**Beauty has no age limit**

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By The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)February 10, 2007

 Female baby boomers who once chanted The Who refrain "hope I die before I get old" appear to be singing a different tune -- and it sounds a lot like The Rolling Stones' Time is on My Side.

So suggests a new global survey of 1,450 women aged 50 to 64 in which 86 per cent of respondents said they take pride in sharing their real age when asked. One in eight feel they're "not the same 50-year-old (their) mother was," while nearly 60 per cent say they're not concerned about getting older.

Fully three-quarters of respondents believe sexual activity is what separates them from previous generations of mature women, with 40 per cent professing to enjoy sex more now than they did in their youth. The number climbs to 49 per cent for Canadians.

Yet the Dove-commissioned survey released today reveals the average woman believes society's "ideal age of beauty" is 32 and reports having felt her most attractive at age 34.

Participating analysts Dr. Robert Butler of the International Longevity Center in New York, Nancy Etcoff of Harvard University and Susie Orbach of the London School of Economics connect this finding to the under-representation of females over 50 in the media, observing that women seem to be "aging to invisibility." Similarly, nearly 60 per cent of survey respondents believe if magazines were refl ective of the population, people would think women over 50 don't exist.

Early reactions to a Dove "pro-age" campaign depicting tastefully photographed women over 50 in the nude suggest perceptions of what constitutes "old age" will be hard to change.

Entertainment Tonight used the headline "naked seniors" for its recent segment on the ads, Oprah enthused on her show that a "grandmother" was taking it off, and the Federal Communications Commission banned the U.S. broadcast of a pro-age TV ad that revealed only slightly more skin than you'd see in a soap commercial.

"Look at Ronald Reagan -- people said he was handsome at 75," says Susan McDaniel, a professor of sociology at the University of Windsor.

"We've got feminism, we've got some equality here, let's give up on this business of women being over the hill at 40, or even 25 in some trades." Indeed, 58 per cent of women worldwide -- and 68 per cent in Canada -- agree with the statement: "While men over 50 are viewed as distinguished, women over 50 are viewed as over the hill or past their prime."

Athena Uslander, one of the women appearing in the new ads, sees her participation in the campaign as a way of putting a human face -- not to mention fi gure -- on age-based marginalization.

"Hopefully this will give women who are heavier, or a different colour or age or ethnicity, the courage to come out and say, 'I am beautiful,' " says Uslander, a 52-year-old baker from Chicago.

"Anti-aging just sounds so combative.

I mean, to think that we can beat nature and not have wrinkles -- how Dorian Gray!" "The message is that beauty has no age limit," Dove's Allison Leung says of the campaign. "Showing (mature women) in all their glory proves to the world you don't have to be 20 to be gorgeous or to reveal your body The ultimate statement of confi dence in who you are is not to cover it up."

The survey was conducted by StrategyOne and Mori International in nine countries in June 2006 and is considered accurate within 2.6 percentage points.

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