

Fitness *food*: The denial of food taste because of the desired body



<https://doi.org/10.56238/uniknowindevolp-055>

Neuza Cristina Gomes da Costa

PhD in Contemporary Culture Studies from the ECCO Graduate Program - Federal University of Mato Grosso.

Juliana Abonizio

PhD in Sociology from Universidade Estadual Paulista Julio de Mesquita Filho - UNESP - Araraquara campus. Post-doctorate at the Institute of Social Sciences at the University of Lisbon and Post-doctorate at the Graduate Program in Social Anthropology - PPGAS - at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte.

ABSTRACT

Among the diversity of dietary practices and nutritional beliefs that coexist in contemporary times, we aim to unravel the relationship between a diet and a body shape, which has become known as fitness culture. To achieve our objective, we conducted eight interviews based on two criteria: self-identification and evidence of body shape that characterizes belonging to the corresponding lifestyle. For a better understanding of the

phenomenon, we also performed participant observation in two places frequented by the subjects of the analysis: a bodybuilding gym and a crossfit box, in Cuiabá, Mato Grosso. Through the data constructed, it was possible to identify the use of scientific discourses to defend the effectiveness of a dietary pattern that includes products, ways of preparation, schedules among other variables, considered essential to obtain the desired body shape, hypertrophied and with low fat index. This body, although perceived as an individual responsibility, is supported by discourses of various modalities of health professionals, the media and other members who adopt the same lifestyle. However, we could also assess that the change in eating habits for insertion and acceptance in the fitness universe affects the sociability of the subjects, especially in the family space, but also in the entry and permanence in new groups of peers and withdrawal of old ones.

Keywords: Corporality, Food culture, *Fitness universe*.

1 INTRODUCTION¹

The cultural phenomenon that became known as *fitness* identifies a lifestyle that becomes visible through the size of a hypertrophied body with a low-fat index. Such a body, in addition to the ostentatious form, carries notions of health and beauty that are often confused.

Fitness brings disciplinary discourses that associate a morality that values willpower and determination and the market offer of goods and services aimed at the body, situated in levels of access and distinction that are related to monetary values, but also to the values conquered within this universe in which other forms of distinction are built. Thus, in addition to the consumption of products and services, such as access to gyms, personalized trainers, clothes, food, supplements, health professionals among many others, the body shape displayed, the time of belonging in this lifestyle and even social media constitute themselves as distinctive elements.

¹ This article was originally published in Portuguese with the title *A alimentação fitness: corpo e comida na contemporaneidade* na Revista Antropolítica, v. 55, n. 1, Niterói, e56147,1. Quadr., Jan./abr.,2023.



Everything that is encompassed about the definition of *fitness* can be considered a field in the sense that Bourdieu (2010) defines: a delimited and extraordinary space, endowed with a certain autonomy, with specific laws and rules, at the same time as influenced and related to a broader social space. The field, formed by institutions and/or individuals, agents that integrate and seek to maintain or achieve certain positions, in a kind of "sense of play" (using sports language). To remain in the field, countless acts of recognition are necessary that, repeatedly, are the currency of constitutive adhesion of belonging and in which collective ignorance is engendered. Belonging to the field, however, if it does not exclude, affects other types of belonging, such as networks of friends, family, etc.

In the field of fitness, *there are several institutions that offer goods and services, and emanate discourses of knowledge and power to individuals, including those who are not part of the field, even because the fitness discourse itself extrapolates itself being*² appropriated in various ways by social actors who can use products, terms, jargon, clothing without, however, being recognized as fully belonging, which happens in steps. These institutions involve medicine, the pharmaceutical, food and fashion industries, the State, with biopolitical strategies, education and services, such as bodybuilding gyms and other sports activities.

Agents, always, enter and exit the "game". Those who manage to comply with the laws and rules of the field remain and, through the conquest of body modification, reach a volume of capital, especially the symbolic, which according to Bourdieu (2010), translates prestige and honor, being a form of conception of the world loaded with meanings. Symbolic capital is a way of classifying individuals in this field, but the soil of this field, we highlight, is not solid.

Of the rules to enter, remain, ascend and continue to remain, we highlight two essential: assiduous practice of physical exercises and specific nutrition.

For the construction of the empirical data that allowed the reflection we present, we sought to understand daily life and corporality, with Pais (2002) and Le Breton (2011) as reference. And, considering food something routine, we turn to sociology and anthropology of food in order to unravel the importance of eating, and how to do it, it is for the *fitness* group that we intend to unveil. We use the act of eating (and everything that surrounds it) as a privileged locus for understanding this universe, as, in fact, the interviews proved.

For the analysis of the daily life of the fitness *subjects*, *two forms of data collection were selected, participant observation in the training sites and interviews to know the routine of the subjects*. However, the focus was not on physical activity, but on the observation of diet and interviews on this topic, even though, due to the nature of the interactions between researchers and respondents, the topics addressed were crossed by so many others.

² It extrapolates in such a way that it is even seen in the advertising of pet food. See Kulick, 2009.



Specifically, one of the authors, a native of the field in question, conducted participant observation in the period of one year (2016) in a bodybuilding and *crossfit* gym in the city of Cuiabá, capital of the state of Mato Grosso. The length of stay in each training space was around 1 hour and 30 minutes to 2 hours, with subsequent recording of the observed questions and dialogues that occurred. Because it is an older practice, in the bodybuilding gym the attendance was lower than in the *crossfit*. Thus, the frequency in bodybuilding was on average three times a week and in the practice of *crossfit* from five to six days.

In the contexts of analysis, eight subjects were interviewed who identify themselves *and are identified as fitness, based on what is daily considered, that is, they are subjects whose bodies were defined in terms of musculature, with muscle hypertrophy and absence of evident subcutaneous fat, body shape idealized by the followers of this cultural group and who identify the subjects as fitness.* Observing bodybuilding and *crossfit* practitioners with body modifications, which both natively and for the researchers, means inclusion criteria in the field that is intended to be understood, we realize that the *fitness* identity is only fully recognized when the individual already has his body modified by a set of practices, which does not involve only the practice of physical exercises, but rational control over their food and other aspects of everyday life in a disciplined manner. Thus, those new to the practice are not immediately incorporated and recognized as *fitness*. Only time acting on the muscles will allow this identification, with temporal permanence being a decisive criterion, which makes this identity less fluid than a way of dressing, cutting or dyeing hair, or choosing musical genres, examples of constructive consumption of identities, especially juveniles. Nevertheless, we have seen and heard the story of subjects who belonged to the field for years and abandoned it for various reasons whose motivations transcend the theme of this article, focused on food.

The interview with the practitioners took place based on a script in order to guide key points of the discussion. As this study is part of a larger research, whose title is **The multiple orientations of contemporary consumption: ethics, activism, pleasure and health**, carried out at UFMT - Cuiabá campus, by the BACO research group, to which the two authors belong and, one of them held her PhD on the *fitness* universe, the interview script contemplated several aspects, since it was part of this larger research. However, we point out that, for the purposes of this article, we have specifically cut out the topics related to food.

It should also be clarified that, because it is a qualitative research, there was no concern with the number of subjects to be interviewed, but with the quality of information that, to the extent that it was repeated, allowed us to perceive the existence of a pattern and thus made possible, in the intersection with the specialized bibliography, an understanding of the eating routine and the meanings attributed to it.



We highlight that, although only one of the authors conducted the interviews and participant observation, the analysis we present was carried out jointly.

In technical and ethical terms, we highlight that the interviews, for the most part, were recorded with prior authorization through an audio recorder and, in order to preserve the identity of the subjects, we alienated the real names and adopted fictitious names chosen by the interviewees themselves.

2 THE MANAGEMENT OF BODIES AND FOOD INTAKE

The body is the way we experience the world, but before being or belonging to an individual, the body is culturally tamed, as Mauss (1974) already addressed in his classic discussion of body techniques in 1934.

In contemporary culture, marked by plurality, it engenders different ways of experiencing and thinking about the body, which can be seen as a destination or project, the latter being increasingly frequent. (LE BRETON, 2011; VELHO, 1994).

In the discussion on the history of the Western human body, Tucherman shows how the existence of numerous technical interventions, which can even mean a *cyberbody*, considering the advances of scientific interventions made possible by genetic engineering, molecular biology and new surgical techniques, etc. (TUCHERMAN, 1999, p.23) The search would be an ideal body, but what means ideal body is no longer a consensus.

In contemporaneity, according to Le Breton (2011, p.28), the body is not a destination, it is a provisional representation. In the case of *the bodybuilder*, we can think of the notion of design discussed by Velho (1994). In the case of *fitness* as well. As we could see from the discourses, the body is experienced daily as a project, although cases of giving up and leaving the field are not rare, which makes us reflect that, despite the intention, the experience and longevity in this universe are mediated by many factors that intersect in individual biographies.

According to Landa (2012), *fitness* represents a set of companies and services that promote a specific body culture. This referred body is the muscular body, worshipped, which sustains the *fitness* field that, simultaneously, discloses values related to individual pleasures and leises and self-donation and sacrifice, dedication, overcoming and conquest. In short, a disciplinary behavior expressed in a disciplined body. The goal is to rationalize every gram of protein ingested, every muscle group, every number of exercise sets, and every hypertrophied centimeter. The search for such eminent management of the body can be, according to Le Breton (2011), a way to give the subject a sense of control in an uncontrolled world and in transformations in areas of great social importance, such as sexuality, birth, singularity and death.

For Landa (2012), the ideology of *fitness* would constitute both a repertoire to shape and transform the body, as well as a link of a technical device of (self) government and subjectivation, thus



being marked by a very peculiar notion of instrumentality, functionality and beauty. The *fitbody* would be a "sign of valuation, mediation and exclusion/inclusion of subjects who are inscribed in the logics of (self) discipline and normalization established by the body culture of *fitness*". (LANDA, 2012, p. 228). However, it should be noted that the simply muscular body, as a result of *bodybuilding*, can be seen, as Le Breton (2011) does, as an accumulation of useless muscles, since it is hypertrophy and not strength that matters.

The *fitness* culture has been developing, but not everyone who shares their beliefs, or wants or can keep in their field and subfields, because initiation tests and a behavior aimed at meeting the body that modifies and is modified by everyday habits, the main ones being the exercise routine and food. The latter is the focus of analysis of this article, whose objective is to unveil how, through certain dietary practices, individuals enter and leave groups of belonging, in this case, *the fitness culture*, alter their biographies, the view about themselves. The changes are seen in daily life that, despite its banal character, as highlighted by Pais (2002), allows us to reflect on the social representations expressed even in the most banal actions, such as the act of eating.

Eating is a bio-psycho-social act. In contemporary culture, we witness the coexistence, often confusing, of various dietary practices, based on scientific discourses, or that resemble them, in addition to diverse traditions sustained by culture, family traditions and localities.

The proposition of Fischler (1995) about the existence of a gastro-anomie has resisted, since the middle of the twentieth century, given the variety and incompatibility of diets, which abound in the press, specialized or not. Thus coexist, good or bad, advocates of meat intake, exclusive eaters of organic products, vegetarians of various shades, vegans, adherents of the ketogenic, paleolithic, raw diet, among others. Each of these modalities can find arguments, scientific or otherwise, that defend its superiority over the other.

Regardless of the health benefits or harms – which is another cultural construct, as is disease –³ foods tell a story (AMON; MENASCHE, 2008) and consumption is a way of making sense of the world, as Douglas and Isherwood (2009) discuss. Similarly, the notions of pure and impure are social constructs, as Douglas (1991) demonstrates about the contradictory aspects of the dietary rules present in Leviticus.

Knowing the existing diversity, in our analysis, we focused specifically on the diet considered *fitness and* adopted, although there are some individual variations, by the individuals belonging to the field in question, since, in the discourses analyzed, as we will demonstrate below, a very specific diet is considered essential for the achievement and maintenance of the desired body, alongside the practice of exercises.

³ For a discussion of normality and pathology, we can return to Durkheim's classic *The Rules of the Sociological Method* and realize how they are variable, as the author discusses, between societies and their respective stages. On the notion of body, health and disease, we suggest reading José Carlos Rodrigues' *Tabu do Corpo*.



The bodybuilding and *crossfit* practitioners observed and interviewed justify their practice with arguments that swing between health and aesthetics. Health is understood as a quality and a state of the body that can be perceived in its movement and its functionality in terms of capacity to perform daily activities, well-being and disease prevention. The valued aesthetics is translated into a lean body, not necessarily slender, but with a low fat index, and in muscular shape. It is the definition and hypertrophy of the muscle that characterizes the ideal of beauty worshipped and desired by the group and, to achieve this ideal, several techniques are used.

Currently, discussions about the meanings of healthiness in the scope of the human sciences and health question the biomedical model of care focused on the disease and biological body, (CAPRA, 2012). Thus, we think more holistically, considering the well-being and the set to which the individual belongs, not only the state in which each organ is found in isolation. Nevertheless, although we have perceived, at a discursive level, the importance of a global health, including in its dimensions of mental well-being provided by the adopted lifestyle, many subjects continue in a kind of shredding their own body by stating, for example, needing to increase my biceps or need to increase the intake of specific proteins or vitamins. This fact makes us relativize the holistic conception of the body, to the extent that, in some cases, the muscles are worked differently, including in relation to gender, being more common the more strenuous work to the glutes a feminine practice and a greater attention to the upper limbs, a masculine practice, as we observed in the field.

If initially, the entry into the field is the search for health, its permanence may be by the conquest of aesthetics, in the same way, if the initial search had the preponderance of form, the well-being and vigor conquered begin to rise in the order of priorities. It is then a junction between the beautiful and the healthy often used, even without deliberate intention, as synonyms.

The motivations of the subjects were also discussed by Jacob (2015) when approaching functional eating as a *growing fitness* food that promotes beyond nutrition, health and the possibility of achieving a leaner body with more muscle. Functional eating, according to the author, has been considered a correct diet that is shaping a language of communication, transcending the *fitness* circuit. But according to our research, the idea of functional food outside the *fitness circuit* is adapted and incorporated into more general tastes, being less rigorous and more syncretic.

Despite the functionality of food, as described by ANVISA (BRASIL, 1999a; BRASIL, 1999b), referring to the potential to promote health, avoiding diseases and not to the body modifications that it can provide. In the case studied, the objectives are confused.

Regardless of the reason for entering the field, to modify the body, the subjects need to change the diet. The diet to which they were accustomed is now seen as "bad" and as causing an unwanted body shape and the presence of real or potential diseases. Although there are many diets in today's world to the point that Fischler (apud GOLDENBERG, 2011) says that we live in a state of gastro-



anomie, it is possible to perceive the existence of a pattern in terms of nutrients and number of meals in relation to Brazilians, as suggested by the extensive study conducted by Barbosa (2007), in which the author discusses the supremacy of rice-with-beans on the plate of Brazilians and the fractionation of meals most seen in our country.

However, as we have already discussed, there are still many nutritional beliefs that advocate a healthy diet, free of processing, pesticides or meats, or that seek regularity between meals or advocate fasting practices. Faced with this multiplicity of diets in search of health and beauty, the dietary pattern of the fitness subject is situated, reflexively adapted and readapted by the practices and results obtained. In any case, if they want to remain in the field, the desired ones need to adopt eating habits different from those in which they were raised or those with whom they have lived mostly so far, in addition to having to adopt other behaviors that go through discipline, control and individual vigilance. These subjects assume responsibility for their own care and for the consumption they choose to make, but they face a new socialization to have their relevance recognized in the field.

In this sense, food appeared as a central theme of the subjects who identify themselves as *fitness* and that appears as another framework within the contemporary kaleidoscope related to food, often treated as a moment of union and eucharist, but which, as we have seen, can also engender conflicts and symbolic disputes.

3 EATING IS NECESSARY, LIKING FOOD IS NOT NECESSARY

Protein is the nutrient considered essential by practitioners of both sports mentioned in this study - bodybuilding and *crossfit* - because it is believed that this is the substance that will promote the development of muscle mass. In this way, practitioners seek to consume fractional amounts throughout all meals of the day to provide enough amino acids for muscle protein synthesis, whose hypertrophy is the main goal.

According to Sgarbieri (1996), protein, as well as carbohydrates and fats, are essential nutrients to the human body and must be present in the diet. Among the various functions of these macromolecules - enzymes, nutrient transport, antibody formation, hormones - what matters most is their structural and contractile function for *fitness* subjects, precisely because it is what helps the desired hypertrophy. Even without the specific knowledge of exercise physiology, practitioners know, by living with other practitioners, through the media and digital influencers that protein intake is fundamental for muscle contraction and muscle growth, which is impossible in the absence of its intake.

Protein, along with whole and functional carbohydrates, judged by practitioners as "good", become nutrients sought in foods to be consumed. By food, we can consider the concept of Barbosa (2007, p. 92), as a "set of nutrients necessary for the physical reproduction of human life" and,



according to the author, the combination of food and the transformation to eat in a specific way, would be the concept of food. The food suitable for consumption, according to practitioners, is one that provides basically carbohydrate and protein, but not obtained from any foods, but from those considered "good." We emphasize that the evaluation of foods is linked to the property of the foods that compose it, indicating a rationality in the construction of evaluative criteria that are not related to the palate, be it personal or socially constructed taste. In fact, taste can again be constructed individually and socially in the subgroup in question, but immediately we see that it moves away from the tastes shared by the family and other poles of sociability outside the field. The judgment made by the interviewees about the nutrients they seek, in addition to "good" and "bad", can be considered pure or impure, carriers of harms or benefits.

The foods considered "pure" are those that serve the body, both in its *performance*, as well as in the promotion of health and prevention of diseases. Many, even without more specialized knowledge about the foods they should eat, began by eliminating from the diet those "impure":

I've done various types of dieting since I started in bodybuilding, but from the beginning, I've always cut out everything that wasn't helpful: sugar, soda, white rice. I started eating every three hours, gave priority to fruit, eat plenty of chicken, egg, oatmeal, sweet potatoes. (CAMILLE).

In the course of this session, we highlight several excerpts from the subjects' statements that show the judgment of the family's food and the "street" as "bad" and dangerous, giving a *status* of impurity to it, as opposed to the food they consume, considered as "good", pure.

According to DaMatta, there is a dichotomy between the "house" and the "street", the former being reliable and the latter a space that suggests risks. "They are spheres of meanings that constitute reality itself and that allow us to normalize and moralize behavior through our own perspectives." (DAMATTA, 1997, p.42). In the case we analyzed, street food is poorly evaluated, however, the shared at home as well, which causes the *fitness individual* to make their own food or order it from establishments that already abound in the business. Another important issue is the distinction between food and food.

For Barbosa (2007), there is a cultural distinction between food and food, the latter being culturally manipulated and the former only the ingredient. What we call cooking involves a series of techniques of selection, cooking and representations coated with symbols that characterize different cultures. (BARBOSA, 2007, p. 91-93).

It should be noted, however, that although there is no doubt about the fact that our interviewees eat food (pardon the redundancy), the emphasis in the discourses is on the food, on the ingredients and their properties. Thus, we could think that the subjects eat food and not food and the cooking techniques



are only those that aim to value the good characteristic of the food, for example, not to use immersion frying techniques that would destroy the benefits of the ingredient.

Although we note this in the interviews, it should also be noted *that the growth of the fitness universe* occurs so exponentially that it is possible to see establishments that sell products considered functional and, at the same time, tasty, such as the case of *gourmet fitness*, aimed at the public that does not want to give up neither the taste nor the bodily effects. Others no longer make a point, claim to eat what they need, pleasure gives way to an asceticism that condemns gluttony and directs the vision in the mirror, the hands of the scale, the tape measure and the regular bioimpedance examinations.

Anyway, there is a whole classification learned through professional prescriptions, media and older people in the field about what one can and cannot ingest. To understand these classificatory criteria, we resorted to the analysis of Douglas (1991). For the author, the impure is related to disorder, being a symbol of danger and power. The notions of impurity are inserted in social life through a largely functional and expressive level, in an attempt for people to influence or even monitor the behavior of others with the apparatus of beliefs of dangers that threaten transgressors, reinforcing personal constraints and thus maintaining the social order. Within the subgroup studied, the dangers that frighten the subjects, in addition to those that commune with the collective consciousness, such as violence, death, loneliness, are related to the body, to what can harm body modification, metabolic functioning and *performance*. The subjects then consider foods rich in protein, whole and functional carbohydrates and "good" fats (coconut oil and olive oil in pure state, nuts) as pure foods and the others as impure and dangerous, a classification framework that causes various conflicts and tensions and a system of control and surveillance of oneself and others.

In the case studied, *fitness* food, consisting mainly of functional foods, seems to focus on a certain group of foods that is repeated at meals. The diet described by the interviewees involves: a) among the proteins: chicken breast, fish, lean red meat, such as duckling or rump and eggs; d) among the carbohydrates: rice, whole grain pasta and bread, sweet potatoes, vegetables and greens; c) among the fats: avocado, coconut oil, olive oil, nuts. It is noteworthy that fatty foods are valued in their pure function, without heating.

The cooking techniques valued, if necessary, are the frying done in non-stick pans or in the *Air fryer* (electric fryer if oil is used) or the use of an oven. Meats and other foods are seasoned, preferably, with so-called natural seasonings (leaves) to obtain a low percentage of sodium in the food. Vegetables and tubers, such as yams or sweet potatoes, can be cooked in boiling water.

The diet that practitioners follow is based on the diet of an even more restricted group, that of bodybuilders. In the study by Sabino *et al* (2010) on food and food of bodybuilders, the authors verified



the predominance of 'white' foods, considered, in their classification schemes, rich in proteins and carbohydrates, such as chicken breast, fish, pasta without sauce or salt, fiber, potato, banana, egg white.

It is perceived that this type of food has expanded and incorporated the menu of many people who crave a more beautiful body, but without the degree of transformation of bodybuilders' professionals, often considered exaggerated, as well as supplementation. According to Sabino *et al* (2010), the consumption of white foods occurs in significant quantities and not infrequently such consumption is associated with the intake of dietary supplements that are understood to be carriers of the same substances and capable of 'growing'. The use of supplements is considered indispensable, as they give strength and help in increasing muscle mass.

In our analysis, we also realized the importance of dietary supplements, even without unanimity, by subjects who use *whey protein* in recipes and vitamins in order to supplement the daily intake of proteins, which certainly has little to do with taste. Other supplements that also contribute to muscle development are BCAA, glutamine and creatine, amino acids with different functions. The first, composed of leucine, valine and isoleucine, considered essential for muscle growth, development and recovery; glutamine also collaborates in this development, but is widely used for its action on the immune system of the individual; and creatine that in addition to the function of contributing to muscle development, collaborates in the synthesis of ATP and, according to many practitioners, It is used in cycle form to increase strength in lifting weights.

Sabino *et al* (2010) associate the use of supplements to an imaginary built on the belief that their content will give strength, power and muscle growth, purposes widely publicized and sold by the sports media. The authors describe that the enchantment produced by dietary supplements is associated with images of the muscular body, with an implicit promise that the higher the protein intake, the more protein in the body is manufactured and so the supplements present themselves clean of everything that can be considered heavy. In this sense, we can also attribute the idea of purity to these products.

This imaginary could also be identified in some of the interviewees, but it did not exist before entering this sports field. According to Rotanzeiro: "ah, I thought what you do is it? (the supplement) Am I going to get huge? It was kind of bigoted, then you research it and you see it's nothing like that."

The supplement, after the beginning of use, appeared to this interviewee as a facilitator in protein intake: "when I am lazy (to prepare a meal), I take a *whey*." It is important to reflect on what is considered a complement or supplement to an already specific diet and the replacement of meals by these supplements, which can be seen differently in the group.

For Alexandra, the beginning of the consumption of supplements happened two years after the practice of *crossfit*, when she saw the need to increase protein intake for muscle mass gain, being



encouraged by a nutritionist and a doctor: "I thought of nutritionist, doctor, thought of pump, I⁴said, I will not take anything. I had a prejudice, I didn't even know what *whey protein* was, a *BCCA*." At the time of the interview, she said she routinely ingests *whey protein*, *BCCA*, glutamine and, before competitions, creatine, including with a sponsor obtained for being one of the pioneering women in the practice of *crossfit* in the state.

Sabino *et al* (2010) perceive this increase in the consumption of supplements and sometimes the replacement of food (or food) by supplements as a

process of increasing gustatory standardization and transformation of food into post-food, a scientificized ethereal substance, which social groups would be carrying out new commensal practices, articulating solidarities and against gastronomic hegemonies. (SABINO *et al*, p. 354).

The change perceived by these authors is also perceived in this work. All the subjects we talked to stated that they use or have already used supplements, but for some, this consumption is recent and sporadic, especially due to the financial issue, since they are products of high purchasing value. Even with the difficulty of buying the supplements and even in the face of a fearful opinion about their effects, all practitioners have already made the use of *whey protein*, either continuously or sporadically, during the training trajectory as an aid to a more hyperprotein and hypocaloric diet.

In addition to a standardized daily diet and the consensus on its effect on the body and capacity for body modification, there are other common characteristics among the study subjects. Practices that have become routines, despite carrying some exceptions, which leads to the result, as is believed. Among the characteristics mentioned, we highlight the number of daily meals, ranging from six to seven, with an interval of about three hours and, for this, the loading of the "lunchbox". The lunch box, in addition to subverting the time and place of meals standardized in most of society, promotes the distinction between good food and "that of others." One eats at the time one should eat, with or without desire and one eats where one is.

The discipline required to follow the diet generates some conflicts between "duty" and "wanting", between reason and emotion in the face of food desires.

For Barbosa (2007), there are moments standardized by society to eat and, using the analysis of books and recipes, prescriptions of institutions and doctors, concluded that the meal system should be composed of at least six moments of eating. However, with the application of questionnaires to more than 2,136 people distributed in ten Brazilian cities, Barbosa found a disagreement with this prescription, since Brazilians reported eating three to four meals a day.

⁴"Bomb" is a language of the *fitness* field that refers to the use of anabolic steroids, substances that potentiate muscle growth.



Our interviewees perform what Barbosa (2007) considered prescribed by the medical and institutional discourse of the time. However, the field is dynamic and new prescriptions emerge, such as the practice of intermittent fasting that prescribes more time between food intake in order to mobilize the stored fat stock and enable weight loss. The benefits are not consensual, because along with fat loss, muscle mass is lost, which does not make this method so attractive to those seeking hypertrophy.

The lunch boxes arouse the interest and curiosity of people outside this field, people "who do not follow a diet" or "normal", as cited by the interviewees, leading to incomprehension because they find the number of foods allowed for ingestion or because food is repeated daily, or even because they eat "food" for breakfast. An example of this is Hercules who claimed to eat six meals a day, with an interval of three hours, being at that moment (the one in the interview), three with carbohydrates and three with zero carbohydrates, only protein and some fat option. Breakfast was considered the most important meal for him, always with carbohydrate, rice or whole grain noodles and chicken. This meal, when described to friends, caused astonishment: "do you have lunch when you wake up?", he said he was asked with surprise, because it would be breaking the food logic of the Brazilian system.

Alexandra prepared her lunchboxes over the weekend and froze them: "I always cook my vegetables, I leave a lot of green salad ready, vegetables, pods, broccoli, zucchini, I always leave it ready on Sunday. I already leave everything frozen, my pre-workout portion⁵. I leave everything separate for the whole week." Only lunch is not prepared by Alexandra, being ordered from a "naturalist" restaurant near her place of work, judged by the same as "great", since preparing the food without industrialized products, preservatives and frying. According to Alexandra: "I say, I need 100 grams of protein, 50 of carbo, 150 of vegetables and green salad, they do. It is very expensive! I pay about 27 reais in the lunch box, but everything is done in olive oil, nothing industrialized, tomato paste is natural."

From the perspective of the interviewees of this study, the food they eat is healthy and pure, thus differentiating themselves from people they consider "normal", seen as irresponsible towards their health or sloppy in relation to their own form. Healthy in the sense that they promote benefits in the biological body in order to prevent diseases. On the other hand, people they consider "normal", who are concerned with health and appearance within an acceptable and socially shared limit, often make moral judgments about the dietary restrictions to which *fitness* people are subjected considering an exaggeration, especially when one has body modification as motivation, considered a futility.

In this sense, the distinction between the food that practitioners eat and that of "normal people" allows reflection on these paradoxes and in the consideration that this more oriented and restricted diet is considered as superior, of greater value for the fact that they ingest functional foods and also for the emotional control and discipline before the maintenance of the "diet", Especially, without the pleasure

⁵Pre-workout is a meal that is usually taken at least 30 minutes before starting training.



of food. This also happens to people who adopt other non-hegemonic diets, such as vegans, macrobiotics, frugivores and others.

Even with the judgment of the interviewees of the "ordinary" food, because it impairs the process of body construction, the practitioners deal with conflicts regarding the pleasure and desire for other foods considered as "crap". Sweet food such as candies, chocolates, cakes are considered as villains and also identified as addiction, something to be fought.

Because they do not share the same food as the family, this often generates a domestic conflict that can be a problem in maintaining the diet they strive to follow. Ingrid stated that her mother has a negative influence on the maintenance of her diet, as she prepares foods that escape the prescription: "the problem of my diet is my mother, in addition to her helping, it also hinders. She makes omelettes, those things for me, but she also does a lot of things and I can't eat." Ingrid's "not being able to eat" relates to the preparation of foods that can impair body modification, such as cakes with white flours (simple carbohydrate) or fried ones.

Rick also described that he is the only one in his household who follows a specific diet and that his mother still judges him as "*psycho*":

I sit at the table, but the food is different. My mother says that I'm *too psycho*, worried about the body, but like I tell her, people of old, it seems that health is fat, the person has to be fat to be healthy, I don't think so.

This excerpt from Rick's speech reveals that while he doesn't share the food, he does share at least a few moments of the family meal, which relativizes the idea of complete exclusion. What we see is a network of negotiations: Ingrid's mother makes an omelet, Rick sits with the family. Thus, we can perceive the discussion made by Simmel (2004) about the sociological character of the meal, not being a simple "act of eating", which would be a physiological, primitive and individual element. Simmel (2004, p. 161) states that "to the extent that the meal becomes a sociological subject, it assumes more stylized, more aesthetic and more supra-individual regulated forms." The meal allows for socialization and announces rules and prescriptions about the act of eating. About some changes brought about by the meal, such as regularity, the author describes that one ate when one was hungry, now one eats at times that people have available to be together; On the gestures, a normatization emerges, a code of rules, such as sitting at the table.

Thus, even if Rick consumes a different family food, sitting at the table for the meal demonstrates that the social character of the food has not been completely abolished, as one might imagine through some more emphatic interviews regarding the individuality put in the lunchbox. Even if Rick's food serves for a certain nourishment to the body, which would bring it closer to the primitive character, one has to consider the cultural meaning of "eating together".



The "eating together", according to Montanari (2013), is a characteristic, even if not exclusive, of man. The author points out that "eating together" does not necessarily mean being in harmony, but participating in the common table would be the first sign of belonging, a way of saying that one is part of the same family or group.

In the case of Rick and the other interviewees, not sharing the same food would break the logic of communion. However, it seems that this break is mitigated when they come together. "Sitting at the table", even if it is to eat a different food from the others, maintains the social characteristic of the meal. "Eating together" is then a "being together" and this balances some "breaks" of the logic of communion.

Practitioners, despite all the discourse of willpower and denial of pleasure, end up consuming some foods that escape the prescription and aim to brighten the palate. For this, there is the "garbage day" or the "garbage diet". It is not known who created this term, but used as a language and action of the field. In addition to being a way to gather with others, to be together, it is also a way to deal with the conflicts between pleasure and health, or pleasure and the bodily goal.

Even knowing the benefits and harms of food, they adopt the diet considered good, but institute an exception day in which they can allow themselves to eat the foods considered forbidden. At other times, they may give in to some temptation, but in general, it is a bad intake programmed almost as a reward for the good diet followed and that, for this reason, would have its maleficent capacity controlled. It is yet another negotiation between pleasure and asceticism, functionality and taste.

I think I'll go on for life (the food), it's been three years that I follow right food, but sometimes if it makes me want to eat something, I eat, I have a lot of desire to eat sweet, but I always have an outlet at home, a cake without sugar, a guava without sugar, I always have an option at home not to be running away from the diet. (Alexandra) (bold ours)

I eat right during the week, I don't drink soda, I don't eat fried foods. Like sweets when they are dark chocolate, without sugar or peanut butter itself. I eat fruits at least once a day, like vegetables just right. Very rare times I eat white carb. But on the weekend I allow myself a wine, a tasty snack, a pizza. But all in moderation and then the other day I already give an insured to compensate. (Nicole)

I do not follow 100% of the diet prescribed (by the nutritionist), but I try, I follow about 80 to 90 percent, I eat right, but weekend I always go out, I eat other things. I like pizza a lot, I ate a lot of pizza, a lot of rotation, but what I realized, the pizza has nothing good, it has no protein, it only has wheat, fat, it was very full, it was bad, then now I'm avoiding it, when I go out, I'll eat food, I'll go on a meat rodizio. Basically something I really like, cheese cake, then weekend, I eat, drink with coffee. (Rick)

In Nicole's speech, when she expresses "tasty snack", we perceive the relationship between pleasure and health. Thus, Camile also said that she got used to such foods, even without so much pleasure. It is also noteworthy that the "weekend" appears as permissive days to get carried away by the pleasure of the palate built by the previous foods, which are now considered prohibited. It is a situation of liminality (TURNER 1974), of dismissal of their frequent social positions, which usually occurs on weekends, as rites for re-entry into the discipline of the week.



There is a re-elaboration of food taste, caused by an external motivation, which separates these categories – pleasure and health. The reelaboration of food taste was described by Santos (2008) when talking about the tendency to lose weight and that the operationalization of the diet is restrictive in calories and fats, being the difficulty in operationalizing the control of hunger and appetite with food desires, leading to conflicts between the rational and emotional.

They compete with each other for the pleasure of looking in the mirror, of being healthy and of eating. Faced with this multiplicity of factors that contribute to the construction of the subjects and the perception of themselves, we can observe that, even adopting largely a dietary rationality, the interviewees do not position themselves as radicals and often defend themselves when they are seen as such:

I have a lot of control with food, but I am not radical and I do not like radicalism, for example, totally cut the carbohydrate, I do not like these "crazy" because I believe that the body needs everything since in the amount really fractionated. (NICOLE)

I'm not radical, like some I see, who goes on his birthday and takes a lunchbox. If I go on my birthday, I eat salty, I eat sweet. If it's birthday, or mother's house, as normal and it's like garbage day. (ROTANZEIRO)

The interviewees presented a perspective against the radical control of food in the sense of not ingesting a certain food for the harm it can cause to the body. Thus, they seek to avoid foods considered bad, but avoidance does not mean not eating for life. Faced with "a lot of desire", they give in to the desire, even if they later compensate for this slip or "garbage" meal with more intense training for fat burning or a "hold" in the feeding.

The ingestion of some bad or impure food is remedied with an extra workout, in the sense of expelling from the body those ingredients that are not welcome. The extra training works as a ritual of purging the contamination generated by the ingestion of inadequate food and as a moral atonement, a punishment for the lapse in ascetic practice.

According to Ortega (2008), the "diet" is no longer an item of distinction between social classes, the discourses of healthy eating and the desire to be thin cross the social classes, although often, only discursively and not effectively in relation to what is set on the table, both by food tradition and accessibility. Although the moral stigma of the fat is common to rich and poor and although there is a different relationship between social classes regarding conceptions and practices related to health, obesity and corporality, there is an association between the fat body and the poor body. The products of the *light* and *diet* empire, all the techniques of reducing measures, all health professionals are not accessible to all social strata. The very meaning of the fat body, which once meant power, according to Vigarello (2012), comes to mean lack of control and inefficiency in modernity. This occurs even in relation to animals, and the fitness rations, premium *etc are the fastest growing branch* (KULICK, 2009)



In a common way, however, we have the imperative about the discourse of risk in which the individual is constituted as autonomous and responsible, which significantly distances the discussion of health from the dimension of public policies. The norms and rules of food followed by the subjects of this research were incorporated through contact with institutions of knowledge, which do not consist only of the representatives of the disciplines, such as the nutritionist or medical nutritionist, but also of other "holders of knowledge", whether those who already present body modifications and are legitimized by this body, being the living experience of the knowledge applied, or physical educators, acting as instructors in the gyms, *or* crossfit *coaches*, or even as *a personal trainer*.

Despite the counselors and the shared knowledge, the responsibility for health and the ostentatious body is the individual, thus, it is a body endowed with social and political value that demonstrates the responsibility and management of the subject over his own life, and characterizing a new life policy (ROSE, 2012) based on the body that they aim to conquer and maintain for as long as possible.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the *fitness* universe, seen from within, as we did in this reflection, we saw that one of the most radical changes (and experienced daily) is in relation to food. A new food discipline, based on food and nutrient restriction, fractional and quantified meals, diverging from the dishes served by the family among other institutions is necessary for entry and permanence in the field, which does not occur without conflict. Understanding the food consumption of subjects who consider themselves and are identified as *fitness*, who practice physical exercises such as leisure, health or aesthetics, also allows us to understand the symbolic representations of food, health and corporality.

The body is built, but it also builds the world lived by people and so it is important to consider the perceptual and sensitive experience of people who seek modifications, especially, in the case of the scope of this research, through food. In this sense, this article, when addressing the eating routine of the fitness subject, permeated by discourses of knowledge, by (self) expertise on food and its effects, as well as the characteristics of daily eating, endowed with specificity proper to a particular field, but tending to extrapolation, helps the discussion about the importance of the discipline that controls bodies and lives, including the notion of individual responsibility (and public irresponsibility), notions of success, efficiency, and control as attributes of a higher morality.

In summary, *fitness* food is considered a specific way of eating, which is characterized by prioritizing, as they believe, the nutritional value of foods and how much they allow functionality to the body, with the objective of fat loss and muscle mass gain, but also able to promote health, beauty, well-being and the prevention of diseases. Beliefs that are shared by the subjects belonging to *the*



fitness field, but that expand into a form of culture, involving people also outside the field, although not with the same intensity.

Food once restricted to weightlifters is now spreading to wider social strata. However, we emphasize that the diffusion of concepts related to the functionality of foods, especially whole, low-sodium and less processed foods, is accompanied by less restricted versions of the diets effectively practiced by those considered *fitness*. The *fitness* diet is accompanied by other diets of different beliefs that also target health, such as veganism, *slow food* and fasting practices.

According to the data constructed in this research, we see the importance of food in order to modify the body, permeated by discourses of knowledge that expert on this field and allow the subjects to analyze the foods and choose rationally those capable of collaborating in body modification. Such a way of eating becomes a distinctive feature of a specific lifestyle, different from what they possessed and which is based on discipline and emotional control in the face of taste desires. However, although rationality is central as well as the individual responsibility that one believes to have over one's own body, the social dimension of food is not abolished at all, and family commensality, friendship relations and new relationships originating from the countryside are maintained, even if it is a commensaliade resignified or otherwise practiced.

However, being the act of eating biological, psychological and subject to social rules, the contact with the new diet for beginners is often conflicting and painful. The foods previously ingested daily, and that continue to be inserted by the community to which they belong, are replaced by those considered more effective, many are repeated during the day, making the diet monotonous and difficult to maintain, requiring a resocialization in the new field in addition to a valued self-discipline, considered an essential characteristic for the tributaries of this lifestyle.

"New foods" become known in various ways. Be it by the recommendation of the oldest in the modality, owners of a verified *expertise* in the body modifications that they boast, of the instructors in the gym or by the *coaches* of the crossfit, *and*, enjoying with greater legitimacy of knowledge-power, the specialized professionals, such as the sports nutritionists and nutrologists, modalities in which there is a growth. One cannot disregard the greater access to information through the internet, which enables knowledge, although not always reliable, about foods, functional recipes and tests of the "new" diet, a dimension in which we highlight social networks with fitness influencers who display bodies, recipes, motivational texts that support and act as a guide for their admirers and followers.

We then perceive the close link between the insertion in a lifestyle and the necessary radical codification of the diet that starts to be based on new foods, new ways of doing, new schedules and new sociability. In this way of eating, the pleasure of tasting is replaced by the value of food to the body. The pleasure of eating becomes restricted to certain days, as in the case of days of permissiveness called garbage days.



These new eating practices promote identity and identification of belonging to a specific group or lifestyle – *fitness* and are able to (re) structure lives that, although there are many dropouts in the field, it is an identity lived as a long-term project, since the achievements of body modifications are not immediate and require recurrence of exercise and food for the maintenance of the desired body.

For DaMatta (1986, p. 37), in the same sense as Barbosa (2007), "food would be everything that can be ingested to keep a person alive", while food would be "what was valued and chosen among the foods; that which is to be seen and savored with the eyes and then with the mouth, the nose, the good company and finally the belly." Food would be what one eats with pleasure, following the social rules of communion and commensality. For the study subjects, hierarchically, the functionality of food overlaps with the pleasure of food, this ceases to be important because it contributes nothing to the objective of the act of eating, whose notions of commensality and communion are annulled or resiginified (but still lowered) in *fitness culture*.

Food, in this context, is what gives functionality to the body, and, in a way, what keeps them alive, however, the choice of food depends on its function in the body, on the ability to shape it. The joining of these foods, forming the food, results in a necessary nourishment to the body, but not one that gives pleasure to the palate or that is shared in the sense of communion. It is important to emphasize, however, that it is not the absolute denial of the pleasure of eating, because another kind of pleasure seems to come from functional eating in two ways: a) the pleasure of helping to conquer the body that one wants to have; b) and the gustatory pleasure that is now being developed by a growing number of companies that recreate "junk foods", now coated with healthiness, such as sugar-free sweets and other functional or low carb recipes, including brigadeiros, breads, etc. We must also consider the development of specific palates by custom and thus come to appreciate previously unpleasant flavors.

Finally, we emphasize that the adoption of this diet does not cancel the commensality that can be seen on the day of exceptions (the days of garbage), but also in the restaurants attached to the gyms or functional specialty and on the tables of the families, even though the lunch boxes are individual items.



REFERENCES

- AMON, D. & MENASCHE, R. (2008), “Comida como narrativa da memória social”. *Sociedade e Cultura*, 11 (1): 13- 21, jan./jun.
- BARBOSA, L. Feijão com arroz e arroz com feijão: o Brasil no prato dos brasileiros. *Horizontes antropológicos*, Porto Alegre, ano 13, n.28, p. 87-116, jun./dez. 2007.
- BOURDIEU, P. O poder simbólico. 13 ed. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2010.
- BRASIL. Ministério da Saúde. Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária. Resolução n. 18, de 30 de abril de 1999. Aprova o Regulamento Técnico que Estabelece as diretrizes Básicas para Análise e Comprovação de Propriedades Funcionais e ou de Saúde Alegadas em Rotulagem de Alimentos. Brasília, 1999a.
- BRASIL. Ministério da Saúde. Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária. Resolução n. 19, de 30 de abril de 1999. Aprova o Regulamento Técnico de Procedimentos para Registro de Alimento com Alegação de Propriedades Funcionais e ou de Saúde em sua Rotulagem. Brasília, 1999b.
- CAPRA, F. O Ponto de Mutação. São Paulo: Cultrix, 2012
- DAMATTA, R. O que faz do Brasil, Brasil? Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986.
- DOUGLAS, Mary; ISHERWOOD, Baron. O mundo dos bens: para uma antropologia do consumo. Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ, 2009.
- DOUGLAS, M. Pureza e perigo. Lisboa: Edições 70, 1991.
- DURKHEIM, E. As regras do método sociológico. São Paulo: ed. Nacional, 1982.
- FISCHLER, Claude. El (h)ominívoro: el gusto, la cocina y el cuerpo. Barcelona: Anagrama, 1995.
- GOLDENBERG, M. Cultura e gastro-anomia: Psicopatologia da alimentação cotidiana. Entrevista com Claude Fischler. *Horizontes Antropológicos*, Porto Alegre, ano 17, n. 36, p. 235- 256, jul/dez 2011. Disponível em <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/ha/v17n36/v17n36a10> . Acesso em 24 mar.2020.
- JACOB, H. *Fitness* e grastonomia: a comida como mídia e o biopoder em dois ambientes comunicacionais aparentemente distintos. INTERCOM – Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos Interdisciplinares da Comunicação. XXXVIII. Congresso Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação. Rio de Janeiro, 2015.
- KULICK, D. Animais gordos e a dissolução da fronteira entre as espécies. *Mana*, v. 15, n. 2, pp. 481-508. 2009.
- LANDA, M. I. Os corpos da liderança: as tramas da ficção do dispositivo cultural do fitness. *Cad. Cedes, Campinas*. v. 32. n. 87. 2012. p. 223 – 233.
- Mauss, Marcel (1974), “As técnicas corporais”, in *Sociologia e antropologia*. São Paulo: Edusp.
- MONTANARI, M. Comida como cultura. 2 ed. São Paulo: Editora Senac, 2013.
- LE BRETON, D. Adeus ao corpo: antropologia e sociedade. 5 ed. Campinas: Papius, 2011.
- Antropologia do corpo e modernidade. 2 ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2012.



ORTEGA, F. O corpo incerto: corporeidade, tecnologias médicas e cultura contemporânea. Rio de Janeiro: Garamound, 2008.

PAIS, J. M. Sociologia da vida Quotidiana: teorias, métodos e estudos de casos. Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2002.

Rodrigues, José Carlos (1983), Tabu do corpo. Rio de Janeiro: Achiamé.

ROSE, N. A política da própria vida: biomedicina, poder e subjetividade no século XXI. São Paulo: Paulus, 2013.

SABINO, C; LUZ, M.T.; CARVALHO, M. C. O fim da comida: suplementação alimentar e alimentação entre frequentadores assíduos de academias de musculação e fitness do Rio de Janeiro. História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos, Rio de Janeiro, v.17, n.2, abr.-jun. 2010, p.343-356.

SGARBIERI, V. C. Proteínas em alimentos proteicos: propriedades, degradações e modificações. São Paulo: Livraria Varela, 1996.

SIMMEL, G. Sociologia da refeição. Estudos Históricos, n. 33, p. 159-166, 2004.

TUCHERMAN, Ieda. Breve História do Corpo e de Seus Monstros. Lisboa, Ed. Vega, Coleção. Passagens, 1999

TURNER, V. O processo ritual: estrutura e anti-estrutura. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1974.

VELHO, Gilberto. Projeto e metamorfose. Antropologia das Sociedades complexas. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1994

VIGARELLO, Georges. As metamorfoses do gordo. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2012.