

Body and aging

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The picture of spectacle's society where the body became a consumption object tends to worsen before the natural process of human aging. Constant human beings preoccupation with aging in Western culture, leads it to be generally rejected. The so-called Third Age, which includes individuals with sixty or more years old, arouses negative feelings such as pity, fear and embarrassment as a result of physical changes, cognitive and social triggers.

Accordingly, it becomes relevant to examine the particular ways people realize their own body taking into account the different societies in which their individuals are placed. So, it is important to note how the role of body image can influence the personal identity building.

Into this perspective the present research attempted to discuss how people aged from 60 years to realize aging process through his own body and see how the contemporary aesthetic appreciation interferes in the way of realizing it.

The subjects sampled in this study were obtained by convenience, for a total of 100 elderly of both sexes, with ages ranging 60-88 years.

The instrument used was a semi-structured interview that investigated socio-demographic data and specific issues of self-perception.

Moreover, it was used Nine-Figure Outline Scale (Stunkard, Sorensen, Schulsinger, 1983), which was shown to the participants, in order to assess the perception of body size and shape. That scale consists of a set of eighteen cards, containing drawings of nine female and nine male silhouettes that represent human figures with nine variations in order of increasing body size.

Some studies have sought to investigate and evaluate the body image through different assessment tools. Some examples are the Multidimensional Relationship Questionnaire I-Corps, validated in Brazil by Ferreira and Leite (2002) or the Self-image, adapted to Brazilian reality by Gouveia, Singelis and Coelho (2002). And to investigate the perceptual aspects of body image can be

found scales of profiles or photos, as developed by Stunkard, Sorensen and Schulsinger (1983).

This instrument Stunkard, used to assess body image, has been validated to Brazil only to female audiences, so the analysis of silhouettes scale refers only to a female audience interviewed (Scagliusi et al, 2006).

Initially, we carried out a survey of places frequented by people of 60 or more years old, who practiced physical or intellectual activity. In these contacts, the subjects were informed about the objectives of the research and asked to take part on it. People who agreed to collaborate signed a consent form. This document, prepared in duplicate, was delivered to each respondent, with the purpose of informing the research objectives and the commitment to secrecy about the identity of the participants.

After the interviews, they subjects went through a pre-test with the aim of testing its effectiveness. After the adequacy of the instrument, interviews were conducted individually by trained investigators and without pre-determined time. The average duration of each interview was approximately 30 minutes.

This study was approved by the Ethics Research Comite of Centro de Ensino Superior de Juiz de Fora – CES-JF under number 244.18082006.

Of the 100 people interviewed, 75% were female. The mean age was 69 (SD = 6.6) years. Most respondents (55%) are younger elderly, ie aged between 60 and 69 years. Regarding schooling, 53% (n = 53) had primary education. Points out that 17% of the sample present higher education.

About the satisfaction with one's own body, 82% of seniors said they were satisfied. Of these, 78% would not make any modifications to the current body. Note the significant percentage of individuals (75%) which said that they have concern over their own bodies, and not are not worried about how other people perceive your body, which was reported by 84% of respondents.

To analyze the data concerning satisfaction with their bodies, according to gender, there was statistical non-parametric Chi-square. Satisfaction with the body is perceived differently between men and women. Women are less satisfied with their bodies than men ($\chi^2 = 4.42$, $p = 0.03$).

The results for the possible measures to bodily changes such as invasive surgeries and practices were not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 3.81$, $p = 0.05$) women presented more concerned about changing the body itself.

The difference between genders regarding the observation of physical posture at the time of execution of exercise was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 13.2$, $p = 0.01$). Women are more attentive to the best management posture during performance than men interviewed

It was possible to see that the conception of the body is undergoing to changes brought by the actual changes in society, but aging is an inevitable process, however the results showed that aging is not synonymous with disability, therefore, consider old age as a life stage that can be experienced positively must be the search for those who want to continue to live well with independence.

The age only can be considered as a body disabling factor when the inertia sets in whole or in part and whether the environment plays a role of a strait-strength. Biological determinants have the final limit to the longevity of the species and their rate of disorganization, but the educational and social opportunities, mental and physical health and lifestyle play a role of paramount importance to determinate the pace and products of aging. The basic intellectual capacities may be maintained in old age, provided that the conditions continue biological and intellectual activity. Thus, there may be growth of cognitive specialties at daily life and wisdom in relation to existential questions. The personality retains its structure and mechanisms of self-regulation in old age if the integrity of the body and social interaction are maintained. Healthy aging of the biological, psychological and social points of view includes experiences and influences of historical and social changes throughout life.

Aging well depends, therefore, of equilibrium, always unstable and dynamic, between the limitations of each one and their resources and capabilities to handle with new body configurations, new personal demands and any real-world problem.

According to this study, females are more concerned with the body than the males. However the people interviewed are not concerned in how people view their bodies.

Analyzing the choices on the scale drawing silhouette can be noted that, for women, the demand for lean bodies, while synonymous with normality seems to be great. This finding seems consistent with the statements of Ogden and Evans (1996), whereby social norms propagated mainly in the western world,

represent a way to perpetuate the stereotype that associates the thin body of women with positive attributes, to normal and the ability to become attractive and beautiful.

It can be concluded that it is impossible to predict the future of people, now elderly, and which will be de ideals and standards applied, since the image and culture is always through changes and transitions.

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