

BRAZILIAN CATCH WRESTLING IN 20th-CENTURY RIO DE JANEIRO

A LUTA LIVRE NO SÉCULO XX NO RIO DE JANEIRO

LA LUCHA LIBRE EN EL SIGLO XX EN RIO DE JANEIRO

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Keywords:
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Abstract: This study aims at analyzing the history of wrestling in Rio de Janeiro during the last century. The data come from four interviews with practitioners aged 46-78. Working with memory and oral history, we found that wrestling in the city developed and improved by hybridizing with other forms of combat, pointing towards sportivization. The analysis allowed us to conclude that wrestling asserted its identity in opposition to jiu jitsu.

Palavras chave:
Luta.
Artes marciais.
História
do século XX.
Narrativas pessoais.

Resumo: Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar a trajetória da luta livre no Rio de Janeiro no século passado. Os dados provêm de quatro entrevistas com protagonistas dessa luta, com idades entre 46 e 78 anos e de revistas de lutas. Trabalhando com memória e história oral, verificamos que a luta livre carioca se aprimorou por movimento interno e através da hibridização com outras modalidades de combate, rumo à esportivização. A análise permitiu concluir que a luta livre afirmou e reconstruiu sua identidade em confronto com o jiu-jitsu.

Palabras clave:
Lucha.
Artes marciales.
Historia del siglo XX.
Narrativas
personales.

Resumen: Este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar la trayectoria de la lucha libre en Rio de Janeiro, en el siglo pasado. Los datos provienen de cuatro entrevistas con protagonistas de esa lucha, con edades entre 46 y 78 años. Trabajando con memoria e historia oral, constatamos que la lucha libre en Rio de Janeiro fue mejorada por un movimiento interno a través de la hibridación con otras modalidades de combate. El análisis permitió concluir que la lucha libre confirmó y reconstruyó su identidad, en confronto con otras con el jiu jitsu.

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1 INTRODUCTION

During the 20th century, MMA events confronting martial arts gained prominence in different regions of Brazil. The city of Rio de Janeiro was one of the venues for those confrontations in which fighters wanted to show the technical superiority of their style. Historical narratives underscore some of them, such as Brazilian catch wrestling (*Luta livre*, henceforth wrestling), muay thai and jiu-jitsu, the latter associated with the Gracie family (AWI, 2012; GRACIE, 2008; VASQUES; BELTRÃO, 2013). There is disagreement about the role played by jiu-jitsu, since wrestling, boxing and capoeira, “[...] with their unique characteristics, were crucial in the constitution of inter-fight combats” (LISE, 2014, p. 128).

The problem of the study is: how do the four icons of wrestling manifest, in oral statements, their memories of the development of that form of struggle and participation in MMA fighting, where confrontations are sportivized?

The Federação de Luta Livre e Submission of the State of Rio de Janeiro’s (FLLSERJ) official website highlights that the style “[...] was born ‘free’, as the name [*livre*] implies, without props or complements and in line with nature itself. Man has always fought and will continue fighting until the end of time”. The text about the history of the fight is signed by Master Roberto Claudio Leitão, our respondent, who concludes: “It would be appropriate to remind that the origin of wrestling merges with olympic fight and now it certainly has the largest number of practitioners in the world (over 30 million)”. The website highlights the trajectory of Tatu, a fighter who was the first wrestler to gain notoriety – from 1928 on. Being originally a swimmer and having a privileged body, he learned wrestling techniques and won fights in the 1940s and 1950s (FEDERAÇÃO DE LUTA LIVRE E SUBMISSION DO ESTADO DO RIO DE JANEIRO, 2015).

According to Awi (2012, p. 18), “[...] hungry crowds would be dragged to watch a good fight” and wrestling was present in many MMA events. According to Melo (2007), the sport, which already stood out as a social practice in the early 20th century, found an echo in Futurist proposals that celebrated aggressive moves, slaps and punches – ingredients of different styles of fights. The main newspapers of the 20th century, such as *Correio da manhã*, *A Época*, *A manhã* and *Jornal do Brasil*, describe the history of wrestling. However, there is a gap with regard to the stance of the very protagonists of wrestling and their history. Studies such as Amaral (2014) categorically state that wrestling had nothing of entertainment in its early days. The article aims to broaden discussions about wrestling in MMA events in Rio de Janeiro by looking into the voices of four of their leading characters.

We share Gebara’s (2004) view on oral history, in the sense that we produce unique documents with subjective oral statements, partly caused by interviewers’ interference. We favor oral sources for their intensive and extensive use in the area of Physical Education. According to Ibrahim (2014, p. 115), through oral statements we give the respondent “[...] subjectivity as production, detailed and contingent truth, memory as an active reinterpretation process”.

As Meihy (2010, p. 181), we see the present “[...] as a product of processes still underway; we start from it to observe events, situations and facts”. Knowledges from oral statement are contingent, provisional products of present recall, reconstructions of what was lived.

2 METHODOLOGY

In this research, we use oral history method (THOMPSON, 2002) with narratives driven by in-depth interviews. We approach trans-creation (MEIHY, 2006, p. 194-195) in the sense that we must understand to explain and explain to change, “therefore, understanding is changing”, because we analyze the whole with a commitment to the social by using the beginning, the middle and the end of the story. We used content analysis techniques to postulate a posteriori categories and inferences (BARDIN, 2011). The project was approved by Pedro Ernesto University Hospital’s Ethics Committee under number 781338.

Socio-cultural studies on fights are gaining ground and accumulating knowledge about social practices and representations based on empirical investigations where individual or group oral interviews with the protagonists of the several forms of fight are analyzed. Gomes *et al.* (2010), Nascimento and Almeida (2007) as well as Rufino and Darido (2011) attest to the importance of those studies.

The option of working with social memory in oral narratives accumulated knowledges related to body practices, which were marked by the contingency typical of oral history and memory, with respondents urged to put their experiences, knowledges, attitudes and behaviors into text.

The choice of the four elite respondents followed the criteria related to practice time and their ranks in wrestling. Roberto Cláudio das Neves Leitão (10th Dan), João Ricardo Nascimento de Almeida (8th Dan), Hugo da Silva Duarte (8th Dan) and Johil de Oliveira (6th Dan) belong to two generations in the history of Rio’s wrestling.

The literature review on Rio’s wrestling has a gap with regard to the voices of its protagonists. With oral history, we seek to fulfill part of that gap and help to understand the trajectory of wrestling in Rio de Janeiro and the place of each respondent on that history, according to Amado and Ferreira (2006, p. 75-76), by building a “history from the bottom up. [...] a different viewing angle and a broader notion of the very process”.

We chose to work with voices hitherto hidden or barely audible of wrestling’s protagonists, within oral history, where we see special potential and power (THOMPSON, 2002). Interview questions gave respondents a chance to talk about their own trajectories and evaluate the process of consolidation of their wrestling careers. The four respondents were chosen after consultation with Rio de Janeiro’s masters who pointed at them as today’s wrestling highlights.

Collection took place between 2013 and 2015. The interview script, validated by judges and organized in theme blocks, allowed interviewer and interviewed the freedom to address each one’s story and return to the study of the topic whenever necessary. The interviews were categorized and analyzed by content analysis techniques (BARDIN, 2011). The analysis of responses resulted in the following categories: history of wrestling; influences and alliances with other fights; Rio de Janeiro as a stage for the fight; international market for the fight. Based on analysis of the responses, we highlighted recurrent parts and distributed them in the categories we had postulated.

3 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Through analysis and interpretation of respondents' narratives and based on publications of Rio's main newspapers of the time and recent studies, we offer new reading on wrestling's history in the last century in the city.

3.1 HISTORY OF WRESTLING

FLLSERJ's website indicates that wrestling appeared in 1928, with fighter Tatu, but Roberto Leitão provides other clues about its pioneer role in Rio de Janeiro: "In 1920, Sinhozinho already had a kind of wrestling team in Flamengo". In this excerpt, we find an older legitimate effort on the practice of wrestling, resorting to the construction of a memory that seeks to refer to the 1920s.

For respondent João Ricardo, wrestling was proposed because of the need to master ground techniques, which were necessary to fight in the events that happened in 1967 and 1968: "It was at Rosário Street, I just used to do karate then; I didn't do wrestling, so I started at my gym, I started doing MMA at [club] América, so I started practicing wrestling". The master talks about fighters who contributed to his learning of ground techniques, of wrestling: "Hilbernon de Oliveira conveyed the ground part to us, wearing shorts, then I started doing the wrestling technique, and later I met Roberto Leitão, in 1973, 1974 [...] then, I perfected myself in wrestling".

Hugo Duarte started practicing wrestling in his teens: "It was at Santa Luzia [...] master Brunocilla liked me; I was there on the mat and there were few people to practice, so he told me: 'Do want to practice?' And I started practicing, and he said: 'You really have it in your blood; I started practicing at 14'.

Hugo Duarte sees wrestling as a pioneer among the other existing styles: "Our fight is the oldest one, with adaptations". In his speech, he says that the fight has been adapted from its inception to the present.

Johil de Oliveira began wrestling at the age of seven, influenced by his father: "I always liked to play ball at the time, but my father practically forced me to go to the gym with him; my father was a fighter, too". The main masters who excelled in coaching wrestlers and as wrestling disseminators were Sinhozinho, Brunocilla and Roberto Leitão. According to Lise (2014), presentations of American struggle in Rio de Janeiro's theaters by foreign troupes in 1909, 1911, 1913 and 1915 had a major impact and acceptance in the city, which suggests a high degree of dissemination of that practice. During last century, that sport was renamed from Roman wrestling to American wrestling and finally came to be known as *Luta Livre Esportiva* and then *Luta Livre*. In 1920, according to Roberto Leitão, Master Sinhozinho had a wrestling team in the Flamengo district; in that same year, the April 13 edition of *Correio da Manhã* records the arrival in Rio of Spanish wrestling champion André Balsa, who challenged all amateurs and professionals. In 1930, according to the press, Brazil's Manoel Rufino faces a representative of American wrestling among the crew of the American cruiser (CORREIO DA MANHÃ, March 9, 1930). In the 1940s and 1950s, newspapers continued to highlight wrestling in MMA events as spectacles that always had crowded audiences and happened with already trained troupes.

The history of wrestling in Rio de Janeiro raises reflections on the ennoblement of fighting activities, their role in citizen education, their focus on self-defense and respect for opponents' integrity, which has been achieved by moving disputes from beaches and streets to indoors venues.

The concept of sportivization, proposed and developed by Elias and Dunning (1992), allowed us to advance in understanding what happened in Rio de Janeiro when fights – both wrestling and jiu-jitsu – ceased to be activities of gangs and youth groups relatively irresponsible in the use of force and combat techniques to become prestigious activities developed at gyms that brought together fighters involved in the present and the future of sportivized fights, consolidated in MMA events and institutionalized in its championships. The fact that the Ministry of Sport provides financial and technical resources to youth fighting events indicates that the sportivization of the area was consummated. In August 2015, the Ministry invested R\$ 3 million in the World Junior Wrestling Championship, which brought together athletes from 62 countries. “In the last five years, the Ministry has signed seven agreements with the Brazilian Confederation of Associated Fights (*Confederação Brasileira de Lutas Associadas*, CBLA), resulting in over R\$ 14 million in investments” (MINISTÉRIO DO ESPORTE, 2015).

3.2 INFLUENCES FROM AND ALLIANCES WITH OTHER FIGHTS

Appropriating techniques from other forms of fight to adapt them to one's interests and purposes is a hybrid practice used by many martial arts masters. We cite the example of Jigoro Kano, who created judo in 1882 by adapting techniques of Japanese jiu-jitsu, practiced by the ancient samurai masters, as well as from other fights developed in Japan at the time (KANO, 2010). Wrestling incorporated features of European troupes such as slaps and traumatic blows; it gradually enhanced those features and appropriated techniques from other fights, focused on street clashes. Therefore, we can say that it resulted in hybridization, which “consists of a type of mix that renews culture and creates new meanings” (KERN, 2004, p. 59).

In addition to wrestling, two of our four respondents practiced other forms of fighting, while two of them started directly in wrestling. We noted the evidence of those influences in respondents' statements. According to Roberto Leitão, his history in wrestling developed in Rio de Janeiro in a context of information exchange, personal experiments and appropriation of body techniques derived from other styles: “I said: No good in doing jiu-jitsu; I'll be always behind it. Then I chose judo [...] I never stopped; I kept doing Judo until fourth degree black belt”.

The same respondent, who plays an important role in formulating wrestling techniques shows us his personal involvement in the fight:

I knew wrestling for the heat; we'd take our jackets off because the kimono's jacket was too hot. We began training that, and then we started looking for people who fought it, and we found Sinhozinho. Yes, I adapted things from jiu-jitsu, judo and wrestling practically, because there were already the practitioners from the suburbs, [...] when there was a foreigner, we'd get something.

João Ricardo started in judo and then moved on to practice karate. After several confrontations, he started training wrestling at club America as mentioned above. According to Hugo Duarte, experiencing with different styles of fighting took place under the pugilistic habitus, where the influence of other fights manifests itself: “Yes, I took part in it. English boxing,

Thai boxing, I had friends who were in boxing and Thai boxing, there was a family of English boxing and Thai boxing; it's all a family”.

Hugo Duarte's concern with improving techniques is justified by the lack of techniques of direct blow exchange in standing fight, and by the advantages of wrestling; hence the union with the “family” of English boxing and Thai boxing: “[...] I used to train with all the ‘tough guys’; I'd pass them the ground part and they'd give me the standing part”.

Johil de Oliveira, who specializes in wrestling, also found himself training muay thai: “We had a partnership with Luiz Alves from the Boxe Thai gym, then everyone who practiced wrestling would do muay thai there at Boxe Thai, and those who practiced muay thay with Luiz Alves would train wrestling there with us”.

Among all styles practiced in Rio de Janeiro, olympic wrestling was part of the history of the four respondents, and it reinforced wrestling's repertoire of blows; respondents practiced and won championships in that kind of fight both as coaches and athletes. According to Roberto Leitão, “[...] We put people from wrestling to learn olympic wrestling. [...] To our style, wrestling is the core point because there's no good in being the world's best ground guy if can't put the other to the ground”. João Ricardo says: “[...] I used to do olympic wrestling at Gama Filho, and I won the championship for five years in a roll”. Hugo Duarte's statement shows his lifetime involvement with wrestling: “I did it at 16, and I'm 50 now”. Johil de Oliveira, in turn, says: “I've never trained olympic wrestling, but I took part in Rio's state Championship and I won it in 1995”.

Therefore, respondents' statements provide evidence that wrestling was built in a context of close collaboration with olympic wrestling; in sports disputes, the union with that fight refined wrestling techniques, also known by other names: “We used to call it pistol or sporting fight, or shorts' fight” (Roberto Leitão). “It was shorts' fight” (João Ricardo). “Twenty years ago I said that wrestling would be the fashionable fight” (Hugo Duarte). Our youngest respondent, who trained and practiced wrestling from the age of seven, said: “If you take off your kimono (and wear only shorts) and do the ground part, that's wrestling” (Johil de Oliveira). The vague terms used to identify the style indicate a field under construction. Prowrestling, wrestling, sports wrestling, freestyle wrestling, wrestling: the labels show approaches and appropriations that may convey the impression of a diffuse field, with partial overlapping of styles and techniques.

Practicing and fighting on shorts facilitated its acceptance, since it is similar to the reality of fighting in which everything goes, from which the Brazilian term *vale-tudo* would have been derived. However, this literal interpretation is not consensual. A considerable part of the documents examined uses the term *eventos de vale-tudo*, where the interpretation that fighters confronted opponents with different styles prevailed.

3.3 RIO DE JANEIRO AS A FIGHT STAGE

MMA events in Rio de Janeiro were organized by known fighters with undisputed leadership in wrestling and jiu-jitsu, who challenged one another at beaches, streets and parking lots. The context of the time was that of affirmation of each style of fight. What was at stake was showing that a form of fight could overcome the other and prove which the best ways of fighting and the best masters were. According to Lise (2014, p. 152), “Rio's newspapers in the 1930s

began to announce frequent events that gathered boxing, jiu-jitsu, capoeira and wrestling fights and, on some occasions, inter-style confrontations”.

Those events were gradually reduced but they did not completely inhibit demonstrations in squares and streets, to the point that Roberto Leitão said, about the TV fight show presented in the 1960s: “It was in Gávea, right in front of the Jockey Club; we’d participate in ‘Heroes of the ring’, MMA, at Continental TV. [...] At that time it was one of the Gracies against some outsider, and our wrestling club had advantages, strangely enough”.

In 1960, the authorities showed concern with wrestling events due to “slaps” and allegedly because of the “[...] danger and total lack of sportsmanship in (American) wrestling, which is only practiced in Brazil” and it should not be allowed (CORREIO DA MANHÃ, Jan. 9, 1960 2nd supp.). In an open letter to *Jornal do Brasil* (JORNAL DO BRASIL, 1960), American wrestling representative Rubens Berardo advocated the continuity of MMA events that happened on Mondays on Continental TV, organized by the Gracie brothers. But Brazilian families rejected violent scenes. Several media outlets caused a stir at the time, which culminated in a letter sent by Air Force Major-Brigadier to “Mr. Police Chief, demanding prohibition of such spectacles”. The newspaper concluded that the fact had already been brought for discussion at the National Sports Council and it would abide by its decision (JORNAL DO BRASIL, Jan. 9, 1960, p. 9). On the same day, newspaper *Correio da Manhã* published a story about changing the rules: “The commission will change...”. The discussion at the time was about the use of slaps by fighters during confrontations: “There were a number of diverging opinions on wrestling, regulations, conveniences, the illegalities of punches – each supporting the thesis that interested its advocates (CORREIO DA MANHÃ, Jan. 9, 1960, p. 15)”.

Wrestling, which until then had developed by itself, imported blows and slaps that evolved into punches, which began to be used in MMA events. Those events underwent a crisis that foreshadowed changes and divided opinions, with scenes that were exciting to some and violent to others. The crisis foreshadowed sportivization in the sense of Elias and Dunning (1992), of progressive control over the physical strength and restriction of damage to opponents’ bodies.

In 1962, there was an unfortunate episode when a jiu-jitsu fighter dislocated his opponent’s arm in a famous TV show (AWI 2012). Transmission on TV has ceased since then. The number of events decreased, and rules were debated and changed in different regions. João Ricardo sets the tone of that variation in the late 1960s, with a literal version for the term *vale-tudo*: “[...] in the ring, three rounds of five; punches and blows were not allowed in some events; open-hand slaps, knee, elbow were fine in Rio but not head blows; and in Goiás – I fought in Brasília – real punches were allowed there, everything was really allowed”.

In his statement, João Ricardo shows the stage of variation in changes in the fight, with *real* punches, besides slaps, knees blows and falls. It was in a stage of uncertainty towards sportivized fighting. Improvement of rules as well as control of violence and its homogenization changed events during the 20th century; attack actions were contained or modified without alternative, at the risk of maintaining the fight off any public space.

The change in the rules as a result of pressure for sportivization and search for spectacularization again attracted the public and ensured that events proliferated across the country, with more understandable and predictable actions of struggle, both for practitioners and spectators.

In this context, a passage from Elias and Dunning (1992, p. 224) deserves to be quoted literally. It helps to understand what happened to wrestling in Rio de Janeiro: “[...] competitions included a set of rules that ensured balance between possible high tension in the fight and reasonable protection against physical injury”.

According to fighters’ oral statements, Rio de Janeiro would have been a reference point for wrestling. However, other oral studies indicate other capitals as references (PASSOS *et al.*, 2014). Hugo Duarte places the return of that fight in the early 1980s, when he attended the first MMA event at the gymnasium of Rio de Janeiro’s América Futebol Clube, in: “The first MMA I saw was in 1980, at América with João Ricardo from Budokan”. At that time, Hugo used to practice wrestling with master Brunocilla at the Boqueirão club.

João Ricardo, a wrestling idol in MMA events in Rio de Janeiro and other states, influenced legions in Rio to practice the sport, from the 1960s until 2000, as a fighter and as a coach and creator of the Budokan Cup.¹

At each competition, fighting styles were evaluated. According to Roberto Leitão: “At that time, it was one of Gracies against an outsider (i. e., wrestling)”. To João Ricardo: “We did MMA, we didn’t know what opponents did”. Hugo Duarte said: “In MMA in Rio de Janeiro [...] everyone defended their own flag; we defended ours because some absurd things happened, and we revolted against it”. Johil de Oliveira highlights their rivalry with jiu-jitsu: “My desire was always fighting the jiu-jitsu people to prove that there is no best fight, there are best athletes, you know, the best athlete, the one who is best prepared”. The Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (2015) website reports 11 fights with wrestling. Jiu-jitsu had won six of them, with four draws and one defeat. In 1997, due to new trouble in a televised event, it was again banned for several years.

Johil de Oliveira says that his goal in the 1990s was to fight jiu-jitsu to prove that the best prepared athlete would win regardless of his style. When João Ricardo says that the opponent’s style of fight was not known, he refers to the beginning of the fight, since the origin of the opponent’s style becomes evident in the course of combat and, at its end, the winning method is made explicit and extolled.

We have evidence that jiu-jitsu fighters’ challenges against opponents of any style sought to assert their names in the fight’s market – and they often found icons of other fights willing to face them. According to the Master Roberto Leitão, “jiu-jitsu followers always invaded the gyms”. Hugo Duarte offers an explanation for the union of wrestling with Thai Boxing: “[...] and they invaded Molina’s gym; there was a fight and they scheduled an MMA fight against Thai boxing; we joined Thai Boxing; and then this war between jiu-jitsu and wrestling started”.

The attacks took place even at the beach, according to Hugo Duarte on one of the most emblematic scenes of that rivalry between wrestling and jiu-jitsu in the 1990s: “At Pepe beach, Rickson Gracie arrived with 50-60 people against me [...] and three others, and he asked: hey brother, are you ready?” A week later we invaded his gym at the Humaitá district.

The context of rivalries between fight styles in the 1980s and sportivization of fights are analyzed and evaluated by Hugo Duarte: “[...] Rio de Janeiro was under siege, it was only wrestling and jiu-jitsu, today everybody gets along, but it was not like that then”.

Johil de Oliveira talks about that rivalry: “It was important for the growth of MMA, you know, both for wrestling as jiu-jitsu”.

¹ The International Budokan Wrestling Cup has happened every year in Rio de Janeiro since the 1980s.

The growth of wrestling was partly caused by jiu-jitsu's practices and discourses as reported by Roberto Leitão: "Jiu-jitsu used a lot the theory of fighting to prove the supremacy of the art they championed"; compared to other forms of fight, jiu-jitsu was built based on asserting its techniques, as the most effective of physical fights. To maintain that image that earned it fame and status in the fight market, jiu-jitsu needed to assert itself before the other fights and wrestling stood out as the main opponent in those combats.

3.4 THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET FOR WRESTLING

Confrontations and victories in some MMA events broadcast on TV in the early 1960s brought international notoriety to wrestling and jiu-jitsu. The world of fighting began to know Brazilians in international MMA events. Hugo Duarte's statement points at barriers to wrestling's inclusion in the international scene of fights because of jiu-jitsu's bargaining power: "A Japanese guy arrived, Miúra [...] if he took (a contract) there for the jiu-jitsu guys, they would've stopped it; they would never let me sign a contract".

Since the early 1980s, the promoters of international MMA events sought the world's best fighters, and Brazilians stood out. Japan was the world's MMA "Mecca" from the second half of the 1990s on, when wrestling gained notoriety and eclipsed the sovereignty of the Gracie family, as João Ricardo tells us: "[...] I went to Japan in 1996 and took Ebenezer with me, and Pedro and Johil to an event in Japan, and the three of them won the Challenger".

In the same vein, Hugo Duarte's statement shows the prestige of wrestling: "We were heroes, we got to go to Japan, to travel all over Europe, I went 20 times to Japan; I won't move from here to give a seminar for less than three thousand euros, five thousand euros".

Wrestling's victories in international MMA events presented foreigners with techniques of that combat system, which our respondents helped develop, especially fighter and engineer Roberto Leitão. That is what we read in the statement of Roberto Leitão: "[...] the fight of many blows, cervical, torsions, heel keys". Johil de Oliveira ads: "Because it has many more blows, which are not allowed in jiu-jitsu, but are allowed in wrestling. So I think wrestling is more complete".

The multiplicity of wrestling's blows and their efficiency opened an international market for lectures about it, as shown in the statement of Hugo Duarte, who held seminars in Italy and the Netherlands: "[...] I used to earn up to 50,000 dollars per month; I went all over Europe and South America; it's a different fight, which has many blows". The fighting world was delighted with the variety and quantity of technical and traumatic blows developed by wrestling in the city of Rio de Janeiro during the 20th century.

4 CONCLUSION

The history of wrestling in Rio de Janeiro reflects the determination and performance of different groups of fighters when they confronted each other and it consolidated by asserting identity and difference, ensuring access to cultural goods, social prestige, and material power.

We conclude that the efforts of wrestling protagonists had their impact. The sport has evolved, incorporated new techniques, improved rules and mechanisms for controlling physical

force, thus contributing to improve fighters' self-concept. Sportivization resulted from the clash of fighters' interests with the mechanisms of social control in clubs and gyms.

Reflection is needed on the relation of fights with the duties of Physical Education professionals. New fields of intervention for graduates presuppose their participation in sportivization processes of technical and playful character competitions, which include fights. They must analyze the mechanisms of control and management of aggression in social safety, of education for self-esteem and self-concept. They must analyze the components of individual and team sports that can be part of pedagogy, thus enabling deconstruction of the fight metaphor. Each sport is a fight, and each style of fighting is a sport in which the focus is on the opponent's body, a moving target who must be overcome without being hurt.

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