

## MEDICALIZED BODY PRACTICES: DIAGNOSING VIDA SIMPLES MAGAZINE

*PRÁTICAS CORPORAIS MEDICALIZANTES: DIAGNOSTICANDO A REVISTA  
VIDA SIMPLES*

*PRÁCTICAS CORPORALES MEDICALIZANTES: DIAGNOSTICANDO A LA  
REVISTA VIDA SIMPLE*

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**Keywords:**

Life style.  
Health behavior.  
Journal article.

**Abstract:** This research aimed at analyzing body practices described in printed editions of Vida Simples magazine in 2014. Fourteen editions were analyzed under the very concepts of medicalization and life policies, based on their place in Cultural Studies. The magazines analyzed were found to include body practices with meanings linked to a healthy simple life, permeated by biomedical discourses. Those practices were also discussed under the notion of vitality policies, but that notion could not be directly linked to the practices described in the magazine.

**Palavras chave:**

Estilo de vida.  
Comportamento  
saúdável.  
Artigo de revista.

**Resumo:** Esta pesquisa teve como objetivo analisar as práticas corporais descritas nas edições impressas da revista Vida Simples ao longo de 2014. Foram analisadas quatorze edições desta revista a partir dos conceitos de medicalização e de políticas da própria vida, desde suas inserções no campo dos Estudos Culturais. Constatou-se que as revistas analisadas apresentam as práticas corporais com significados vinculados a uma vida simples saudável, permeadas por discursos de ordem biomédica. Discutiram-se, também, essas práticas a partir da noção de políticas da vitalidade e percebeu-se, no entanto, que tal noção não pôde ser diretamente vinculada às práticas descritas na revista.

**Palabras clave:**

Estilo de vida.  
Comportamiento  
saludable.  
Artículo de revista.

**Resumen:** Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar las prácticas corporales descritas en las ediciones impresas de la revista Vida Simple durante el año 2014. Catorce ediciones de la revista se analizaron desde los conceptos de la medicalización y de políticas de la propia vida, en su inserción en el campo de los Estudios Culturales. Se encontró que las revistas analizadas presentan las prácticas corporales con significados vinculados a una vida simple y saludable, impregnados por los discursos biomédicos. Se discuten, también, estas prácticas a partir de la noción de políticas de la vitalidad y se observó, sin embargo, que tal noción no puede ser directamente vinculada a las prácticas descritas en la revista..

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## 1 HAVING A SIMPLE LIFE BY BUYING SIMPLE LIFE

It may seem inconsistent, but humans' simple life is more complex than we may think. As trivial as it may seem – or they suggest it to be – simple life is a broad and highly subjective topic, because thinking, living or understanding the practice and the term *simple life* makes us think of a particular style of existence. Subjects who adhere to such way of being and relating choose a way of life that differs from the urban life found in our century. Issues related to the choice of this way of life can be linked to any number of aspects, such as spirituality, religion, health, quality of life, family, friends, the environment, leisure, finance, consumption and others, which are widely pointed out by Editora Abril's *Vida Simples* (Portuguese for Simple Life) magazine, aimed at discussing these aspects to better guide its readers in their daily choices. Those who chose it voluntarily give up what they see as superfluous and essentially embrace their choices in the pursuit of a “hassle-free”, life, which entails efforts and deprivation in pursuit of this ideal.

It might be nonsensical to think that this ideal of life based on choices that favor minimalist aspects of personal satisfaction, involving understanding and engagement in the process of living in the “simplest” way possible could be directly connected to the medicalized issues of life. However, when we understand medicalization as a process in which men's way of life is appropriated by medicine, interfering with construction of concepts, rules, norms, morals, customs and social behavior (FOUCAULT, 1988, 1997b, GAUDENZI; ORTEGA 2012, CAPONI, 2009), we realize that subjects' understanding of and conditioning to the simple life model are influenced by medicalized thinking, to the extent that the intervention in bodies and lives of individuals who adhere to that lifestyle is mediated mainly by a certain line of thought and a biomedical matrix.

*Vida Simples*, a monthly publication of Editora Abril, materializes today's processes related to that lifestyle that favors simplicity. The magazine emphasizes topics related to aspects that can make daily life simpler, discarding the excesses and aspects of consumption that mediate daily lives in large urban centers, presenting information about the benefits of body practices established and proven mainly by scientific discourse and relating them to health.

According to Editora Abril's own website, the magazine aims to bring “information relevant to readers who are looking for a more balanced routine” by featuring stories about ways of dwelling, interpersonal relations, culture and trends (PUBLIABRIL, 2014).<sup>1</sup> Topics and articles featured by *Vida Simples* were analyzed in this work based on the concepts of medicalization (FOUCAULT, 1988, 1997b, GAUDENZI; ORTEGA, 2012, CAPONI, 2009) and vitality policies as referred to by Rose (2013). In a globalized world, in which knowledge and information speed are valued, there are issues relevant to interpretation and identification of everyday topics, which are brought out, publicized and disseminated by that magazine, such as health benefits through alternative body practices.

With a view to initial theoretical and conceptual delimitation of the central object of this study, namely, body practices, we indicate the way in which we understand them and how we operate with that term in this study. Analyzing the different operational processes of body

<sup>1</sup> In March 2014, when we submitted our research project, we used the information provided by Editora Abril's website; however, as of June 2015, that website was unavailable because *Vida Simples* had been bought by Editora Caras and was presented to readers on its new website at: <http://vidasimples.uol.com.br/>. The magazine's description by Editora Caras can be found at: [https://www.facebook.com/revistavidasimples/info/?tab=page\\_info](https://www.facebook.com/revistavidasimples/info/?tab=page_info) page.

practices in *Vida Simples*, we learned their meaning from a perspective grounded in cultural events. We understand that body practices carry distinct cultural expressions – from those related to values, meanings and significances linked to the subjects who practice and produce them to the contents present in their manifestations (CARVALHO, 2006). They can be practiced individually or by different social groups in an “institutionalized, organized and systematic, but also spontaneous, unstructured and sporadic manner” (GONZÁLEZ, 2015, p. 136).

Note that the assumption of the notion of body practices occurs “from the human and social sciences, the arts, philosophy and popular knowledge, without disregarding biological and natural sciences” (WARSCHAUER *et al.*, 2007, p. 3). According to Lazzarotti Filho *et al.* (2010), the field of Physical Education can be considered as the one who uses the term body practices more often, especially in studies based on the view of Human Sciences, referring to the term as a series of activities that are not limited to their biological nature, thus making them a concept that can be operationalized (LAZZAROTTI FILHO *et al.*, 2010).

Moreover, the discussion of body practices as medicalizing has been targeted by theoretical and empirical efforts in the field of Physical Education. For instance, Gonçalves (2015) discussed the ways in which Physical Education professionals in Porto Alegre, RS, in their different working contexts, conceived the physical and body practices that they applied as medicalizing. One of the consequences of that discussion referred to the debate of the medicalizing garb that physical exercise acquired when prescribed to users of the health systems where the professionals investigated worked. Meanwhile, in the opinion of those professionals, one way to overcome that biologicist model established between exercise and health with a medicalizing bias was to propose body practices (LAZZAROTTI FILHO *et al.*, 2010). However, it is possible to infer, even when replacing exercise with body practices, that the medicalizing logic in which the prescriptions made by professionals studied were based had not been covered, since both exercise and body practices were proposed under a biomedical rationale, which was the prevailing framework where an activity might or might not be considered medicalized. In any case, this note is intended to challenge the ways in which body practices have been conceived as alternatives to issues of physical activity or exercise – the latter being traditionally part of medicalization – and to which extent such replacement of physical exercises with body practices will become mere rhetoric if it is not discussed within the broaden context of the rationale that underpin those actions.<sup>2</sup>

The activities cited by the magazine address elements that are not restricted to the logic of physical activity as a promoter of health through energy expenditure, going beyond that biologicist paradigm since they involve aspects of social and cultural order as they describe the proposed practices. Thus, in most cases the activities present in *Vida Simples* highlight elements related to the intrinsic social aspects of those practices, corroborating what Silva and Damiani (2005) say when referring to body practices as promoters of self-care and more socialization. Examples such as the practice of tango as

2 Note that a number of theoretical and empirical efforts have been made in favor of a discussion that promotes reflection and change about the relationship between body and health practices, especially in Physical Education (FRAGA; CARVALHO; GOMES, 2013; GOMES; FRAGA; CARVALHO, 2015). However, although body practices may be based on perspectives aimed at social and cultural manifestations of individuals and communities, especially sustained in the field of human sciences, the assumption and prescription of those practices to replace the traditional established model of physical activities or exercise and health end up being mere rhetoric, because the purpose of their prescription and therefore the reason that sustains it is grounded on the same rationale that prescribes physical activity and exercise for health – the biomedical rationale. Thus, the prescription of body practices as a way to replace physical activities in the health field may take away their operating power focused on socio-cultural issues, also instilling them in medicalized practices. We will resume this discussion through analysis of excerpts of the empirical material presented here.

a “therapeutic tool with healing effects that favors the feeling of belonging to the group” (SAIBA..., 2014, p. 15) or the testimony of a cyclist on the importance of a partnership “to share experiences” while doing a world tour (RECORDAR..., 2014, p. 23) share the definitions of body practices assumed herein.

Therefore, understanding that the magazine materializes everyday cultural issues allowed us to analyze it as a current tool for discussing new changes, particularly those related to bodies and life. Thus, from the readings made and the concepts adopted for discussion, we understand the need to identify and analyze the body practices presented, publicized and described by and on *Vida Simples* in its 2014 issues, and understand how the body changes after practices we can define as medicalizing, which are directly or indirectly related to how we become subjects today. These cultural developments have countless effects ranging from a new kind of knowledge about human beings and their body practices to everyday activities in our leisure, health and entertainment activities.

Starting from such notes and contemporary facts about body practices, medicalization and vitality policies, and initially approaching the issue based on some reflections about the place of body changes in society presented in *Vida Simples*, we now discuss the methodology used in this investigation.

This investigation is based on the field of Cultural Studies. It is document research based on *Vida Simples* magazine’s 2014 issues. According to Corazza (2002, p. 355), investigations in this field of studies employ “pragmatic, strategic and self-reflective” analysis, since they intend to examine several areas of culture. The body practices presented by *Vida Simples* were analyzed based on the notion of medicalization of bodies and vitality policies. Magazine editions were taken as cultural artifacts, that is, as documents of a particular culture that materializes meanings and significances relevant to the society in which it operates, conveying specific ways of understanding the world (ANDRADE, 2002).

The corpus of analysis includes 2014 editions. It should be noted that *Vida Simples* is published monthly but sometimes there are two editions in the same month. The editions have the following structure and sections: *Cover; Eating; Share; Share/Amazing People; Share/Transformation; Share/Having Coffee With; Experience; Manual; On A Second Thought*. Some data were available on Editora Abril’s website based on CVI – Circulation Verification Institute – in May 2014, which shows circulation of 74,478 copies, on an average of 85,196 readers (PUBLIABRIL, 2014).

The magazine publishes and conveys certain types of representations and models on bodies and health to its readers, suggesting that they can be reached through the body practices presented there. However, according to Publiabril (2014), the magazine provides tips and suggests ways to make life less complicated, making it an essential partner of the simplified daily life, since it brings readers stories about ways of living (homes), relating interpersonally, developing culture and identifying trends.

The following analyses were based on this methodological approach and conceptual choices about this subject matter. Below we present and discuss two axes of analysis, namely a) medicalizing practices and b) vitality issues present in *Vida Simples*.

## 2 MEDICALIZING BODY PRACTICES

Nowadays, it is often said that physical activities and even body practices improve and enhance individuals' living conditions and health, since they improve aspects of their quality of life, especially those related to physical and body skills (NAHAS, 2012). A new development field was created for the population along with these arguments: the pursuit of awareness and more information about health care, including increased body movement and changes in lifestyle – the so-called pursuit of an active life style. However, such recurrences have also triggered a discussion about the effects of those practices with regard to the control of individuals' bodies and actions, resulting in their manipulation and regulation, linked to disease-health processes and the development of new medical-sanitary models of care with body and health (FRAGA, 2006 FRAGA; WACHS, 2007).

Therefore, the body is an instrument for social investment of biomedical nature and precepts, and also a subject of dispute through economic and political modes operating on it, which take shape in the field of medicine and spread to other social areas and especially to health. This economic and political operating field on the body is called somatocracy by Foucault (1988, 1997a, 1997b): forms, strategies, body control and regulatory actions in favor of health. Thus, through many changes, the body became an object of medical intervention, overflowing to other areas and fields of activity which, based on biomedical language, expanded and extended it to a specific field (FOUCAULT, 1988 1997a, 1997b). It is known that there is no convergence between theoreticians as to the definition of a univocal notion that covers this whole process of control over the body in favor of health based on a biomedical rationale, but we can somehow suggest, along with other authors, the term medicalization (FOUCAULT, 1988, 1997b; GAUDENZI; ORTEGA, 2012, CAPONI, 2009).

Even though many theorists disagree on the use of the term *medicalization*, the concept originated in the 1960s and covers a number of normative labels that render beings of dissonant and deviant behaviors hostages of biomedical appropriation, language and rationalization. Such biomedical language and rationalization include new nosology where scientific and biological patterns of “normalcy” try to understand, regulate, describe, discriminate, cover, co-opt, rule, subjectify bodies and health practices in favor of a social economy, therefore legitimating medical intervention in that group (FOUCAULT, 1988; 1997b, GAUDENZI; ORTEGA, 2012, CAPONI, 2009).

In the case of the magazine analyzed here, the practices suggested seem to be included in that domain of medicalizing thinking. An example of that process is the “Having coffee with” session in the November 2014 edition entitled “Tango as therapy”, which interviewed researcher and psychologist Ignacio Lavallo Cobo (the creator of psycho-tango). The medicalization processes of that therapeutic modality are clear in his writings, since he considers that it is “able to appease health problems through that typical Argentine dance” (SAIBA..., 2014, p. 15). The work is done in workshops, hospitals, public places or in his Buenos Aires office, where his couch was replaced by a dance hall. The therapy is used to alleviate the symptoms of various pathologies and is treated as a therapeutic novelty, although that body practice – dancing – has been reported for hundreds of years. Thus, dance takes on meanings related to possible improvements of the – physiological – body, thus leading us to miss the centrality of social and affective senses that have surrounded the practice since its early days.

Moreover, a simple act of running, which has been practiced by man for thousands of years, also assumes a medicalizing garb in the magazine, in that subjects are recommended to be aware of the most effective ways of doing that activity with a view to biological body enhancements, referenced on calories, heart rate, etc. The article “Running in the city”, published in the September 2014 edition, could only portray the experience and sensations obtained by the author’s practice of running in the streets of a São Paulo district, emphasizing, for instance, cultural issues involved in his run, sensations related to leisure, or other developments. However, in his words, the practice assumes a medical-sanitary explanation in that it only emphasizes biological variants related to health, such as the amount of calories burnt, the correct mechanics of the running movement, the best footwear for the practice, among others.

In the aforementioned cases, problems are “defined in medical terms, described based on medical language, understood from a medical viewpoint or ‘treated’ with a medical intervention” (CONRAD, 2007 as cited by SANTOS, 2014, p. 13). Thus, medicalization of bodies and life is carried out not only by doctors, although it is possible to say that social control is better exercised by them, since they have high power of authority historically legitimated by society, defining behaviors, beings and situations after biomedical logical and rationale. Thus, orientations, prescriptions and referrals that originally appear in the medical field are extended to other fields of knowledge and health areas, even crossing the disciplinary boundaries of those sciences or scientific practices and materializing in non-scientific fields, such as the case of the magazine analyzed here. These biomedical guidelines are passed on to countless generations through the phenomenon here called medicalization, which broadens the field and the role of traditional medicine, also extending, for example, to the field of *Vida Simples* magazine, based on the words of different experts.

While discourses and orientations used to be restricted to doctors as authorities legitimated by their historical power over bodies, we can say that other authorities are now gaining space, whether in the field of health or in that of so-called complementary therapies. For example, looking at our analyses of *Vida Simples* 2014 editions, we can highlight a number of health experts: nutritionists, osteopaths, psychologists, physical educators, health researchers in universities, therapists, etc. Furthermore, one has to take into account authorities appearing in the magazine but who are not part of the so-called traditional medicine and who, even being included on a smaller scale, sometimes assist traditional medicine, sometimes oppose it. They – who have low credibility and are doubted by not belonging to the field of science and traditional health – are masters of yoga, meditation, ecology, and other non-traditional fields of health.

Although the discussion about the process of medicalizing the lives of individuals may have gained ground in the middle of last century, the concept has now been used in numerous areas of discussion. When pointing out medicalized practices within school processes, Santos (2014) refers to medicalization as the processes by which non-medical problems (social, cultural, political and economic, for example) are defined and treated as medical problems, thus establishing new pathologies. These processes are commonly understood as diseases and disorders, which gradually increases the medicalization process,

[...] such as the emergence of ‘new’ deviations from ‘normal’ life and the consequent transformation of behavior previously considered immoral, sinful or criminal (treated with social control measures) into medical problems (alcoholism, smoking, mental disorders, sexual dysfunction, menopause, sexual abuse, male sexual health, homosexuality, transsexuality, etc.) (SANTOS, 2014, p. 27).

Thus, while it is possible to transform immoral behavior in diseases, it is also possible to prevent physical illness or deviant behavior through medicalizing practices such as those suggested by *Vida Simples*, when treating body practices as activities beneficial to humans, using biomedical language and transforming them into medicalizing practices.

As an example, in the June 2014 edition, the story entitled “Floating therapy” describes the experience of floating in a dark tank that prevents external sensory stimuli (sound proof). The tank is filled with 700 liters of water (at the average human body temperature of 35.5°C) with shallow depth of 25 cm and dilution of 350 kilograms of medicinal salt. People can float there without any effort, which promises to take the individual to high levels of relaxation and well-being. In addition to benefits such as the state of resting and intense relaxation, the therapy promises to provide a sense of well-being and strengthen the immune system by releasing endorphins into the body, since one hour of immersion is equivalent to four-six hours of deep sleep. At least three initial sessions are recommended. In the words of the researcher, the “therapy helps improve insomnia, anxiety, depression, heart disease, stress, emotional trauma, spinal alignment problems, among other benefits”, since relaxation promotes a number of physiological changes (AGRADECER..., 2014, p. 16).

Based on the principle that medicalization means considering and treating something that can be absolutely normal and common in the life of a human being as a health-related and medical problem, it is possible to conclude that both psycho-tango – in the case mentioned of the psychotherapy that uses it – and floating therapy as recently mentioned can be understood as everyday practices that assume biomedical language in order to achieve more legitimacy in their developments. Thus, when medical science appropriates individuals’ lives and bodies, human experiences may be considered as problems, deviations or pathologies and result in homogenizing modes for human beings to locate themselves and others in the world.

This process by which men’s way of life is appropriated by medicine interferes in the construction of concepts, hygiene rules, moral standards, prescribed customs (sexual, eating, home) and social behaviors. Therefore, the social body, in turn, undergoes political intervention (FOUCAULT, 1988, 1997b, GAUDENZI; ORTEGA, 2012, CAPONI, 2009). Problems of different natures are presented as “diseases”, “disorders” that evade the major political, social, cultural and emotional issues that affect people’s lives, turning non-medical issues into medical problems. Therefore, collective issues are taken as individual ones while social and political problems are seen as biological matters. In the meantime, examples of the process of medicalizing life include hyperactivity, learning difficulties, sleep, infertility, alcoholism, birth, death, menopause, eating behaviors, reproduction, premenstrual syndrome, andropause, erectile dysfunction, among others. It is in this political space on the body that body practices and complementary therapies end up taking up space in achieving a simple life.

### 3 VITALITY POLICIES AND “DE-OPTIMIZATIONS” OF BODY PRACTICES

With processes of social transformation in recent decades being mediated by scientific advances in several areas, especially in sciences focused on life-related technology, views of being and the world have also changed. Thinking and human existence cross a path potentiated by the scientific, in which the tone of the process lies not only in the fact that we live longer (as a typically modern promise), but rather in an attempt to live longer and better, a tireless and

relentless pursuit of maximum optimization of health, life and body (SUSIN; SANTOS, 2014, RIBEIRO, 2003, ROSE, 2013).

Rose (2013) states that, in this context, the medicalization process has had an even deeper effect on us, changing us and making us into what we would like to be in an even more latent form. The author reflects on and discusses life policies, and proposes to update the concepts of biopower and biopolitics proposed in the works of Foucault (1988; 1997b), arguing that policies on life developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries addressed by Foucault were defined more as health policies to understand and regulate the rates and figures of births and deaths, diseases and epidemics, sanitation and water distribution, and other factors that made up the vital capacity of the population in major European cities. Advancing in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, those policies have gained impulses from life increases through the improvement of the breed, hazards control, management of families, and understanding of population characteristics through eminently biological notions.

However, to Rose (2013), life policies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century operate in other areas, at various levels, through processes that are different from those of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Twenty-first century life policies seek elements, factors, data, rates that are different from earlier ones. They are not defined “by extremes of disease and health or focused on eliminating pathologies to protect the nation’s destiny”; those policies are rather designed and recombined after the increase in our ability to control, manage, repair and modulate distinct vital skills that human beings can have, taking them as manipulable living creatures (ROSE, 2013, p. 3). These processes, capabilities, skills, strategies, knowledges and drives are called by Rose (2013) the policies of “life itself”. History shows that for centuries medicine has sought to treat what it considered abnormalities. But today, what can be said, called or characterized as normal is also open to change after biomedical modifications. This entire process includes a new molecular understanding of minds and bodies, and new techniques for manipulating basic life processes at molecular, cellular, and especially genetic levels. Life policy itself offers an indispensable analysis of recent developments in life sciences and biomedicine, which have led to widespread politicizing of medicine, human life and biotechnology. Avoiding the exaggeration typical of popular science and pessimism of most social sciences, Rose (2013) analyzes contemporary molecular biopolitics by examining developments around the genome, neuroscience, pharmacology and psychopharmacology, and the ways in which they have affected racial politics, crime control and psychiatry. Rose (2013) also analyzes the transformation of biomedicine based on the practice of healing and enhancing life itself as a tool for its own rule.

As regards the magazine under analysis here, it is possible to point out that, as mentioned above, while it operates under the logic of medicalization of the body practices it features, with regard to the vitality policies highlighted by Rose (2013), *Vida Simples* arguably presents a process, if not contradictory, at least more distant from vitality policies. This is because, while the process discussed by Rose (2013) shows the human condition based on living longer and better, as the incessant search for the “plus” or the “something else” to optimize life and body, actually enhancing it, some of the magazine’s articles precisely point out the opposite, emphasizing the search for neutrality of life, for what is minimalist, for a “zero” state, including the decision to live really simply and, we would say, in terms of “negativization” of “positivization” of the optimization of life. However, it is possible to question if such “negativization” would not be, on the other hand, looking precisely to extend some “positivization” of life, in this case towards optimization through minimalist processes.

Take, for instance, the July 2014 edition of the magazine, which refers to meditation, or even its September edition, which includes a story on medical ecology, and even the January

edition about the teachings of one nutrologist on eating processes. Both cases refer to a way of living that rules out the characteristics of exalted and enhanced life, although they also have in common the characteristics that lead people to seek those activities, namely, better quality of life or a way to extend life by improving its process. However, this extension or improved quality of life is not based on management principles of body optimizations; it emphasizes only the balance of life as a kind of search for homeostasis. While that balance is not directly grounded on body optimization, but rather on a decrease in body optimization capabilities for the benefit of a kind of life saving, it can point towards an increase of life to the extent that deceleration of the body could lead to life improvement.

In July, the article entitled “The first Meditation” depicted important moments by observing the flow of thoughts and self-discovery. The lesson portrayed in the story was given free of charge by a public servant who had practiced meditation for over ten years. His practice, he said, can bring peace and knowledge, facilitating harmonization and synchrony with the environment and oneself (PENSE... 2014, p. 16). “Eating lesson”, in turn, published in the same edition, depicted a reporter who goes to a complementary medicine clinic where elements of traditional medicine are combined with practices of homeopathy, acupuncture, nutrology and behavioral medicine. This therapy enhances individuals’ eating awareness in order to improve body functioning, sleep and disposition (PENSE..., 2014).

On the other hand, the article about medical ecology states that this therapy can help visitors to get in synch with the environment and themselves. The homeopath researched “ways to help people understand the messages behind the disease” and “adapted a model developed by quantum physicist Amit Goswami, which proposes treating human beings in their five dimensions: physical, metabolic, vital, mental and supra-mental (spiritual)” (PENSE..., 2014, p. 12). This therapy is intended for people to find their own means to reconnect to their own essence, thus finding their life purposes. The therapy aims to generate health to oneself based on the varied fauna and flora found at the Florescer da Mata Medical Ecology Center, through workshops on meditation, dreams, animal therapy, vitalized foods, and medicinal herbs, with a transdisciplinary team including several professionals such as nutrologists, physicians, nutritionists, psychologists and physical therapists.

Finally, we would like to mention “The Sea Lover”, where Henrique Pistilli, who is a consultant, speaker, teacher, athlete as well as a water polo and bodysurfing practitioner, describes and analyzes his life. Mr. Pistilli says his life is strongly focused on the “unconscious, on our guts, our will and to the speech of the heart” (PENSE..., 2014, p. 46), strengthening these relations based on a deep connection with the sea.

He criticizes our current living conditions in large urban centers, noting that today “everything has to have a goal, a result, a return, and we live in pursuit of perfection”. Then the interviewee says that: “I’ve learned from the sea that sometimes it is best not to have a goal, and that imperfection is part of life” (PENSE..., 2014, p. 47). This statement goes against what is recommended by the vitality policy in that it sees perfection precisely as something not only attainable, but particularly adaptable and desirable in the today’s world. However, not seeking perfection may not be a total departure from vitality, since, according to the interviewee, it is precisely by stopping to seek perfection that it is possible to achieve a better life.

The excerpts examined here seem to show a kind of mismatch with the vitality policies developed by Rose (2013), to the extent that vitality policy aims at life enhancement while

*Vida Simples* magazine, through its articles on body practices, focuses on more minimalist and simplistic issues for living life, perhaps “de-potentiating” or “de-optimizing” it. Moreover, even if the practices proposed appear to act towards “de-optimizing” the body and its capabilities, these can, in turn, optimize life to the extent that they improve it. Here lies a contemporary paradox where the decrease in body optimization can optimize life based on the minimalist precepts pointed out by the magazine.

#### 4 THE SIMPLE SIMPLE LIFE

Body practices present in the articles published in *Vida Simples* during 2014 were described and suggested to readers based on biomedical arguments, often turning them into medicalizing and medicalized practices. We have no doubt that body practices and complementary therapies have changed over the years, and will go through many other changes. New technologies available, as well as authorities that promulgate them and places where they are practiced, use scientific arguments to describe their benefits.

We understand that in the current scenario of Physical Education teachers and professionals are the most suitable figures to enforce the recommendation of physical and body activities regarded as healthy and beneficial. However, in the meantime, other health professionals have also used the scientific aspects of biotechnological discoveries to prescribe activities that are part of their specialties. In this, there seems to be transformation and expansion of body practices previously seen as cultural or “natural” by society into a type of practice that occupies a place in a biomedical, pathologic and biological context. Thus, we need to identify and analyze the “new, old and remodeled” body practices presented, publicized and described by and in *Vida Simples* and other publications that reach a large number of readers in order to understand how the body changes after medicalized body practices that are directly or indirectly related to how we become subjects today. However, the articles did not show substantial arguments on issues of body optimization. Therefore, we can say that such practices are part of a scenario of increased vitality or even optimization of bodies, as suggested by Rose (2013), although such questions can remain open for a debate on those practices based on that concept. On the contrary, what has been highlighted is the pursuit of health through a view that reaches the minimalist precepts of life. Thus, we leave open a reflection on body practices identified by the magazine, since it can, in many instances, be discussed with a view to optimizing life not only through potentiating but through qualitative improvement of its aspects.

We emphasize that body practices and complementary therapies should change over the next few years, spreading into the social fabric, especially if mediated by interventions of new life-related technologies. This indicates the need for constant and permanent return to analyses about the ways in which body practices are designed in the different cultural settings of which we are part. Therefore, it is essential to carry out further studies on this issue in order to understand how what we are urged to do is transformed in new fields of knowledge.

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