autoethnography is the reflection on my childhood experiences in Indian culture. This chapter provides a detailed account of some of my experiences during my childhood in my home country. I have divided this chapter into 2 parts. The first part deals with my family's journey in an urban place i.e. Faridabad (a place nearby India's capital in the North) during the early 10 years of my life. Later my family shifted to Himachal Pradesh (450 km from India's capital in the North). Therefore the second part of this chapter will cast light on the remaining period of my childhood that I spent in a rural area. The autoethnographic cultural narratives described in this part are elicited through my personal childhood photographs, as I used these pictures as a main data source that helped me to reconstruct my personal and cultural experiences. The findings of this chapter are mainly derived from my own childhood personal encounters. In this chapter, I analyzed my childhood memories through critical gender lenses. This chapter will help the readers to realize how my personality was shaped by Indian culture.

4.1.1 Star baby of the hospital (0-1 year)

I was born in the land of India; where people give more preference to boys as compared to girls (Ahmad, 2010; Anupama & Durge, 2010). Unlike others my birth was not a happy moment for my family. I have a picture that depicts my family and me soon after my birth

which was taken by hospital authorities. My birth made a record in the hospital because I was one of the heaviest children ever born in that hospital. The hospital management wanted to keep my photo in their hospital record so they arranged a photo shoot. This picture was published in the local newspaper too. In this photo my mother holds me in her arms surrounded by the teams of doctors, nurses and my father. All were smiling except my mother and father, because I was born as a second girl child in my family. The eyes of the doctors were shining with happiness as they delivered a baby in their hospital which was more than 4.5 kg. Whenever I look at this picture of my childhood it made me realize how sad my parents were after my birth. Instead of happiness their eyes were full of tears. Whenever I opened my childhood album, I always remembered how unlucky I was that my birth was not a happy moment. Indian people have a deep desire to have at least one son in their lives, and hence my parents were not indifferent (Hassan, 2016; Subramanian, 2018). Studies by Saha(2013), Choudhary(2013) Thomas (2016)and Subramanian (2018) also found that Indian people were more happy to become the parents of a male child than a girl child as in Hindu religion, only a son can help the parents to achieve salvation.

Similarly, studies by Hassan (2016) and Srivasana and Durge (2010) found that the strong desire of Indian people to have at least one son in their lives leads to serious consequences such as female infanticide and child marriage. If the total population of India in terms of male and female ratios is calculated, India has 63 million fewer women than it should have and the reason behind this missing population is people's preference to have sons(Subramanian, 2018). The study by Srivasna and Durge (2010) also stated that more than 21 million Indian girls were unwanted by their parents due to their preference for having a son rather than a daughter.

I often wonder, why was my mum sad while holding me in her arms? Why were her eyes not filled with joy? It was because Indian people were more obsessed with having sons than daughters in their families (Anupama and Durge, 2010). A study by Kumari (2015) also found that like men, women were also happier to give birth to sons as compared to daughters as it was a matter of pride to become a mother of a son. Similarly a study by Cubbage (2016) also stated that Indian parents have the perception that more sons in their family brings more respect and money, while daughters only bring responsibilities and expenditure. These studies gave the answers to my questions about how parents' own gender perceptions play a crucial role in the lives of their children.

4.1.2 My first birthday (1-2 year)

Initially nobody wanted to accept this situation but in India there is a famous quote; "Jaisi Prabhu ki Ichha" (All God's wish) and with the passage of time my family's sadness started to vanish. I can say that my lovely and cute face probably won their hearts. Another picture of my childhood that shows that my parents did accept my birth was taken on my first anniversary. This picture shows a small party at my house and my parents were smiling and hugging me tightly. My grandparents were also present, but they were looking so sad and disappointed. It seems that they were not willing to celebrate my birthday. Rather, their eyes reflect their anger towards this celebration. In those times people in India mostly celebrated their sons' birthdays rather than their daughters' (Subramanian, 2018; Hassan, 2016). The happy faces of my parents and this celebration of my birthday made me realize that my parents finally accepted my birth. Although my parents accepted my birth, in reality, having

a girl child meant an extra burden on the family (Gill, 2013). Hence, I was considered as a burden on the resources of my family.

Indian people believe that being a parent of a girl child is a costly affair, as a girl will need to marry someone and they need to arrange a huge dowry for the groom. Therefore, spending on girls would not give anything in return to parents, and as a result people preferred to have a male child in their lives (Thomas, 2016; Choudhary, 2013; Saha, 2013). In those times, the dowry and people's preference to have sons were the two main causes of female infanticide in India (Gill, 2013).

Similar studies by Gill (2013) and Salvi (2009) have also shown that Indian people were more keen to have a male child in their families. In those times, people believed that only the boys could provide financial and emotional security to their parents in their old age. Apart from this, funeral rites in India can still only be undertaken by sons, as people believe that salvation can only be achieved through a son's hand; hence people's desire to have a son rather than a daughter is obvious (Anupama and Durge, 2010). Whenever I looked at (Picture2) I realized the sadness in the eyes of my grandparents. They were probably sad that their son would be deprived of achieving salvation in his life. They were sad because they believed that there would be nobody who could perform funeral rites for their son after his death, as my father had two daughters. A Hindu, who died without a son to carry out the family rites, was deprived of the opportunity of going to heaven (Natarajan, 1959).

Indian people still believed that being a parent of a son is a matter of high prestige in society (Gill, 2013). A study by Ahmad (2010) stated that the desire for having a son leads to serious consequences such as child marriage and discrimination in providing schooling to the

children. Similarly, a study by Anupama and Durge (2010) also stated that people's gender perceptions play an important role in a society where people believe that only a son can fetch money and provide security to his parents. Hence, people preferred to be blessed with a son rather than a daughter.

This is the context where I was born. A girl in a male-dominated society striving for survival. The next years would prove to be the real gender challenge not only for myself but for my whole family and even my local community. The heaviest baby who was not desired at her birth was also someone who would bring disruption to the traditional family gender order.

4.1.3 My toy room: The worst place in my home (2-3 years)

I was the second girl child and hence, I was supposed to play with the old toys of my elder sister. The picture that I hate the most is of my toy room (Picture3). There was a separate toy room in my house which was full of all girlish toys such as dolls, doll-house, kitchen sets, ludo, building blocks and other household miniatures. My parents always brought girlish toys for us that I didn't like. This picture is colourful, having a huge collection of toys, but it was all 'girlish'. The walls of this room were painted in pink and covered with posters of dolls and fairies.

I can say that for me this was the worst room in my house and I never wanted to spend time in that room in the midst of those girlish things. I wanted to have cars, trucks, airplanes and excavators in my room. At those times girls were restricted to playing male dominant games. It is human nature that the things that are denied are more attractive. I spent my childhood in a gender biased society which gives more preference to boys than girls, and where men receive more attention than women in almost every aspect of life (Gill, 2013; Choudhary,

2013). So probably my attraction to boyish toys was inspired by these feelings. I needed to be accepted and wanted to be the centre of my parents' lives, even if that meant challenging the gender rules which had been established since birth: girls will play passively with 'girlish' toys.

A study by Connell (2002) states that society restricts men and women on account of that which is deemed culturally and socially appropriate to each sex; the unwritten gender norms. The activities of men and women in everyday life are shaped by societal patterns formulated on the basis of their perceived biological status. Now I realize that this was probably the reason why whenever I tried to resist, every time I was rebuked for my playing choices.

Indian parents are gender biased in selecting playing options for their children. Studies by Minocha(2015) and Saha (2013) concluded that parents guide their daughters to play with other girls rather than boys, and likewise guide their boys to play with other boys. Parents not only guide but also sometimes force their children to play with the things that are associated with their sex (Mayeza, 2017). Moreover, parents hope that their children will participate in those games which are socially approved i.e. according to their sex. For example, parents direct their girls not to participate in cricket and soccer as these games are meant for boys only (Wingrave, 2016; Massey, 2013).

Similarly, Connell's (2002) and (2005) studies also reveal that society applies distinctive measures on babies, identifying them as either male or female according to their respective blue or pink clothes. Later, these labeled babies are advised to behave as per their biological sex. Pink babies are asked to behave modestly and take part in tasks and games that require

less physical work. On the other hand, blue babies are advised to be tough, rough and choose the games and tasks that require heavy physical effort and stamina.

Furthermore, Connell (2002) states that Girls are taught by mass culture that their main task is to lie on silk cushions and dream about their Prince Charming who will come on a white horse one day to take them away. On the other hand, boys are not generally advised to make themselves attractive. Rather, they are taught to be tough and rough, run cars, earn money for the livelihood of their families and pursue girls (Connell, 2002).

4.1.4 My stealing activities (3-4years)

Picture3 also reminded me of my stealing habit. I always wanted to play with cars, planes and trucks instead of dolls, but my collection was full of girlish toys. This little girl did not have access to money so that she could buy the toys that she liked, so one day she stole one small car from someone else's house. I was very happy to have this in my collection as this was the first toy in my collection that I always wanted. When this act came to light my family was upset, as they had good reputations among their society. I, however, brought disgrace upon them due to my stealing activities as at those times, girls were advised to learn the habits of modesty, caring, sharing and nurturing (Connell, 2002). I was more keen to learn by possessing toys that appealed to me. Hence, my stealing habit was totally opposite to the gender expectations of my parents, community and society (Connell, 1987).

My family counseled me so many times but I failed to convince my inner soul that always pushed me to follow my dreams. Moreover, my family tried to change my innate wishes especially towards play, as those were not acceptable in my society. These actions show how

gender mediates the lives of any Indian people who try to confront the practices of their society in the everyday aspects of life, particularly the rigid gender order in the country (Connell, 2002).

After being caught red-handed with stolen toys, my family threw out all the toys that I had stolen from other houses. A little girl wanted to gather all those toys from the rubbish bin but was unable to do so, as I was that girl and possession of those boyish toys was not an appropriate behavior for this society; in other words, I can say that I lived in a society where females were always asked to follow traditional feminine traits, despite their own wishes, rather than to pursue masculine traits (Connell, 2002).

I always thought, why can't I fulfil my own wishes, especially being a girl in Indian society? I tried every possible way to convince my family regarding my playing wishes. Sometimes I refused to eat food and locked myself inside my room, but in vain. Men were considered as supreme and superior to women, and probably this was the reason that my wishes and efforts were brutally crushed, especially by my father, and my actions didn't bring any change in my family's attitude (Connell, 2005).

Although this crushing didn't involve any kind of physical abuse, which is one of the prominent features in hegemonic masculinities suggested by Connell (2005), but this oppression shows the dominance of men (my father) who try to maintain their superiority in every situation by any means. For example, whenever I insisted on buying any boyish toy in the market, my father forcefully dragged me from that place by saying that he doesn't have any money as he left his purse at home. In other words, he always tried to change the situation as per his own wishes.

At those times, social obligations were supreme and everyone had to be within the limits of the boundaries marked by Indian society (Chapman, 2016; Massey, 2013). In a similar vein, another study by Cabbage (2016) found that parents have strong inclinations towards biological accounts of gender, and they highly discourage their children from behavior which is opposite to their biological sex status. Furthermore, the studies of Connell (2002) and (2005) also ascertain that parents, society and school also practice gendering that influences the behavior and personalities of children. For example, in my school there were separate rows for boys and girls for their seating and we were encouraged to be seated within the specified rows for boys and girls.

Societal patterns not only practice gender bias activities but also give a strong message to the children regarding their playing options. Playing becomes the key part of the children's gendering process. For example, whenever I tried to play with marbles and gilli-danda and pithoo, I was advised by my granny and father that these games were not meant for me. Rather, they advised me to learn household skills which would help me in playing my future roles as wife and mother.

Connell (2005) discusses how gender constructs play an important part in determining what adults regard as being valuable and worth praising in boys' and girls' actions and physical appearance. For example, I always received appreciation for my charming features from my relatives and neighbors. I always thought: Why is it only my physical outlook that attracts people? Why should my other qualities, such as playing like boys not win appreciation from society? I found the answers to these questions in studies by Connell (2002) and Boskovic (2014) which stated that society only appreciates women for their beauty and other feminine qualities such as sincerity, modesty and politeness.

Parents and school have played an important role in shaping children's play. Children are influenced by social contexts which include family, school, peers and media (Galipeau, 2014). For example, my elder sister and I were advised to play with household miniatures as it would prove beneficial for us in enhancing our cooking skills. Indian society believed that women's main role was to provide care and nourishment to the family. Hence they encouraged their girls to take part in games and activities that could enhance these skills (Wingrave, 2016; Massey, 2013).

4.1.5 Cricket: My first love (4-5 years)

My parents advised me to play with the toys I had in my toy room like my elder sister. These toys were mimicking traditional women's roles: I was expected to cook for the dolls and care for them (Chapman, 2016; Aina & Cameron, 2011). I tried to play with girlish toys but those toys failed to give me the real pleasure that I always found in playing boy's games. I was desperate to play the games that I liked and as a result I started to think of ways through which I could fulfill my dreams. I have a picture which reminded me of the memories that were associated with watching boys' games. This (Picture4) was taken by my parents when I was nearly 4.5 years old. The location of this picture was the playground in our locality. There was probably a social function over there and I too went with my family to attend that occasion.

Everyone looked happy in this picture except me. This picture is a perfect example of socially approved gender roles for girls and boys. In this picture, girls were playing with dolls and kitchen sets and boys were busy playing cricket. This shows that gender practices

by society, parents and the prevailing culture not only shape an individual's life but also have deep influence on children's playing patterns (Borve and Borve, 2017). I was sitting near the place where boys were playing cricket as I always wanted to play cricket like other boys, but I was unable to do so. It is clear that these gendered practices restrict the playing options for boys and girls as both are advised to choose playing options as per their associated gender (Chapman, 2016; Aina& Cameron, 2011). If someone carefully looked at this picture then surely he/she could figure out how keen I was at that time to play cricket, but my wishes were restricted by societal patterns (Connell, 2000).

My eyes were dreaming only of the one wish that I ever wanted; to be fulfilled in my life. I was so lost in watching other boys' games that I didn't realize that my family was capturing me on camera. This picture looks vibrant, full of colors and shades of life. Everyone looks happy and it seems that they were cherishing the moment, but for me in reality, it was as if I was captured in a dull background. The reason behind this was my everlasting wish that I knew would never be fulfilled in my life, due to societal patterns which would never allow me to go against them (Clark and Hardacre, 2017).

This (Picture4) revealed the gender segregation among the children in the arena of play. I carefully examined this picture and figured out that mostly the children were playing with the children of the same gender. A study by Mayeza (2017) showed that children are the active participants in the gendering of their identities. Whatever a child sees, anything happening around the child, he/she quickly learns that behavior. In other words we can say that children learn gendered behavior through the dominant conversations that circulate within their

family, society and culture (Connell, 2000). A similar study by Connell (2002) suggested that society and parents also play an important role in promoting gender segregation. For example, whenever I visited the playground my parents always sent me along with other girls instead of boys. This shows that the parents wanted to keep their girls apart from boys, as intimacy between boys and girls was not socially acceptable in those times (Connell, 2002; Whitehead et al., 2012).

The second important issue that I observed in this (Picture4) is the playing choices of children. All the children were busy playing among same-gender peers. Girls were busy playing with dolls and kitchen sets and it must be noted that they were sitting at the corner of the playground, just as they were meant to. On the other hand, the boys were using the entire playground at their fullest (Galipeau, 2014).

Similarly, a study by Lynch (2015) found that parents and teachers advised girls to play indoor games or choose games that required minimal physical activity such as Ludo, playing with dolls etc. whereas on the other hand, boys were advised to play in open areas. This aspect of parents and teachers' behavior has raised serious concerns regarding children's playing experiences. These gendered practices limit children's playing opportunities and affect the lives of children in a drastic way (Connell, 2002; Lynch, 2015).

Hence I was a girl who for different reasons dreamt of playing 'boys' games. The two following years of my life were crucial in revealing the potential that children's playing activities would have on disturbing the gender order in my community. Particularly within the sacred male terrain of cricket, girls should not have any voice – and in my case this proved to be a serious problem.

4.1.6 Selection in the cricket team (5-6 years)

This (Picture4) provoked more memories attached to my life. Watching boys' games at the playground was my daily routine. For several days nobody noticed my presence but one day one boy noticed me and came closer to me and asked:

Boy: who are you?

Me : Vandana.

Boy: what are you doing here?

Me: I am watching your game.

Boy: why?

Me: Because I like cricket and football.

Boy: what? You like cricket?

Me: Yes, not only like but also want to play.

Boy: Are you mad? Go home and play with dolls (Laughed at me).

Me: why should I go home?

Boy: You are a girl, you can't play cricket and football.

Me: I will not go home (told firmly).

This conversation forced me to think, why can't I play the games that I like? Why is there discrimination between boys and girls? I didn't find any answers to my questions at that time. It is well said that gendering is an ongoing process; it starts from the birth of a child and continues throughout the life of a child (Chesley, 2011; Galipeau, 2014).

Similarly, a study by Mayeza (2017) also asserted that gender is learnt and continually performed as we interact with different people in different contexts. The findings of the

above stated studies made me realized that the blunt reply of that boy who asked me to go home and play with dolls was probably due to gendering enforced by his own parents and peers. Moreover, the study by Connell (2002) suggested that gender is a social construct and it is society who dictates to the individuals about their socially approved roles based on their biological sex.

Later, I figured out that children were actually innocent, whatever they observed exactly and tried to imitate.

This photo (Picture4) is one of my favorite pictures. I was 7 years old at that time. In this picture, the girls are playing their regular games and licking lollypops. The amazing thing in this picture is that it reminded me of the presence of mind that I had applied at that time. My parents had sent me to the playground in the evening to play with other girls. No doubt that every child was innocent and extremely honest for their ages. It was my daily routine to watch boys playing cricket on the playground. I knew that if my parents came to know that instead of playing with girls I was watching the games of boys, then surely they would get angry. Hence, I decided to give my candies, toffees and lollies to the other girls as a bribe to keep their mouths shut.

I was very happy as I was succeeding in keeping my secret as a secret. Finally, on one evening, when I was watching boys playing cricket, the batsman hit the ball for six, I caught it and everyone noticed my presence. One boy came closer to me and said “good catch”. It was my first comment of praise from a boy. The next day changed my fate completely when the ball was just about to touch the boundary line for four runs. I quickly picked it up and without thinking anything I just threw the ball towards the wicket. Luckily the ball hit the

stumps and the batsmen were taking runs. Someone yelled 'out!' Soon the team realized that it was me who had thrown the ball towards the stumps, not anyone among their team. Suddenly, I noticed that all the players were talking about something and pointing towards me. I was hoping that they would call me but they didn't say anything to me.

The cricket was meant to be played by boys only and the catching of the ball by a girl was a big surprise for the team playing on the playground (Connell, 2002; Chesley, 2011; Connell, 2000; Borve & Borve, 2017). I was hoping for appreciation but nobody said a single word to me, which reinforced the gender stereotype in the behavior of boys (Borve and Borve, 2017). This behavior of the boys shows the one most prominent feature of hegemonic masculinities; men try to hold the superiority over the women in any society (Connell, 2005). I concluded at the time that men always have a perception that women are inferior to men in every way, and that this was the reason that nobody reacted when I caught the ball (Connell, 2005).

4.1.7 Father's doll turned to a cricketer (6-7 years)

There is picture in my childhood album in which I am wearing a cap on my head just like other boys were. I am looking very happy in this (Picture5) and my face is glowing marvelously. My eyes looked like shining stars. In this picture my hair is tied in such a way that it appears as if I had taken a new hair cut just like the boys. This picture reminds me of some very memorable moments in my life.

Everyone noticed my presence when I caught the ball but they didn't say anything. Next day, some of them came closer to me and asked about my reason for sitting over there. I expressed my passion towards their boyish game. At first some of them were surprised and warned me that cricket may be not easy for me as this required high stamina and physical activity

(Chapman, 2016; Aina & Cameron, 2011). Later, somehow I succeeded in convincing them and finally they welcomed me into their team. I have often wondered, t why did they include me into their team? If they believed that girls can't play boyish games (Mayeza, 2017) then why did they take me into their team?

Studies by Connell (2010) and (2002) have argued that from a very early age boys are advised to maintain good physique and stamina, and their parents and society make them realize that their main roles are to chase and protect girls. This made me realize that the main reason behind my inclusion in the team was not my passion and sincerity towards cricket; rather it was my beauty that attracted the boys (Meland & Kaltvedt, 2017).

I have a picture (Picture6) which shows some sort of celebration at someone's home. I am looking sad and upset in this picture because all through my childhood I have always liked Indian sweets. There is a plate in front of me and I am not eating at all. Rather, my expressions reveals the sadness in my heart and eyes. My parents are also present in the picture but theyl looked upset too as they were not smiling. It seems that they were attending the function unwillingly. This picture reminds me about a very sad incident which occurred in my life.

I was enjoying this new venture in my life but one day a woman noticed me when I was playing with boys. She came to me and asked, why are you playing with boys? She said that this is not right as I am a girl and I was not supposed to be here (Lynch, 2015; Massey, 2013). She clearly told me that she was going to inform my parents as she never wanted other girls to learn anything from me.

The angry reaction of that lady was genuine, especially within the Indian context where girls were not supposed to play with boys (Salvi, 2009). In India in those times the social roles of girls and boys were decided on account of their biological status (Nagaraja, Reddy, Ravi & Shankar, 2013). In India, being a parent of a daughter was seen as a crucial responsibility for parents; the role of the mother was especially crucial in terms of providing training in performing household chores for the daughter as this training would help the girl to become a good mother, wife and daughter-in-law in her future life (Saha, 2013; Durge, 2010).

The reaction of the woman was also guided by a society which did not allow women to play like boys (Mayeza, 2017). Gender roles prevail in Indian society so deeply that sometimes, it becomes difficult for people to emerge from all this restriction (Connell, 2002). Societal patterns were so strict and meant to be followed in any situation ((Nagaraja et al., 2013). Studies by Saha (2013) and Minocha (2015) argue that gender discrimination reached its full height in the early 1990s as people believed that women were best suited to the roles of mothers, sisters and wives. Hence the reaction of that woman was genuine as she probably had the perception that girls needed to be trained in household chores such as cooking, stitching and caring for others (Kumari, 2015; Nagaraja et al., 2013).

My parents and neighbors asked me to play in the same way that other girls generally played, supporting the view that Indian parents encourage their children to behave in a certain 'boyish or girlish' way (Chapman, 2016; Saha, 2013). Research by Meland & Kaltvedt(2017), Wingrave(2016) and Massey (2013) similarly states that gender differences were more inevitable in play settings. The time I have spent in both rural and urban areas during my childhood confirms that Indian girls usually play with dolls, miniature household items and skip with ropes, whereas boys usually play with balls, play cricket, football, car

racing and other computer based games (Oke et al., 1999). This shows that gender differences are clearly evident in play settings, which not only mediates the playing patterns of children but also restricts the play options for them (Connell, 2002; Mayeza, 2017; Borge & Borge, 2017; Bowen 2015).

4.1.8 Barbie doll becomes Batman (7-8 years)

This is the most memorable picture (Picture7) in my childhood memories. In this picture I have short hair just like other boys and wear a half pant with t-shirt, holding a bat and a cricket ball that was presented to me by my family. I liked this picture the most because this was the way I always wanted to dress up; not only to dress up, but also the way I wanted to think, play and behave, like boys. This was taken at my 9th birthday. The whole background was blue, just like the color theme of boys' birthdays. I was looking very happy and my parents were looking amazed. This picture brings happy memories of my life, but also reminds me of the painful journey that I had after that woman's complaint.

I have already described how that woman argued with me for playing with boys. I knew that that lady surely informed my parents and I knew the likely reaction of my family. So I decided to run away. I hid myself in the nearby temple so that nobody could find me. I spent the whole late evening there and luckily nobody noticed me as there was a huge rush in the temple due to evening 'aarti' (prayer). As the prayer finished the temple became empty, but I was still sitting there.

After sometime, the priest of the temple came closer to me and asked the reason behind my presence there. At those times, girls were not allowed to stay alone outside the home, especially in the late evening, as people believed that it was not safe for women as they are

weak and cannot protect themselves alone; in other words they need men for their safety (Connell, 2000; Connell, 2010; Connell, 2002; Saha, 2013; Durge, 2010). I remained silent for sometime but when the priest said that he was going to inform the police I was forced to speak up. I told him how and why I hid myself in the temple. He tried to convince me that the things that woman told me were right and that every girl needed to stay within her marked boundaries (Gill, 2013; Nagaraja et al., 2013).

Later, the priest assured me that he would go with me to my home and would try to convince my family. When we reached my home my father was not there. He was out of the house searching for me. When my mother saw me she quickly ran towards me and cuddled me in her arms. The priest narrated the whole story to my mother, explaining how and why I hid myself inside the temple. My family was surprised to know this but they didn't say anything. Soon after the priest's departure my parents started to scold me and warned me not to do this again. This behavior of my parents shows how strict Indian parents were in terms of the associated sex roles which were approved by society; moreover, my parents tried to implement those societal patterns by any means possible (Nagaraja et al., 2013, Micnocha, 2015). I confined myself behind the closed doors of my room.

My family was noticing my behavior but they didn't appear to be bothered by it, as Indian parents give more attention to their sons' wishes (Gill, 2013; Salvi, 2009). There was something inside my mind and heart that was eating me day by day. One day I heard a conversation between my parents. My mother was crying and insisting that my father give me permission to live my dreams. My father was in a great dilemma as he never wanted to go against the society in which we were living. If my father allowed me to play with boys then surely he would meet criticism, which was very likely in those times in India (Nagaraja et al.,

2013; Kumari, 2015). Finally their love towards me overpowered their fear of being ostracized or criticized by society. I can never forget the day when my parents came to me with a car and cricket set. I was happy because finally I had achieved the support of my family, but my struggle didn't end there. Rather, the real struggle was just beginning as the journey I was about to start was not acceptable to Indian society (Connell, 2002; Connell, 2005).

4.1.9 A complete makeover of my old toy room (8-9years)

I have a picture (Picture8) in which I am holding a big truck in my hand and seem very contented and delighted. The amazing thing in this picture is that my hair was short just like other boys. Another noticeable thing in this picture is that instead of my regular frocks and skirts I wore pants and a shirt. This picture brings so many happy memories for me.

The very first thing that I did, after getting permission from my parents, was to change my appearance. In India in those times girls were supposed to keep their hair long, as it was one of the essential qualities that every girl must have (Choudhary, 2013; Bhattacharya, 2005). My father took me to the barber shop where I got my new hair cut in a boy's style. I still remember the incident that took place at the barber's shop. When my father asked the barber to cut my hair he surprisingly asked my father, are you serious? But my father replied 'yes'. When the barber was cutting my hair the other people inside the shop called my father a foolish person who was trying to challenge societal patterns (Bhattacharya, 2005). While returning home, people were staring at me due to my haircut. I saw two women whispering something that I couldn't hear, but was sure that they were talking about me as my appearance was in opposition to my gender (Salvi, 2009).

The next morning when I reached school, my classmates were shocked to see my new boyish look. Some of them were making fun of me but I was not nervous and feeling ashamed, because I knew that their reactions were genuine as what I was doing was not acceptable in Indian society (Choudhary, 2013; Hardgrove, 1999). After returning from school, I was eagerly waiting for the evening when I could rejoin my team again. As I reached the playground my team mates were happy to see me again but they were surprised too. Some of them appreciated my new look but some advised me that there was no need for this makeover as girls always look pretty in long hair. This reflected their gender perception which was probably guided by their parents and other agencies of society (Chapman, 2016; Connell, 2002). On that day I started two journeys; one was as a girl playing games that were meant only for boys, and the other was as a sufferer of societal criticism.

It was not only me who was facing criticism from society due to my behavior; my family was also sailing in the same boat. In India society is divided into four castes (Desai, 1957; Choudhary, 2013) and I belonged to the very first cast known as the ‘Brahmins’² the most prominent one. At that time, each caste had their own unions for the betterment and welfare of their own people. Soon the news reached the union regarding my haircut and especially regarding my playing activities with boys. The union summoned my father and asked for clarification regarding these reports. They tried to convince my father to stop this as this was against their religion (Minocha, 2015) but my father remained adamant. As a result, my father was expelled from our caste union which was the only official punishment at that time for someone who goes against societal patterns (Choudhary, 2013; Thomas, 2016).

² Brahmins: A very upper class in Indian society which performs deity service.

Whenever my mother visited the temple and the market, other women from the neighborhood would taunt her. I was also facing taunts, but the happiness and joy of playing cricket, pitthoo and football far outweighed the vicissitudes of my new life. When people realized that my family was supporting me they tried to stop their own children, especially their sons, from playing with me. I still remember that for almost 2-3 weeks I was almost alone at the playground. This shows how people were so orthodox at that time and they did not want to go against societal patterns in anyway (Jensen & Oster, 2009; Mathur, 1973).

After a couple of weeks the playground was again full and all my teammates were back. They narrated how they emotionally blackmailed their parents by refusing to eat food or talk to their families. In India, boys are privileged in almost every sense (Kumari, 2015; Gill, 2013). For example, when I tried to emotionally blackmail my parents by refusing to eat food or talk to them nobody cared, because I was a girl. On the other hand, when some of our neighbors stopped sending their boys to the playground because of my presence in their team, the same emotional blackmail trick actually worked for the boys. Their parents gave in against their son's wishes and let them return to the playground (Mohanty & Rammohan, 2015; Srivasana & Durge, 2010). This situation supports the argument that Indian parents try every possible way to keep their son's happy in every situation, whereas their daughters are born to sacrifice their desires (Choudhary, 2013).

Men have been beneficiaries of this gender bias throughout Indian history (Choudhary, 2013; Salvi, 2009). Society has always preached that stealing is a bad habit, and when I stole some toys from our neighbor's house, I became a criminal in the eyes of society. Whereas In my experience, when any boy stole something from their parents' pockets this act was not seen as such a bad thing. Rather, the parents usually tried to make excuses for their son's

‘mistake’ by saying that they had forgotten to give him pocket money so he took it under his own initiative (Subramanian, 2018). Indian society did not regard behavior as negative regardless of who committed the behavior. Rather, the mistakes committed by boys were usually ignored, but the mistakes made by girls were highlighted and consequences ensued (Minocha, 2015). Parents who made such excuses reinforced in the minds of their children that boys are superior to girls (Connell, 2005).

Everything was going well and I was enjoying my boyish games, but change is the law of nature. There was something that was about to devastate my life. In Part 2 of this research I will discuss the second half of my childhood spent in Himachal Pradesh (in North India, 450 km from India’s capital). I will depict the role of gender in mediating children’s play in rural India. I will paint the picture of my later childhood in which societal patterns based on gender crushed my playing desires and forced me to change my playing patterns due to the increasing gender rigidity within my new community.

CHAPTER 4

MY NARRATIVE

PART2

4.2.1 Migration brings sadness and pain (9-10 years)

I have a picture (Picture9) which was taken at the festival of Diwali (A “Christmas” for Indians and one of the largest festivals in India, usually in the months of October-November). Diwali is a festival of lights, lamps, sweets, crackers and happiness but this picture does not show such things. It seems that the circumstances were not so happy at that time. The house is decorated with a few lamps only and all of us look sad. We are not enjoying crackers; rather we look upset.

There are various sad memories attached to this picture. One day when I returned from my daily play activities, I observed a different type of silence in my home. Yes, it was unusual and at dinner time my father told us that the company for which he was working had been declared bankrupt. As a result, they had retrenched all their employees by giving them some sort of compensation and my father was upset.

At that time, it was only men who earned money for their families. The primary role of a man was to provide financial security for his family (Connell, 2005; Choudhary, 2013; Gill, 2013). From a very early age children are advised to follow the roles and responsibilities attached to their biological sex. Hence my father’s sadness was genuine as he knew that he had the whole responsibility of his family and it would be difficult to lead the family without a job (Connell, 2002; Connell, 2005; Ahmad, 2010; Anupama & Durge, 2010).

My father was the only breadwinner in my family and my mother was a homemaker. Although she had only just passed the 8th Standard at school she was good at cooking, making pickles and jams, and she wanted to start a business to support her family. Women are not considered suitable for running a business or holding major positions in Indian society as people believe that these roles require critical thinking and good evaluative skills that women lack (Connell, 2002; Bhattacharya, 2005). My father was an adamant person and probably due to his gender perception he denied her the freedom to even think about running a business.

‘Men are the best; men are always superior’ were the popular assumptions at that time and every man wanted to maintain his superior position over his wife, sister, mother and daughter, reflecting their hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). This was probably the reason that my father was ready to face the situation alone but never wanted to lose his superior role in the family, hence he denied my mother permission to start a business (Connell, 2005; Ahmad, 2010; Choudhary, 2013).

A few days later at dinner time my parents informed us that we were moving to our ancestral home i.e. Himachal Pradesh (450 km from India’s capital). I still remember how my hands were stopped at that time due to this news. I become motionless for a couple of minutes. Everyone in my family was worried about the future but I was only worried about my playing possessions. I knew that people in my ancestral home believed that girls should learn household chores as this would help them in playing their future roles of mother and wife (Connell, 2002; Roopnarine, Talukder, Jain, Joshi & Srivastav, 1990).

Whenever, we visited our ancestral home in the summer holidays, my grandmother chided me to wear skirts, stop wearing shorts and moreover, became angry with me when I tried to play pithoo, gilli –danda etc. as such games were not meant for girls (Choudhary, 2013; Mayeza, 2017). Studies by Connell (2002) and Salvi (2009) also observe that society expects that girls should not even day-dream about the things that are not appropriate to their biological sex. Hence, my anxiety was genuine and quite obvious.

My father was aware of my fear and anxiety. One day before our migration he came to me and assured me that he would not let my dreams be shattered in anyway. There were tears in his eyes and his voice was trembling. I realized that nobody in my family was happy about this migration. On 1st May, 1998 we finally shifted to the home of our ancestors. We usually visited our native home during summer vacations and I was always excited to go there but this time I was not happy.

4.2.2 My experiences in the local public school (10-11 years)

I have a picture (Picture10) that was taken when we reached our ancestral home. In this picture, my grandmother is hugging only my father, not the rest of us. She is smiling; probably she was happy to see her son, another example of the bias Indian people show towards their sons (Choudhary, 2013; Saha, 2013). In this picture I am looking sad, probably because I was not happy with this migration. When we arrived there, I observed the weird reactions of some people towards me, probably due to my short hair and pants. In India, at that time, girls usually wore ‘salwar-kameez’³ as this was a socially approved outfit for girls,

³ Salwar-Kameez : A traditional Indian costume in which the salwar is just like pants and Kameez is just like a long shirt and this dress is worn with a long scarf. It is a combination of three parts i.e. salwar, kameez and scarf.

especially in rural areas, but I was in a short skirt and my outfit raised the brows of villagers (Bhattacharya, 2015).

After a few days, my parents admitted me to a nearby public school. My parents wanted to admit me to a private school but my grandmother was against it. She believed that there was no need to spend money on a daughter's education as she would eventually go to her in-laws home after marriage (Ahmad, 2010; Anupama & Durge, 2010). A study by Mohanty and Rammohan (2015) similarly argues that gender affects the school life of children as people engage in gender-biased practices regarding the schooling of their children. On the other hand, a study by Subramanian (2018) argues that Indian people do not want to spend any money on the education of girls as they will not get anything in return in the future. Rather, the girls will go to someone else's home after marriage so it is futile to spend anything on girls.

Indian parents are gender-biased. A study conducted by Saha (2013) observes that Indian parents usually prefer to admit their son's to private schools, and their daughters to public schools. In some areas of Himachal Pradesh, India women are responsible for collecting firewood, fodder and medicinal plants for their families, and as a result girls are being withdrawn from schools (Minocha, 2015).

It was difficult for me to adjust to the environment of a public school as my earlier schooling was in a private school. I remember how my classmates made fun of me on the very first day of my school due to my short hair and clothing, which shows how gender expectations and norms were rigid in my ancestral town. On those days, gender-based bullying behavior was the norm and it was a hard life on the school grounds for those who, like me, did not conform

with the unwritten gender norms imposed over children's bodies, including the school uniforms, hair styles and even the way they walked, played, ran and talked within school borders (Connell, 2002). Later on that day at recess time my class teacher called me and told me to wear 'salwar-kameez' instead of pants and a shirt, as pants with a shirt was the dress code only for boys in the school (Bowen, 2015).

After school, I returned to my home and cried a lot in front of my parents and narrated the whole day to them. The studies by Connell (2002) and Salvi (2009) observe that parents urge their daughters to be flexible, adaptable and ready to make sacrifices in their lives. Similarly, my parents also advised me to keep calm and try to adjust to the new environment, just as other parents would advise their daughters.

The next day, after morning assembly I saw a circular on the school notice board. It was a call for boy and girl participants for football and pebble race events. This shows that sporting activities play a key role within schools in complying with the mainstream gender order. Gender also mediates children's playing patterns. Moreover, a study by Borge and Borge (2017) observes that every school has separate teams for boys and girls for different games, which indicates that the gender bias in school settings also follows mainstream gender patterns for sports.

As per the notice, interested students needed to contact the sports teacher at the school. I approached him and he was surrounded by boys when I asked him to take my name for the team. Everyone became silent for some seconds and then suddenly some of them laughed at me. I asked their reason behind the laughter and then one boy replied, "Go and take part in a skipping or pebble race that suits a girl" (Deshpande, 2016; Mayeza, 2017; Connell, 2002).

School clearly plays an important role in reinforcing the gender divide between the students (Borve and Borve, 2017).

Later, I approached the principal of the school and narrated the whole incident to him. He was a gentle and wise person. He understood my situation and called the sports teacher into his office. When the principal asked sports teacher, he replied that football is a game meant only for boys in our society (Massey, 2013). Moreover, all the other teams from various local schools had only boys' teams for football. The teacher convinced the principal that if they included a girl in their team, then probably our school would not be able to take part in the inter-school football tournament (Mohanty& Rammohan, 2015). At this point, the principal become silent as he probably knew that it is easy to fight issues within the school, but to fight outside the school on a large scale was not an easy affair (Nagaraja et al., 2013).

These reactions of boys, the sports teacher and the principal proved the existence of gender differences in the arena of play, especially in school settings (Meland& Kaltvedt, 2017). Similar studies(Chapman, 2016; Warash et al., 2017; Harris & Estevez, 2017; Aina & Cameron, 2011; Mayeza, 2017) also argue that gender-biased practices of teachers and school administrations not only affect the playing patterns of children, but also influence the overall personalities of the children. On the other hand, studies by Wingrave (2016) and Massey(2013) argue that apart from society there are other agencies such as family, peers and school who also have influence in creating gender differences in play settings.

I was a very good player of cricket and football during my childhood but still I was not able to play like other boys. My mind always asked, why? I had all the qualities that a good player should have, so why could I not play? The answer to this question can be found in the

observations of Connell (2002) which suggest that gender is not solely or inherently associated with physical anatomy, but rather it is a social construct. The activities of men and women in everyday life are shaped by societal patterns formulated on the basis of their biological status (Connell, 2002). For example, from an early age my grandmother always encouraged my elder sister and me to learn cooking and do baby-sitting for our younger sister instead of outdoor playing (Connell, 2002).

The practices of society, school and parents contribute to, and help form, young boys' masculinities (Connell, 1989). Similarly, a study by Connell (2005) argues that masculinity can never exist in society without femininity as they both are relational to each other. Connell (2005) also argues that masculinities have several forms and the most dangerous of these are hegemonic masculinities, which try to sustain dominant positions over females and other gender identities perceived as 'feminine'. I can attest to Connell's (2005) arguments in my real life as I was usually pushed back by men whenever I tried to be like them, and their typical hegemonic behavior shows their fear of losing their superiority over women.

On the other hand, my parents were trying to accommodate my situation. My father re-opened my grandfather's shop and started a new business of readymade garments. My father used all the retrenchment compensation money he received for this new business. Things were not going smoothly in my school life. My classmates made fun of me and sometimes they drawn cartoons on my notebook and the blackboard such as pictures of me wearing pants and cooking, and wearing a frock and urinating like a boy with silly captions. Whenever I complained to the teachers, they advised me that the solution lay in adopting more girlish behaviors (Bowen, 2015). Apart from school life, I tried to play with the neighboring boys but they were not keen to play with me due to their parents' restrictions not

to play with children of the opposite sex (Chapman, 2016; Cabbage, 2016). There were only 2-3 boys who played with me, but the majority of the boys made fun of me and advised me to play girlish games. My father purchased a football and cricket set for me. I started to play in the fields alone and whenever I played people working in neighboring fields taunted me (Aina & Cameron, 2011; Connell, 2002).

Gender differences are evident in educational and play settings (Chapman, 2016; Deshpande, 2016; Connell, 2002). The behaviors of teachers in schools reinforce gendering among the children (Bowen, 2015). A study by Saha (2013) found that parents in China, Thailand, India and Pakistan encouraged their children to behave in certain 'girlish/boyish' ways.

Classroom material and teachers' instructions enforce gendering in school settings (Aina & Cameron, 2011). I was advised to wear 'salwar-Kameez' instead of pants which shows that teachers reinforce embodied gendered practices in school settings (Chapman, 2016). Moreover, when I tried to complain that my classmates were teasing me, my teachers advised me that the solution lay in adopting girlish behaviors, which again revealed their deep-rooted traditional gender perceptions (Connell, 2002).

A similar study by Aina and Cameron(2011) also concluded that teachers treat boys and girls differently in schools on account of their gender. Furthermore, this study claimed that teachers discouraged pre-school girls from using computers through their words and attitudes, and that this gender bias limits the abilities of girls to become proficient in the use of computers. Gender bias can be easily observed in the ways adults appreciate children. For example, I was regularly praised for my rosy cheeks, lips, hair, politeness and sincerity instead of my passion for boyish games. Whenever I tried to take part in fancy dress

competitions in my school, my teachers' suggested that I play the role of a mother, or a milk-woman, rather than imitate a cricketer or actor, revealing their deeply-rooted gender perceptions about the social roles of men and women.

4.2.3 The last happy picture of my childhood (11-12 years)

I have a picture (Picture10) in which I am swimming in an indoor pool with other boys. I am looking contented in this picture and wearing shorts. Other children are also looking happy and we are all enjoying the splash of water in the pool. This picture is the last happy picture in my childhood album, as afterwards I felt as if someone had snatched the smile from my face. One day, I heard a conversation between my parents. They decided to go back to Faridabad after the final term exams as they realized that we were not meant to live in a rural area.

My father had a good reputation in the village. In India, villages run their own small governments named the 'Panchayat'⁴ to solve their day-to-day problems. In other words these social agencies are responsible for maintaining the social rules and ensuring that they are followed strictly (Hardgrove, 1999; Kapadaia, 1966). My father was summoned by the panchayat about my playing activities which were anti-social, according to the villagers. At that time, in Indian society people generally believed that any activity which was not associated with a particular sex was considered as anti-social. Moreover, the people who gave any kind of help to the offender were also considered equally guilty. Hence, people rarely come forward to support any activity against the set societal patterns as nobody wanted to be boycotted by society (Hardgove, 1999). The members of the panchayat threatened to

⁴ Panchayat: A small scale governments in Indian villages. The main purpose of these is to maintain the law and order in the village. These are responsible for the smooth functioning of village activities pertaining to the welfare of villagers.

boycott my family if I didnot stop playing boyish games. According to them, my activities were against the societal patterns and may have provoked other girls of the village to play boyish games (Minocha, 2015; Nagaraja et al., 2013). My father assured them that after my final exams we would leave the village and go back to the city.

The establishment of the ‘panchayat system’ shows how important the societal patterns were at that time. A similar study by Connell (2002) also argued that societal patterns are strictly followed in Indian society and any kind of opposite behavior is not easily accepted. Society tries to force people to bow down to the societal patterns just as in my case, where my father was obliged either to support his daughter’s playing activities or to leave the village (Connell, 2002). Indian people fear being punished by societal organizations if they commit or support any kind of behavior that is not socially approved (Bhattacharya, 2005).

4.2.4 The worst experiences of my life (12-13 years)

I have a picture (Picture11) in my collection which I hate the most. This picture was taken just before my father’s funeral. In this picture the dead body of my father is lying on the floor and my mother holds her three daughters tightly in her arms and is crying. The expressions of my mother and me reveal the deep grief and sadness that occurred in our lives due to the sudden death of my father. We are surrounded by our relatives and neighbors.

It is well said that ‘no one can predict the future’. That which is written in destiny can never be revealed until it happens. On 17th November, 1998 my father went to his shop in the morning and I went to my school. My mother completed her household work and was waiting for my father at dinner time but he didn’t come. At that time, mobiles were not available in the villages and landlines were present in only a few houses in our entire village.

In midnight, someone came to our home and asked about my father's scooter number. I was unable to think why he was asking for my father's scooter number plate. After sometime someone asked for the phone numbers of my father's relatives. People started to gather at our house and we were unable to understand why there was a huge rush to our house. Later, someone informed us that my father had died in a road accident.

We were completely shocked and within a few hours my father's dead body was lying on the floor in front of us. My mum hugged her three daughters and cried hysterically. My father left this world at the very young age of 42 years and he was the only bread winner of our family. My mother was not able to secure a job as she was a woman and few women held prestigious positions in the public realm (Connell, 2002).

My mother became a widow at the age of 34. After the death of my father, it was impossible for my mother to go back to Faridabad as decided earlier by my parents, as people believed that a woman could not take decisions independently (Desai, 1957). Our only source of income had disappeared and we spent days without food and basic amenities. Destiny had not only snatched my father but also smashed my dreams, especially my playing dreams. My dreams of living a life beyond my community's strict gender barriers, that would not allow a girl like me to express who she was, or to do what she wanted to do with her body and leisure time, were shattered.

The life of a widow becomes hell, especially in the Indian perspective, after her husband's death (Hardgrove, 1999). At that time Indian people believed that a woman could not exist in society without her husband, so if her husband died then she had no right to live alone in

society, whereas a man had the right to live without his wife in society (Natarajan, 1959). The study by Connell (2002) also discusses how many societies are organized: a man holds a superior position in society and is responsible for leading his family, whereas women are born to take care of the family; that is exactly the case in India, hence my mum was worried about our future. A study by Choudhary (2013) argues that Indian people believe that women are weak and cannot exist in society after the death of their husbands.

My mother wanted to re-open my father's shop but my granny denied permission, saying that only men can do business and women are meant to manage homes (Connell, 2002; Connell, 2005; Hardgrove, 1999; Choudhary, 2013). As a result my mum decided to grow crops in the fields. Farming was very hard for all of us but we were forced to do it due to hunger. Society always preaches that only men can do hard work as they have good stamina and strong physique (Connell, 2002; Hollenbeck, 2016). So why was my mother forced to work in the fields? I had often wondered why is there discrimination in the society? Why are women not allowed to make their own identities? Why can they not be the bread-winner of the family? The answers to all these questions lie in the study by Connell (2002) which argued that gender is the way in which the reproductive capabilities and sex differences of human bodies are brought in to justify social practices and become part of the historical process. Concerning gender, social practice refers to the body; based on the bodies' anatomy social roles and political power are designated to men or women. Moreover, the hegemonic tendency of men does not allow women to overpower men in any way (Connell, 2005).

From a very early age, parents, the media, schools and peers give a strong message to males that they are supreme and above women in every way (Connell, 2005). This gendered behaviour by the social agencies is enough to feed the minds of men that men are born to

dominate women (Connell, 2005). It is expected in India that such societal arrangements should be strictly followed. Hence the advice given by my grandmother to my mother to stay at home shows that gender-associated behavior was always meant to be followed in Indian society at that time (Connell, 2002; Choudhary, 2013; Chapman, 2016).

The biggest challenge for my mother was food, as the breadwinner of our family was no more. She started to plough the fields to grow crops, as at that time in Himachal Pradesh women were responsible for collecting firewood and food (Minocha, 2015). Later, I started to play again as I wanted to come out from my grief. On the day when I started to resume play with boys, the same evening my mother was summoned by the 'panchayat'. They strictly ordered my mother that if we wanted to live in the village then we had to follow the societal patterns or else vacate the village as soon as possible, which was the ultimate punishment for any form of rebellion (Sekher and Hatti, 2010).

My mum wanted to fulfill her husband's promise that he had made to me. As a result, she decided to ignore the panchayat order and I continued to play with boys as usual. Indian people were so obsessed with their sons (Hassan, 2016; Subramanian, 2018) that they were unable to stop their sons from playing with me, so they found another way to stop me. As a result, people often cut the electricity wire and sometimes even released their buffaloes into our fields to ruin the crops. In short, they all wanted to teach us a lesson; that people are social animals and they have to agree with social arrangements and gender traditions (Connell, 2002; Yieke, 2001).

4.2.5 The phase of transformation (12-13 years)

I have a picture (Picture12) in my album which depicts a crucial turning point in my life. In this picture, I am completely dressed up in Indian traditional attire and my hair is tied into a typical pony tail. My expressions are not so appropriate if I carefully examine the eyes. They probably depict the sadness that was filling my heart. Although I am smiling in this, it appears that I am faking the smile. In other words, I can say that I look like a bird whose wings have been smashed and put it into a cage. This is the last picture in my collection and it is associated with bitter experiences in my life.

One day some people burnt our ripening crops in the fields and I felt that ultimately I was the only person responsible for this. Yet my mother remained calm again, as she only wanted to keep her husband's wish because she believed that women should keep promises made to their husbands (Choudhary, 2013; Salvi, 2009). I faced a great dilemma because I wanted to stop all this nonsense. Indian women bear various societal pressures and make sacrifices after the death of her husband (Choudhary, 2013) yet it was impossible for me to ignore the hardships of my mother.

Humans are social beings and they need social support to live in any society (Connell, 2000; Wingrave, 2016; Healey, 2014). It was difficult to live without the basic amenities and on one day I decided to withdraw from playing 'non-feminine' games, as they were clearly the cause of my family's sufferings. I appeared in front of the panchayat and begged for mercy. They asked me to live as per the community norms and I agreed. I promised to stop playing with boys and to comply with the local gender rules. Afterwards, I not only left playing boyish games but also adopted an Indian dressing style. I left everything that was responsible

for the sufferings of my family. I sacrificed my playing dreams due to the societal patterns based on gender. I stopped challenging the not-so-invisible gendered boundaries of my community. Women are born to do sacrifices throughout their entire lives for the welfare of their families (Bhattacharya, 2015; Gill, 2013). My family lost their support on my father's death, and whatever I had done I have no regret over this, as I love my family. If my father was alive then surely I would not be the person that I am today.

My classmates were aware about the do's and don'ts of being a girl or a boy, hence they often drew cartoons in my notebook with certain gender based captions. This behavior of the children showed their gendering. Gendering is a continuous process which starts from the birth and continues till the death of an individual (Chapaman, 2016).

My teachers told me to wear salwar-kameez as that was the socially approved dress code for girls. A study by Nagaraja et al., (2013) argued that sometimes teacher's own personal perceptions towards gender also reinforce gendering among children. Sometimes teachers emphasize gender in the classrooms (Connell, 2002). For example, in our school all the competitions were organized separately for boys and girls, which shows that schools reinforce gendering among the students through their acts (Connell, 2010; Lynch, 2015).

Gender issues are deeply rooted in Indian society (Nagaraja et al., 2013). Gendering issues are prevalent in society, and one cannot get entirely rid of these regardless of his/her wishes (Mohanty & Rammohan, 2015, Connell, 2002; Connell, 2005; Hassan, 2016; Healey, 2014). In India, at that time, societal patterns were strictly followed. Society tried every possible means to ensure that individuals would surrender to it. The incidents of burning our crops in the fields, and cutting the wire for our electricity show how society creates situations such

that innocent people must bow down completely to conform with societal patterns (Connell, 2002; Warash, Root& Devito, 2017).

I never wanted to withdraw from my leisure activities as playing cricket and other ‘boyish games’ were everything for me, but due to societal pressure I had to stop my playing patterns at the age of 13 (Minocha, 2015; Wingrave, 2016). I quit because I realized that it was not easy to fight society (Connell, 2002; Chapman, 2016) especially when everyone is standing on one side. I was forced to change myself because I was unable to fight against the societal patterns. At some point I realized that if I did have the courage at that time then I would never have quit, and I could see that probably I could have been a successful sportswoman.

CHAPTER-5
CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The main objectives of this research were to study the role of gender in shaping children's play in India and to explore the playing culture of India through an interpretative autoethnographic approach. In this research study, I constructed, deconstructed and interpreted my own personal experiences of a childhood lived within Indian culture. In this project, I acted as both the researcher and participant. By using my own childhood pictures, cultural and life experiences I have discussed how gender is negotiated in Indian culture since the early days of a child's life, through their toys, games and playing activities.

The methodology used in this study was ethnographic in its orientation, cultural in its interpretative orientation and in terms of content it is autobiographical. Apart from this, in this study, my personal reflections on my lived experiences in Indian culture acted as both subject and method in this research study.

I chose this autoethnography to explore my own identity which was shaped within typical Indian culture, where gender plays not only a crucial role in mediating the playing patterns of the children but also influences the lives of the individuals. My life has been gendered since before my birth. If this process happens in every human society, then India bears perhaps the deepest gendered drama: baby girls are not wanted; religious tradition says that they do not bring luck to their family. Entrenched societal norms transform girls into economic burdens

to their families. As an extreme measure, people turn to feticide or infanticide to avoid carrying the weight of raising a girl.

Indian people believed, at the time of my childhood, that only a son could provide emotional and financial security to their parents in their old age. Girls could never bring happiness in the lives of their parents as they would go to live with their husbands i.e. (in-laws home) and this is the case in India, where people prefer to be blessed with a son than a daughter. These reasons are responsible for the practice of sex-selective abortions and early child marriage in India. Although the prenatal screening of the fetus is completely banned in India by law, it is still being practiced as people don't want a girl child. Moreover, parents want to get rid of the responsibility of their daughters as soon as possible by fixing their early marriage.

These desperate measures never happened to me. Despite their initial struggle in accepting my wishes, my parents provided me with a positive upbringing. Furthermore, as my 'tomboy' manners challenged the gender status quo of my communities, after their first rejection – in the case of the stealing issues, or when they insisted on providing me with girlish toys – my parents embraced me and my desire to play 'gender-prohibited' games. If I was a gender-broker, my parents deserve to be acknowledged as they also challenged their communities and relatives to protect me. Whether my family circumstances, the early passing of my father, the subsequent financial difficulties of my family, the strong pressure of the community leaders led me to withdraw from my 'forbidden' playing activities and therefore from my gender-challenging attitude, these events also taught me something: to be honest with my feelings and to fight even against the powerbrokers for the right of women in India and anywhere to achieve high levels of education.

Hence, if my playing story finished on a sad note, after finishing this study I can see how gender barriers, as a social construct, can be overcome and pushed towards more freedom for women in my society. With this understanding, I will continue to advocate for liberty for boys and girls to play whatever they wish without the gender restrictions that have blocked me (and countless other children) from fulfilling my playing dreams.

5.2 Summary of the findings of the study

1. This study deepened the perception that gender plays a key role in mediating children's play in Indian culture.
2. The study also found significant gender differences in Indian playing patterns. There are numerous instances mentioned in Chapter 4 which confirm the existence of gender differences in play settings. For example, my parents always asked me to play with girls only. Apart from this, the provision of separate playing areas for boys and girls in community playgrounds and in my schools show that gender barriers definitely exist in Indian playing culture.
3. By studying the playing culture of India, it has been inferred that certain games played in both rural and urban areas were associated with a particular sex, which confirms the existence of gender differences in play settings.
4. The findings of this study also affirm Connell's view that gender is a social construct. All the memories narrated in Chapter 4 made me realize that migration can change the place, but not the mentality, of society.
5. Through the detailed interpretative analysis in Chapter 4 it is clear that gender patterns are entirely constructed by society. Throughout my childhood I was always urged by my parents, school, teachers and neighborhoods to follow the social

traditions in terms of dressing style and play, which shows that it is society who creates boundaries for the individuals and forces them to act in accordance.

6. The study also found that gender perceptions of parents, teachers and peers play a significant role in shaping children's play in India.
7. The study confirms that societal patterns, especially those based on gender, restrict the playing options for children and force them either to ascertain societal patterns or abandon their playing choices.
8. This study found that significant changes can occur in people's perceptions regarding gender roles. For example, the narratives mentioned in Chapter 4 show how my father's traditional gender views changed with the passage of time. He accepted my boyish games; probably my achievements in playing boys' sports convinced him that daughters can also be a matter of pride for their families, like their sons.
9. This study also proved helpful in identifying my own personality. Although I stopped my playing due to the societal traditions and family conditions, still I have remained a 'gender broker' throughout my life and progressed in my academic journey to a university level not in India, but here in Australia, which is one of the major achievements of my life.

5.3 Benefits of the study

On a personal level, this study provided me with an opportunity to explore my identity. This study helped me to once again revisit the past memories of my life. This study made me realize how Indian parents influence their children's play. The findings of this study have enabled me to raise any future children I may have in an environment which will provide them with opportunities without any discrimination. This study is also beneficial for the

Australian teachers who are teaching in diverse contexts, as with the help of this study they will be able to better understand the children and families coming from India. Autoethnographic studies are scarce in the field of childhood studies and hence this study provides an input to this most growing autoethnographic research tradition in childhood studies. Moreover, the findings of this study will help the insiders and outsiders to understand India's playing culture.

5.4 Limitations of the study

1. This study is limited to the personal life encounters that I had in my life. The results of this study are based on my personal experiences only.
2. This study is limited to the Northern part of India as both Faridabad and Himachal Pradesh are in the North of India.

5.5 Suggestions for future researchers

1. This study was conducted on the Northern part of India, so any future studies should perhaps be conducted on the remaining parts of India.
2. Further studies can be conducted to compare the playing culture of different parts of India.
3. Future research could be conducted to compare the present and past situations of India.

More studies could be conducted to compare the playing culture of India with those of other countries and continents.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, N. (2010). Female feticide in India. *Issues L. & Med.*, 26(13), 13-29.
- Aina, O. E., & Cameron, P. A. (2011). Why does gender matter? Counteracting stereotypes with young children. *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, 39(3).
- Anupama, S., & Durge, P. M. (2010). Female feticide in India: A social evil. *The Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology of India*, 60(6), 503-506.
- Bakan, Omer. (2014). Representations of female athletes in Turkish media: A content analysis of three newspapers. *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, 4(1), 881.
- Bhattacharya, R. (2005). *Social reforms and women's education among the patidars of Baroda state 1850-1950* (PhD. thesis). Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1754643494?pq-origsite=primo>
- Børve, H. E., & Børve, E. (2017). Rooms with gender: Physical environment and play culture in kindergarten. *Early Child Development and Care*, 187(5-6), 1069-1081.
- Boskovic, B. (2014). Globalization and gender: Relationships as epitome of change. *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, 4(1), 973.
- Bowen, Z. (2015). Play on the mother-ground: Children's games in rural Odisha. *South Asian History and Culture*, 6(3), 1-18.
- Chang, H. (2008). *Autoethnography as method*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Chapman, R. (2016). A case study of gendered play in preschools: How early childhood educators' perceptions of gender influence children's play. *Early Child Development and Care*, 186(8), 1271-1284.
- Chesley, N. (2011). Stay-at-home fathers and breadwinning mothers: Gender, couple dynamics, and social change. *Gender & Society*, 25(5), 642-664.
- Choudhary, R. (2013). Women in Indian society: A historical perspective. *Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences*, 18(1), 41.
- Connell, C. (2010). DOING, UNDOING, OR REDOING GENDER? Learning from the workplace experiences of transpeople. *Gender and Society*, 24(1), 31-55.
- Connell, R.W. (2002). *Gender*. (First edition.). USA: Blackwell Publisher Ltd.
- Connell, R. (2002). *Gender* (Short introductions). Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity: Blackwell.
- Connell, R. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). Crows Nest, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin.

- Connell, R. (2000). *Making gendered people: Bodies, identities, and sexualities*. CA: Stanford University Press.
- Connell, R. (1987). *Gender and power: Society, the person and sexual politics*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Cubbage, A. D. (2016). *Parent talk: How parents discursively construct, co-construct and re-do gender expectations and practices in their young children* (Doctoral dissertation, UC Riverside).
- Denzin, N.K. (2014). *Interpretive autoethnography*(2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA:Sage.
- Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2008). Introduction: The discipline & practice of qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (3rd ed., pp.1-43). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Desai, N. (1957). *Women in Modern India*.Vora and Company Publishers Pvt. Ltd.: Bombay.
- Deshpande, V.M., (2016). Gender discrimination in sports. *International Journal of Physical Education, Sports and Health*, 3(3), 545-547.
- Ellis, C. (2007).Telling secrets, revealing lives relational ethics in research with intimate others. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3(1), 3-29.
- Ellis, C. T. E., & Bochner, A.P. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. *Qualitative Social Research*,12(1), 1-14.
- Ellis, C. & Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as a subject. In N.K Denzin & Y.S Linclon (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp.733-768). Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.
- Florio-Ruane, S. (2001). *Teacher education and the cultural imagination*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Foster, K., Mcallister, M., & O'Brien, L. (2005). Coming to Autoethnography: A mental health nurse's experience. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 4(4), 1-15.
- Garg, S., Sharma, N., & Sahay, R. (2001). Socio-cultural aspects of menstruation in an urban slum in Delhi, India. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 9(17), 16-25.
- Galipeau, J. L. (2014). *Reflecting on gender as a social construct: A qualitative case study of a girls' critical gender group*. (Doctoral dissertation), Rutgers University-Graduate School of Education.

- Gautam, C., & Jenlink, Patrick M. (2015). *Leadership adventures of an emerging scholar-practitioner: An interpretive autoethnography*. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.
- Gill, M. S. (2013). Female foeticide in India: Looking beyond son preference and dowry. *Mankind Quarterly*, 53(3/4), 281.
- Gupta, R. (2013). Bowled out of the game: Nationalism and gender equality in Indian cricket. *Berkeley J. Ent. & Sports L.*, 2, 89.
- Hardardottir, G. A., & Petursdottir, G. M. (2014). Gendering in one Icelandic preschool. *Nordic Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 7(9), p. 1-14.
- Hardgrove, A. (1999). Sati worship and Marwari public identity in India. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 58(3), 723-752.
- Harris, E., & Estevez, M. (2017). The role of gender and motherhood ideologies in perpetuating workplace inequality. *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, 7(2), 67-85.
- Healey, J. (2014). *Sexual orientation and gender identity*. (4th Ed.). The Spinney Press: NSW, Australia.
- Hollenbeck, C. A. (2017). *Open source identity: Countering the binary through self-definition and creativity*. (Doctoral dissertation), Union Institute and University.
- Jensen, R., & Oster, E. (2009). The power of TV: Cable television and women's status in India. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 124(3), 1057-1094.
- Kapadia, K. M. (1966). *Marriage and family in India*. Oxford University Press: Delhi.
- Klingaman, D., Ewell, Sara, Berdos, Amy, & Connor, Francis. (2012). *Paying attention to culture: An autoethnographic study of a principal in transition*. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.
- Knijnik, J. (2014). Feeling at home: An autoethnographic account of an immigrant football fan in Western Sydney. *Leisure Studies*, 34(1), 1-8.
- Kramer, K. Z., Kelly, E. L., & McCulloch, J. B. (2015). Stay-at-home fathers: Definition and characteristics based on 34 years of CPS data. *Journal of Family Issues*, 36(12), 1651-1673.
- Kumari, D. (2015). Autonomy of educated urban women and their attitude towards female foeticide in India. *Human Geographies*, 9(1), p.17.
- Lehman, S. (2013, June, 12). High heels were popular among men before women. Retrieved from <http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2013/06/high-heels-were-popular-among-men-before-women/>.

- Lynch, M. (2015). Guys and dolls: A qualitative study of teachers' views of gendered play in kindergarten. *Early Child Development and Care*, 185(5), 679-693.
- Maréchal, G. (2011). Book reviews: Creating Autoethnographies. Tessa Muncey. London: Sage. *Management Learning*, 42(1), 124-128.
- Massey, D. (2013). *Space, place and gender*. John Wiley & Sons: United States.
- Mccabe, J., Fairchild, E., Grauerholz, L., Pescosolido, B., & Tope, D. (2011). Gender in Twentieth-Century children's books: Patterns of disparity in titles and central characters. *Gender & Society*, 25(2), 197-226.
- Mathur, Y. B. (1973). *Women's Education in India, 1813-1966*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.
- Mayeza, E. (2017). 'Girls don't play soccer': Children policing gender on the playground in a township primary school in South Africa. *Gender and Education*, 29(4), 476-494.
- Meland, A. T., & Kaltvedt, E. H. (2017). Tracking gender in kindergarten. *Early Child Development and Care*, 18 March 2017. doi: 10.1080/03004430.2017.1302945.
- Minocha, R. (2015). Gender, environment and social transformation: A study of selected villages in Himachal Pradesh. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 22(3), 335-357.
- Mohanty, I., & Rammohan, A. (2015). Child schooling in India: the role of gender. *Indian Growth and Development Review*, 8(1), 93-108.
- Nagaraja, G. M., Reddy, M., & Shankar, S. R. (2013). A study of gender discrimination in students' education by parents: A pilot study. *Journal of Evolution of Medical and Dental Sciences*, 1(2), 4497-4504.
- Nagesh, A. (2016, January 3). Did you know high heeled shoes were originally meant for men. Retrieved from <https://metro.co.uk/2016/01/03/did-you-know-high-heeled-shoes-were-originally-meant-for-men-5597966/>
- Narayan, S. (1995). *Play and Games in Tribal India*. Commonwealth Publishers: Delhi.
- Nash, R.J. (2002). *Spirituality, ethics and teaching: A professor's journey*. New York: Peter Long.
- Nash, R.J. (2004). *Liberating scholarly writing: The power of personal narrative*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Natarajan, S. (1959). *A Century of Social Reforms in India*. Asia Publishing House: Bombay.
- Nieto, S. (2003). *What keeps teachers going?* New York: Teachers College.

- Oke, M., Khattar, A., Pant, P., & Saraswathi, T. S. (1999). A profile of children's plays in urban India. *Childhood*, 6(2), 207-219.
- Reed-Danahay, D.E. (1997). *Auto/ethnography: Rewriting the self and the social*. New York, NY: Berg.
- Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A method of enquiry. In N.K Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Inquiry* (1st ed., pp.516-529). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.
- Roopnarine, J. L., Lu, M. W., & Ahmeduzzaman, M. (1989). Parental reports of early patterns of caregiving, play and discipline in India and Malaysia. *Early Child Development and Care*, 50(1), 109-120.
- Roopnarine, J. L., Talukder, E., Jain, D., Joshi, P., & Srivastav, P. (1990). Characteristics of holding, patterns of play, and social behaviors between parents and infants in New Delhi, India. *Developmental Psychology*, 26(4), 667.
- Saha, A. (2013). An assessment of gender discrimination in household expenditure on education in India. *Oxford Development Studies*, 41(2), 220-238.
- Salvi, V. (2009). Child marriage in India: A tradition with alarming implications. *The Lancet*, 373 (9678), 1826-1827.
- Sekher, T., & Hatti, N. (2010). Disappearing daughters and intensification of gender bias: Evidence from two village studies in South India. *Sociological Bulletin*, 59(1), 111-133.
- Spry, T. (2001). Performing autoethnography: An embedded methodological Praxis. *Qualitative Enquiry*, 7 (6), 706-732.
- Straughn, C., & Halkias, Daphne. (2016). *The life of the African-American career military woman: An autoethnographic study*. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.
- Subramanian, A.(2018). 63 million women, girls missing due to India's preference for boys. *Asian Reporter*, p. 3. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/2002109678?accountid=36155&rfr_id=info%3Axri%2Fsid%3Aprimo.
- Thomas, Joanna. (2016). Global focus: Child marriage in India: Legal challenges of a social issue. *LSJ: Law Society of NSW Journal*, (26), 22-23.
- Tobin, D. D., Menon, M., Menon, M., Spatta, B. C., Hodges, E. V., & Perry, D. G. (2010). The intrapsychics of gender: A model of self-socialization. *Psychological Review*, 117(2), 601.

- Ulibarri, R., Eder, Donna J., Corsaro, William, Damico, James, & Hallett, Timothy. (2016). *Children's worlds: An exploration of Latino students' play in rural New Mexico*. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.
- Umelaila, & Chohan, Bushra Iqbal. (2013). Parental attitude towards girls' higher education: A mixed methods approach. *Journal of Gender and Social Issues*, 12(1).
- Wall, S. (2006). An autoethnography on learning about autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(2), 146-160.
- Warash, B. G., Root, A. E., & Devito Doris, M. (2017). Parents' perceptions of play: A comparative study of spousal perspectives. *Early Child Development and Care*, 187(5-6), 958-966.
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & society*, 1(2), 125-151.
- West, C., & Fenstermaker, S. (1995). Doing difference. *Gender & society*, 9(1), 8-37.
- Whitehead, J. C., Thomas, J., Forkner, B., & LaMonica, D. (2012). Reluctant gatekeepers: 'Trans-positive' practitioners and the social construction of sex and gender. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 21(4), 387-400.
- White, G., Ruther, M., Kahn, J. R., & Dong, D. (2016). Gender inequality amid educational expansion in India: An analysis of gender differences in the attainment of reading and mathematics skills. *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, 6(2).
- Wingrave, M. (2016). Perceptions of gender in play. *Gender and Education*, 22 November 2016. doi: 10.1080/9540253.2016.1258457
- Winkler, I. (2018). Doing autoethnography: Facing challenges, taking choices, accepting responsibilities. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 24(4), 236-247.
- Yieke, F. (2001). Gender as a sociocultural construct: A sociolinguistic perspective. *Journal of Cultural Studies*, 3(2), 333.