Pedagogy of Distance:
Touch in Education

by

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Abstract

Pedagogical touch is becoming an endangered species in the learning environments we create with our students. Many school districts are adopting no-touch policies without considering the social and emotional implications for students. Through ethnodramatic, performative and autoethnographic writing, difficult questions are posed. Are interpersonal physical connections between students and educators an important and valuable expression in the pedagogical relationship? What personal, experiential and/or institutional considerations influence the pedagogical choices that teachers make in using touch? Does fear play a role in making these pedagogical decisions? Does gender matter? This body of work is divided into two sections. The first piece consists of an ethnodrama titled “You Were Warned.” The play deals with the complexities of touch and teacher’s lives in the politicized school environment, drawn from interviews with educators. The second piece contextualizes the ethnodrama and work as a whole. This section also explores the methodological underpinnings that gave me permission to engage with the data through ethnodrama, performative writing, autoethnography and how these methodologies mediated my struggle with finding voice.

Keywords: touch; education; gender; teachers; teacher discipline; ethnodrama; autoethnography; performative writing