



The Body in the
Social Sciences

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Words from the President

Dear Readers and Friends of RC 54 of ISA!

We are nearing the end of a year filled with hard work and dedication as a scientific committee. This year, our committee has expanded both qualitatively and quantitatively. We now have a highly active and engaged scientific committee, with which we can democratically decide on all matters related to it. On behalf of myself and our VP Monica Mesquita, I would like to express my gratitude for the intense participation of this important group of top-quality researchers.

The impact of this process of re-foundation of RC 54 can be seen both in our internal discussions and on our social media platforms, as well as in our external partnerships with other entities of the International Sociological Association (ISA).

Following the great success of our first newsletter this year, which featured articles by renowned sociologists Raewyn Connell, Adrian Scribano, and Bryan S. Turner, we are pleased to present in this edition an opening article by one of the most important sociologists of the body, David Le Breton. Le Breton writes about the variations of the body in contemporary society, stating (to paraphrase): “The body no longer determines identity; it serves it.”

We enthusiastically thank Prof. Le Breton for his contribution to opening this newsletter. At the same time, we are equally excited to highlight that our ISA Forum in Rabat in July 2025 will feature an incredible program, as we have received more than 90 submissions for review. These submissions come from diverse countries across all continents, which makes us extremely happy and demonstrates the widespread relevance of the theme "the body in social sciences" around the world and in the development of global sociology.

We believe that, step by step, with the effort of everyone involved in our RC and our interlocutors, we are strengthening social ties around bodies, embodiment, and corporeality. We are confident that our in-person meeting in Rabat in 2025 will be of great benefit.

Dulce Maria Filgueira de Almeida
President

Stalwarts Speak

David Le Breton

Variations du corps dans les mondes contemporains

David Le Breton¹

Nos sociétés connaissent aujourd’hui une inflation des pratiques et des discours autour d’un corps devenu matière première de la fabrique de soi dans un contexte d’hyperindividualisation du lien social. Sans un travail sur soi le corps est perçu comme insuffisant, imparfait, voire même méprisable ou surnuméraire, fossile d’une humanité promise à une disparition prochaine, notamment dans le discours transhumaniste². Il n’est plus l’incarnation radicale et stable du sentiment de soi, il est à la disposition de l’individu pour qu’il s’invente des personnages à sa guise en puisant dans une prolifération d’offres : tatouages, implants sous-cutanés, body building, diététique, régimes alimentaires, cosmétiques, prise de produits ayant des incidences sur la conformation physique ou psychologique, gymnastiques de toutes sortes, marques corporelles, chirurgie ou dermatologie esthétique, changement de genre, etc. Le corps s’érige en lieu de salut se substituant à l’âme dans une société sécularisée. Longtemps dans nos sociétés, il était pour le meilleur et pour le pire au cœur de l’existence, il n’est plus aujourd’hui la souche identitaire inflexible d’une histoire personnelle, mais une forme à remanier inlassablement au gré des désirs de l’individu, selon l’ambiance sociale du moment. En changeant son corps il souhaite changer son existence, c’est-à-dire remanier un sentiment d’identité lui-même devenu obsolète.

Le corps est désormais une construction personnelle, un objet transitoire, susceptible de maintes métamorphoses selon les aspirations de l’individu. L’apparence alimente une industrie sans fin, sans cesse relancée par le marketing et les offres du marché ou par l’inventivité d’un acteur dont l’autonomie paraît immense, mais qui est pour l’essentiel une liberté de se mouvoir parmi les allées des hypermarchés afin de choisir le produit qui participe le mieux du style dont il se sent proche. Liberté formatée où il importe de se « personnaliser » en ayant la main heureuse dans ses choix, plutôt que de faire œuvre de son existence. A défaut de grands récits pour s’orienter, le marketing suggère une myriade de petits récits en célébrant des produits d’appel autour du corps. L’expérimentation prend la place des anciennes identités fondées sur l’habitus et l’identification. Le sentiment de soi est alors inlassablement travaillé par un acteur dont le corps est un outil de l’affirmation de soi dans une société de l’image, du look, de l’apparence.

¹ David Le Breton est professeur de sociologie à l’université de Strasbourg, titulaire de la chaire « Anthropologie des mondes contemporains » à l’Institut des Études Avancées de l’Université de Strasbourg (USIAS). Auteur en langue anglaise de *Sensing the world. An anthropology of the senses* (Bloomsbury, 2018).

² Cf. David Le Breton, *L’adieu au corps* (Métailié, 2007).

A défaut d'exercer un contrôle sur son existence dans un monde insaisissable, le corps est un objet à portée de main sur lequel nourrir enfin une souveraineté mise en difficulté partout ailleurs. Le désinvestissement des systèmes sociaux de sens amène à une centration accrue sur soi. Le repli sur le corps et l'apparence est un moyen de réduire l'incertitude en cherchant des limites symboliques au plus proche. Il ne reste plus que le corps auquel l'individu puisse s'accrocher pour se sentir bien dans sa peau. L'obsolescence de la marchandise est devenue aussi celle du corps. Il faut y ajouter sa marque propre pour en prendre possession et sursignifier ainsi son apparence. Prothèse d'un moi éternellement en quête d'une incarnation provisoire pour assurer une trace significative de soi (Le Breton, 2017 dont les ingrédients ne cessent de se modifier selon les abondantes propositions du marché. Désormais brouillon à corriger par un travail adéquat, le corps est l'habitable provisoire d'un individu qui refuse toute fixation et choisit une forme de nomadisme de sa présence au monde. Espace d'expérimentation visant à transformer le rapport au monde, à multiplier les sensations et les stylisations possibles de soi. L'ampleur sociale de ce souci dit cette volonté de signer son corps, de se l'approprier pour devenir enfin soi. L'individualisation du lien social rend l'individu non seulement libre de ses attaches avec les autres, mais libre également de ses attaches identitaires, de ses assises corporelles ou de genre. Elle entraîne l'individualisation du corps. Il importe alors d'avoir un corps à soi, un corps pour soi.

Nombre de nos contemporains deviennent les designers de leur apparence et bricolent leur corps selon les circonstances. On le personnalise et on le customise à l'image d'autres objets du quotidien. Il est une proposition à affiner et à reprendre, un tenant lieu de soi et particulièrement investi en ce sens (Le Breton, 2017). La transformation du corps est d'abord une manipulation symbolique du sentiment de soi, elle traduit un jeu subtil entre le public et le privé. Dans la société du spectacle, il faut en imposer aux autres par son apparence, tirer son épingle du jeu, en mettre plein la vue. L'individu dispose des signes d'identité sur son corps à travers lesquels il interroge sa place dans le monde. Le succès planétaire du tatouage en est une illustration. Il faut se mettre hors de soi pour devenir soi, puisque soi est désormais surtout un effet de regard. L'intimité connaît une extension publique, elle appelle la reconnaissance des autres. Mais la tâche exige sans arrêt de remettre le corps sur le métier dans une course sans fin pour adhérer à soi. Ce supplément assure de soi à l'image de cette étudiante confessant que c'est seulement après son premier tatouage qu'elle s'est sentie enfin « complète ». L'impératif premier lancé à l'individu est de devenir soi, c'est-à-dire finalement de savoir choisir dans le magasin des accessoires un produit qui le révèle à lui-même. Volonté d'autogénération qui alimente souvent le cliché de l'individu affirmant avec fierté qu'il s'est « réapproprié » son corps. On n'est plus soi par le polissage de ses relations aux autres et un cheminement personnel, mais par le miracle de la trouvaille du bon produit. Quel qu'il soit, le signe cutané est une prise de marque avec un monde qui échappe en grande part. Il s'agit de remplacer des limites de sens qui se dérobent par une limite sur soi, une butée identitaire pour se reconnaître et se revendiquer comme soi. La modification corporelle (le terme est déjà révélateur) devient un badge identitaire, parfois de manière assez radicale.

Aujourd'hui comme autrefois, la biologie est un chapitre du politique. Les anciens codes culturels du féminin et du masculin sont aujourd'hui remis en question. Le genre devient un vaste champ d'expérimentation, une affaire privée, et non plus une question de naissance ou de biologie. Là où la fabrique corporelle de soi ne cesse d'élargir son champ d'intervention possible, féminin et masculin incarnent une différence parmi une multitude d'autres, proposition initiale éventuellement à rectifier selon une volonté propre. Certains « trans » entendent même subvertir radicalement ces catégories devenues obsolètes à leurs yeux. Le corps est l'outil pour se créer des personnages dépendant du contexte. Volonté de conjurer la séparation, de ne plus faire du sexe (du latin *secare* : couper) ni un corps ni un destin, mais de s'en affranchir pour s'inventer et se mettre soi-même au monde à travers une anatomie nomade. L'assignation à un genre est une histoire que l'on se raconte.

Les transgenres sont des individus postmodernes en ce qu'ils entendent se mettre au monde par eux-mêmes, rectifier leur origine en décidant de leur renaissance sous une apparence n'appartenant qu'à eux. Ils font de leur corps une décision propre et non un destin anatomique. Certes, ils n'échappent pas à l'histoire de leur société, à leur condition sociale, aux valeurs ambiantes, aux représentations qui les entourent, même s'ils se les approprient à la première personne, ils sont dans la position d'artistes qui jouent de leur existence et impriment leur marque sur un langage déjà donné. Voyageur de leur propre corps dont ils changent à leur guise la forme, ils poussent à son terme le statut de ressource d'un corps devenu modulable.

Impossible de penser le corps sans envisager la pluralité de ses mises en jeu, de ses ambivalences. Dans la mesure où l'individu devient le concepteur de son corps, il fétichise parfois les stéréotypes associés au masculin et au féminin. Les normes corporelles ne disparaissent pas, elles se multiplient et se font d'autant plus incisives qu'elles paraissent moins impératives, laissant l'individu à leur appréciation. Le binarisme homme-femme est ici fortement sollicité. La femme cherche à être plus femme à travers un corps mince, sain, svelte, jeune, séduisant, lisse... Des hommes renchérissent sur des normes de virilités aujourd'hui en crise, ainsi par exemple le body builder, le bâtisseur de corps, construit ses limites physiques. Il endosse son corps comme une deuxième peau où il se sent enfin à l'aise. Sa force est inutile, seule importe une esthétique de la présence.

Le sujet postmoderne est fragmentaire, saisi dans le flux de la consommation et des signes qu'il laisse percevoir de lui, tout en extériorité. Le sentiment d'identité est un permanent work in process, un écran où projeter une image désirée. Prêt-à-jeter à l'image des autres produits ambiants au sein d'un immense vestiaire où la singularité implique de se diluer dans un ensemble plus vaste, le corps devient un récit personnel toujours à reprendre, un accessoire à retravailler ou à entretenir pour se créer des personnages et les décliner socialement pour assumer la multiplicité de soi. Ces jeux de transformations corporelles alimentent une identité narrative devenue notre lot à travers un permanent commentaire sur soi. Le corps ne détermine plus l'identité, il est à son service³.

³ Sur tous les points esquissés ici je renvoie à David Le Breton, *Anthropologie du corps et modernité* (PUF, Quadrige, 2017).

Variations of the Body in Contemporary Worlds

David Le Breton

(Translate by Dulce Maria Filgueira de Almeida)

Our societies today are witnessing an inflation of practices and discourses surrounding the body, which has become raw material in the construction of the self within a context of hyper-individualization of social ties. Without personal work on oneself, the body is perceived as insufficient, imperfect, or even contemptible and superfluous, a fossil of a humanity supposedly doomed to imminent disappearance, particularly in transhumanist discourse. The body is no longer the radical and stable embodiment of the sense of self; instead, it is available for the individual to invent new personas at will, drawing from a proliferation of offerings: tattoos, subcutaneous implants, bodybuilding, dietetics, dietary regimes, cosmetics, substances affecting physical or psychological conformation, various forms of gymnastics, body marks, cosmetic surgery or dermatology, gender change, and so on. The body has become a place of salvation, replacing the soul in a secularized society. For a long time, it was at the core of existence in our societies, for better or for worse. Today, it is no longer the inflexible root of a personal history but rather a form to be endlessly reshaped according to the individual's desires and the current social climate. By changing their body, the individual hopes to change their existence, which in turn means reshaping a sense of identity that has itself become obsolete.

The body is now a personal construction, a transitional object, susceptible to many transformations depending on the individual's aspirations. Appearance fuels an endless industry, continuously propelled by marketing, market offers, or the inventiveness of an actor whose autonomy seems vast but is essentially a freedom to move through the aisles of hypermarkets to choose the product that best fits their desired style. This is a formatted freedom where it is important to "personalize" oneself by making happy choices rather than engaging in the work of shaping one's existence. In the absence of grand narratives to guide them, marketing suggests a multitude of small stories by celebrating body-related products. Experimentation replaces the former identities based on habitus and identification. The sense of self is relentlessly worked on by an actor whose body becomes a tool for self-assertion in a society dominated by image, appearance, and style.

Unable to exert control over one's existence in an elusive world, the body becomes an object within reach on which to finally nourish sovereignty that has been undermined elsewhere. The disengagement of social systems of meaning leads to an increased focus on the self. Turning inward toward the body and appearance is a means of reducing uncertainty by seeking symbolic boundaries close at hand. The body becomes the last thing the individual can hold on to in order to feel comfortable in their own skin. The obsolescence of commodities has now extended to the body itself. One must add their personal mark to it in order to possess it and over-signify their appearance. A prosthesis for a self eternally in search of a provisional incarnation that ensures a meaningful trace of the self, the ingredients of which continue to evolve according to the

abundant market proposals. Now a draft to be corrected by adequate work, the body is the temporary vessel of an individual who rejects any form of fixation and chooses a nomadic way of being in the world. It is an experimental space designed to transform one's relationship to the world, multiplying possible sensations and stylizations of the self. The social scope of this concern reveals the desire to sign one's body, to appropriate it, in order to finally become oneself. The individualization of social bonds not only frees the individual from attachments to others but also from their identity attachments, bodily or gendered foundations. This leads to the individualization of the body. Thus, it becomes important to have one's own body, a body for oneself.

Many of our contemporaries are becoming designers of their own appearance, adjusting their bodies according to circumstances. They personalize and customize their bodies as if they were other everyday objects. The body becomes a proposition to be refined and revisited, a stand-in for the self and particularly invested in this sense. The transformation of the body is first and foremost a symbolic manipulation of the sense of self, a subtle interplay between the public and the private. In the spectacle society, one must impress others with one's appearance, stand out, and make a strong visual impact. The individual possesses identity markers on their body through which they question their place in the world. The global success of tattoos is a clear example of this. To become oneself, one must go beyond oneself, as self is now primarily an effect of perception. Intimacy extends into the public sphere and calls for recognition from others. Yet, this task requires continuously remaking the body in an endless race to adhere to one's identity. This supplement ensures one's sense of self, as exemplified by a student who confesses that it was only after her first tattoo that she finally felt "complete." The primary imperative presented to the individual is to become oneself, which ultimately means knowing how to choose the right product in the accessory store that reveals oneself. This desire for self-generation often fuels the cliché of the individual proudly claiming to have "reclaimed" their body. One is no longer oneself through the cultivation of relationships with others or personal growth, but through the miracle of discovering the right product. Whatever the case, the skin-mark is a form of branding in a world that largely eludes us. It replaces the disappearing limits of meaning with a limit on oneself, a boundary for self-recognition and assertion. Body modification (a term that is already revealing) becomes an identity badge, sometimes in quite a radical way.

Today, as in the past, biology is a chapter of the political. Traditional cultural codes of femininity and masculinity are now being questioned. Gender has become a vast field of experimentation, a private matter rather than an issue of birth or biology. Where the body is ceaselessly reshaped, femininity and masculinity represent just one difference among many, a proposition that may be rectified according to personal will. Some "trans" individuals even seek to radically subvert these categories, which have become obsolete in their eyes. The body is a tool for creating personas that depend on context. This is a will to break from separation, to no longer make sex (from the Latin *secare*: to cut) a body or a destiny, but to liberate oneself from it, to invent oneself and

introduce oneself into the world through a nomadic anatomy. Gender assignment is a story one tells oneself.

Transgender individuals are postmodern subjects in that they seek to create themselves in the world, to rectify their origin by choosing a rebirth under a form that belongs only to them. They make their body a personal decision, not an anatomical destiny. Of course, they cannot escape the history of their society, their social condition, the prevailing values, or the representations that surround them—even if they appropriate them in the first person. They are in the position of artists who play with their existence and leave their mark on an already given language. As travelers of their own body, they change its form at will, pushing to the limit the status of a body that has become malleable.

It is impossible to think about the body without considering the plurality of its dynamics, its ambivalences. As the individual becomes the designer of their body, they sometimes fetishize the stereotypes associated with masculinity and femininity. Bodily norms do not disappear; they multiply and become even more incisive as they seem less imperative, leaving the individual to navigate them according to their own judgment. The binary gender model is heavily involved here. Women strive to be more feminine through a slender, healthy, youthful, attractive, smooth body... Men amplify current crisis-driven norms of masculinity, such as the bodybuilder, who builds his physical limits. He wears his body like a second skin where he finally feels comfortable. His strength is irrelevant; only the aesthetics of presence matter.

The postmodern subject is fragmented, caught in the flow of consumption and the signs they project outward, existing entirely in externality. The sense of identity is a perpetual work in progress, a screen on which to project a desired image. Ready-to-discard, like other ambient products in a vast wardrobe where singularity involves merging with a larger whole, the body becomes a personal narrative always subject to revision, an accessory to be reworked or maintained in order to create and socially perform various personas that accommodate the multiplicity of the self. These bodily transformations fuel a narrative identity that has become our lot, through a continuous commentary on the self. The body no longer determines identity; it serves it.

For a more-than-human sociology of the body

Deborah Lupton⁴

The sociology of the body became ‘big’ in the 1980s and grew apace in the 1990s. At first, it was driven by White male theorists in the Global North, who cited other White male theorists in the Global North. But very soon, the sociology of the body diversified, as women, people of colour, colonised people and racialised people, First Nations peoples, ageing people, queer people, people who identify as gender diverse, disabled people, people with chronic illnesses and others who did not identify as White male theorists in the Global North, began to draw attention to how human bodies are infinitely diverse. They identified the discrimination, marginalisation and sheer prejudice that people in these social groups endured. These theorists and researchers showed how members of these groups they were constantly unfavourably compared with able bodied White men, who are typically portrayed as possessing the greatest capacity to achieve the ideal of the tightly contained, highly controlled body, and how power differentials fed into these beliefs and practices.

Since the emergence of the sociology of the body, phenomenology, deviance and stigma studies, cultural anthropology, Foucauldian theory, feminist theory, postmodernism, risk theory, queer theory, postcolonial theory, practice studies and digital sociology have all made an impact in theorising human bodies. What we need now to do is to go beyond the human, to ponder the world of entangled more-than-human bodies. From the perspective of more-than-human theory, human bodies are always more-than-human, extending out from the carapace of the fleshly body. Our bodies are always in relational arrangements with other agents and entities – not just other people, but things, places and spaces. We move through our days and our lifespans together with other animals, plants and fungi. Our bodies are hosts to assemblages of living microscopic creatures which (for the most part) live in symbiotic relations with us. Our bodies, in turn, are always part of larger microbiomes involving other living creatures living in defined ecosystems. Every day we engage with or consume a multitude of non-living things, from smartphones to foodstuffs, furniture and clothing.

If we have learnt anything from the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, it is that the fate and wellbeing of humans and other beings are inextricably intertwined. Most non-Western cultures and First Nations peoples recognise this as part of their millennia-old cosmologies and call for humans to recognise their role as kin to other beings. I commend the ISA RC54 The Body of Social Sciences for continuing social inquiry on this important topic and advocate for you to turn towards a more-than-human sociology of the body to ensure the mutual flourishing of all entities in this precious planet on which we live.

⁴ Deborah Lupton, Vitalities Lab, Centre for Social Research in Health, Social Policy Research Centre, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society, UNSW Sydney, Australia.

Thoughts from our members

Anabela Pereira

Bodies, technologies, social justice and well-being in the Anthropocene

Anabela Pereira⁵

The Anthropocene is strongly influenced by human actions contributing to climate and environmental changes. In such an extraordinary setting, the idea of social justice becomes more complex. Traditional concepts of justice often focused on individual rights, citizenship, societal fairness, and normativity may no longer be enough.

Human activities, including travel, shopping, communications, and industrial and technological advancement, significantly impact climate, environmental balance, and biodiversity. In addition to the effects of conflict and war(s), technical developments have increased resource consumption and excess waste, leading to environmental problems, including deforestation, pollution, and natural world damage. Additionally, the increased use of plastics, synthetic chemicals, pesticides, and antibiotics in agriculture and animal farms has contributed to the degradation of ecosystems, posing threats to human and animal health (e.g., antimicrobial resistance, allergies, cancer, and respiratory diseases, among others). The situation calls for a change to a more global, intergenerational, and ecological perspective, ensuring the protection of nature and that future generations have the same opportunities and resources as the present. A perspective calling for justice and balance between health, human and animal life, and nature by acknowledging their inherent value and links.

On the other hand, despite their advantages (facilitating work, access to information, improving studies and health research, for instance), technology and artificial intelligence (AI) development have also contributed to environmental problems. While AI can improve transportation and communication networks, help build more effective energy systems, and develop creative ways to adapt to climate change, research, training, and running AI models are more expensive regarding energy consumption. Also, the amount of data generated and stored globally is growing, impacting local environments and contributing to climate change. Besides, unequal access to technology may aggravate existing social inequalities and (in)justice among different countries and populations. In such a scenario, new discussions of social justice emerge. There is a need to create new conceptual frameworks considering how technology, the environment, and human activity are intertwined. This connection is intensified by digitalization and profoundly influences how we understand our bodies, social roles, and our relationships with the world.

⁵ Anabela Pereira, Cies-Iscte, IUL and GHTM-IHMT, UNLLisboa, Portugal

Therefore, the sociology of the body can provide important insights into these scenarios and problems by creating more inclusive and fair methods of tackling social and environmental concerns and by looking at the social and cultural significance of the human body in its relation to the environment, animals, and other non-human agents. By comprehending how bodies are shaped, experienced, and valued in such an integrated social context and examining how technological and ecological interactions impact people's well-being, selves, and identities, the sociology of the body can help address the unique needs of communities and lives affected by climate change towards a more equitable and sustainable future. Studying embodiments is critical for creating solid ecological and technological systems, supporting well-being for all living entities besides human agency and autonomy, and insights into the social relationships that shape our embedded bodily experiences, which are crucial for achieving fairness and a more just and equitable world for everybody.

Social construction of body through different leisure styles: A sociological study of adolescent boys of North Kolkata

Madhurima Dasgupta⁶

One of the major contributions in the sociology of leisure was by Stanley Parker, a British sociologist. His principal contribution in the field of leisure is how he constructed the types of work and leisure practices in order to theorize the relation between leisure patterns and occupations. Neulinger defined leisure in terms of its components like freedom, motivation, goal orientation and relation to work. Leisure can also be understood as time characterized by freedom and non-work activity. Leisure can also be defined as any kind of pleasurable activities where there is freedom from work obligations, family and social time. This signifies that leisure can be understood as any kind of activity where there is liberty from work obligations and other non-work activities (Mukherjee, 2020).

Adolescents regard leisure as a form of relaxation and freedom from their routine life (studying) in terms of time and choice. Adolescents also regard leisure as a condition of easy, unstructured enjoyment where they can spend time with friends with little emphasis on their work (McMeeking & Purkayastha, 1995). Historically, sociological writings have mostly referred children only in reference to their socialization which was underpinned by the fact that children were of interest to sociology only when they disclosed clues about their adulthood (Alanen, 1992 & Mayall, 2013). However, such scenario transformed with the onset of 'New Sociology of Childhood' during 1980s where a new paradigm shift in the childhood research in sociology occurred. Such paradigm shift changed the focus of looking at childhood as a period of life to regarding it as permanent and structural segment of society. With the advent of new sociology of Childhood, conceiving childhood changed from a biological given to a structural feature which helps to understand how experiences of childhood differ across time and space (Mukherjee, 2020).

Leisure activity can be of two types ---- structured and unstructured. Structured leisure activities are those activities which are freely chosen by the adolescents and which provides physical and mental stimulation to the teenagers. These activities require enrolment with a fee where there is supervision by parents. These activities require commitment by the adolescents and often include regular participation schedules. It also emphasizes on skill development of teenagers and involves active participation with sustained attention. Research suggests that structured activities provide a range of opportunities to the adolescents to acquire and practice their physical, social and intellectual skills and also to form network with friends and adults in their life (Mukherjee, 2020).

⁶ Assistant Professor (Sociology), The Neotia University, West Bengal.

Two types of structured activities exist for adolescent boys ---- sports and cultural activities (music, dance, and painting). Adolescent boys' shows greater interest in sports during leisure as such an activity not only helps to improve their physical and mental health but also help to provide life satisfaction. Enrichment in any sports activity is not an obstruction to the academics of the adolescent boys. Bengali middle class parents like their adolescent sons to cultivate their talent through sports. Further, adolescents who participate in sports have a greater intimacy with their parents followed by a better self-identity (Anderson, 2005).

There is a strong relation between sports and masculinity since sports create an ambience where traditional masculinity like competitiveness, physical prowess and violence are regarded as normative (Gault, 2010). Sports as an activity and a major means of leisure of adolescent boys of Kolkata occupy an important position not only in Western but also in Indian culture. As pointed by Connell, sports played by high school boys is the major means through which masculinity in school is practiced from where they derive their sporting prowess at the reluctance of those boys who did not develop an interest in the activity. Violence and aggression are highly prevalent in sports since it's the only leisure activity during adolescence which helps to construct and practice notions of masculinity and reinforce the notion of hegemonic masculinity that value physical prowess and dominance. (Connell, 2005).

Boyhood, for the high school adolescent boys of North Kolkata implies the ability to portray one's strength, power, and heterosexuality, sexual assertiveness followed by the hiding of emotions which is often regarded as a 'feminine' trait and unmanly. The teenage boys spend their leisure time by watching movies i.e. Action thriller & suspense. They also preferred playing different outdoor games like football, cricket during their leisure time. High school boys also spend their leisure time by surfing internet especially by accessing social media like Facebook, Whatsapp and Instagram. Body building/ Gym was chosen as one of the preferable leisure activities by most boys.

Attending coaching classes of Cricket and Football is one of the major forms of leisure activity and also one of the major means of expression of masculinity for the adolescent boys of North Kolkata since playing sports provides both physical and mental strength ----- physical prowess being one of the major socially constructed traits of being masculine. Such physical prowess helps the boys to conform to the notions of hegemonic masculinity ---- strength, physical toughness, capability, aggression. Among sports, high school adolescent boys spend their leisure time in playing sports like football and cricket since they are trained in such sports since their childhood and are even socialized in watching sports in media i.e. Television. Since the high school adolescents attending coaching classes of Football and Cricket as their preferred form of leisure activity, they regarded its as most important structured leisure as such activities not only improves their physical and mental health but also provides them life satisfaction (Wellard, 2009).

1. Power, Discourse, and the Body

The major influence and the third social constructionist approach to analyzing the body as a product of discourse can be seen in Michel Foucault's work which regarded the body as a receptor of social meanings. The body, for Foucault, is not only given meaning by discourse but is constituted by discourse. In this way, the body does not exist as a biological entity but becomes a socially constructed product that is highly unstable. Thereby, for Foucault, the body establishes a relation between daily practices on one hand and organization of power on the other (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982).

The nature of the Foucauldian approach to the body mainly involves the substantive preoccupation with the body along with the institutions which govern it followed by the epistemological view of the body as produced by discourse. This means that the most important concept in Foucault's work is a discourse that is centrally concerned with language (Foucault, 1974; Poster, 1984).

Foucault initiated the concept of the 'docile body' in his book *Discipline and Punishment*. Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison is a book written by Michel Foucault in 1975. In Foucault's work, the concept of 'body' was discovered by the classical age as an object and target of power where it was regarded as an object that can be shaped and trained as per societal rules so that it obeys, responds, and follows the dogmas of society. He defined 'docile body' as "one that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved, and that this docile body can only be achieved through a strict regimen of disciplinary acts". For the construction of docile bodies, the disciplinary institutions must (a) ensure that the individuality which is disciplined internalizes within the bodies which are being controlled and (b) observe the bodies and then record them which are under their control. This means, discipline must exist and bodies should be molded into their correct form through intensive observation without the usage of much force.

Foucault while explaining the process of 'discipline' in his theory on the docile body elaborates that body is socially constructed and normalized to suit the social norms and regulations. He regarded the docile body as one which can be subjected, sued, transformed, and improved as per socially constructed social expectations of beautification which are used by most adolescents.

2. Social Construction of the Gendered Body

Connell's initial argument portrays how social categories and practices define people as different by negating the similarities between their bodies. However, to speak of a contradiction between biology and social practices is insufficient since it accepts that biology is fixed and constant and not subject to change. One such implication would be to set up a dualism between biology and society as separate spheres. Another implication would be to establish a dualism between the mind and the body whereby gendered social practices exist only in the people's minds which affect their perception of male and female bodies. To ignore such problems, Connell used the term 'transcendence' to signify how social practices have the power to transform biology (in the form of the body). Such a form of transcendence recognizes the body as an object of labour that

is worked and transformed by people just as other aspects of the social world. For example-gymnastics and body-building can build up and transform the physical body. Such processes of transcendence create corporeal differences in the construction of gendered bodies. In this way, the physical sense of masculinity experienced by men is derived not only from the images of power attached to the male body by popular culture but also from the ways by which social practices transform the body. Such impact of social practices gets manifested in myriad ways including the greater encouragement and social pressure that boys receive in physical exercise and maintenance of their physical bodies through the practice of football and body-building, in comparison with girls. (Connell, 2005).

Such social practices produce a profound impact on the body and these are not only confined to strength and muscle size. As stated by Lowe (1983), different types of physical activities can also lead to social stress which occurs through sports. So, the different opportunities that boys have to engage in body-building work and leisure activities can play an important role in transforming their bodies. (Shilling, 1993).

Activities

Lançamento do livro
O Processo Qualitativo de Pesquisa Social

Emissão de Certificados para os participantes e sorteio de exemplares do livro

Data: 05/11/2024
Horário: 19h00

Participantes:
Adrián Scribano (CONICET/Argentina),
Alexandre Zárias (Fundaj/UPE)

Debatedoras:
Dulce Almeida (UnB),
Monica Mesquita (UNL)

Duração: 1h30

Transmissão pelo YouTube da Fundaj



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- Conference in collaboration with ISA RC14, RC37 and RC54 with AISLF Maison de la Recherche to be held on December 5th and 6th, 2024. For more details please visit <https://cis.cnrs.fr/corps-arts-et-medias/>.
- RC54 is organising several sessions in the V ISA Forum, Sociology, to be held at Rabat, Morocco, from 6th to 11th July, 2025. Please visit the ISA website for more details on the sessions. For any queries please do not hesitate to contact our programme coordinators:
Dulce FILGUEIRA DE ALMEIDA – dulce.filgueira@gmail.com
Monica MESQUITA – mmbm@fct.unl.pt

Announcement

RC54 is going to update its banner in social media. To create more decentralisation the committee decided to organise an online competition on photographs and paintings. The unanimously selected photograph or painting will be the banner of RC54 and the name of the photographer or painter will be mentioned there. Since it will be the banner of RC54, the theme of the competition is “The Body in the Social Sciences”. RC54 encourages all (from different fields) to participate in this competition and enrich the committee with insights and thoughts. Please email your photograph or painting to **RC 54 ISA** <rc54isa@gmail.com> . The deadline of submission is 28th February, 2025. Please disseminate this information to your colleagues, students, and other professionals to make this committee bigger and more successful in contributing to the culture and knowledge flow.

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Editor's note

Dear Readers,

We are going to step into the festive season and celebrate the new year. On behalf of RC54 I take this opportunity to thank you for being with us, sharing your insights and thoughts and for all your support and help that keep us growing. This November, we bring you an issue of our newsletter packed with thought provoking write ups from stalwarts. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Professor David Le Breton and Professor Deborah Lupton for their intense and pensive write ups.

I would like to thank the members who shared their thoughts with us through their writings. We do not have any peer review process for the write ups of RC54 members. This, on the one hand, facilitates them to directly share their thoughts through their writings and on the other hand, makes them more sentient and aware as being accountable to the readers. I feel that this shared responsibility and accountability generate a connectedness in the continuous process of knowledge construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. As I always say, your positive and constructive critiques help us growing. For any queries, suggestions and feedbacks you can always reach me at mukherjee.somdatta4@gmail.com.

With this note I extend my sincere appreciation to all the board members for their continuous trust and support that always work as booster for me.

I hope this issue sparks your sociological imagination, ignites your ideas and enriches your thoughts and knowledge. Let's celebrate knowledge with open hearts and shared thoughts. Happy reading.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Somdatta Mukherjee

November 20th, 2024

Kolkata, India.