

GENDER STEREOTYPES IN THE BODY REPRESENTATION OF CHILDREN

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Abstract: In this work, the phenomenon of objectification is addressed through the body representation of minors. The body image that boys and girls have is permeated by various gender stereotypes, causing a sexualized image of their bodies. The main objective of the work was to analyze the gender stereotypes of boys and girls between 10 and 12 years old from the municipality of Toluca Mexico present in their body representation. The Drawing-Observation-voice methodology was used, which allowed us to know the sexual stereotypes that infer in the sexualization of minors from an early age and that promote childhood violence.

Keywords: Body, objectification, childhood, gender stereotypes

INTRODUCTION

Sexual objectification is considered as the reduction of a person in their body or sexual parts. It consists of treating subjects as things that do not think and therefore can be used and discarded.

It is a fact in which the human being is transformed into something impersonal and is subjected to less than human pressures, therefore, he is considered as a thing subject to control, violence, dishonor, shame, humiliation, affront, etc. In this sense, reification consists of treating subjects as things that do not think and therefore can be used and discarded (MONDACA et al., 2015). This phenomenon is reflected in the representation that minors have of their bodies, representing them as muscular, metrosexual, strong, sexy, thin, made up, operated on, stylized and even stereotyped.

The body is a carrier of signs with a social and symbolic orientation that, thanks to it, allows us to position ourselves actively in social life. The study of the body demands the investigation of the symbolic codes with which a culture operates, the body codes and

the discursive codes. The body is the measure of all things. There is nothing in culture that has not passed through human corporeality, not even language itself (RICO, 1995).

Hence the importance of its study and recovery for this work. It is necessary to pay attention to the image of the body that is seen in today's society, since it legitimizes various social practices. The socially and historically constructed body, with its variations, functions, needs, structure, values, positions, and the way in which this image of the body has an impact on boys and girls today and unleashes a series of social phenomena that transgress and endanger crisis to this same body as: the sexual objectification of childhood. This study allows us to have a look at the identity, style, signs, languages, gestures, codes, structures, problems, knowledge, interests, ideologies, cultural stereotypes that impact childhood.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative study was carried out, which allowed an in-depth understanding of the meanings that boys and girls give to their bodies. The Drawing-observation-voice methodology of (HOFMANN, 2021) was used, which provides a space in which boys and girls can think and reflect on certain daily events, favoring a creative and calm atmosphere that stimulates memories in greater detail. In turn, creative expressions can correspond to different abilities and forms of expression of boys and girls. Ojeda (2014) argues that Drawing can be a way to study the symbolic representations of boys and girls in their daily lives; it is a way of knowing their "internal world." In turn, Rovetta (2017) mentions that these elucidation techniques have been used in various qualitative studies with boys and girls, especially in the Anglo-Saxon field, beginning to work in Latin America.

The inclusion criteria in the study were

the following: boys and girls between 10 and 12 years of age, attending a public primary school belonging to the municipality of Toluca México, who had the prior authorization and willingness of their guardians to participate in the study. In accordance with these inclusion criteria, the field work was carried out with a total of 10 participants, of which 5 girls and 5 boys to whom the Drawing-observation-voice workshop was applied, who made the representations of their own bodies through Drawings. This methodology consisted of the following phases:

Phase I: The conversation before drawing. In this phase, an approach was had with the minors, providing a space for interaction and dialogue where they were given the opportunity to share their experiences, suggestions of possible themes for the Drawing and choice of topics by the minors.

Phase II: The drawing development process. The boys and girls began to draw their body representations under the instruction that they must draw themselves as they would like to be physically. While the Drawing process was taking place, they were questioned about what they were drawing and the reason for the Drawing.

Phase III. The representation of the Drawings. Once they finished their Drawings, the boys and girls were asked to explain what they had drawn regarding their body representation.

RESULTS

In the Drawings made by the minors it was found that the majority would like to have a thin, tall, strong body. The following table 1 shows the stereotypes analyzed in the Drawings.

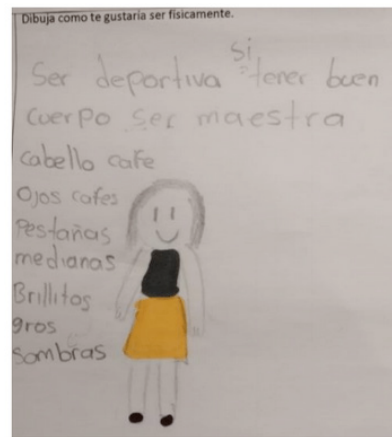


Figure 1: Body representation of a 10 year old girl

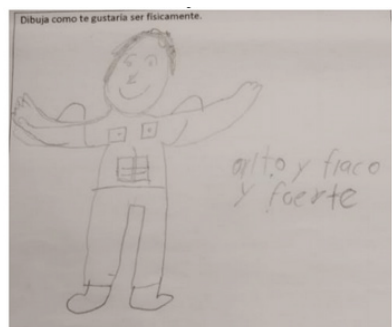


Figure 2: Body representation of an 11 year old child

ANALYSIS

As can be seen, in most body representations the stereotypes are observed: tall, thin, skinny, exercising, strong, suckling, athlete, painted hair, made-up face. According to Fernandez (2002), sexual stereotypes arise from concepts of femininity and masculinity. The stereotypes assigned to the female role have to do with delicacy, physical beauty, being physically attractive to men, being thin, tall, pretty, having an exercised body, while the stereotypes culturally assigned to the male gender have to do with with being strong, muscular, violent, burly, attractive, vigorous, aggressive and athletic.

These gender stereotypes are transmitted from an early age and children little by little begin to assume that the ideal body is the one that has been stereotyped by accepted

Drawings of children	Stereotypes in body representations	Drawings of girls	Stereotypes in body representations
Drawing 1	Very blown, short blue hair, body of a professional athlete.	Drawing 1	Tall, athletic, long hair, brown hair.
Drawing 2	Tall, skinny and strong	Drawing 2	Skinny, Tall, More exercise, long hair, brown eyes, red hair
Drawing 3	Skinny and tall, being a footballer.	Drawing 3	Athlete, have a good body, brown hair, brown eyes, with shine, gloss on the lips and shadows in the eyes.
Drawing 4	Black hair, tall and strong	Drawing 4	Painted hair, lips with lipstick, mascara, shadows and makeup
Drawing 5	Tall, strong and with money	Drawing 5	Pretty, kind of skinny, exercise more.

Table 1: Stereotypes present in the representations of boys and girls

Note: Own elaboration

sociocultural beliefs, causing its devaluation. Lopez (2019) states that these gender stereotypes cause minors to grow up with the idea that physical appearance is essential to achieve success, as well as precocious maturity, loss of experiences typical of their age, violating their fundamental rights of their age. Fuentes and Rodríguez (2021) mention that these stereotypes contribute to violence, promote sexist opinions, machismo, job discrimination, sexual harassment, undervaluation of work and achievements, because the man must be physically and emotionally strong and the woman attractive. and object of desire. All these practices are socialized from childhood.

In this sense, subjects are valued only for their body or physical appearance, this causes them to perceive themselves as sexual objects, that is, they sexually objectify themselves and conceive themselves as elements to give pleasure to the other, in short, objects (SÁEZ et al., 2012). When conceiving their own body as an object, it is possible that they intend to do with it what they please best; attack it, distort it, modify it, make up it, sell it, buy it, filter it, transgress it and an endless number of practices that alter it, often using the word “health” appropriating diets, exercise routines, chemicals, surgeries, implants among others, to maintain an idealized and stereotyped body with the idea that one wants to take care of it,

when many times what is dazzling is to bring to light the large number of stereotypes that have been assumed since childhood.

CONCLUSIONS

This study allowed us to have a look at the cultural stereotypes that impact children in the bodily representation they have of their bodies. The results show that minors from an early age possess a large number of sexual stereotypes and this is reflected in the representation they have of their bodies. This demonstrates the need for comprehensive sexuality training for minors and their families, since these stereotypes are often socialized from home. It is necessary to pay attention to the way in which minors are conceiving their bodies, what is the ideal body that has been socially accepted and the impact that this representation of the body may have on the health of the subjects. On many occasions, they can suffer from eating disorders, or minors may subject their bodies to surgeries or diets that affect their physical and emotional health, or desire a body that is not appropriate for their age in order to be accepted and valued socially.

LIMITATIONS

The main limitations that were presented in the work were access to more sessions with the participants, an example of this was the ethnographic work that was carried out previously which had a short duration due to the activities of the minors. The approach to the participants was often limited by their

school time, so interaction with them was only allowed in their free time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Researchers interested in continuing our research could focus on the study of the body from a social, historical and cultural perspective and childhood sexualization.

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