

Touching Bodies SWG annual report (2017)

The Standing Working Group “Touching Bodies” was created in July, 2014, by the General Assembly, during the ISCHE 36 held in London. The convenors are Diana Vidal (Brazil, USP), Ines Dussel (Mexico, Cinvestav) and Marcelo Caruso (Germany, Humboldt University).

1. General Purpose of the SWG

In contemporary schools, it is almost impossible that bodies touch other bodies without being questioned or put under suspicion. School regulations, moral orders, and pedagogical discourses have established that teachers and students have to keep their distance. Also, students’ peer relationships are similarly scrutinized. It is not only old punishment practices that are forbidden; bodily expressions of kind and care are practically vanishing from the time-space of schooling. These changes are related to shifts in our understanding of violence; what passed as rituals of initiation in the past may now fall into the category of bullying, and what was perceived as caress and warmth may now be read as sexual harassment or assault.

It seems that we have never talked so much about bodies in school. We have never given so much attention to teachers and students as individuals, subjects of desire, anger, sadness or happiness. There was never so much fear of touching each other, hurting each other, affecting each other.

2. Participation at ISCHE 39 in Buenos Aires 2017

a) Call for papers

We invited researchers attending the ISCHE Meeting in Buenos Aires to submit papers considering the proposition **Touching bodies as emancipation?** upon the following rationale:

Tactile and bodily entanglements in educational practices in and outside schools have been interpreted in many different ways. They may represent a more direct pedagogical intervention through touching; they may hint at the dangers of body contact; they may be considered as opportunities of contagion as in hygienist programmes or as an opportunity to achieve order as in the discourses on body punishment. Even for some educational practices like learning to dance, touching bodies may have had a structuring effect. Yet touching bodies has been rarely analysed in terms of its potential emancipating powers. Bodies have become in the course of times as one of the most promising surfaces for enabling different registers of emancipation. In touching the communion bread, a Christian participates in a moment of emancipation from evil and sin. Coordinating gymnastic movements in Prussia in 19th century has been a practice intrinsically entangled with a national emancipation movement. Rituals of nudist culture were seen as educational opportunities for getting back to nature and emancipating from a decadent society. Touching animal bodies has been recommended as a way of articulating emotions and learning. Avant-garde sexual practices became a central interest in the context of the transnational cultural and political movements associated with the year 1968. Of course, liberation did not unmistakably come about through these practices. Christians were trapped in a dialectic relation of approaching liberation and hell; Prussian

liberals ended advocating a new form of separating bodies through militarisation; some nudist groups eschewed the ambivalent potentials of body contact; animal bodies could also represent a source of danger (being bitten) or contagion; and, of course, some sexual experiments involved in a new kind of education of the sentiments in late modern times ended in forms of harassment and abuse. Nonetheless, the link between (achieved and/or failed) emancipation and touching bodies in the field of education remained in many cases a two-faced issue.

The Standing Working Group aims at discussing the specific links of body contact in educational fields from the perspective of political, cultural, national, sexual, social and pedagogical emancipation. Contributions may address both programmes and practices, promises and dangers, success and failure. Yet, at the same time, contributions should ideally propose conceptual frames for linking abstract emancipatory programmes with situated techniques and processes

b) Panels

Out of the Call For Papers, four panels were organized which included the participation of seventeen researchers.

Panel 1:

7 SGW Panel: Touching bodies and the construction of racial perspectives / El contacto entre cuerpos y la construcción de perspectivas racistas Location Room 6.2

✓ Politics of the body: the embodiment of the 'native savage' during the eighteenth century at the Cape Colony, Southern Africa (English), Johannes Seroto, University of South Africa. ✓ "Do not touch!" Social avoidance of black children's bodies and the paradoxes of emancipation (Brazil, first decades of the 20th century) (English), Cynthia Greive Veiga, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brazil. ✓ "Save the body, save the Fatherland". The defence of the race as an affect-education-corporal policy (Chile, c. 1940-c. 1943) (English), Pablo Toro Blanco, Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Chile. ✓ New Education, race, and corporal punishment in Brazil (English), **Diana Vidal**, Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil.

Panel 2:

20 SWG Panel: Touching bodies in educational institutions / El contacto de los cuerpos en las instituciones educativas Location: Room 5.3

✓ Cuando los cuerpos se tocan: experiencias pioneras de enseñanza de la danza en Río de Janeiro en la primera mitad del siglo XIX (Spanish), Victor Andrade de Melo, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil. ✓ The body that grows and learns. Eugenic and ergonomic concerns in the Portuguese school furniture (19th and 20th centuries) (English), Anabela Amaral, Margarida Felgueiras, Juliana Rocha Universidade do Porto, Portugal. ✓ The bodies' boundaries in the classroom: a dialectics between teacher training and secondary school (English), Valeria Sardi, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Argentina. ✓ The body and the students of the University of Coimbra: an ethnographic study into the 'Queima das fitas' (2012-

2013), (English), Marcia Terezinha Cruz (Universidade Estadual de Maringá) & Margarida Louro Felgueiras, Universidade do Porto, Portugal.

Panel 3:

2.18 SWG Panel: Touching bodies and gymnastics: Emancipatory or colonial? / El contacto entre cuerpos y la gimnástica: emancipador o colonizador? Location: Room 5.2

The physician-pedagogue D. G. M. Schreber, his 'domestic gymnastics' and his son (English), Meily Assbú Linhares Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brazil. ✓ La educación física para mujeres en la educación secundaria (1911-1937) (Spanish), Elisabeth Figueredo de Sá, Universidade Federal de Matto Grosso, Brasil. ✓ Formando profesores de educación física para educar los cuerpos 'en el nivel del detalle y en el de la masa', Argentina (1939-1967) (Spanish), María Andrea Feiguin & Angela Aisenstein, Universidad Nacional Luján, Argentina.

Panel 4:

2.33 SWG Panel. Touching bodies and emerging practices and identities / Cuerpos en contacto y emergencia de prácticas e identidades Location: Room 5.3

✓ The emancipation of the others: perceptions on untouchability and imperial education in 19th century India (English), Marcelo Caruso Humboldt Univeritat zu Berlin, Germany. ✓ Touching and mingling as seen in an amateur album on children's games (Argentina, 1902) (English), Inés Dussel, CINVESTAV, México. ✓ Touching pedagogical discourses and its diaspora: sex, education and gender regulations after the modern scientific definition of sexuality (English), Juan E. Péchin, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina. ✓ Childhood and naturism: nudity and body education in Brazil during the 1950s (English), Carlos Herold Junior Universidade Estadual de Maringá, Brazil.

3. Participation at ISCHE 40 in Berlin 2018

Our Call For Papers for ISCHE 40 in 2018 in Berlin, **Touching bodies and Nature**, is based on the general theme **Education and Nature**, and has the following rationale:

In the education of bodies, nature has been attached with ambivalent meanings. It has been considered as part of an integral education of the body and soul of the child; as a haven from the urban society and its sins, as Rousseau argued; as a subject of study in science classrooms or a didactic resource for object lessons in 19th century; as the ideal environment for freedom and authentic experience for children in the New School movement. Less visibly, it has also appeared as part of the call for teaching in female educators in kindergartens and primary schools, or as support for laws that obliged them to remain single and celibate in many countries. It has discursively framed gender boundaries in school; justified racist contents and hierarchies of knowledge in school curricula; legitimated school failure and success of individuals based on gender or race.

How did school bodies "touch" nature? Was touching other people's bodies perceived as natural or socially constructed? How was this boundary defined? Were children taught to caress animals and plants? How did school excursions and fieldtrips promoted a contact with

nature? How were the different senses involved in these contacts? All these problematics can be addressed in our panels, making it clear that nature has never been just a topic developed by teachers in class, but a substrate, limen or boundary that has been constitutive of educational processes.

Also, in recognition of the ISCHE 2018 Education and Nature theme, the ISCHE Touching Bodies in School SWG and the Objects, Senses and the Material World of Schooling SWG plan joint panels that will take up historical questions concerning distinctions and interplay between the Human and Nonhuman, as well as the Animate and Inanimate. We seek papers that examine materializations in pedagogy, classrooms and other educational practices of the intersections between “bodies” and “objects”. Possible topics include educational histories of classroom pets, didactic specimens, plant care, gardening, bacteria, germs, and school meals. The intent of these jointly convened panels is to surface issues arising as “bodies” and “objects” come into contact with, and are mediated by, one another. The SWG organizers particularly wish to foreground the ways that distinctions between Human and Nonhuman, living and non-living have historically played out in educational practice.

The SWG on Touching Bodies wants to make a special Call for Papers for those interested in discussing the materiality and immateriality of contacts between bodies with and across nature.

4. Plans for the future

We are planning to publish a book with a selection of the papers presented in the panels over these four years of the SWG Touching Bodies.

In addition, we intend to continue the relationship we are starting in this Conference with the SWG on Objects, Senses and the Material World of Schooling, by organizing joint panels in the upcoming ISCHE Conference at Porto.