

## MARKET AND SPORT/PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: HEALTH AND PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AS EXCHANGE VALUES

*MERCADO E ATIVIDADE FÍSICA ESPORTIVA: A SAÚDE E A APARÊNCIA  
FÍSICA COMO VALORES DE MUDANÇA*

*MERCADO Y ACTIVIDAD FÍSICO-DEPORTIVA:  
LA SALUD Y LA APARIENCIA FÍSICA COMO VALORES DE CAMBIO*

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### Keywords

Social perception,  
Social values.  
Exercise.  
Sports.

**Abstract:** This paper examines the influence of the market on sport and physical activity, which is currently associated with greater focus on the body. Document and empirical evidence show that, through sport and physical activity, the market imposes, among other aspects, the advantages of a legitimate appearance for strengthening interpersonal relationships and for advancing the supremacy of physical attractiveness both as a parameter of social acceptability and as a measure of exchange value between individuals.

### Palavras-chave

Percepção social.  
Valores sociais.  
Exercício.  
Esportes.

**Resumo:** Este trabalho analisa a influência que exerce o mercado na atividade física esportiva, mesmo que na atualidade apareça associada como uma atenção destinada ao corpo. Evidências documentadas e empíricas mostram que através da atividade física esportiva o mercado impõe entre outros aspectos, vantagens da aparência legítima dirigida ao fortalecimento das relações interpessoais e supremacia do atrativo físico, como parâmetro de aceitação social e como medida de valor de transformação entre os indivíduos.

### Palabras clave

Percepción social.  
Valores sociales.  
Ejercicio.  
Deportes

**Resumen:** En este trabajo se analiza la influencia que ejerce el mercado en la actividad físico-deportiva, misma que en la actualidad aparece asociada con una mayor atención sobre el cuerpo. Evidencias documentales y empíricas muestran que a través de la actividad físico-deportiva, el mercado impone, entre otros aspectos, las ventajas de la apariencia legítima dirigidas a fortalecer las relaciones interpersonales y la supremacía del atractivo físico como parámetro de aceptabilidad social y como medida del valor de cambio entre los individuos.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Concern with one's body and health has become a fashion. Most people, especially youth, are under high social pressure to have a beautiful, slim and young body, either by exercising or by eating carefully, or even both. Although this ideal is not always achievable, motivation to achieve it has been on the rise since it is considered a condition for "social success". Such concern about looking attractive and healthy has a familiar name: cult of the body, that is, what some authors such as Tinning (2002) have called somatocentrism, or the body as the center of one's life. Thus, longing for psychological and physical wellbeing, unlike in the past, becomes more important and generates constant concern to assert oneself in the eyes of others. According to Valiente (2008), that social anxiety is only silenced after acceptance, respect and recognition from others.

The market's interest in body development and changes is not lower, and it appears as a solid relation of influence<sup>1</sup> that sets the characteristics and conditions for such changes. This relation involves endogenous (such as individual behaviors) and exogenous (such as education, politics, health and the media) conditions that apparently motivate, encourage or promote both the decisions to practice of sport/physical activity and the search for a body image based on a "culture of thinness". It all seems to indicate that forging oneself in the exchange values of modern capitalism has become a social duty and a cultural value with major meanings, especially for people who often practice sports and cultivate a taste for physical appearance.

According to Inglehart (2008), cultural exchange values which used to be the focus of the "materialistic dimension", i. e. people's material wellbeing and security, are now directed to the "post-materialistic dimension" that stresses self-expression and personal fulfillment focused on "success". Therefore, authors like Bajoit (2012, p. 35), note that "[...] society not only demands individuals capable of having resources such as food, health, education, information, entertainment, competitive skills, creative and stable jobs, and networks of relationships (friendship, love, sexuality)" but also "competitive, imaginative, creative, flexible, autonomous, responsible individuals who are also able to accumulate money as part of all the factors out of which happiness is most likely be built".

In a sense, the above is linked to the theory of cultural change (INGLEHART, 2008) which, *inter alia*, as stated by Sicilia *et al.*, (2011) "[...] when societies acquire higher levels of personal and economic safety is when they tend to abandon their concern about values related to shortage and survival to align themselves with other values such as self-expression or emancipation". While this may be questionable for Latin America and for less developed countries where problems of hunger and public insecurity remain constant, evidence indicates that these aspirations and values emphasizing new motivational orientations toward the practice of exercise and the pursuit of physical beauty are accepted in certain strata of the population, especially in medium and upper classes (LE BRETON, 2002). In fact, these types of values have emphasized and strengthened the somatocentrist orientation of today's society.

That is why this work attempts to demonstrate that, through these aspects, the market imposes the advantages of legitimate appearance in interpersonal and social relations, the supremacy of physical attractiveness as a measure of social acceptability, and exteriority as a

<sup>1</sup> We use the term influence in the sense postulated by Moscovici (1981), as strategies of persuasion used by a minority or an individual through ideological and psychological means to introduce or develop new ideas, new ways of thinking and behaving, or to change ideas received, traditional attitudes and old ways of thinking – all within an environment that does not imply equality between the parties.

measure of exchange value.

Next, we will focus our analysis on the market as contextual reference for practices and motivations linked to sport and physical activity, whose pillars are transnational corporations of sporting and beauty products, and which convey what could be called “the market of good health” through the media, medical institutions, academics, dietitians and nutritionists, among others. We also emphasize the role played by everyday life’s social pressures as part of individual and group behaviors related to endogenous factors where the influence of the market is also reflected. All that aims at providing elements for a better understanding of current changes and trends associated with the body.<sup>2</sup>

## 2 BUILDING THE LEGITIMATE APPEARANCE AND SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY

Today, the association between transnational corporations, media groups and medical institutions plays a central role in constructing a social representation of health linked to market-imposed parameters of consumption. Representations of a healthy and aesthetic body that circulated in countless print and electronic media such as newspapers and magazines, books and manuals, brochures and posters, radio programs, television and film, plus email and websites, among others, are social constructions of biopolitical nature, whose background is not only health management but also the social legitimation of physical appearance (PANIER, 2010).

The confluence of interests between these three actors has gradually formed a solid mechanism in the development of “social orthopedics” whose purpose was to guide people according to the norm, defining behaviors and characteristics considered normal and differentiating them from those seen as deviant (FOUCAULT, 1976). Medical practice is traversed by economic and power systems that are impacting decisions regarding body care (plastic surgery, diets and consumption of supplements that promise better results when combined with exercise). That is why the market for “healthy” products promoted by doctors, dietitians and nutritionists, among others, is increasingly becoming a pervasive institution and the ideal support to harness power and produce consumer subjects according to the interest of post-industrial capitalism. It seems, as rightly pointed by Foucault (1976), that the body has been seen as a biopolitical reality based on industrial society, and medicine is a strategy used to determine what is healthy and what is not.

It should be noted, however, that current processes actually show the weakness of collective and personal identity threatened by the deployment of a homogenizing and fragmenting culture that resorts to mass media to impose a legitimate appearance. However, there are also resistances that counteract market forces and break away from the stereotypes that promote standardization of values oriented to aesthetics and appearance. Organizations such as The National Eating Disorders Association, The Academy for Eating Disorders, The National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders have spoken out against advertising that promotes extreme thinness (BEHAR, 2010). Marginalized communities, indigenous people, immigrant groups, ethnic minorities all over the world and groups using physical techniques (such

<sup>2</sup> According to Turner (1989), the body is ceasing to be the object of the sacred discourse of flesh and becomes the object of medical discourse, since it is conceived as a “machine” that must be controlled through science. Therefore, for the author – whose definition is a basic assumption of this paper – the body is an entity to be inspected and supervised by professional, occupational and government institutions, whose regulation is of interest to public health, the economy and political order.

as yoga and dance) with the intent of raising emotional and reflective awareness, knowledge, expression and self-understanding (which Foucault (1990) called technologies of the self) reject imposed regimes that demand high performance in sport and physical exercise and several programs under political intervention. They refuse to be completely assimilated to the culture of consumerism and they replicate their own values against the rules of the national dominant community. In that sense, homogenization of a culture oriented to aesthetics and body care cannot be linked to a territory; it is rather a mindset that takes on many peculiarities.

### 3 THE HEALTH AND HEALTH PRACTICES DISCOURSE

One of the arguments for health promotion wielded by academics, medical practice and government institutions is related to the current obesity epidemic facing the population of different countries in the world. The financial outlay intended for diseases resulting from overweight and obesity is between 2% and 9.1% of total health spending, with the US having the highest percentage (RODRÍGUEZ; GONZÁLEZ, 2009).

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in its study on obesity and the economics of prevention (2010), Mexico has the world's highest overweight and obesity rates for adults. The report notes that 70% of Mexicans are overweight and 30% are obese. The United States, the most developed country in North America, sits in second place, with 68% of its population overweight and a 28% obesity rate. However, it seems clear that the true extent of the problem is not only health-related, but also economic and social. According to the same report, preliminary estimates of the cost of obesity and associated comorbidity in Andean countries such as Bolivia, Colombia and Peru show that, in order to provide attention to obesity, three of its main clinical complications (diabetes, hypertension and hypercholesterolemia) would require financial resources of approximately 25% of the countries' total health budget. For example, between 1987 and 2002, the proportion of health expenditures attributable to obesity increased more than ten times. In the same heading, according to the report cited above, Mexico has to channel 190 billion pesos of public spending to address health problems associated with obesity, which is half the budget of all public health institutions (GARCÍA *et al.*, 2010).

High budgets invested in promoting physical activity<sup>3</sup> and health aspects have not managed to reduce diseases related to sedentary habits and inadequate nutrition. Moreover, in recent decades, other diseases related to obsessive-compulsive behavior have even increased due to high perceived social pressure to stay thin and "healthy", mainly in adults under 30 (MORENO *et al.*, 2007; THOGERSEN-NTOUMANI; NTOUMANIS, 2006; CAGLAR *et al.*, 2009).

The health discourse, as pointed out by Pedraza (2008), "is aimed at self-exploration and self-control as the stock of mandatory self-knowledge encouraged by aesthetic-political movement techniques". These refer to the mechanism that promotes individuals' ability to recognize their bodies and see themselves as vulnerable and exposed entities and which drives healthy lifestyles with emphasis on the principles of self-sensitivity to consumption of goods and services. A market is provided for techniques, services and products amid oversupply that creates needs for specialized knowledge due to the wide variety of existing healthy products. In this

3 In the case of Mexico, according to Ruiz (1996), it was the post-revolutionary educational apparatus in charge of organizing sport and physical practice as an integral part of a social system that expressed and reproduced sociocultural habits and ways institutionally established to channel modern individuals' free time, emotions, tensions and body language.

process of sensibilization and emphasis on consumer-directed health, the bets are on *habitus*<sup>4</sup> to ensure the permanence of the market for such products (PEDRAZA, 2008).

In that sense, consumption of healthy products promises successful individuals and promotes quiet amid the unstable political, economic, social and cultural context. Moreover, consumption associated with enjoyment is promoted because it is the realization of the very act: the fantasy of total freedom, but also of possession of certain items that have to be shown in order to be recognized by others. As it is easy to understand, they are almost always objects that are purchased but not kept because there will always be new and improved ones at the expense of those already acquired (BOURDIEU, 2006; NUÑEZ, 2010).

It must be said that although the diet industry promotes a very thin ideal, this promotion does not necessarily lead to weight loss in the long term, but that fashion has led to health problems such as anorexia and bulimia and other pathologies associated with anxiety over a slender body (VALIENTE, 2008).

Those who promote the purchase of healthy products and impose an authoritarian norm for their consumption include not only transnational companies making health products, but also health professionals, mainly dietitian doctors, nutritionists, fitness instructors, family and friends, and the media, which often resort to advertising campaigns with ads featuring smiling and vigorous people in several spectacles, magazines and brochures (COUTIÑO, 2012; FINLAY; FAULKNER, 2005). All this leads to self-control and self-medication that now pervades much of private life's habits, with nutritional and exercise practices that sometimes can be inadequate. All this happens under a new biopolitical strategy based on marketing and aimed at specific segments and consumers, with the rise of healthy life.

#### 4 The marketing of health and appearance

Sports practice has certainly become one of the most important industries. It is promoted as a need or demand for a lifestyle directed towards a particular consumption of sporting goods and services that are usually expensive and limited in use. As indicated by Pedráz (2007), all that "becomes justifiable in the name of health and quality of life".

It should be noted, however, that there are significant differences between promoting sport as a spectacle and as physical exercise. The former is considered a global aesthetic manifestation that emphasizes attributes of competence and social status – depending on the sports practice<sup>5</sup> – for medals or recognition, either by addiction to overtraining or by consumption of products due to fanaticism for some sport (associated with idols or sporting clothes and gear) as adaptation to the system and to commerce, among others. The latter is rather associated with playfulness, active leisure, rest, channeling aggressiveness, enjoyment, self-expression, aesthetics, balance, mental health – which are related to expressing feelings and sensations – and to the transmission of cultural values, self-knowledge, education, strengthening of personality and development of social behavior and values, among others (ELIAS; DUNNING, 1992).

4 The notion of *habitus* is understood as the internalization of social rules, as an immanent law and a guide for action. According to Bourdieu (2006), it is defined as a "subjective, but not individual system of internalized structures that are schemes of perception, conception and action". It represents a fundamental mediation between the system and the actor; it is a form of articulating social order and individuals' practice. In that sense, cultural phenomena such as aesthetics and sports, among others, can be analyzed as complex symbolic processes of production, distribution and consumption.

5 Social strata that practice tennis, horse riding, sailing, for example, are not the same that play football or basketball.



In both cases, however, sport and physical activity are associated to body care since they promise precisely beauty and health. Therefore, the physical assessment of a person usually involves moral judgments and even sense in terms of personality. Overweight people can be considered ill, lax, sloppy, lazy and unbalanced while thin people are associated with health, spiritual integrity, prudence or sense (CONTRERAS; GRACIA, 2005). These are some of the elements transnational sport companies take into account when they launch their campaigns.

Today companies like Nike, ESPN, Adidas, Sky Sports and Under Armour, among many others, compete to occupy important market niches. Their advertising campaigns go beyond promoting or encouraging competition. Their high levels of acceptance among consumers worldwide as well as their high sales and profits place them at the top (FORBES, 2014). For example, Nike's global sales were around 19 billion dollars in 2013 (FORBES, 2014); in 2011, global sales (17.3 billion dollars, FORBES, 2011) were distributed as follows: 7.6% in North America, 3.8% in Europe and 2.1% in emerging countries (SÁNCHEZ, 2011).

The influence of the sporting goods market on the practice of physical activity is associated with increased action by the industry of diets, cosmetic surgeries and gyms. Massages, belts and shirts to reduce size are available as well as cellulite treatments and tanning, toning and reducing beds, anabolic steroids and injections of Botox, collagen and hyaluronic acid, among many other products. The aim is to impose a hegemonic view that extends to all social strata by crossing previous boundaries in relation to social class, age or gender, although the population at highest risk is undoubtedly that of adolescents and women.<sup>6</sup> It has also pervaded the workplace sphere, where especially women are rejected and dismissed because of overweight. Advertising images of the prototype of the ideal woman and diet control are released, and strong pressure is put on youth to lose weight, and much more emphasis is given to size and labels (BARBERO, 2006).

As a result, concern for body care and the practice of sport and physical activity also appears as a problem of inequality and social distinction. The population with less access to sport and physical practice comes from middle-lower and lower classes (OMS, 2014). They cannot afford going to gyms and specialized sports clubs and they cannot culturally adopt the habits of the health programs imposed. Therefore, when the values and practices come to be assumed by the lower class, the upper class has already transformed them enough to keep a significant social distance. Then cultural development appears disproportionate, preserving that elite's privilege of distinction for wellbeing while disadvantaged social groups always seem to arrive too late (CONTRERAS; GRACIA, 2005).

## 5 CULTURAL CONSUMPTION AND SYMBOLIC BEAUTY

Authors like Bourdieu (2006) and Grogan (2008) argue precisely that cultural differences are the main factors responsible for body ideals. This is because art and cultural consumption have been consciously and deliberately created to fulfill the social function of legitimating social differences (BOURDIEU, 2006). Today, the promotion of beauty prototypes associated with thinness and the dietary industry also play that role.

<sup>6</sup> As an example, note that a study conducted in the city of Hermosillo Sonora, Mexico, showed that weight loss products most consumed by women are, in that order: medicines, nutritional supplements, clothing and sports footwear, and cosmetics. The reasons presented by 60% of women to consume weight loss products included first health and then aesthetics. It should be emphasized that 77% of the women surveyed indicated that the price of those products did not seem expensive to them (COUTIÑO, 2012).

The influence of advertising media has been crucial in the construction of these cultural differences. They have manipulated existing cultural values to give transnational companies a better market positioning for their products. Advertisers identify the deepest longings of certain social groups and constantly bombard audiences with promises that their lives will be good, happy and satisfying. As indicated by Vanden *et al.*, (2006) statements include sentences like “I just want Barbie’s perfect image”, “I’d like to have that flat stomach”, “I’d love to look like Cindy Crawford”, etc. In fact, society and the media encourage people to put their eyes on an image to serve as a benchmark for slender and successful people. Authors such as Umberto Eco (2010) rightly point out that the media bring back “a nineteenth-century iconography, fabulous realism, the exuberance of Mae West and the anorexic grace of the latest models, Naomi Campbell’s black beauty and Claudia Schiffer’s Nordic one, the femme fatale of so many television broadcasts or advertising messages, and the girl with the freshly laundered face in the style of Julia Roberts or Cameron Diaz” (ECO, 2010). In addition to cutting-edge experiences, we can provide models from the 20s, 30s, 40s or 50s, even rediscovering forms no longer in use.

Cultural consumption can therefore be understood as a distinct symbolic activity that applies not only to goods, items and services, but also to other social representations, such as the distinction between being old or young, or between being female or male. In the first case, “it intends to describe the ‘legitimate youth’ – a historical and social construction, a predominantly urban model whose imposition is effectively influenced by mass media” (BOURDIEU, 2006, p. 216). According to the author, one of the favorite places to go is the gym. One goes there in search of reaffirming youth, taking care of the body and ensuring a perfect silhouette. Even ever-changing practices like fashion, the use of leisure, sports, diets and music will provide supposedly “legitimate youth” to those who follow these rituals.

In the second case, indeed, femininity and masculinity are linked to the perception that the body is primarily a human entity. However, Cuevas (2009) reports that, unlike men, women are oppressed and manipulated by global culture, the same that is constructed from advertising, media and the cosmetics industry, which promotes a globally westernized narrow ideal of female beauty.

It should be noted, moreover, that there are “extreme” cases where sociocultural influences on body image include body modification practices that may even mutilate and cause extreme body pain (cosmetic surgery, piercings, tattoos and bodybuilding) (GONZÁLEZ, 2006). Therefore, consumption is one of the main channels through which the aspirations of the young, the thin, pursuit of beauty and health, all associated with success, are channeled and exposed as promises encouraged by the market (CUEVAS, 2009).

## **6 Consequences associated with the practice of sport and physical activity, social exclusion and diseases related to achieving personal goals**

In the beginning of this text we underscored the existence of endogenous factors driving decisions to practice sport and physical activities and the search for a body image based on a “culture of thinness”. These have to do with psychosocial causes linked to self-determination of individuals in search of their views of personal fulfillment, where social tensions often appear that explain individual and group behaviors. Thus, the social construction of the body through its several manifestations is explained by human behaviors resulting from the influence of the so-

ciocultural environment, the market and social inequalities, but also by influence of autonomous behavioral factors comprised of self-concept and personality.

Following this parameter, some have pointed out (GROGAN, 2008; VALIENTE, 2008) that a body that is diligently cared for symbolizes rational behavior, representing a high degree of self-esteem and self-governing capacity. Therefore, those who are capable of “self-control” will exercise the same skills at the level of interpersonal relationships and in other spheres of life. On the contrary, a body that does not meet the standards of “high maintenance” identifies the person as not dedicated, lazy, unwilling to sacrifice and take responsibility. So, those who have not cultivated the moral category of self-correction will be more prone to disorder and “deviation” than to the logic of competition, perfection and success.

At the center of this “rational behavior” is social physique anxiety as an emotional consequence that can be experienced when people perceive a negative evaluation of their bodies by others (SCOTT, 2004). It is considered as a specific social anxiety, to the extent that it appears closely linked with body image and self-esteem and the high importance of exercising as a social activity, since the body becomes the focus. Thus, social physique anxiety seems to develop as an influential factor related to such practices. It is manifested through the constant concern about the way in which one’s body is evaluated by others (HART, *et al.*, 1989). These people regularly show external motivation toward physical activity, they have greater body awareness when in public and display motivational profiles similar to exercise addicts (REEVE, 2003).

We could say that people who develop addiction to exercise have personality characteristics based on obsessive-compulsive traits, nervousness, extroversion, low self-esteem and high anxiety levels. Indeed, some studies have pointed out a negative association with neuroticism and self-esteem (HERNÁNDEZ *et al.*, 2005).

Some research linking *social physique anxiety* (SPA) with sports practice found interesting results. McLachlan and Hagger (2010) documented that the reasons for physical activity in a population of southeast England were associated with appearance and this, in turn, with external motivators, i. e., the desire to avoid feelings of guilt and embarrassment and anxiety. Results indicate that when that population practices sport and physical activity mainly to improve body image, they are less persistent and feel less wellbeing than those involved for reasons of enjoyment and autonomy. In fact, emphasis on appearance explains high dropout rates in physical activity.

Also, studies like Grogan’s (2008) mention that male athletes experience eating disorders because they mention body dissatisfaction and focus on achieving an unrealistic ideal through training and diet. For women, there are also differences and society-marked impositions. A case study in Costa Rica analyzed body perception, construction of femininity and consumption of health and beauty products among youth. Subjects mentioned that in order to be physically attractive in relation to standardized ideals of beauty they “should be thin but muscular”, “that people note that you exercise”, “neat”, etc. Some approaches explain the relationship between internalization of sociocultural aspects and body dissatisfaction, and of the latter with eating disorders, neuroticism, constant attention to the body, and embarrassment (BAYYARI *et al.*, 2013; LLORENTE *et al.*, 2013).

The implications are equally severe among men. A case study conducted in Chiapas, Mexico, showed that body deviations such as illness and disease are also objects of moral



assessment. Participants reported on their perception of their own bodies by mentioning some practices in relation to their peers. For example, they showed that being competent in sports and measuring their strength and endurance are necessary to express their masculinity. With these actions they showed the way men prove their physical strength, emotional strength and performance in sports and other skills since a young age, in order to gain respect and recognition from others (CRUZ, 2006). Thus, when the resources listed above are not available and these “rights-duties” are not fulfilled, consequences include tensions that affect individuals’ balance and result in diseases such as depression, which in turn, promote a new cultural ill-being or feelings of anomie (BAJOIT, 2012).

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

Field studies show that the pressures on young men and on women to have an ideal physique are prevailing social forces in today’s society. Failure to comply with these real or imagined rules can induce negative thoughts and feelings toward individuals’ physical evaluation. When this happens, what emerges is what we called social physique anxiety. As we know, it leads people to consider the idea of participating in sport and physical activities to improve their bodies and decrease the chances of negative evaluations; however, social physique anxiety usually undermines motivation for physical activity.

Advertising campaigns and private companies have certainly created an environment that evokes feelings of dissatisfaction and discontent among consumers while providing messages that promise to relieve that ill-being. As rightly pointed out by Vanden *et al.* (2006), ensuring that consumers feel inadequate is essential to the future profitability of those companies. Therefore, ads instill a sense of failure, guilt, humiliation and embarrassment into people who do not fall for the consumption of “healthy goods and services”. They also serve moralistic judgments and emotions that add confusion and obstacles to the challenge of developing healthy lifestyles (e. g. consuming high-cost health products and/or services such as sportswear, food supplements to achieve faster results with physical activity, etc.). Judgments are passed on productivity and self-control, laziness is pointed out and those who do not have a slender and/or muscular body or who do not consume healthy products are stigmatized. Therefore, promoting feelings of inadequacy to “encouraging body hatred” becomes undoubtedly a very lucrative business (VANDEN *et al.*, 2006).

As we have seen so far, individual behaviors and motivations related to regular physical and sport activity, even though they are linked to body nature, cannot be analyzed outside the context of changes in the production and distribution of commodities within a consumer system, since after all they are the result of events of contemporary capitalism. That is why we tried to prove that sport/physical activity and health are also conveyed by the market as exchange values – the same market that imposes the advantages of legitimate appearance in interpersonal relationships and the supremacy of physical attractiveness as a measure of social acceptability and success.

Therefore, society’s fundamental aspiration could be aimed at encouraging the shaping of healthy subjects who, although regulated by the market, would be able to build their own individual and collective symbolic world with potential to influence and force changes in the market’s hegemony.

Future research should elaborate on the association between the reasons for physical practice and the materialist and post-materialist dimension, in order to advance in relating those reasons with the characteristics of the socio-cultural and economic structures of advanced Western societies. It will also face the challenge of further studying economic, cultural, political and social changes that are happening over time and how this affects people's reasons to engage in leisure activities in general and in physical exercise in particular.

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