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▶ **To cite this version:**

Mathilde Plard, Anne Quéniart, Charpentier Michèle. Body in motion: experience of walking amongst elders immigrant women in Montréal. XVIII ISA World Congress of Sociology: "Facing an unequal world: challenges for global sociology", International Sociological Association, Jul 2014, Yokohama, Japan. halshs-01513094

HAL Id: halshs-01513094
https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01513094

Submitted on 24 Apr 2017

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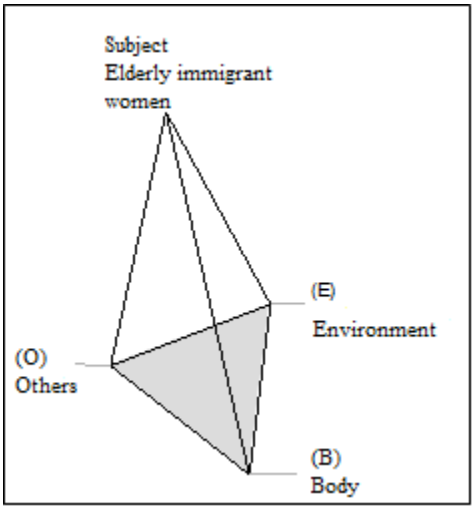
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Body in motion: experience of walking amongst elders immigrant women in Montréal

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XVIIIe ISA World Congress of Sociology, Yokohama, Japan, 13-19 July 20142541
Research Committees "Sociology of Aging" (RC11): Aging and the Body in the Everyday Life

SUMMARY
As part of an ongoing study on "older immigrant women and their relationship to aging" conducted in Montreal, the experiences of aging in regards to the self and body are particularly questioned. The data presented in this paper are from 15 focus groups, 90 women from different backgrounds and cultural communities with diverse migration routes. From this data, the lives of these immigrant women are presented through a common practice: walking. A comparative analysis of transcripts especially has helped to understand the importance granted to movement. Notably walking attests to the unanimous commitment these women reveal; that of remaining autonomous and independent. This is the result found in all focus groups. Indeed, whatever the person's age, autonomy, cultural background, religious practices, their migratory route or family status, walking is a way to experience and live their environment - their lived space. Beyond the vision that describes aging in terms of limitations and disabilities, we mobilize the prism of movement to show how these women adjust their body to stay as much as possible consistent with their environment. We highlight in this section if getting older and having physical limitations may represent obstacles in every day movement, however not necessarily in a definitive way. Furthermore, we will show what this attitude towards walking reveals about the person practicing it. Travel and daily movements, for example, enables social relations.

INTRODUCTION
Relational dynamics of the subject: "to the self, to others and to the environment"



This paper presents a discussion based on data from a research that explores the experience of aging in older immigrant women in Montreal. It aims to show how the practice of walking daily is an activity in which subjects encountered build relationships at different levels. These connections are illustrated in the figure (see opposite) and link the "subject" to the self and body (B), to others (O) and to the environment (E). The articulation of these three relational dynamics stemming from the subject also supports the theoretical notion of plasticity of these relationships in order to reach a balance. Thus, the socioplasty evoked allows for the sharing of the subject's creative dimensions that mobilizes different relationships according to biographical experiences. In this way, the experiences of aging of older immigrant women met in Montreal reveal how these relationships are arranged. Walking is also a relevant entry to grasp how a spatial practice is a tool of expression and identity construction (Kusenbach, 2003).

The framework of the study offers, firstly, general elements in order to situate the results (1). The results are then presented in the form of relational typologies in order to understand the meaning behind walking for women interviewed through the different relationships expressed in regards to their body, to others and to the environment (2). The discussion reflects on how the practice of walking ultimately shapes their meaning. This last part suggests that these "relationships" stem from the "meaning" (3). The conclusion addresses three important steps in the process of relationship building and opens onto a general notion of plasticity.

1. Context of the study

This is a presentation of some of the results of a qualitative research aimed to analyze the personal, social and family-oriented experiences of aging. This research[1] was conducted in Montreal, Quebec (Canada) with 83 women aged 65 years and older. Here, I present some of the findings concerning migration patterns of women and the changes and adjustments that immigration brings to their lives.

1.1. An accelerated aging of the population of Quebec

In 2011, 15.9% of Quebec's population is 65 years old and over.
(Gouvernement du Québec, 2012. *Les aînés du Québec. Quelques données récentes*)

1.2. Methodology

Qualitative research through interviews

18 focus groups each comprising 3-6 elderly women (**n** = **83**) of the same ethno-cultural background and speaking the same language, but having diverse characteristics such as marital status, education level, income and migration routes.

Individual interviews (ongoing analysis) (**n** = 15)

Sample

Our sample included elderly immigrant women with diverse variables such as: age, ethno-cultural background (Arab, African, Haitian, Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, Romanian, etc.); their migration routes or timing of migration (during youth, adulthood or retirement) and immigration status. We formed 18 focus groups; each consisted of 3-6 women sharing the same ethno-cultural background and speaking the same language, but have varied characteristics in terms of marital status, education, income and migration patterns. The 83 elders which we will present are from three continents and a variety of countries: Ex-Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia (10), Romania (6), Mexico (2), Guatemala (1), El Salvador (3), 5 Colombia (5), Algeria (3), Egypt (6), Lebanon (4), China (9), Japan (9), Congo (5) , Haiti (10), Jamaica (3) and Portugal (7).

2. RESULTS. "Walking in order to shape relationships"

It is possible to structure into three categories the types of relationships that walking establishes. For most of the women interviewed, discussing and defining their experiences of aging implies identifying what reduces or increases that capacity. What increases or decreases physical and functional capacities (2.1.), what increases or decreases cognitive, social and interpersonal skills (2.2.) or what increases or decreases the capacity to experience their own living space (2.3.).

[1] Research on the development of partnerships funded by the Social Science Research Council of Canada (Charpentier 2011-2014).

2.1. Walking in order to feel the relationships towards the self, towards the body

It seems as though aging is first felt, physically, through the body. The analysis of transcripts shows how women relate the experience of aging to their own changing body. For them it is "feeling their body", to set themselves "in motion" and "to be mobile and independent". These elements reveal the anguish of the dependence particularly present in Western societies.

In a social and cultural context in which the experience of aging is associated with a vision articulating dependence VS autonomy, it is conceivable to ask how the subjects encountered construct themselves. The practice of walking daily is an activity that first reveals the experience of aging by physically making the subject feel that the "body is changing" and then presented as a tool to act upon the self and "keep fit".

Feeling your body age: sensations of an aging body:

*"Until I was 65, I did not feel like an old person inside, I felt like a young person. But at 65**, I was operated on my knees** and since that time, I **started**... It was like going down the stairs, we stop at every step, then **decrease**, and decrease"* (Portuguese, p.25).

*"Personally, I **started to feel that I was getting old when I had back pains**. When I had back pains I could not walk so I said, "it starts"* (Congolese, p.11).

Walking, an activity to stay fit and a normative imperative:

*"Even if my health is not good **I walk anyway**. Today I moved. Someone called me at home and told me: "C. **you should not stay at home**", "No, God talks to me, he told me not to stay at home" I **have to walk**; I have to move, move a lot"* (Haitian, p.10).

2.2. Walking towards others

Walking as a meeting tool: destinations of choice in order to get to others. The common itinerary usage of "to" or "by" certain places reveals clearly structured strategies that develop social ties (church, coffee, etc.).

*Destinations where women meet friend(s), relatives, acquaintances, etc.: "Then, I want to go out; I cannot walk much because my legs do not let me. But **I like to go to Mass**, **I always get to talk to some ladies**, they also have the same problems as me, when I get home, I am relieved but the days are long ... "(*Portuguese, p.32).

Walking with others: "We walk together. I always walk with my husband "(Ex-Yugoslavian, p.9).

2.3. Walking to identify and develop a sense of space

Just as it is possible to connect the experience of aging with the body, the relationship to space runs parallel to this dialectic. Therefore, we must grasp what limits or increases women's practices in their local area - direct geographical environment, lived space.

Specific habitual routes, neighborhood practices, strategies in relation to the weather, etc.: In regards to snow, "it is slippery, I'm afraid of falling and hurting my wrist again. I have an arm that has no strength, if I fall and hurt my other arm, I could do nothing" (Chinese, p.39).

In regards to walking for one's own self, one can note the importance of temporality and spatiality. Indeed, there is seasonality in the practice of this activity. It is not the same in the snow in winter than it is in summer. The itineraries vary in shape and duration.

The discussion initiated by Bernard Duperrein is relevant to this discussion as it brings up the notion of how it is possible to "make sense of space" (Duperrein, 2013).

3 DISCUSSION "bonds born through meaning"

3.1. Walking activates processes of plural domestication

Indeed, "the domestication of the world is Man's primary concern in society. The purpose of this process is none other than the production of meanings by humans to the space they are in. In this way, individuals domesticating their environment establish the ontological foundations of their world, making it livable and practical. The meaning given and produced provides points of references (orthonormal) necessary for individual practices. The methods for making sense of space and time are also directly related to the social, political, economic and cultural environment in which each individual evolves. Also, forms of domestication results from both the subject that produces them, and the situation in which the individual is a part of" (Plard, 2013).

3.2. Walking and the experience of aging: daily updates of the self

Objective: To remain consistent with one's environment in terms of one's physical, functional, psychological capacities, etc. In other words, it is to adjust the terms of interactions in terms of one's own aging experience.

The personal and intimate relationship "of" and "in" the aging body expresses the dialectic between body and identity. In this way, we find the dynamics that bind the women interviewed in both the process of change and continuity in everyday life. Indeed, we observed interactions between transformations /variations (important transitioning elements towards the end of life) and constancy /stability /sustainability of self-identity (which is not simply what the signs of time passing leave as traces on the body nor what society - and others in general - determine as stigmas.

In other words, it is to find a balance in the constantly changing body as expressed by this Chinese woman in regards to her relationship to her appearance. *"**Every day, there is a slight difference**. It is worse than before. Our 'sifu' (Buddhist masters) that tell us about the lessons given by the Buddha told us that our appearance changes every day, but we do not see it "*(Chinese, p.30).

The aim is to deal with one's aging body without forgetting its identity, the heart that does not change - or "narrative identity" according to Paul Ricoeur. *"I'm not old! [Speaking loudly] I am still very young! Especially do not say I'm old [laughing]. **The person is old, but the heart is not old** [expression: meaning that the heart remains young despite appearances]* "(Chinese, p.30).

3.3. Walking, a metaphysical activity: translation of a vital impulse Practice to embody, feel and live

"Aging and walking: counting on movement"

Walking - vitality (practice of one's lived space, "moving forward", *"If I could walk, it would be ideal, **I feel as though I have a creative power in me!"*** (Romanian p.2).

Continuing walking while recognizing the aging process: *"I like to walk, **I feel like I have a lot of vitality.** I walk every day. I do not use transportation because I like to walk. Yes, I look in the mirror and I know I'm older, I realize that my body is not the same every year ... "(*Colombian, p.5).

"Aging is like making a stop during the long race we call youth. Aging is like stopping a little bit and starting to walk more slowly in the path of life "(Colombian, p.2).

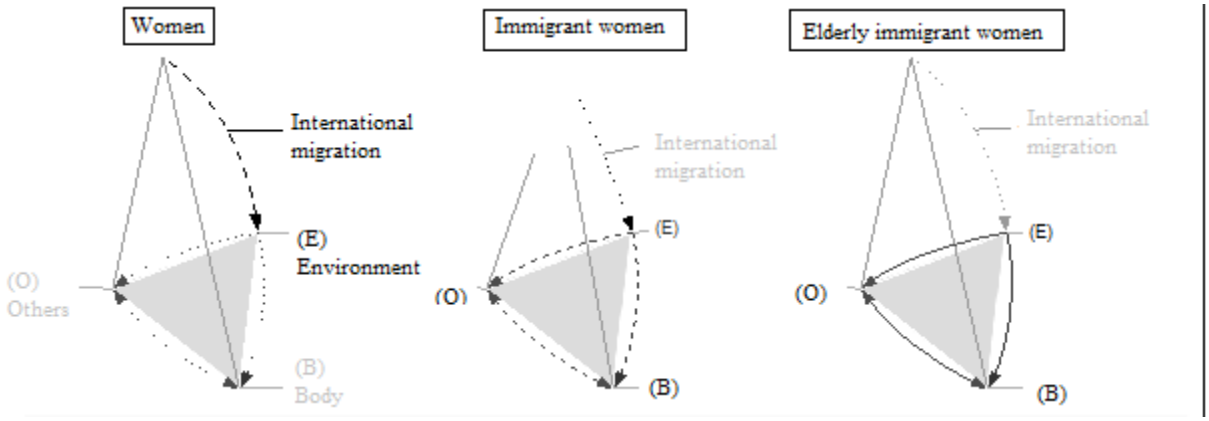
CONCLUSION:

Walking, a tool to create and rebuild relationships

In order to further this presentation, there should be complementary studies that explore more in detail the evolution of the relationship that women have with themselves, others and their environment. It would be possible to explore how spatial practices of the environment and walking in particular change over time. What were their spatial and social practices at the time of their arrival in Montreal? Were these practices more developed at that time because of their young age and broader functional capabilities? Or on the contrary, is their lived space, as of today- while aging- more developed, better built and more organized than it was a decade ago since their functional capacities are now reduced due to their advanced age? Does knowledge of the environment and the relationships built during a lifetime help stabilize a lived space set in motion by international migration?

In view of life events experienced, trajectories and life histories, subjects would develop and accumulate a capacity to cope - coping capacities (Schröder-Butterfill & Marianti, 2006) - variables. This idea is also supported by a dynamic vision of biographical trajectories developed by Andrew Delano Abbott in the book *Time matters: on theory and method* (Abbott, 2001).

On the figure below you can read the different steps through which people who have migrated pass in order to "domesticate" a new environment, Montreal, in our study. Walking is one tool amongst others for building relationships that migration has initially broken.



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