

ANTHROPOLOGY OF BODY: THE CONCEPT ILLUSTRATED ON AN EXAMPLE OF EATING DISORDERS

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The aim of the article is to introduce the concept of anthropology of body. The authors suggest studying the human body at three structural levels, which correspond to the three main types of cultural elements: artefacts, norms and meanings. The authors argue that human body and embodiment is possible to analyse at the three structural levels: modification, disciplination and semiotization processes of human body. The authors apply this concept of anthropology of body on the study of eating disorders, which they understand as a cultural phenomenon. This application of the proposed concept is based on the findings obtained during the authors' own research.

Key words: anthropology of body, embodiment, thinness, eating disorders

INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION OF THE TOPIC

The human body is a basic instrument of every human being; there are no human activities that can be imagined without it. However for a long time, in European philosophical thought an idea prevailed that the mind and body are separated. The determining European scheme of thoughts, which has its roots in Antiquity (Fustel de Coulanges, 1877; Stavěl, 1971), worked with the dichotomy of body and soul, the variation of it is the binary opposition of nature and culture. The bipolarity of body and soul contributed to the long-term undervaluing of the scientific study of social and cultural dimensions of the body. In a simplified way, we can say researchers approached the body as a part of nature, and thus as an entity detached from culture. A good example of that paradigm is Cartesianism, which runs a distinct borderline between body and mind, and perceives the human body as a machine. In the 20th century, researchers began to develop efforts to study the body as an integral part of society and culture.

In this text, we focus on an anthropological approach to studying human embodiment and formulate our own concept of anthropology of body. The subject of interest

of anthropology of body is a study of the human body as a social and cultural phenomenon in time and space. This branch of anthropology studies the body in a wide spectrum of connections. Particularly it deals with ways how the body becomes a cultural and social phenomenon through body modifications, disciplination and semiotization of the body and its individual parts and functions.

PIONEERS OF STUDYING PHYSICALITY IN CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Three major turns in social sciences took place in the 20th century, namely a turn towards culture; language and body (see Burke, 2004). The turn of attention towards studying embodiment occurred in sociology, philosophy, psychology, and other social science disciplines. In cultural and social anthropology, a systematic interest in studying embodiment had begun slowly developing after the second half of the 20th century; later on, we will expand this topic further.

A French sociologist and ethnologist Marcel Mauss (1872–1950) became a pioneer of studying embodiment in sociology and ethnology. He observed that during socialisation and enculturation, people personalize their bodies in a specific way. For this phenomenon he used the term *habitus*. He described the complex of body habitus as techniques of the body, and he was convinced that the research should pay systematic attention to them. In the influential study *Les techniques du corps* (Techniques of the body, 1934), he formulated an opinion that “*the body is man’s first and most natural instrument. Or more accurately, not to speak of instruments, man’s first and most technical object, and at the same time technical means, is his body.*” (Mauss, 2007: 56). Mauss noticed that the techniques of the body reflect themselves in people’s everyday life in a determinative way. For example, he discovered the power of the ability of staying in a squatting position. In the frontline, he served with several Australians who, during breaks in the march through mud and water, could rest by sitting on their heels (squatting); while he had lost this ability in childhood. In his study based on his observations and knowledge he divided mankind into two groups “sitting” and “squatting” (Mauss, 2007: 62). He also described the differences between the French and the British military units’ marching styles and rhythms that were causing problems during the war when both units tried to move together. Mauss pointed to the fact that the techniques of the body change over time; he substantiated this by showing developmental transformations of swimming lessons, which occurred during his life. Based on the analyses he came to the conclusion that the techniques of the body vary not only from one culture to another, but also between sexes, and they also change with age (Mauss, 2007). Later, he suggested studying them with photography and slow motion films. The following ranges of the topics were supposed to become objectives of the research: childbirth, breastfeeding, locomotion, relaxing while being awake, running, swimming, and other (Mauss, 1969).

A French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) defined the well-known concept of *habitus* in many of his works (see Bourdieu, 1996, 1998, 2001). The *habitus* is a set of dispositions, inclinations and preconditions for behaviour, which the individual acquires during the early period of life and which predetermines patterns of thinking, perception, evaluation, and at the same time, it writes itself into the human body through ways of behaving, physical avocations, and own body treatment. He regarded *habitus*es

as products of social positions (Bourdieu, 1998); we acquire habitus based on conditions in which we live from childhood, and which predetermine what sets of patterns of distinctive practices, activities, perception, and evaluation we acquire (Bourdieu, 1984: 171). In the classical work *The Distinction*, he demonstrated the concept of habitus via analysis of social positions and lifestyles related to them. According to him people are not only the bearers of culture but most importantly culturally conditioned participants, who move in pre-given structured structures, the reproduction and changes of which they themselves contribute with their habituses as structuring structures.

Indications of interest in anthropological study of embodiment can be found in the work of an American cultural anthropologist Paul Radin (1883–1959), who devoted part of his work to analysing the concept of body and personality in Maori culture (Radin, 1927: chapter 14). The work of an ethnologist and missionary Maurice Leenhardt (1878–1954) is also worth mentioning. In the light of his ethnographic findings from New Caledonia, he reflected the dualism of soul and body as a western cultural idiom (Leenhardt, 1979). However, in neither of these two cases can a systematic interest in studying embodiment be found. From the viewpoint of genesis of anthropology of the body, the study called *Nacirema* by Horace Mitchell Miner (1921–1993) can be considered as the beginning of study of social and cultural dimension of body in anthropology. In the study, the author described rituals that are practised by members of the Nacirema tribe, who are obsessed with beauty of the human body, they profess a cult of youth. Members of the tribe consider the human body disgusting and inclining to weakness and illness, therefore, its beauty and health must be improved through ritual procedures in special temples (Miner, 1956: 503). Members of the tribe spend a large part of each day performing complicated and secret rituals that each of them practises in privacy usually without any witnesses. In temples there are placed special cases in which powerful tinctures, ointments, oils, pills and other things can be found. Together with them special artefacts are kept that are used during the application of these special preparations for maintaining or strengthening health and beauty. Every member of the tribe pays an increased attention to the mouth, because they believe that a healthy mouth represents the key to succeeding in all types of social interactions. This is the reason why they are so afraid of losing teeth, tooth decay or bleeding gums. They believe their friends would leave them because of bad and unhealthy teeth and they would also never be able to find love. Therefore during the daily rituals in temples, each Nacirema pays careful attention to their mouth. Obsession with visual impression of their body is typical for members of this tribe, and a dominant cultural pattern is physical beauty and youth. Actually, Miner in his study described American culture; he just spelled American backwards (see Miner, 1956). Beside Miner, in 1950s' there were other anthropologists that also focused on subtopics related to body and embodiment. For example, a British social anthropologist Edmund Leach (1910–1989) in his work *Magical Hair* (1958) carried out an analysis of hair from the viewpoint of social anthropology. Later, British anthropologist Christopher Hallpike (born 1938) reanalysed and published the aforementioned study and called it *Social Hair* (1969). In 1977, British social anthropologist Anthony Synnott (born 1940) reinterpreted works of both authors in his study called *Shame and Glory: Sociology of Hair* (1977). A French ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009) reflected on tattoos and body paintings observed among native groups of South America (Lévi-Strauss, 1961). Already in these early anthropological studies it is possible to differentiate focus on three different sociocultural processes related to body

and embodiment, namely modification of the body, its disciplination and semiotization.

Undoubtedly, the works of British social anthropologist Mary Douglas (1921–2007) were the most significant contribution for development of studying embodiment in anthropology. In comparison with Miner or Leach, her approach to body was systematically developed. Douglas in her works *Purity and Danger* (1966, quoted 2001) and *Natural Symbols* (1970) elaborated her own concept of the human body exploration. In the second aforementioned work, she differentiated the physical body from the social body. She understood society as a beyond-individual phenomenon, which predetermines the way in which the physical body will be perceived and physical processes experienced. Every culture assigns a meaning to body functions and parts, some of them are considered unclean or dangerous, other clean and desirable. The concept of the body, its functions and meanings assigned to body secretion are images of society and intensity with which it guards its borders. The body simply mediates information from the social system, of which it is an inseparable part, and it represents the field on which the social structure is projected, where the body itself is its image (Douglas, 1970, 1999, 2001).

ORIGIN OF ANTHROPOLOGY OF BODY

The ones, who used the term “anthropology of body”, for the very first time, were probably the organizers of a conference of the same name, which took place in 1975 on the initiative of the Association of Social Anthropologists. There were presentations devoted to dancing, expressions of emotions, health and illness, or patterns of the moves. According to Beck (1975), the conference led to the conclusion that anthropologists have to systematically collect data, which are related to the changes of physiological state. In addition to that, participants of the conference agreed on the fact that social and symbolical systems will become more intelligible, if the body is accepted as a basis for metaphors and meanings. Proceedings were edited two years later by British social anthropologist and ethnomusicologist John Anthony Randall Blacking (1928–1990). In the introduction to *The Anthropology of the Body* (1977) he expressed his opinions about the subject and the theoretical framework of the developing sub-discipline. Blacking did not intend to use the anthropology of body as an alternative term for the physical or biosocial anthropology. The objective of the anthropology of body should be cultural processes and products, which are representations and extensions of the body in variable contexts of social interactions (Blacking, 1977: 2). In the introduction, Blacking suggested the concept of anthropology of body, which however, did not have any followers. His idea was to connect perspectives of the physical and cultural anthropology. He considered the human body to be the product of the biological evolution, and that humans have to move, survive and reproduce themselves in a sociocultural context anywhere, all over the world. They also adapt to this sociocultural context by a variety of body dispositions, physiological states and cognitive abilities.

Since 1980's, an increasing interest for the study of embodiment in anthropology can be observed. The body and embodiment have become the subject of scientific interest of American cultural anthropologist Terence Turner (1935–2015). He is renowned for his study *The Social Skin* (1980). His analysis starts with the paraphrase of Rousseau's well-known saying: “Man is born naked but is everywhere in clothes” (Turner, 1980:

112). On the basis of studies of decorative practices of the South America tribe Kayapó, Turner came to the conclusion that in socialization processes, the body must subordinate itself to the social order. He is convinced that the body skin is a stage, where the “drama of socialization” takes place. He considers the skin as a border, where the society, social self and psychobiological individual get in touch. In the last decades, Thomas Csordas (born 1952), American cultural anthropologist, fundamentally contributed to the development of the anthropological study of the body and embodiment. His academic interests are focused on the area of medical anthropology and the anthropology of religion. He elaborated his scholarly interest in these topics in the paper *Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology* (1990), discussing the “paradigm of embodiment”. He is convinced that anthropologists should study the human body as a subject of culture; the human body is not an object. According to Csordas the starting point for the building of the “paradigm of embodiment” in anthropology is the concept of praxis and perception based on the approach of Pierre Bourdieu, or more precisely, French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961). Csordas tested the mentioned concepts during his study of the healing ritual and a cultural concept of self among the members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement (see Csordas, 1990). He later expanded his opinions about the anthropological studies of embodiment in the book *Embodiment and Experience* (1994), where he expressed the opinion, that no anthropology definition is based on an idea, that a culture could be embedded in the human body (embodiment) (Csordas, 1994: 6). It is worth noting his study *The Body's Career in Anthropology* (1999) where he provides one of the most complete reviews of the social sciences' literature aimed at the body and embodiment. Regrettably, Csordas did not formulate his own concept, or opinion about the direction which the anthropology of body should follow (see Csordas, 1999).

Although a turn to the body in the discourse of social sciences occurred, there were only a few attempts to establish the anthropology of body as an independent research area until the sixties. An entry named “anthropology of body” is not included even in recent anthropological synoptic publications, handbooks or encyclopaedias (Birx, 2005; Birx, 2010; Barnard & Spencer, 2010). The term itself occurs rather rarely in scholarly publications; apart from some exceptions, they cannot be understood as attempts to conceptually establish the sub-discipline. More likely these tendencies can be seen as attempts for mere naming a wide spectrum of theoretical and methodological approaches in studying the body and embodiment as sociocultural phenomenon (see e.g. Blacking, 1977; Jackson, 1983; Mascia, Lees, 2011). In the past twenty years, several books have been published; their authors made an attempt to elaborate and summarize recent results of anthropological researches aimed at the issue of the body and embodiment. The key studies are undoubtedly *The Body Social* (1993) by Anthony Synnott or *A Companion to the Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment* (2011) prepared for publication by Frances Mascia-Lees. Furthermore, in 1995 the editors of the prestigious *Journal of Cultural Anthropology* made a decision to devote the second issue to the topic of the embodiment. These and some other efforts may be signals of the growing importance of this anthropological research area.

THE CONCEPT OF ANTHROPOLOGY OF BODY

When reviewing the anthropological literature focused on the subject of the body and embodiment, it becomes clear that most studies deal primarily with four main topics:

(1) meanings attributed to the human body; (2) study of body processes; (3) representation of the body within a particular culture; (4) anthropological study of senses. At first, anthropologists analyse and interpret meanings attributed to the body and body parts. In general, this orientation is represented for example in the two-volume book *Cultural Encyclopaedia of the Body* (2008), compiled under the editorial supervision of Victoria Pitts-Taylor. The second orientation has become the research of the body processes. *Blood Magic* by Thomas Buckley and Alma Gottlieb (1988) could serve as a representative example of this area of interest, focusing on the intercultural analysis of menstruation. The first two thematic areas build upon anthropology as a comparative discipline. The third one follows the ethnographic basis of anthropology. It actually focuses on the representation of the body within a particular culture. The typical example of this approach is the work of Anne Becker *Body, Self, and Society* (1995), where, based on her research conducted in the village Nahigatoka, she deals with the Fijian concept of the body (Becker, 1995). The fourth thematic area gave rise to a relatively independent field of anthropology, which is today called the anthropology of senses, and currently belongs to a respected area of anthropological study. Its origins and development can be traced back to the 70's of the 20th century. The term anthropology of senses was coined by American historian Roy Sydney Porter (1946–2002) in the preface to the English edition of *Le Mias et la Jonquille* (1982) by French historian Alain Corbin (born 1936). There are renowned specialists of that field: Corbin, Constance Classen (born 1956), David Howes (born 1957) and Paul Stoller (born 1947) who are currently the leading figures in the field of the anthropology of senses. For example, Paul Stoller published the renowned work *The Taste of Ethnographic Things* (1989). He addressed a critique to the style of ethnographic writing which is, in fact, tasteless. He is convinced that anthropologists lost their senses, because anthropologists usually do not write about the smells, the noises, the tastes, which they experienced in the field (Classen, 1993; Stoller, 1989; Synnott, 1993). The subject of interest of these and other anthropologists is the study of the senses and sensory perception as a biocultural phenomenon with an emphasis on cultural construction of senses, and sensory perceptions in time and space.

From an anthropological point of view and in an attempt to study the human body as a social and cultural phenomenon we can work within the perspective of the three various structural levels: body as an artefact (modification), as a norm (disciplination) and as an idea (semiotization). In accordance with the anthropological theory of culture, we can consider the human body to be a distinctive type of an artefact, an object which originates from goal-directed human activity. Therefore the anthropology of body engages itself within the first, structural level, in modification processes of a human body and its results. The human body can also be understood as an embodiment of social and cultural norms. Individuals are encouraged to manage their bodies and bodily functions so that they become eligible for social interactions. Within the second structural level, anthropology of the body examines the processes of disciplining the body. The human body, its parts and processes bears cultural meanings. If we adjust the famous quote (Geertz, 1973, quoted 2000), we can say that the human body is literally suspended in a web of meanings woven by people. Within the third structural level, anthropology deals with the process of the semiotic concept and its results. In other words, we can study the human body within these three structural levels, using the processes in which the human body is modified, disciplined, and conceived from a semiotic perspective (see Soukup & Balcerová, 2011). Each of these areas can be

illustrated via numerous examples from various cultures. We do so selectively in the following sections. It is noteworthy that the following part of the article focuses on issues of the phenomenon of eating disorders (specifically anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa). We consider these mentioned eating disorders as a kind of ethno-psychosis found in western countries. We use this point of view as a way of thinking of anthropology of body, as we have described this field of study above.

BODY MODIFICATIONS

Generally, the area of body modifications includes all bodily alterations that help to change the natural state of the human body to a body, which is desired by the culture where one lives. Apart from the weight loss and related treatments, it also includes plastic surgery, makeup, teeth whitening and many other treatments. The popularity of this topic within the contemporary society is evident; it can be seen through the increase of eating disorders, the development of plastic surgery, various diets, studios, that specialize themselves in the modification and decoration of the human body.

As we mentioned above, we understand eating disorders as a cultural phenomenon (ethno-psychosis). The significant increase in cases of eating disorders encourages exploring the connections between their origin and cultural and social development. Following it can hardly be considered a completely random phenomenon that eating disorders are widespread especially in Western culture, the more so looking here at its emphasis on individuality, efficiency, thin body cult, unrealistic expectations of perfection, youth, and beauty (Novák, 2010). Nevertheless, it is necessary to define eating disorders a little more specifically. Eating disorders are a group of serious conditions in which a person is so preoccupied with food and weight that they cannot focus on anything else. The main types of eating disorders are anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. Anorexia nervosa is characterized by an individual's belief they are overweight even when the person is in reality dangerously thin as a result of extreme food restriction to the point of self-starvation and excessive weight loss. Bulimia nervosa is a disorder characterized by binge eating followed by purging or other way to eliminate the food from the body. Eating disorders can be life threatening. Most people with eating disorders are females, yet males can also be at risk.

The body modifications, which people undergo suffering from anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa, intend to achieve the slimmest appearance possible.¹ The promotion of practices, that guarantee the desired ideal, is nowadays supported even via popular social networks and specialized blogs. They inherently reflect the current social issues, where weight loss comes first. Young girls, women, and even men, share pictures and comments aimed at weight loss and beauty on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest. Such trends are passed on through virtual space to the real life. They are extremely dangerous and often associated with eating disorders. Internet

1 It should be noted that not only eating disorders relate with the topic of modification of the human body. In this field, here should be mentioned body dysmorphic disorders as well. Moreover, these two diagnoses sometimes can be easily confused. For example in case a normal-weight person is afraid of being fat, and does not comply with diagnostic criteria for an eating disorder, then body dysmorphic disorder might be diagnosed. Body dysmorphic disorder is a body-image disorder distinguished by tenacious and insistent preoccupations with an nonexistent or slight defect in one's appearance. Body dysmorphic disorders are assigned to obsessive-compulsive and related disorders, whilst eating disorders have their own category of mental diseases (DSM 5) (Composite authors, 2013).

users refer to photos, stories, and advice on how to become as skinny as possible as “*Thinspiration* (combining the words *thin* and *inspiration*)”. If we type in browser a keyword “*thinspiration*”, or “*thinspo*”, we can find a lot of photos and images, with a goal to inspire and encourage the weight loss (Borzekowski et al., 2010). Furthermore, there also exist the so-called “Thin Commandments”, which contain 10 commandments of “*pro-ana (pro-anorexia)*” principles, and quotes or mottos in the spirit of *thinspiration* (Tong et al., 2013).

Various mottos and quotes related to the weight loss often appear on personal blogs of Internet users. For example, one of the favourite slogans is “*I’d rather be dead than fat*”, or, “*Hunger hurts, but starving works*” (Motta, 2010). We can see such motivational phrases mainly in communities of female bloggers, so-called “Pro-ana (or pro-mia [pro-bulimia])”. Ill girls personify mental anorexia as their friend, naming it “Ana (in the case of bulimia Mia)”. They publish their opinions online; stating why it is better not to eat, why food is bad, and anorexia is good. They do not perceive their disorders as an issue, which is the reason why they strive to share their experiences. Virtual space helps them to seek the support and approval of their behaviour (Tong et al., 2013). They also get sufficient support², which reinforces the feeling that people around them are jealous and envious of their lean physiques. They redefine the disease as a lifestyle, whose devotees excel above ordinary people, especially in the sense of refined ability to control their bodies.³

As noted above, plastic surgery becomes one of the most dynamically evolving sectors in Western societies. It is not used only for the reconstruction of body parts, which has been damaged by illness or injury, but it has also been increasingly used for aesthetic reasons. According to recent findings, it is men who are more likely to undergo aesthetic facial surgery, especially the rhinoplasty and wrinkle smoothing. Women choose various adjustments, not only facial procedures, but also various modifications of the whole body – especially breast augmentation or adjustment. According to the latest statistics published by the United States, interest in aesthetic plastic surgery is steadily growing (The American Society for Aesthetic Surgery 2014, see Synnott 1993).

At the end of each structural level, we would like to briefly introduce the partial results of our own research. The research was realized as an experimental part of the dissertation thesis written by author of the presented study (Dvořáková, 2015). This research focused on specifics features of body image of people with anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. The aim of the research was to ascertain the mental representation of the body of people with eating disorders. For this purpose, two special drawing research techniques were used. In the first instance, a group of ten adult women with eating disorders and a control group of ten adult women were asked to outline their life sized bodies on a piece of paper. Then the author traced their real bodies on the same piece of paper. This investigation shows that subjects in both groups perceive themselves larger than they actually are. The group of eating disordered women showed the greatest differences in the areas of shoulders, waist, hips and thighs (similarly as for differences between Barbie doll and examined symbol of normality in

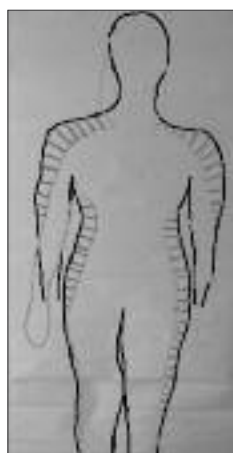
2 The study realized by OPTENET in 2008 confirmed 469% increase of pro-ana and pro-mia websites in 2006 a 2007.

3 As the opposite extreme we can mention fat activism or fat acceptance movement. The aim of this social movement is to change prejudice against fat in social attitudes.

USA, cf. Urla & Swedlund, 2007 below and Table 1), thus, in the body parts which are naturally formed differently in each sex. In the research group, masculine shape without signs of femininity seems to be the typical one (i.e. without hip shaping, with broad shoulders and robust legs, see fig. 1). The control group showed the most significant difference in the shoulder part and nobody drew a slimmer figure than they actually had (see fig. 2).

Table 1: Measurements of the real and estimated body parts in research and control group

	chest (real)	chest (estimated)	waist (real)	waist (estimated)	hips (real)	hips (estimated)	shoulders (real)	shoulders (estimated)
anorexia nervosa	33,5 ¹	40,3	29,8	39,8	39	51,5	38,3	43,3
bulimia nervosa	36,1	49,4	34	43,3	32	38	35,4	45,1
control group	36,2	39,5	31,6	33,6	40,6	44,4	35,1	45,3



*Fig. 1: research group, woman 35 yrs
(black line by the subject of the research,
grey line by the researcher)*



*Fig. 2: control group, woman, 45 yrs
(black line by the subject of the
research, grey line by the researcher)*

DISCIPLINING THE HUMAN BODY

In general, human beings subordinate their bodies and bodily functions to social norms and cultural expectations. To discipline the body means, for example, to master socially acceptable ways of satisfying the basic physiological needs, specific body treatment in institutions, emotional management, and various types of activities, that lead to the gaining of such a kind of body, that is viewed as acceptable, desirable, or even perfect in the particular culture. It is possible to demonstrate it by a thin-ideal of beauty. While in the past the thinness was seen as a sign of a poverty and illness, nowadays it is viewed as such primarily in the Third World countries. In contrast, in the West countries the slim figure became the symbol of a high social status and a healthy lifestyle. Anorexia nervosa can be regarded as one of the major phenomena

related to the disciplining of the body, which pervades the Western socio-cultural area. Anorexia nervosa is a serious, potentially life-threatening eating disorder, which has got psychological, social, and biological causes and consequences, and is highly affected by social and cultural influences (Krach, 2002: 11; Garner, Garfinkel, Schwartz & Thompson, 1980; Keel & Klump, 2003; Miller & Pumariega, 2001).

The basic characteristic of anorexia nervosa is pathological striving for the thinnest body possible, which is related to the various ways of disciplining the body. These include for example the effort to eat the smallest portions possible, reducing the diet and eat foods with low energy density, eating as slowly as possible, replacing regular plates and cutlery with smaller dessert dishes and cutlery, slicing food into small pieces, eating alone, and working out excessively. The change in beauty ideal towards the slim body has been documented over twenty years in a study by David E. Garner, Paul E. Garfinkel, Donald Schwartz, and Michael Thompson (1980). The authors have analysed the bodies of women featured on Playboy double-page spreads, along with the participants of Miss America. They show a considerable move toward the idealization of the slim body. Furthermore, they also assert, that in comparison with the past, there has been a significant increase of the number of articles on diets in the six major women's magazines. The authors discuss the implications of these facts, which may also include the increase of the cases of anorexia nervosa. The disciplining of the body is also reflected in the ways, in which eating disorders are treated, as well as in the case of other diseases. Individuals are placed in specialized institutions, such as hospitals and psychiatric clinics, to be treated there.

The topic of institutions, power, and bodies has been elaborated by the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984). He shows in his ground-breaking analysis how the diverse mechanisms of power were shaped in European history. From the standpoint of our topic, his concept of biopolitics is the most beneficial. He means by that the rationality of the modern power over the population, which is achieved by supervision and discipline. The supervision over the population, which is applied with the aspiration to improve well-being, is established through the defining of the social standards, the control of sexuality and reproduction, the focus on normality, and the elimination of diseases and anomalies. According to Foucault current medicine, surgery, psychiatry, sexology, etc., are based on these principles, which can be understood as manifestations of the biopolitics. The discipline is a pressure that various specialized institutions exert to force the body to obedience. Human beings will ultimately accept these principles, and then supervise their normality on their own, just in the same way as a prisoner is guarded in Panopticon (Foucault, 1977). The discipline and supervision over oneself can be, in our opinion, seen via the experience of the application of reduction diets. The nineties, along with the fall of communism in Czechia and the opening of borders, brought a new phenomenon in the form of 'proven' diets. At the start of the early nineties, every second women and every fourth men answered positively to the question, if they were ever on a weight-loss diet (Fialová, 2006: 56). Sport became one of the ways to reduce body fat. "According to Stern magazine, more than 77% of German women consider doing sports to be a way to lose weight." (Fialová, 2006: 56-57). The body dissatisfaction is becoming a pervasive phenomenon that is being spread among ever-younger individuals. For example, it was found that older boys are more satisfied with their own bodies than girls. 70% of boys stated satisfaction with their own bodies, while 57% of girls wanted to be thinner. They want to lose weight, and for this purpose they don't eat some of the daily

meals (Štajnochrová, 2009). A total of 22% of the Czech population is on a weight-loss diet of some sort (Česká průmyslová zdravotní pojišťovna, 2014).

The second part of the research mentioned above (Dvořáková, 2015) clearly proved the drawings of people with eating disorders having repeating elements. Using another drawing technique the author investigated connections between the images people with eating disorders have of themselves in three different stages of their lives: each participant depicts how she thought she looked like five years ago, how she looks like now and finally what her prediction is regarding her appearance in five years. This technique was invented specially for this research. The subjects participating in the research were 42 women with eating disorders between 18 and 39 years. The drawings were divided into two groups: drawn by women with anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. Not only drawings were collected but, verbal comments and explanations about them as well. People with both eating disorders depict themselves thinner in the future than in the present (see fig. 3). Moreover, drawn clothes proved to be an interesting phenomenon. Changes in clothes preferences remarkably repeated in the drawings. Skirts and dresses are used mostly on drawings representing the period in five years, specifically; among the group of people with bulimia nervosa 50% of research participants and 73 % in the group of people with anorexia nervosa. In contrast, in the present trousers are preferred (see fig. 4). Secondary sex characteristics (breasts, hips) appear sporadically in the drawings (see fig. 5).



Fig. 3: bulimia nervosa, woman, 23 yrs



Fig. 4: anorexia nervosa, woman, 18 yrs

SEMIOTIZATION OF BODY

A human body as such carries no meanings. The process of semiotization happens through the existence of culture, which has an effect on the human body, its parts, and its processes. It is also the culture, through which it gains specific meanings, that people adopt along with the concepts of body normality, health, and the ideal appearance, ever since their early childhood via family environment, the behaviour of one's peers, and media content. Opinions about normality and an ideal appearance differ in time, they are culturally specific, and may be interculturally diverse in a significant way, yet in the case of complex societies we can observe trends and dominant cultural patterns. In the case of Western societies, we internalise the preference for the slim body from the early childhood. A study *Measuring Up to Barbie* (1995, quoted 2007), published by American anthropologists Jacqueline Urla (born 1956) and Alan Swedlund (born

1943), demonstrates this process in an interesting way. They investigated the phenomenon of the Barbie doll. The first goal was to observe the social and cultural climate within which Barbie was made. The second goal was to show the doll's anthropometric measurements. The research has shown that Barbie, even at the time of its birth (1959), represented "*an emblem of the aspirations of prosperity, domestic containment, and rigid gender roles that were to characterize the burgeoning post-war consumer economy and its image of the American Dream*" (Urla & Swedlund, 2007: 146). Barbie has become the embodiment of femininity and a "happy life". As an icon of middle class values, the doll has got its own clothes, house, furniture, a friend, and a job. The authors discuss anthropometric measurements of the doll in the framework of the development of anthropometry as a science in the United States. The origin of an idea of "normal" body proportions is associated with Dublin's table of standard height and weight, which was based on statistical measurements and very soon became the norm that people tried to reach. The Barbie doll body is a manifestation of utter self-discipline and high sexual attractiveness, yet it lacks any attributes of motherhood or fertility. For example, waist circumference and hip breadth of Barbie doll is dramatically smaller than in case of statue of Norma (see Urla & Swedlund, 2007, table 1, p. 128).⁴ Still, its symbolic power has led many healthy American women to rethink their bodies and subsequently undergo plastic surgery.

Urla and Swedlund found out that Barbie's anthropometric measurements were all undervalued when compared to statistics of US Army recruits. In contrast, measurements of Barbie's male counterpart Ken revealed no significant differences from the Army recruits' statistics. In conclusion, we can assert that the Barbie doll, which became a beauty ideal, has an anorexic body (see see Urla & Swedlund, 2007: 128). The authors therefore argued that Barbie has significantly contributed to the "tyranny of slenderness", as the American writer Kim Chernin (born 1940) named the phenomenon (see Urla & Swedlund, 2007). We have been exposed to these pressures ever since an early age. Harrison(2000) asserts that the breeding ground for eating disorders is already rooted in the pre-school age, when children are more prone to negatively stereotype people with higher levels of body fat while having a preference for thinness. If we consider, for instance, the aforementioned Barbie doll, it has been found out that the design of this toy actually causes five to eight-year old girls to become dissatisfied with their own bodies. The researchers exposed 162 girls to the influence of Barbie dolls, Emma⁵, or left them without any external influence. The girls exposed to Barbie showed lower self-esteem and a desire to be thinner than the girls from the other two groups. It was proven that such an early confrontation of a child with a Barbie doll might cause damage to the *body image* of young girls, which may very well lead to eating disorders and a pathological pursuit of a weight reduction (Dittmar, Ive & Halliwell, 2009).

There are experiments and efforts designed in order to demonstrate the subjectivity of evaluation of beauty. As an example the forensic artist Gil Zamora conducted a social experiment⁶ for a cosmetic company, in which he showed the subjectivity of women's perception of their own look and beauty. He demonstrated the difference between the

4 Two statues were created according to the average body proportions of a male and a female American in 1945.

5 Emma doll matches U.S. size 16.

6 This was not a scientific experiment in strict sense of the term; a result is only short movie.

perception of a woman's own look and the perception of her among people around her in the campaign and a short film called *Real Beauty Sketches*. Before the start of a drawing session, the female participants were asked to spend a short time with a stranger without knowing why they do so. Then the examined person was seated behind a curtain, and the painter drew her according to her own description. Then the painter made a second portrait, which he drew following the description of the person with whom the woman had met shortly before the experiment. Most of the portraits created by the description of the stranger showed a more beautiful and accurate depiction of the women than the portrait drawn following their own descriptions. As it is possible to see, cosmetic companies often make money on distorted self-images of their customers, who feel, that there is a necessity to modify their appearance with the help of cosmetic products. It should be noted that this trend does not concern only women anymore. Even though as women age they typically lose their sexual status in contrast to men, men are also expected to take care of their bodies with the help of cosmetics, designer clothes, or not exclusively, with the help of the aesthetic surgery (Shakespeare, 1999).

Generally, being overweight has negative connotations, and slim and lean bodies are regarded positively in many Western societies, although this kind of attitude supports pathological patterns of behaviour and thinking. In the era of abundance, which is currently present in postmodern Euro-American culture, sobriety or even asceticism in food consumption becomes admired. However, back in the times lasting from the third to the sixth century, Europe suffered from depopulation due to famine, plague epidemics, and bloody wars. Descriptions of starving people from the times of the Greek-Gothic war show malnutrition, with the same symptoms as we can see now in individuals with mental anorexia: grey and cracked skin; raw-boned people who are dying of exhaustion, unable to eat as their digestive tract ceased to function after a long period of starvation (Montanari, 2006). Personal qualities are often evaluated and assessed on the basis of body appearance in folk psychology. Bigger women tend to be associated with a low intelligence, starting rows, and laziness. On the other hand, the persons with a muscular and lean body are identified as having strong will, obtained through rejecting temptations, and through the commendable determination to shape his/her body in the gym. This results in self-esteem overlapping with *body image* (Fox-Kales, 2011). The paradox is that a person with an eating disorder, at the stage of chronic disease, often gets a disability pension. The body of the patient passes the very thin line of being able to live in a mainstream society, and becomes its unable/disabled member; although his/her body may very well meet the essence of the beauty ideal.

According to our research not only people with eating disorders depict themselves thinner in the future than in the present, but they believe that the weight loss will bring them happiness as well. That is apparent from the verbal expressions that were collected in conjunction of drawings. The mentioned sense of happiness corresponds well with the repeated representation of a smile on the figures in future (see fig. 5).

Another interesting area of the examination revealed the representation of hair. There was a distinct repeating trend in hairstyles changing in time. From five years ago to the present day 55% of subjects with bulimia nervosa and 73% of subjects with anorexia nervosa have changed hairstyle in each drawing. From now until the five years after, the change of hairstyle occurred in 60% of subjects with bulimia nervosa and in 63% subjects with anorexia nervosa. Hair style changes are usually associated with the rites of transition, which used to be related to the change of social status (see

Schouten & McAlexander, 1989). Hair symbolism was revealed especially by British social anthropologist Edmund Leach in his studies (1958). In the first case he was testing the psychoanalytic interpretation of the symbolism of hair on ethnographic data. Leach was convinced that psychoanalysis and anthropology arrive at the same conclusions, because they consider human hair and beard as the epitome of sexuality. Long hair and beard represent unrestrained and uncontrolled sexuality, while trimming or shaving means symbolic castration. Leach's study *Magical Hair* was re-analysed and published by British anthropologist Christopher Hallpike (1969). Hallpike criticizes mainly the hypothesis linking hair with male genitalia and head shaving with castration. He shows on ethnographic material that women's hair has its undeniable place in traditional rituals as well. He argues that shortening of hair can represent living in a particular disciplinary regime in the society. Thus, according to him, haircutting corresponds to social control. For example, soldiers have shaved heads because they live in a regime of strict discipline and their freedom is limited. On the other hand, long hair symbolizes life out of the society or less accessibility of social control. So the results of the research are possible to interpret in the light of findings published by Hallpike. The subjects' long hair is a sign of their exclusion from normal life in a society.⁷



Fig. 5: *bulimia nervosa*, woman, 18 yrs

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the paper was to contribute to the development of anthropology of body as a branch of anthropology. In the article we introduced our own concept of the field. As we stated above anthropology of body is focused on multiple dimensions of the human body, which is the first and most natural instrument of man, as Mauss argued. In this article we propose a concept of anthropology of body. Anthropology can examine the body on three structural levels, which correspond to the three main types of cultural elements: artefacts (modification of the body), norms (disciplination of the body) and meanings (semiotization of the body). In other words, we can study the human body within these three structural levels, using the processes in

⁷ There are more findings of the research regarding hair. The authors will publish it separately, there is not enough space to discuss them in this article.

which the human body is modified, disciplined, and conceived from a semiotic perspective. Our intention was to illustrate our concept on the example of eating disorders. We understand these types of disorders as cultural phenomenon relating to the human body, so it is possible to analyse it in the framework our concept of anthropology of the body. We used findings of our own research for the purpose of applying the concept of anthropology of body on the topic of eating disorders. The findings of the research support the idea that it is possible to study human body and embodiment on the three distinct, but in fact interrelated and inseparable, structural levels – modification, disciplination and semiotization of the body.

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