Chapter 8

School Practices in Photographs: Recess

Introduction

Recess, the scheduled rest period for all education levels, is when students can freely carry out activities, such as studying, reading, listening to music, chatting, eating, using the bathroom, playing, or simply resting. Also referred to as “break” or “break time” in the UK, recess is more often associated with compulsory education (kindergarten, primary, and secondary schooling) than higher levels of education, such as university. Although there are many definitions of the concept of school recess, most are in line with Pellegrini and Smith’s definition of recess as the scheduled time during the school day for students to rest, have lunch, go to the bathroom, interact, or play with each other.¹

Recess is an inherent part of schooling and takes place in the context of each school institution, although its form may vary according to the context (countries, type of schools). Thus, it has been the subject of international study and consideration in various scientific fields in education: psychology, pedagogy, pediatrics, and sociology. Its origins in Spain can be traced back to the end of the nineteenth century, when it was seen as a way to combat students’ physical and psychological fatigue during the school day, as well as provide time for physical activity and play as a way to use excess energy built up during hours of classroom work.

This chapter stems from a research project into school practice.² Thanks to various studies over the last decade on photos depicting the history of schooling in Spain in general, and the Balearic Islands in particular, we have located hundreds of photographs from public and private archives, school collections, yearbooks, institutional websites, social networks, illustrated magazines and commemorative publications.³ There is, however, very little written testimony concerning recess. Most

¹ Anthony D. Pellegrini and Peter K. Smith, “School Recess: Implications for Education and Development,” *Review of Educational Research (RER)* 63, no. 1 (1993): 51, DOI: 10.2307/1170559 (accessed March 13, 2020).

² This chapter was written as part of the project *School Culture and Practices in the 20th Century*, funded by ERDF/ Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades–Agencia Estatal de Investigación/ EDU2017- 82485-P

³ The results of these projects, including all related bibliographic information, can be found in Francisca Comas and Bernat Sureda, “Photography and History of Education. Ten Years of Research in the UIB’s History of Education Studies Group,” *Informes de recerca en educació. Illes Balears*. 2018, January 16, 2018, <http://www.irie.uib.cat> (accessed April 24, 2020).

sources which are used to study schooling practices (regulations, dissertations, notebooks, personal memoirs) reference other activities and tell us little about rest times. We are obliged to turn to other sources, including, oral testimony, material evidence, spaces, school projects, autobiographies, personal diaries, and photographs, to better understand what took place during recess time.⁴ Photographs, in particular, are one of the richest sources of information, revealing that rest periods have been a part of Spanish schooling since the late nineteenth century.

In this chapter, we focus specifically on school-related photography in the Balearic Islands.⁵ After more than a decade of research on this topic, we can confirm that images of recess have been published in books and featured in stories written about education centers, alongside the existence of unpublished images that we located in school collections and archives.⁶ However, identifying and analyzing unpublished photos presents unique challenges. To understand the photographs taken of recess at schools in the Balearic Islands, we first discuss the concept of recess, and its origins and development in Spain.

The Concept of Recess

The need for recess in the school routine has been the subject of intense debate in certain countries in recent decades. In the United States, for example, the neo-liberal movement in favor of eliminating recess during the school day led many experts to defend the pedagogical, social, physiological, and cognitive benefits of recess against those who consider it to be a waste of time. Evans and Pellegrini, for example, claim that recess responds to physical, cognitive, and motivational needs.⁷ During the last two decades, many other arguments have defended recess as a significant

4 Sjaak Braster, Ian Grosvenor, and María del Mar del Pozo, *The Black Box of Schooling. A Cultural History of the Classroom* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2011); Peter Cunningham and Philip Gardner, *Becoming Teachers. Texts and Testimonies 1907–1950* (London: Woburn Press, 2004).

5 In previous studies we have dealt with school-related photography as a subgenre under which we grouped photographs kept by the schools themselves, those in specialized school archives, images taken in schooling locations and contexts, and those that use some kind of semiotics that specifically relates them to schooling, without having been part of schools' collections or having been taken in schooling spaces or contexts. See: Sara González and Francisca Comas, "Photography and Construction of School Memory," *History of Education & Children's Literature* 11, no. 1 (2016): 215–236.

6 Francisca Comas, "Localització, anàlisi i utilització de la fotografia com a font per a la història de l'educació: presentació dels projectes desenvolupats en el Grup d'Estudis d'Història de l'Educació de la UIB," in *Investigar la història de l'educació amb imatges*, ed. Eulàlia Collelldemont (Vic: Eumogràfic-MUVIP, 2014), 53–64.

7 John Evans and Anthony D. Pellegrini, "Surplus Energy Theory: An Enduring but Inadequate Justification for School Break-Time," *Educational Review* 49 (1997): 229–336, DOI: 10.1080/0013191970490302 (accessed March 22, 2020).

pedagogical resource. Problems and conflicts that can develop during recess (bullying, discrimination, violence) have also been studied, as has the ability of recess to emulate social, economic, and cultural realities.⁸

Additionally, the concept of recess as a time dedicated to school-day rest is strongly associated with a physical space in the school where it tends to take place: the playground. While school playgrounds can be used for activities other than recess (e.g., physical education (PE), performances, shows, and school celebrations), they are deemed ideal for holding recess. In recent years, educational historiography has given special attention to times during the school day and school spaces in general. However, while neither recess time nor playgrounds have received much attention, recent history studies on school playgrounds from around the world provide interesting reflections on the history of schooling and recess from material and spatial perspectives. These studies include the works of Marc Armitage (focusing on England and Wales),⁹ Kate Darian-Smith (Australia),¹⁰ Anna Larsson and Björn Norlin (Sweden),¹¹ and most recently, Inés Dussel (on school playgrounds in Argentina).¹² Among other elements, these publications look at the origins of school playgrounds, the uses that they have been given, and the functions they have served over the last two centuries. Accommodating recess periods is one of these functions.

8 There are many international works from a variety of scientific disciplines that cover recess and topics related to play, physical activity, behavior, gender differences, inclusion/exclusion, and healthy eating habits, but we have not included them all as this is not the objective of the present study.

9 Marc Armitage, "The Influence of School Architecture and Design on the Outdoor Play Experience within the Primary School," *Paedagogica Historica. International Journal of the History of Education* 41, no. 4–5 (2005): 535–553, DOI: 10.1080/00309230500165734 (accessed April 13, 2020).

10 Kate Darian-Smith, "Australian Children's Play in Historical Perspective: Continuity and Change on the School Playground," *International Journal of Play* 1, no. 3 (2012): 264–278, DOI: 10.1080/21594937.2012.739826 (accessed February 19, 2020).

11 Anna Larsson, "A Children's Place? The School Playground Debate in Postwar Sweden," *History of Education* 42, no. 1 (2013): 115–130, DOI: 10.1080/0046760X.2012.69792 (accessed April 23, 2020); Björn Norlin, "Making the Schoolyard: Recess, Recreation, Play, and Other Pedagogical Incentives to Regulate Outdoor School Spaces in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Sweden," in *Making Education: Material School Design and Educational Governance*, ed. Ian Grosvenor and Lisa Rosén Rasmussen (Switzerland: Springer, 2018), 33–48.

12 Inés Dussel, "El patio escolar, de claustro a aula al aire libre. Historia de la transformación de los espacios escolares (Argentina, 1850–1920)," *Anuario de Historia de la Educación* 20, no. 1 (2019): 28–63.

The Origins of Recess in Spain

The first discussions published in Spain on the idea of rest at school arose during the second half of the nineteenth century and were related to a series of hygiene principles, and were influenced by such scientific disciplines as psychology and pedology, the study of children's behavior and development.¹³ At its beginnings in the nineteenth century, Spanish elementary schools did not allot schedule time and space for rest. During the school day, which consisted of a three-hour morning session and another three-hour session in the afternoon, students were kept fully busy, and only during the summer were afternoon schedules reduced. The obsession with maximizing school time (as per laws ratified in 1825, 1838, 1855, and 1857) was reinforced with the appearance of the first Teacher Training School not only for training future teachers but also future Inspectors of Primary School, both of which aimed to establish class schedules that provided no time for rest or vacations, alternating only curricular content and lessons.

However, with the first studies on school fatigue at the end of the nineteenth century, a whole series of rest activities began to appear throughout the school day. Vacation days, recess, and subject reorganization were some of the measures taken to ensure a healthier distribution of time, in line with new hypotheses of the day.¹⁴ Institutions associated with the progressive education – or New School – movement, such as the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (ILE, The Free Institution of Education) and the *Museo Pedagógico Nacional* (National Pedagogy Museum), were fundamental to the introduction of these healthier practices into Spanish schools. So, too, were the first conferences on school hygiene and publications on topics related to pedagogy, such as the *Boletín de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (the ILE Bulletin), the *Revista de Pedagogía* (the Pedagogy Magazine) and, in the case of the Balearic Islands, *El Magisterio Balear* (Balearic Teaching), a professional journal.¹⁵ Renowned Spanish authors on education who advocated most forcefully for reorganizing the school day and reshape overloaded schedules include: Francisco Giner de los Ríos, Manuel Bartolomé Cossío, Luis Simarro, Domingo Barnés, and Pedro de Alcántara García.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, educators have institutionalized rest into their school curricula in two ways. First, the need to either create or adapt spaces to serve as recess playgrounds, and second, to introduce brief rest periods

¹³ Antonio Viñao, *Tiempos escolares, tiempos sociales* (Madrid: Ariel, 1998).

¹⁴ Agustín Escolano, "Tiempo y educación. La formación del cronosistema. Horario en la escuela elemental (1825–1931)," *Revista de Educación* 301 (1993): 127–163.

¹⁵ Many of these professional journals have been digitized and can be found in the Biblioteca Virtual de Prensa Histórica (Historical Press Virtual Library) of the Spanish government's Ministry of Culture and Sport. See: "Biblioteca Virtual de Prensa Histórica," last modified May 11, 2020, <https://prensahistorica.mcu.es/es/inicio/inicio.do>

between classes in order to allow students to release the energy accumulated after hours of cognitive effort.¹⁶ In addition to the playground and recess itself, other rest periods from class would also be introduced, including free days.¹⁷

Legislation regarding school playgrounds first appeared in Spain in provisions addressing the building of schools passed in 1883, 1904, and 1905. These laws set out the regulations for the size and facilities to be included on playgrounds (sand boxes, trees, sources of drinking water). The Department of School Architecture, a branch of the Ministry of Fine Arts and Public Instruction,¹⁸ was charged with establishing the legal parameters of new school buildings and spaces. Their first models, published in 1909, included recess playgrounds, in addition to school libraries, gymnasiums, lecture and manual activity rooms, cafeterias, small-scale museums, washrooms, toilets, and showers. However, from the end of the nineteenth century and through the first decades of the twentieth century, very few schools were built in Spain in general, and particularly in the Balearic Islands. Moreover, as those that existed did not have playgrounds, recess took place in a variety of other spaces: streets, plazas, terraces, interior spaces, or in the countryside, if the school was in a rural area.

In turn, recess as a school time started to be regulated in Spain at the start of the twentieth century. At first, recess was dedicated to exercise and singing – two new subjects that were introduced into primary school curricula in 1901.¹⁹ The authorities, in the following decades, realized, however, that these activities were not restful and, for the remainder of the century, recess became associated with free play time.

Until the 1930s, both the school calendar and schedule, including recess times, were topics of debate. Between 1923 and 1933, the *Revista de Pedagogía* published 15 articles on the school schedule offering different considerations on how to arrange school time using health-related, teaching, organizational, and comparative criteria.²⁰

During the Franco dictatorship, recess was fully integrated into the school day, although state schools did not have official schedules nor were they given government guidelines to create them. Thus, teachers themselves were charged with establishing the work and rest rhythms at schools, often guided by recommendations

16 Purificación Lahoz, “Higiene y arquitectura escolar en la España contemporánea (1838–1936),” *Revista de Educación* 298 (1992): 89–118.

17 Agustín Escolano, “La arquitectura como programa. Espacio-escuela y currículum,” *Historia de la Educación. Revista interuniversitaria* 12–13 (1993–1994): 97–120; Agustín Escolano, *Tiempos y espacios para la escuela* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2000).

18 In their native Spanish, these institutions are known as the *Negociado de Arquitectura Escolar* and the *Ministerio de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes*.

19 *Gaceta de Madrid*. “Real Decreto. Atendiendo a las razones expuestas por el Ministro de Instrucción pública y Bellas Artes, de acuerdo con el Consejo de Ministros y con lo informado por la Sección primera del Consejo de Instrucción pública,” *Gaceta de Madrid* 303 (1901): 498–499.

20 Escolano, “Tiempo y educación,” 127–163.

made in teaching manuals, schedules provided during inspections by provincial officials, or their own experience.²¹

Despite the construction of new schools and their respective playgrounds in early twentieth-century Spain, a school model based on teaching by age groups grades (as opposed to single classroom schools) would not become the national standard until the ratification of Spain's General Education Law of 1970.

Considerations for the Identification and Historical Interpretation of Photographs of School Recess

Current and older published photographs of school recess often include iconography that we recognize, and which forms part of our collective imagination. The playground tends to bring together certain student activities and attitudes, including spontaneous movement, free play, snacking, and peer interaction based on interests and motivations. In this sense, there is an iconography surrounding recess that enables us to identify it visually.

By the early twentieth century, there were already historical images of recess corresponding to this collective imagination. For example, one of the earliest and best-known published photographs of recess in Spain was taken by the Danish photographer Christian Franzen for an article on the Institución Libre de Enseñanza (ILE), published in the magazine *Alma Española* in 1903.²² The image (Fig. 8.1) is widely available on the Internet and depicts the main iconographic elements associated with the idea that recess is time for supervised rest and play – a widely accepted belief in Spain since the early twentieth century.

In the photo, we can see a school playground with high walls closing off the area, and children playing typical recess games (Ring Around the Rosie and leap-frog). As the image was captured by a professional photographer for publication, it might be a staged recess photo. Nonetheless, it does illustrate that the idea was to fill these rest times with physical exercise and singing. The photographer shows us elements that are illustrative of a new concept of school recess based on play, in line with the institutional pedagogical ideals of the time. Also worth noting is the fact that one of the four images chosen for an article aimed at publicizing the ILE's pedagogical

²¹ Some documents, such as trainee teacher dissertations, include this information. See, for example, Gabriel Barceló, Francisca Comas and Bernat Sureda, "Opening the Black Box: Post-War Spanish State Schools," *Revista de Educación* 371 (2016): 56–77, DOI: 10.4438/1988-592X-RE-2015-371-308 (accessed March 13, 2020).

²² Manuel Carretero, "España nueva. La Institución Libre de Enseñanza," *Alma Española* 7 (1903): 2–3.

Fig. 8.1: *Alma Española* 7 (1903, 3). Photographer: Christian Franzen.

work specifically depicts recess, showing that the management of rest time had become a hallmark of the Institution's pedagogical identity.

Other school photographs published throughout the twentieth century illustrate similar settings and choreographies, and are often associated, as with Fig. 8.1, with modern approaches to teaching.²³ In turn, schools' own archives and collections contain many other images that may show unstaged times or moments of recess and do not have the same iconographic elements. Since they were not taken by a professional for publication, these sometimes more spontaneous images are slightly more ambiguous.

The image of Recreation in the Balearic Islands

The photographs we located in dissertations and publications (yearbooks and school magazines) enabled us to date them, and some even include information regarding

²³ One recent example is the photograph used to present the exposition *Madrid, ciudad educadora 1898/1938–Memoria de la Escuela Pública*. Both the flyers advertising the exposition and the cover of a related printed catalogue depict an image of a recess period. See Ian Grosvenor, María del Mar del Pozo and Antonio Viñao, *Madrid, ciudad educadora 1898/1938 – Memoria de la Escuela Pública* (Madrid: Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2019).

the photographer or the place where the picture was taken. We have located and studied numerous photographic collections from state and public schools in detail. We have also analyzed school images found in collections and documentation from specialized and general archives, both at provincial and state level.²⁴ However, the majority of unpublished school photographs that we have found in recent years in the Balearic Islands have forced us to confront difficulties that have been discussed by some pioneering educational historians in the use of images for history of education research.²⁵ In all instances, the greatest difficulty lay in the fact that photographs from schools are rarely accompanied by more information than that which is provided in the image itself. Many schools keep photos in boxes without any kind of cataloging system. We were lucky to find some boxes ordered by decade, but few were so neatly cataloged. Usually, we were unable to find any information about the photographer or about exactly when or where the images were taken. Thus, wherever possible, we had to deduce this information by associating other information. In general and specialized records at education museums and archives, we found a better, but far from perfect situation. Here, photographs were often cataloged and thus included some more detailed information, but in the majority of cases, the information was still incomplete, making difficult to fully understand the image. Such difficulties meant that our first attempt to conduct an historical analysis using school photographs as sources, as Burke and Rousmaniere have noted in different contexts,²⁶ was conditioned on our previous understanding of the time and school spaces under consideration, and on the social imaginary of the school that we have built collectively over the years.

Without additional information to help provide context to these images, certain spaces in which the photos were taken are easy to recognize (inside a classroom, the playground, cafeteria, laboratory, library), but defining school times dedicated to a subject is more difficult. At first glance, some seem obvious – our social imaginary of schools includes iconographic elements that we associate with specific classes (for example, a laboratory space and students working in a lab lead us to recognize the image as a science class). Nevertheless, others are not so clear (for example, an image

24 We have developed three research projects oriented around the location and analysis of school photographs since 2007, focusing especially on the Balearic Islands. The results of these projects, in the format of publications, are listed in Comas and Sureda, “Photography and history of education”.

25 Early first publications on the use of photography as a resource for studying the history of education addressed these difficulties, as well as methodological issues that could arise. See Ian Grosvenor and Martin Lawn, “Ways of Seeing in Education and Schooling: Emerging Historiographies,” *History of Education* 30, no. 2 (2001): 105–108, DOI: 10.1080/00467600010012382 (accessed May 12, 2020).

26 Catherine Burke, “Containing the School Child: Architectures and Pedagogies,” *Paedagogica Historica. International Journal of the History of Education* 41 no. 4–5 (2005): 489–494, DOI: 10.1080/00309230500165635 (accessed April 13, 2020); Kate Rousmaniere, “Questioning the Visual in the History of Education,” *History of Education* 30, no. 2 (2001): 109–116, DOI: 10.1080/00467600010012391 (accessed May 12, 2020).

of students doing some kind of physical exercise on the school playground could be a PE class, an end-of-the-year celebration, or a recess period). Consequently, our first challenge with this kind of photographic collection is to correctly identify photographs showing school recess.

School Recess in Photographs: Identification

We associate recess with a series of specific spaces, elements, and activities, and so by recognizing these we can identify them as recess photographs. However, not all photos depict these spaces, elements, or activities clearly, and this can lead to some confusion.

With regard to space, the playground is the setting most commonly associated with recess. However, an image captured of a school playground does not mean that it depicts recess. We must remember that schools have traditionally used playgrounds for a range of other activities, including end-of-year or start-of-year events, parties and celebrations, award ceremonies, PE classes, or sport and art exhibitions. Given the technical advantages of the space and the light that it provides compared to other school spaces, a considerable number of old school photographs in schools' own archives and collections were taken on their playgrounds.

Moreover, there are images that show recess in many different settings, including on terraces, in the vicinity of the school, in fields next to school buildings or, simply, in the streets. In these cases, the spaces tend to be open and outdoors, although there are also images of recess time inside school buildings, further complicating its unequivocal identification as school time. What helps us to identify recess in the images is not the space itself, but the iconographic elements that we associate with this activity and which represent actions such as play, snacking, rest, and improvisation.

We should also note the possible difficulty in recognizing a playground in an image when it does appear. Even though we may know the school building in which the photograph was taken, we cannot always identify the specific space. Here, certain iconographic elements that we associate with school playgrounds aid our analysis, for example, basketball hoops (very common in playgrounds of Spanish state schools since the Franco era), soccer goalposts, and other elements of play such as slides and swings.

Apart from physical space, recess has allowed students to enjoy a series of activities. The main one is play. In the photographs, it is easy to spot the boys and girls playing, whose visual representation involves action, movement, nonchalance, and general happiness. This play may be accompanied by objects, such as balls, tops, marbles, ropes, or swings and slides. We can also recognize typical playground games, like Ring Around the Rosie, leapfrog, and jump rope because they

form part of our collective social imaginary. In many instances, the photographer (professional or not) seems to have intentionally chosen these objects or games to visually express the idea of recess.

Practicing sports, not just games, can also be associated with recess, though confusion may arise since certain sports are played during PE class, celebrations, or exhibitions. Thus, other iconographic elements can help us distinguish between a photo of recess and a one of a PE class or a celebration. Perhaps the most important element is wardrobe: sport uniforms are associated with competition between teams, requiring a level of organization unavailable during free play. For recess, there is hardly time to change clothes. Other elements related to the disciplined practice of sport (presence of referees, player positioning) can be of assistance in distinguishing recess, where playing sport is always informal.

Another element that can help us visually identify recess in Spain is the presence of snacks. School photographs in which we can see children eating sandwiches or any other kind of snack immediately suggests school recess. Even in the absence of other elements such as play, outdoor spaces, or movement, the presence of a midday snack is enough for the image to be considered a recess or rest photo. Children eating in a photo immediately points to recess period, even if the image was taken in a classroom. In this case, we would likely interpret that the children were unable to go out to the playground due to the weather or simply because they preferred to have their snack in the classroom before going outside, and not associate the image with any other school period.

Finally, we should reference one activity, or rather the lack thereof, that is often associated with school rest periods: not doing anything. While not being able to identify any particular activity in a photograph does not necessarily make us think that it is a recess period, if we add to this particular lack of activity the playground or spaces outside of the school, alongside nonchalant attitudes, relaxation, unwinding, or improvisation, we could link the image to recess. We have found many images of school recess from schools' own collections, where children are on the playground and not performing any particular activity which could be related to any curricular subject. Thus, in cases where no activity is being carried out, we automatically consider whether the image could show a recess period.

We have selected two photographs from the same school collection located in the Balearic Islands as an example of what has been said so far. This is a collection of images preserved without any apparent order or additional information in a state school album in Mallorca. After analyzing the entire collection and in the absence of further information that could help us, we concluded that the two images shown below visualize recess time. However, this has implied certain difficulties. Let's see why.

Fig. 8.2 can be clearly identified as school recess. There are iconographic elements such as play, rest or improvisation, and we also easily identify the physical space with basketball hoops – an unequivocal element of Spanish school playgrounds. Some

Fig. 8.2: CEIP La Soledat Archive (Palma). Undated. Photographer: Unknown.

Fig. 8.3: CEIP La Soledat Archive (Palma). Undated. Photographer: Unknown.

children are playing basketball without equipment or apparent discipline, surrounded by others walking, playing, or even sitting on the floor having a snack.

One photograph, however, was a challenge (Fig. 8.3). On the one hand, we can see that the children are playing indoors, with a dining table converted into a ping pong table. We do not see a playground, snacks, or other iconographic elements that appear in the previous image. Nor is the image supported by any explanation that would allow us to say that it is a photograph of recess. On the other hand, such iconographic elements as free play, the lack of discipline, the relaxed attitudes of those watching the match, the informality of the situation, and above all, the absence of elements that connect to curricular activity (or at least with the image we have of it) suggest that it is a photograph of recess.

To summarize, there is an iconography of school recess that enables us to identify it in photographs, including spaces, actions, objects, artifacts, gestures, and attitudes. Perhaps none of these elements by themselves are enough to identify school recess in a photograph, but the combination of several can lead us to deem that an image shows a recess period and not another school activity.

Keys for Interpreting Photographs of Recess

These school photographs were taken by someone for a reason. The photographer chose what he or she was going to capture, as well as the moment and perspective at which to do it. The result is a social construction of the school-related times, models, concepts, and ideas that an image intends to convey. Consequentially, understanding the context in which the photo was taken is key to properly interpreting the history behind it. Though we have previously mentioned that, in the case of school photographs, this information is not always available.²⁷

There could be various reasons why some schools were interested in photographing recess. On the one hand, it could be due to the school's or a specific teacher's interest in showing the importance of rest and play periods or students' satisfaction, as they often appear smiling and relaxed in recess photos. On the other hand, recess may have been captured to showcase schools' facilities. During Francoism, many public schools in the Balearic Islands made use of large buildings that offered families various boarding options. In these instances, the facilities and spaces available to children

²⁷ In Spain, it was María del Mar del Pozo who initiated the debate on how to analyze photographs as a resource for studying the history of education, emphasizing the importance of the medium. See María del Mar del Pozo, "Imágenes e historia de la educación: construcción, reconstrucción y representación de las prácticas escolares en el aula," *Historia de la Educación. Revista interuniversitaria* 25 (2006): 291–315.

for rest, play, sports, recreation, and leisure took on as much or more importance than academics or teaching.

It is also interesting to know where and why the images were conserved, and how and to what extent they were circulated over the years (and even today). It would be very useful to distinguish between photos kept in school collections that make up part of schools' own albums and those that we found in yearbooks, magazines, and private collections as, in these different cases, the audience and motivation for taking the photos and conserving them in one place or another, could differ greatly. The image itself, along with what we know about the context in which it was taken, stored, and circulated, helps us to construct a more in-depth understanding of the photographs and their visual discourses.

Each photograph should be analyzed by taking into account all of the above, in order to approach any interpretation. By way of example, we have selected two photographs that were taken during the 1961–62 school year at a state school for boys in Alaró (Mallorca) (Figs. 8.4 and 8.5). These pictures were found in a dissertation submitted on the Rational Pedagogy course at Madrid's Complutense University, by the trainee teacher B.R.A.²⁸ Both photos, along with 13 others, were taken by B.R.A. to provide pictorial testimony in his dissertation on this particular boy's school.²⁹ The majority of the photos show the setting in which the school is located (the town or landscapes), six of them explicitly show the school, and two of those include school activities, which, coincidentally or not, depict recess. The remaining four school images show the building, the playground, a group of teachers, and a typical photo that seems to have been taken as a memento.

We have selected these two unpublished recess photographs from the Balearic Islands as we know the photographer, and they are included in a document that provides information that can help with interpretation. This allows us a more thorough approach when presenting it here as an example of how to approach interpretation.

The two photos displayed below (Figs. 8.4 and 8.5) show the plot of land adjacent to the school that has been converted into the school playground.

The author of the dissertation described it as a recess playground, stating that the school had a spacious playground surrounded by pine trees and with a soccer field, though he found an abandoned water tank in the middle of the field to be disconcerting.³⁰ The presence of this covered tank and the surrounding pine trees

28 B.R.A., "Matricula y asistencia escolar en la escuela graduada de Alaró (Mallorca). Universidad de Madrid (curso 1961–1962)," *Fondo Romero Marín (FRM)*. Museo Manuel Bartolomé Cossío (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) FRM 503 (1961–1962): 1–46.

29 Gabriel Barceló and Teresa Rabazas, "La escuela en Mallorca durante el franquismo, una aproximación a través de las memorias de prácticas del Fondo Romero Marín," in *Imatges de l'escola, imatge de l'educació. Actes de les XXI Jornades d'Història de l'Educació*, ed. Francisca Comas, Sara González, Xavier Motilla, and Bernat Sureda (Palma: Universitat de les Illes Balears, 2014), 87–100.

30 B. R. A., "Matricula y asistencia escolar," 35.

Fig. 8.4: Collection of Romero Marín (503). B. R. A. teaching dissertation (1961–1962 school year). Photographer: B. R. A.

Fig. 8.5: Collection of Romero Marín (503). B. R. A. teaching dissertation (1961–1962 school year). Photographer: B. R. A.

tells us that the space was not designed to be used as a playground, but rather was converted to serve that purpose.

The author expresses a pedagogic interest in playgrounds. In his dissertation, he defended rest as something necessary and highly beneficial, even observing that spaces for recess were crucial for children, and commenting that “children need recesses, and it is of great value to have a field with conditions that allow children to freely entertain themselves during these times.”³¹

The dissertation includes three photographs of the converted playground (two of which are shown here): one of the space while empty and two including children. The photo without children shows the playground as a school space, albeit at a non-recess time. It can be useful, in order to recognize recess time, to depict both the physical space and the subjects, activities, and attitudes typical of the rest period.

Fig. 8.4 shows the size of the playground, with an improvised goal built out of three posts in the background. Nearby, we can see children playing, some sitting on the ground, and others standing or running, perhaps playing or chasing after a soccer ball. Though we cannot see the game very well in the photograph, it shows a recess period. The footnote accompanying the photo only alludes to the space as a playing field. The author explains that it is enjoyable to watch the children happily and noisily at play during recess time. According to the author, the games which the children played include soccer, skittles (a lawn game), play with imaginary guns, tag, and some traditional games in Spain as “four-corner” or “handkerchief” game.³²

Fig. 8.5 depicts a group of similarly-aged children standing near a wall that splits the outdoor space adjacent to the school in two. According to B.R.A., the school in the background was opened in 1933, during the Second Spanish Republic (1931–1939). Accompanying the photo is a handwritten note by the author that says “The wall separating the two schools,” referencing the division wall between the boys’ and girls’ school. The boys in the photo are standing, looking off to the other side of the wall, apparently not doing anything else. They do not appear to be posing for the photo, but rather seem to be interested in what is happening on the other side. The picture shows the boys acting naturally and relaxed, albeit with curiosity.

If the author describes recess as a time for games, then why did he include this image in his dissertation? Why did he feel it was important to show a wall that separates the boys’ and girls’ schools? What did he aim to show in this image without text? The fact that the image is included in the dissertation and that the footnote references the wall could be significant. The wall is a symbol, an iconographic element that not only represents the separation of the sexes in school, but also the separation of the sexes throughout Francoist Spain. The boys observe the girls from the

³¹ B. R. A., “Matricula y asistencia escolar,” 36.

³² B. R. A., “Matricula y asistencia escolar,” 36.

other side of the wall. One boy even sits on the wall, but they are all looking curiously towards where it is prohibited to go.

Both photographs provide us with information at different levels. The author chose to take photographs to illustrate his work. It is possible that this decision was conditioned on factors outside of his control. Perhaps for technical reasons, he was unable to take photos of interior spaces or he did not have permission to take photos during class. But it is also possible that he chose to take photographs of recess because of its value to teaching.

This interest in recess and its pedagogical benefits is not all we can gather from an analysis and interpretation of these photographs. They also show the physical space used for recess. In terms of the material history of schools, these images provide information on what school playgrounds were really like during this time period in Spain. Far from what is suggested by regulatory, architectural, or teaching guidelines, school playgrounds were often just adjacent land to schools or fields reconverted into play spaces with equipment such as basketball hoops or goals built out of simple materials. These images show a clear lack of resources.

They also tell us about recess as a school practice. In the dissertation, B.R.A. describes some games and activities that children carried out during rest periods and even explains how recess represents a time for rest and fun for children. Moreover, the images show much more about recess than what is written in the dissertation. A careful consideration of the two photographs discussed (Figs. 4 and 5) shows other things that took place at recess, providing reflections on socialization among peers and the school and social realities in a specific context at a specific time. In the dissertation, B.R.A. addresses games and sports, but in Fig. 8.5, what we see is neither play nor sport, but rather, curiosity. The social reality and state of affairs in Spanish schools during the 1960s – in the midst of the Francoist dictatorship – kept men and women, as well as boys and girls, in separate, differentiated realms. Schools were a reflection of a society where the separation of sexes was officially imposed. The purpose of Fig. 8.5, as confirmed by the author in a footnote, is to show the wall that separates the boys' and girls' schools. This wall is an architectural element that becomes symbolic of a specific social and educational reality. But the image also shows us how the children look over the wall, interested in that which is prohibited, longing for socialization beyond the politically-imposed barriers of the day. The snapshot captured by the camera depicts natural human curiosity in the only school time and space in which, during the Franco regime, it could exist: recess. They can be an example about how photographs can implicitly undermine networks of power.

Conclusions

The fact that school recess has been photographed throughout the twentieth century is proof of the various levels of interest that there has been in this rest period. However, historical analysis of recess promises to be a fruitful line of inquiry. Recently, articles that analyze the playground via a consideration of schools' material history have been published. However, we still know very little about what actually happened during these recess periods.

In this sense, we consider photographs to be very useful, as they can show us not only objects, spaces, elements, and activities related to recess in the past, but also enable us to see the concept of recess at different times and in different contexts. In order to make use of these images, though, we must first find and identify them. This is the initial hurdle that historians must overcome, given that school photographs are not always accompanied by information that helps to contextualize them. Additionally, when considering recess in the past, we must overcome the preconceived ideas that we have, and define the iconographic elements that allow us to discern between images showing recess and those showing other school times. Elements such as spaces, activities, gestures, and attitudes of the subjects being photographed can help to identify recess, and even parts that are not photographed can provide us with information. For example, thanks to oral testimonies, we know that students would often make use of recess periods to go to the bathroom, but for reasons of privacy, related images were not taken. Thus, for a complete historical analysis, we must also consider the moments of recess that were not captured by the camera.

In order to interpret these images, we must examine the contexts in which they were produced, stored, and disseminated – another difficult task given the idiosyncrasies of school photos. Nonetheless, images of recess periods can provide us with information on different issues, and an analysis of the photos can be linked to various approaches to studying the history of schools and of education in general, as well as the study of material history, the history of school practices, and the history of pedagogical thought.

In short, these images may provide testimony that other sources cannot. As recess is a school time about which much has been written, visual analysis provides us with specific information on both the practice and its historical evolution, as well as the constructed and projected visual discourses they contain, enlightening us as to how the public imagines recess itself. From highly staged to completely impromptu photos, all these images build discourses about what recess was, what it was meant to be, and what it represented. But beyond this, photographs of recess also provide us with information about school culture at different moments in time, and even about social, financial, and political realities reflected through the school. From here, the challenge is to include images of recess among the sources used to document school history from different perspectives.

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