72 - ADOLESCENTS, BODY AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

MARCELO MARQUES SOARES;
FRANCISCO CARLOS LEMES DE MENESES.
Centro Universitário Feevale - Novo Hamburgo - RS - Brazil
marcelodidi@feevale.br; franciscoclm@feevale.br

1 INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The concern with body, with body shapes have always aroused individuals' attention. The body has become, more and more, a basic reference in individual and collective way of living as well as in the definition of the human being's role in the world. I can point out, though shortly, the body in two situations, in its use and representation, respectively. SANTIN (1998) states that "the almost omnipresence of body in life, both on people's individual and social sphere." No longer just ideas define the human being, but also body dimensions take on an important referential in the progress of society.

The body representation, on the other hand, is linked to the individual's relationship and identification. Each individual starts to be identified by their way of being present and expressing themselves, therefore, body representation is fundamental and because of it, the individual started to be more preponderantly recognized and, as a consequence, care and concerns with body shape have become something constant in individuals' everyday life, for body image has turned into a fundamental element in the value system. SANT'ANNA (1995, p.12) points out that "society has its body, as well as its language."

In contemporary society, the concern with representations grows, especially at the physical level. We live in a time of overvaluation of images, what leads to an exaggerated importance of good looks and body representation, facts that GOLDENBERG (2002, p.8) has named as "a culture of narcissism". Constructing a physical representation has become so fundamental for men that, in present days, the care with body matters, evidenced by the maintenance of their aesthetic shapes, have become the desire, the most longed for ideal in society's imaginary.

The dream of the sculptured, well-defined body, has affected in a more obsessive way members of a certain social order, more specifically young people who attend school. It's in that context that I observe the presence of a body identity no longer of the individual exclusively, but of the collective. The aggregation of young people, described by themselves as "guys, gang" is categorized by gender, values and their own interests. Each group presents a body image constructed under the guidance of their physical and aesthetic preferences. Rethinking the role of body in the school sphere, reflecting the redimensioning of the value of body within the educational sphere is an opportunity for man meeting himself again and, at the same time, the reconciliation of body with man.

2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology was designed according to the qualitative investigations paradigm, having as a reference the case study. Field work consisted of six months in contact with adolescents in their sports practices at school. Considering that the accomplishment of the preliminary study has taken a month and the main study has taken five months. Instruments used for information collection were non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews and notes on the field diary. The analysis and interpretation of information were constructed from Theme Units which emerged, mainly, from the semi-structured interviews performed with teenagers, from records and notes resulting from observations comprised in the field diaries and from theoretical reference on the aspects which constitute the research problem. The questions raised from the construction of these Theme Units have allowed to understand what are the body representations that adolescents present regarding their bodies.

3 INFORMATION ANALYSIS

Based on the collected information, we have identified that the objectives adolescents present regarding the practice of some sports activity may be listed in two categories, which we define as: body representations: female and male and positive and negative feelings regarding the body.

3.1 Body Representations: Female and Male

In the search for the identification of body representation in teenagers, we have verified that there's a significant difference between body characteristics declared by male collaborators in comparison to those declared by female ones. At first, the differences between genders, recognized by everyone, are going to be approached, in order to later describe what each teenager ascribes to the opposite gender's body.

Differences between body features searched for male and female students can be evidenced by diverse statements, as an exemplification I describe this initially: *"I think there's a difference, because for man I think it's that handsome, well built body with well-defined muscles; for women, instead, a body not too built, but fine, like, not too many muscles, but also no fat"* (Moana, 15 years old). In another statement, I have found very interesting comments about those differences such as: "the girl must have a perfect, sculptured, feminine body and the boy must have a macho body with strong muscles, at least that's the way I see it" (Douglas 17 years old). The relation established by the interlocutor that a man must have strong muscles, so he can be classified as macho is understood by Pope at al. starting from their studies: (2000, p.77) "Becoming strong is a clear way for men to irradiate power and masculinity", and they still add: "musculature, in particular, has become more and more important, because it symbolizes masculinity ".

The respective differences between body representations, both for male and female, are restricted exclusively to external body shapes, since, in no other moment, other differentials were raised. Characteristics attributed to a feminine representation are of a slim body, having certain shapes which are connected with a beautiful body. For males, the attributes are a muscular body, with physical features of a well-defined and prominent musculature. All those characteristics are nothing but social creations constructed with the passing of time and in each culture's interior, because as Sant'anna reveals to us (1995, p.120) "The idea that beauty is to feminine as strength is to masculine, crosses centuries and cultures".

Starting from the establishment of differences between men and women body features, it was possible to identify what are the characteristics that every one wants to find on the opposite sex's body. We started with female teenagers from the community investigated, which elected certain body features that must be present on the masculine body. That is evidenced and clarified by some teenagers' statements: "every woman dreams of a men with a hyper-defined abdomen, muscular thighs and arms and a developed chest" (Laura, 17 years old). Another one tells us that "women like a man with a well built, handsome body with defined muscles, but not too big, because then he looks more like a troglodyte; I think it's awful when musculature gets too big, he must have defined muscles but nothing exaggerated" (Gisele, 17 years old).

A few more statements, still, to allude to characteristics that female teenagers establish to the male body: "Girls kinda like who's got a more muscular, more defined body, a defined abdominal, a strong chest, a salient arm and not those guys with a paunch, like those IT nerds who only like electronic game, have flaccid and weak bodies and are dorky in sports." (Fábio, 18 years old). The collaborator's thoughts are originated in the principles of modern culture. In Pope et al. (2000, p.70)'s opinion, "musculature is closely connected with sexuality: the message is that muscles attract women".

The characteristics established as reference for the male body by female teenagers and what they want to find on this body are nothing but features of a representation of masculinity linked to bodies with defined muscular shapes, which were constructed with the passing of years. Pope at al. (2000, p.30) are sure when stating, after performing their studies, that "society performs a powerful

and growing role, constantly transmitting messages that real men have big muscles. In that sense, acquisition of muscles by male teenagers becomes then what Malysse (2002, p.109) has defined “as a kind of body inscription, a social mark printed on the body”.

The features that male teenagers idealize and try to find on female bodies are also fairly marked in their statements: “the woman must have a slim and fatless body” (Lauro, 15 years old). The features male teenagers expect to find on a female body are very similar to those divulged by the physical appearance market, in which bodies have shapes built in the name of the body wrapping ideology, whose prioritized element is the exterior environment. In that sense, the whole female teenagers' concern with their body is restricted to physical shape, in which the body, according to Malysse (2002, p.132), “is considered as a potential work of art, a work which the social artist has the duty of refining and stabilizing day after day by means of a series of (de)forming physical exercises, always guided by an aesthetic search for an optimization of physical appearance”.

The almost unrestrained pursuit, by the study collaborators, both male and female students, of body remodeling in search for certain body features, is pointed out by Cortine (1995, p.85) as “an obsession for body wrappings”. These pursuits only make sense if we believe that, as Sant'anna shows us (1995, p.12) “the body doesn't stop being (re)manufactured throughout time” and the author concludes “for the body is, itself, a process”, therefore, it's not immune to culture influences, for the body itself, as well as its representation, is a cultural creation.

Summarizing what was presented so far, it's not difficult to identify that, both in the features for a feminine body representation and for the male one, body shapes are relevant. Some divergent characteristics were named for both female and male body, but one fact seems to be common to both genders: the emergence of a body model, an aesthetic standard idealized by teenagers for each gender and, in that reference, body has great valorization.

3.2 Positive and Negative Feelings Regarding the Body

In the construction of body representation, two different and opposed feelings have arisen among teenagers. One positive and other negative, both regarding the body. Both feelings seem to have a same causal denominator: body shapes. The positive feeling regarding body is expressed when it presents certain body shapes which are highly regarded by teenagers. I'll begin reporting aspects of the positive feeling, in order to relate the negative feeling later.

Every positive feeling teenagers establish regarding their bodies starts from a fixed idea of presenting certain body characteristics that make them feel well and attractive to others. The very own definition of healthy body is established having as a reference the body exterior. Having a body passing on health in the protagonists' opinion is presenting “a nice body, with no paunch, with defined thorax musculature, strong arms and back muscles very pronounced” (Maicon, 16 years old). Although the whole situation of the constant presence of a body standard which dictates shapes and measures for the body is weighed up, the teenager understands that, in some situations, it's impossible to draw near this reference, for as an interviewee relates “everyone has a kind of body with a different structure, that makes it very much difficult wanting to have a body like the models” (Fernanda 17 years old).

Every positive relationship students establish with their bodies starts from an aesthetic notion of body. Students specify in their ideals that, to feel good, it's necessary to present a beautiful and aesthetically acceptable body. The acceptance of their bodies is what motivates students to take care of their physique, considering that, many times, that's what boosts them to practice physical activities. For many teenagers there's only one way for their body to pass on a sense of well-being, and, at the same time, be accepted by others: having a body very similar to the ones of the models presented in various television programs. Such situation can be evidenced by the words of a research participant: “I wish I had a body like the models, because then I'm sure boys would like it” (Eduarda 16 years old).

The negative feeling teenagers show regarding their bodies, instead, is restricted to the presence of certain characteristics that, in their opinion, in some situations, are considered as body shape defects. Considering that these defects arise from an aesthetic reference present in each collaborator's imaginary, and that, as a general rule, is highly regarded and valorized by great part of society, particularly by young people and teenagers. With the constant presence of aesthetic references on a slim body, with molded and well built body shapes, the teenager may compare his or her body to that of the reference and, thus, make the emergence of feelings like unhappiness regarding their own body structure possible.

The body standard reflected on that aesthetic reference is of a slim body with well-defined body shapes and with aligned measures and curves. Having a slim body seems to be the goal of many students from the educational center investigated, since they organize their daily activities with a concern with leaving a space for practicing physical activity and all the same control daily their feeding habits. This dedication is the result of a special attention given to body, more specifically, given to the search for a slim body that makes them feel good and desired by others. In the teenagers' opinion, one notices that, in order to attract the attention of others it's necessary to have a slim body, for as a female student points out: “all my male friends like only slim women, no one likes fatties ” (Gisele, 17 years old). With that definition of slim body, it's easy to imagine the reasons for teenagers being afraid of gaining weight, and moving away from the body standard.

To justify the participation in sports practices having as a single goal the maintenance or conquest of certain body shapes is, in other words, reducing sport to a laboratorial practice of body constructions. So, it emerges the question on valorization of body just for appearance or aesthetic shapes as something separated from the vital dynamics of body, which constitutes it as a living being. Vital functions are sacrificed in favor of mere aesthetic shapes, what may be evidenced by the worry over presenting a body with certain physical characteristics, putting teenagers in a position of hostages to body appearance and transforming them, thus, in guardians of physical shape.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The reflections here presented comprehend an educational reality investigated. We do not have the intention of drawing up generalizing formulations about what are the body representations teenagers present about their bodies. This study has attempted to understand what are the body representations that teenagers present regarding their bodies, more specifically, within a school context. Therefore, the considerations made from description, analysis and interpretations of information delimit a research field and specific individuals, aiming to identify local and regional particularities, which demand answers and proper interventions. The case study, as we understand it, is the appropriate kind of study to enter both in the local singularities' world, and in the individuals' perspective and meanings attributed by them to a phenomenon investigated, that, in this case, are teenagers and sport.

When analyzing factors that generate the investigation process, the need to present a synthesis of the information constructed by it has emerged. Regarding the phenomenon investigated it was evidenced by the teenagers' statements, as for body representation definitions, I've realized that teenagers don't show, clearly, an understanding about their bodies, since their identifications are restricted to body appearance and not to the body as a unit. What teenagers have clearly shown was the ability of establishing different characteristics for the male and female body, which are close to the characteristics of body representation models worshiped by them. Besides, teenagers point out their bodies as being responsible for a positive or a negative feeling regarding their own body representation.

We have also evidenced that the body was given a license for a referential so that teenagers feel good or bad and that, starting from then on, feelings of self-acceptance or rejection are determined. Every acceptance feeling regarding their body arises from the basic premise that it's necessary to have a body as it pleases us, and, in order to do that, it's fundamental to present certain body characteristics in accordance to the current body models in society.

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Address: Araguaia Street, 1430, Jardim Mauá - Novo Hamburgo (RS)
Phone number: (51) 99784102 - marcelodidi@feevale.br

ADOLESCENTS, BODY AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

ABSTRACT

The body and respective body shapes were always one of society's concerns, more specifically of teenagers. We have tried to investigate, starting from the delimitation of a research field and specific individuals, what are the body representations teenagers present regarding their own bodies. The methodology was designed according to the qualitative research paradigm, having as a reference the case study. The analysis and interpretation of information were constructed from Theme Units which emerged, mainly, from the semi-structured interviews performed with teenagers, from records and notes resulting of observations comprised in field diaries and from theoretical reference on the aspects which constitute the research problem. The questions raised from the construction of those Theme Units have allowed to understand how fundamental body has become to the life of teenagers, since, thinking about it and concerned with its shapes, they use sports practices from the school context as a resource to construct a body representation. KEYWORDS: adolescent , body & activity physics

ADOLESCENTS, CORPS E ACTIVITE PHYSIQUE

RÉSUMÉ

Le corps et formes du corps respectives étaient toujours une des inquiétudes de société, plus spécifiquement d'adolescents. Nous avons essayé d'enquêter sur, en commençant de la délimitation d'un champ de la recherche et individus spécifiques, ce qui est les adolescents des représentations du corps présente regarder leurs propres corps. La méthodologie a été conçue d'après le paradigme de la recherche qualitatif, en ayant comme une référence l'étude du cas. L'analyse et interprétation d'information ont été construites d'Unités du Thème qui ont émergé, principalement, des entrevues structurées semi exécutées avec les adolescents, de registres et notes qui résultent d'observations comprises dans les journaux de champ et de référence théorique sur les aspects qui constituent le problème de la recherche. Les questions ont élevé de la construction de ceux les Unités du Thème ont autorisé à comprendre comment le corps fondamental est devenu à la vie d'adolescents, depuis, le penser et inquiet avec ses formes, ils utilisent des entraînements de sports du contexte scolaire comme une ressource pour construire une représentation du corps. MOTS CLEF: adolescents, corps & activité physique

ADOLESCENTE, CUERPO Y ACTIVIDAD FÍSICA

RESUMEN

El cuerpo y su respectivas formas corporales siempre constituirán una de las preocupaciones de la sociedad, específicamente de los adolescentes. Procuramos investigar, a partir de la demarcación de un campo de investigación y sujetos específicos, que son las representaciones corporales que los adolescentes presentan en relación a sus cuerpos. La metodología fue dibujada segundo el paradigma de las investigaciones cualitativas, teniendo como referencial el estudio de caso. La analice y la interpretación de las informaciones fueran construidas a partir de Unidades Temáticas que surgirán , principalmente, de entrevistas semi-estructuradas, realizadas con los adolescentes, de los registros y de las anotaciones resultantes de las observaciones contenidas en los diarios de campo y de lo referencial teórico acerca de los aspectos que forman el problema de investigación. Las cuestiones suscitadas a partir de la construcciones de estas Unidades Temáticas permitirán comprender o cuanto el cuerpo se torno fundamental para la vida de los adolescentes, una vez que, pensando en el cuerpo y preocupados con su formas, eles utilizan las prácticas deportivas del contexto escolar como un recurso para construir una representación corporal.

PALABRAS LLAVE: adolescente , cuerpo & actividad físicas

ADOLESCENTE, CORPO E ATIVIDADE FÍSICA

RESUMO

O corpo e as respectivas formas corporais sempre foram uma das preocupações da sociedade, mais especificamente dos adolescentes. Procuramos investigar, a partir da demarcação de um campo de investigação e sujeitos específicos, quais são as representações corporais que os adolescentes apresentam em relação aos seus corpos. A metodologia foi desenhada segundo o paradigma das investigações qualitativas, tendo como referencial o estudo de caso.. A análise e a interpretação das informações foram construídas a partir de Unidades Temáticas que emergiram, principalmente, das entrevistas semi-estruturadas, realizadas com os adolescentes, dos registros e das anotações resultantes das observações contidas nos diários de campo e do referencial teórico acerca dos aspectos que constituem o problema de pesquisa. As questões suscitadas a partir da construção dessas Unidades Temáticas permitiram compreender o quanto o corpo tornou-se fundamental para a vida dos adolescentes, uma vez que, pensando nele e preocupados com as formas dele, eles utilizam as práticas esportivas do contexto escolar como um recurso para construir uma representação corporal. PALAVRAS CHAVE: adolescente, corpo e atividade física.