

"...can we change the world with a hug?"



CCGL9064
FINAL BODY BLOG
PORTFOLIO

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**WHY HUG
MATTERS?**

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#INTRODUCTION:

In this body practice, I will link my embodied practices of hugging people with analytical concepts and articles, to widely explore the interconnection between body, culture, and the society, to see how voluntarily hugging people deepen my understanding of the world.

#1: HUG OCEAN

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I invited Ocean, a good friend, to be the first participant. We hardly touch each other's body as she is not really into intimate body contact.

Under the serene late-summer nightfall, I opened my arms and hugged her neck. She asked me whether she needed to hug back, and I said it was up to her. Then, she put her arms gently on my back. Her body was a bit tense, and her position of holding me was not common. "I seldom hug people. But it's not that hard." She said and laughed.

I heartfully appreciate her engagement because she over-crosses her **comfortable body contact zone** for the sake of my program. According to a **YouTube video talking about body contact on the first date**, the best social distance varies between culture and traditions, directly linked to individual well-being. Sometimes this variation leads to misunderstandings and hinders communications, if they are not communicated in an appropriate way. Regarding Ocean and I, a hug is a **symbol** carrying the meaning of love and care to me. Yet to Ocean, hug might signify the lack of respect, and this notion is part of her **value** system that is unshakable. .

However, thanks to the emotional tie between us, I was permitted to come into her safe zone. It informs me that friendship is not metaphysical. It affects people's way of perceiving what is the most comfortable condition of the body, negotiating with space and distances.

Through Ocean's participation, I realize the best way of telling love is to the legitimate proliferated way of expressing love and respecting others.

#2: HUG RC

Identifying as a queer/gender non-binary person, I assumed hugging a boy is easy because **norms**, namely some socially enforced rules that regulate male-female distances, are not applicable to my body anymore. However, pondering on which boy I should choose to hug, I cannot come up with a single name.

Finally, I ended up inviting another good friend of mine, RC, who is also a queer person. When I hugged her, I reassured that she was VERY skinny. I should put my arms closer to each other and lean on her shoulder. Her body shape is like a boy's, but she is still not. That's why I can hug her without any awkwardness.

RC shared a similar feeling with me: "I understand. If you are a real boy, I won't help you with this hugging project. Isn't it just weird?"

RC and I are both very open-minded people. We always discuss gender topics, intentionally resist the ‘female should be passive and submissive’ gender stereotypes that is backed up by outdated Western biological knowledge of egg and sperm (**Martin, 1991**). For example, RC loves football and I have studied Taekwondo for 8 years, which are not stereotypically for biological females. Just as the *zhongxingnvhai* in Taiwanese context gives girls who resonate with this identity a new way of depositing themselves (**Lu & Hu, 2021**), our queer identities somehow give us more freedom to accept intimate physical contact with boys. Because in many cultures, specifically traditional Chinese culture, there are some rules regulating the distance between girls and boys, forcing them to keep distances to avoid misunderstanding and gossips. Observing from a queer feminist perspective, this tradition is based on **heteronormative** assumption, since it assumes that all people are straight, and boys must fall in love with girls. So, our identification of gender ‘in between’ may liberate us from these rules.

Nevertheless, both of us still feel uncomfortable crossing the boundary, which shows our bodies are carved with histories, memories, and old-day disciplines. The gender distances have already become a part of our **habitus**, namely our embodied way of behaving. Our upbringing and education shape our habitus, and it cannot be changed in two or three days. Furthermore, this ‘boy-girl social distance’ can also be interpreted as cultural hegemony, that manipulates and limits our behaviors in daily life interactions, even RC and I have aware of its control on us.

#3: HUG THE SLEF

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I even forget to design this hugging project in the past depressing week. Owing to the intense depression in schoolwork, I ate too much and gained weight. Stepping on the weighing scale, the shameful sense of losing control of my body shape almost swallowed me. That's why the whim 'give me a hug' for self-therapy emerged in my mind.

Putting my arms around my own shoulders, a strange sense of comfort and security derived. My head, very naturally, leaned on my elbows. I felt being healed after closely interacting with my own body.

According to **Bordo**, why I am ashamed of gaining weight is that there is a moral coding regarding fat/slander body has been deeply embedded in our culture; the control of food intake symbolizes the ability to constrain impulse and desire (1993). If my weight loses control, I would feel defeated and be ashamed of the deficiency of my personal competency of self-discipline, which is demonstrated by my 'evil, uncontrollable appetite'.

My anxiety to the number on the weighing scale is worth analyzing as well. Weighing myself is a form of **self-tracking**, also known as ‘quantifying self’, advocating self-knowledge through numbers (**Schull, 2016**). The number should benefit me and help me understand myself, yet it turns out to be the opposite. This somehow shows the tension between ‘**experiential self**’ and ‘**quantified self**’, which basically means the inconsistency between my sensational feeling towards my body and the number that tracks my body. I never feel unwell while gaining weight; it is the number that utters there is something wrong with me, speaking my failure.

However, it is overt that we shouldn’t let a simple number control our emotions and our sense of self. It is just a tool rather than an end. In this sense, apart from relying on technology, I should connect more with my ‘experiential self’, emotions, feelings, thoughts, and body parts to gain insights into my actual condition.

REFERENCE

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LINK TO THE INSTAGRAM:

<HTTPS://WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/HUGGINGBEAR1907/>



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Hugging Bear Zig

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🧪 Experimental Body Project

💖 Dedicated to CCGL9064, a common core course at HKU