

## Tracing Indian Girls' Embodied Orientations Towards Public Life

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**Speaker:** **Dr Vinnarasan Aruldoss**  
Post Doctoral Research Fellow, Sussex University

**Chair:** **A/P Tracey Skelton**  
Department of Geography, NUS

**Date/Time:** Friday, 27 October 2017, 3.30pm – 5.00pm

**Place:** Earth Lab, AS2-02-03, NUS

### Abstract



In recent years, contemporary Indian women's bodies have been the subject of shock and awe in public life. The threat and scrutiny female bodies are subjugated to in public life is not new and, feminist responses to unsolicited and threatening attention has begun to galvanise over recent years in an attempt to register dissent, dissonance, and subversion. However, much of the discourse on gender in India has focused on the extreme and grotesque acts of violence and mutilation mostly on young women in public life. Therefore, there has been little or no reference to younger girls' lived experiences of their body in mundane life, although younger girl children have been subjected to sexual abuse, rape and gruesome murder in public places such as school and

neighbourhood across the country. In alluding to such theoretical gap, our Connectors study – a qualitative, longitudinal, multimodal ethnography conducted in Athens, Hyderabad and London – attempts to reflect on the everyday lived bodily experiences of Indian girls, aged 6-8, in relation to their gender and childhood. Generally, the categories of childhood and public life seem initially at odds with one another; public is bracketed out of childhood and childhood is bracketed out of public life. Equally, children and body have long been ignored in the public sphere literature, because both have been presumed to lack reasoning and thought. Drawing on recent scholarship from the fields of political geography and political sociology, we consider how a focus on 'embodiment' offers us valuable insights and new perspectives on understanding the relationship between childhood and public life.

This presentation explores the way in which young girl children's bodies being deeply gendered and what sort of alternative repertoire their phenomenological experiences might offer us for our re-imagining of public sphere, a normative framework offered by Jürgen Habermas (1989). Importantly, and framed from a childhood studies perspective, this presentation also seeks to examine the ways in which young girl children talk back to their bodily lived experiences.

### About the Speaker

**Dr Vinnarasan Aruldoss** is a Post Doctoral Research Fellow in an ERC funded Connectors Study at Sussex University. He is mainly responsible for carrying out qualitative, ethnographic, longitudinal research in Hyderabad (India). Prior to his doctoral training in Social Policy and Childhood Studies at Edinburgh University, he worked for several years with a number of civil society organisations, state/central government departments and multilateral agencies as a social development practitioner in India. He has published mainly in the fields of sociology of childhood, early years education, childhood policy and political sociology.

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