

Touching Space, Placing Touch

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Given that touch and touching is so central to everyday embodied existence, why has it been largely ignored by social scientists for so long? What is the place of touch in our mixed spaces of sociality, work, domesticity, recreation, creativity or care? What conceptual resources and academic languages can we reach towards when approaching tactile activities and somatic experiences through the body? How is this tactile landscape gendered? How is touch becoming revisited and revaluated in late capitalism through animal encounters, tourism, massage, beauty treatments, professional medicine, everyday spiritualities or the aseptic touch-free spaces of automated toilets? How is touch placed and valued within scholarly fieldwork and research itself, integral as it is to the production of embodied epistemologies? How is touch involved in such aesthetic experiences as shaping objects in sand, or encountering fleshly bodies within a painting? The goal of this edited collection, *Touching Space, Placing Touch* is twofold:

- To further advance theoretical and empirical understanding of touch in social science scholarship by focussing on the differential social and cultural meanings of touching and the places of touch.
- To develop a multi-faceted and interdisciplinary explanations of touch in terms of individual and social life, personal experiences and tasks, and their related cultural contexts.

The twelve essays in this volume provide a rich combination of theoretical resources, methodological approaches and empirical investigation. Each chapter takes a distinct aspect of touch within a particular spatial context, exploring this through a mixture of sustained empirical work, critical theories of embodiment, philosophical and psychoanalytic approaches to gendered touch and touching, or the relationship between visual and non-visual culture, to articulate something of the variety and variability of touching experiences. The contributors are a mixture of established and emerging researchers within a growing interdisciplinary field of scholarship, yet the volume has a strong thematic identity and therefore represents the formative collection concerning the multiple senses of touch within social science scholarship at this time.

Together, the essays in Touching Space, Placing Touch challenge the scopophilia that animates much of geographic inquiry, from key concepts to methodological frameworks and techniques. Here, touch takes hold of the geographic imagination, reworking our understanding not only of bodies and environments, but such fundamental questions as what does it mean to locate, to connect and to become intimate with? Engagingly written, Touching Space, Placing Touch uses a series of empirically rich analyses to unfold these questions, providing in the process a "grounding" of affect, aesthetics, corporeality, embodiment, performance and materialism that manages to offer a radical intellectual agenda whilst remaining accessible.

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