59 - IMPLICATIONS OF AGE WHEN HOMOSEXUAL MALES CHOOSE THEIR PERSONAL TRAINERS

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Introduction

Trying to capture the existent tension in the necessity of keeping a young body, this study seeks to reflect on the influence that the visible features of age exercise over the criterions of choice of a *personal trainer* by homosexual males. The data collection was done through group interviews according to the orientations by Gaskell (2003) and Macnamara (2004). The members of the group have been reached during visits to the beach "Praia da Farme" situated on part of the Ipanema beach, south zone of Rio de Janeiro a place frequently visited by homosexuals due to the liberty conquered since the seventies, last century. The groups were composed of three informants who followed the criterion of age and the practice of body building under the orientation of *personal trainers* there were three interviews with the same informants in which we could discuss, in subsequent interviews, points that emerged in the previous interviews. Due to the nature of the corpus of the research, the interviews can be considered of elite. As the collected information incorporate with the presupposed defended by studious of services personalization, they show a strait relation with some of the homosexuals' needs.

A socio-historical statute of visuality and of homosexuality

The images, do not communicate an explicit content: they suggest, point, suscitate, indicate but do not speak: communicate a range of images that exempt long explanations in a society where the image has an equalizing role which attends the rush of consumption (LIPOVETSKY, 2004).

They point to an ideal which is, diffusing but has as its nucleus the youth. The images are associated to values, situationally consecrated by specific groups.

Due to the need of keeping eternally young to supply their anguish that the uncertainties of the hyper-modern times bring (ibid.), taking care of the body becomes an implicit exigency to the process of search for an ontological security of the individual. (GIDDENS, 2002). Régis explicits, on his terms, through the category of caution, the emphasys on the involvement of the person, as a whole in the continuous procces of insertion and participation in the fight against loneliness.

RÉGIS: We, apart from suffering from a huge rejection of society because you suffer, wanting or not! You have to put quality to compensate this rejection. The rejection people have to you. So, your kindness for your ownself has to become greater to compensate this, I also think so.

Being out of the referential that will contribute to the individual's security, the fight against loneliness gets trough an undeniable need of being carefull to be so, accepted in a group that has a high level of aesthetic exigence. (BARCELLOS, 2002). The worries of the informants are in a level of maintance of capacity to keep their relationships, having a strait relation to self-care which, as they refer, is not so present in the heterosexuals more worried with financial stability and family bonds.

LEONAM: That's why the men, the heterosexuals relax! Once I'm married…

The physical activity contributtes to optimize the personal capacities (GIDDENS, 2002) and has the double function of minimizing the effects of isolation once it offers more tools to deal with its longings and for making the individual independently of its sexual orientation keep interesting for future partners.

ROGÉRIO: Because I think, also that besides caring for your body, you must keep your self-steem right up! I guess, that's ok! I think it's well worth!

Here the interpretation offered by Stoer et al (2004) according to the body as a place of exclusion evidences itself in an intense way. To fit into the expectations of post-modernity, and to keep inside of the socio-interactional changes conditions, the homosexual, unavoidably, needs to keep or retard the natural process of getting old, under the risk, in case he does not give attention to the unchangeable devaluation of old age to which the man is subdued in the homosexuals' relationships, to find himself excluded from the circle of socio-affective relationships of the gay world. (GUASCH,1995). The two categories, virility and youth, intersect in such way that one implies the other. The decadency of one leads to the decadency of the other. We understand that the price of getting old is higher, or assume bigger dimensions among male homosexuals, due to the difficulty of keeping more stable relationships, a fact related to the constantly evanescence of the desired object.

To flow over the role of the gym, of body building, to neutralize or at least minimize the effects of old age in the capacity to keep relationships with other homosexuals, the informants emphasize the fact that it is necessary to look after the body, keep young, or, at least, it is necessary to transmit jollity.

Another detail that can be detected is "having a young spirit" and "to insinuate joviality". These are signs that it is necessary to live in a "young world" aspect that has already been pointed by Lipovetsky (2004)

RÉGIS: (…) it is obvious that keeping the soul young is very important, even more than the body! Why? You have a nice body, but being an old boring guy, nobody will want you!

A limited has been constituted: for the interviewed, the young body (full of muscles) needs to be pumped with an "energy" that implies joviality. Furthermore, there is a limit for this age increase. Taking for instance the gays that try to hide their ages adopting a young stereotype. It may even get to a point that a teacher who tries to keep a young "image" becomes unacceptable.In this point the *personal trainer* possibly will not have space in the gym anymore even if he tries to delay the ageing through the use of steroids or not.

As states Harris (1997), the gay culture can be seem sorrounded by feelings of inadequation that make the cult of the body (keeping or enhacing the signs of youth) a necessity to compensate the lack of signs of masculinity that hit the male homosexuals. The author reinforces the argument that the gay is constantly dissatisfied with his own body. The dedication to the exercises of body building would help compensating the insecurity to produce an appereance associated to masculinity: strong and viril and, so, young[1]. The necessity of exalting the signs (physical) of a hegemonic masculinity is in synthony to what Mosse (1996) shows as being one of the corollary of contemporaneous masculinity: the beauty, representing the ideal of capacity sculped in the work, responds to the consensual image that the beautiful body (with muscles and no fat) is capable. What the collected data allow to deduce is that there is a resonance of such paradigma of society nowadays, eventhough we can surmise that there is a spreading to the other segments even among the heterosexuals as referred by Nolasco (1995) reinforcing the premise about the valorization of apparent you.

1- The names are fake, for ethical reasons.
2- Not by chance, the figure which is present in the magazines oriented for the homosexual readers is the one of men who bind the signs of youth and, in the way they are treated, express a rhetorical capacity, of strength and virility of men doing hard work as Moses states (1996) when he refers to the cult of images of workers with a lascivious hint through details, like sweat, looks and provocative shots (Harris, 1997).
3- Empirical researches done with homosexual individuals have showed that the male homosexuals reveal their preferences to heterosexual men that incorporate characteristic signs of masculinity (Costa, 2002, Costa 2000; Fry & Mac Rae, 1992). This interest for virile men is in intone with the exogamic model of homosexual relationships characterized by the relationship of men from different social and economical classes (Barcellos, 2002).

The psyche of male homosexuals has a genesis many times similar that starts in childhood (COSTA,2000). Costa (2000) reports that the boy, when not fitting into the expected masculinity standard, tends to be discriminated and that may, in some cases, reflect on his adult life through a sutile resistence to the stereotyped image of the effeminate gay. Such restriction in the expression of feelings and attitudes may result in a conflituous relationship with the self-image unleashing, as an answer to the exterior critics of the effemination, a process of valorization of the characteristic masculine stereotype.

In this process, it is possible that the figure of the virile and young man a representative image of the man as already described by Mosse (1996) becomes part of the preferences of the individual as an intimate level as well as roles attributions (social and affective) to the other men.

The mediatory function of image

The speeches of the informants make it possible to deduce that there is a need of keeping the body away from the signs of ageing: obesity, wrinkles, lack of interest with own vanity and unfashionable clothing. The correlation between the increase in the volume of exercise and ageing is clearly expressed in the following dialogue

ROGÉRIO: Today I body build mch more! Because I am getting older.

LEONAM: You are compensating!

It is necessary to pass on an image that shows you are always ready for new contacts, an aptitude to bring into relation with.

This necessity is expanded to its recommendations to the *personal trainers* when the informants say that it is not possible to work with a *personal trainer* in a bad, down mood, with no enthusiasm, an image that can be definable as old, as express the folloing:

LEONAM: It must be fun, did you understand?! Because it's a time of the day when you are leaving work; so.. you are full of worries, you don't want a "down" person to be with you, you know?! You don't want! I don't want!

The supression of the word in the gay culture endows the homosexual with the sensitivity to notice nuances that may be imperceptible to the heterosexual individual (insinuations, looks, gestures) setting a heap of resources to which the homosexuals tend to appeal to so they can bring meaning to their most ordinary experiences of the daily life (Barcellos, 2002). In the expression of the gay manifestations,

[...] the gay culture confirms itself through a "being-there" that is preferably transmitted over gesture and visual codes that exempt long discourses, justifications or elaborated agumentations: a look, a touch, a gesture, a small sign and all is said (Barcellos, 2002, p.129)

It is possible to surmise that the mediatory function produced by the image is not privative to the gay world, as pointed by Maffesoli (1999). The image and the aesthetics seem to find their relevance when stressing in the discourse of the informants the prototype of masculine beauty (young and virile) as a decisive factor in the mediation of the relations among them, the student-*personal trainer* relation. Therefore, the discourse of the interviewee points to the necessity of a credibility that at times resembles to the same surrounding parameters of choices and preferences of the gay through the body.

As it is possible to realize in the speeches of Rogério, for instance, that he saw in his *personal trainer*, since the first moment, signs that he "looked after the body", keeping a "young"look (muscular) despite being 35 years old. The important is not the chronologic youth but "looking" young, finding background in studies that talk about the relevance of image in modern times and, specially, in the gay culture (Barcellos, 2002)

In a certain way, the gay culture reproduces paradoxically the hegemonic culture (heterosexual, hygienic and fallocentric) when appreciating those aspects that, as an acceptable social speech, appears covered by the acceptance of rules necessary for a healthy life. Besides, the corporal image is related to the productive capacity according to the address to its prototypical signs (strong body and able to work). It is possible to emphasize that, through the collected data and observation of some features of the gay culture, the homosexual, when reproducing in his body the male esthetics and in assimilating the disposition to search for new sexual adventures, enhances the hegemonic manhood. Deepen the manhood deconstruction, as Giddens (1993) suggests, we came to a feature exaltation that characterizes the manhood in the gay culture where it is expected more femininity and less virility.

The decline of the body appeal lead the interviewees to search for other ways to live their emotional necessities. The interest for the culture or for the art does not allow a complete sublimation of the desire. If in some other moments of the interview, the interviewees raise the hypothesis that the search for the personal trainer has the purpose of optimizing the body work in order to obtain a safer result, the pleasure of the company of the young personal trainer or the one who possesses the youth feature it would be subliminal. The attraction to younger personal trainers (male) would fill this emptiness created by loneliness.

RÉGIS: The most important thing is to be there assisted by him, having his affection, doing something that fills me up in that moment (speaking about his relationship with the personal trainer).

In this stage, the hypothesis that the esthetics would promote an approach between learner and personal trainer becomes valid because it supplies the deepest necessity which goes beyond the prescription and accompaniment of a personalized training to reach only the best esthetic, agreeing with Lipovetsky (1983) about the intrinsic necessity of creating and maintaining bonds of the contemporary man.

The tendency to cool and free affective demanding relationships (LIPOVETSKY, 2004) where it is inserted the forethought concerning Giddens episodic sexuality (1993) seems to find in personalized services a convenient displacement because it keeps the personal freedom and contributes to supply the let-down created by the (de)stabilization of the traditional social relations in which the homosexuals seem to be prototypic examples.

Teachers: for the esthetics

Even with the possibility of existing teacher in advanced ages, for them to be accepted in the gym environment, they need to keep fit through their dedication to physical activities and, if necessary, even with the usage of steroids, in order to disguise the aging signs depreciated by the interviewed group reinforcing the premise that the youth image is the one worshiped, not the chronological age.

While the youth features are worshiped, the interviewees quote a data that contradicts, in a certain way, what has been said in some other moments in the interview regarding to the steroids when saying they contribute to decelerate the signs that denote the aging. They agree it is only possible to reach the age of fifty or sixty bending a muscular structure with the usage of steroids and this does not give the same depreciatory tone that was given to the other personal trainers. Regis even appreciates the structure (physical) of a 54 year-old personal trainer seen as "fine" (in shape) should be privileged for being resisting for so many years to the usage of steroids without presenting characteristic side effects.

ROGÉRIO: Exactly! A guy who reaches his age looking like he is 20, for me...

RÉGIS: Absolutely! I want to reach his age looking like him! So: working out with him is an encouragement! Because looking at a 54 year-old guy, you won't expect seeing a 30 year old body!

At this point, I can associate to what Sabino (2002) says concerning the gain of status of a steroid user inside the

gym. The interviewees refer to the person who could reach the age of 54 presenting youth features (muscular body and no fat) exalting his effort, even under the effect of steroids. The fear that the homosexuals have as the years go by, paradoxically, is an attribute when associated to the body which express energy, disposition and beauty (youth) in advanced age. They agree that is only possible to reach the age of 50 or 60 bending a muscular structure with the usage of steroids. The informers mention in some passages of the text the necessity of keeping the body young and this goes through the care of not letting the fat accumulate in the body.

The effort to reverse the natural tendency of fat accumulation in the body is a prestige factor to the personal trainer who transposes the age of 40. The dedication and the effort of this personal trainer work as an additional factor of motivation and prestige.

The youth appreciation maybe associated to the presence of younger teachers acting as personal trainers. This fact may show the esthetic appreciation to a younger personal trainer as it can be a reflex of the gym as a whole where few teachers in advanced age are working. Maybe there is a tendency that older Physical Education teachers look for an activity that would provide them more stability than the seasonal work as a personal trainer or that the gym is searching for younger teachers according to the learners' preference having in mind that the beauty cultivated at gyms are related to the youth, the gym may be investing in a generation of professionals with a young profile, added to the idea that health is reflected in a young look.

But a data that, a priori, represents a paradox only understood as a youth appreciation of the looks and not chronological is the fact that the interviewees may show themselves resistible in hiring very young teachers, as it is reveled on the speeches collected through the interviews.

RÉGIS: There is no way that you'll tell me that a 21 year-old guy has had experience. He hasn't! He has just graduated!

The interviewees allege that little age would be a limitative factor while they associate youth to little practical experience. This aspect emphasizes the practical content exercised by the physical education teacher at the gym. It is possible that the cultural capital offered by the diploma (Bourdieu, 2002) it is not free from the charisma requirement acquired in a practical experience that grants the status and the symbolic power that the teacher needs to act as a personal trainer.

The interviewees' resistance in trusting a professional that has just graduated helps reinforcing the hypothesis that an older teacher and endowed with a body within the esthetics patterns cultivated at the gym has more chances to be in demand to a personal training, despite his chronological age and so, for presenting the youth beauty (well-shaped body), is given the youth appearance. The trust mitigated for the conception that it is necessary to have experience is bigger when this experience leaves the signs in the body (Stoer, 2004), turning it into main meanings cultivated at the gym and in society.

Maybe the capacity of reprogramming ahead constantly changes and to the diversities quoted by Stoer et al (ibid.) needs to be discussed further in the academic environment of Physical Education, because it is a competence that might be the turning point for teachers at the gyms, so they can face this tendency in attributing values to the empirical knowledge that more experienced personal trainers have. Acquiring this versatility needs to be taken into account that the resistance that certain groups face can only be overcome through the reflection of the professional on the problem which is not presented in similar forms in all groups to find this mean to interact and conquer the group (or the individual).

Concerning the fact that the personal trainer is a new phenomenon, Physical Education teachers working in gyms are usually young. The preference for youngsters revealed by the homosexual learner may be a result of these factors' combination as it can be found an useful space to experience this possibility of being accompanied by a young handsome personal trainer. It is possible that there aren't older personal trainers in the job market and these hypothesis need to wait longer to being analyzed or refuted.

General considerations

Leaving the scene to growing old represents to the homosexuals solitude and isolation that comes from the need in keeping familiar bounds to what it is exposed. This way, the homosexual will try to reverse as much as it is possible the unavoidable depreciation of the aged body through body building practice. Even if this data cannot appear directly related to the criteria which orientates the choice by their personal trainers, it is possible that the same careful and critical pattern assumed in exercising practice reflects the preference for personal trainers making efforts in keeping the young figure through the exercise practice. The homosexuality may be faced, under this aspect, as a paroxysm of hegemonic manhood which enriches the strong and capable man represented by the young personal trainer.

A data that shows the importance given to the practical experience is the fact that there is a resistance from the interviewees in trusting the capacity of younger teachers. The considerations that can be made concerning this aspect is that the cultural capital from the academic training has no power to overcome the symbolic value conferred to the practical experience. The profile that can be outlined is that the personal trainer needs the look that denotes youth and not necessarily being young.

The discrimination hidden against the homosexuals is similar to the discrimination against the Physical Education teachers at the gym. What the data of the study seems to show is a discrimination suffered by the older teachers (or the ones that couldn't or didn't want to decelerate the aging signs through the systematic practice of physical exercises) is a gym phenomenon which clearly appears among the homosexuals due to their critical position concerning esthetics. To remain in the personal trainers' market, the teacher needs to be aware that his youth image will compose his curriculum as much as his interaction capacity or his knowledge acquired through years of practice in the job. In this way, the rhythm demanded to act as a personal trainer demands the force that is expected from a younger teacher, being a requirement “keeping fit” to support the working routine as much as the prejudice that might come up over the ones who do not take care of the body letting the aging signs take place.

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IMPLICATIONS OF AGE WHEN HOMOSEXUAL MALES CHOOSE THEIR PERSONAL TRAINERS

ABSTRACT

The significance associated with the youthful body is intimately related with the values within a model of affective relations which is characteristical in gay culture. During the interviews held among homosexual males between 35 and 45 years of age and who practiced physical activity in gymnasiums located in the south region of Rio de Janeiro, the theme of aging was detected as influential in deciding with personal trainers they choose. They also disclosed to be paroxysmal representatives of hegemonic masculinity and for that praise youthfulness as a necessary qualification that they expect to find in their personal trainers.

Key words: youth, personal trainer, homosexuality.

IMPLICATIONS DE L'ÂGE POUR LES CRITÈRES DE CHOIX DU *PERSONAL TRAINER* FAITES PAR LES ÉLÈVES HOMOSEXUELS

RÉSUMÉ

Les significations liés au corps jeune possèdent une relation intime avec des valeurs dans une économie d'échanges afectives propes de la culture *gay*. Dans les interviews réalisées dans un groupe d'homosexuels entre 35 et 45 ans, il a été possible de détecter la présence du thème *vieillir* en enfluençant les normes a partir du choix du *personal trainer* par ceux qui pratiquent des activités physiques dans les académies de la zone sud de Rio de Janeiro. On a considéré que les homosexuels interviewés, comme représentants d'un paroxysme de la masculinité hégémonique, absorbent la valorisation de la jeuneusse dans leurs aptitudes de compétences nécessaires au travail du *personal trainer*.

Mots clés: jeunesse, *personal trainer*, homosexualité.

LAS IMPLICACIONES DE LA EDAD PARA LOS CRITERIOS DE SELECCIÓN DE EL *PERSONAL TRAINER* T PARA ALUMINOS HOMOSEXUALES

RESUMEN

Los significados atrapados al cuerpo joven posean intima relación con valores dentro de una economía de cambios afectivos típicos de la comunidad gay. En entrevistas realizadas junto a un grupo de homosexuales con edad entre 35 y 45 años, fue posible detectar la presencia del tema envejecer influenciando los patrones partindo de la escoja del personal trainer por eses practicantes de actividades físicas en centros de aptitudes en la sona sur de Rio de janeiro. Fue considerado que homosexuales entrevistados, como representantes de un paroxismo de la masculinidad hegemonica, absorben la valorización de la juventud en sus atribuiciones de competencias necesarias al trabajo del *personal trainer*.

Palabras claves: juventud, *personal trainer*, homosexualidad.

IMPLICAÇÕES DA IDADE PARA OS CRITÉRIOS DE ESCOLHA DO *PERSONAL TRAINER* POR ALUNOS HOMOSSEXUAIS

RESUMO

Os significados atrelados ao corpo jovem possuem íntima relação com valores dentro de uma economia das trocas afetivas típicas da cultura *gay*. Em entrevistas realizadas junto a um grupo de homossexuais com idade entre 35 e 45 anos, foi possível detectar a presença do tema *envelhecer* influenciando os padrões a partir de escolha do *personal trainer* por esses praticantes de atividades físicas em academias da zona sul do Rio de Janeiro. Levou-se em consideração que os homossexuais entrevistados, como representantes de um paroxismo da masculinidade hegemônica, absorvem a valorização da juventude em suas atribuições de competências necessárias ao trabalho do *personal trainer*.

Palavras-chave: juventude, *personal trainer*, homossexualidade