

Original Article (short paper)

## Body and aging perceptions in the project ‘Our Healthier City’

Kaline Lígia Estevam de Carvalho Pessoa<sup>1</sup>, Maria Isabel Brandão de Souza Mendes<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Ceará, IFCE, Physical Education Course, Limoeiro do Norte, CE, Brazil; <sup>2</sup>Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, UFRN, Physical Education Department, Natal, Brazil

**Abstract** — **Aim:** We aim to develop this study with the main objective to discuss perceptions about body and aging from the context of the ‘Our Healthier City’ project. **Method:** We use the phenomenological method to develop the research. Through a strategy of the situated phenomenon, we visit the place where it is experienced. We observed the lived world of the people there and interviewed 10 project participants. **Results:** In this way, we perceive that the aging body is ruled by taboos and prejudices, but develops every day, weaving meanings from movement, work, family, experiences, pleasures, and displeasures, caring for oneself by the understanding that life continues after old age and that death is an irreversible phenomenon. We also understand that it is a part of the body that ages fall, wrinkles, declines as a natural process but that cannot be considered just this, meaning that the body that grows older also develops in a polysemic cultural context with different meanings since old age is understood and lived in different ways by each one. **Conclusion:** We identify that the area of Physical Education has an academic production in the area of aging and old age that still need to be discussed in order to broaden the eyes for these bodies, so that they can not only be understood in their physiological and their effective responses to exercise, adaptation to physical activity and the types of training programs but also as beings that produce meanings from their experiences.

**Keywords:** aging; old age; body; physical education; old body.

### Introduction

In researching about body and old age, we often come across various discourses that turn to the understanding of a decaying body. In order to diversify these ideals in discussing old bodies, old age and aging, we seek to interpret the nuances of the lived experience of bodies that feel at that moment in life in order to understand them in their contexts, their forms of being and living and how it differs from the usual understanding of being old.

From our understandings, and based on the reading of authors<sup>1-6</sup>, we consider aging as the process by which the human being passes through their life, and old age as the product of this process. Path and walk. Road and destination. Thus we conceive these two perspectives of life and the phenomenon in question.

In this sense, we seek answers from authors who discuss old age and its process in the human body, understanding it in an existential aspect, wherein there is not only the biological or the social but both processes intertwined.

Allied to this, in crossing the phenomenon in its context, we use the experience of participants of a project in the city of Natal, located in the State of Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil, in order to give life to their speeches and allow their voices to cross concepts and preconceptions, bringing light to another perception about what it is to be an old body, elevating us to a new dimension in the knowledge about this body that we will someday have.

Starting from the central question: what are the perceptions about the body and the aging from an investigation of the context of the project "Our Healthier City", we defined the central objective to discuss the perceptions about body and aging from the context of the project "Our healthier city".

### Methods

Having chosen the project to be carried out the interventions, the target public and the objective of the research, the project was submitted to the Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte, obtained a favorable opinion under the number 1,808,280.

Regarding the methodological aspects, this research is based on a qualitative approach and uses the phenomenological method for its realization. The method allows the investigator to investigate a certain object from its intentionality to interpret, observe and understand such a phenomenon. Thus, "intentionality refers to the choices that are made in the face of an event, at the moment when it is lived."<sup>7</sup> From this perspective, research from the phenomenological method allows the description of the experiences as phenomenology,

*[...] is an account of space, time, and the world "lived". It is the attempt of direct description of our experience as it is and without any deference*

*to its psychological genesis and to the causal explanations that the scientist, historian, or sociologist can provide.*<sup>6</sup>

Through the intentionality of investigating the space and the understandings about the old body, the spaces and lived-times of the project participants are described. By describing and intending, I become part of this lived-world on which I seek to relate, even if it is necessary to use the phenomenological reduction<sup>6</sup>, as a temporary and incomplete form of abstention of the world to be described.

We, therefore, seek the understanding of the subjects in their places of activity practices and seek to understand from the description of the situated phenomenon, which is to describe "the perceived, what makes sense for the subject who observes or who says something"<sup>7</sup>. We used the observation of the subjects and the interviews made taking into account the world-lived and intentionality to discuss the perceptions about body and aging from the project "Our Healthier City".

## Results and Discussion

In the view of authors<sup>1-4</sup>, old age presents varied characteristics, it is a multifaceted phenomenon and linked to the history of each being that grows old. Based on the study of these authors, we understand that aging began to be carefully perceived and studied when it was noticed that the world was aging more and more due to the increase in general quality of life.

In the 1970s, the author<sup>1</sup> had already stated that "although old age, as a biological destiny, is a transhistorical reality, there is still the fact that this destiny is lived in a varied according to the social context". For this author, who reveals the nuances of a society that at the time already excluded the old in their condition and situation, old age constitutes individualities, whose characteristics are based on the way one lives, on health, on the environment, among others. In twentieth-century France, where the phenomenon of an aging population began to be noticed, the author creates a work in the form of a complaint and a deep reflection on the complexities of old age.

The author also states that old age carries with it the idea of transformation and the end and prolongation of a process because inertia is only in death. So life is based on the idea of getting old. It is not enough simply to understand the process from the analysis of biological data, for "old age could only be understood in its totality; not only represents a biological fact, but it is also a cultural fact"<sup>1</sup>.

We age, and this, in fact, cannot be considered only when the signs and marks appear that indicate a fall in corporal functionality. As the author<sup>4</sup> points out when referring to modernity, old age represents everything that transgresses modern values: "work, youth, seduction, vitality." In this conception, old age is thought of as a reminder of human decay.

From the observed contextual aspects, we perceive that there is a negativity about aging and old age in today's society. We

cannot say if this occurs only at this moment, but we can infer that from these looks, together with the various contexts of a society marked by the productivity of bodies, we find negative looks. In this sense, these characteristics have long been built and have different designs in cultures, but are all based on the fragility that old age demonstrates the first hand<sup>8</sup>:

*It is common to say that aging and old age are punctuated by myths and stereotypes, beliefs, misconceptions and an unavoidable approximation to restlessness and anguish, all originated from the recurrent fragility with which older people are confronted. In spite of the modern recognition of the specificity of this new phase, there are still myths and fears that reproduce as an echo, very similar to what was observed in other epochs in the most diverse civilizations*<sup>8</sup>.

For this reason, it is necessary to listen to the processes that constitute the whole context of aging. Thus, the project "Our Healthier City" is presented, where it seeks to open space in the form of diverse care for a public still poorly understood in its various existential aspects.

The 'Our Healthier City' project represents a huge step forward for the aging public policies that are developing in the city of Natal. Such policies need to be increasingly elaborated and devised in order to meet the demands of this public that demands more and more care and sensitive views.

This project takes place every day from 5:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. on the Avenida Afonso Pena. According to the coordinator of the previous management of the 'Our Healthier City' project, and according to the words of the author<sup>9</sup>, Afonso Pena Avenue was frequented by many people who performed daily activities, from races to gymnastics. Not just seniors, but people of all ages. However, it was noticeable that the greatest demand for space and its use is made by this group.

The project has been operating for almost five years and its structure consists of weekly, biweekly and monthly activities. Stretching activities and monitoring of the professionals, in addition to gauging the pressure, are made daily. In partnership with a pharmacy and a laboratory, biweekly blood glucose tests and others are performed free of charge for all who wish. Breakfast is held for integration and approximation of all each month. Special dance classes are also held for those who want to participate.

Regarding the professionals of the project, they include the participation of Physical Education teachers, psychologists, and nurses. Physical Education teachers offer classes based on their students' needs such as stretching, tips, and follow-ups. They perform group stretches at the beginning and end of each person's walks. There are also several types of stretching, often the benchmarking by the teachers themselves, some recommendations, and especially a lot of affection is perceived in those moments that occur in the 'Our Healthier City' project tent.

It is perceived that the dimension of this project runs through several aspects regarding the involvement of older adults in

society. Not only is the interest in physical activity in relation to physical well-being sought, but there is also the concern for emotional well-being, friendship, interaction and integration of older adults, there is the demonstration of the necessity of their participation in activities.

According to<sup>8</sup>, public policies aimed at older adults should encompass the various aspects that characterize this group, such as the context in which they live, the economic, health, and family situation. Moreover, such policies should involve other generations so that one can continuously learn about needs and not turn a specific population into a social problem.

During observations of the space and the existing relationships, we realized that the 'Our Healthier City' project is not only an environment designed to solve physiological problems; those who are there have the right to full and complete participation of a moment that unites encounters, motivations, well-being, joy, and liveliness.

On the days when the field study was carried out it was possible to perceive the contrast that existed between a space in which people are to meet a demand of perfect body and a space in which people are going to be and to live, only. In the Project, this need to live and to be is emphasized, independent of the body that one has.

With regard to this body, from the observations and speeches of the interviewees, a number of relationships between their bodies and their conceptions of aging were perceived that is not usually emphasized. Perceptions that magnify the very meaning of life and the meaning of aging, said by people who feel and who experience the process itself.

From the volunteer speeches of ten interviewees with a script guided by questions that elicited reflection on their lifestyles, body conceptions, old age and aging, happiness, positives and negatives about aging, we could perceive some aspects that enable broadening the horizons regarding body, old age, and aging.

The interviewees presented the most diverse ways of responding about their bodies and about being old, demonstrating that the perspective they use in these concepts depends on how they lived their life and hope to continue living, their perspectives for the future, the people who make up their lives and their ability to continue building experiences.

As noted by some authors<sup>10,11,1,2,3,4,12,8,13</sup> we must understand that old age and aging must be considered from a context and the history of who lives it. We demonstrate this by getting the various answers of what this aging would be like for the aging body itself.

We separate the understandings obtained into units of meaning, because during the observations and reading the speeches we noticed terms, expressions, and words in common that indicated new senses and meanings about old bodies and aging. Thus, understandings are organized into the following units of meaning: Old age as life in movement; Old age as a form of experience; Old age as a need to take care of oneself; Old age as acceptance of the losses and irreversibility of death; Old age as pleasure and displeasure; Being old as a continuation of life.

### *Old Age as Life in Movement*

Our first fundamental reflection in this unity of meaning is that for them, life develops through movement, through their ability to continue working and caring for themselves and their families, maintaining a quality of life that is not only reduced to the free body of evils, but also to the body that amuses, interacts, is rich in experiences and can pass them on to the next generations.

For them, the moving body is an essential means for understanding old age. Space is explored in the movement, and so they understand that I may or may not be old (starting from a common conception of old age, turned to the biological) from the movement, from the moment I can continue to experiment, which can be seen in the following statements:

*- This week I saw a guy playing ball at 65 on the television. I see people swimming at such an advanced age right? I think it's going to take me a while to grow old (Interviewee 9).*

*- I think my father registered me before he was born because I'm 70 years old and I do not feel those 70 years. I do everything! I walk, I do my shopping, everything. I do not feel difficulty at all (Interviewee 1).*

When they perceive themselves as old, in ceasing their movement, the subject opens their eyes to a sensitive view of their lives that occurs in and through movement, in the action of everyday life. Their worlds are built daily from their understanding of independence and autonomy, to carry out their routines.

Based on previous statements and our perceptions about them, we understand that in addition to the body concept, there is a concept of old age and aging that are based on the body uses of the subjects participating in the project. In their lines, we note that the construction of old age is based on this body present in the world of each one, especially when this body accommodates and becomes immobile. It is at this moment that a true old age begins for them.

Still, regarding the movement, interviewee 6 points out his understanding of aging as a gradual cessation of this movement:

*- A lot of things you did before and cannot do, for example, I used to run, today I can't run anymore.*

A thought that emphasizes the importance of the movement for building an understanding of active old age is highlighted in the thoughts of respondents 2, 3, 4, 8 and 9. For them, when asked if aging prevents them from something:

*- It does not stop you, you know. (Interviewee 2)*

*- No way! Thank God it does not stop. (Interviewee 3)*

*- No, not at all. I haven't even noticed aging so far! (Interviewee 4)*

-No, not at all. I don't think so. (Interviewee 9)

In this perspective, although they are in the process of aging, the interviewees feel completely capable, many still in their full height of life, when they identify that they do not feel impeded from accomplishing anything in their lives. Self-indulgence and lack of movement are, in the minds of most participants, a clear sign of old age. Movement is not limited to the ability to move joints and perform physical tasks; however, it also revolves around the very fact that it can pass through the normal cycle of life, an experience acquired over time, enabling to maintain memory and existential movement of the life of the human being.

Interviewee 3 points out to us elements of how much movement and the ability to stay active are essential and are present in their daily life. Through reports of her life, she tells us that work has never ceased to be a part of her day-to-day life, even after retirement. In our understanding, we realize that in their lived world, work is essential to keep it alive and part of a whole. We perceive herein the notion of extravasation, discussed by the author<sup>14</sup> as stupefaction when we notice that work has invaded our life beyond our bank account.

Other points noted in the speeches that refer us to the life that takes place around the movement are noticed in interviewee 2's speech when it comes to well-off older people. In this sense, we understand that procrastination can be generated by several problems, mainly by psychological diseases.

For<sup>6</sup>, moving does not only mean taking the body toward something. We move our phenomenal body. As the author cites, there is an intentionality behind the movement, which flows equally with the idea of autonomy posed by the interviewees. The moving body for them is the capable and potent body of accomplishments. It is a body that intends to do something; therefore, a living and pulsing body. Although we do not disregard the inactive body as capable of being realized and without intentionalities, we consider it as a valid conception to which they bring us about this moving body.

The pleasure in staying active in us is not only presented verbally but painted through the framework that develops throughout the project. The very description of the life of the majority of the subjects allowed us to reach an understanding that they feel alive, being realized through the continuity of their lives and the possibility to remain independent.

### *Old Age as a Form of Experience*

The movement that generates life is also a generator of experiences. After all, experiences permeate the environment of being, and in this, the older adult also realizes themselves as being endowed with a meaningful life. For the participants, aging has strong marks of experience. The acquired and transmitted experience characterizes the being that grows old and is constituted in their life and world in a network of meaning.

Interviewee 3 agrees:

- [...] people get a lot of experience with other people. We learn to live together. It is very good to live, we live and learn, right?

We thus find a new sense flowing from the experience of the aging body. What he can see being preserved through the memory that promotes and reaffirms the other, and by opening ourselves to experience and the other in this way, we understand that:

*[...] recall or voice is rediscovered when the body opens again to the other or to the past, then it is allowed to pass through coexistence, and when again (in the active sense) it means beyond itself<sup>6</sup>.*

In this way, it is understood that their experience is not lost, but it is heard and apprehended, it remains in the world as if it were they who remained here at the same time.

For the interviewee 4, we have a notion that aging runs through the question of experience, of which "lived a lot". It is expressed as follows:

- [...] getting old is that you lived a lot but your head is good, you drive your goods and obligations. So I always jest that the one who ages is the head, not the body.

The way in which each participating subject expresses their conditions of aging, from the markings on the body to the meaning of being old, shows us that each conception is based on different contexts, presenting different needs. In this way, we do not only conceive the natural aspect of the different aging understood herein. We add the capacity of each responder to understand the old being based on what they live and understand their bodies.

In this case, the body understanding that each one has is expressed in experience, lifestyle, daily activities, social relations, all this and beyond, integrating an understanding of aging, in this case, ten understandings of aging and being old which are not limited to the natural aspect, since nature and culture are intertwined in the human being.

Corroborating this view<sup>15</sup>, "man is considered a biocultural being, being totally biological and totally cultural since everything that is human has a connection with life", and everything that man is and produces is centered in nature and represents his culture, for both communicating and acting upon each other.

Thus, the authors affirm that "in this way, body, nature, and culture interpenetrate through a recursive logic. What is biological in the human being is simultaneously a culture infiltrate. Every human act is biocultural"<sup>15</sup>, constituting the communication between nature and culture and exemplifying, for us, the meanings of the aging body based on this conception.

### *Old Age as a Need to Take Care of Oneself*

In the speeches by the participants, we realized that much of the reason for being there is related to health care, medical recommendations and the will to continue exercising.

From this, we refer to a cult and cultivation of the body to which<sup>16</sup> refers as being that we must build our sense of body and perceive it in the world, as well as muscles and bones that weaken. This body is also endowed with the creative capacity for meaning and deserves to have sense-creating looks. In this way, we seek to understand the different senses of this self-care observed in the participants of this research.

Thus, some interviewees indicated in their speeches the concern with the aesthetic side of aging. They affirmed the signs they express for them in their bodies, which are aging, and recognize themselves in that moment. We bring the speech of some interviewees as an example of this recognition:

- [...] only these gray hairs sometimes bother me. (Interviewee 9)

- Eat what the person likes, that is not too heavy and too fat, right? Eat healthy food. Then the person becomes a grandmother, an old woman, like the people say, healthier, right? If you eat too much fatty food you get sick, finished. There is no way there, right? (Interviewee 2).

- I don't do anything on my face [...] I've never been one to do these things. I live a normal life. I have no vanity, I don't have these worries. (Interviewee 1)

It is through their bodies (ours and those interviewed) that their different life histories and their different experiences are sustained, and in affirming to us that their care, their practices, and their age, we relate their bodies to the human being, the living entity and dwells in that body and that escapes a dualism of man and body, as experience allows so. The body is the human being themselves tied to the world in which they live, as defended by the author<sup>6</sup>.

We also realized that there was a need to feel good from daily physical exercise, which provided a sense of the quality of life. Thus, we perceive that "everyone wants to grow old, but with quality of life, with pleasure in life and physical activity [...] in its various forms of expression, has an important role within this theme"<sup>17</sup>.

In this way, self-care is expressed in aesthetic values, in caring for food, in perceiving or not wrinkles and grey hair, in the way of having fun and in the search for quality of life through physical exercises.

### *Old Age as Acceptance of the Losses and Irreversibility of Death*

In discussing the phenomena of old age and aging we should observe them as something that is part of us and that occurs

in our bodies daily. They are part of life. But in the speeches that are presented to us and in part of the literature, we can understand old age as a phenomenon commonly removed from the view of those who do not consider themselves part of the process, or rather, from those who do not understand that the transformation of the body depends on the time that passes and the aging of one's being.

In dealing with old age and aging, the author<sup>18</sup> provides insights that help us understand the reasons for the social withdrawal of aging people, whether physical or in the form of non-comprehension. Because it is a moment of life that reveals the approach of the end, the author comments that people tend to move away from what they fear. Thus:

*Perhaps we should speak more openly and clearly about death, even if we fail to present it as a mystery. Death has no secrets. It does not open doors. It is the end of a person. What survives is what she or he gave to other people, what remains in the memories of others. If humanity disappears, everything that any human being has done, everything that people have lived and fought for, including all secular and supernatural belief systems, becomes meaningless<sup>18</sup>.*

In this sense, the author explicitly states that death becomes repression, both in the individual and in the social sense. Thus, people may not feel comfortable in contacting the dying, for they would be reviving, bringing the idea of death to consciousness.

Losses happen in the sense of respect, treatment, their invisibility to society, their close relatives and friends. However, as they often put it, life needs to be followed naturally and with acceptance of all these phenomena. Some lines delineate these thoughts:

- Call me old and I don't think bad, but when I'm very angry and someone says like this, old woman! I say: old is the past. (Interviewee 2)

- My daughter, you have no respect for the people. As if the person who disrespected you did not have a father, a mother, would not grow old. (Interviewee 7)

- The worst part is that the person is alone in life without having anyone to ask for help ... the person has a child, then he becomes sick, he stays in a corner asking for help from one and the other, it takes time to come. Then you feel more and more lonely and you feel older because you see that you are alone and no one comes to help. I think that's it, abandonment. (Interviewee 2)

- We miss life, longing for people, but life goes on. (Interviewee 3)

- That old business is a lie!" (bored) Aging is bad. I think ... but there's no way right? [...] Everything is worse, there is nothing good about getting old, nothing good. (Interviewee 6).

In spite of this, we still perceive the acceptance of life in some other interviewees (3, 4 and 5) as a cycle, its phases, its moments and what comes with each one. We think of this Being as endowed with lived significations, which produces a network in their day-to-day, a knot of meanings that perpetuate life beyond the way it is usually understood.

### *Old Age as Pleasure and Displeasure;*

The pleasures and displeasures of old age are identified in many ways: going out, being with the family, being in peace, doing good, going to parties, drinking, retirement and sexuality. Also, we perceive the displeasure in the very phenomenon of aging, in what must be limited (food, certain movements), the very fear of the end. They are (among many) some aspects that portray the multiplicity of pleasures and displeasures in aging. Some lines bring us these aspects:

*- [...] to live well with his family and friends, to enjoy good physical and mental health, and to enjoy this gift that God bestows on us, gives us. Now, we live in peace with our conscience, with people, with our friends, with health, with happiness. And do good to other people as well. (Interviewee 5).*

Interviewee 2 shows that her greatest pleasures, besides including the family, are also parties, and trips to the beach:

*- Going to the beach, going to a party, going out at night, walking with the grandchildren, taking them to play, I think that's it. For me, that's it!*

Interviewee 3 pointed out that she likes:

*-To talk to people, to help people, unintentionally no retribution. And make all people like me, right?*

Respondent 10 states:

*- [...] there are parts where 'it's good' right? Better because the guy gets retired, rest a little more. Just like me, who worked from the age of 8, then when I retired ...*

The pleasures described by the participants convey a sense of simplicity to the detriment of what we often think is necessary to satisfy the being. Conversations, good living together, simple trips to the beach, being with family and friends are dimensions of pleasure that often seem difficult to be understood by many people.

Running and traveling, eating whatever you want, going out, drinking, present themselves as some factors considered as a form of pleasure by the interviewees. This is also to be an aging body and an old body: to present needs, wants, desires.

We also emphasize that displeasures are part of the aging body. We see this when interviewees cite the negative understandings of aging based on their limitations.

Regarding this, interviewee 10 points out that:

*- [...] nice old age even though I think it does not have anything. Nothing pleasant about being old.*

Many lines tell us that respondents suffer from the fear and misunderstanding of what is really aging. That is why it is important to comprehend issues such as these, so we can open ourselves to a greater reflection on the processes of life.

Another important aspect to be mentioned in this unit is sex. Sexuality is borderline between pleasure and displeasure. The sexual factor is even more implicit in this phase of life. It becomes even more taboo, for sexuality in today's society is often associated with young bodies, with vigor, with beauty, with the physical itself.

The only respondent who mentioned the subject was participant 10, when he used the phrase "no longer work", followed by laughter to exemplify a negative aspect of old age. Despite being urged to continue, he closed the matter and finished the interview, proving yet again that the subject of sex is not deepened at this stage of life.

For society at large, it is scary to think about sex at an advanced age, despite the fact that sexuality is always present. It strikes us to face a person who is so close to a process both natural and misunderstood by us, as is death. Scared to realize that one day we will reach what today (as young people) we never think about arriving to. And we perceive, in these well-placed speeches, how much life itself, its events, giving itself to the other, feeling desires, work, movement itself, is desired and experienced in old age as much as in any other phase of life.

Thus, "For the others, the old is the object of knowledge; for himself, he possesses of his own state, a lived experience"<sup>1</sup>. Such lived experience gives them the confidence to weave with pleasure what we do not recognize as sufficient to make life generally meaningful.

Life should not be thought of by automatism. We are pure of being intentionalities<sup>6</sup>. We experience relationships, our neighbour, the world and ourselves in all phases of life. But we often believe that an old person must strip himself of what they love most to assume a tone of seriousness, of that which does not feel and does not express, that which is the unshakable posture of the incontestable example of sobriety that cannot be permeated by that there is better in life.

### *Being Old as a Continuation of Life*

It is in this sense that we leave some points of our text in perspective: The old age faced by the self and by the other, by who lives and by who waits for it, putting in perspective all the beliefs and all paths of society around this phenomenon.

So, "the law of life is to change"<sup>1</sup>, so that man, his body and his life, accompany changes as a way of evolving and giving continuity to the fullness of life.

Therefore, aging is also surrounded by changes that are part of life, but which allow the continuity of being, development,

learning, experience and the constitution of the lived world. Interviewee 5 corroborates:

*- We should accept things as they are, of course, do you understand? (Interviewee 5)*

In dealing with the continuity of life, we talk about walking, even with the barriers, losses, homesickness, and all the events in the interviewees' lives. In this walk, we find the continuity of life in the smallest details of their speeches, even when they find meaning in the pleasure of being with their own. This is the continuity of life. Therefore, we insist on the experiences, the cares, the pleasures, the fears, the affectivities, because all these nuances are part of the continuation of their lives.

Aging can also mean the understanding of life as a natural and cultural event that is fulfilled in the step-by-step of existence, walking slowly with experience, in balance and imbalance. This is shown in the speech of interviewee 5:

*- If I accept this natural consequence of living a great deal, I must also abide by what it imposes on me, does it not? I can't rebel because I'm getting old. No one can stop time. Isn't that true? (Interviewee 5)*

This is understood that the aging body becomes the continuity of life for us, not the end, or beginning of the end of it, not only. It becomes a source of subjectivities and perceptions, that tries to live their daily life in their body, and to continue, as each of us continues, in the tortuous way of the complexity of living.

We can infer some things from here about the aging body and the lived world to which we have been introduced, allowing us to see closely (perhaps from within this world) what the participants understand by old age and aging.

## Conclusion

The writing of this work immediately presupposes an understanding that we should not naturalize the aging process because although it is biological, it is felt in different ways by each subject, since each being is unique. This was reinforced by the statements of each of our interviewees.

The work also raises an immediate need to put ourselves in the place of the older subjects to understand them a little more in their lived worlds. Even if we are not 60, 70, 80, we are aging daily and we must understand this fact from those who are already advanced in the process. Aging, for those who are not old, represents something and this something must transcend the representations of aging: pain, wrinkles, fear of death and everything.

Perhaps these concepts are obscure and offer many barriers to be discovered; after all, as previously pointed out, old age in common sense refers to a physiological decay of the being, which causes fear, pain or deviations from conduct and to deepen in this world, on the part of those who do not consider themselves "aging", or who will one day be old.

From the feeling of belonging to the "Our Healthier City" project, we notice that health permeates the aging body that walks in search of taking care of itself. But they also belong to that place, because it builds and is built daily by all the relationships that wake them up.

The sense of physical independence and functionality are raised by the interviewees as hallmarks of the results that the daily activities of the project provoke in them, as well as the friendships, the conversations, the laughter aroused and the bonds.

And each being interviewed herein decisively contributes to the understanding that we are not and do not live alone, and that we do not go through the world, but we form the world from our actions. We are formed by him from his phenomena.

As humanity, we are "a community of thinkers in which each one, in his solitude, obtains in advance the certainty of understanding with others, because they would all share the same thinking essence"<sup>5</sup>. Despite the traditions and imprisonments that are also suffered by those who grow old, we need to understand this body<sup>10</sup>. In understanding him, then, "he speaks to us and his speech tells us of ourselves, but we do not hear, we do not understand."

And from this thought, we share our understanding of old age and aging that are not in life, but which first and foremost are the very life of the incarnated subject whose experience has the wealth of an entire generation ruled by meanings and meanings which transcend life itself. One must understand that it is not aging itself that castrates the sentient being or the experiences of a body, but rather the stereotypes created socially about them.

It would be correct to consider from the lines that aging and being old is to accept life and often be afraid of the consequences of the transformation of the body. It is to build experiences and pass them on, allowing them to be re-signified by those who benefit from them.

To get old and to be old is to face falls, wrinkles and white hair with good or bad humour. Hearing oneself as an old man and fearing that it means something bad, because we are surrounded by pre-established taboos and concepts in a society that uses labels to control, qualify or disqualify someone.

We understand that their bodies are their sanctuaries, seen with love, fear and sadness as well. The love for the body that allows them to move and be independent, the fear of seeing them paralyze and the sadness of comparison with the other, with what is considered better.

The visions of the old being and aging intertwine with the conceptions that the interviewees have about their body in movement, which feels pleasure and perpetuates the continuity of life. It would not be possible to consider this without an openness to the world of the sensitive, to the world that dialogues with its conceptions and brings us such reflections.

Opening ourselves to the sensitive world, as we have already said, allowed us to come to an understanding of the lived world of the old being, in order to understand life as a cultural and natural process at the same time.

We apprehend the aging body as a subject inscribed in a certain space and time. In other words, the subject is temporal and marked by the space that it constitutes and by which it is

constituted. This subject was identified in the interviewees' speeches when they told us about their worlds.

The subject is also this phenomenological body, whose body is its presence in the world, expressing life through gesture, movement, language, weaving its senses and meanings.

The aging body is sensitive, endowed with capabilities. This is what they are able to see by allowing themselves to be considered old, in age, maturity, or in any other way that we consider to be old.

Understanding that body conception is not done in one, but in several, we can infer that, just as we say that aging can be perceived on the basis of its various nuances, social context, quality of life, environment, and genetics as a multiple factor from cultural to biological, so that we can also infer that the body here in this project faithfully follows this definition.

Its multiplicity can be developed and understood in the speeches by the older adults, and between smiles, ties and dissociations, between great conversations and few words we understand that the body and the body conception found in the 'Our Healthier City' project is dynamic, variable with its individuals and suggests that they continue to live and develop it daily, demonstrating that the aging process does not happen with other bodies and out of life, it happens here and now, until the next scene ends.

In addition, the conception of the body perceived while conducting this study has proven to be one of the considerable aspects to understand this aging phenomenon as a broader, existential process, since this body is also existential, intertwined with the biological and the cultural, and is a multiple body of meanings. The way each one looks and lives their body also tells us a lot about what they think of old age in them and how each one experiences it.

In this regard, we add questions about movement and work, which denote important and fundamental representations for the meanings of the aging body for the participants in our work. We also advance the notion of life as finite by the participants and the body as the essential condition of being. Other conceptions discussed to consider the establishment of effective relationships in the project space, in the contact with teachers and friends; the relationship of health and the care with which they present; of experience, of the meaning of life, and of pleasures and displeasures for the participants.

Thus, the aging body must first of all be seen as the possibility of the living, of the one who creates and experiences as much as in other phases of life. In this sense, we see the need to expand studies in the great area of Physical Education, so that the aging body is perceived within its limitations, but also within its possibilities.

## References

1. Beauvoir S. A velhice: a realidade incômoda. São Paulo, Difel, 1970.
2. Le Breton D. Adeus ao corpo. São Paulo, Papirus, 2007.
3. Le Breton D. A sociologia do corpo. Rio de Janeiro, Vozes, 2011.

4. Le Breton, D. Antropologia do corpo e modernidade. Rio de Janeiro, Vozes, 2012.
5. Merleau-Ponty M. Conversas-1948. São Paulo, Martins Fontes, 2004.
6. Merleau-Ponty M. Fenomenologia da percepção. São Paulo, Martins Fontes, 2006.
7. Mendes MIBS. Corpo e cultura de movimento: cenários epistêmicos e educativos. Curitiba, CRV, 2013.
8. Alves Junior ED. Aspectos sociodemográficos de um país que envelhece: o exemplo brasileiro. In: Alves Junior ED (Org). Envelhecimento e vida saudável. Rio de Janeiro, Apicuri; 2009a, p. 13-26.
9. Carvalho HL. A nova cidade nova: Petrópolis e Tirol, bairros em constante transformação. [Trabalho de conclusão de curso] - Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte; 2007.
10. Nóbrega TP. Corporeidade e educação física: do corpo objeto ao corpo sujeito. Natal, Edufrn, 2009.
11. Nóbrega TP. Uma fenomenologia do corpo. São Paulo, Livraria da Física, 2010.
12. Alves Júnior ED. Procurando superar a modelização de um modo de envelhecer. Movimento. 2004; 10(2): 57-71.
13. Alves Júnior ED. Exercitando o corpo para a saúde e o bom envelhecimento. In: Alves Junior ED (Org). Envelhecimento e vida saudável. Rio de Janeiro, Apicuri; 2009b, p. 119-40.
14. Kamper D. O trabalho como vida. São Paulo, Annablume, 1998.
15. Mendes MIBS, Nóbrega TP. Corpo, natureza e cultura: contribuições para a educação. Rev. Bras. Educ. 2004; (27): p. 125-37. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1413-24782004000300009>
16. Santin S. Perspectivas na visão do corpo. In: Educação física & esportes: perspectivas para o século XXI. São Paulo, Papirus; 1992. p. 51-70.
17. Carvalho RBC, Madruga VA. Envelhecimento e prática de atividade física: a influência do gênero. Motriz: J. Phys. Ed. 2011; 17(2): 328-37. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5016/1980-6574.2011v17n2p328>
18. Elias N. A solidão dos moribundos: seguimento de envelhecer e morrer. Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar, 2001.

## Corresponding author

Kaline Lígia Estevam de Carvalho Pessoa  
Physical Education Course, Ceará Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology, Limoeiro do Norte, Brazil. Mailing Address: Rua José Pequeno, 370. Núcleo Sabino Leite, São Miguel, Rio Grande do Norte, Brasil. CEP- 59920-000.  
Email: kaligia.tc@hotmail.com

Manuscript received on March 2, 2019

Manuscript accepted on March 14, 2019



Motriz. The Journal of Physical Education. UNESP. Rio Claro, SP, Brazil - eISSN: 1980-6574 – under a license Creative Commons - Version 4.0