Frisbee on the beach: Transcending gender subjectivity through play

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Abstract

This thesis explores how a gender subjectivity, emerging from a hegemonic discourse operative in public space, specifically on the beach, may be challenged through the play of Ultimate Frisbee. By focusing on the body and its affective components as central in determining subjectivity, it documents the concomitant changes that occur in these states during play. It makes a case for the game to be considered a liminoid given its temporal occurrence within a normative order. But its potential to alter the character of the space that it occupies is regarded, given players' perceived transformation beyond the game itself

Contents

maggie and milly and molly and may

e. e. Cummings, 1894 - 1962

maggie and milly and molly and may
went down to the beach(to play one day)
and maggie discovered a shell that sang
so sweetly she couldn’t remember her troubles,and
milly befriended a stranded star
whose rays five languid fingers were;
and molly was chased by a horrible thing
which raced sideways while blowing bubbles:and
may came home with a smooth round stone
as small as a world and as large as alone.
For whatever we lose (like a you or a me)
it’s always ourselves we find in the sea

Chapter one: Introduction

Some of my best memories of childhood are of playing at the beach, with my cousins, friends, and aunts and uncles. They would all come down during the summer, and the allure of Chennai's beach, especially for those in non-coastal towns was definitive. What fun thing do you want to do today? The response would instinctively be "let's go to the beach!" Once there, we would get drenched to the bone. We would throw ourselves at the waves, fall and sometimes mock run away from the sea, pretending the waves were chasing monsters. Invariably, we brought home excessive amounts of beach sand much to the wrath of my mother. The beach, in the liminal window of childhood, was a place of carefree abandon.

As I grew up, the charm of the beach waned. It occurred in stages. At first I would visit the beach and merely soak my feet in the water. Then I would just sit in the sand and enviably watch children and some families immerse themselves in the sea. Men, most of them half naked, always got adventurous in the water, trying to mount over the oncoming waves. It was a grand performance, an evident display of hyper-masculine behaviour. I noticed that women my age and a little older, with an identifiably similar disposition, rarely ever ventured into the water. They would sit with their mothers and aunts, as their brothers and fathers ventured in. A place, where I once felt thrill and happiness over the years became one where my body was docile and subdued. In many ways, it was dictated by the interpretation of the operative cultural codes in the environment with regards to how, as a woman, my body should behave, that led me to restrict myself. As Certeau pointed out, the body on the street bears a code that is understood by all dwellers, including the body itself, and the body's bearing must manifest the least amount of deviance in relation to the stereotypes allowed in the neighbourhood (Certeau 1998: 16- 18).

And in rare instances where I did defy these implicit codes, a policing occurs through stares that convey strong disapprovement.

Space thus becomes a highly embodied experience, dependent on the gender of the person (apart from age, sexuality, class, physical ability) inhabiting it (Harvey 1990, Lefebvre 1991, Soja 1989), because it is through the body that the everyday is lived, experienced, and executed. Bodies take on social significance as constellations of culturally constructed ideas about what is appropriate, as mediated by (hegemonic) discourse (Ranade 2007: 1524).

The body in the threatening environment of public space has seen severe violation when perceived to be transgressing moral codes. In what has now come to be known as India's landmark rape incident, on 16 December 2012, a twenty three year old woman was brutally gangraped in a moving bus in India's capital, New Delhi, because she was out with a boy at 10 pm in the night. Testimonies from the rapists and recollections of the incident brought this warped rationalisation for the rape to the fore. everyday forms of harassment in public spaces. If gendered violence is perceived as a spectrum, and if gangrape lies at one end of it, then on the other end of it are everyday forms of violent encroachments. Hooting, whistling, catcalling and singing lewd song-lyrics when women pass by - these are an everyday reality for most women, and because of the frequency of this occurrence, they have been rendered insignificant. Many of my women respondents spoke about how they're asked to keep silent or ignore these overtures because if they react, something "much worse" could happen. "Much worse" could be interpreted as an acid attack, being stalked, and continued harassment. The psychological state of most women in public space therefore is one of fear, and its various forms - apprehension, shame, submission, and sometimes anger.

In this thesis, the beach figures as the public space of choice. To focus my research there was particularly alluring because, while on the one hand, it is popularly construed as a place of fun and freedom, the actual experience of it suggests an infliction of a restrictive moral discourse for women. The affective geography of the beach hence becomes largely gender-contingent.

Apart from my own experience, in my participant observation, I found that groups of men appearing* to belong to lower classes acted in a way to shame women who appeared* to belong the middle or upper classes. Although in a basic structural-hierarchical model of society, the middle class woman would be placed structurally higher to the lower class man, the woman's privilege became disadvantage in the context of the beach. The beach, also because of the ways in which it has developed in Chennai, socio-historically, sees a clash of sorts between different social groups and therefore social imaginaries.

The history of colonialism and more recent neo-liberal developments add to its spatial complexity. Such a complexity not only makes for an interesting analysis but also helps reveal how one social group can be disadvantaged at the cost of another, as well as the possibilities for reclaiming this space. This reclaiming must ideally occur not at the cost of excluding one social group in favour of another but in a more egalitarian sense.

The case of Ultimate Frisbee on the beach presents one such possibility. As a game constituted of men and women, and of different social classes, it compels the breakdown of certain norms of interaction[1]. The way players inhabit their own bodies and use them for the game is radically different in comparison to how women otherwise use their bodies and feel in the space of the beach. The game offers them the chance to fully explore their subjectivity, by legitimately demanding a kind of unrestricted body-use. The affective impact of such a use of the body

[1] Especially between the middle and upper class woman and the lower class man, the social distance between whom attempts to be bridged as harassment and other forms of violence in public spaces.

produces a subject not defined by fear or submission, but a thrilled and confident woman. These can be gleaned from interviews with the women who play the game and narratives of their "transformation" that carry beyond the time-defined event of the game.

The beach then becomes a place where both structure/hegemonic discourse and agency find expression.

1.1. Theoretical placement

Socio-space has a dual character; it both reflects social structure and contributes to its reproduction, as many postmodern theorists of space have pointed out (Lefebvre 1991). This is not, however, a relationship of stasis; people and their agency are central to any place-making process and changes to it. This thesis therefore looks at how normative gender subjectivities, produced by social structure, may be transcended by participation in the play of Ultimate frisbee on the beach. Why gender? Spaces and places are not only gendered but also reflect and affect the way gender is constructed and understood (Massey 1994: 179).

Normative and altered gender subjectivities, both are understood through the body and its affective components. The body is the nucleus of lived experience; a center of agency, and a way of speaking and acting on the world (Low 2000). Post-structuralist feminist theory in particular believes that the (social) body that one inhabits day-to-day substantially shapes subjectivity (Wearing 1998: 114). And since the mind and body are intrinsically related; embodiment[2] and affect feed into the other (Freund 1990). Further, any space is meaningless without the immersion of the body in it - the human inhabitants who experience it in their

[2] I draw upon embodiment as an 'indeterminate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and mode of presence and engagement in the world" (Csordas 1994: 12).

everyday lives, and shape it according to larger political and economic contexts within which they, as individuals and collectives, operate. Human bodies and their performative and affective engagement with the material world, are intrinsic to placemaking. (Sen and Silverman 2014)

The relationship between body and space has been of much sociological and anthropological interest, Apart from Bourdieu, who engendered the notion of the habitus to explain how bodily automatisms have a socio-cultural genesis (1977), there was Foucault who provided a historical analysis of the docile body to social structure and power (1975, 84, 86), and also Giddens who developed a theory of structuration (1984). Ethnographically, stuart Rockefeller (2001) traced how movement patterns collectively make up locality and reproduce locality. He argued that places were not in the landscape alone, as in the material sense, but simultaneously in the people's minds, customs, and bodily practices. Geographer Allan Pred (1986) followed the microgeographies of daily life in Southern Sweden to determine how everyday behavior and movements led to spatial transformations in land tenure, which in turn affected the local social structure. Pandya (1990) also noted the importance of movement in the creation of place, conceptualizing space as movement rather than a container.

Following in this vein, this thesis documents the radically different dispositions and interaction pattern of men and women who inhabit a particular space on the beach. It makes a case for that section of the beach as a liminal space because of its evident psychic potentiality and novel social reconfiguration that is counter-hegemonic, which are temporary. Also, since there was a constraint of time to make claims at any larger spatial transformations, the space is understood as liminal.

Liminality

Liminality lends itself to a kind of interpretive analysis of events and experiences (Thomassen et al 2015: 42). Van gennep first conceptualised liminality in application to rites of passage. It was revived by Turner to a similar use - in relation to ritual and communitas (Turner & Turner 1978). Thomassen (2015) argues for an application of liminality to social and political movements, and other aspects of postmodern culture such that the original meaning of 'liminal' itself undergoes a seismic change. For the purposes of this thesis however, I draw on Turner's definition of liminality, who related it to anti-structure. Structure is all that holds people apart, defines differences and constrains actions, according to Turner. Initially, I show how experiences on the beach are typical of this conflict. Anti structure, conversely, is a state that exists on the boundaries of everyday life. Times and places where anti-structure comes into being are always liminal (Turner 1974: 274). Ultimate Frisbee, and the space where it is played, are characteristic of this anti-structure that Turner speaks of, the anti-structure manifested in the differential interaction of bodies with space. I discuss this through the case of Ultimate Frisbee in the last chapter.

While two of these combinations have previously seen scholarly interest, i.e. gender and space, liminality and space, the mutually influencing effects of the three have not been substantially explored. The changes to the self in the liminal zone have been demonstrated, but they have not explicitly articulated as what potential it may hold for a gendered subject to transcend aspects of hegemonic discourse that are experienced as constraining. Alternatively, to look at a secular space as becoming a liminal space because of the different disposition of the gendered bodies inhabiting it has not been suggested. My suggestion of space acquiring liminal properties arises less from the ontological features of a space and more from how the social body inhabits, uses and interacts with space. Further, since I use Ultimate Frisbee, a game

played in the city of Chennai to establish the case, my contribution to existing body of literature on gender and space also lies in the specificity of the empirical case.

1.2. Methodology

Urbain (2003) remarks that beaches are still relatively unexplored terrain. This is particularly the case in India where beaches haven't seen much interest as public space ethnographies. The general image of the beach, as Baldacchiono conceives it, is as a space in which adults go back to childhood; 'adults are at liberty, are even expected, to fool around, build castles, dig canals, and perform other "childlike" acts' (2010: 773). In the Western world, beaches have popularly been used for bathing, surfboarding, yachting, sunbathing, fishing and promenading (Preston Whyte 2004: 315). It is difficult to conjure up Baldacchiono's imagination of beaches in India, at least on the city's coasts. The uses synonymous to the West are also perhaps only applicable to private beaches away from the city. Beaches have also been explored as possible spaces in which dominant discourses could be subverted (Andrews 2012). In this thesis, I first highlight how dominant discourses are asserted in the space of the beach, but bring in a specific case as an instance of how it is also subverted.

My main methods for this research were participant observation, unstructured interviews and drawing from my own impressions of being a woman in public space in India. I write from the position of being a subject myself; and as anthropology recognises that the researcher is part of the context, and that the personal and intellectual are inextricably intertwined, parts of the thesis are autoethnographic.

I interviewed men and women of an average middle class economic status. I wanted to interview subjects who were reflexive, and socially and politically engaged. My interviews mostly played out as discussions, allowing respondents the freedom to interpret their own experiences in the current social context. They followed the old feminist adage of the personal is political, where they drew upon small incidents and made bigger socio-political sense of

them. Low (2003) talks about the need for theories of space and body that are experience-near but simultaneously allow for linkages to be made to larger social and cultural processes. This was achieved anecdotally, in my thesis. This also helped me avoid the pitfall of over-interpreting the gathered data.

In one of these unstructured interviews, the format of it, enabled one of my respondents to suggest Ultimate Frisbee as instance that offered an unconventional experience of the beach. What therefore came to eventually shape my research and take a central place in it, ultimately was happenstance - an instinctual suggestion. It was also for these reasons, these fruitful accidents, that I prefered a mostly unstructured interview format.

As for the site of the interviews, when I spoke to two of the boys, we sat on the beach, the site of my research. The sensory stimulation provided by the environment helped conjure up other memories of the beach from the past, helping respondents open up fully. In order to overcome distances, I also made use of new technology such as Whatsapp and Facebook chat to correspond with respondents who no longer resided in Chennai but were well-acquainted with Chennai's beach for many years.

Overall, I interviewed 7 women and 5 men, a ratio slightly tilted in favour of women as a compensatory measure given the skewed women-men ratio in public spaces. What came out of these interviews were biographical details and interpretation of those details through a social and political lens. Biographical details animated by emotion and revelation of feeling also helped me glean affect; a significant analytical tool I use to establish gender subjectivity. (Wearing 1998).

In terms of acquainting myself with Ultimate Frisbee, I spent four days following the team around and watching them practice and play competitively. It was partial immersion; I also

visited the neighborhood of the players from lower income homes, in order to understand a context, different from my own, better. Apart from interviewing the players, I also spoke to the program director of the NGO that first introduced Ultimate into the community and envisioned it as an "empowering" sport/game which in social discourse could be understood as tool/technology. It was easier to communicate with them and understand more about how exactly aspects of the game lend themselves to producing subjects that are favorably gendered[3], and why, in the first place they wanted this. These interviews took place in the very contexts and situations that I was trying to make sense of, and that too helped immensely as I was visually able to absorb the aspects that were verbally conveyed to me.

In order to help better communicate the context of India and experience of women in public spaces, I also relied on several blogs, feminist campaigns in public spaces which shaped new social movements around women's right to reclaim public spaces. These blogs, as much as what was revealed in my own interviews, were able to convey the problems and aspirations rooted in women's mobility in public spaces. I was able to go beyond the limitations of my selective sample by referring to these accounts, although not beach-specific, but generic public space experiences.

[3] Without possessing harmful and disadvantageous characteristics or behaviours associated with conventional masculinity or femininity.

1.3. Organization of Chapters

In the first chapter I present a brief history of the Chennai's coastal stretch and the competing imaginaries that have shaped its contemporary form. I interweave ethnographic detail into this discursive history to provide instances of how these conflicting imaginaries of the beach is manifested in its everyday use by people. I highlight subterranean tensions and conflicts that unfold here, extracting a gender perspective on these interactions in the public space. I then move on more concretely to women's experiences on the beach and discuss how these experiences are representative of a particular normative social discourse. I also highlight men's experiences to contrast them with women's, and establish an experiential basis - gleaned from embodiment and affect patterns - for the construction and production of gender in public space. Through this, I establish normative gender subjects on the beach.

In the final chapter, I describe the uniqueness of Ultimate Frisbee in Chennai. In this game, a normative gender embodiment transcended to produce subjects whose experience on the beach is in stark contrast to those of normative subjects. I discuss Frisbee as a liminoid as it enables this transcending. Through a phenomenological account, I contemplate if and how there's a difference in the spatial experience, because, liminal moments on occasion perpetuate into normal structures (Thomassen et al 2015: 2).

1.4. Chennai's coastal stretch: A socio-history

Located at the southern end of Chennai's 20-kilometre long coastline, the Elliot's beach, popularly known as the Besant Nagar beach, is named after Edward Elliot, former British Governor of Madras. Several landmarks and popular sites in Chennai still retain their colonial names, a vestige of the past. During the colonial period, the Elliots beach was a popular hangout for the British. Although the Marina beach and the Elliots beach are part of the same continuous coastal stretch (apart from the Santhome, and newer beaches developed outside of the city such as Neelangarai, Kovalam etc) they're in popular referencing, different. Many consider the Marina a "people's beach" because it draws tourists from semi-urban and rural areas[4]. The beaches within the city have a different character from those outside of it. "Bessie" on the other hand, is more of city-bred young people's spot. Over the years, it has acquired the reputation of being more "posh" than its popular counterpart, Marina, perhaps because it rests in public memory as a former British hangout and suggests preference on part of the native elite to continue in that vein.

Aurobindoo (2010) talks about the many conflicting imaginaries that have contested to shape the beach, one of the largest, open, public spaces, in the city. During the colonial domination of the British, the beach was used for walking, driving carriages, riding horses and listening to music at the military bandstand. These were mostly pursued by the Europeans and the native elite (Srivathsan 2000; Aurobindoo 2010). Post independence, the native elite, seduced as they were by the European ideal of ordering public space realised that they couldn't quite fully adopt it. This was because of the pre-colonial order of spaces in which all open spaces where communally held. And further, notions of a western genesis such as the stark separation of the public and the private were challenged as domestic/private activities such as sleeping, changing of clothes, urination and defecation took place in the open (Chakrabarty 1992: 541; Aurobindoo

[4] http://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/marina-vs-bessie/article4040914.ece

2010: 383). Although the colonial administration had sought to impose a more orderly idea of the public, the resistance on the part of non-native elite left the "civilizing mission" incomplete. Post independence, the situation was complicated because while the native elite had inherited the European sensibilities and its notion of modernity, they had used and legitimised many instances of pre-colonial modes of living as a way of establishing difference, and through that, native pride. This hybridity (or confusion) was reflected in public spaces such as the beach where the idea of a disciplined and orderly public clashed with that of the chaotic and the common, producing a landscape that had both limited order and a careless quality (Srivathsan 2003).

It was not merely a discord in perception and an incomplete civilising mission that produced this landscape, though. In the immediate postcolonial years, where there was a massive migration from the rural areas to the city, the notion of public space became one that which could be put to a number of uses, from freeriding to vandalizing (Aurobindoo 2010: 380). Kaviraj (1997: 104) conceptualised the postcolonial city as a reflection of the unjust and unequal social order and, increasingly, a site of real contestation and struggle.

As Sen and Silverman (2014) remark, placemaking is always a process fraught with ideological, economic, and symbolic conflicts — because of the people who are engaged in it.

Later, the need to sanitise and render public spaces more aesthetically pleasing was an outcome of economic neo-liberalisation in 1991. Since cities were the visual locus of globalisation, political actors began to re-imagine their ingredients, attuned predictably, towards displaying a kind of 'bourgeois environmentalism' (Baviskar 2003). In such a project, an 'urbanism prescribing aesthetics and order underlines the disciplining zeal of the state and its interests in creating legible spaces and docile subjects. (Aurobindoo 2010: 380)' Chennai, as one of the

metropolitan centres in India was no different, and its beach, a microcosm of the city, became one of the more popular public spaces for the implementation of such a vision. The resulting blueprint however was not one that lent itself to a pure realisation.

Several "development" projects to "beautify" the beach began and were then stalled because of a strong political society that protested these developments. Aurobindoo refers to Appadurai's theorisation of third world cities in which a politics of partnership, i.e. the state's negotiation with the civil society and the political society of the poor in order becomes a huge determining factor in the implementation of any vision (Appadurai 2002: 22 cited in Aurobindoo 2010: 381). And when such a partnership fails, the implementation remains partial, symbolic of a continued claim of space by different groups and their different imaginaries.

The present habitus of the beach, a product of this history, shapes individual and collective practices within it (Bourdieu 1977: 82). Here, different groups try to assert their dominance over the space, and these tensions continue to play out in the everyday.

In the evenings, especially on the weekend, the Besant nagar beach is crowded. Couples, families, groups of friends, the city police, and those whose occupations exist on the beach, such as sellers of various commodities, are part of the beach-occupying crowd. On the promenade, walkers, some walking their dogs and some exercising are also present. Given this inhabitation of the beach by diverse groups, there are a number of less tangible interactions going on in the space apparent only to the discerning observer. Groups of men eye women keenly, some pass comments. Other men sit on the promenade and size up people passing by. At times when there are women particularly, they whistle, hoot or pass a lewd comment. The women either ignore them or rarely give them a stern look which, on many occasions, only emboldens the group. They're here to engage themselves, or perhaps entertain themselves, and appear to be from lower classes (demeanour), but I did not want to make assumptions. Bourdieu (19877) however writes that biological individuals carry with them in the form of dispositions

so many marks of social position. A recognition of this social position of the 'other' serves as a pressing reminder of the distance between them and the response to that recognition varies - either to keep a distance or manipulate it symbolically or strategically (1977: 82). From the men's body language it is evident that they derive some pleasure in indulging in these forms of harassment as it provides them a momentary satisfaction of minimising this social distance between the middle class women and themselves, through verbal shaming. In the larger rhythms of the beach, these are rendered normal, an annoyance that women especially have to face in public spaces.

The sellers, who also in an attempt to minimise the perceived social distance move from group to group offering their services. For instance, an old woman offered to read my palm and tell me more about my future for a few rupees. A little boy with a coloring book goads me to buy it, often devolving into emotional persuasion citing hunger and poverty. Some sellers have stands where they sell food items- and they call out to people to come try them. Then there are the fisherfolk whose catamarans and fishing nets lay on the corner of the beach...

There were a diversity of claims over the common space of the beach. In these competing and conflicting uses and imaginations of the beach, what asserts itself is a subterranean struggle for power and domination expressing itself through class[5] and gender, which is more the focus of this thesis.

[5] It is a recognised limitation of this thesis that when I use class, it is perceived class rather than actual economic status.

Chapter two: Experiencing the beach - a gender perspective

In the previous chapter, I highlighted how multiple imaginaries compete to lay claim on the beach. In this chapter, I focus on how the patriarchal imaginary encumbers women's experiences on the beach. I spoke to three women who belong to a more or less middle class economic status, are from the city and able-bodied. Their names are indicative of beings Hindus, but whether or not they're practicing Hindus could not be determined. I compare their accounts to men's experiences on the beach. Towards the end of this chapter, I establish gender subjects based on these normative experiences on the beach.

Women on the beach

"I now stay only a couple of yards from the beach but I never *feel* like going there alone *as a girl.* "

- **Manasa, 25**

"The beach is one of the most *limiting* public spaces, most *oppressive* in fact. Just the other day I was walking on the beach with my cousin early in the morning, and I was feeling *embarrassed* because I was walking with a guy. You are constantly *afraid* of how you're going to be perceived by the public; you can *feel* the *judgement*. It is very very difficult to feel free, or safe or liberated on the beach."

- **Shreya, 28**

"One of my friends had once gone to the beach with her boyfriend to play volleyball, and a bunch of guys, fishermen, literally pinned her down to rape her. Her boyfriend fought them off and they managed to escape. I've always treated this as a cautionary tale and *resisted* going to the beach unless I am in a fairly large group or with family members."

- **Pradipti, 27**

Going to the beach becomes a difficult experience not only because of a fear of verbal or physical attack but also because of feeling shame at being the target of harassment or assault. 'Narratives of respectability' in India are built around exactly the kind of demographic that these women belong to. The woman is the carrier of moral/cultural values that define the family and community (Bachchetta 2003, Chakravarti 2006) and within this hegemonic discourse, the "good private woman is in opposition to the bad public woman" (Mitchell 2000, Rose 1993, Walkowitz 1992). Subsumed under the larger need to manufacture respectability, which women "show" by dressing in ways that suggest an affinity for tradition and adopt a contained body language, there is the need to show purpose as well (Phadke and Khan 2011). The beach is one space where such a bodily performance[6] of purpose fails because of its blatant pleasure-seeking function. It is not surprising then that women experience it as oppressive - their usual strategies cannot hold up to their full effect in this space.

Shreya went on to tell me that she doesn't mean to be classist, but the presence of so many lower class men in an open, accessible space such as the beach was unnerving. This was an uncomfortable interaction, shaped by the power that men of this class hold in the public space, that I noted in my observations as well.

The lower class man and the middle class woman are the oppositional figures around whom the discourses of safety, legitimacy and illegitimacy are structured (Phadke et al 2011). In fact, any restriction on women's mobility is rationalised on the presence of this dangerous "other,"

[6] I use performance in the Butlerian sense, i.e. a narrative that is sustained by the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain genders – and the punishments that attend not agreeing to them. Purpose, in public space becomes an essential component of gender performance (Butler 1990: 179)

the lower-class male. While in theory this may seem like an adherence to outdated racist stereotypes, many men from such classes are incriminated in incidents of rape and sexual assault in India which get substantial media attention[7], exacerbating fear.

In the quest for pleasure on the beach, regular social hierarchies are disturbed and the hegemonic social discourse can be discerned through these unpleasant encounters.

Freund (1990) points that one's position in a social hierarchy and the activities involved in insuring social control or safety influence feelings. In my interviews, in deep contrast to the men's first responses when I mentioned the beach, the women's responses were overwhelmingly negative. Only one respondent didn't respond this way instinctively. She'd always grown up around beaches because her father had served in the navy. So any beach for her is a reminder of her childhood and offered a sense of comfort. At the end of the interview, she said her "feelings" about the beach might be biased because she has rarely ever been at the beach without her family, and that she is still very careful to dress conservatively.

Interestingly, as I found from my other respondents, these markers of respectability don't seem to always be enough to ensure a smooth experience.

[7] Although middle and upper middle class men, too, have their own incriminating records of violence (and statistics have shown that most sexual abuse is committed by an offender "known" to the victim), they're less publicised, and therefore less prominent in the public imagination.

Manasa: It was during the *kacheri*[8] season. My friend K and I went to the beach immediately after a concert. We were almost approached by a few men…the police were also there...and they were also...you know….[9]

Shreya: I also have a similar incident. I was walking in a saree after a concert, from my cousin's car to my father's car. And this patrolling vehicle just followed beside me until I got into my father's car. They flashed the torch onto my face, and when my father asked them what the problem was, they moved away. It was clear they took my for an escort because at 10 pm in the night, I walked from one man's car into another man's.

Manasa: "It" happened to me outside the railway station too (being mistaken as a sex worker), as I was waiting for my father. I was wearing a saree; you can't be upper-middle class and young and wearing a saree. It just somehow sets off all kinds of red signals.

Shreya: But if you're upper middle class and wearing shorts, then you're going to definitely be policed; you're going to be looked down upon because, oh my God, how dare you do this to our culture.

Manasa:. My friend 'K' even got asked why she was wearing a saree.

Shreya: Isn't that the most violating question ever; to be questioned on your choice of clothes?

Manasa: Make up your mind guys!

[8] Classical music season in Chennai where a number of concerts happen, and to which people usually wear traditional attire.

[9] Perhaps they were mistaken for being sex workers because they were "dressed" and were walking on the beach in the evening.

Shreya: Do you want us to be in revealing clothes, or do you want us not to be?

There are two important findings that come off this conversation: it seems a slightly misplaced assumption that attempts to manufacture respectability through choice of clothing alone would ensure unintrusive treatment in public, as previous studies have suggested. In fact, traditional clothing seems to be more problematic for a particular demographic of women.

With respect to these non-verbalised interactions with the police, they line the boundary of the beach for a number of reasons including to catch any runaway couples from smaller towns, and sometimes, this responsibility is expressed in needlessly being suspicious about any man and woman seen together. There's also a heightened need to clamp down on sex workers, and any woman vaguely giving the impression of dressing attractively and waiting/walking on the road is cause for suspicion and harassment[10]. The police often consider themselves not only keepers of social order but also a moral order which is shaped on strictly patriarchal beliefs, reflected in the hegemonic discourse that I delineate at the beginning of this section. Order on the beach then directly assumes the shape of the cultural views of these keepers of order. The muted exchanges between the women and the police are representative of the pervasive non-verbalised interactions that take place in public spaces, between the male gaze (not always held only by men) and women. As Rose (1999) notes, public space's masculinisation through a certain policing of bodies means that every body requires disciplining in order to guarantee public space's reconstitution - to an imagined social order.

[10] Although many newspaper reports suggest that the police never "arrest" these sex workers, they take bribes after issuing all kinds of threat (source). It can be interpreted as an exercise in wielding power to feel "powerful."

Men on the beach

The reflexive middle or upper middle class man displays awareness of how a woman's experience of the beach may be different from his own, but his own memories of the beach are at first largely positive.

Visvak: I had my first kiss on the beach, the first time I smoked was on the beach. It is really the best place there is.

Sibi: It is definitely one of the most "liberal" spaces, I think. When I was in college, I used to come here a lot. I smoked up here, for the first time, at night. Yeah, cops do sometimes question people, especially if they look poor or vulnerable. They flash these huge torch lights on their faces. But still, it is not like it is a clamp down.

Visvak: Yeah, if you go now to Elliots, you will still find couples all over the place, making out, doing different things.

Sibi: But there's an undeniable hostility to man-woman bonding in public. Just the other day, me and my friend (female) were having cigarettes outside the periphery of the beach. It was slightly dark, and a cop car passed by. He called me on and reprimanded for smoking in public, that too with a girl. He was so rude.

Viswak: But you do realise he was justified in doing that; smoking in public is illegal.

Sibi: Yeah, but I am sure he wouldn't have pulled me up if I wasn't with a girl. That was very evident. He implied I was doing something "dirty" by smoking with a girl.

Visvak: When you're in the legal wrong, it becomes very difficult to take the moral highground.

Sibi: Yeah, but at the same time, they can't impose their morality on me.

There's a bit of inconsistency in this conversation; at first they perceived the beach as a fun place where they've had some "special" experiences - it has been done stealthily with a slight risk of getting caught. It seemed that that risk factor added to the thrill. Still, the palpable fear, hesitation and sense of shame that the women I interviewed felt was absent here, even though there were reasons for being harassed by the police. Visvak told me later in the conversation that he was once caught "smoking up" on the beach. He had to go to the police station, after the cop slapped him across the face. After negotiating with the cops and showing his journalist ID card, he was let go. I couldn't help but note, as he revealed this, that Viswak still resembled a young boy. The police's violent reaction could have been their recognition of a lack of agency on his part. It is much easier to police boys this way because of their still under-developed masculinity. Further, the way he revealed this incident was in a funny manner that didn't betray any hurt or anger. The incident did not mar his larger emotions for the beach, as incidents like these had for many women.

Sibi was discerning as he realised his privileged position in the social scheme of things. He remarked that even when the cops pulled him up[11], the the balance of power between them wasn't too skewed. Perhaps if it was two or three girls, they wouldn't have been able to negotiate the same way that he did with them, he added later in the conversation. The way both the men could negotiate and talk back to the cops is different from the silent encounters between

[11] Sibi is older and more stereotypically masculine-looking. The police's reaction to him was completely different.

the women and the police. In these encounters, there were many (mis) assumptions and the women were made deeply aware of their gendered bodies, with a certain hegemonic social and cultural inscription on them. The encounters had a more devious quality in the case of women, and the women's responses were also different from the men's "it-happens" reaction. When a woman was involved, there was a risk of being morally policed or pulled up for the men.

It is also extremely important to note that the men were questioned by the police only when they were in the legal wrong. Still, frequent visits, for both men and women, to the beach meant multiple confrontations with cops whose attempts at social control takes the shape of their own sense of morality, which appeared to be rigidly, stereotypically patriarchal.

Subjects on the beach

Hall (1968) remarked that people can inhabit different sensory worlds even if in the same space. The spatial experience of the beach for women and men, especially from a sensory perspective is dissimilar. For men it offered an experience where there was thrill, high, and small windows of opportunity to indulge even in "illegal" acts, for which they were policed. But they could negotiate their way out with confidence. Women were policed[12] for a whole range of reasons; being with a person of the opposite sex, for being out late at night, for their clothes and sometimes they were simply harassed by other men for the men's own pleasure. These incidents occurred even at hours considered "safe." They were also suspected to be sex workers; a pervasive attempt to shame defining their experience on the beach's premises. The female body was subject to a wide variety of interpretations, and though these interpretations were not overt, they were immediately perceptible for the women. This in turn led to the women expressing affect as embarrassment, shame, discomfort, hesitation, fear and during the course of my interview with them, a kind of cathartic anger.

[12] By the designated law keepers and others, with moments of self-policing as well.

A powerless social status increases the likelihood of experiencing an 'unpleasant' emotionality or emotional mode of being, Freund (1990) says. Such an emotional experience translates in some way into how subject inhabit their own bodies, as emotional states have expressive bodily accompaniments (Ekman et al 1983). Conversely, the modes of experiencing feeling originate in the body's encounter with the world (Freund 1990: 458), and that encounter with the world is strongly mediated by subjectivity, social activity and the interpenetration of social structural contexts. It is this relationship that also comes to be embodied in many ways (Freund 1990: 459).

In my introduction I spoke about how my relationship with the beach changed over the years. From wildly venturing into the sea and fighting with the edgy waters to sitting miles away from the sea as a passive observer, how I used my body depended on my state of mind, which in turn was dictated by a hegemonic expectation of how, as a woman, I should behave in a public space like the beach. Although it is difficult to point exactly how these expectations are passed on, they're deeply internalised over a period of time.

Then, if one were to construct gender through affect and embodiment on the beach, it would be possible to set aside specific emotions and embodiment patterns associated with women and those with men. These would then translate to being normative gender-subjects in the space of the beach.

Chapter three: Transcending Subjectivities

In the following chapter, I highlight how a game becomes a sphere for normative subjectivities to be transcended, for the female body, especially. I introduce Ultimate frisbee as a tool that enables this empowerment, and conceptualize it both within socio-political and theoretical contexts. I proceed to women's phenomenological narratives of playing Frisbee on the beach. I compare it to the narratives of women in the previous chapter in order to document how a normative subjectivity is transcended through the game. The game thus connotes a liminoid because of how it facilitates social bodies to behave and interact differently, both with other bodies and with the space they inhabit. I propose for this space to be understood as liminal space given the temporary presence of the differently disposed subjects within it, and the suspended hegemonic expectations within it. But since the concept of the liminal also encompasses something more permanent, I contemplate small lasting changes in players and in the space, the latter through a phenomenological account.

The Unique Case of Ultimate Frisbee

The format and constitution of Ultimate Frisbee in how it is practiced in Chennai on the Elliots beach, the southern end of the 3-km Marina beach stretch, presents a breaking down of not just gender embodiment and dynamics but also other social barriers like class. Men and women play together on the same team, and people from different social backgrounds - kids of the slums to middle and upper middle classes employed in multinational corporates - are members of the same team. Therefore, while the game has the diverse constitutive elements of society, the character of the interaction within the game itself is radically different than the norm, which was detailed in the last chapter. As one player told me, when you're playing the game, you're

a player and nothing else matters. What I gathered from that was other social identities cease to matter during the game, and only that of being a player remains (ideally).

There are few official accounts of how frisbee came to be in Chennai. Gleaned from interviews and some newspaper records, it appears that Ultimate was started in Chennai by a few people who'd returned from the US after a limited period of stay there. They'd been acquainted with the game there, and wanted to introduce it in their hometown as a "fun" activity to be played on weekends. Ultimate soon grew into a serious fun activity as various clubs that would eventually compete against each other in nationally recognized tournaments were formed. Only a year later, an NGO, Pudiyador, began using the game for its after-school personality development program aimed at boys and girls from low-income backgrounds. Many aspects of the game lend themselves to be used as a tool for social empowerment, Pudiyador's director of Chennai operations, Chiai Uraguchi told me. As a non-contact sport, it teaches you to respect other people's personal space. This is a very important learning because the general crowd behaviour in India is unmindful about maintaining a decent distance from another. The game doesn't have a referee, pushing players to sort out fouls among themselves. They're required to be calm, honest and not hold their ego which equips them to resolve conflicts in a smoother, non-aggressive manner. Ultimate also ensures inclusivity - the boys, who generally tend to be more ambitious about sport, are asked to bring girls into the the team, without which the club they play for would disqualify from tournaments. This dreaded prospect works as a big motivation factor. Again, in the context of India, where there are no team sports that allow a gender-mixed constitution, this requirement becomes significant. Once three girls to four boys ratio is fulfilled, during the game itself, the boys are asked to throw the disc to the girls without hesitation and communicate respectfully with them. This works to challenge notions that girls are the weaker sex or that they can be ignored. Girls are also encouraged to speak up and

question the boys if they sense any shirking on their part. If they treat the girls differently or don't give them the respect one must give a fellow player, the boys are told that they (the girls) will leave the team, and everyone loses.

In the context of rampant gender-based forms of violence in India, many non-governmental organizations develop modules of action to transform what they perceive to be grassroots and early stage-intervention. One of the frameworks for such an intervention is to minimise gender segregation and normalise cross-gender interaction, working against a social context that makes such interactions transgressive and therefore punishable. Many of these NGOs believe that socialising opposite sexes with and to one another can reduce violence against women in adulthood/later life and create a culture of mutual respect. By intervening at this stage, what they effectively do is produce a different subjects than that which is likely to be acquired if the boys were to be completely inculcated by the values and beliefs prevalent in their own parochial social context. It is in this view that Ultimate Frisbee's conceptual imagination remains embedded, as far as mixed gender and class constitution is concerned.

Such a consciously transgressive play that challenges social norms and unspoken rules of interaction is suggestive of being a liminoid. Turner theorised liminality, from which the concept of liminoid is drawn, as a way for society to reveal itself; to open up its essential codes of behaviours and values to either play with these and reassemble them in novel ways or to confirm their existence (Thomassen 2014: 185). Liminoid for Turner was more applicable to activities pursued in the modern world to break from routine. Forms of entertainment such as art, theatre, sports where people immerse themselves, and ones that generate novelty or innovation in self-understanding, and perhaps also shaking up social roles, values or established views, and with wider ramifications for the public sphere, are characteristic of

liminoid (Thomassen 2014: 186). It is temporary immersion with more lasting effects. Frisbee has many of the characteristics that establish it as a liminoid - a modern sport erected by individuals also inclined towards social transformation fits squarely into the definition offered by Turner. It challenges all the normative social "rules" and attempts to forge those interactions across class and gender that become the root of conflict in public spaces. In the next section I highlight how transformation is perceived by women who play the game, hinting at changes that carry beyond the game itself. This makes the case for a liminoid, in theory, as an activity that helps transcend normative and constraining gender subjectivities.

Women who play Frisbee

"When I play frisbee, I forget everything around me. It is so uplifting, just being there playing the game. I even forget who I am, sometimes, it is such an escape."

- **Monisha, 24**

"When I play I am not bothered about the surroundings because I enjoy playing. I am super comfortable playing Ultimate. I feel safe and sometimes overly protected. The boys in my team, Blitz, are always there. I remember during Chennai Heat 2013, I was watching the finals game with my team from the sideline (the finals was played by two other teams). It was a sunday night and there was a lot of crowd in the beach to watch the game. Two men kept commenting on a girl playing in the field and that annoyed me and my friend (girl). We immediately asked 'Enna' (WHAT!) Thats it, the boys in my team immediately got up and took over. They didn't even know what we were bothered with, if it was us even. They chased away the two men. So that's the amount of support they give us. Though I feel I am very capable of taking care of myself at anytime, the reflex from the boys in my team was a sweet gesture."

Me: Did you face other problems?

Thara: “My family did not appreciate me playing Ultimate initially. They said I am getting old and need to get married soon. They felt I roam with boys and playing with boys is not going to help. Since my family is in Salem (a smaller town away from Chennai), they worried if I would be back home before 9 p.m. Stuff like that. Thats was the struggle I faced and sometimes still do face.

When I initially started playing Ultimate I used to wear pants only. But later on I realised that Ultimate is great and I didn’t have a problem wearing comfortable clothing for the sport.”

- **Tharakai Natesan, 29**

“I am the happiest when I am playing Ultimate. It requires the athleticism of a football player, and the mind of a strategist trying to invade a small country. Running, catching, flying, it’s a beautiful sport which almost literally gives me wings. Ultimate has also changed my life in other ways; I’ve gotten better at conflict resolution, bonded with people across social and economic barriers, and found a whole new perspective. Ultimate is so much more than just a sport.”

- **Devathi, 26**

In comparing the testimonies of Thara and Devathi, I found that their respective contexts have shaped their “experience” of the game. Both come from identifiably middle-class families but Devathi has grown up in the city and has a more liberal family. She didn’t face many of the constraints that Thara had to, and therefore Devathi’s understanding of her transformation is

less obviously gendered than Thara. Liberal contexts necessitate less rebellion, if the subject identifies more with that narrative. So, the transformation here is interpreted in terms of personal growth. Even in this personal growth that seems to be articulated in a gender-absent manner, a gender element is identifiable: the freedom to use the body in ways that were previously impossible in the restrictive social space of the everyday. This freer and subversive inhabitation of the hegemonic gender-habituated (Bourdieu; Butler) body is visible in affect; the palpable happiness in her voice as she spoke this. Devathi articulates her experience of the game as giving her "wings" because it legitimates the use her body to run, catch, fly. There's also a concomitant impact on the mind. Freund (1990: 458) said that emotions are in some way embodied. But the vice versa is also true. The use of the body in previously unfamiliar ways triggers a release of emotions. Emotions and bodily activity, like mind and bodily activity, are thus inextricably connected (Zaner 1981). And such a release can be cathartic. It helps shred a socially and culturally endorsed body, and releases subjects from the burden of performing (Butler) aspects of normative femininity.

In the case with Thara, conventional gender expectations from the family, seemed to be perceived in a less oppressive light because of an increased self-fulfillment through the game. Normative prescriptions/expectations of clothing, demeanour and social interaction (the proximate interaction with boys) are also substantially transcended and a new subject, who negotiates the limitations imposed by her cultural context, is formed. Her agency, mediated by the game, resonates with Foucault's who said that a relationship of power goes beyond discovering who we are; it lies in challenging dominant discourses so that we may fully build up to what we can be (1983: 216). What was also affirming was an initial inhibition to wear shorts on the beach was successfully overcome, and she interprets this change as one that was

made on considerations of comfort. The decision on how to clothe the body transcends inadvertently challenges cultural hegemony which dictates ideal dress codes for women.

Thara remarks that while playing the game, she doesn't notice anything, because the game draws her in so deeply. This is particularly in contrast to interviews with other non-playing women on the beach who were hyper aware of their surroundings in the space of the beach, and by virtue of that moral code for behaviour. Since Frisbee completely immerses its players by its demand, and the concomitant bodily and psychological changes that it opens up, they're suspended from cultural codes/expectation inscribed in the space. It is also interesting how Thara interprets the "protection" that the boys in her team had extended to the girls. Although recent literature (Phadke and Khan 2011; Ranade 2007) has argued against a protectionist discourse because it reinforces notions of inferiority and infantilization of adult women, and a curb on freedoms, the gesture was only interpreted by Thara as teammates sensing their discomfort and taking action to put an end to that, and she takes care to mention[13] that she is fully capable of taking care of herself. It shows not a dependent relationship on the boys but a fraternity-based team spirit.

The concern of hegemonic masculinities

A concern around women entering sport has been if they embrace masculine qualities like aggression, domination and excessive competition. Many women playing sport also face criticism for completely discarding any feminine qualities. However, Ultimate consciously aims to limit the level of aggression and competence that can find expression in the game.

[13] An inability to protect the boundaries of self and to counter the resistance or intrusion of others thus leads to depression and anxiety. A person's social position will determine the resources he or she has to protect the boundaries of their self and how they will come to define themselves. (Freund 1990: 465)

There is a concept called the spirit of the game, which necessitates that the game be played in a fair and controlled manner. Uraguchi Chiai, who runs the NGO that introduced Ultimate Frisbee into its after-school programme gives me the example of Raja. He was high on anger and aggression when he started playing the game. He would get extremely competitive and had trouble controlling his emotions during the game. However, such behaviour gets called out at the end of the game where captains point out expressions that went against the game's spirit: i.e. it has to played in a fun, (subdued) spirited way. Over time, Raja has learnt to calm himself down and conform to the rules of Ultimate. Similarly, the game does not allow women to exhibit these same behaviours. The resulting effect is that the behaviours displayed by the players in the course of the play cannot be stereotypically gendered; i.e. subsumed under overt masculinity or femininity. It involves a manufacturing of characteristics, laid out in rules, that engenders a style, or a habitus, incorporating aspects of both genders and transcending it in multiple ways. It creates specific sorts of dispositions, based partly on discourse and partly on reflexive learning, to cater to the game's machinery and conceptualisation[14].

Transgressing bodies, liminal spaces

This thesis encompasses the dialectic of socio-space, i.e. the fact the people and bodies make space as much as space makes people and specific behaviour. The case of Ultimate Frisbee enables a different disposition of bodies for as long as the game lasts, making the space they inhabit a liminal space. In 'Liminal Landscapes' (2012), Andrews and Roberts (2012) theorise the liminal landscape as a kind of border, a transitional landscape that resembles a physical as well as a psychic space that holds some potentiality (2012:1). Located at the edge of the city, the beach is already in a liminal landscape a material sense. It is a bridge between two

[14] I understand that Frisbee can become a micro-society in which bodies or policed to attain certain dispositions and attitudes. But since these are consciously counter-hegemonic and the game itself has been largely interpreted by subjects as a positive and liberating experience, such a view loses credit.

geographic elements, land and water, and constituted by a vastness of sand and rock. In theory, it is often a place that people come to for respite, to get away from the drudgery of day-to-day living. In one of my interviews, a respondent spoke about how the beach triggered a personal and emotional conversation between him and his uncle. A kind that they'd never been able to have in any other context. I interpreted this as a breakdown of the social barriers that are otherwise astutely maintained, preventing an honest conversation between members of family. In other words, the beach facilitates a kind of opening up. But from a feminist sentiment, the beach rarely offers relaxation from the social restrictions that limit their movement and freedom in other public spaces, as was elaborated in the previous chapter. This is broken down for women in play of Frisbee, the space on which it is played thus bearing physical and psychic potentiality.

The question finally is, can Frisbee become the tool that holds the potential to perpetuate 'liminal moments into "normal" structures (Thomassen et al 2015). The social construction of any space is the product of practices and uses (companion to tourism) over a period of time. If Ultimate Frisbee is played on the beach frequently enough, does this liminoid alter the dynamics of interaction in everyday living? The repetition of a different performance can change the character of the space itself, just like gender that is produced through repetition of particular norms that come to be embodied (Butler 1990). Drawing on my body's positionality as a middle-class woman, through a partial affective geography and partial observation, I document the place immediately surrounding the space where Frisbee is played.

Ethnographer's account

Liz and I walk through Uroor Kuppam, a slum on the beach and an area I hadn't been inside before because of the assumption of danger that lie therein. It dots the coast and is mostly

occupied by fisherfolk and their families, and people in other occupations that are in the low-income category. Although it is commonly referred to as a "slum" but visually, it appears like any other street in the city; concrete houses made of cement and each house reflecting a different colour. There's a certain upbeat character to the narrow street that is buzzing with the humdrum of daily life. Motorbikes snake through it trying to avoid driving into people who, in small groups, flank the street's sides. They're having conversations on the street, some are reading the newspaper.

Liz is in shorts and I am in a generic T-shirt and ankle-length pants. I didn't expect to go inside the area, but as we walk deeper, I feel fear engulf me. I desperately hoped Liz wouldn't ask me to find my way back. There's a curiosity among the men (who are the majority on the street, no surprises there) but I don't encounter any harassment. I still feel a tad bit uncomfortable, mainly because I realise how impossible it is for me to be present in an area like this. I pretend to be completely absorbed in what Liz is telling me, very purposeful in my walk. Unlike me, Liz is walking the talk like the street was second home to her. It was. She hi-fies with some young boys for whom the street is homeground. She asks them "how it is going." They seem fairly well-versed in English, and are enthusiastic about talking to her. They shake hands with her and there's the healthiest form of egalitarianism operating on both sides, minimising social distances. This, embarrassingly, surprises me because I am always warned against being friendly towards strangers, definitely not those who reside in slums, and certainly not the men there. I realise that Liz, as an outsider, doesn't bear the prejudices that I do. She has also not experienced the same public culture that I have, growing up in India. Therefore, our psychological states are very different even as we occupy the same space. My body was on the defence, and hers was, casual.

Did she ever feel uncomfortable, especially around the time she moved here? A little in the beginning, she says, because of the unfamiliarity with the surroundings. But she feels at home here now. The area had also grown "accustomed to the Ultimate Frisbee peoples' comings and goings." They were used to seeing women in "western" outfits walking the streets to fulfill NGO work, interacting with the boys, and these sights which were morally unacceptable and a shock to the area's sensibilities, had acquired the air of being, mostly, normal. Frisbee, she says, had changed a lot in the social and psychological life of Uroor Kuppam. We walk further inward and I relax after this revelation. A couple of boys smile at me, and I smile back. It was one of the most humane, silent exchanges I had had on the street.

Further in, Liz meets Arun, a Frisbee player, to get a few forms signed from him. She says she has to go further in, now. I have to head back. I walk back alone, something shifting in me. If Liz could be so comfortable in the space, why couldn't I be? I found myself being less hostile and afraid and in some intangible way, I felt the cordiality being reciprocated. It felt something like a walk of triumph; by being there, I'd (un)made the space in some small way, and it had altered something in me - the absence of both fear and hyper-alertness.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have explored the beach as a public space where a normative order assert itself. From a feminist standpoint, this order is particularly kept up to an oppressive extent. I support this through excerpts from my interviews. Contrary to the beach as a liberating space in the west, I show how the beach in Chennai can be a confusing mix - through a social historical account and observations from its contemporary use.

I bring in the case of Frisbee on the beach to explore how actors have an impact on the space they inhabit. Because actors experience their subjectivities differently than otherwise experiences on the beach, through and in this game, I put forth the argument that this shapes the space around them given the dialectical relationship between space and actors/users. I explore the theoretical conceptualisations of the liminal to posit the game as a liminoid because of how normative gender performance, visible in affect and embodiment of players, is transcended temporarily but with bigger changes that carry on beyond the game. Since Turner himself conceptualised a liminoid as one that was a temporary experience but one that had ramifications for the wider public sphere, this was particularly a fruitful application. I interpret the expansion of the self, associated with liminal experiences, in terms of transgressing a normative gender code. Such a transgression then (un) makes the space around it.

Since transgressions do hold the potential to propel change beyond the temporal occurrence of the game, in actors' behaviour, expectations, I try to see if features visible in the liminoid articulate themselves beyond the confines of that space where it takes place. I refrain from making overt judgement or conclusions but through a reflexive phenomenological account, document an affective geography of the space in order to see the potential of liminal experiences to effect larger spatial changes.

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