

ANTI-AGING BODY EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN THAI SOCIETY

PATCHAREE NIAMSRI 5137725 SHMS/D

Ph.D. (MEDICAL AND HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCES)

THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE: PIMPAWUN BOONMONGKON, Ph.D.,
PENCHAN SHERER, Ph.D., MULLIKA MUTTIKO, Ph.D.**ABSTRACT**

The objectives of this research were to study as follows: senses of body-self according to natural aging changes with increasing age; practices of anti-aging body managements and life experiences in diversity of women in Thai society. This research was a qualitative research conducted by accessing the data through the Ethnographic Approach using the Narrative Approach Methodology with Epistemology according to the basic philosophy of Feminism in accessing the knowledge and reality through the life experiences of women. Besides, in the narrative process, the reflection of experience between the researcher as a woman and the research participants known as intersubjectivity was present. In this study, the researcher selected the sample by purposive sampling from specific areas and also by snowball technique from the researcher's social network. The research participants in the sample group were women whose attributes belonged to the set-up criteria. Research ethics to protect the rights of the participants were considered throughout the study. The results of the study demonstrated that: 1. The sense of body- self of the female body which was the subjective experience of the body, both positive and negative, included the senses of body-self as reckless, inferiority complexes and worries, changes of the blood and circulatory system, undesirable appearances, reduction in passion and sexual attractiveness, as well as the medium of happiness and good-spirits, 2. The women's anti-aging practices to manage their body could be divided into 4 groups, which were: 1) the group that concentrated on self-care practice of exercising; 2) the group that preferred the consumption of products from popular culture rather than practice (by taking vitamins and supplements); 3) the group that focused on multiple anti-aging methods (the use of medical technologies as well as the consumption of products and services from popular culture; and 4) the group that preferred non-plastic surgery medicine technology. Women's anti-aging practices reflect self discipline without the control by the government's power. Instead, it is the power of knowledge from biomedicine as well as product advertisements. Women as agencies chose to manage their bodies and found the body-management methods which were appropriate for their life contexts in order to upgrade their statuses and to live in a better society. Middle-class women with higher economic and social statuses and greater purchasing power emphasized the importance of appearance management by linking youth with health and beauty, and they usually relied on the use of medical technologies which they thought were able to provide clearer and safer results as well as to reduce obstacles which prevented them from conducting their self-care practices. As for women who concentrated on self care or product consumption (by taking vitamins and supplements), they focused on internal body management for health rather than appearance. Lower middle-class women usually managed their bodies in a way that did not cost a lot of expense and tried to find the most appropriate way to fix and prevent health problems in the future. 3. As for the life experience of women from different life contexts, women's body-management to resist aging were necessary and important as an investment in the body in order to transform the self, to accumulated capital and to turn their body capital into other types of capital such as social and economic capital. This also included women's experiences with negotiation regarding the use of medical technologies, which was not able to resist aging as efficiently as self care from the inside since the latter could reflect external appearances. Policy recommendations are suggested to enhance quality of life of these middle age Thai women.

**KEY WORDS: BODY-SELF / BODY / ANTI-AGING / WOMEN EXPERIENCES / GENDER &
SEXUALITY / BIO-POWER / PRACTICES / AGENCY / BODY INVESTMENT /**

201 pages