

BODY AGENCEMENTS AND DRUG USE AMONG HOMOSEXUAL MEN IN RIO DE JANEIRO CITY

*AGENCIAMENTOS CORPORAIS E O USO DE DROGAS ENTRE
HOMENS HOMOSSEXUAIS NO RIO DE JANEIRO* 

*AGENCIAMIENTOS CORPORALES Y EL USO DE DROGAS ENTRE
HOMBRES HOMOSEXUALES EN RÍO DE JANEIRO* 

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Abstract: In Rio de Janeiro, the agencies of the body are presented uniquely, linking beauty ideals to success and social capital, especially for the gay community. This study aimed to explore the discursive meanings of gay men using drugs to shape their bodies. Six middle/upper-class homosexual men were studied through an ethnographic, qualitative approach with covert observation. Cocaine was a prominent substance used to enhance their training performance, leading to increased excitement and sexual willingness towards partners both inside and outside the gyms. The findings suggest that drug use plays a significant role in body constitution and sexual experiences among these individuals in Rio de Janeiro.

Keywords: Body. Fitness Centers. Illicit Drugs. Homosexuality.

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1 INTRODUCTION¹

The agencies of the body present themselves in various ways today and impact us in multiple forms (Malysse, 2007). To facilitate and/or accelerate the process of creating a so-called beautiful body, one can make use of several substances such as diuretics, stimulants, and anabolic steroids (Iriart; Chaves; Orleans, 2009). It's important to remember that the notion of beauty regarding certain bodies is influenced by the relationship between culture, space, and time in which they exist and may vary according to different contexts and relationships (Vigarelo, 2005).

Pereira and Ayrosa (2012a) suggest that the city of Rio de Janeiro is particularly unique in this sense, as the Carioca way of life appears to be intertwined with the cult of the body among its residents. The authors point out that for homosexuals in Rio de Janeiro, this notion seems to further reinforce an aesthetic ideal that reflects the value of their identity, making this region a space of strong social appeal for a gay body model with its own aesthetics and meanings. There appears to be greater value placed on a masculine, youthful body endowed with hypermasculinity and what is apparently considered healthy (Pereira & Ayrosa, 2012a).

Recognizing that these values and meanings are culturally established and revolve around the use of the body, Sabino (2007) observes that the use of anabolic substances among homosexuals reflects motivations that guide the pursuit of a sexually active and/or emotionally fulfilling lifestyle, as well as an aspiration to belong to a hierarchical structure of prestige and value. Furthermore, various discourses emerge from the interactions established between substance consumption, the body of the gay man consuming it, the environment in which consumption occurs, and the effects it produces both in the short and long term (Pereira & Ayrosa, 2012b).

It's important to remember that self-reflexivity, coupled with the influence of abstract systems, broadly impacts both bodily and psychological processes. The body is no longer merely an extrinsic "given," operating outside internally referenced systems of modernity, but is rather reflexively mobilized. What may seem like a general trend towards narcissistically cultivating physical appearance actually signifies a deeper concern with the "construction" and active control of the body. There exists an intrinsic connection between physical development and lifestyle, demonstrated, for instance, in the pursuit of specific bodily regimens. However, broader factors also play a significant role, reflecting the socialization of biological mechanisms and processes (Giddens, 2002).

Understanding the complex relationships between human subjectivities and social interactions (Becker, 1996; 2008; 2011; Velho, 1998), gyms emerge as spaces not only for physical training but also for showcasing the body, in addition to serving as settings for various social relationships (Gontijo, 2007; Silva, 2017). Characteristics such as the incorporation of symbolic capital into the body and the representational

¹ Revisited and expanded version of: GARCIA, Rafael Marques. Consumo de drogas em uma academia de ginástica do Rio de Janeiro: uma microrrealidade de homens gays. In: SILVA, Alan Camargo (ed.). **Corpo e práticas corporais em academias de ginástica**. Curitiba/PR: Bagai Publisher, 2022. p. 151-162.

power that certain beauty ideals hold are evident through practices, conversations, sharing, and even the market for substances that facilitate these processes (Sabino, 2007). According to Silva (2017, p. 49, our translate), “gyms are privileged places for analyzing issues related to the overvaluation of the body.

That said, we aimed to understand the discursive meanings of gay men who used (i)licit drugs to assist in the constitution of their bodies, through the following question: what are the representations attributed to these substances during the process of constitution of their bodies?

2 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

In this study², we focused on six subjects who self-identify as middle/upper-class homosexual men residing in Rio de Janeiro City, Rio de Janeiro State, Brazil. These interlocutors use (il)licit drugs to assist in shaping and agencement their bodies. The term ‘agencement’ is derived from Fiore (2013), who proposes an analysis of how individuals approach substances in order to understand them beyond their immediate effects or socially attributed meanings. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct an empirical analysis that considers the trajectories of individuals and their relationships with drugs, taking into account different contexts and subjective frameworks. It’s important to note the positive aspects related to subjective experiences with substances, following a Foucauldian perspective on positivity. This term serves as an analytical tool to integrate ethnographic analysis, considering the multiple dimensions and relationships involved in experiences with substances.

As Velho (1998) points out, it is crucial to understand that there are numerous drug cultures with varying meanings, depending on the social interactions within the groups that use them. We emphasize that drug use in contemporary society is not limited to a particular social group but traverses various layers of class, race, gender, sexual orientation, among other identifiers. In this context, our study examines a specific, contextualized microcosm, which should not be extrapolated to represent the entire gay community.

To develop the research, we opted for a qualitative approach, being performed in a covert way, and typifying itself as ethnographic. We are inspired by Geertz (1989) to situate ethnography as an extremely fruitful and enriching form of research, since it proposes to study in depth a certain group, people, custom, habit and/or cultural manifestations, seeking to understand the meaning of the adoption of certain practices, especially the symbolism they present and how they are triggered, (re)transmitted and worshiped in the universes.

As Geertz (1989) points out, dare under an ethnographic investigation is to delve deeper into the dense study of some culture and/or social group, bringing to light the possibilities of reading that are possible about these cultural activities. For this, it is necessary to adopt certain measures to promote the reliability of the findings and ensure that as much as possible could be extracted for analysis, such as the

² A preliminary version has already been published in Garcia (2022).

establishment of a link with the interlocutors, observation attentive to the occurrence of events, detailed description of them and a considerable time in the “natural environment” of the study. Aware that our theme is sensitive and surrounded by moral judgments, we chose to develop it in a covert way, without the interlocutors knowing of its execution so as not to harm the data presented.

We followed the subjects throughout thirty training sessions in a gym in the Ipanema neighborhood in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Ipanema is a neighborhood belonging to the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro, considered noble and mostly inhabited by the middle/upper class. The neighborhood of “Ipanema came to be considered the ‘elite neighborhood’ of the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro, replacing Copacabana, which lost this position after becoming a more popular region” (Ribeiro, 2015, p. 10, our translate).

The entry into the field of one of the researchers was facilitated by already being part of the network of interactions of the interlocutors and presenting social characteristics in common with them, namely: being a man, homosexual, white, young and frequenter of gyms, becoming in the eyes of others one of many who engage in physical exercises in gyms. Thus, through the participant observation technique, the events were recorded in the researcher’s cell phone notes application, and also recorded via sound recording, where they were later transcribed and analyzed by the speech analysis technique (Orlandi, 2011).

Due to the proximity to the researched, we were inspired by Velho (1998) and Minayo (2021) to exercise reflexivity, so that we could get involved and distance ourselves from the practices of the group to which we set out to investigate, thus avoiding a misinterpretation of the phenomenon. Therefore, it is emphasized that this text is only a narrative of the events captured, among many others, which should not be generalized, but tensioned and expanded.

The notion of “discourse” employed here is demarcated by values and meanings of its enunciators, and through it “[...] the way in which language is social is explained” (Orlandi, 2011, p. 19, our translate). The socio-historical context, culture, social relations and the way judgments and senses are used to languages are valued, whether explicit or not.

Thus, in the light of Becker (1996; 2008) and Velho (1998), in addition to evidencing the discourses, it is essential to understand that they are embedded in ideological and particular conceptions of their deponents, but that they undoubtedly talk to the external layers to them and thus become able to express what they are, how and why they are.

Finally, as a strategy for valuing Latin American production, our theoretical framework is built, mostly, on authors from the region. With this, we aim to value local production and use it as are used the main references on the international scene. It should be noted that we had the approval and agreement of the Research Ethics Committee with human beings of the Hospital Universitário da Universidade Federal do Rio De Janeiro, with opinion number 3.801.620, CAAE 26649419.8.0000.5257 and

protocol 434-19 in accordance with Brazilian legislation. To preserve the anonymity of subjects, we used fictional names.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the training sessions observed, we noticed that the six subjects of the research used various symbiotic forms of drugs consumption with the agencies of the bodies, to improve their performance at the time of training, among anabolic steroids and dietary supplements, but the one that stood out the most was cocaine, which was consumed inside the gym just before training.

Always upon arriving, the group went to the locker rooms (upstairs) to store backpacks and to gather in the last shower cabin, farther from the flow of people, where they snorted the first portions of cocaine to work out. Meanwhile, one of them always stood outside fiddling with the bag and simulating that he was looking for something among his belongings, but his intention was to signal when colleagues could leave the cabin unseen, knocking three times on the door. At that moment, one of them would go out and trade places with the colleague who was watching. After a few more seconds, everyone left the cabin “colocados³” and headed to the weight room (downstairs), ready to train. The justifications for this consumption were different, as we can see in the statements of Apollo, Perseu and Achilles:

Apollo: It's a turbo, so I can devote myself more and crack. A month from now there's the Odyssey⁴ and I need to get dry, but then you have to be careful, because if I don't eat like a horse, I lose lean mass. That's fucked up, because the “padê⁵” takes away all the hunger, but then I need to eat like a horse to preserve the muscles...

Achilles: If I don't snort, I can't train. Even if it's just a little bit. If I don't, I keep dragging myself, I'm not pulling half of what I can get, it's boring. I don't like to train like this.

Perseu: There comes a time when I get dizzy, I see nothing more, it seems that I'm going to faint, my heart jumping out of my chest, but that's how I like it, this feeling on the edge of the abyss, it goes up a heat all over my head... If I was pure, I'd come nowhere near it.

As can be seen, cocaine use (named by the subjects of “padê”) was performed in order to increase the performance of practitioners and assist in the conquest of a defined body with low fat rates, even closer to a given event. The absence of the substance signaled a weak body without energy to perform the training of the day, being conditioned to a good performance. The effects caused by the drug were still exciting for Perseu, who liked to be “on the edge”, although the notion of what this

3 Native term used by the subjects themselves to replace the notion that a person, when consuming a certain drug, is drugged, thus becoming “high”. Importantly, it should be noted that the use of the term within the gay community is not limited solely to the Brazilian context, as documented in França's work (2010). To further expand our analysis of the euphemistic use of the word, we will also engage in dialogue with the works of Becker (2008; 2011), who proposes understanding the use of mild terms as a strategy of dissociation from a supposedly problematic and stigmatized framework.

4 Fictitious name, it refers to an electronic music festival aimed at the gay public and which brings together a large number of homosexuals from Brazil and other countries.

5 This is the native term to refer to cocaine. In English, it would be similar to “coke.”

limit is often unclear and act primarily as a symbolic field of what is estimated in performance (Silva, 2017).

According to Le Breton (2003), the risk conduct, widely disseminated and accepted in the universe of masculinities, is transfigured as adventure, generating satisfactory sensations especially when danger is lived and overcome. For Perseu, training has become inseparable of the risk, so that the danger of death is resignified overcome through the metaphor “on the edge of the abyss”, that is, it comes very close to this place of threat to life, but it is possible to overcome it and with each new victory, more exciting becomes to experience it, since “being pure” would prevent this deflagration.

Besides, Giddens (2002) says that life is inherently subject to risks, both in the physical aspect and psychological well-being, as human existence is made possible by the presence of a body. Our behavior is strongly influenced by the experiences we receive through the media and our assessment abilities, meaning that each individual can, in principle, be overwhelmed by anxieties related to the risks involved in daily activities. This sense of “invulnerability,” which leads us to emphasize a hopeful attitude and block out negative possibilities, stems from a basic trust. Even when one is close to the edge, facing death, a situation in which the individual is reminded of the body’s limits, they reconsider the next action to control these manifestations. Once this stage is overcome, they return to the previous point of confidence, justifying another round of dangers.

Cocaine eventually triggered expected reactions to the group, such as euphoria, greater disposition, and increased libido, however, it also had “other” effects, such as irritability, impatience and, at the end of the effect, a sense of lethargy.

Perseu: I’m high, high, don’t talk to me right now. I’m already pissed off about that slut there [a woman using the device] who doesn’t get out of the equipment, this stupid bitch, disrupting my training... And it’s still on the phone, bitch! Oh, fuck!

Apollo: That fat son of a bitch [another woman using other equipment] who doesn’t release the device, I’m fed up, she didn’t even have to be here. It just gets in the way of my high, so I sit here doing what? Of course, she had to be fat, hideous!

Ajax: I’m going to have to go upstairs and get another little bit, I’m already getting tired.

Achilles: There’s only Greek god here, fuck off. Then we’re all going to the beach. We work out for it, right, get there and get attention, to get an easy sex. Especially on fire, full of padê, and horny as hell, surrounded by macho, can anyone resist?

Although they are ambiguous, these sensations end up being reframed by the researched, so that they are understood as pleasant. Thus, Becker (2008, p. 65, our translate) explains that consumption becomes continuous, since the sensations considered as unpleasant need to undergo a redefinition: “Pleasure is introduced by the favorable definition of the experience that a person acquires from others. Without this, the use will not continue.”

Irritability and impatience were resolved through coarse speech and swearing directed at women with different bodies, a possible strategy to deal with the impossibility of continuing the practice of exercises and reflex of a body that does not arouse the desire for consumption. It is perceived that models of bodies unrelated to that worshiped/consumed by the group were condemned and disgusted, being interpreted as unworthy of belonging in that space. In this sense, the woman's fat body was surrounded by swearing and mockery, deflating that fat and femininity belonged to a distant other universe. This perception would cause there to be a feeling of abjection in the presence of that body, which was emphasized when it occupied one of the devices that the group would like to use. In other words, "there is a kind of body labels implicit according to what the subject should fit, or rather, there are codes of a socially accepted know-how with/for the body" (Silva, 2017, p. 40, our translate).

Another sign points to the expression "Greek god", popularly triggered to refer to male bodies considered beautiful. Vigarello (2005) explains that the notion of male beauty is part of a representation of strength and power translated into means of impressing. It was part of the routine of practitioners this cult of hypervirilization and hypermasculinity, both in the physical and symbolic spheres. These ideals were cultivated through the intense training they performed, but also by the thoughts and representations that were attributed to the carriers of these bodies, who would be responsible for the male's desire consumption.

As Sabino (2007, p. 149, our translate) points out, "The new libidinal economy potentiates passions and is established by the logic of consumption". The use of cocaine and anabolic steroids in this context materializes "instrumental strategies for maintaining the body considered a vehicle of pleasure and self-expression, a body produced by an individualistic and rationalizing society – and that produces it". Sabino (2007) points out that in a part of the gay world, the consumption of bodies is guided by the logic of sexual enjoyment, the orgasm market, with the body having an important role in attracting partners.

This characteristic has already been highlighted by the literature (Gontijo, 2007; Pereira; Ayrosa, 2012a, 2012b; Reis, 2013; Ribeiro, 2015). Hypersexualization, tied to increased libido caused by cocaine, made sexual practices or thoughts always present in the routine of gyms, as can be seen in Achilles' speech: "Guys, I'll take it, that guy there won't stop squeezing the dick and I'm all awed, I'll go upstairs with him".

"Squeezing the dick" meant holding the penis over shorts/shorts, an inviting code for performing sexual practices. "Go upstairs" meant going to the locker room and consecrate these practices inside the cabins, which was common in that gym. During the activities of one of the sessions observed, Odysseus exchanged glances with another man, equally strong, and as soon as they communicated with subtle gestures, they went up to the locker rooms where they remained for about ten minutes. Odysseus returned to the gym minutes later and, laughing, spoke briefly to Achilles: "He was rough with me, I felt dizzy afterward."

Sexual practice under the effect of drugs is called chemsex, which aims to facilitate the initiation of the act or prolong it, intensifying the experience. In a literature

review, Maxwell, Shahmanesh and Gafos (2019) indicate that the main drugs used for this experience are mephedrone, methamphetamine and GHB/GBL. In smaller proportions, cocaine and ketamine are used, evidencing that the choice of substances “[...] are likely to vary across countries and among sub-cultures within countries, as well as across time” (Maxwell; Shahmanesh; Gafos, 2019, p. 75).

Odysseus and Achilles seem to share these ideas and experiences when they exchange information about their deeds and Achilles mentions that “work out for it”, to “get there and get attention, to get an easy sex”. It means to attract looks, flirt and perform sexual acts with third parties, which would be in vogue “Especially on fire, full of *padê*, and horny as hell, surrounded by macho, can anyone resist?”. From the above, cocaine increases sexual desire that, tied to the opportunity and interest of others, materializes in chemsex. This, in turn, potentiates the sensations and experiences of the sexual act, leading sexual pleasure to the ecstasy of *jouissance* concomitantly with the diminishment of arousal: “He was rough with me, I felt dizzy afterward.”

By Odysseus facial expression at the time of speech, it was noticed that the sensations of his experience were so exacerbated that remembering them by words brought him one more satisfaction. However, it should be noted that when he went to practice, Odysseus most likely consumed more cocaine because, when he went down and talked to Achilles, he was visibly euphoric and more agitated. Satisfaction seemed to be the result of the multiple experiences Odysseus experienced and/or was experiencing at the time of healing your lust.

As it turns out, the consumer’s look at the pleasures of the gay body was part of the lifestyle of these subjects, blurring the notion that they would be practices exclusively performed in the gym, on the beaches or at parties. In high modernity, body regimes and the organization of sensuality have become objects of continuous reflection, given the multitude of choices available and spaces. These regimes are not limited to new ideals of body appearance or popular spots, but they are built upon internal idealizations, adoption of daily habits, personal relationship with one’s own body and others’ bodies, status, values, measurements, foods etc. They are shaped by a complex interaction of social, individual, and cultural influences (Giddens, 2002).

In this interim, it is confusing to establish a place to perform these practices, being a symbiotic relationship built between these spaces, that is, what was in evidence was the slender gay body with lust looking for males to consume them or by them to be consumed (Sabino, 2007). This would represent an important part of the actions analyzed in this microcosm, being possible to associate their daily practices with elements that turn to this situation. As Silva pointed out (2017, p. 176, our translate):

[...] the body in gyms or in bodybuilding was not an end. Such spaces were a process of construction of the lives of those subjects who yearn to deny, reaffirm or resignify their worldviews embodied in their multiple and temporary identities constituted in everyday social interactions.

These bodily interactions were translated into the territorialization of spaces, which was evident when the researchers exposed that there was a path to be performed before or after the workout to show evidence by/through the body what had

been conquered in the academy. At the end of the training, it was very common for the men to go to Ipanema beach, near the street Farma de Amoedo, which appears in the “[...] ‘gay sub-culture’ as a space frequented by barbies” (Ribeiro, 2015, p. 30, our translate)⁶. Strong, muscular and slender, barbie⁷ bodies gather social, gender and class capital, illustrating the value of gay identity in this group (Gontijo, 2007; Malysse, 2007; Sabino, 2007). “All these ideas converge to the notion that the subjects in their social relationships define certain types of bodily appearances from their insertions and interactions in the world” (Silva, 2017, p. 41, our translate).

As they left the gym, they undressed on the sidewalk and in swimming trunks finished the journey to the sands. On the way, it was not uncommon to cross paths with acquaintances or flirts, exchanging hugs, kisses and leaving pre-arranged some other activity for the day/week (for Achilles, the easy sex).

Ajax: That one said he goes to Farma later, good that I go along, and I take the opportunity to tan. He's had viagra now, you can tell...

Odysseus: It's all good, those who work here go to Farma, and those at Farma come here. Everyone's pumped up, full of energy! I like it that way!

Apollo: I'm getting hot, everyone is looking and wanting me, I already come with tank top and shorts for this, help work out and shows me all. If it's not to be seen, I won't even leave the house.

On the beach, soon upon arriving, they met with other equally muscular men, snorting more cocaine, talking, hugging, and kissing, and discreetly touching/squeezing the erect penis of their colleagues in their voluminous swimwear. Showing/perfecting the body was important to signal this status and the idea of belonging in/from the group. The practices adopted, such as drug use (anabolic, cocaine, viagra, marijuana) and hypersexualization among the limbs also emerge as important aspects of constitution of this scenario, since they were shared/repeated exacerbated as a requirement to truly belong to this representation. This space revealed an intimate relationship between body agency and drug consumption in light of freedom and diversity, where homosexual men feel comfortable expressing their identities and sexualities without fear or stigma, intensifying experiences of leisure, sexuality, and sociability. Indeed, several authors have devoted themselves to studying the beach as an important location for the exchange of experiences and interactions among homosexual men in Rio de Janeiro. Ribeiro (2015) provides a highly significant historical overview of the use, occupation, and experiences of the gay public in these places, using the unparalleled works of Fabiano Gontijo to guide their timeline. We recommend reading the author's work.

6 The term “sub-culture” still generates debates, since it is used to identify a group that carries out and/or worships some type of counter-normative social practice, but also to crystallize the dynamic and fluid understanding between what would be typical and atypical in an uninterrupted way (Velho, 1998).

7 According to França (2010), “barbie” is used to describe a stereotype of a muscular gay man, typically from a middle/upper-class background, with light skin, and an appearance considered more “masculine.” The origin of this term dates back to the late 1990s when it was imported from the United States, specifically Miami, to Brazil, through events like *X-Demente*, which took place in Rio de Janeiro. Initially, the “barbie” category was associated more positively with extremely muscular or “ripped” men. It is worth noting that the term “barbie” is rarely used by individuals to refer to themselves; instead, it is more commonly applied by external observers. Currently, the use of this term has somewhat declined and is more often used to describe a distinctive type of attendee at gay events and venues, according to the perspective of external people.

By the end of the day at the beach, they said, “It’s time to stop,” “get back to normal,” and to do so, they used marijuana together, sitting in a circle on the sand and passing the joint to each other. They commonly kissed and exchanged affectionate gestures with each other and other present members. It was not uncommon for them to leave together with the already revealed intention of ending the day by having sex (chemsex), “high, with the sound of MPB (Brazilian Popular Music), and with good wine”. This day conclusion, according to the interlocutors’ discourse, was “closing the day on a high note.”

The use of so many substances is in line with what Le Breton (2003) identifies as the pharmacological production of self, which aims to accelerate a process that would require a longer time to materialize without any intervention, that is, the potentiation of a result. In the microcosm investigated, it can be seen that this result would be a muscular gay body, with a low percentage of fat and hypersexualization, especially evident when the penis is erect.

This ritualized style skirts the universe of ‘barbies’ and helps to realize “[...] a category of marked men who adopt a certain style that goes beyond body worship” (Ribeiro, 2015, p. 117, our translation), but it is also stigmatized when associated with “an alienated, futile, and consumerist culture that brings together superficial individuals and drug addicts” (França, 2010, p. 110, our translation).

“Addicted”, they triggered the term “colocado” to signal that they had consumed drugs, a euphemism strategically used to “[...] neutralize the sensitivity to stereotype” (Becker, 2008, p. 82, our translation), also identified by renaming “cocaine” as “padê”, distancing themselves from the immoral figure of an uncontrolled substance user who violated basic moral imperatives (Becker, 2008; 2011; Velho, 1998). As Ajax pointed out: “We don’t use drugs, we engage in ‘colocação’⁸. We don’t use cocaine, we use ‘padê’.”

The strategy of rationalizing the use of the substance, as proposed by Becker (2008), makes the person who uses it justify the use as beneficial and well planned, meaning they control the substance and not the other way around: “the degree of use seems to be related to the extent to which conceptions no longer have influence, leading to rationalizations and justifications among users” (Becker, 2008, p. 87, our translation). In this same dynamic of establishing self-control, the adoption of some caution was perceived so as not to overload the body with excessive consumption and/or mixing of various drugs, especially according to the routines of the subjects, in line with what Le Breton (2003) refers to as risk control.

Hercules: There is so much mixture in this body here that I don’t even know anymore... All I know is that I’m fine because of my exams, all right, and my endocrinologist takes good care of my hormone replacement until I get back to normal.

Odysseus: Today I’m going to take it easy on “colocação” because at night there’s the Olympics⁹ and there, I’ll be crazy, today is the day

⁸ Native term that in English would mean “to get high”.

⁹ Fictitious name of an electronic party held weekly in the city center of Rio de Janeiro, aimed exclusively at middle/upper class gay people.

to forget my own name, I just get out of there charged. I have to save neurons to spend, light training today.

In Hercules' speech, a new euphemism is noticed this time employed to refer to the use of anabolic steroids when he says that he is undergoing hormone replacement. Although he did not present a deficiency in the production of testosterone, he claimed to perform the biomedicalized use of the substance to enhance his gains, deflating a multiple subordination to engage in bodybuilding practices, in addition to desensitizing the stigma attributed to this condition of dependence: "The reference to the anabolic as a drug approximates such a substance to illegality" (Silva, 2017, p. 129, our translation) and "[...] no one there 'took' pump and yes, positively, made hormone replacement."

This discourse refers to what Silva (2017) names legitimate biomedical care, that is, the adoption of measures that use a health ideal concerned with risks and becomes a socially acceptable act, besides contributing to the process of beauty medicalization. Triggering these terms gives life to what Becker (2011) calls the language of drugs, which puts the subject in a relation of protagonism in relation to the substance and "suggests that the use is voluntary, pleasant and innocent" (Becker, 2011, p. 159, our translation).

Here is an inquiry: is this the path that legitimizes the various forms of drug use to achieve a body considered beautiful, or is it, as Becker (2008) pointed out, a strategy to redefine the consumption of these substances in the face of the prestige they supposedly could attribute? Based on the given statement and endorsed by Giddens (2002) and Fiore (2013), it appears that drug use has become another regime of ritualized displays with significant importance for self-identity, precisely because it links habits to visible aspects of the body's appearance.

4 LAST CONSIDERATIONS

It is perceived that the interlocutors are immersed in a microcosm of drugization that refers to the agencement and construction of a type of body that enjoys physical, social, and sexual prestige in a potentiated way, demonstrating the meanings of substance consumption. The space of the gym appears as a place of construction, but mainly of exhibition, fraternization, and experimentation of these bodies, that is, as a stage of social interactions that manifest themselves in the lifestyle of these subjects beyond the space of exercising.

Working out under the influence of drugs raised the performance of practitioners, as well as making them excited and sexually willing to partners inside and outside the gyms. Sometimes they got cranky when the devices were busy, but they circumvented this situation through cursing and flirting with other men. The consumption of the substances was rationed and consciously, to the point that it had an effect at the time of training, but also in the interactions after it, especially in the sands of Ipanema, where they sociosexually engaged more explicitly.

Being in control, mainly accompanied by the biomedical route, shows the interlocutors that it is possible to live well, happy, and healthy regardless of the mixture of these substances, which “reject the exotic fairy tales in which people without any first-hand experience believe” (Becker, 2011, p. 86, our translate). On the other hand, there seems to be consensus that without the aid of these substances, the interlocutors would not be able to train with quality or interact socially in the way they would like and/or are expected of a gay man from the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro, leading us to ask: in this microcosm, would it be possible to be part of the group and live their powerful pleasures without these drugs? The answer leads to establishing a new type of agency and way of life where drugs seem to be indispensable. In this context, there appears to be no sense in asking “why do you use drugs?” but rather, “why someone would not use drugs?”

We recommend more research on the subject because we understand that social interactions are numerous, as well as the meanings, reasons and needs that are established for the engagement of various practices. We emphasize that the data presented represent a microcosm and cannot be generalized.

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Resumo: No Rio de Janeiro, os agenciamentos do corpo são apresentados de forma única, relacionando os ideais de beleza ao sucesso e capital social, especialmente para a comunidade gay. Este estudo teve como objetivo explorar os significados discursivos de homens gays que usam drogas para “agenciar” seus corpos. Foram acompanhados seis homens homossexuais de classe média/alta através de uma abordagem qualitativa e etnográfica, com observação encoberta. A cocaína foi a substância mais proeminente usada para melhorar o desempenho nos treinos, levando a um aumento da excitação e disposição sexual em relação a parceiros dentro e fora das academias. Os resultados sugerem que o uso de drogas desempenha um papel significativo na constituição do corpo e nas experiências sexuais desses sujeitos no Rio de Janeiro.

Palavras-chave: Corpo. Academias de Ginástica. Drogas Ilícitas. Homossexualidade.

Resumen: En Río de Janeiro, los agenciamientos del cuerpo se presentan de manera única, vinculando los ideales de belleza al éxito y capital social para la comunidad gay. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo explorar los significados discursivos de hombres gays que usan drogas para moldear sus cuerpos. Se estudió a seis hombres homosexuales de clase media/alta a través de un enfoque cualitativo y etnográfico, con observación encubierta. La cocaína fue la sustancia más destacada utilizada para mejorar el rendimiento en los entrenamientos, lo que llevó a un aumento de la excitación y disposición sexual hacia parejas dentro y fuera de los gimnasios. Los resultados sugieren que el uso de drogas juega un papel significativo en la constitución del cuerpo y las experiencias sexuales de estos individuos en Río de Janeiro.

Palabras clave: Cuerpo. Centros de Acondicionamiento. Drogas Ilícitas. Homossexualidad.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Rafael Marques Garcia: Preparation of the work; Data collection. Discussion of the main points to be addressed; Discussion of the main points to be addressed; Analytical dissertation according to bibliographic input and references; Methodological review; Improvement of discussions; Linguistic review. Translation. Submission on the platform.

Alexandre Palma: Methodological review; Enhancement of discussions; Linguistic review.

Monique Ribeiro de Assis: Methodological review; Enhancement of discussions; Linguistic review.

Rafael Fortes: Enhancement of discussions; Supervision of previous stages.

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RESEARCH ETHICS

The research project was submitted and approved by the HOSPITAL UNIVERSITARIO DA UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO DE JANEIRO Ethics Committee, CAAE: 26649419.8.0000.5257; Protocol number 434-19

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EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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