

Paths of inquiry: the body under the magnifying glass

By Rebeca Cena

It is a pleasure to share and present issue 32 of the Latin American Journal of Studies on Bodies, Emotions and Society (RELACES). On this occasion, the present edition is made up of seven articles and two reviews that, transversally, address death, disappearance, health and disease, learning, childhood, advertising and state interventions around the bodies/emotions. This series of works is located in a field of research that, although it is broad and diverse, for many years has taken bodies/emotions as an analytical node. In this direction, the evolution of social theory has enabled the advancement and generation of investigations regarding the most varied phenomena, recovering the sentient agent as an analytical center.

RELACES, has insisted since its first issue on the nodal importance of the approaches on and from the body/emotion for the social sciences. For social theory, the body/emotions has occupied and continues to occupy an analytical platform from which to problematize different phenomena of the social. The following paper by Hochschild (2008) allows us to put into words the centrality that we are trying to allude to here, since he maintains that if one of the horizons of sociology is to trace the links between public and private problems, the central node of sociology is, or should be, the sociology of emotion:

“if the job of sociology is to trace the links between private troubles and public issues, the sociology of emotion is - or should be - at the heart of sociology” (Wright-Mills cited by Hochschild, 2008: 47)

From this perspective, then, theoretical developments and empirical studies on the body/emotions become central, at least to shed light on problems that challenge contemporary societies. The different articles that make up this issue enable us to identify, problematize and stage the analytical centrality that bodies/emotions possess for the approach to the different social phenomena that are

problematized such as death, disappearance, health and disease, learning, childhoods, advertisements and state interventions.

We could string together the writings that make up this issue in relation to at least two axes that are transversal:

-The centrality of the body/emotions for the investigation of social phenomena;

-The body as an anchor or locus of conflict and order (Scribano, 2009);

Regarding the first of these elements, there are already extensive works that account for the presence that the body has had in social theory (Turner, 1989; Hochschild, 2008; Bericat, 2012; Scribano, 2015). However, some agreements that can be outlined here are those that consider that the body is socially constructed from objective and subjective structures, in its schemes of vision and classification of the world, in its representations and meanings. Thus, the body is much more than empirical evidence:

“it is the result of an experienced education and taught according to the normative demands of society that are revealed in judgments and values that force the body to a form, a weight, a stature, a conservation and a presentation that condition expression [...] beyond the biological” (Tijoux, s / a: 5)

For the second sense, in their relationship with the regimes of capitalist accumulation, bodies/emotions are the first place of anchorage of all social order. Since regimes of accumulation not only require regulating the modes of production, distribution, and consumption of commodities, but also regulating the ways in which subjects produce and reproduce their material conditions of existence, “capitalism requires the control of nature by means of technology, but it also needs, so to speak, the control of the inner nature of the human species” (Turner, 1989: 72-73).

Thus, the first and most obvious thing is that human existence is eminently corporeal, because there is no possible social action without bodies. In the terms set out by Giddens (1991):

“the body is an object in which we all have the privilege, or the fatality, of inhabiting, the source of sensations of well-being and pleasure, but also the seat of disease and tension ... the body does not it is only a physical entity that we <pose>: it is a system of action, a mode of practice, and its special involvement in the interactions of daily life is an essential part of maintaining a coherent sense of self identity “ (128).

The body is a condition of possibility of relationship with the world, ranging from perceptual activities such as smelling, tasting, looking, to the expression of feelings, participation in social interactions, etc. From and starting with the body, social existence (of individuals and collectives) is produced and reproduced, it is the link with the world, determined by the place and time in which a person assumes existence (Le Breton, 2002; Giddens, 1991). Well, inevitably, the totality of the actions necessarily implies the intervention of the corporeal. Thus body/emotion constitutes the hinge (Elías, 1998) between nature/society, nature/culture, natural/social sciences, since the bodies/emotions are not mere biological aspects which are genetically fixed, but are the result of complex processes that involve learned elements (products of models of society, culture, etc.) as a set of pre-dispositions, and the unlearned (like the vital organs).

It is from this great analytical umbrella that this issue of RELACES involves themes that, like death, make corporeality problematic. **Leandro Drivet (Argentina)** in his article “**On the death we give. Materialism, humanism, violence and guilt**” takes the body from a leading position, to analyze the foundation of a morality that, in the regime of capitalist accumulation, contributes to legitimize and perpetuate the repression and exploitation of bodies.

Rafael Losada Martins (Brazil) offers the second article, “**Between dreams and quimeras: sociability and subjectivity in organ transplants**”. There the author, at the crossroads between health, corporality and emotions, reflects on the subjective transformations in organ transplant recipients. The disruption, the break, the split that a transplant means in people’s lives, is staged daily in the search for a balance between health and chronic disease: for one of the main dilemmas that recipients must

face is the rejection of transplanted organ. The body receiving a transplant is, thus, produced on a daily basis, traversed by care practices, subject to biomedical surveillance, guided and controlled behaviors rigorously and continuously. The ways of behaving, the spaces for socialization and leisure, the lifestyle, is mediated by an ethic charged with values that establish the centrality of bodily existence and some parameters about “how to live”.

The third article is proposed by **Moira Cristiá (Argentina)**, entitled “**Bodies of disappearance or representing the invisible. Tactics and repertoires of the International Association for the Defense of Artists Victims of Repression in the World in denouncing the last Argentine military dictatorship**”, and enquires about the different strategies that social groups have carried out in order to represent and position the disappearance of persons. One of the strategies has been performative acts taking the names and bodies as protagonists, with the challenge of making guilt visible. The different performative actions that acquire centrality in the body were intended, on the one hand, to raise awareness and, on the other, to involve different national and international agents to exert pressure on these situations in order to clarify them. In the performance acts, the use of faces, silhouettes, inscriptions, masks and other expressive resources anchored in the bodies, sought to install, together with the identity of a missing other, and the act of naming and representing in public space, the charge of enforced disappearance.

The fourth article, “**The meaning of life and practices linked to suicide. Testimonies of young people in school**”, is offered by **Darío Hernán Arevalos (Argentina)**. Based on an exploratory socio-educational study that aimed to understand the emotional experiences of death of oneself or someone close, this paper works with a series of interviews conducted with young people in conditions of poverty. The possibility of death, the daily presence of a possible or probable death, questions the meanings in relation to the human existence of the youth interviewed, particularly the meanings attributed to practices linked to suicide or self-inflicted violence.

Lucía Mantilla (México) is the author of the fifth article, entitled “**The importance of the emotional state in Nietzsche and Heidegger’s thinking. Biopolitics by a childhood**”. Here the author distinguishes between two conceptions of the human: Childhood childhood. To do this, he reflects on the contributions that different authors have made, engaging with the views that are positioned from time to time and which constrain the concept. Since the institution of modern regulatory regimes,

age has positioned itself as a mechanism to measure, enumerate and value social groups in pursuit of the normalization and discipline of the body. On the contrary, the argumentative strategy for this article is to understand childhood not as a stage in chronological life, but in an ontological way, alluding to being.

Elkin Orlando González-Ulloa, Sol Natalia Gómez-Velásquez and Héctor Rolando Chaparro-Hurtado (Colombia) are the authors of the sixth article entitled **“Heterodydactic modes of (corporeal) education in its political dimension: untied learning in a seedbed of investigation”**. The authors of this contribution approach teaching-learning experiences, taking the body not from a biological perspective, but as a process of sociocultural construction that allows us to allude and incorporate cognitive, affective and attitudinal dimensions into the analysis. In this article, the educational experience acquires centrality from the co-construction, dialogue and inter-subjective exchange. The authors analyze some results of a research project with a qualitative methodological approach, appealing to narrative biographical research as a way of remembering, constructing and reconstructing scenarios.

The seventh paper is entitled **“Body Grammars in advertising aimed at children”**, and is offered by **Roberto Sánchez-Reina** (Spain). The aim of the article is to explore the representations of body image in television advertising targeting children between the ages of 5 and 9, thereby identifying some of the modern body values. The analysis of the media representation in television advertising of body image requires reflection on the implications that these representations have on the imagery of the body amongst the aforementioned population. The link between consumption/diffusion of images and narratives and consumption of advertising that promote body products, influence the ways in which canons of beauty and gender are associated in the reference population. Advertising thus functions as a mediating element in the interpretation and appropriation of what the author identifies as body literacies.

This issue of RELACES concludes with two reviews. The first one from **Constanza Faracemacia** is entitled **“Social Policies in the XXI century: contributions from the Sociology of Bodies/Emotions”**, a book review of **A. De Sena and A. Scribano (2020) *Social Policies and Emotions. A look from the Global South***. The second, by **María Victoria Mairano**, is entitled **“Implications and Potentials of Trust in the 21st Century”**, and reviews the book by **A. Cervio and B.A. Bustos García (2019) *Trust and Policies of sensitivities***.

We thank the authors and all those who have sent us their manuscripts. We remind readers that the call for articles is permanently open.

To conclude, we must reiterate that, from issue 15 of RELACES, we began to publish up to two articles in English per issue. As we have been reiterating for a long time: at RELACES, its entire Editorial Team and the entire Editorial Board, believe it necessary for each article of our journal to serve as a node that allows us to continue the path of dialogue and scientific/academic exchange as a social task and policy to achieve a freer and more autonomous society. It is in the above context that we want to thank all those who trust us as a vehicle to instantiate such dialogue.

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