A Mapping of Tensions
Exploring Bullying Inside Bangladeshi Classrooms

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PROLOGUE: BEING NOMADIC, BEING TENSE

My mother and I stood in front of my first ever school. Early morning in January. I wore a navy blue sweater. I would not go inside the school. After going the first three or four days to my first ever school, I had grown a silent repulsion for it. I simply would not step inside the school compound. The reason was unknown, the mystery perplexed my parents. My mother had prepared me for school and dragged me all the way, only to be disappointed by my implacable stubbornness. I simply would not go in. The principal strolled outside the gate that morning, to make sure things were running smoothly, that students were getting inside the school, without too much fuss. She spotted the drama that unfolded between me and my mother from a distance at first. Then she walked towards us, grabbed and lifted me into her arms, and asked my mother to go home. She curtly turned around and started walking inside the school. I, with all my body strength and anger, started to pull her hair. I pulled, pulled and pulled, and screamed, screamed and screamed, and pulled, pulled, pulled, down the corridor, all the way to her office. She was also an implacably stubborn principal. Once inside her office, she gave me a small glass car. Tiny, colorful balls eerily floated in some sort of transparent liquid inside. That captured my fascination and calmed me down, I had never seen anything like that before. After that day, I resumed school once again.

In 2013, when I finished conducting my first ever workshop on ‘Bullying inside the Bangladeshi classroom’ at InHouse, the ‘idea village’ of the youth organization One Degree Initiative1, set in Dhaka, I felt anything but accomplished. I felt I had just hit a wall, I felt tension. My friends, who had taken part, later asked me if it had been helpful for me (for this thesis), did I find my answers? “Yeah, I think so” I lied. Of course I did not find my answers. On the contrary, I was even more clueless than before.

A few weeks prior to this workshop, while I was having coffee with a colleague and friend at The Daily Star newspaper (my workplace) cafe, set in Dhaka, I was listing potential topics for my MA thesis. I listed three a) a post-colonial reading of the violence against indigenous people in Bangladesh b) the neo-liberal garments industry and the bodies of factory laborers and c) bullying inside the Bangladeshi classroom. To the first two options, my friend, a non-academic, expressed a frown and utter disinterest, not because he thought they were unimportant, but because much has been written about both topics. When I told him about my third option, his response was, “Hm, now that’s interesting.”

Some weeks later, a researcher and acquaintance, whom I had met in his home in Dhaka, to ask for advice on my thesis topic, reassured me saying “And that is exactly why you should write about this topic” given that there has been little (or no) work done on this, in the Bangladeshi

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1 One Degree Initiative Foundation is a nonprofit youth organization in Bangladesh. It aims to mentor young people and engage in active citizen and entrepreneurship (One Degree Initiative Foundation 2014).
context. These two encounters were important for two reasons. Firstly, it was important for me as a writer and researcher to see what kind of topics appealed to non-academic readers. Secondly, from an academic perspective, it has a lot of potential and scope to explore.

I thought I could avoid the topic of bullying, but it kept coming back to me stubbornly—a topic I had written about in English, in two articles for two different newspaper magazines in Bangladesh. The idea of my first article on bullying (that got published in The Daily Star weekend magazine) came to me when I took the Grey Hound bus from Lehigh, Pennsylvania to St. Louis, Missouri. It was a day long bus ride and one of the most unpleasant rides of my life. All through out the ride, I could not stop thinking about Michael S. Kimmel’s essay where he wrote on R. W. Connell’s theory about hegemonic masculinity, which I remember had a ‘goose bump effect’ on me when I read it for the first time in my gender studies class. I was jotting and noting things down on a notepad, inside the moving bus. While passengers slept, I wrote frantically, fearing that the idea of the article would escape before I could write it all down. The spotlight over my seat was the only light that was switched on, the rest was darkness.

It was a very personal narrative, and I felt tension to send it to my editor. I felt even more tension, when it was published and few of my friends shared it on my Facebook wall, accolading my bravery. I did not feel very brave at that instant to be honest, and instead I felt a little shame, at the fact how my experience of being bullied was out in the public now. But I also thought it was important to reside in tensions and write.

The year was 2010. It was when I took my first ever gender studies course in Washington University in St. Louis, USA, as an exchange student. This was also the time when a lot of other things happened. This was the first time I had left Bangladesh to go abroad. I was learning new things and meeting exciting professors I did not know existed. I fell in love with the beautiful campus which was deemed as a bubble by many. I saw in person that everything is not beautiful after all in America, ‘the land of dreams.’ I made best friends from other countries like Bahrain, Italy, Ecuador, Egypt, France and the USA. I was getting acutely aware of my non-heterosexuality pressing against me, as I read theories on sexuality, and thus felt even more tension. I took part in a week long leadership program in Illinois called Leadershape, at a very beautiful and isolated camp, where I finally came out, feeling safe, far away from ‘home’ (every time I use this word, I am reminded of what Susan Stryker once wrote, “home is a concept that is long gone” and I chuckle a little).
All these different spatio-temporal locations—my high school classroom where my gender transgressive, middle class, able-male-body extended out in a heteronormatively striated\(^2\) space (what affects or emotions got circulated at the point of such an encounter with other bodies?), the Grey Hound bus where I jotted down ideas for my first article on bullying, and the Leadershape camp where I came out—led to me feeling tension(s). But, something generative also came out of those moments and spaces. Thus, I find it important that we trace out the moments of our tensions and un-learning. Why do I delve into so much of my personal nomadic past? Quite simply because I have come to the understanding that personal narratives and situated knowledges can set things in motion, and quite potentially ‘queer’ our realities—not only change the way we look at people and the world we live in, but also change the way we look at ourselves and become ‘unhinged’ from our own realities.

For the purpose of this thesis, I would go on to visit schools, and speak to students, teachers, and non-teaching staff, family members, write to my former bullies on Facebook, and sit inside the classroom once again, yet again, as a learner. This topic would not only take me to the places and narratives of the informants of this research, but also take me back to my own narratives and spaces where my body was once located, and ways I dealt with my narratives and experiences, in years that followed, the tensions that stayed with me, times when I felt safe to talk and write about, not exactly letting go of the tensions, but attempting to bring out something generative out of all these tensions.

\(^2\)Strata is an imagery used by philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to describe a space that restricts ‘becoming,’ ‘lines of flights’ and ‘de-territorialization.’ “De-territorialization is when energy might escape or momentarily move outside normative strata” (Ringrose 2011: 603). The idea of strata has to do with norm producing spaces and bodies sticking to the normative. I will employ and explain this imagery more in the following text.
INTRODUCTION

Research questions and points of departure

How can we address bullying inside the classroom by analyzing hierarchical education, classroom standards and power relations? How can we explore the transformative potentials of anti-oppressive, non-hierarchical pedagogy by applying the theoretical framework of intersectional gender pedagogy and affect?

In this thesis, I will explore the politics of bullying inside secondary school classrooms, taking Dhaka, Bangladesh as my setting. I will explore the politics of bullying within the framework of intersectional gender pedagogy and trace out the connections between bullying and education. Such an approach will allow me to understand and write about the power relations inside the classroom that exist among students and teachers. I find it important that we do not leave out the bodies of teachers as we talk about bullying, and analyze how teachers contribute to power politics inside the classroom.

I rely on the theoretical framework of intersectional gender pedagogy to elaborate on anti-oppressive and non-hierarchical education. Intersectional gender pedagogy will allow me to look at how excluding norms and differences are produced inside the classroom and how that can be problematic and thus, important to be aware of and challenge. Using the framework of such pedagogy, I will examine how the socio-cultural categories or power differentials such as gender, sex, sexuality, age, ethnicity, class, religion, nationality, and language that at times can be the reason behind “societal inequalities and unjust social relations” (Lykke 2010: 50) influence and form power dynamics inside schools and classrooms, and how they can be addressed in educational settings. In order to write about power differentials inside the classroom, I rely on both autoethnographic and ethnographic materials. I analyze past encounters in my classrooms, and visit schools to talk to students and interview them, and access their stories through their reflective pieces.

This thesis is an attempt for a cross disciplinary adventure. I will bring in theories from the disciplines of education, gender and philosophy, and read and employ them in interplay and assemblage for a more fruitful dialogue and critical understanding of bullying inside the classroom. One of the themes of this thesis is mapping out tensions—which I see as an affect that gets circulated and transferred between bodies. I will also read bullying within the theoretical framework of affect theory. Employing affect theory will enable me to explore the circulation and channeling of affect that shapes the performance of bodies and their capacity to act. This approach will allow me to see how the bodies of the bully and bullied are affectively co-produced, which I suggest could be a fruitful and important way of looking at the bully and bullied. When bullying is addressed in schools, at times the approaches tend to fix identities of the bully and bullied which I
refer to as the discursive production of bully and bullied. I will observe and analyze how bodies and identities of the bully and bullied are produced in discourses—texts, conversations, existing knowledge. I will explore how the bully gets defined as proactively aggressive, wanting to cause harm, while the bullied as passive, weak victim of situation who cannot stand up for him/herself. These are troubling discourses because such readings fix the definitions of the bully and bullied, when identities are constantly changing. Schools also come up with further limiting approaches (based on such understandings) to deal with bullying, such as discipline, punishment and surveillance, which create further exclusions of both the bully and bullied. Moreover, discursive readings keep the binary between the bully and bullied intact when identities of the bully and bullied are produced, but instead as constantly produced when they encounter affects in school and the classroom, not only from fellow students, but also from teachers and other administrative figures. Analyzing the body of the teacher within the framework of affect will help address the power relations between teachers and students, and how we can revise the role of teachers and students inside the classroom. This will also allow for a discussion about how the bodies of teachers can ‘become.’

Using the framework of affect theory and intersectional gender pedagogy, I also explore how dialogue and self-reflexivity could be important aspects in teaching and learning—in knowledge production inside the classroom, to challenge power relations, with the aim of turning education into a liberatory practice.

**Background and research context**

There is a large cultural and institutional code of silence surrounding bullying in classrooms in Bangladesh. A few schools in Dhaka have very recently employed a zero tolerance policy to bullying. However, in most schools, bullying is still not addressed in classrooms, due to several factors. For instance, teachers and administrations do not receive any training on how to address bullying in schools; bullying is seen as normal part of schooling and bullying is also not addressed given it is a sensitive topic, and teachers, students and parents shy away from talking about it. If bullying is dealt with inside the classroom, it is often dealt with through punishment and discipline.

There is very little research on bullying in Bangladesh. Developmental psychologist Eliza Ahmed has written four academic journal articles on bullying in Bangladesh based on quantitative material she collected through a three year long project titled *The Life at School Survey* (1996-1999) on school bullying in Australia, Bangladesh and South Korea. She has mainly written about bullying in terms of the parental and observers’ role, and relies on shame management and restorative justice theories to deal with bullying. She mainly proposes that shame acknowledgement could reduce bullying, and parents could play a role in helping a child become aware of his or her
wrongdoing through dialogue and care. She also suggests that adaptive shame acknowledgment (shame, responsibility, amends) by observers can also enable them to intervene to prevent bullying. In the analysis of my thesis, however, I do not enter into an extensive dialogue with Ahmed’s work for several reasons. In my interpretation, it lacks a careful contextualization of bullying in Bangladesh and what bullying might mean in different geo-political locations. Moreover, I argue that her arguments around shame management and restorative justice on the one hand rely on assumptions that bullying can be solved through increased discipline and non-stigmatizing shaming, and on the other leaves the binary between the bully and bullied intact. This thesis problematizes both these assumptions as it addresses bullying within institutional power hierarchies.

The Bangladesh government published a National Education Policy in 2010 (in Bengali), which does mention classroom bullying/harassment. It mentions that due to certain negative behavior (the direct translations of the terms used in the policy, would be torturous, anxiety evoking and demotivating) of students, other students are harmed by it. The government recommends that educational institutions take this into account into ensuring to build safe learning spaces and also creating counselling spaces to help students with different kinds of adolescent issues. The policy also mentions that teachers should not engage in corporal punishments. In the Bangladeshi context, a child-centered development vision has “gained considerable currency and momentum in contemporary development practice” (Mohiuddin et al. 2012: 34). This recent development has taken place in the context of corporal punishment mainly:

In August 2010, under the order of the High Court, Bangladesh officially banned all forms of corporal punishment in schools. The ministerial guideline came into effect from April 2011. Yet ten Bangladeshi newspapers reported 63 incidences of corporal punishment at times of the observance of one year of Bangladesh’s banning of corporal punishment in August 2011. The prohibition is enacted in legislation from March 2012. [...] teachers hit students with cane, sometimes pull their ears, or hair, or make them put their hand under the table, and some teachers put a pen between student’s fingers and squeeze their hands, sometimes they are made to stand on the bench and hold their ears (Mohiuddin et al. 2012: 35).

Corporeal punishment has had a widespread cultural acceptance in Bangladesh, and many parents would want the teachers to be strict and hit their children, just so that the children are disciplined. However, nowadays there is an emerging consciousness among parents, guardians and teachers regarding corporal punishment and its negative effects. Corporeal punishment is a very ‘physical’ expression of oppression and power inside the classroom. However, power sometimes is not always exerted through any physical means, and is difficult to address inside the classroom, such as power that could get played out through hierarchical education and teaching and different kinds of bullying.

Anthropologist Thérèse Blanchet in her book Lost Innocence, Stolen Childhood, writes about the lives of Bangladeshi children and adolescents roughly between the ages of eight and sixteen years, from different socio-economic backgrounds to explore the discrepancies they face when it
comes to expressing rights. The book was first published in 1996, but I find some of her points still relevant in the Bangladeshi educational context. Blanchet writes about the hierarchical and oppressive nature of the education in urban schools, stating:

Children have much to say about the fear, the tension, and the possible sense of failure which such examinations entail. The school system streamlines children early. The successful ones are highly praised and develop a sense of their superior ability. Children who do not succeed for whatever reason are penalized, both at schools and at home, and in all kinds of ways. […] the education dispensed to children is syllabus-based and examination-driven. […] the school system sanctions the memorization of a finite knowledge contained in book. […] a good memory is very important to obtain good results. Memory is intelligence (Blanchet 1996: 150-151).

In the Bangladeshi context, teachers often have to scramble for time to complete the syllabus, in the context of political strikes and shut downs that disrupt the yearly schedule. Bangladeshi researchers in education Ferdousi Anis and Masud Ahmed in their book Paradigm shift: Exclusion to Inclusion (2009), write about teachers and inclusive education for disabled children in Bangladesh. They write about the different kinds of problems school teachers in general face in Bangladesh. They write that due to a shortage of teachers, it is not unusual to find a single teacher being employed to teach additional subjects on which he/she has no qualification. They also write:

In many developing countries, dealing with large classes, inadequate resources, ready to access to other educational professionals in administration or management, lack of cooperation from colleagues, and many other factors contribute to their feeling of loneliness. […] often new initiatives may seem to be like additional burdens to teachers as they are already working overtime having to check scripts or write lesson plans during weekends. Therefore, rather than exploring with new ideas and challenges, they may feel more comfortable with what they have always done (Anis & Ahmed 2009: 24-25).

Anis and Ahmed also address the several economic obstacles teachers face (poor public image, prestige, salary and respect for professional status) that eventually determine how they teach in class. In this thesis, I also explore how important it is to acknowledge the realities that teachers bring in the classroom, along with the students, and contribute to the multisensory environment of the class. It is important that we do no dismiss the body of the teacher in the discussions of power relations in the classroom, and also explore how pedagogy could be a collaborative effort of both teachers and students.

One of the power differentials that I will explore in this thesis is sexuality, taking the homophobic bullying that I experienced in my secondary school in Bangladesh as a point of departure. Sexuality is still a sensitive topic to address in the larger socio-cultural sphere in Bangladesh. But there is not a ‘complete’ silence about it in the public discourse currently. In classrooms, however, sexuality is not addressed. There is no sex education in the Bangladeshi classroom, and aspects of sex and sexuality are not generally discussed. If and when sex is addressed, it is within the context of Biology classes, only very briefly mentioned, and only in terms of using protection and the dangers of STDs. Since there is no talk about sexuality in the classroom,
it is necessary to address what does ‘homophobic’ bullying mean, when there is no platform to talk about sexuality, keep aside homophobia.

Bangladeshi anthropologist Adnan Hossain in his essay *Conceiving sexual agency* (2009), writes, “Contemporary Bangladesh presents a rather paradoxical situation in terms of non-normative gender and sexualities” (Hossain 2009: 20). Hossain brings in the intersectionality of class, gender and sexuality to give an idea what homosexuality could possibly mean in Bangladesh. “Hijra a cultic sub-culture of lower class non normative ‘males’ with extensive community rules and rituals is publicly institutionalized. [...] In Bangladesh ‘transgenderism’ is not conflated with any form of homoeroticism in the popular imaginary. [...] Gay groups emerged in Bangladesh from 2000 onwards among the middle/upper class males” (ibid: 20-21). Hossain then explains that there is no Bengali word for ‘straight’ and that there is a lack of public discourse on homosexuality, and also that overarching heterosexuality “never allowed non-normative desire to rise to the status of a legitimate sexuality. Therefore fear of same sex desire or ‘homophobia’ could not gain adequate conceptual depth” (ibid: 22). He also mentions:

I argue against the uncritical transposition of ‘western-fabricated’ homophobia onto the Bangladeshi social context where the socio-cultural configuration is far more complicated with ‘homophobia’ never taking the overt form of physical violence but manifesting through a multiplicity of vectors of power like class and religion that are often in operation in consolidating regimes of oppression (Hossain 2009: 22).

Hossain writes that it is relatively easy for men from lower socio-economic status to obtain relative freedom/ agency when it comes to their non-normative gender and sexuality expression, compared to men from upper socio-economic classes. Men in the middle/upper class grow up with a ‘“classed social responsibility’ that they find difficult to disrupt” (ibid: 22).

‘Homophobic’ bullying usually takes place in classrooms when boys are equated to hijras (men who cross dress, and have more ‘feminine’ gender expression), if boys act in ways that are interpreted as more ‘feminine.’ Moreover influence of Hollywood and Bollywood movies also shape the everyday diction and attitude of students regarding aspects of sexuality. Words such as ‘faggot’ and ‘homo’ get coined amongst youths, and jokes about gay and effeminate men also circulate to make fun of others.

Hossain wrote the article referred to above in 2009, for which I argue that there is no longer a ‘complete’ lack of public discourse on sexuality in the current times in Bangladesh. The government recognized Hijra as the third gender in the country in 2013.3 In August 2013, Dhaka Tribune, the latest English Daily in Bangladesh, called for the decriminalizing of same sex relationships in its editorial (Dhaka Tribune, 2013). However, in September 2013, the government denied education on sexuality and refused to ensure gay rights in Bangladesh, against the UN

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3 The new government policy will give hijras the right to identify themselves as a separate gender from the binary genders of male and female, on all official documents, including passports.
recommendation, at the 6th conference of Asian and Pacific Population control. In January 2014, Roopban (Beautiful), the first ever LGBT magazine in Bengali got published in Bangladesh. There are now discussions and debates about same-sex sexuality, on online forums and social network sites. ‘Under the rainbow’ is an LGBT underground event that takes place in Dhaka every year, since 2009. In 2011, it took place as an open for all three day long event, where many young people took part and attended talks. However, in education institutions, policy and media, there is still a turning away from addressing sexuality politics. In the aftermath of so much that has taken place, there still lacks a large scale public debate or discussion in Bangladesh regarding sexual politics.

Material, methods, methodology and ethics
For this thesis, I have collected data from an English medium coeducation school in Dhaka. I visited the school in February 2014, and spent the entire school day there, each day for one week, beginning with the morning school assembly until the last period. The informants from this school are students from grades five to nine, between the ages of ten and fifteen, and teachers and nonteaching staff (helpers or cleaners). The principal of the school has asked me to keep the school and its students anonymous as I write about them in this thesis. Besides this school, I also went to three other schools in Dhaka in August 2013— two English medium coeducation schools and one Bengali medium school. My visit to these three other schools did not extend more than two days in each, for which I will not write extensively about them. However, I will bring them up, to refer to certain discussions I had with the students regarding bullying in their classes. Thus I will regard the school, where I spent one week, as more important for this thesis, since I could collect most of my data from that school. As I mentioned, I will write about the other three schools as well, and to avoid confusion about the English medium schools in this paper (since I cannot use their names), I will employ letters A, B and C to address them, related to the order I visited them. The schools I visited in 2013 are School A and B, and School C is where I spent one week in February 2014. There were certain circumstances that could not be avoided, which affected my field work process. School C was already working around a tight schedule in the aftermath of the post-election shut downs at the beginning of 2014, for which it also took some time for them to get back to me with the permission to collect data there. All of these schools are well known and renowned, and the students are mainly from middle and upper middle class families. This means that the students

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4 Bangladesh has three streams of education— general education, technical/vocational and Madrasah (religious) education. The education system and structure is divided into three major stages- primary, secondary and higher educations. Primary education is 5 year long, while secondary education is 7 year long with three sub-stages: 3 years of junior secondary, 2 years of secondary and 2 years of higher secondary. The age group of primary education is roughly between the ages of five and ten, and in secondary between the ages of eleven and seventeen. The school curricula are either in Bengali or English. In English medium schools, teachers teach lessons in English (except Bengali lessons). Similarly, teachers teach in Bengali (except English lessons) in Bengali medium schools (Banbeis 2013).
already had access to certain privileged mediums such as the internet, television and mobile phones to get information and for entertainment.

During my fieldwork at School C, I was accompanied by my former high school classmate and friend Naureen Amir Ali, a twenty six year old Bangladeshi student, currently completing her bachelor’s in human resource, with a minor in sociology. Naureen is a also situated informant in the research too, given that she was in my class when I experienced bullying as a teenager. This is also why I refer to her with her first name throughout the discussion. Naureen used to be bullied in class too, for her figure. Making our observations of the classrooms during the field work has a phenomenological element, given our past encounters in regards to bullying. We both brought in our past encounters and lived realities, as we both researched on the topic of bullying.

In order to examine the dynamics and explore the power relations that exist between students and teachers inside the classroom, I used ethnographic means to observe— physically ‘being there’ in the classroom. According to anthropologist Clifford Geertz, “Ethnography is well-suited to a study of school bullying and power relations, as a key aspect of ethnographic research is ‘being there’” (Geertz 1988 cited in Horton 2011: 28). Being there allows the ethnographer to observe the exercise of power in practice. ‘Being physically present’ inside the classroom allowed me and Naureen to make observations. Naureen and I sat at the back of the classroom and took notes of the classroom environment— how much students participated, how teachers talked to students, how did they lecture, how did the students behave in the class, and we also put down our reflections and thoughts. The observations allowed us some time to come up with some contextually relevant interview questions as well, regarding classes and teachers. Since the timeframe of my observation was so short, Naureen and I carried out focus group discussions randomly, whenever we got the chance, even during the games period, with students as they played carom board, and during their free times. Due to the short notice, we did not have the possibility to notify the parents of the students. However, we took the principal’s and teachers’ permission if we spoke to the students during the classroom, for example when they did project works. We explained to the students that I was doing research on bullying, and asked if it was alright if I spoke to them and asked them questions.

I also asked for their permission before recording interviews that I later transcribed. I also created a survey questionnaire for the students of grades 5 to 9, to fill out. Naureen and I went from class to class, and asked permission from the teacher if we could use fifteen minutes out of the class time, to conduct the survey. If the teachers asked us to come back later, we did so. I did the survey to get some situated answers to questions like ‘what does bullying mean to you’ and ‘how can one solve bullying.’ I made a separate questionnaire for teachers as well, through which I wanted to see how they viewed bullying and what do they think of their role in the classroom (while teaching and
also dealing with bullying). The principal wanted to keep copies of the surveys for school record, so that the school could get an understanding of bullying and take measures accordingly. The survey was a gain for the school, given that the school authority had been meaning to do a study like this for some time, as the principal informed us. For which we left photocopies of the surveys with the principal. Unfortunately, I did not inform the students and teachers that the principal would be keeping copies of their answers, which raises some ethical concern in this thesis. I did not share this information because back then I did not consciously think of this information to be relevant for the informants. However, as I think upon this now, I realize that this raises ethical implications. The informants should have been notified about the circumstances they answered the questionnaires in. They might have answered the questions differently if they knew that the school authority will read their answers (regardless of their anonymous status). Even though the principal informed Naureen and me that the survey answers will be dealt with utmost confidentiality and is only for her own read, I realize that I cannot guarantee how safe the information will be with her—given if she wants to discuss certain issues that came up in the survey with teachers and students. I regret this decision as a researcher and should have been more reflexive regarding the ethical concerns of dealing with the data. Acknowledging this shortcoming as a researcher allows me to think more deeply about ethics in qualitative research in the future.

I also asked students to voluntarily submit anonymous reflective pieces (on getting bullied, seeing someone else get bullied, bullying someone else) in any form (prose, poems, drawings, few sentences) as means to get access to their situatedness through bottom-up story telling. Naureen and I went to their classes with an envelope and asked the students to fold their stories up and drop it in the envelope, as Naureen and I took it around. We collected fifty-one reflective pieces in total from grades 5 to 9. All these materials will be my data, which are crucial to look at and explore bullying contextually. In the other three schools I did focus group discussions by taking permission from the principals and the students themselves. In School A and B, I interviewed the school psychological counsellors, teachers and coordinator from Student’s Association.

As part of my thesis, I also did autoethnography, where I recount my experience of being bullied in school, thus taking part in the research as an informant myself. I rely on my published writings to enter my past encounters and write about power differentials, orientation and affects in the classroom. Such an inquiry will simmer into phenomenology, as I take my lived realities, my past encounters to situate myself around the research topic and enter the discussion of bullying. In the autoethnographic inquiry, I also problematize my own reading of bullying when I wrote the articles, and revise them using the theoretical frameworks I employ in this thesis. I also got in touch with a former bully from my secondary school to bring in his narrative and write about his
perspective on bullying, to point out the importance of not othering the bully in the process of addressing bullying in class.

The aim of this research is not to do a comparative analysis of these schools regarding how they deal or do not deal with bullying. I will write about the schools and students to give specific examples of how bullying is dealt with using limiting approaches that stem from troubling understandings of the bully and bullied. My aim is to revise these approaches and argue that these approaches further exclude and other the bully and bullied, and come up with an alternative reading of bullying inside the classroom, hoping for a cut in power relations in the classroom and possible transformations of the roles of students and teachers. I propose the initiation of a dialogue between teachers and students, by exploring bullying in the framework of anti-hierarchical pedagogies—ultimately questioning and revising the knowledge production process inside the classroom.

I will divide the thesis in three main sections. The first section is my autoethnographic inquiry where I will visit my past encounters by revisiting two articles I wrote on bullying. I employ affect theory to address power relations in the class and talk about bodies inside the classroom, and how they are affectively co-produced. I also bring in Sara Ahmed’s theory on space and orientation to talk about my affected body. In the second section, I analyze the materials and data I collected from schools for the purpose of this thesis. I analyze them in relations to affect theory to propose an affective understanding of bodies in the classroom, instead of a discursive reading of the bully and bullied, to revise the roles of teachers, students and knowledge production in the classroom. I rely on the answers from the focus group discussions, surveys and reflective pieces to explore bullying in these classrooms. In the third section, I write about pedagogies and explore aspects of power relations in the classroom, which will be an extension of the affective reading of the classroom. I bring in the section of theories on pedagogy at the end because doing so allowed me to first elaborate on my materials and then use the theoretical frameworks to analyze them more clearly. I also did not want to overburden the readers with theories at the beginning. I start with my autoethnography at the beginning to make this thesis read like a story and to elaborate on the importance of this topic to me. I then bring in the data to expand on the autoethnographic understanding of the topic and connect with my informants, as means to also bring down the divide between myself, the researcher and the informants. I will bring in theories of intersectional gender pedagogy by Nina Lykke and anti-oppressive education by bell hooks, Kevin Kumashiro and Paulo Freire. I also rely on Paul Horton’s PhD dissertation on bullying in Vietnam for framing and structuring my thesis. I will read these sections in interplay with each other when themes and elements of different sections will flow in a crisscross manner into each other, as I draw connections between narratives and theories.
AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

There are two main reasons for which I am doing an autoethnographic inquiry as part of this thesis. They are a) To write about my past experience of being bullied inside the Bangladeshi classroom to situate myself around the research topic, taking my personal experience as an entrance point to talk about bullying and b) To cut down power relations between me (the researcher) and the informants and participants of this research, especially when I rely so much on their personal narratives. This is an attempt to do what queer theorist Kevin Kumashiro suggests, “The researcher does research with rather than on the participants” (Kumashiro 2002: 16). This kind of inquiry is also resonant of what feminist and race theorist bell hooks writes about sharing personal experience, “Sharing personal narratives yet linking that knowledge with academic information really enhances our capacity to know” (hooks 1994: 148). This sharing of personal narratives and seeking out situated knowledges are connected to ideas of creating a dialogue inside the classroom and advocating for anti-oppressive pedagogy.

In this section I will do a genealogical mapping of my past encounters, tensions and situated knowledges with regard to bullying. By genealogical mapping, I mean a rhizomatic, nomadic mapping, and not a linear mapping. I intend to jump from one timeline to another, to draw connections between disparate narratives and situated knowledges. Doing so will also allow me to take different entrance points to do this autoethnographic inquiry in a ‘queer’ way— not necessarily being linear, straight or fixed.

Philosopher Rosi Braidotti in her book Nomadic Subjects, writes, “The rhizome is a root that grows underground, sideways; Deleuze plays it against the linear roots of trees. By extension, it is ‘as if’ the rhizomatic mode expressed a nonphallogocentric way of thinking: secret, lateral, spreading, as opposed to the visible, vertical ramifications of Western trees of knowledge” (Braidotti 1994: 23). The imagery of the nomad is fruitful in this autoethnographic inquiry, because it is also a mode of thinking. “Nomadism in question here refers to the kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behavior. […] It is the subversion of set conventions that defines the nomadic state, not the literal act of travelling” (ibid: 5). A nomadic inquiry is important for me to enter other narratives, and read my personal encounters through them. “This ability to flow from one set of experiences to another is a quality of interconnectedness that I value highly. Drawing a flow of connections need not be an act of appropriating. On the contrary it marks transitions between communicating states or experiences” (ibid: 5). This line of thought is comforting, because it firstly suggests that our mode of thinking should go in every possible direction, and secondly that that will make us realize that there cannot be ‘one’ perfect solution, a useful observation in the context of reading and thinking about bullying. Sociologist Sarah Wall in her essay Easier said than done: Writing an Autoethnography, cites
researcher on qualitative methods. H. F. Wolcott who states, “every view is a way of seeing, not the way” (Wolcott 1999 cited in Wall 2008: 44). There is no ‘standard’ approach to transformation. Kumashiro, who has written about queer politics and activism in the classroom and education in his book Troubling Education writes, “we need to resist believing that we know what it means to do antioppressive education effectively or unproblematically. The unknowability involved in teaching requires that even antioppressive educators must constantly trouble our own practices and look beyond what we already know” (Kumashiro 2002: 68). Kumashiro asks us to constantly keep questioning to find out what other voices are getting unheard in the process, and thus how can we keep questioning, transforming and ‘becoming,’ a philosophy that can be actively thought about in the classroom, to address the knowledge production process.

Wall in her essay refers to few writers, as she explains autoethnography. She writes:

Autoethnographies “are highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding” (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). In considering the use of personal stories in sociological work, Laslett (1999) has claimed that it is the intersection of the personal and the societal that offers a new vantage point from which to make a unique contribution to social science. “Personal narratives can address several key theoretical debates in contemporary sociology: macro and micro linkages; structure, agency and their intersection; (and) social reproduction and social change” (p. 392) (Wall 2008: 39).

In this section, I write about experiencing homophobic bullying for my gender transgressive behavior, in secondary school. I aim on turning this autoethnographic inquiry as a diffracted space, in which readers can critically engage and think and come up with their narratives and personal encounters. Thus, the autoethnographic inquiry will be an attempt to produce something more than just a self-referenced piece. Gender and cultural studies scholars Tony E. Adams and Stacy Holman Jones, who have written on queer methods and methodologies to do research write, in their essay, Autoethnography is Queer, “Stories can be insurrectionary acts if we make room for our (all of our) selves and their desires, for making trouble and acknowledging the implications of doing so, for

5 ‘Becoming’ is a philosophical concept employed by philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. By ‘becoming’ or ‘lines of flight’ they meant to ‘deterritorialize’ or ‘unfix’ identities, and see identity formation as an ongoing process. Our identities are formed or are always becoming, when we come in contact with other bodies and affects, when there is an ‘assemblage’ of bodies and affects. This kind of philosophy is crucial for a non-essentialist understanding of identities and socio-cultural categories of gender, sexuality, race, class, ethnicity etc. In this thesis, I employ the understanding of becoming to point out how at times schools essentialize the definitions of the bully and bullied, for which the approaches employed to deal with bullying also are based on the essential understandings, and that can pose problems, because doing so further ‘others’ both the bully and the bullied and keeps the binary between the bully and the bullied intact. Essentialist understanding of the bully and bullied also eschews addressing power politics inside the classroom and schools, in which teachers have a contribution as well.

6 Diffraction is a ‘thinking technology’ used by techno-science feminists Donna Haraway and Karan Barad. Nina Lykke in her book Feminist Studies explains that diffraction is a concept borrowed from Physics-- “from optics and, and more generally, from the science of the interference of wave motions” (Lykke 2010: 154) that both these feminists employ to suggest that it is much more productive critical figure than ‘reflection’. “If we take the optical metaphors seriously, a reflexive methodology means using the mirror as a critical tool. Haraway notes that while this can be useful, it also has limitations if you seek alternatives and want to make a difference. For using the mirror as critical tool does not bring us beyond the static logic of the Same. We can look critically at the reflection in the mirror, but no new patterns emerge” (ibid: 155).
embracing the texture of knowing without grabbing on to sure or fast answers” (Adams & Jones 2011: 114). So, I use this autoethnographic inquiry to also disrupt existing knowledge that is already there, and perhaps enable readers, and myself, the writer, to think about bullying in alternative ways. As a researcher, and also as an informant of this research, I cannot and will not distance myself from the research topic, to have an ‘objective’ view of the topic, when my viewing is already situated and partial. I do not see that as a drawback, but rather an entrance point, to draw in and connect with other narratives. As Lykke writes, “The knower is always in medias res (i.e., in the middle of), participant in and in compliance with, the analyzed world. […] the researcher cannot give an objective depiction of the world ‘out there,’ but produces a story, of which she or he is a part,” (Lykke 2010: 5). Allowing myself to share my personal narratives and be vulnerable is important if I expect the informants of this research to be vulnerable too. Adams and Holman Jones, in their essay, Telling Stories: Reflexivity, Queer Theory, and Autoethnography, write,

My experience—our experience—could be and could reframe your experience. My experience—our experience—could politicize your experience and could motivate and mobilize you, and us, to action. My experience—our experience—could inspire you to return to your own stories, asking again and again what they tell and what they leave out (Adams & Jones 2011: 110).

Thus, I write about my past encounters with the hope to engage with the readers and provide ourselves with a space to think of our stories together.

One of the main themes of this thesis is tensions, as I mentioned earlier and one of the objectives is to map out those tensions to see how moments and spaces of tension could be generative. I employ affect theory to talk about such affects that get circulated when bodies come in contact, and intra-act7 and co-produce each other. Inside the multisensory environment of the classroom, reading the bodies of teachers and students in the framework of affect theory will allow me to de-essentialize the roles and identities of teachers and students, bully and bullied, in this thesis. I connect this kind of reading with that of the discursive formation of the bullies and bullied, and point out how that can be limiting when it comes to thinking addressing bullying. Affect studies will also help me talk about the potential of disruptions inside the classroom, and question why there are not enough ‘risks’ taken inside the classroom, that is, see disruptions as carrying potential to un hinge the roles of teachers and students and revise ideas of knowledge production inside the classroom.

7 Intra-act, as opposed to ‘interact,’’ is yet another image used by Karan Barad. “Barad underlines that inter-action is something which takes place between bounded entities, clashing against each other, but without generating mutual transformations. Conversely, intra-action refers to an interplay between non-bounded phenomena, which interpenetrate and mutually transform each other while interplaying” (Lykke 2011: 3).
Affect theory and affective reading

Affect studies forms part of the fields of psychoanalysis and also neuroscience. For the purpose of this thesis, I choose to rely on a sociological and philosophical understanding of affect. But first, it is important to understand what affects mean. Philosopher Baruch Spinoza first wrote on affects and emotions in his book called *Ethics* (1663). He explained how affects, or emotions (that get transferred like energy), are not ours, that is, we do not have or produce affects, but rather affects get circulated, when we come across other bodies. There is a circulation of affects, rather than a production. Affect theory is the study of what these affects can do to us, our bodies, the formation of our bodies, or as Spinoza wittingly asks, “What can the body do?” or what effect the body produces. Our capability to act (effect) in this world depends on the affects that get circulated when we come in contact with other bodies.

Discursive and affective practices theorist Margaret Wetherell in her book *Affect and Emotion* (2012), writes, “By affect, I will mean embodied meaning-making” (Wetherell 2012: 4). She also writes, “Above all else, it is clear that coming to terms with affect implies coming to terms with the body. […] In the field of identity studies, researchers are increasingly turning to analyses of feeling practices to better understand people’s allegiances and investments, and the activities of categorising, narrating, othering, differentiating and positioning” (Wetherell 2012: 10). This brings us to how we can address power relations using the framework of affect studies.

In the context of bullying, we can try and read how bodies of the bully, bullied, teacher and observers affect each other, to understand power relations inside the classroom much more deeply. “Power, then, is crucial to the agenda of affect studies. It leads to investigations of the unevenness of affective practices” (Wetherell 2012: 17). We may ask, how is the performance of the bully and bullied or capability to act is determined by affect flow between them? Gender studies scholar Edyta Just writes in her essay *Teaching Gender in Interdisciplinary and Transnational Classrooms* “An embodied subject has its own affects stored in ‘memory banks’ and its experiences and countless negotiations with surrounding it ‘reality’ are internally and externally written in and on its body. It has its particular manners of reaction and action” (Just 2012: 174). We can trace the affective capacities to see how the body of the bully, bullied, teacher and observers in the classroom affect each other, and contribute to each other’s ‘capacity to act’ and ‘becoming.’ Gender and education scholar Jessica Ringrose in her article *Beyond Discourses? Using Deleuze and Guattari’s schizoanalysis to explore affective assemblages, heterosexuality and striated space, and lines of flight online and at school* states, “The ‘affective’ dimension thus presents a way of analyzing power relations within and between bodies and assemblages, and mapping ‘flows of energy’” (Ringrose 2011: 602). I will connect how power relations are often perpetuated through non-engaging pedagogy, and connect that to bullying. Once we become aware of power relations that
play out through hierarchical education and pedagogy, we may want to revise our ideas about knowledge production, and also attempt to reterritorialize the roles of students and teachers inside the classroom, with the hope for liberatory pedagogy and cut down of power inequity.

**Personal narratives**

To trace out my situatedness around the topic of bullying, I will now bring in a few excerpts from the articles I wrote on bullying and were published in two separate magazines of The Daily Star newspaper in Bangladesh. I wrote the first article titled *Fight against bullying* in 2011, and the second one, titled *Bullying is not cool*, in 2012. Both were opinion pieces, where I wrote how I find bullying a social problem, and also brought in my own personal experiences of how I used to be bullied, in order to address the code of silence surrounding bullying in the Bangladeshi culture. The following extract is from the first article:

I used to be bullied ruthless only when I was in high school. The reason was quite simple - according to people I was effeminate or not “manly”. I was at the peak of puberty and I sti didn't have a manly voice. Instead I had a croaky high pitched voice. I moved my hands a lot while speaking, and I was not very athletic. In short I wasn't a “real” man. Boys in my class shot words like “homo”, “fag”, “hijra”, “half-lady” to differentiate themselves from me, since I was a disgrace to manhood. They pointed and jeered at me to juxtapose me as “abnormal” with them being “normal”. For too long, even I thought that there was something severely wrong with me. I was constantly under the male gaze in and outside my class. Every time I did something “unmanly”, I was laughed at. I became very self-conscious of my behaviour and attitude. My behaviour and gestures came under my own surveillance, because I wanted to “fix” myself (Khan 2011).

This opening text to my article situates me as an embodied and embedded writer— embodied in the spatio-temporal location of the classroom and embedded as an informant in this research.

I asked a friend of mine to help me become “manly”. My friend was a she, since I didn't have a lot of male friends. I was usually ostracized from the social circle of boys, or at times I was only used to quench their thirst for bullying. This friend of mine was very excited and took the task very seriously, because she was about to “change my life” – make me normal. She taught me a couple of masculine poses and asked me to wear metal chains because that would definitely make me appear more masculine. She approved of my behaviour and rebuked me every time I did something out of order. However, I looked for approval from the boys, or the “real” men, in class to feel like a man. I rarely spoke in class and was always shy and embarrassed to interact with boys, because I wasn't getting any compassion from them. I felt proud when my male (and sometimes female) classmates or cousins announced that I seemed much “manlier” or that I was no longer a “half-lady” (Khan 2011).

The character of a girl introduced in the text, who helped me become manly, is my friend Naureen, who accompanied me to School C during fieldwork. Naureen is also an embodied and embedded informant in my past encounters, given that she tried to help me deal with bullying, by trying to fix me. Thus, as I was curious to see my response as a situated researcher towards the topic of bullying, I also wanted to see Naureen’s interpretations of the materials we collected from School C.

After this point in the article, I delve into an explanation how this kind of bullying can be used to talk about gender and sexuality politics inside the classroom. I also explain Kimmel’s
discussion on hegemonic masculinity to elaborate on the oppression I felt for being a gender transgressive teenage boy:

As a boy, I was oppressed because I didn’t necessarily fit into the normal category of the masculine gender. For which I was labelled with different names because it helped reinforce the gender and sexual binaries and dynamics in society. By labelling me as “abnormal”, the boys in class were merely keeping the role and “legacy” of masculinity intact, monolithic and absolute, as it’s supposed to be. By bullying kids like me, the bullies in class felt manlier and stronger. [...] Michael S Kimmel, an American sociologist describes hegemonic masculinity as “the image of masculinity of those men who hold power, which has become the standard in psychological evaluations, socio-logical research and self-help and advice literature for teaching young men to become “real men”. The hegemonic definition of manhood is a man in power, a man with power, and a man of power”. Boys from an early age are chastised and oppressed by other male peers until they become “true” men – someone who should be chivalrous, physically buff, athletic, who shows interest in alcohol, drugs, violence and stunts, who shows instant sexual interest in women, and who should cringe at the slightest hint of sensitivity because that would be considered gay or not manly. To conform to hegemonic masculinity, a boy suppresses the “feminine” traits he picks from his mother or else he will be seen as a wimp, a Mama’s boy, a sissy. We live in a society where not only women are eve teased and raped, but also men are oppressed and brought up to become hyper masculine (Khan 2011).

I revisit my past encounters of being bullied through this article, because it was my first critical approach on bullying. The writing is also a collaboration of memories—memories that came rushing back to me when I read Kimmel’s essay on hegemonic masculinity, which had ‘the goose bump effect’ on me. Gender and cultural studies scholar Elspeth Probyn in her essay Teaching Bodies: Affects in the Classroom, explains, “‘the goose bump effect’- ‘the moment when a text sets off a frisson of feelings, remembrances, thoughts, and the bodily actions that accompany them. [...] In other words, the first point of departure in analyzing the text requires an embodied acknowledgment” (Probyn 2004: 29). Thus reading Kimmel’s text circulated not only memories for me, but also the affects I experienced when I was bullied (shame, embarrassment and tensions) that led me to writing my first piece on bullying, a topic that I had hardly talked about before this point.

As I read Kimmel’s text, I remember that I felt tension for few reasons— the tension I felt when I came across the memories of me being bullied, as this was the first time I actively chose to critically think about these past encounters. I read Kimmel’s theories in the summer of 2010, and I wrote the article at the beginning of 2011, when I still had not come out. One of the important themes Kimmel bases his writing upon is sexuality, and I was both aware of and still in denial of my sexual orientation (I did not come out right after I read theories. Theories did not ‘liberate’ me instantly). This denial also produced tension, because in the article, I do not write about my sexual orientation, but I do write about non-normative gender expression. I elaborate on how I faced homophobic bullying (without really using the terminology and not addressing what homophobia means in the Bangladeshi context). As I look back at this article now, I sense a gap, given that I came out in the summer of 2011. At this point in the thesis, I will revisit the article to explore and bridge that gap, and suggest that bringing in post-colonial queer theorist Sara Ahmed’s theories on space and orientation may fill some of those gaps. “(Re)turning, we revisit, shift, and refigure
earlier iterations of our queer work, show-ing what it means to be reflexively queer, attending to the ethics of being reflexively queer within personal texts, and tracing the importance of using reflexively queer autoethnographic work for socially just means and ends” (Adams & Jones 2011: 108). Thus, I revisit to extend my article for the purpose of this autoethnographic inquiry, and see what was left unsaid.

As a gender transgressive closeted teenager, when I faced homophobic bullying, I started to stratify not only my gender expression, but also my sexual orientation. Tracing out the personal tensions that I faced at the encounter with other bodies in the classroom is productive because it explains how some bodies extend into space, more than other bodies due to the orientating and aligning into given lines in space— lines and actions that have been repeated over and over again to produce and re-produce the normative, as Ahmed writes in her book *Queer Phenomenology*, “The lines that direct us, as lines of thoughts as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition” (Ahmed 2007: 16). The classroom is a space which gets produced and reproduced as a fixed space, where roles are fixed, and this happens due to repetition of certain actions. The roles of teachers and students are kept intact, through disciplines, syllabus and hierarchical structure of education. Disruptions and transgressions are not addressed, because they could potentially un-hinge these fixed roles— a phenomenon that is risk laden, as it carries the potential to challenge power and hierarchy. We can extend this understanding to also point out that the classroom gets fixed as a ‘straight’ space— certain kinds of bullying, such as homophobic bullying, produce more tensions than others, because they disrupt the heterosexual space. For which fixing or correcting one’s behavior is seen as a solution, rather than addressing and exploring the tensions. Some bodies fail in their orientation and alignments with the given, straight line, and these bodies appear out of space, out of line, they appear queer, slanted. “Orientation depends on the bodily inhabitation of that space. […] Orientation involves aligning body and space” (ibid: 6-7).

Thus, bodies align themselves (or are made to align), to ‘fit’ and not jut out, and this act of aligning also gets repeated over time and again.

When my gender transgressive male body tried to extend out in the heteronormatively striated space inside the Bangladesh classroom, it caused disruptions in that space. My failed orientation circulated affects such as anxiety and tension between my body and that of my classmates. I was failing even though I was trying to orient again and again— “Orientations involve directions towards objects that affect what we do, and how we inhabit space” (ibid: 28). I oriented towards the boys in the class, looking for approval, and not the girl who helped me become more ‘masculine.’

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8 See footnote 2.
The affect that circulated as I encountered other male bodies in the class was that of anxiety—anxiety for the non-normative. Ahmed in her essay *Affective Economies*, writes, “In other words, fear works to restrict some bodies through the movement and expansion of others” (Ahmed 2004: 127). The restriction in my case was in the form of me trying to fix my gender transgressive behavior and also ‘straightening’ my slanted sexual orientation.

My gender transgressive behavior, along with my transgressive sexual orientation (that as a teenager, I eventually became aware and then gradually went in denial of, from the sixth to twelfth grade) put me in a doubly compromising position as a teenager inside the classroom. I do not suggest however that I was bullied because I was gay, but because students ‘thought’ I was gay due to my gender transgressive behavior. The bullying did two things. It made me more anxious and aware of my non-heterosexual orientation and made me choose not to identify with my sexual orientation. And the tension and bullying created self-surveillance—a vigilance to stop myself from transgressing any further. I remember reading in my Islamic book\(^9\), in religious class in the eighth grade, that homosexuality (the terminology used in the book) is a sin. What is intriguing is that the term ‘homosexuality’ was never mentioned anytime during my school life, and when it was, it was mentioned in the religious text that the teacher mentioned very briefly in the form of condemnation. What is homosexuality and what is heterosexuality, or what is sexuality—nobody discussed. It was a taken for granted heteronormative striated space, where everyone was assumed to be heterosexual.

As a non-heterosexual teenager, I did not want to identify with my non-heterosexual orientation, because it was thought to be a sin. It was also something that needed to be treated with disgust and contempt—affects generated from the bullying, and thus I found it important to fix and police myself. I was ashamed of both my gender expressions and sexual orientation. “Compulsory heterosexuality shapes what bodies do. Bodies take the shape of norms that are repeated over time and space” (Ahmed 2007: 91). That I was in denial regarding my sexual orientation is only one way of saying that the heteronormative striated space straightened me. Affects like fear, anxiety and shame circulated amongst my body and the body of the bullies, and that held me back from extending out into the space as a transgressor. Ahmed refers to social science scholar Gill Valentine who states, “Repetitive performances of hegemonic asymmetrical gender identities and heterosexual desires congeal over time to produce the appearance that the street is normally a heterosexual space” (Valentine 1996 cited in Ahmed 2007: 92). Only when I repeated actions and norms and straightened my transgressive gender expression (moved my hands less, fixed my walking and postures), I managed to extend out in the space somewhat, without fully leaving

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\(^9\) The Bangladeshi National Education Policy 2010 states that schools need to have religious education till grade 8.
behind the stigma. Thus it is not only my body that was ‘straightened,’ but the space that I occupied, also became further congealed as straight through my self-surveillance and fixing.

My second article *Bullying is not cool* (Khan 2012) is shorter, and also more ‘filtered.’ I remember when I wrote this, I did not want to delve into the details of me being a gender transgressive teenager once again, not because I did not want to, but because this time I felt a little more vulnerable compared to when I wrote the first article. In this article I write, “I shared my experience of being bullied too, how I used to be called a ‘girl,’ ‘fag,’ ‘homo’ because I didn’t fit in the conventional image of masculinity, and apparently I wasn’t a very ‘manly’ boy” (Khan 2012). I do not go into talking about Kimmel this time, but I mention the Egalia pre-school in Stockholm, Sweden, where neutral gender pronouns are used in the classroom, to give an example of how we can cut down on power politics that gender binaries and labels may bring. I mention teachers, by writing:

Bullying is a criminal activity, it is harassment inside classrooms, in front of the very eyes of classmates and teachers, and still it goes unnoticed, unaddressed. What do teachers do? They ask the bullied kid to take up a fight. How is that a sustainable solution? High school teachers can’t be indifferent and inactive. They have to work with different imaginations. They can’t think that bullying is a ‘normal’ part of growing up. The kids who bully are never confronted, their parents are never notified of such criminal behaviour. Parents are only notified if their kids are not doing well in studies, and not when they are failing in becoming sensitive, mature, well-informed people (Khan: 2012).

In retrospect, I find the ‘rhetoric of difference’ in both the articles problematic. In the first article, I write, “Sadly people are so blinded by hegemonic representations of everything that they have simply lost the faith in imagination, free thinking and acknowledging diversity and difference among human beings” (Khan: 2011). In the second article I write, “In high schools, anyone who is a little different, gets bullied, anyone who is ‘funny’ looking, gets bullied: a fat kid, a pimplly kid, a ‘feminine’ boy, a ‘masculine’ girl” (Khan: 2012). This fixing of the body of the bullied as different, assumes that there is nothing problematic with the non-different, or the normal. In the article, I imply that we should ‘let’ or ‘allow’ the ‘queer’ and ‘different’ bodies extend in the space. What is problematic about this ‘solution’ is that I am already assuming the binary between the ‘normal’ and the ‘other.’ Bullying is often framed around such a discourse where the bullied is usually deemed as ‘different,’ which is troubling because it stops us from questioning the ‘normal.’ I also other and exclude the bully by writing that bullying is a ‘criminal’ activity in my second article, thus necessarily deeming the bully as a ‘criminal.’ That being said, I also do not want to assess the classroom as a homogenous space with no power differentials or other differences. I however want to point out how at times we forget to ask the other question, and thus need to be more self-reflexive, how at times we do not question and challenge the ‘normal’ as our entrance point to discuss bullying.
These two articles are largely auto-biographic. The point of re-visiting these two articles is to not only point out what was limiting in the writings, but also to create something new. I returned to these articles to be more reflexive about how in my writings, I ended up discursively producing the bodies of the bully and the bullied. “Each time you return to this work, you reconsider, revise, restructure, and write something new” (Adams & Jones 2011: 108). I have also revisited my writings with the purpose of writing what was previously left unsaid—mainly about orientation and extending out in the space, in the context of affective capacities of bodies inside the classroom.

A diffracted space
It is also important that when I revisit my articles, I become aware of whose voices are not present. In both the articles, it is my voice that is being heard. Even now, as I write about affective production of bodies inside the classroom, it makes little sense if I trace out only my voice yet again. By this I do not necessarily mean my situated voice silences other voices, but I also suggest that the narrative of bullying cannot be complete without the voice of the bully. Gender and culture scholar Sue Lovell writes, “There is power relation at play in writing a biography, and history accords the balance of the power quite emphatically to the biographer” (Lovell 2005 cited in Wall 2008: 49). Leaving out the voice of the bully once again necessarily others and excludes the bully, deeming the voice of the bully as not important, which I want to resist from doing in this thesis. Wall writes, “Questions about ethics in autoethnography have scarcely been raised. [...] Ironically, it is the intricate connection between the personal and the social that made it impossible for me to speak of myself without also speaking of others, thereby creating my ethical conundrum” (Wall 2008: 49). In order to trace the voices that were not present in my articles previously, I thought of getting in touch with one of my former bullies and ask him if he would want to be part of this research. I wanted to see where such kind of interaction might take me. I wrote to him on Facebook. I was not in touch with him prior to this interaction and I made it clear that it is completely up to him if he wanted to participate in the research. Unfortunately, I did not get any reflective piece from this interaction. However, I will recount the conversations I had on Facebook, for the purpose of bringing a different angle to my inquiry. I wanted to engage in a dialogue with the ‘informants beyond the self,’ that is my classmates, and see what could be added to my narrative of bullying. Social science scholar Leon Anderson writes, “Autoethnography is analytically reflexive; it presents a ‘visible narrative presence’ while ‘engaging in dialogue with informants beyond the self’ in order to improve our ‘theoretical understandings of broader social phenomenon’” (Anderson 2006 cited in Adams & Jones 2008: 375). Thus I engaged with other informants to see how the narrative of bully could be further nuanced and problematized, with other voices and narratives. I
use the pseudonym Asif to refer to the bully. I took his permission to mention our conversation here. The message I wrote to Asif (in English) was this:

Asif hi! long time, how are you doing? I’m currently doing my masters in gender studies and writing a thesis on bullying inside the BD classroom, and I’m collecting reflective pieces from my former classmates regarding experiences of bullying or/and getting bullied. Now I remember you bullying Sajid, and me as well (and few others perhaps). Please don’t see this as me pointing finger or anything. I’m doing this because part of research will also be about me recounting my experience of getting bullied, and for that I’m going back to few of my classmates. But I would really like a piece from you, if you are willing to write! So, let me know if you are interested and I’ll explain further. Please see this experience as taking part in the research, which is, well, very important to me right now. your identity will be completely anonymous in the research (if you want to keep it that way).

I copy-paste Asif’s reply here:

Saad, long time but good to hear from you...your thesis topic is really intriguing and thoughtful...ill be happy to contribute towards your research and provide a reflection...the person i was then is not the person i am now...school was a long time ago when no one had a solid identity and we kept on changing everyday in the search of finding who we really are, mostly falling into peer pressure which is not at all helpful for that development...i do think about those times and what i mostly feel is regret...the damages i did were internal and unseen so its hard to weigh them out, giving me no idea how big of an asshole i was...empathy was not a strong suit of mine back then...however those experiences cant be taken back and it contributed to making me the man that i am now...i took a very damaged road to learn empathy and kindness...let me know and i will try to help you out as much as i can from my side…

Asif’s reply came a surprise to me. Asif gets intimate in expressing his thoughts and a few other points that I find quite important. He mentions some of the reasons for which students bully (peer pressure, not having solid identity, constantly changing). He is self-reflexive about his past encounters and confesses that he feels guilty for being a bully in a class. He also mentions that “it can be a good medium for me to repent and express this weight in me,” in one of his subsequent replies. Asif however did not end up sending the piece, as I mentioned earlier. I knocked him a few more times on Facebook. He replied saying that he had written the pieces (handwritten) in chunks, and that “it was quite cathartic writing about those times...” I asked him to send in the chunks, the way they are, and not connect them, but he ultimately did not send any reflective piece, and I did not force him anymore.

Asif acknowledges that the writing is also cathartic. Asif’s body could have been fixed in strata as the bully, but the dialogue between us, the reaching out, set things and affects in motions once again. This time the messages and affects reterritorialized Asif’s body and also my mode of thinking. Back then, I saw Asif as the ‘sadistic’ bully for me. Asif’s perception is valuable, firstly because his voice was missing out in my narratives on bullying, when I wrote in my article (using my voice) that bullying is a criminal act, and secondly, his take on ‘changing constantly’ should be brought in, in the discourse of bullying and affects, when the bodies of the bully and bullied are seen as fixed.
I also got in touch with another classmate who went to school with me from grade six to twelve, who used to be bullied a lot because he was skinny. I use the pseudonym Sajid for him (I mention Sajid in the message I sent to Asif). I asked Sajid for a reflective piece too and whether he would like to share his experience of being bullied. He wrote to me saying, “Hi saad, its been long…hope your doing fine with your life. I am really sorry saad I have already forgetton most the things that happened about bullying in school…cause I never talk or remember those things …..I wish I could help you about that…..anyways…..I wish you all the best and take care.” I wrote back, saying that it is perfectly fine, but asked him, “You write ‘cause I never talk or remember those things.’ Is it because you find it unpleasant and traumatic? I hope you don’t find this intrusive, because as you know I was bullied too, quite badly, and I’m trying to understand the politics of bullying for my research.” To this, he replied saying, “Its unpleasant saad...that why I dont even think about it….haha...best wishes to you too.”

This was also a very important interaction, because it is necessary to consider how others deal with bullying by not remembering and talking about it, and reinforcing the code of silence around bullying. This was the way I dealt with bullying when I was in school. I told no one that I was being bullied, and in fact I was always worried to take my parents to school on Parent Teacher Day, in case a bully passed a comment to me in front of my parents (a point that I mention in my first article). The code of silence surrounding bullying should be addressed in order to address the affects the bullied student feels— affects of shame, trauma and humiliation— affects that cow students into silence, thinking that there is something wrong with the bullied, which is the way I thought when I was bullied. By not talking about bullying, the code of silence and stigma attached to it becomes normalized.

The reasons I wanted to bring in narratives and get into dialogue with my former classmates is because I wanted us to engage together to talk about our school and past encounters and see our affective co-production back then. It did not happen the way I wanted it to, but these conversations are nonetheless valuable. It enabled me to see how a bully also struggles to write down about his past encounters, and not just the bullied. A dialogue is necessary in order to bring down binaries and to un-fix bodies— themes that could be used to also shape our ideas of knowledge production inside the classroom.

Thus, when we bring in affects to talk about the politics of bullying, we get a different angle to talk about bullying— not in the usual framework that posits the bully as ‘aggressive’ and ‘evil’ and bullied as the ‘weak’ and ‘different.’ Such discursive takes stratify identities of the bullied and bully, further excluding and othering them, and keeps the binary between the bully and bullied intact.
In this section I revisited my past experiences of bullying through the two articles I wrote. I problematized both the articles and wrote about how some bodies can extend in the space, while others cannot, and I read that phenomenon in the framework of affect theory. I wrote about the importance of affect theory to read the bodies of the bully, bullied and the teachers inside the classroom, so that we do not fix them in strata, and instead try and understand the process of affective co-production of bodies inside the classroom. I elaborated on how I experienced homophobic bullying due to my gender transgressive behavior. That led to me trying to correct my behavior and also ‘straightening’ my slanted sexual orientation. Affect theory also helped me trace out the different kinds of ‘tensions’ I experienced as a student. I entered others’ narratives as a nomadic figuration of my story (tracing my tensions, through others’ tensions). In the next section, I will bring in the themes and motifs that already came up in this section, mainly those of dialogue, affects, disruptions and power relations, and elaborate more on them and connect them to the data I have collected from schools.
SITUATED VIEWS

In this section, I will write about the materials I collected for this thesis from schools in Dhaka, to elaborate on my take of the discursive production of the bully and bullied. My data consists of the answers I have received during the focus group discussions with students in the different schools, the interviews with teachers, administrative figures and non-teaching staff (helpers or cleaners at schools), observations Naureen and I made during our one week stay at School C, answers I received in the surveys I gave to students and teachers and reflective pieces from the students of School C. To explore what I mean by the discursive production of the bully and bullied, I will refer to the answers I received for the questions that I had asked students and teachers, such as what does bullying mean to them, what do they think are the reasons behind bullying and suggestions for addressing bullying and possibly bringing it down in the class. Their answers helped me highlight a few specific ways that bullying takes place in the classrooms and schools I went to in Dhaka. I rely on their responses to bring forth my theoretical arguments of studying bullying in the framework of affects and power relations inside the classroom.

In the previous section, I mentioned the significance of reading the classroom as a multi-sensory space where an affective co-production of bodies takes place. I used autoethnographic means to elaborate on how affects, circulated from the bullying I experienced, influenced my capacity to act—mainly leading me to ‘fix’ my gender transgressive behavior and ‘straighten’ my slanted sexual orientation. Such an encounter pointed out and produced my body as a transgressive body that needed fixing, by the other bodies that also got produced as the normative, in opposition to mine. Reading bullying using such a framework of affects can lead us to an understanding of how the bodies of the bully and bullied get produced in the classroom, through encounters, and are not simply ‘there.’ In this section, I will look at how the bodies of the bully and bullied are discursively produced inside the classrooms I went to during my field work.

In School C, the methods I used to collect data were as mentioned; sit-in classroom observations, focus group discussions, surveys and collect reflective pieces from students. I did focus group discussions with students of ages between ten to fifteen, from grades 5 to 9. The number of students in the groups varied from ten to twenty-five. Since we only had one week, Naureen and I conducted the focus group discussions whenever we the opportunity arose, without planning things in advance, sometimes in the middle of lessons by taking permission from teachers, during group project works and during games periods. I took permission from my informants and recorded their interviews using a recorder. I recorded all the interviews and focus group discussions, which I transcribed later. I conducted the focus group discussions mostly in English, with some additional Bengali, which I translated during the transcriptions. Naureen and I also did
one focus group discussion with the maids or cleaners, middle aged and elderly women coming from lower socio-economic classes, after school hour one day. We wanted to know what kind of ideas they had about bullying and what roles they played inside the school dynamics. This discussion was done in Bengali, because the maids did not speak or understand English.

The survey for the students, in English, had nineteen questions, which Naureen and I took to all three sections of grades 5 to 9 (see Appendix). Since the survey was also an anonymous platform, I wanted to see what their answers might be if the students expressed their views on bullying without feeling shy or worrying about the consequences. I also wanted to rely on the specific answers students provided with, in order to come to an understanding of how students view bullying in these classrooms. I also created a separate survey on bullying for the teachers (see Appendix), that Naureen and I handed out to teachers in teachers’ rooms, and requested them to fill out by the end of the day. This survey had sixteen questions, and from the answers provided by the teachers, I wanted to see how self-reflexive are they as teachers, and how they view bullying. In order to give more agency to the students to express their views on bullying, I asked them to write reflective pieces to share any kind of experience related to bullying. As means of bottom up story-telling, I wanted to come across their situatedness through these stories. I asked them to submit their reflections in any form—prose, poems and drawings. Naureen and I took an envelope in their classroom and collected these narratives, which the students submitted either by folding or in envelopes. We asked them to keep their identities anonymous with the hope that more students feel comfortable to submit stories. We made it very clear that this was completely up to the students if they wanted to submit reflective pieces, and should not see this as a school exercise. We announced that it was perfectly alright if they did not, but also pointed out that if they wanted to share their stories, this would be a safe medium to do so. In the other 3 schools, I mostly conducted focus group discussions with students between the ages of thirteen and seventeen. I refer to their answers as well in this section.

I mentioned earlier that one of the themes of this thesis is to map out tensions in the classroom, and explore how that can be generative. Tension circulates amongst bodies in the class when bullying takes place, and when tension circulates, I think it is necessary to trace what such an affect does to the bodies—how do bodies respond (or not), how do they perform, how are they produced in the process and how do teachers deal with bullying. Employing affect theory to talk about bullying serves three main purposes in this thesis. Affect theory allows me to a) acknowledge tensions and disruptions inside the classroom b) explore how these moments carry potential to address power relations between teachers and students inside the classroom, and ultimately address pedagogy and knowledge production, and c) de-territorialize the role of students and teachers.
Discursive production of the bully and bullied

Child studies researcher Paul Horton, in his PhD dissertation, *School Bullying and Power relations in Vietnam* (2011), wrote about the connection between bullying and institutional power that is in play in schools in Vietnam. Bullying should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon, which takes place between the bodies of the bully and the bullied. Horton calls for a methodological shift, where bullying needs to be contextualized in institutional power relations that is played out in the hierarchical settings of the school and classrooms. Horton refers to philosopher Michel Foucault to talk about how power and oppression functions, and explains how power is not a structure or an institute, but rather functions from different points and is not necessarily always a top-down process. He extends this understanding to suggest that bullying can be seen as an act of resistance towards authoritative power and discipline, a resistance that students cannot fully express in front of authoritative figures of teachers and the principal, for which they bully other students. This shift in reading the politics of bullying from aggression based to power relations in school and classroom can be productive. It will not deem bullying as an isolated phenomenon that happens only between students, and thus would also make us question how we look at the bully and bullied and our approaches to deal with bullying. Horton’s understanding of bullying ties in well with the theoretical framework of affect studies that I employ in this thesis, to write about power relations inside the classroom.

Horton classifies direct and indirect bullying in his book. Direct bullying mainly involves physical bullying, such as hitting, kicking, pinching, and also non-verbal bullying such as name calling, threatening and mocking. Indirect bullying, is ‘less visible’ and occurs in the form of spreading rumors, exclusion, isolation and note passing. Along with addressing the indirect and less visible form of bullying, it can be troubling to address power relations between teachers and students, because it might be interpreted as a cut down in the teacher’s authority. This has the implication of disrupting the knowledge that is already there, which means that we need to view bullying in the context of power dynamics of the entire classroom and not just of the bully and the bullied— look at how teachers, and passive and active observers also contribute to bullying. Addressing power relations in the framework of anti-oppressive pedagogy can lead to fruitful discussions about what the classroom should ‘be.’

In the classrooms, where I went, both direct and indirect bullying took place, according to the students I spoke to. Some common points that students brought up in regards to bullying, were skin colour (students with darker complexion were bullied, boys who were too fair were also called ‘gay’ at times), English speaking capability (students who did not speak good English were made fun of, students who had a ‘bad’ or ‘tacky’ accent were also made fun of), girls who had male
friends or boyfriends were often slut shamed, students were sometimes bullied for the kind of jobs their parents did (like having a fish business or being a politician), students who had affluent parents (like politicians or lawyers) sometimes bullied others, students with certain body types were bullied, boys who acted ‘girly’ were bullied, students who were autistic were bullied, there were silent exclusions taking place in the classrooms and cyber bullying, when students created fake accounts of other students on social network sites like Facebook. Some of these kinds of bullying were addressed and sometimes not addressed by the school authority, depending on the school’s attitude towards bullying. There are schools that are lenient and do not address bullying at all. However, recently a few schools in Dhaka, including schools A and B, have started to employ zero tolerance approach towards bullying, and also hire psychologists to work as counsellors.

From the answers that I got from students and teachers through focus group discussions, interviews and surveys, I also tried to trace out a few of the common traits and characteristics that kept coming up as students and teachers talked about the bully and the bullied. A bully was believed to be someone who is ‘naughty,’ ‘rough,’ ‘do not get love at home,’ ‘sadistic,’ ‘angry,’ ‘insecure,’ ‘jealous,’ ‘have mental issues,’ ‘cool,’ ‘criminals’ and ‘losers.’ While bullied were those who were ‘weak,’ ‘nerdy,’ ‘not good at sports,’ ‘not good at studies,’ ‘stupid,’ ‘loser,’ ‘has some kind of problem,’ ‘fat,’ ‘different’ and ‘don’t know how to fight back.’ A few teachers in School C mentioned about the ‘weak personality of the bullied’ in the survey they answered. Talking about the bully and bullied in this way poses problems for several reasons. When certain kinds of attributes are associated to the bully and bullied, it tends to discursively fix their identities, implying that students bully and get bullied for particular ‘inherent’ characteristics, and that their identities are not co-produced inside the classroom as bodies of the student and teachers come in contact. The bully and the bullied are then not only stratified, but also ‘othered.’ The bully gets defined as a loser and a criminal, while the bullied as a weakling and someone different, with some kind of problem.

When the schools I visited, take measures regarding bullying, the approaches are usually based on such understandings of the bully and bullied. Schools take disciplinary measures to tackle the criminal behavior of the bully, while counselling and taking assertive techniques to ‘toughen’ the bullied. The bully is also counselled and talked to, for an understanding of his/her ‘mental issues.’ Horton in his book explains that bullying is usually written about in terms of ‘aggression intentionality.’ Such a reading of bullying labels the bully and also the bullied, or discursively fixes identities of the bully and bullied. Horton writes, “A child is not just aggressive, passive, or provocative, but rather has to navigate a range of power relations. […] bullying may say less about the aggressive tendencies of those involved that it does about the relations of power within which it occurs” (Horton 2011: 53-4). Thus, to resist a discursive reading of the bully, we need to also
address the power relations inside the classroom in which teachers play a role, and see how that adds to the hierarchical nature inside the classroom. If schools do not resist a discursive reading of bully and the bullied, then the approaches they take to deal with bullying, are based on this limiting understanding of bullying, which causes further exclusion and othering of students. Reading bodies in the framework of affect theory also helps us question knowledge production inside the classroom and roles of students and teachers in the knowledge production process and will also lead to discussions of power relations inside the classroom. Discursive readings of bullying only enable schools to come up with more disciplinary measures and punishments for students, which does not address institutional power hierarchy.

In one of the classrooms of grade 8 in School C, I came across a poster on bullying. The poster said “A bully is someone who hasn’t the means to earn respect” (In English and bold letters). The poster had two shaded figures on it, a man pointing down at a woman, the man looking assertive, while the woman looking meek and submissive. School B has an annual discipline month, where students and teachers get involved to raise awareness about bullying in school. Throughout the month, students put up posters and do role-plays. Ideas such as ‘bullies are losers’ get currency during this month. When I asked students of grade 8 what they thought of the discipline month, some of them pointed out that they thought the discipline month was quite ineffective, because bullying increases even more after the month is over.

I consider the approaches in both these schools troubling. The posters (in the discipline month and inside the classroom) stratify the identity of the bully as the loser and the oppressor— someone who does not have the means to earn respect— thus predetermining our emotional response towards the bully. I also see the posters as closing off possibilities of having a dialogue regarding bullying, and instead pitching for an absolutist definition of the bully. Moreover, the posters do not give us a nuanced understudying of bullying— that there are different kinds of bullying (not only amongst students, but also between students and teachers) and the different reasons for which bullying takes place.

The approaches in both Schools C and B are taken with best of intentions— to address and cut down bullying in schools, but it is important to be self-reflexive as well, to figure out what is troubling about the approaches schools take. Both the approaches are based on the discursive understanding of the bully, for which the posters end up ‘othering’ and excluding both the bully and the bullied. Calling bullies losers, only excludes them more from getting engaged in a dialogue and figure out how a bully is caught up in a flux of power relations in school. The criminal behavior of the bully is then dealt with discipline (during the discipline month) to ‘fix’ the bully. Another common factor that is talked about to address bullying is the family background of the bully, when
it is believed that the bully does not get love at home, and thus the bully channels his/her anger at the world. Othering the bully and also justifying the action of the bully this way, both eschew addressing power relations inside the classroom, in which teachers play a part.

Roles of researchers in power relations
In order to talk about power relations in the classroom, it is important that I situate myself and Naureen in the classroom too, and explore the kind of power relations that existed between us, the researchers and the teachers and students in the class.

In a focus group in School C, Naureen and I talked to students from grade 7 during their games class. As one of the groups played carom board, Naureen and I made our way in the circle and started talking to them after taking their permission. When I explained my project and said that I want to talk about bullying, everyone in the group laughed and pointed at one boy, who happened to be the bully of the class. He was standing next to me, so I said that I did not want to make anyone uncomfortable and point fingers, but rather have a discussion. However, I laughingly asked the boy why did he bully others in his class. He was visibly uncomfortable and his response was that he does not bully, but teases. Others expressed irritation towards him, but I channeled the discussion towards other things, because I did not have any intention of making any student uncomfortable, and rather engage everyone in discussion. As the discussion progressed, at one point, the boy walked away from the group to play with other classmates. He however came back after a while, and I told him again that my intention was not to make him uncomfortable, but rather have an open chat with him and his classmates. This boy also expressed discomfort when Naureen and I went to his class with the survey that we handed out to students to answer. He said that he did not want to answer the survey. I told him that that was alright and took it back and did not force him to answer it.

It is important to consider this interaction, to see how power relations played out between me and Naureen, the researchers and the students. Given that we were in School C for one week, expecting to bond with students in such a short span of time would have been impossible, especially since we were going around and talking to random groups of students. During a focus group with students from grade 5, Naureen and I asked if the students felt uncomfortable talking about bullying, and several raised hands to express that they were uncomfortable, and did not share anything at all. This could have been due to the fact that students are generally shy when it comes to talking about bullying, and since Naureen and I were seen also seen as adults and academics, they did not trust us with the information they shared. The way we confronted the bully, during the focus group discussion with grade 7 could also be regarded unfair to a certain degree, given Naureen and
I occupied positions that were less threatened compared to the other students, for which we could get away with confronting a bully. However, mine and Naureen’s ages also served as advantage. Given that we were younger compared to the teachers, and that the age difference between us and the students was not that big, students shared certain personal insights too. After a focus group discussion with a group of students from grade 9, one of the girls present in the focus group came up to me and Naureen separately to say that she sometimes feels uncomfortable in her body, and at times she felt bothered if she was bullied about it. She felt safer to share this piece of information separately with me and Naureen, rather than in the focus group. Another student in grade 6 wrote in her reflection, “Thank you for coming to school. By sharing my feelings I am feeling very light minded as if a burden was moved from my head. You both are doing a very good work.”

Naureen and I also contributed to the classroom dynamics, when we went to classes randomly to hand out surveys and ask students to fill them out at the moment. We asked for the the teachers’ permission before talking to students in class, and sometimes we came back later if the teachers asked us to. During one such session, the teacher told us to take not more than ten minutes (we usually requested fifteen minutes of the class time for the survey), and we agreed. When ten minutes had passed, and the students hurried to finish answering the survey, the teacher started to express her irritation. She started to talk to students and open the window of the classroom, causing distractions as the students wrote. Some teachers also asked students to ‘focus’ as they answered the survey, if the students were seen deep in thoughts. Naureen and I quickly had to remark saying that it is best that if students are not given any kind of instruction to fill out the survey, because it was not meant to be a typical study exercise. Our presence in the class, and counter responses to teachers’ remarks, could be seen as transgression and questioning the power that the teacher holds in class and undermining their authority. We could only do so because we had the principal’s permission to be inside the classroom. When a teacher asked me and Naureen to come back later, or insisted that they stayed in room while we asked the students to fill out the survey or speak to the class, Naureen and I did not oppose to that, and chose not to impose our privileges as researchers. Our presence, sanctioned by the authority of the principal, also added to the power relations inside the classroom by privileging me and Naureen. Thus it is important to be self-reflexive about that too, because the purpose of doing this research is to challenge any kind of power relations, including the one that exists between researchers and research informants, for the purpose of non-hierarchical learning.
Roles of teachers in power relations

An affective reading of the multisensory classroom also makes us think of the bodies other than that of the students—mainly that of teachers. Talking about affects can be useful to address the roles of teachers and students that get fixed in the classroom, and the power relations between students and teachers, which could be undercut through an affective understanding of the class. What are the emotions that both students and teachers bring into the class, and how does that influence the class dynamics? Why do teachers and students not want to address disruptions inside the classroom and dwell in the tensions, which could be generative and transformative?

When we bring in affects, we come to realize that the politics of bullying is not as simplistic as it seems. That there are not some set bodies who bully, and some other set bodies who get bullied. This is an important point to consider because then we start looking at bullying not as an isolated phenomena where only bodies of students intra-act, but also the other bodies, such as those of the teachers, who until now only appear in the scene when students have to ‘complain’ about the bully. Teachers are seen as the police officers, who set up surveillance so that students do not bully, and if students do, teachers are expected to discipline accordingly. Affect theory will enable me to make the methodological shift from the aggression based reading of bullying to the studying of power relations inside the classroom, and write more on the bodies that contribute to power politics inside the classroom, including that of teachers.

One of the common points that students in School C and the Bengali medium girls’ school, brought up was that teachers’ behavior can also be often times regarded as bullying, especially when teachers insult students in front of the whole class because of bad grades. Teachers also make derogatory comments on students’ appearance and ‘character’ in front the class. One of the students of grade 6, from the Bengali medium school shared in her reflective piece that she was ignored by her teacher when she went and told the teacher about the problem of bullying. The teacher asked the student to solve the problem herself since it was a students’ affair. The student also mentioned another situation, when a teacher commented on her hair and why was it cut so short, and asked her if everyone from the girl’s hometown cut hair this short. Everyone in the class started to laugh, which upset the student and made her feel humiliated in front of the class, as she expressed in her reflective piece. Horton writes:

The use of sarcasm and derision also serves to reinforce the teacher-student opposition by highlighting a degree of unfairness in the power exercised by teachers over students. Perceived teacher unfairness may have implications for the extent to which bullying occurs in schools, because it may suggest to students that such behaviour is an appropriate means of exercising power (Santinello, Vieno, and De Vogli 2011) and may lead itself to a general ethos that allows bullying to occur more easily (Browne 1995; Rivers, Duncan, and Besag 2007) (Horton 2011: 158-159).
Horton elaborates that at times, teachers’ unfair treatment of students (humiliating students in front of the class) and lack of self-reflexivity can encourage students to act or treat other students in similar kinds of ways. This ties in well with what the student from grade 6 writes, as she brings up two important points, which are that teachers at times can be lenient towards addressing bullying, and dismiss bullying as a ‘student affair,’ and also about teachers’ inappropriate behavior in the classroom, which can influence the behavior of the students amongst themselves.

Another student from grade 6, in School C shared her experience of being bullied in her reflective piece by writing, “When I told this to my class advisors, they told me that I have to stand up for myself. So I did stand up for myself. But that was no use so I kept quiet.” Another student from grade 8 wrote in reflective piece, “The teachers say that we have to be smart enough to tackle ourselves, we have to protect us. But I think it’s not my fault it is the fault of those students who cannot obtain good manners from home. School should take action over the students so that other students also stop bullying.” These two reflections point at the teacher’ inaction towards addressing bullying, treating it once again as a students’ affair, which the students have to take care of by themselves. The student in the first reflection also mentions silence. This could explain how aspects of teachers’ ineffectiveness to deal with bullying and the code of silence surrounding bullying, are connected. This is related to what Horton writes, “Silencing may actually be promoted through the hierarchical management structure of schooling, the use of non-dialogical teaching methods, the teacher-student opposition, and non-discreet teacher-parent and teacher-student communication” (Horton 2011: 201). Dismissing bullying as a students’ affair is also another way of overlooking power relations inside the classroom in which teachers play a role. Thus a methodological shift to address the role of teachers in the politics of bullying can be fruitful to talk about power relations and revise our understanding of bullying inside the classroom.

What also remains unaddressed is how at times teachers are bullied by students too. Teachers can be bullied for several reasons, but one of the most common ways mentioned by students in the written survey in School C is because of the English speaking capability of teachers. In English medium schools, it is not unusual if students speak English that is considered ‘better’ (by students and often teachers as well) than the teachers, who have Bengali medium education backgrounds. This has to do with differences in accent, pronunciation and grammar. A student of grade 9 wrote in her survey that students made fun of teachers, but teachers were too naive to understand that. A power differential in this context is the capability to speak the English language, when students who spoke ‘better’ English, considered themselves to be superior and smarter than the teachers. Employing Horton’s understanding of how power and oppression functions from different points inside the classroom, and that power is not always practiced in a top-down process, can be useful
here. Horton explains bullying as a ‘counter effect’ or resistance against discipline by writing, “In considering disciplinary power, it is important to consider not only how disciplinary power operates but also how it is resisted through the use of various strategies, as students are not docile but also actively seek to exercise power within the disciplinary framework of school” (Horton 2011: 63). Such a take on bullying ties in well with what students in School B had to say about the discipline month, which they deemed as ineffective and led to more bullying. The increase in bullying after the discipline month can be seen as an implication of applying too much discipline. The reason behind using discipline to deal with bullying is based on our troubling understanding of bullying as a criminal act, through which certain students want to proactively harm other students by being innately aggressive. In order to revise schools’ approaches to deal with bullying, it is important that schools’ understanding of the bullied and bully be revised as well. This can happen when an affective understanding of the politics of bullying is employed in the classroom, to address power relations between students and teachers and pedagogy in the class. Moreover, an affective reading of bullying also challenges a discursive reading of the bully and bullied from taking place.

A common solution that many students in School C thought of to bring down bullying was to increase surveillance. Many students in the survey suggested that, along with strictness, schools should also increase surveillance by putting up cameras, so that bullies could be monitored. Non-teaching staff (maids or helpers) in School C, in the focus group discussion I had with them, told Naureen and me about how they are asked by teachers to ‘keep their eyes and ears open’ all the time. They were asked to keep a look out for students who gathered in stairs in groups and looked suspicious to the maids. The element of surveillance was also present in the approach that School A took to deal with bullying. School A had a zero tolerance policy regarding bullying. The school had a counsellor who regularly talked to students who bully or get bullied, and also about other adolescent issues. Teachers and the non-teaching staff policed stairs and corridors during the break time and stood on balconies to keep an eye on students on the playing ground, to make sure no one got involved in any fights. Problematizing these surveillance tactics to deal with bullying might enable schools to see how surveillance at times might lead to more bullying. Horton explains how surveillance is another strategy to practice disciplinary power. He writes, “Schools and buildings within their grounds are generally designed in such a way as to enhance the surveillance of students by school staff” (Horton 2011: 64). He then explains that increasing surveillance in schools may lead to schools becoming more stifling, which could increase bullying, because then bullying starts to occur in spaces that are outside the disciplinary gaze of teachers.

This take on surveillance could be brought into discussions on cyber bullying, which some students in School C described as very frequent. Cyber bullying takes place outside the disciplinary
gaze of teachers and thus takes place more easily and frequently, especially when most students have access to internet. One of the teachers in School C mentioned in the survey that students wrote mean things on Facebook, school walls and toilets—spaces that fell outside the disciplinary gaze of teachers, where surveillance did not reach. Surveillance is also problematic because it once again makes bullying seem as a phenomenon that only takes place among students, and teachers have no role in it, except when it comes to disciplining and surveillance. Such an approach reinforces a hierarchical environment in the classroom, where the bodies of the teachers are kept away from critiquing and revising. Through surveillance, teachers practice discipline which creates a hierarchical environment, which reinforces the power binary between students and teachers. Surveillance also fixes the bodies of teachers and students into stratified roles. It evades an affective understanding of the bodies of teachers and students, through which roles of teachers and students could be revised for a potential cut in power relations inside the classroom. When bullying is talked about without addressing power relations inside the classroom that get played out through discipline and surveillance, which reinforce power binaries between students and teachers, we get an unrevise picture of the classroom, which otherwise could be revised to make it more inclusive and safer.

In this section, I wrote about the materials I collected during my visits to the four different schools in Dhaka. I focused on School C, where my materials for analysis were the transcribed interviews, field notes, reflections, survey answers and reflective pieces by students. I went through them to come up with contextual readings of bullying, the kinds of bullying that take place in these classrooms and how students and teachers want to address and solve bullying in the classroom. From their answers, I traced out how the figures of bully and bullied are discursively produced, and wrote about the problems of thinking of bullying in that way. Such an understanding also leads to schools coming up with problematic approaches to address bullying, such as surveillance, discipline and punishments, which further exclude and other the bully and the bullied. In the process, power relations inside the classroom and how teachers contribute to it, is never addressed. Exploring power relations using the framework of affect theory, to see how the bodies of teachers and students are potentially co-produced, can enable a non-essential understanding of the bully, bullied and teacher. Mine and Naureen’s presence in the classroom and questioning teachers’ authority, and teachers getting bullied, are two examples of not only how the power of authority gets undermined, but also how the roles of teachers could be revised, so that along with them, researchers and students could engage in a dialogue to revise the classroom altogether. This makes us think about what kind of roles teachers and students have when it comes to knowledge production inside the classroom, and how power can be undermined when it comes to knowledge production, which should be a liberating process, and not an oppressive one. Reading bullying in the framework of
such a philosophy can open up possibilities of making the classroom much safer and more inclusive and leads to the final discussions of this thesis- that of anti-hierarchical and non-oppressive pedagogy.
ADDRESSING POWER RELATIONS THROUGH GENDER PEDAGOGY

In this section, I will bring in intersectional gender pedagogy and see how this might be a productive tool to write about power differentials in the classroom and link that to bullying. This will allow me to discuss the possibilities of non-hierarchical education and revise our understanding of knowledge production, as a means to address and potentially challenge power relations amongst students and teachers. Non-hierarchical pedagogy and addressing power relations, will also allow me to further locate tensions, disruptions and other affects inside the classroom, and explore their potential, to address and reterritorialize roles of teachers and students in knowledge production. In this last section, I will revisit the answers of teachers and students from the previous presentation, and autoethnographic elements, as I write about one particular experience of mine, as a teacher, to explore the significance of non-hierarchical pedagogy and affects.

**Intersectional gender pedagogy**

In her book *Feminist Studies— A Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing* (2011), Nina Lykke writes that discursively and institutionally constructed sociocultural categories of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, age/generation, dis/ability, nationality cannot be read as isolated categories, because they are already always intra-connected and criss-crossing. They are intersectional. In another essay titled *Intersectional gender pedagogy*, Lykke writes, “The aim of intersectional gender pedagogy is to make students and teachers more conscious about power relations, excluding norms and differences in the classroom” (Lykke 2013: 1). She also writes that communication in the classroom may be improved using the knowledge of intersectionality. Thus, intersectionality can turn out to be a fruitful methodological tool to read all these categories in interplay with each other, to see how specific kinds of power differentials and/or constraining normativities (Lykke 2013) are produced.

In the previous sections of the thesis, several power differentials and intersections were made relevant in the classrooms I went to. Through my autoethnographic inquiry, I wrote about how sexuality and gender are power differentials through which unjust behavior inside the classroom may emerge when certain kinds of bodies can extend in space while others cannot. I wrote about my sexual orientation and gender transgressive behavior that I attempted to correct inside the classroom, because both were unacceptable in the heteronormative orientation of the classroom space. Other power differentials that also came up in other parts of my material were gender, when students from the Bengali medium girls’ school informed me that teachers often comment on their ‘character’ if they are seen with a male friend; socio-economic class, when students with parents who have jobs that are not ‘respectable’, such as having a fish business, are often made fun of; students from upper socio-economic backgrounds could also be bullied; language, when students
with better English speaking capability, bully teachers and make fun of their accent; skin color, when students with darker complexions are bullied. I suggest that using intersectional gender pedagogy, students and teachers can become more aware of the excluding norms of these power differentials, through discussions on bullying. Addressing these power differentials will also enable an understanding of how schools are part of society, and like other social institutions, schools also privilege certain identities, while marginalizing others.

Taking pedagogy as an entrance point to analyze bullying fits well with Horton’s suggested methodological shift, of not regarding bullying as an isolated phenomenon. Bullying also has to be addressed in the context of institutional power relations. Thus in order to address bullying, one needs to address hierarchies in schooling and education. This can be done when power relations between teachers and students are challenged. Going back to the example of the disciplinary month of School B — several students from grade 8, in one of the focus group discussions, deemed the disciplinary month as ‘complete waste’ and ineffective, because according to them, bullies bully ‘even more’ when the discipline month is over. When I told the school counsellor about this side that the students brought up regarding the disciplinary month, the counsellor said that it is only normal that some aspects will not work with certain approaches. The counsellor plans the activities with students, so I would not say that there is no dialogue at all between them. However, it is important to question the approaches and be more conscious about trying to figure out what other things are left unsaid, and what other things are coming forth, opening up spaces for further discussions.

In my interpretation, the initiative of the disciplinary month does not address power structures, hierarchical education, discipline and power differentials inside the classroom and school, but instead stigmatizes and criminalizes students once again. The bully and the bullied are once again re-produced discursively, where the bully is defined as ‘strong, but a loser,’ while the bullied as ‘weak, and needs saving.’ Thus the binary between the bully and the bullied stays intact, eschewing discussions regarding roles of teachers and potentials of liberatory and engaging pedagogy to cut down power relations inside the classroom.

Educator Paulo Freire in his book Pedagogy of the Oppressed (2005) writes about the banking concept of education, which hinders critical thinking inside the classroom. Freire writes, “In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (Freire 2005: 72). He writes about how there is a lack of dialogue inside the classroom, which can be disastrous when it comes to knowledge production. An education that does not thrive on dialogue cannot be liberatory, for neither the students nor the teachers. Within the banking concept, education thus becomes a process of ‘depositing’ and not a dialogue, or as Freire writes that education suffers from a ‘narration
sickness.’ The banking concept of education is important to revise because it hinders dialogue and development of critical thinking. As opposed to such a banking concept of education, Freire proposes the problem posing education. “Banking education resists dialogue; problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality. Banking education treats students as objects of assistance; problem-posing education makes them critical thinkers” (ibid: 83). Dialogue is important if we aim for a non-hierarchical environment inside the classroom, where everyone will bring in and acknowledge each others’ situated realities, and has the potential of leading to an epistemological shift. “Dialogue cannot exist without humility. The naming of the world, through which people constantly re-create that world, cannot be an act of arrogance” (ibid: 90). Dialogue will thus also challenge the authority of the teacher, because it will no longer be the teacher taking up the position of knowledge producer in class, but everyone taking part in it.

There are other consequences of the banking concept of education, and one of them, as Horton mentions in his book, is boredom in the class. bell hooks writes, “Classroom should be an exciting place, never boring” (hooks 1994: 7). Horton in his book explores how boredom and bullying can be associated with each other. He writes that one of the reasons for which students bully is because they are bored in the classroom, and thus bullying turns out to be a ‘removal activity,’ that students engage in to entertain themselves and others (the observers). Non-dialogical teaching can be non-inclusive, and does not engage students to want to study. Through the materials I collected in School C, I learned from talking to students that they thought that boredom is a common reason for which students bullied, and students bullied for ‘excitement’ in class and to make others laugh and make an ‘impression.’ Horton writes, “Bullying may provide a form of removal activity as it may provide a form of entertainment in an otherwise boring lesson, involving plenty of drama and allowing for the potential involvement of numerous people” (Horton 2011: 126). Students in the schools I visited thought that bullies want to make an impression and get attention from the observers. Students also got upset when the observers stood and stared, and did not do anything when someone got bullied. When the observers laughed, my informants thought that this encouraged bullies to bully more. Horton also writes, “Rather than merely consisting of negative acts intended to cause harm, bullying may provide the means by which students strategically adjust to the demands of schooling, and through which they attempt to break up the monotony of their daily schooled lives” (Horton 2011: 113). Thus the concerns that should be addressed are why students get bored in class and how the classroom environment can be revised in terms of dialogue and pedagogy, in which both students and teachers will play equally important roles to ensure that the classroom is not boring and non-engaging.
Addressing boredom in the classroom should be mandatory in order to work for an engaging pedagogy. Addressing boredom can be troubling for the teacher, because it is in a way acknowledging that the teacher is not engaging enough. This acknowledgement can be productive to address the power hierarchy between teachers and students, and also lead to the ‘becoming’ of the teacher. bell hooks engages in a dialogue with Ron Scapp, her friend and a philosopher, who points out to hooks:

We professors should be empowered by our interactions with students. […] along with them I grow intellectually, developing sharper understandings of how to share knowledge and what to do in my participatory role with students. This is one of the primary differences between education as a practice of freedom and the conservative banking system with encourages professors to believe deep down in the core of their being that they have nothing to learn from their students (hooks 1994:152).

By ‘they,’ Schapp refers to teachers. This is in the context of universities, but this can also be applicable in the context of schools, when teachers do not ask for opinions from students and instead opt for lecturing, and perpetuate power through non-engaging, one-sided lectures.

**The classroom as a risky space**

Pedagogue Elizabeth Ann Ellsworth writes, “Teaching involves a great deal of unknowability” (Ellsworth 1997 cited in Kumashiro 2002: 67). It is scary to take risks inside the classroom and ‘let go’. Scapp in his dialogue with hooks writes, “When we try to change the classroom so that there is a sense of mutual responsibility for learning, students get scared that you are now not the captain working with them, but that you are after all just another crew member— and not a reliable one at that” (hooks 1994: 144). Dialogue and epistemological becoming has to do with writing off authority that is often practiced inside the classroom via the single voice of the teacher. I would suggest that this challenging of authority is necessary for the classroom to become more engaging. “Education as the practice of freedom is not just about liberatory knowledge, it’s about a liberatory practice in the classroom” (hooks 1994: 147). hooks writes that personal narratives and academic knowledge (in the university context) when read together can enhance our knowledge. When teachers in schools encourage students to question the things they read in class, and also challenge, taking their personal narratives as their entrance points, the classroom can transform into a ‘risky,’ yet generative space, no longer ‘in control’ of the teacher. This can turn out to be an unknown process for both teachers and students.

Horton writes that the performance of teachers is evaluated by seeing how well the teacher ‘manages’ the class, and also how well the teacher has taught, which can be evaluated through the Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) communication patterns. He writes, “Teachers who are perceived to be unable to control their classes would most likely not be considered the best teachers and would thus not be given the best classes” (Horton 2011: 177). Controlling the class may entail
treating bullying with immediate disciplining and punishment or eschewing discussion on bullying altogether, to give an impression that students are well behaved or more importantly, are well ‘controlled.’ Managing the class may also entail ‘ad-hoc punishment’, and unjustified treatment of the student, to address disruptions inside the classroom, like when students speak out of turn and when they bully.

In the first question of the questionnaire for teachers, I asked the informants to list characteristics that they thought were important for teachers in general to be good teachers. I posed this question to see what their stance was on being pedagogues. Two of the points that came up several times were ‘class management’ and ‘time management’ skills. This ties in well with the role of teachers being ‘in control’ of the class, and ‘managing’ the class well— managing any kind of disturbance and transgressions which I believe otherwise carry potentials to transform the classroom. Teachers also control the classroom by ‘bribing’ students to get good marks and meeting standards. For example, in School C, during a physics class of grade 8, the teacher motivated the class to finish the classwork by saying that it was being marked. Only at the end, she revealed that it was not being marked, and I observed that few students looked visibly disappointed (they sighed and looked demotivated) when they found out that their effort was not being marked. This not only shows how a teacher manages a class using the glorious images of full marks and meeting standards that teachers value, but also that students find something worth doing only when it is being marked, and not because they want to enjoy the process of learning.

Managing the class also means managing disruptions—making sure that students, and also teachers themselves, do not transgress from their given roles. When there is a lack of dialogue and engagement in classrooms, it becomes difficult to challenge and transform norms in the classrooms. In one of the focus groups, students of grade 9 in School C mentioned the issue of bad teaching and how unsatisfied students can feel due to bad teaching. I asked them if they discussed this with the teacher in case, or other teachers. They said that most of the time they did not because they did not trust other teachers with confidential information and also that they did not want to jeopardize their grades. This shows there is a lack of platform where students and teachers can engage in a dialogue to talk about pedagogy and teaching styles and also that students’ fear of bad grades compartmentalize them from having a dialogue, from engaging, from acting out.

In another question of the questionnaires for the teachers, I asked whether teachers thought it was important to take feedback and criticism from students regarding the way they taught in class. Two out of the seventeen informants wrote ‘no.’ One answer was “The feedback and criticism should come from an expertise. The student’s view can be contradictory.” The second answer was, “Rather an experienced teacher can observe my class and take feedback from him/her.” The two teachers keep the power binary between students and teachers intact, by writing that students do not
have the expertise to critique teaching. The hindering of dialogue also fixes the body of the teacher in strata, and closes it off from ‘becoming.’ A lack of dialogue could mean that there might not be moments of encounters that can have potential of an epistemological transformation, when the teacher starts viewing him/herself differently, in relation to the new kind of knowledges that students bring in the classroom. As hooks writes, “There must be an ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamic, that everyone contributes. These contributions are resources. Used constructively they enhance the capacity of any class to create an open learning community” (hooks 1994: 8). This ongoing recognition can only be enacted when there is a dialogue in the classroom, when teachers are open to the critiques that students pose about them.

Teachers acknowledging the fact that they get bullied could also be seen as compromising their managerial role. A lack of dialogue between students and teachers also ensure a silence surrounding teachers getting bullied, because it necessarily indicates a breakdown of authority. Teachers acknowledging that they are bullied would imply that they cannot control the class well, and that they are not authoritative enough, as I have shown, this is often considered an indicator to determine if a teacher is ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ If the teacher cannot control the class, it implies an implosion of the system, a breakdown of hierarchy that teachers strive hard to maintain. This is where I suggest that teachers should be more self-reflexive and see what these moments of tensions can perhaps do to their role as teacher in the class. This very role of the teacher being authoritative and in control needs to be revised, to cut down power relations in the class, and make the knowledge production process more dialogue oriented, where students will also contribute in figuring out what the classroom should be.

In order to elaborate more on the significance of dialogue and disruptions in class, let me recount a teaching experience of mine, to point out how I also tried to manage the class, fearing transgressions in the classroom. I worked as a part time creative writing teacher at an English medium school (which had classes from the elementary level till grade ten) in the beginning of the year 2010 (for about five months). I was completing the third year of my Bachelor’s program in English Literature. As a teacher, I tried to be experimental and at times brought in different texts for reading, from outside the syllabus. Students did not always enjoy my ‘eccentricity’ or innovativeness. At times they would shamelessly express their boredom. Back then, without any understanding of affect and non-hierarchical pedagogy, I only expressed my frustration towards the students and ignored their boredom and went along with the text that I chose as the reading material. Now I understand that such education practice without dialogue, cannot be liberatory, even though I had the best intention of encouraging students to have a critical outlook on the literature.
I had a tense encounter with a boy from grade 3. He sat at the back of the class, and did not pay attention to what I was teaching. He started playing with his ball in the middle of the class, while everyone else went along with their classwork. At one point I snatched away the ball from him as a form of punishment for not paying attention in class. What I remember next is that the boy and I were caught up in a sort of physical combat where he was trying to topple me with full body force. I grabbed his arms and held him back, not hitting him, but still exerting force in return to cow him into acquiescence. This ‘body combat’ was taking place at the back of the classroom and created tension in the classroom, because by then the students were all looking at us, anxious and confused about what to do. The boy was not backing off, even though I tried my best to stop him from fighting me back. I tried to physically force him to stop and make him sit, but nothing was working, he continued resisting me. After one point, a student ran out of the class, and called another teacher from the teacher’s room. By the time she arrived, the student had stopped fighting me, and was sitting in his chair, shaking a little. I told the teacher it was alright, and that she should carry on with her work. She went away, eyeing the student. The others in the class sat down in their seats, but they were looking back at the student, giving him angry looks, and glaring at him with contempt. Afterwards, I spoke to the student very strictly threatening him that he will face severe consequences if he behaved like this one more time in class and went back to teaching. I did not think back upon this incident even once, until now.

Now when I look back at this incident, I see unbridled affects crisscrossing the air inside that classroom. So many kinds of tensions from so many bodies. As a teacher, I did not ask the student even once why he acted like this. I might have asked him if he had done this with another student. As a teacher, by not asking, I separated myself from the classroom, as if my body had nothing to do with his action. All I had in my mind was that I needed to ‘control’ this boy, who was being unbelievably ‘disruptive’ in the class, threatening my authority. I tried to ‘manage’ this disruption by discipline and strictness, and not dialogue. The fact that I did not bring this up again (this moment of tension between me and the student) shows how I considered my position above the class, viewing it as invisible in contribution to power relations in the class. Why did the boy act like this? Why was he angry? How did I intensify his anger by taking away his ball? Did he physically fight me back because I was younger compared to the rest of the teachers? How did this power cut make me nervous and anxious and question my ‘managerial’ capability as a teacher? I did not try to look for answers to these questions, because I wanted to ‘manage’ the disruptive body and the affects. Talking to the boy authoritatively (which encouraged the students to also give him unpleasant looks) excluded him further.

In the context of this thesis, this incident is pivotal to understand how the body of the teacher is not detached from the rest of the bodies inside the class, and that the teacher is also part of the
multisensory environment and how teachers deal with disruptions inside the class, using discipline. When I look back at this incident, I see myself trying hard to ‘maintain order’ in class. I see myself trying to tune down the disruption by being authoritative and not engaging. If I had engaged in a dialogue with that student, I might have come to know about drawbacks in my teaching, which might have prompted the student to engage in something else, something more interesting than my teaching and lesson. Kumashiro writes, “Learning is about disruption and opening up to further learning, not closure and satisfaction” (Kumashiro 2002: 43). Confrontation and unlearning is uncomfortable, but generative, because these kinds of tensions when mapped out can enable teachers to revise their role in the class, and also unlearn. I draw on this personal experience as a teacher here to connect with what the teachers of School C wrote about managing the classroom, and elaborate on how that can be problematic. Instead of managing tension, there should be an acknowledgement of it, which could be used to reterritorialize roles of teachers and students in classrooms.

**Transformative potentials of engaged pedagogy**

Dialogue can be transgressive, because dialogue challenges the authoritative power that teachers hold. Dialogue comes with risks, when students question teachers. The ‘managerial role’ of the teacher needs to be diffused, with dialogue and reaching out. Thus learning, un-learning, disruptions and transgressions— should all be acknowledged to practice liberatory pedagogy. Paulo Freire explains how liberation is praxis, a constant process, a figuring out. He writes that education is also constantly remade in praxis, thus equating education with liberation, or a liberating process (Freire 2005). Engaged pedagogy can be ‘physically exhausting’ and a frustrating process as pointed out by bell hooks. As Scapp mentions in his dialogue with hooks, “Not every moment in the classroom will necessarily be one that brings you immediate pleasure, but that doesn’t preclude the possibility of joy. Nor does it deny the reality that learning can be painful” (hooks 1994: 154). Such pedagogy requires constant questioning and revisiting, and requires both teachers and students to be more self-reflexive, to have a dialogue which does not necessarily have to end. I employ the imagery of mapping of tensions in my thesis, to suggest that dwelling in the spaces of tension can be productive to revise the identities of teachers and students inside the classroom, and also address, revise and possibly un-do power relations.

Freire writes, “The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach” (Freire 2005: 80). Thus, the purpose of engaged pedagogy is to create a non-hierarchical environment in class so that teachers and students both come together to reinvent education and the learning space in the class. Writing that teachers in the Bangladeshi classrooms do not have the time and motivation to learn
about new ‘techniques’ to teach is a concern that cannot be dismissed, but it also puts an unfair burden on the teachers, once again deeming teaching and learning as disconnected phenomena and isolated from power relations inside the classroom. This take also implies that students do not have anything to do with the formation of pedagogy in the classroom. Thus, looking at pedagogy as a ‘process,’ a ‘becoming,’ where both students and teachers take part, rather than ‘techniques’ that teachers have to come up with and use to teach, shifts and cuts down power relations between students and teachers. The idea of techniques being closed off from questioning, once again stratifies bodies of teachers and students into fixed roles, making the knowledge production process static.

Dialogue should be initiated and self-reflexivity encouraged to address vulnerabilities of not only students, but teachers as well inside the classroom. Situating the bodies of teachers in the classroom, where they bring in affects and power differentials can also be another entrance point to map out tensions. How stressed is the teacher today? Why does the teacher feel demotivated? These are questions that can be addressed to understand the psychological and corporal production of the teacher. By addressing these questions, we de-stratify the role of the teacher. We no longer view the teacher as someone who does not lose control, who does not share vulnerabilities.

Thus there needs to be space for the affects that teachers bring to the classroom too. When dialogue takes place, students and teachers become more aware of each other’s voices and vulnerabilities. A teacher is equally a part of politico-socio-economic structures such as class, gender, age, sexuality, like a student, and thus cannot be left out from talking about power politics inside the classroom. Saying that it is teachers who have to come up with and think about experimental pedagogy once again reinforces the power split between students and teachers, and puts the decisions regarding what the classroom should ‘be’ out of reach of the students. hooks writes, “When the classroom is truly engaged, it’s dynamic. It’s fluid. It’s *always* changing. […] I kept reminding myself that I couldn’t do it alone” (hooks 1994: 158-9). When bodies are seen as fixed inside the classroom, we overlook the affective production that takes place among them. A teacher can ‘become’ more than what a teacher is ‘supposed’ to be— someone who stands in front of the classroom, lecturing and grading. Edyta Just in her essay *Teaching Gender in Interdisciplinary and Transnational Classrooms*, writes, “The embodied subjectivities that form a class composition affect one another. […] a teacher should realize that she/he influences and can be influenced, stimulates and experiences becomings of different kinds, and constitutes an important element of yet ‘flat,’ non-hierarchical assemblage” (Just 2012: 176). The teacher is just another embodied subjectivity inside the classroom, and his/her situatedness has to be accounted for too, which means that teacher should be aware of the process that students can un hinge the teacher’s
role for the purpose of non-hierarchical classroom environment, to bring down the power relations between the teacher and students. And this process may begin with dialogue and self-reflexivity.

In this section, I have discussed how the framework of anti-oppressive, non-hierarchical pedagogy can be used to address power relations inside the classroom. Power relations should not only be addressed amongst students, but also amongst students and teachers, in order to initiate dialogue and self-reflexivity. Instead of looking at bullying as an isolated phenomenon that takes place only amongst students, we need a methodological shift from reading individuals to reading power relations inside the classroom and an understanding of how bullying is perpetuated when pedagogy is not engaging and liberating. To challenge hierarchical pedagogy, it is important that we are critical of the banking concept of education that is still prevalent in schools in Bangladesh, through which students become passive receivers of knowledge, and do not become active co-producers of it. A banking style of education also creates boredom in class, which can be pointed out as one of the factors connected to bullying. I also noted why it is important that we address pedagogy and see how we can create a less hierarchical and more exciting classroom. Acknowledging tensions and disruptions in the class, and dwelling in those spaces to see how they can be generative in terms of de-territorializing the roles of teachers and students can also lead to a nuanced practice of non-hierarchical pedagogy. Moreover, stimulating dialogue in the classroom leads to critical thinking and self-reflexivity, and make students and teachers aware of how the classroom at times essentializes definitions of the bully and the bullied. Dismantling essentialist notions can also help schools become more self-reflexive in dealing with bullying, so as to not end up ‘othering’ students (both bully and bullied). Revising the role of teachers and students in terms of knowledge production and creating a non-hierarchical learning environment in class, ultimately challenges power relations inside the classroom. This can be an entrance point to address bullying and create safer, more inclusive classroom spaces that will question standards and norms, and dwell in tensions and disruptions, with the hopes for transformations.
CONCLUSION

Saad, in his navy blue sweater, held his mother’s hand and stood in front of the gate of his first ever school. He would not budge, he would not go in. He had attended the school for the first couple of days, and now he held an inexplicable repulsion towards it. His mother had woken him up and prepared him in this cold January morning, followed by a lot of coaxing, dragging him all the way to the school, but it seemed that the mother’s effort was about to go in vain. The principal with long hair spotted the mother and the son. She understood the drama that was unfolding, walked to them and lifted Saad in her arms, and asked the mother to go home. She then curtly turned around and started walking towards the school. Saad, with all his anger and strength, started to pull the principal’s hair. The principal’s body shook from the boy’s thrusting, her head jerked this way and that from the pulling of hair, but she would not let go of the boy. She looked comical with a screaming and thrusting boy in her arms, who was pulling her hair with mighty determinism. Only when inside the office of the principal did the boy calm down, mesmerized by a small glass car that the principal gave him to play with. Small, colourful balls eerily floated inside.

Why did I, at the age of 5, feel a silent repulsion towards my first school? What did I dislike about my classroom environment? Could the pulling of hair be read as a resistance towards authority and hierarchy that perpetuates power relations inside the classroom? Why was there not enough dialogue between me and my teachers in the coming years, as I attended school, to make the classroom a safer, more inclusive space for me and other students? This thesis has been both a private and public venture, in which I have attempted to write about other narratives, through my narratives, and look back at my narrative, through others’. I have written about bullying in the classrooms where my body dwelled and used my situatedness for the purpose of academic knowledge production through this thesis. By using my personal experience as an entrance point, I have attempted to do what Haraway writes about elaborating on our situated knowledges, and playing with the words ‘site’ and ‘sight,’ that is viewing the world from our situated position, and obtaining a partial objective knowledge. Lykke explains:

We must reflect on our ‘siting’ (localization) and our ‘sighting’ (the ways in which our vision and optical systems are crafted in technological, ideological and bodily biological senses). If we as researchers follow this program, that is, reflect our siting and sighting thoroughly, we can, according to Haraway, talk with an authoritative voice about the partial reality that we can see—and we can make ourselves ethico-politically responsible, democratic players in it. In this way, she says, we can avoid both the god-trick and the position of postmodern relativism with its claim that all interpretations of reality are equally good or bad (Lykke 2011: 6).
Thus, by using my experience of getting bullied, I have sketched out why it is important to talk about bullying in classrooms. I have addressed bullying by bringing in discussions of power relations inside the classroom, and how we can analyze these through affects and non-hierarchical and intersectional gender pedagogy. I have written about how schools tend to fix the identities of the bully and the bullied discursively, through posters, punishments and disciplines. As I have argued, this can be troubling because it further excludes and others both the bully and bullied. The bully is thought out to be a criminal, who proactively wants to harm others, while the bullied is seen as a weakling, who has some kind of problem and cannot stand up for him/herself. Schools’ approaches to deal with bullying are also commonly based on such limiting understandings of the politics of bullying, for which schools come up with more discipline to fix the criminal, disruptive body of the bully, and assertive techniques to toughen the bullied. I analyzed how schools come up with more surveillance to keep an eye on students who are disruptive, which can cause other kinds of bullying to take place outside the disciplinary gaze of the teacher, such as cyber bullying, note passing and writings on the walls of classrooms and toilets.

To resist a discursive reading of bully and bullied, I suggested an affective reading of bodies inside the multisensory environment of the classroom. Bodies are co-produced inside the class, when bodies come across different affects that shape their performance and capacity to act. The effect, or the action of the body, shapes who we ‘become’ and constantly change, and explains how bodies do not have inherent characteristics. There are thus not certain fixed bodies who bully, and who get bullied. This brings us to discussions of power relations inside the classroom, when certain ‘ways of being’ and performances are more privileged than others, which determines which bodies can extend out in space, and which bodies cannot. When we address affective co-productions in the classroom, we understand that identities and bodies are produced in assemblage with other bodies and affects, and thus it is important that we address affects in the classroom and the different power differentials that bodies bring in inside the classroom, which contribute to the formation of power relations. An affective reading of the classroom also points towards the bodies of teachers, who also bring in affects and power differentials and influence the classroom, and thus cannot be dismissed when we read bullying in the framework of power relations.
The body of the teacher is privileged because of the hierarchical education that keeps the body of the teacher away from getting critiqued, from being vulnerable and also from ‘becoming.’ Using theories of non-hierarchical pedagogy, I have shown how it becomes possible to challenge this fixed role of the teacher, and ultimately question power relations that get perpetuated through hierarchical education. Liberatory pedagogy, as opposed to hierarchical education, is a constant engaging practice that promotes dialogue and self-reflexivity in class. Dialogue enables students to talk about their lived realities in the classroom, and thus disrupt the knowledge that is already there. Knowledge production should not be an oppressive practice. Students and teachers have to equally be part of the knowledge production process and constantly figure what their roles in the classroom should be and ‘become’— reterritorialize the roles through dialogue, questioning and being reflexive. This dialogue between teachers and students cuts down the authoritative role of the teacher inside the classroom, and also un-hinges the body of the teacher from his/her fixed role. Dialogue and self-reflexivity enables an understanding that there cannot be one perfect solution to address bullying and power relations in the classroom, or that students and teachers should not be content with one solution. Kumashiro writes, “Critical pedagogy needs to move away from saying that students need this or my critical perspective since such an approach merely replaces one (socially hegemonic) framework for seeing the world with another (academically hegemonic)” (Kumashiro 2002: 49). Schools can borrow this philosophy to critique their approaches for what they overlook or foreclose, and not discursively re-produce and fix the bodies of the bully and the bullied, excluding and othering them, once again.

Engaged pedagogy also acknowledges affects in the classroom to map out and dwell in moments of tensions and disruptions. It is important to do so, and take risks, because doing so unhinges the role of a teacher from occupying a ‘managerial’ position in class. I see tensions and disruptions challenging ideas of standards, disciplines and norms, in order to turn the classroom into a much more generative space where both teachers and students can challenge their fixed roles in the classroom and produce knowledge together. Thus, my argument to address bullying in the classroom, is ultimately related to the challenging of power relations inside the classroom. It is connected to bigger questions of fixed identities, extending into space, orientating and transgressing. I wrote about affects using my experience of getting bullied, and how the affects I came across from other bodies shaped my action to correct my own body. I also explored affects
through my experience of being a teacher and managing a disruptive body of a student in class. Both are cases of transgressions that were ‘managed,’ ‘fixed’ and ‘taken care of.’ However, if affects are let amok, what could that do to our understanding of the classroom, and more importantly, to our understanding of the roles as students and teachers? What could that do to our idea of knowledge production and pedagogy? How does that de-territorialize the bully and bullied?

This thesis opens up future potentials to do more research on bullying. There are many other intersectionalities that could be brought in while talking about bullying in Bangladeshi classrooms. The research could be expanded to collect data from other schools in Dhaka, and also different cities and divisions, rural, semi-rural and urban areas. There are many other potentials to explore power differentials of class, ethnicity, religion, gender and sexuality, in schools for students of other socio-economic classes than middle and upper middle classes. This thesis is meant to initiate a dialogue, and make readers (teachers, students, parents, researchers) be more self-reflexive and start thinking about power relations inside the classroom to address bullying.

One of the teachers in School C wrote in the survey, “One of my students went on Facebook and spread vicious rumors about another student which were not true. The victim ended up in the hospital for depression.” Many such cases of bullying in classrooms are talked about, but never recorded or reported. Thus further research on bullying can look into how and why teachers and students do not often address bullying due to institutional settings. Initiating dialogue, in order to cut down the code of silence surrounding bullying, is also important to see what repercussions bullying can have in everyday student lives. Moreover, when oppression becomes normalized inside the classroom, what does that do to the students’ perception of oppressions? Along the process, do students become passive observers of oppression, inside and outside the classroom, as they become passive receivers of knowledge in classroom? Does the banking concept of education turn a generation of learners into passive observers who do not question and transgress? These are examples of further questions that could be addressed in new research on bullying.

This ethno-phenomenological exploration of tensions inside the classroom to explore bullying has allowed me to argue how we should not turn away from addressing tensions that power relations bring. Transforming tensions into something generative can be fruitful for us to
become un-hinged from our realities, and disrupt the knowledge that is already there. Students and teachers contribute to the formation of pedagogy in the classroom and create knowledge together, through dialogue and being self-reflexive. This challenges power relations in the class, addresses power differentials, acknowledges affects and redefines pedagogy as a process, a becoming, and not something static. Students and teachers can become more proactive in addressing and questioning oppressions, like bullying, inside the classroom, by redefining the classroom as a much safer and inclusive space, revising roles and co-producing knowledge, and by constantly transforming and transgressing.
REFERENCE LIST


APPENDIX

Questionnaire to students

Participant information-

Gender:
Age:
Grade:
1. Have you ever been bullied?
   A) Yes B) No. If yes, go to the next question
2. How often are you bullied?
   A) Always B) Sometimes C) Rarely
3. Have you bullied anyone?
   A) Yes B) No. If yes, go to the next question
4. How often do you bully others?
   A) Always B) Sometimes C) Rarely
5. What does bullying mean to you? Define in 2-3 sentences.
6. Why do you think students get bullied? Please list 3-5 points.
7. How are students bullied? What examples have you seen?
8. Why do you think some students bully others? Please list 3-5 points.
9. Have you seen anyone being bullied in front of you? A) Yes B) No
10. If yes, how did you feel when someone was bullied in front of you? A) Sad B) Angry
    C) Embarrassed D) Didn't care E) I wanted to join and bully F) I wanted to stop the bully
11. Have you stopped anyone from bullying someone else? A) Yes B) No. If yes, briefly describe the incident.
12. Did your teacher ever bully you? A) Yes B) No. If yes, how?
13. Have you ever seen a student bully a teacher in your class/school? A) Yes b) No. If yes, how?
14. Do you think there’s enough action/counselling by the school against bullying? A) Yes B) No
15. Who is the first person you will tell if you are bullied? A) Parents B) Teachers C) Friends D) Siblings E) No one
16. Do you feel comfortable talking about bullying to a teacher or advisor? A) Yes B) No
17. Do you think some students should be bullied? Why or why not?
18. Can you offer 3-5 suggestions to address and bring down bullying in your class/school?
19. Did you feel comfortable completing this survey? A) Yes B) No C) Somewhat
Questionnaire to teachers

Participant information-
Gender:
Age:
Grade(s) I teach:
Subject(s) I teach:
1. What do you think teachers should work on more to become better teachers? List 3 such attributes.
2. Do you think it is important to take feedback and criticism from students regarding the way you teach? 
   A) Yes B) No. Please explain your answer in 1-2 sentences.
3. Have you ever witnessed bullying in the class/school you teach? A)Yes B)No
5. Why do you think students get bullied? Please list 3-5 points.
6. How are students bullied? What examples have you seen?
7. Why do you think some students bully others? Please list 3-5 points.
8. Do you think it is your responsibility to address bullying in the class? A)Yes B) No
9. How do you deal with bullying (if you ever had to deal with it)? A) Scold the bully B) Send the bully to the principal C) Ignore the incident D) Talk to the bully and try and understand why s/he has behaved this way E) Other
10. Please explain an example regards with question 9 (how you responded to an incident of bullying).
11. Have you ever been bullied by your students? A) Yes B) No. If yes, how?
12. Did you ever talk to your students about bullying? A) Yes B) No
13. Have you had any training on bulling in the school you work? A) Yes B) No
14. Would you like to do workshops with students and your colleagues on bullying? A) Yes B) No C) Not sure
15. Can you list 3-5 suggestions to address and bring down bullying inside the classroom/school?
16. Did you feel comfortable completing this survey? A) Yes B) No C) Somewhat
Abstract
This thesis is an auto/ethnographic venture to explore the politics of bullying inside Bangladeshi classrooms. The thesis explores bullying in the frameworks of affect, anti-oppressive and intersectional gender pedagogy. Using autoethnographic and ethnographic means, the author revisits past encounters of being bullied and collects data from four schools in Dhaka, Bangladesh, drawing connections between narratives and theories. The thesis explores how schools fix and essentialize the identities of bully and bullied in discursive readings, which result in troubling approaches to deal with bullying, such as discipline, punishment and surveillance, which further exclude and other the bully and bullied. The thesis offers an affective reading of bodies inside classrooms, and employs theories of anti-oppressive and intersectional gender pedagogy to address and bring down the binary between bully and bullied, address power relations in classrooms and revise the roles of teachers and students. By acknowledging tensions and disruptions, aiming for self-reflexivity and transgressions, it offers a reading of how to think of transformations and turn the classroom into a ‘risky,’ yet generative space, to start a dialogue about bullying.

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Bullying, tensions, affects, affective reading, the bully-bullied binary, dialogue, non-hierarchical pedagogy, intersectional gender pedagogy, power relations, Bangladesh