ABSTRACT

This paper is a literature review about social cognitions and behaviors related to the body. Our goal is to present what is understood by body in the scope of social psychology, specifically in relation to social representation theory and phenomenon. In this perspective, the role of socially shared beliefs and values is taken in consideration as well as the psychological and individual dimensions so to comprehend the conceptions and social functions linked to the body, along with behaviors related to it. Empirical studies and theoretical essays published in the scientific literature nationally and internationally were used as a foundation. Social representation theory makes possible an amplified comprehension of the body and behaviors associated to it. It is known that the body mediates social relations and moreover the body has been considered over the last decades as a highlight in the media and scientific productions, mirroring the movement of society in relation to this object and values implicated in it. We are living an important social moment to think about the body, and the beliefs and cares related to it.

Key words: Bodily Practices, Body, Body Image, Social Representation

Introduction

The body can be defined as a natural organism, a set of organs that allows the functions necessary for life (Durozoi, 1996). But in addition to its organic nature, the human body is also characterized by social and individual representations associated to him. Result of the interaction of their genetic material with the socio-cultural environment, the human body is made up of habits that are printed in his matter by codes, symbols and cultural languages shared in the environment in which he lives (Andrieu, 2006).

For an object that is located at the border between the individual and the social and that is coated by meanings, attention is given to the relative study of the body from the theory of social representations, as a way to facilitate the integration of the more private and individual dimensions to those that are socially shared and which are reflected in ways of relating both with their own body as with the body of the others (Jodelet, 1994). Social representations (RS), according to the author, assume an important role in the development of collective ways of seeing and living of the body, spreading patterns of thought and behavior related to it.

The theory of social representations (TRS) was prepared by S. Moscovici in the 1950s, based on a study that investigated the social thought on psychoanalysis, «La Psycanalyse: Son image et son public», published in 1961. The author, the first to study the phenomenon of the RS, believes that they are collectively produced and contribute in the process of formation of behavior and orientation of social communications. The TRS delve into the processes by which individuals in social interaction, they build explanations about social objects (Zanja, 2006). These explanations, also known as common sense, allow individuals to give meaning to the new or unknown facts and likewise give meaning to the society and the universe to which they belong (Moscovici, 1961/1976).
Social representations are dynamic processes, constantly being updated (Moscovici, 1961/1976) with communication as its condition of existence (Jodelet, 2001), once the representation is characterized by its social, shared, character reflecting the norms and values of a group. Social representations serve as a guide for action (Abric, 1998) guiding individuals and groups in their practices.

As Denigré, Cabezas, Sepulveda, Valle, Gonzalez and Miranda (2010) highlight, the human being is a social being, and therefore he is constructed from the plot of established relationships throughout his life, where social skills are shared. This form of social knowledge-RS, for cited authors, it originates and is held in a social environment, it develops in contact with each other and incorporates in its contents the speech of a reference group.

In this way, it is verified that the theory of social representations, according to Jodelet (1994), can contribute to the understanding of the body, so that more than the individual and psychological dimension, without disregarding them, but clarifying the role of knowledge-sharing in the recovery of the body and in the importance of beauty and health and its consequences for the people. Whereas an object that is constituted from the interaction of the biological material with the social environment, shows that there are different representations of the body, passing by the medicine, biology, art, economy and social (Andrade, 2003). In each of these instances, as evidenced by Ory (2006), the body normally is subjected to the influence of the movement of societies, reflecting a particular historical moment of the social group in which it is inserted. In the same way, the knowledge that is had on the body is diversified, both in relation to the space and time (Separavich & Canesqui, 2010).

Jodelet (1994) says that since ancient times the knowledge of common sense, the psychological concepts emphasized in medical or literary texts, proverbs and popular sayings; give an important place to the body in social perception.

It is known that both the representations and practices related to the body vary according to the social environment experienced by individuals (Andrieu, 2006; Chamme, 1996; Ory, 2006). While in some countries, like Brazil, the fact of having a body on the eye, with few clothes to cover it is socially accepted and considered as a natural event; in other cultures, as in some countries in Asia for example, the body, especially women, are fully protected and may not be exposed in an environment that is not his family (Suissa, 2008).

In addition to culture, in a broader sense, the historical moment is also fundamental for thinking about forms of representing and taking care of the body. Andrade (2003) notes that in the 20th century, the image of what is healthy and beautiful was modified in relation to previous periods, where the fat was synonymous of: health, beauty and seduction. From the 20th century, especially the second half, the conquest of beauty and a healthy body becomes an individual goal, achieved through the exercise of self-control involving willpower, restrictions and constant monitoring. The fat, which was previously associated with health, beauty and power; passed over to being related to the lack of control over oneself.

In addition, the 20th century was characterized by globalized changes in the moral values, contrary to the Puritan practices; changes in the designs of the clothes, in the distances taken between bodies, in looks, changes in the practices and, especially in representations of the body (Ory, 2006). Such modifications, related to the changes in social demands, according to Ory (2006), involved a redefinition of body rules during a space of two or three generations who contributed for the reformulation of the values attributed to the body. There were also changes in the scientific field, and the body, which up to then had its emphasis marked by the studies of biology and microbiology, from this century passes to be regarded as a vision that goes beyond the biological, also considering the social and psychological aspects (Chamme, 1996).

From then on, it is highlighted that in addition to a natural organism, as is represented by modern biology (Separavich & Canesqui, 2010), the body is constituted from social and individual representations that are constantly changing. This dynamic is evident in the way how each one uses, sickens, perceives, modifies, degrades and transforms the body. Thus, it is not entirely individual, nor strictly social, but a result of a symbolic construction and a subjective invention according to the perceptions and individual and collective representations (Andrieu,
2006). Each individual would symbolically, as Helman (2009) says, two bodies: (1) Individual body –acquired at birth, physical and psychological; (2) Social body– essential to live in society, or any group, with communicative power. The body is at the same time a private and social object, being that he is in part, element of an immediate personal experience, on which the subjectivity is inscribed. On the other hand, it is a product of social thought, governed by prescriptive systems, evidenced in the social scenes (Jodelet, Ohana, Bessis-Moñino & Dannenmuller, 1982). Thus, the body is shown as a privileged object to study the interaction of individual and collective processes in the formation of the RS.

At the same time, it can be said that the study of the representation of the body has different approaches: one collective and another psychological, individual. As Jodelet (1994) defines, the collective approach, based on the social dynamics, includes knowledge, i.e., representations, communication and social interactions advents both formal and informal. Moreover, the approach based on the subjective sphere reflects the relationship that the subject establishes with their body. This occurs through the body experience, with reference to the painful and pleasurable sensations, exercises and daily activities in general; either through the relationship of the individual with its environment, which appears as a «role» that the subject assigned to their body, or the image that is reflected in the others around them.

Body image

By treating the body as an individual approach, it is convenient to introduce the concept of body image. Andrieu (2006) considers that the objective body is perceived through the subjective body and that experience comes to modify the body image, self esteem and the relationship with the body of the other. Body image, to Schilder (1999), is the mental representation that an individual has of his body. Such representation integrates the physical, emotional and mental levels in every human being, with respect to the perception of the own body. The author points out that body image is also a social phenomenon, in which there is a continuous exchange between our own image and of the others. For Helman (2009), body image can be any form by which an individual conceptualizes and experiences their body, whether consciously or not. It is incorporated by the perception, but also by affective, cognitive and behavioural dimensions (Banfield & McCabe, 2002).

In terms of the implication of the individual, it can be said that two main dimensions transcend the concept of body image: investment in the body image (perception), which reflects the degree of behavioral and cognitive importance that the person gives their body and appearance; and evaluation of body image (attitude), which refers to the degree of satisfaction with the appearance and the functional capacity of the body (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2006; Monteath & McCabe, 1997). Despite being composed mainly by those components, body image is multifaceted, including perceptual, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that interact and influence each other (Legenbauer, Ruhl & Vocks, 2008).

Some studies were carried out looking at the body image, mainly in what refers to the bodily satisfaction (defined as the difference between the perceived body size and the ideal body size) and the effect of the media on this. In these studies it is observed an affirmation in common: women, mainly young people who have a very low body satisfaction that is directly influenced by the communication media. (Featherstone, 2010; Jones, 2001; Legenbauer et al., 2008; Monteath & McCabe, 1997; Tiggemann, 2004).

Currently, Brazilian and international research on body image identify parallel and differentiated processes between men and women regarding the manipulation of the body to achieve this satisfaction. Women usually perceive their body as more large than it actually is, commonly showing high levels of body dissatisfaction and wanting a slimmer body (Ambwani & Strauss, 2007; Camargo, Goetz, Bousfield & Justo, 2011b; Martins, Nunes & Noronha, 2008; Monteath & McCabe, 1997; Ruso, 2005). Some studies also noted that women express negative feelings both in relation to the individual parts of the body and the body as a whole; and identify the ideal body for society as an even slimmer body that their ideal body, seeing themselves much more dissatisfied with their bodies when confronted with the social expectation (Monteath & McCabe, 1997).

Studies with women in different consecutive generations show that you can be checked in different
ranges of ages who has the will for the thinnest body, however young women usually want bodies far thinner than the less young women (Lamb, Jackson, Cassiday & Priest, 1993; Tiggemann, 2004).

Recently the research on the body image of men is gaining place and visibility, noting that they are increasingly more concerned with muscle definition, a socially shared meaning of a symbol of masculinity (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2006; Mills & D’alfonso, 2007). In a research conducted by Tiggemann, Martins and Churchett (2008), it was verified that while weight and musculature are important elements of the body image of men, as it is shown in several earlier investigations, other aspects are also important, mainly the individual parts of the body, as having more hair, less chest hairs by the body and having more stature.

Camargo, Justo and Aguiar (2008), in a study on body satisfaction found that there is a significant difference between men and women in relation to their self-image and body satisfaction. While on the one hand, men, even above the weight considered ideal by the World Health Organization (WHO) are considered satisfied with their body; among the women, many declared themselves dissatisfied with their body, while they are within the range considered ideal weight. In this way, you can see that there is a difference between the body pattern established by the WHO and the aesthetic pattern adopted by the participants.

Moscovici (1981) says that the image that comes to the subject summarizes a complex organization of stimuli, being implicit the judgements of value and socially shared aspects, so that the sensory stimuli coming to the subject are modulated by collectively divided values. In this sense, Lopes (2007) proposed that when talking about the image, not to speak only of an anatomical, real and objective body, instrument of locomotion functions, of apprehension and synesthesia, but also a corporeity, which refers to the subjective reality. It is thus a body which, having gone through different experiences during life, tells a story, which is registered in the image itself.

Addressing body image, it stands that there are two different emphasis: a psychological, individual, explained by Schilder (1999); and another collective, that can be related to the notion of organization, referred to by Moscovici (1981), stating that the concept of image is not away from the opinion, at least in regards to their base assumptions. I.e., the image can be used in the formation of a complex and coherent organization of value or assessment judgements, taking a demarcated social function.

Images built, either as assessments made, both in relation to itself, such as relating to other people, reflect a role exercised by the body appearance. The body measures social relationships, and at the same time it can be considered as a mediator of knowledge that has of itself and the other (Jodelet, 1994).

The Body as a social object

Highlighting the social character of the human body, it is observed that this is situated at the crossroads of a number of determinations: from the intellectual to the more material, more or less disseminated by the press, advertising, or fiction; considered as modes of diffusion of representations and values (Ory, 2006). Hubert and Labarre (2005) talk about the appeal of media to the cult of the slim body, emphasizing practices that make it easier to reach the ideal body, and fat being addressed as disease.

In one documented study in national circulation magazines, Goetz, Camargo, Bertoldo and Justo (2008), by analyzing the materials on beauty and health, checked that the RS of the body in the analyzed magazines contemplate two main aspects: the first, practical, considers eminently physical aspects relating to beauty and health in the body; and the second, of more subjective character, represents the body as a physical-psychic unit, which prioritizes balance and wellness to achieve a healthier lifestyle. Beautification appears related to the health and sense of well-being and the techniques that facilitate the obtaining of a body suitable to the spreaded social patterns are highlighted.

Swain (2001), investigated the main RS present on the covers of Brazilian women’s magazines and noted with emphasis the technological body, remodeling to follow the model of woman whose images are present in these magazines. In these magazines the body is considered essential, as it is from its capacity of seduction that other elements are integrated. The diversity of plastic surgery techniques, rejuvenating cosmetics: all in the fight against time and imperfections. The body model would finally be
available to all, and the beauty would be the essential condition for romance and happiness.

Jodelet (1994) stated that the external image of the body appears as a mediator of social ties which the individual establishes, especially on three factors: 1) in an instrumental perspective of success of social interactions; 2) to respond to the social norms of presentation; 3) in the attempt to win the affection of others. In the study carried out by the same author, it was found that three quarters of interviewed people recognized a utilitarian manipulation of the physical layout, which has a role in the social success, and is a way of becoming accepted by others and have more easily a relationship with the others.

Body image, in addition to being linked to self-esteem, represents an instrument of status and social acceptance, where people are guided in the idea that the internal or personality characteristics are presented in their physical appearance (Camargo, Justo & Alves, 2011a).

Studies investigating the contents of the RS on the body (Camargo et al., 2011b; Gamboa, Tura & Burztyn, 2009; Justo, 2011; Justo, Camargo, Moreira & Goetz, 2009; Secchi, Camargo & Bertoldo, 2009) point out that in general the body is represented as an object and has an important role in the social relationships between people, associated with the power of seduction and influence relationships in different situations, they found that the most obvious elements, and that they possibly make up the kernel of the representation refers to the aesthetic and health.

Camargo et al., (2011a) found that people tend to attribute to the body some powers related to social influence and mainly young people relate to making use of these powers of influence in their social interactions, although such social functions of the body are not literally expressed in the lexical content of the RS - possibly because it is a part against the regulations of the representation of the body.

An investigation already classical, performed by Jodelet (1984), found that in a few years (less than two decades) cultural changes in a given population had significant impact on the relationship of these people with their bodies. The alteration in the relationship of individuals with their own body, for its part, indicates that there were changes in the way of representing it, which shows the importance of the social dimension in the representations of the body. Body beauty is a cultural fact that varies according to each conception of the world (Queiroz & Otta, 2000). And in this cultural identification, the media shows itself as a fundamental factor. To Sierra and Santos (2003), current media are characterized by the power to produce senses, designing them and legitimizing them, giving visibility to the phenomena that report. Thus, it produces consumption patterns and models of beauty, which, at times, are not consistent among themselves. Many subjects, mainly young people, come to achieve beauty patterns associated with the body, making sacrifices that can take them up to a becoming ill or dying (Novaes & Vilhena, 2003).

Beauty is conceptualized by Le Pape (2006) as a quality attributed to a body by an individual or by a given society and its boundaries are far from being defined. Teixeira (2001) adds that talk of beauty presupposes to consider something real, which arouses strong feelings and inspires actions of reverential contemplation, resulting from elements that extrapolate the perceptions of the five human senses. There are social patterns established in relation to body beauty, showing it as a form of prestige, social acceptance and success. Many subjects, mainly youngsters, seek to achieve these patterns associated with the body (Shohat & Stam, 1996).

Malysse (2002), in his research on the social uses of the body in the South zone of Rio de Janeiro, showed that in the search for an ideal body, individuals incorporate standard images of a new body beauty and are literally condemned to the appearance. It is evidenced that, so the person sits well with the image itself, the approval of the others look is required (Camargo et al., 2005; Jodelet, 1994; Secchi et al., 2009).

Alferez (2006) claims that body beauty is one of the factors or personal attributes whose influence, in the genesis of interpersonal relationships, has been systematically investigated during the past two decades. Another much studied issue, according to the author, refers to the greater or lesser importance that physical beauty can be assumed depending on the type of relationship with the objectives and needs of the individuals wrapped in it. Either way, the awareness of their physical beauty and the beauty of the other is a factor in social interactions. Countless studies
showed that people perceived as physically attractive - or fine - are seen as having more positive features of personality than those perceived as unattractive people, being favorite and receiving treatment in various situations (Bar-Tal & Saxe, 1976; Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani & Longo, 1991; Edward, Lemay, Clark & Greenberg, 2010; Gottschall, 2008; Jackson, Hunter & Hodge, 1995; Johnson & Pittenger, 1984; Livingston, 2001; Locher, Unger, Sociedad & Wahl, 1993). Camargo, Goetz, Barbara and Justo (2007), claim that the social representation of beauty most shared among college students say the respect of the imposition of patterns or socially established rules. In addition, beauty appears as the first aspect in the formation of the initial impression among the people. The study by Camargo et al. (2005), with fashion students, indicated that the social representation of the beauty shared in that population has two aspects: interpersonal, one in which beauty emerges as the first personal characteristic that stands out in social relations; and other normative, referenced to socially determined patterns of beauty which must be followed. Self-acceptance, or feeling beautiful is crucial so you can have the sense of social acceptance, which demonstrates the concern with external standards. On complementation, Novaes and Vilhena (2003) indicate that ugliness is often associated with obesity as a form of female social exclusion.

On the RS of the female body among female university students, Secchi et al. (2009) have noted that this is represented as something that must be endowed with beauty, thinness, is associated with the status, exercises the power and attraction, and it must be healthy. The body is perceived as an idealized object, away from the actual dimensions of these women, with implications for their dissatisfaction with the body.

The study of Camargo, just and Jodelet (2010) suggests that there are differences in the way of representing the body between participating men and women, but also between the different ranges of ages. This finding indicates that the self-image, the representation of the body, and the role of it in interpersonal relationships vary in accordance with the social group to which the individual belongs. The body is represented as a regulatory element, with features that stand out among women and among younger participants. It was observed that women are also more dependent on the other in the construction of its self-image and more demanding in terms of an ideal body. The image of the female body is associated with beauty and there is little tolerance for offsets of socially established aesthetic standards. However, it appears that the influence of the body social interaction decreases as it increases the age range of the participants.

Tiggemann and McGill (2004) found evidence in their studies that social comparison as a process that has important implications in the satisfaction with the body itself and can be related to broadcast media, data also found by Want, Vickers and Amos (2009). Even on the social role of the body and its appearance, stands the experimental study by Wookey, Graves and Butler (2009) that verified the effect of the sensual appearance in the perceived competence of women, noting that sensuality is associated with the social skill in low status jobs, but exacerbated sensuality can be considered inappropriate when women exercise a high power charge.

Such studies show that both concern and the appearance is socially motivated and that the appearance of the body can influence in social relations, going to meet the propose by Jodelet in the Decade of 1980, by saying that the body is a mediator of the social relations of the individual; that was also confirmed by the studies of Camargo et al. (2005), Camargo et al. (2010) and Secchi et al. (2009), in which the participants attributed to the appearance of the body an impact on the formation of the first impression on someone, mainly for women. Such data were corroborated by the study of Alli, Amialchuk and Rizzo (2012), which found decreased social interactions and less friendship relationships among young obese girls, when they are compared with the too many, with apropriate weight in the same group of students.

For Jodelet (1984), models of thought produced social representations, which shared socially, determined the different ways to feel and interact with the body. Representations thus assume an important role in the development of collective ways of seeing and living the body, spreading models of thought and behavior related to the body (Jodelet et al., 1982). Thus, representations serve as a sort of guide for the practices of care taken with the body.
Body practices

The body is considered to be the result of a work on itself, which has resulted in beauty and health (Damico & Meyer, 2006). The behavior that has to do with the care with hygiene, broadcasted from hygiene and social medicine from the Decade of 1920, until the most technology gifted esthetic treatments; they have a narrow relationship with the RS which have on the body and are at the same time decisive and determined by them. Scheduled in the representation of an ideal body, slim, beautiful and healthy individuals adhere different care practices with their body.

According to Abric (1998), the RS are systems that lead the relationships that individuals have with their physical and social environment by determining the behavior (or social practices) although in a non-linear way. Oriented by the RS that individuals have in their bodies, they adhere to different practices of modification and body care. By bodily practices it is understood that behaviors relating to the body, either preventing health care or embellishment, which can be, in greater or lesser degree, supported by the RS that individuals have with their body. Body practices constitute a rather extensive list of behaviors related to the body: physical activity, diet, use of clothes and accessories, fashion and labels membership, aesthetic rituals and even surgeries. It parts from the idea that the RS relates to behaviors, or social practices, serving as a guide for action in daily life (Abric, 1998; Jodelet, 2001) Although this determination not necessarily happens in a linear fashion.

Adherence to diets, or the consumption of light and diet food, that associate the pleasure of food with the maintenance of the body within healthy and aesthetic patterns (Andrade, 2003), the practice of physical activities, the use of aesthetic treatments and, ultimately, the submission associated with aesthetic plastic surgeries, are practices related to the body which at the moment are associated with obtaining health and at times looking for beauty. The choosing of clothes and the behavior of seeing oneself in the mirror are also considered bodily practices, as described by Jodelet et al. (1982). Independent of the reason which justifies the adherence to such practices, it is observed that they reflect representations and positionings about the body, normative patterns about what beauty is, or of what is body health.

With the current dissemination of information about the various care that one must take with the body, grows the preoccupation with the ideal body disseminated by the media and body dissatisfaction reaches the population, mainly women, which are carried to adopt highly restrictive diets and strenuous exercise as a way to compensate for the calories consumed, in the attempt to correspond to the current cultural model (Andrade, 2003). Research conducted by García (1997), noted the eating and beauty paradox, noting that the pleasure of eating is currently subject to the pleasure of being physically attractive and within the aesthetic standards, appearing a doubt regarding being satisfied gastronomically or a beautiful body.

The practice of physical activity, according to the study of Salles-Costa, Heilborn, Werneck, Faerstein and Lopes (2003), was valued by the participating men and women, considered as a social investment, for letting the most beautiful body. This practice is predominantly associated with the men in the sample (Rio de Janeiro University officials) and the incidence of physical inactivity by women was related to the lack of time for leisure, once these women valued the practice of physical activity, and justify not adhering to this practice due to the lack of time. Other studies also have low adhesion of women to the practice of physical exercises, as opposed to a greater adhesion to diets and favoritism to the cosmetic surgeries (Camargo et al., 2008; Secchi et al., 2009).

The practice of physical activities, if on the one hand it may be associated with a better quality of life and the maintenance of a healthy body, on the other hand you can highlight as the search for a nice body from exercises, sometimes it happens in excesses. A study of Irait, Llaves and Orleans (2009), investigated symbolic dimensions about the use of anabolic by people of different social classes, fitness practitioners. For research participants, the motivation for the practice of bodybuilding is clearly aesthetic. Fat is the villain and the goal is to eliminate it. The body is depicted as an incomplete object, which needs to be worked and improved and the use of anabolic provides a quick and efficient solution in the modeling of the body. The cares with the body distinguish between people who are careful (and that’s why they are valued) and the relaxed people that don’t care. Even a strong distinction between the different social classes in the
motivations for the use of anabolic and a muscular body cult stands out.

The finding of this study evidences how the body and the practices related to it can only be studied by means of cultural contextualization, and a same practice which can assume different connotations according to the context in which it is inserted. The same pattern that is desired, if on the one hand it is related to the status and power of seduction of the opposite sex, may be related also to the things from work and imposition of respect from their peers (Irait et al., 2009).

Even in the context of academies, Sautchuk (2007) notes in its study, a contrast in the orientation of bodily practices on health and beauty, where the health measure assumes a moral status and is predominantly in the justification for physical exercise; and aesthetics (object less valued and less explicit than its health) is justified as a way of contributing to the quality of life and health through personal satisfaction. However, according to the author, that doesn’t reflect one importance inferior to the aesthetics, as it is directly related to the well-being and translates the personal interest in investing in their own body.

Another practice relating to the body which gains importance in the search for beauty is the realization of aesthetic plastic surgery. These interventions which were previously maintained in stealth (Teixeira, 2001), were considered an immorality by the surgeons themselves and evaluated as a marginal practice until the early 1950’s (NET & Caponi, 2007); Today they are disseminated in the media and accepted naturally by society in general (Teixeira, 2001). According to the Brazilian society of plastic surgery (2009), approximately 629 thousand plastic surgeries are performed in Brazil per year, of these, 547 thousand are aesthetic surgeries. Such numbers qualify Brazil as the third country where most aesthetic surgeries worldwide are done, behind only the United States and Mexico. The distribution of this type of intervention, according to Neto and Caponi (2007), has demanded a concern in defining the biological patterns of beauty from medicine.

Although the number of cosmetic surgical procedures in Brazil and in the world is growing considerably, De Rosa and Holman (2011) suggest that aesthetic surgeries still acquire a negative connotation by great part of the people, and such practice is more widespread among adolescents and extremely beautiful women, using strategies to maintain anonymity in relation to these procedures.

It can be determined in a study by Slevec and Tiggemann (2010) that the effects of the media in the attitudes when cosmetic surgery is direct, and that investment in appearance, anxiety to aging and exposure to television, predict the social motivation for cosmetic surgery.

Adams (2010) says in its study that the motivations for the realization of cosmetic surgeries are articulated in physical and psychosocial terms, with the expectation that physical alterations shall ease emotional and social disturbances.

Investigations are pointing that the greater reason which has been said to carry out cosmetic surgeries is the improvement of self-esteem, where it is believed that not only will there be an intervention for physical improvement, but especially for psychological and social improvement (Gimlin, 2007; Kinnunen, 2010; Neto & Caponi, 2007). It is also as motivation to prevent aging and generational influence, where children are motivated by parents who already performed cosmetic surgeries (Edmonds, 2007; Kinnunen, 2010).

In a study that investigated representations and bodily practices of adult men and women, Camargo et al. (2010) found that nearly half of the women declared that they intended to perform cosmetic surgery, while among men that number decreases to 15%. The desire to be subjected to such intervention is a characteristic of people who are dissatisfied with their bodies and within the considered normal body mass index. The surgery is related to the search of body satisfaction and increased self-esteem for participants.

Andrieu (2006) states that as a result of the longevity, both men and women are occupied more and more with their bodies, and the medicine is requested to recover the vitality of youth, being through medication, surgery, or in the development of cosmetics. In this sense, Clarke and Griffin (2007) investigated how women between 50 and 70 years were ageing and the embellishment techniques including anti-wrinkle creams, cosmetics, hair dye, plastic
surgery and non-surgical cosmetic procedures. The authors observed that these women see the aesthetic interventions in relation to ageing as natural practices and at the same time idealized. Beauty treatments are increasingly available, and are practically mandatory for women, in a culture that devalues the aged body and the natural physical realities.

By means of production on a large scale, mass media and advertising media, elements of fashion are quickly disseminated and wanted, matching tastes and appearances and at the same time specifying the identity, lifestyle and the group to which the subject resides (Pires, 2005). Lee, Damhorst and Ogle (2009) verified in their study with university women which are participants with greater body satisfaction are less conducive to body modification due to fashions and behavior to lose weight, diets, exercises and cosmetic surgery; which comes to meet what Camargo et al. (2010) points out, people being unsatisfied with the body, and not necessarily those that are overweight, those with a greater propensity to do cosmetic procedures.

The body is made subject to interventions in the quest to satisfy the beauty patterns, and in that sense, medicine becomes an important mediator (Suissa, 2008), either through the development of dermatological, surgical treatments, or through the many types of interventions, working at the interface between health and beautification. Such practices maintain the RS diffused on the body, at the same time that are made possible by them.

**Final Considerations**

The human body is an object of study whose social importance is evident throughout history. And starting from the history of mankind is noted that the body, although it is characterized as a physical object that embodies human existence, is also taken as a symbolic content, which is influenced by the movement of societies. Thus, it is the interaction of natural matter, with the social environment in which it is inserted, resulting in individual and social representations (Andrieu, 2006).

Considered that the TRS can be used as an important base theory for the study of social thinking about the body and behaviors associated to it with a view that they favor the observation of the body as a social object and that they can’t be distanced from the values and beliefs prevailing in a group. I.e., the study of the body from the TRS presents the possibility of integration of the private dimensions to those socially shared and reflecting on ways to interact, both with their own body and the body of others, as well as Jodelet, (1994) noted. The RS, according to the author, are fundamental in the development of collective modes of conceiving and experiencing the body, spreading patterns of thought and behavior related to it.

It is considered that we are living in a social moment where the body and body care practices have been evidenced both in the media as in scientific productions of recent decades, reflecting the movement of the society in relation to this object and the values it involves. The moment that is presenced is marked by the cult of the body, thin and healthy, reflecting the demands and the contradictions that we live. Takes place on the one hand the valorization of the display of a slim body and that reflects health, on the other hand stands the epidemic of obesity, which increases as people become increasingly sedentary and less time to take care of themselves. The increase in the longevity of people, emphasizing the closer look at health, allied to the quality of life, is another important approach to thinking about the body and concerning the care.

Finally, we must remember that the human body comprises a remarkable complexity. As a result, cognitions about this object are also complex, equipped with delicate consents, peculiarities; facets that attracted the attention of researchers and scholars throughout the history of humanity, and that they continue bringing claims to be thought out and investigated, according to the historical movement of societies.
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