

## FOOD AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: an ethnographic study

ALIMENTAÇÃO E ATIVIDADE FÍSICA: um estudo etnográfico

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Received: 04.03.2020.  
Accepted: 05.27.2020.  
Published: 07.01.2020.

### ABSTRACT:

This article presents the results of a study with supermarket customers and fitness center users. The research shows that the daily life of these individuals (here called "the public") contemplates elements of the mediatic discourse about health and well-being. In the perspective of this study, this discourse is compatible with biopower, the power technique that seeks to create economically active bodies. The work uses participant observation. It was carried out in Santa Catarina, State recognized by the indices of human development and quality of life. The manuscript concludes that among the public, elements of the mediatic discourse appear in daily practices that result in an efficient body, or body conomically active.

**KEYWORDS:** Media; Biopoder; Body.

### Introduction

This article presents the results of research done in Brazil on the relationship between media, biopower and supermarket customers and gym users. The objective of this work is to verify if the daily life of these individuals, here called the "public", includes elements of media content on health and well-being. In the perspective of this study, this content is compatible with biopower because it helps to produce economically active bodies.

By daily life, we mean a set of daily practices linked to the body, such as feeding and exercising.

By public, we mean a heterogeneous set of individuals in a population, exposed to the media in a direct or indirect way. Public does not refer to the audience of a given media vehicle. This work considers that even those sections of the population not exposed to the media in a direct way are touched indirectly by it, by friends, family etc. "Communication processes are influenced by the mass media, either directly or on a larger scale through opinion leaders" (HABERMAS, 1978, p. 197).

By media content, we mean the set of statements, composed of reports, interviews, speeches by journalists, conveyed in the media.

By biopower, we mean the indirect way of governing life, begun in the 17th century, which seeks to increase the potential of the population to produce economically active bodies. Biopower is divided into disciplines (it falls on the body of individuals, seeking to empower them) and biopolitics (it falls on the population as a whole, in an attempt to regulate it). "The body disciplines and population regulations constitute the two poles around which the organization of power over life has developed" (FOUCAULT, 2012, p. 152).

In this work, the public is represented by customers of a supermarket and gym users in Santa Catarina. These establishments were chosen because they represent the places where people buy food and where they do physical activity (where they take care of the body, the target of the biopower). Santa Catarina was chosen because it is the state with the highest rate of longevity in the country.

Through participant observation, this research sought to identify whether the daily lives of these individuals include elements of media content on health and well-being. Such content is aired especially in television programs. These programs seek to provide a service to the audience, but end up collaborating with the biopower project of producing economically active bodies.

In Brazil, television programs on health and well-being became more common in 2000, when Drauzio Varella began a partnership with *Fantástico*, by *Rede Globo*. The acceptance was such that, in February 2011, the broadcaster created a daily program to deal with the theme, *Bem Estar*.

Because of the effects it can have on the public, the meeting between biopower and the media must be observed with attention because, on one hand, there is a power technique that seeks to potentialize the lives of individuals, making them more apt and resistant to the production lines; on the other hand, there are communication vehicles capable of influencing your practices (DEFLEUR; BALL-ROKEACH, 1993).

The text is divided into two sections. The first presents the methodology of the study. The second provides examples of sentences taken from observation participants at the supermarket and gym; also presents (with this sign =>) why each of the 10 categories analyzed has, in the optimum of this work, a relationship with biopower.

The article concludes that the daily life of the public includes elements of media content on health and well-being because, especially in relation to food and physical

activity, these elements appear in daily practices that result in an efficient body type, or economically active.

### Methodology

The participant observation in supermarket and gym was made in the Greater Florianópolis. It is the most populated region of Santa Catarina, with 1.5 million inhabitants.

In the supermarket, the observation was made during three months. There were 90 visits in the period. They resulted in 320 "situations" observed (situations include dialogues between researcher and researcher and dialogues between researchers). The procedure adopted was conversations with customers: the author of this work, in the role of an ordinary consumer, talked to customers about their expectations regarding products; why they chose the items that were in the basket; which products they would like to take and did not take; the items they started buying in search of a healthy life or after meeting in the media, etc. The conversations were always in the context of healthy living, with a focus on food. They did not go down to aesthetic care and beauty products. Some lasted a few minutes. Others, almost an hour.

In the gym, the observation was also made for three months. There were 78 visits in the period, each lasting between 45 and 75 minutes. They resulted in 250 "situations" observed. Registered as a regular gym users, the author of this study trained with other gym users, of different ages and social classes, seeking to know what they think about health, food, body care, vanity, discipline and the like. The visits took place in alternating shifts, to embrace different types of audiences.

Participant observation is an ethnographic technique and is often equated with ethnography (RESTREPO, 2010, p. 12). This technique consists of the direct contact of the researcher with the observed phenomenon, to obtain information about the reality of social actors in their own context. "The idea is that, through his presence, the researcher can observe and record from a privileged position how things are done, who does them, how and where. Being a witness of what people do allows the researcher to understand at first hand fundamental dimensions of what interests him/her in social life" (RESTREPO, 2010, p. 12).

The 10 categories observed in the supermarket and the gym were previously defined, based on an analysis of the content of the television program on health and well-being (BERTOLINI, 2018). This content analysis found that, in the area of biopower, the media (a) enhances medical power, (b) cultivates nutritional power, (c) values

science, (d) encourages efficient food, (e) establishes body norm, (f) thinks of the human body as a machine, (g) relies on the natural x artificial relationship, (h) encourages discipline, (i) creates scaremongering, and (j) values health tips.

Those observed may be described by gender, apparent body weight, approximate age (young for people up to 25 years old, adult for up to 45 years old, mature for over 55 and elderly for over 65) and declared qualifications (such as "housewife" or "retired") or explicit (such as student and bakery attendant). The expressions and phrases highlighted in the text do not exhaust those observed in the field. They are only examples.

The chosen supermarket is frequented by residents of all the Greater Florianópolis for sheltering in its facilities, in addition to supermarket, lottery house, food court, pet shop, beauty salon, stall, keychain, watchmaker, mobile phone store, musical instrument store, graphic and florist shop. In general terms, it is an establishment that serves mostly middle class people.

The chosen gym is one of the most traditional in the Greater Florianópolis. It was created in the 1980s. It became a reference for the regularity of the business and for training modalities, such as weight training, swimming, gymnastics, indoor bike, aerobic dance and martial arts: there are 26 training modalities. The variety of modalities gives the gym a body of gym user with different biotypes, ages and expectations in relation to training: there are those who want to lose weight, gain muscle mass, improve physical conditioning, define the body, relieve stress, lose localized fat, practice martial art, etc.. The researched unit has an average flow of 500 gym users a day, with elevation in the summer months. The majority public is middle class.

## **The categories analyzed in public daily life**

### **a) medical power**

What the doctor says seems to have authority and the weight of law for most people seen in the supermarket and the gym. You can see it in expressions like "the doctor sent me", "the doctor forbade me", "it's a medical order", "the doctor fought me" and "ah if your doctor knows that".

Presented on TV as the one who can help us, save us, who knows what he is saying and who knows the consequences of carelessness with health, among the

observed public the doctor seems to establish himself as a full authority, against which no one or few feel able to suspect.

The observation shows that, when the doctor says that something can be done, there is a sense of security on the part of the public. Whether in complex decisions, such as stopping a treatment, or in everyday choices, such as what is used to sweeten the coffee: "My cardiologist says that I can intermediate sweetener with brown sugar," says a diabetic and cardiac woman who for at least five years, by medical order, has been using Stevia sweetener. "I trust him [doctor]. I think the doctor studied to help us live better. If we don't trust the doctor, who will?" she asks, who looks 60 years old.

The examples observed indicate that, if the doctor says a certain product is healthy, you can buy it without fear: "The doctor says it is very healthy. Everyone at the gym is using it. You can use it for frying. You can put a spoonful on the beans, which also looks good. I'm using it and I'm very happy," says the woman about coconut oil, a product that is often cited as a healthy alternative to soy oil and other types of fat. "Besides being tasty, it makes you lose weight. I've lost a lot of weight," she adds, who looks over 60 and dresses in colorful, gluey clothes.

If the doctor says that a certain product is good for you, you should eat what he says, even if you don't like it: "Bitter. It's really bad. But the doctor says it's good for everything, so I don't miss it," says the adult housewife about the eggplant.

Sometimes, when the doctor tells her to, she gives up little everyday pleasures, like drinking whole milk at breakfast: "The doctor cut", says a woman, with a face punished by time, on whole milk. "I'd put a nice little draught in the coffee. A box for me would last all week. And yet the doctor cut," she adds, now taking skim milk. Have you ever thought about taking powdered milk? "Powdered milk can't either. It's too much sugar, too much fat. So the doctor told me. I obey right."

By medical order, the observations show, there are people who eliminate food from the diet permanently. "I don't eat more carbohydrate", says a mature woman, who plants plums and mangoes in the yard to remember to eat fruit every day. "It's hard because we were used to it and we like to eat a warm roll in the morning, but carbohydrate turns into blood sugar. It's a danger," she adds. "I cut everything white. I don't eat more bread. The people at home are with me, but sometimes they complain a little," replies a gray-haired man who recently enrolled in weight training after retiring.

The physical activity prescribed by the doctor must be followed, even if it imposes sacrifices: "The doctor told me to move," says a blind young man who, with no money to continue in the gym and no space at home to install an electric mat, began

to walk in the street, with the help of strangers. "It's a bit risky. But if we stand still the doctor fights," he adds, as he is helped by the author of this work to cross the street.

The doctor may exert so much influence because, among most of those observed, there is a tendency to see disease in everything and everyone: "Don't you have labyrinthitis? It's good to take care of it. It's a thing it would be", says a man, in a hurry, to his gym mate who felt a small imbalance when walking on the floor after 15 minutes on the mat; "Don't you have diabetes?", asks his friend who, after 45 training sessions, took half a bottle of water at once (excess thirst is a symptom of diabetes).

Among those observed, there are those who have already noticed that the doctor sometimes sins in humility. "Doctors don't like to explain things. I don't know, it seems they feel offended," says a mature woman, commenting with a gym partner that her 27-year-old stepson would have bladder surgery.

Although at times there may be an uprising, most observers seem to agree passively with the medical authority: "I'm of the opinion that you shouldn't expect it. You've felt something right away you should look for a specialist," says a mature, thin woman to her gym friend whose husband has been complaining of chest pains.

=> Medical power is related to biopower because medicine is the first biopolitical formulation in Foucault (2012). In it, the physician appears as an instrument of political control of the population's health. This professional assumes a privileged position in the web of power relations that determine social configuration, and that act to improve the collective body.

## **b) nutritional power**

The influence of the nutritionist on the behavior of those observed seems greater than medical interference. One of the reasons that would explain this is the fact that the nutritionist, in most cases, is a more accessible professional: consultation at gyms, circulates around the workplace, fills supermarket signs, charges less for consultations, is usually seen more in television interviews. Another reason is the fact that it deals exclusively with food, the rubric through which healthy or sick people usually believe they will achieve full health or the ideal body.

The observation shows that the nutritionist, who often appears on television programs wearing white coats, can be confused with a doctor: "I thought a nutritionist was the same as a doctor," says a mature woman who bought peanut butter to pass on bread. "It was the nutritionist who told me to eat this," she says about the candy that promises to feed with low calorie and high levels of good fat.

For most of those observed, the nutritionist is the one who indicates the best way to prepare food, the frequency that should be consumed throughout the day or week and the quantities that should be consumed. "In the morning I can eat banana or avocado; at noon, like brown rice and chia; at night, the food is normal, but in smaller quantities," says a supermarket customer who went to the nutritionist after her aunt had a stroke.

Observed is usually delighted with the results. That's why they recommend the nutritionist to their friends, forming a growing circle. "I had a lot of spots on my skin. Now, taking good care of the food, it's clearing everything up", reports an adult woman, a supermarket customer, who after the consultation permanently inserted green leaves on her menu.

Presented on television as one who knows the secrets of healthy eating, who knows how to extract the maximum efficiency from food and who can help us to achieve or maintain health, the nutritionist begins to say what he can and cannot: "We want to, but we can't," says a young gym user to her friend who offered cheese bread on her way out of training. "My nutritionist won't let me eat yellow cheese," she says.

What is said by the nutritionist interferes in big decisions, such as adopting a diet to lose up to 40% of the weight, or small everyday choices, such as buying sweetener. "My nutritionist says this is the best you have," says a woman about a sucrose-based product that costs US\$ 4, six times more than the average sweetener.

Although among those observed there seems to be an agreement or acceptance of the nutritional power, there is a kind of frustration on the part of those who cannot buy the foods suggested by the nutritionists or who do not have time to prepare the foods in the way they indicate: "We even know what is good to eat. But you can't keep to the schedule," says a young woman for friends on her way out of the gym. "Our lives don't match what she asks for," answers one of them.

=> Nutritional power follows the same primer as medical power: the nutritionist can become an instrument of political control to discipline the population's health; he serves, for example, the industrial productivity.

### **c) science**

What is studied has direct and unrestricted acceptance among those observed. Thus, treatments, services and products that have undergone some type of research convey more reliability to the public and are more likely to be contracted or consumed.



This wide acceptance may be due to the fact that science, on television, is presented as that which identifies what does good for the body, that can help us, that can even save us and that surprises with its discoveries.

Among the observed public, the term science is more used as a synonym for study or research. But it also refers to researchers, who in television programs are called to talk about health, and to professionals such as doctors and nutritionists, considered by those observed as "experts in the subject" or "people studied".

In practice, the scientific component can determine what is put or excluded from the shopping cart: "I would buy any oil. Being an olive oil, I would take it. But I read [study] that the less acidity, the better. So I'm taking the Swallow," says a housewife who puts "a little spoonful of olive oil on top of the food to give it a taste.

The observation shows that, in general, what is studied is usually seen as an ally, something that can lengthen life and ward off risks: "I don't eat margarine. They did a study and found that margarine kills even pork. It leaves them bloated. Imagine what it doesn't do to us," says a mature, thin, apparently humble man who was looking for butter because he thought it was healthier.

In the gym, science seeks to extract the maximum efficiency from movement: "A study has come out now that shows that we yield more when we make a brief warm-up before stretching. Before, we used to stretch to start the training. Now they've discovered that it's better to warm up the body before and only after stretching," says the gym instructor.

In the environment where you exercise your body, science is also seen as something that can ward off the risks of physical activity: "You don't row backwards anymore. They have done a study and found that it can affect the spine. We now only indicate breast rowing, which has the same effect," says a gym instructor.

Although most of the time it is seen as the ultimate instance of knowledge, science does not completely eliminate tradition. For among those observed, there is also an apparent confidence in the account of the ancients and in the experience of friends: "My mother always said this: do you want to calm down? Here's a little chamomile tea", says a gym user to her friend. She complained of problems at work.

=> Science is compatible because it is used to praise or to give true contours to what has been studied by doctors and that, for this reason, can be consumed, bought, adopted, manipulated, prescribed, indicated to health.

#### **d) efficient food**



Observation shows that, in most cases, the choice of food no longer obeys primarily to pleasure; food is often chosen for its potential to nourish the body. There is, therefore, a compatibility with the media discourse around efficient food, that which associates health and nourishment.

In conversations about food with supermarket customers and gym users, there are few expressions such as "I chose it because it's tastier", "it's delicious", "everyone at home likes it" or "we get fed up". You hear more phrases like "it's healthier", "it helps you lose weight" and "it makes you thinner".

In this context, the healthy aspect guides the purchase choices: "It's not like that warm bakery bread, but it's good for you. And if it's good, we buy it", says a woman, a supermarket customer, when asked if she liked wholemeal bread.

Among those observed it's common to find people willing to give up taste in the name of health: "We buy this [white] cheese because it's healthier. But it doesn't taste like anything. The unsalted has no taste at all", says the woman.

The efficient may be less tasty, but it's usually more functional. And this is a highly valued feature among those surveyed. It is noted that regular evacuation, besides indicating that the organism is functioning well, is a way to eliminate weight and approach the ideal of the lean body: "It takes longer to cook, but it is worth it because it improves your digestion well," says a young woman, pointing towards the intestine.

In a way, the efficient seeks the good functioning of the body: "We don't like chocolate very much. But it's a good fat. It helps increase good cholesterol," says a couple who had just bought eight 70% cacao chocolate bars.

In practice, the efficient can be the product or the way to prepare the product: "Everything you make grilled will be healthier. The grilled chicken is great. But it is better to grill the thigh without bone. It's thinner, healthier," says a man who used to take advantage of the chicken promotion at the supermarket.

Efficient food rejects everything that's bad or fattening. "In the mouth it's good. But in the belly it's a poison," he says as he watches the image of an ice cream on TV.

The observation shows that eating something that is not prescribed has an air of sin or present. Sin occurs when one avoids the rule: "Yesterday I ate a Bobs. I kicked the stick out of the stall," says a thin woman when she meets a friend at the supermarket. The gift is a kind of reward, something that happens when a feat is performed: "From time to time we take it. Today I'll take it. I'm going to give myself a present," says a woman, a healthy adult, about a chocolate bar.

Among those observed, physical activity sounds like pure efficiency. It means that most of them exercise for health, not for taste: "We don't like aerobics, but we need them", says a man, mature, while walking on the treadmill.

=> The efficient food is compatible with the biopower because it seeks to form an efficient, vigorous body available to the labor market. In it, food should not prioritize pleasure; it should nourish the body.

#### **e) body norm**

The media discourse around the norm (celebrates slimness, recommends eating little and classifies the lean body as normal) seems well assimilated among those observed. Through food control and physical discipline, most of them seek to escape from the fat body, because being fat does not seem acceptable: it is a sign of rascality, laziness, accommodation, the sin of gluttony, sloppiness with the body.

Observation shows that, in the era of the slender body, to praise is to call the other thin: "Wow, how elegant you look. You have lost a lot of weight," says a fat man when he finds a thin friend in the supermarket. "Love slims. After I started dating, I lost weight. I'm feeling good," answers the friend.

There's no age to be thin. "Yeah, but he [baby] is overweight. The pediatrician said to control his food," says a retired man who was walking with his grandson at the supermarket and heard from a friend "what a beautiful thing.

The norm regulates quantities and deprives pleasure to preserve thinness: "Wow, but you're going to eat three at a time?" mother asks the girl, who on Saturday night bought cereal bars to take to school for snacks.

The rule sometimes provides for vigilance. "Wow, that smells", says the author of this study on the brioches at the bakery counter. "Yeah, but there's a lot of fat in it. Look down here. I don't eat anything that fat," reacts a young, thin woman.

The observation indicates that at times the norm creates a sense of guilt. To keep a clear conscience, compensation is made: "We already ate pasta yesterday. Let's just make a zucchini sauteed with that chicken you have in the fridge", says the wife to her husband who wanted to buy lasagna.

The norm reconfigures products: "The bread gets so hard that it even hurts my hand," says the bakery attendant about the baked bread for longer. It is believed that the drier, the healthier. "People are preferring the darker because it's less fat," she adds.

A good part of those observed believe that thin people are happier, so they try to lose weight or look like they've lost: "Thin people are happier," says a thin young

woman to a gym friend They concluded this after listing three people who lost 10 to 15 kilograms (10 to 15 pounds) and are now happier.

The norm, camouflaged as hint or orientation, is shared among friends and passed from generation to generation: "Now I am eating only one green dish at night. Only leaves. If I feel hungry, I take a whole yogurt. It's good. I recommend it," says a mature woman to her friend at the gym.

=> The body norm is compatible with biopower because it seeks to govern individuals through a model. It means that a body model is established as normal, and the public is encouraged to follow it. On media, the model encouraged is the thin one.

#### **f) machine body**

In media discourse, machine body is one that goes beyond the norm. It shouldn't just be thin and healthy. It needs to yield more. Be pure efficiency.

Among those observed, especially among gym users, it is easy to find people who seek above average body potentiality: they want the muscle, the abdomen cracked, the stamina to run a marathon. The body machine is exercised at the limit to give more result: "I judged a lot of my body, but I won," says a thin young man after doing four sets of each exercise prescribed by the gym instructor. To produce the body with above average vigour and therefore, like the regularity of a machine, one sometimes takes risks: "If I become disabled I already know who to sue," says a healed young man to the personal trainer who had put extra iron rings on his back.

The production of the superboddy also requires vigilance. Not in the sense of control, as in the norm, but in the sense of charging: "What is this chicken weight?" asks a guy for a friend at a gym who was a lightweight bodybuilder.

In the search for the machine body, the failure has a sense of defeat. "I filmed your defeat," says a young, healthy friend who fell when trying to do abdominal rolls; "I lost," says a boy who failed to complete a series prescribed by the instructor. The "but" seems an ally of the body machine: "It's well pulled, but it dries well," says man, adult, after session of abdominal board style; "It hurts, but defines well," says young man to friend about squatting to train thighs.

The body machine can be produced with the help of substances: "It is a tea that burns fat. It's okay," says a mature woman who sells products to gym users; "It's not a bomb. It's a product that will give you more gas at training time. It opens the vein to circulate more blood," says a gym user who takes pills that decrease the feeling of tiredness and increase the willingness to train.

=> The body machine sees the body as something that can be constantly improved, modified; as something that can yield more.

### **g) natural x artificial**

The natural x artificial opposition is part of the routine of those observed, both in relation to food and physical activity, the two axes through which one seeks to achieve or maintain full health. In relation to food, contemporary threats may lie in the natural (such as plant poisons) and the artificial (such as preservatives, dyes and other chemicals used by the food industry). In relation to physical activity, duality lies in what exercise promotes by natural means (such as a sense of well-being) or in what can be achieved with the help of substances from industry (faster and more expressive results).

In the first case, there is an inclination towards nature: one should preferably eat organic vegetables, fresh fruit, beans without sausages, what has not been processed; one should drink the natural juice, water in clay filter, freshly ground cane juice. In the second case, there is an inclination to the artificial: the tonic helps to replace the minerals, the protein compound repairs the muscular losses, the energetic increases the disposition to the training, the hormone accelerates the body's recovery, etc.

In the media, the natural x artificial opposition also oscillates between the two extremes: the natural is valued in terms of nutrition, while the importance of the artificial in what represents an overcoming of nature, as products that can correct deficiencies of the body, bring comfort and save lives through prostheses and the like.

Among those observed, the natural can be valued: "When we start eating organic, we can no longer return to the other. We can even taste the poison in each other", says a mature man, a supermarket customer, who every morning takes cabbage juice with two apples.

The artificial can also be praised: "You don't take calcium," asks a woman for a gym friend. "At our age it's good to take it. You must also take the fixed calcium, which fixes calcium in the body. Only with food you don't get what you need," she argues.

Especially in terms of food, the artificial can be rejected. "One day I talked to a boy [who is a restocker] and he said that the problem [stomach pain] could be because of the preservative. Now I take more natural bread. I never felt bad again," says an old man, a confessed sick man, who avoids industrialized bread.

In smaller proportions, natural and artificial can be confused: "This is natural, so the can is green. It tastes like brown sugar. Nothing reminds me of sweetener," says a fat boy about Coca-Cola Stevia.

=> Natural x artificial is compatible with biopower because it shows that nature can be modified to protect the human body from natural or artificial threats.

#### **h) Discipline**

In media content, discipline is a kind of key to success: it serves to lose weight, maintain the diet, and follow training regularly; the statements suggest that the disciplined live longer, that listening to the voice of authority does good, and that regulations help to keep the focus. Among those observed at the supermarket and the gym, the sense of discipline is more or less this. There is no talk of control.

In relation to food, discipline reminds us of diet or control: "If you want to keep your weight, if you want to be well, you have to control yourself. You can't eat anything. You have to have discipline," says a woman for a gym friend.

Discipline in eating is common among adults, but it increasingly seems to hit children: "Mom, I was looking for sesame," says a fat boy, justifying his disappearance into the supermarket for healthy snacks.

In the cases observed, infant discipline comes from family or school: "Baby can't take stuffed cookies. You have to take the same cookie to the daycare center that Dad takes to work," says a young, thin man who, next to his son, bought a whole cookie.

The rigour with which he takes care of his diet is size during the week that Saturday seems to have become the day of the can: he can pizza, he can chocolate, he can soda. You can almost anything, as long as the week that has passed has been one of discipline and the week to come is also: "We control ourselves all week long. Saturday comes and you have to loosen up a bit", says a grown man who bought meat and beer.

In the gym, classical elements of discipline are noted, such as control of activities (each gym user has his training, his grade to fulfill and his goals to achieve), control of time (duration of each exercise, number of repetitions, time between each grade) and control of space (the closed environment and surrounded by mirrors allows surveillance by the instructor and colleagues).

Those who escape the discipline are called pejorative terms: "You're a good thief today," says the instructor to the gym user who said he was "a little tired" (in the gym, stealing means not completing the series); "Are you going to stand there? Let's move, bum," says a muscular young gym friend who used to move his cell phone.

The gym instructor operates as a disciplinary agent. He prescribes the training, praises to encourage, charges results: "I'm suffering a little, but everything will be fine," says a young man who did sit-ups and was asked by a friend if everything was fine.

The discipline provides that the gym user does not stop: "You can't stop, otherwise you won't come back," says a woman to her friend who had stopped for a few days to follow the Olympics. Discipline works best when there is cooperation: "Today they put a chocolate in my bag. I know it was sweet, but it's boring. If they don't help, we lose the line," says a woman for a gym friend; "I already asked my mother not to bake cake on the weekend. If she does, it's hard to resist. Then we get fat," she says to a group of friends at the end of practice.

=> Discipline is the part of biopower that focuses on the training of the body, acting on the expansion of its abilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel growth of its utility, its integration into effective and economic control systems.

#### **i) alarmism**

In the media content, alarmism appears in the constant statements of risk, especially the risk of death, and in the numbers that indicate some danger curve, such as the percentage of people dying from obesity.

Among those observed, it is noted that alarmism causes insecurity and installs a kind of state of fear. This even influences daily situations, such as eating chocolate (the most vulnerable would say that chocolate has sugar and fat, that these products clog the veins, that the vein is clogged because it causes infarction and stroke, and that these diseases are the ones that kill the most in the country).

Among those observed, the effect of scaremongering is a kind of constant concern: "Boy, go to the emergency doctor. It gives you stroke, it gives you heart attack. He doesn't waste time," recommends an adult woman, a supermarket customer, when he hears the author of this study say he has had 600 points of triglycerides, when the normal is 150.

The alarmism seems to influence more those who live with the disease or fear of it: "Isn't it pneumonia?", asks a man at the gym who complained of insistent coughing. "We can't fool around. To die, you just have to be alive," she adds.

Although in small numbers, one notices among those observed an awareness of alarmism: "People frighten us with this thing of illness. We're going to have an examination, something, and everyone thinks that we're sick, that we're going to die. It's boring," says a woman, a slim adult, to a friend at the gym.

=> Alarmism is linked to the biopower because it is compatible with the security device. It is necessary to calculate the risk that threatens the population.

#### j) tip

The tips underpin the media discourse around health: they teach tricks in the hope of helping the public take care of their own bodies. Among those observed, the tips seem to have high acceptance. By their accessible language and tone of informality, they are often seen as help or advice. It is not seen there, as a biopolitical look might suggest, an effort to optimize a state of life.

The tip is often shared: "I was taught to eat raw celery. It lowers [your blood sugar] instantly," says an adult woman who has diabetes; "I take hibiscus tea before bed. The glycemia is well controlled," says another woman, who has the same disease, when buying natural herbs at the supermarket.

As with television, food is the predominant subject among the tips observed: "Cook one day a week and freeze. I do it this way for my husband," says a mature woman about brown rice, which takes longer to cook.

The tip applies to almost anything that has to do with health, whether it's the indication of an establishment with fresh fruit or a habit that has proven effective: "There [Ceasa's fair] has green very cheap," says a mature woman, who does not eat carbohydrate and fat, to the author of this study.

=> The tips contain traces of biopower because it is through them that the TV program teaches and the public discovers how to increase the potential of the body.

#### Conclusion

This research concludes that the public's daily practices include elements of media content on health and well-being because, especially in relation to nutrition and physical activity, these elements appear in behaviors, care and daily practices that indicate an optimized state of life and that results in an efficient or economically active body type. In this context, as shown by field experience with supermarket customers and gym users, the public:

(a) adopts, in their daily lives, techniques compatible with making people live. This adoption can be seen in the care of the body, which becomes the target of permanent and detailed attention, especially in relation to food, increasingly perceived as a health guarantor. It is also seen in weight control, understood as a health indicator. It is not the first time in history that the body has been cared for and the weight has



been controlled. But in the era of maximum health care and the super-body, this control is collectivized and established as one of the main goals of the population.

(b) it incorporates elements of discipline, the technique of power that governs individual bodies, watching them, training them, using them and punishing them. Body discipline is taken to other instances in life, such as housekeeping and disposition to work. In this process, one notices especially the incorporation of the norm, very widespread in the media, which says that the body must be thin and exercised.

(c) it embraces, almost without resistance, the medical power. A classic articulator of the biopower, and an emerging character in the media discourse on health and well-being, the doctor can be perceived as a partner, someone to be trusted and someone to be heard. In the scenario of superhealth, the doctor seems to gain the power of a shepherd: his role is to guide "sheep", pointing out the threats or possibilities of improving or healing the body.

(d) attentive to threats and risks to health. Attention to risks is as old as humanity. But in view of the improvement of probability calculations in the field of health, there is a growing concern with detail (the calorie, the gram, the percentage). In addition, there are the threats of modern life, especially in relation to food, which is increasingly globalized and industrialized, and which can represent a risk to the body. Attention to safety becomes health.

(e) it incorporates body models that the group in which it is inserted starts to consider as ideal (often stimulated by the media). In this case, the ideal model is the lean and trained body. This helps to understand the rigor applied to food and physical activity. It also explains the use of "healthy techniques", such as the consumption of raw food (increases satiety) and prolonged chewing (facilitates digestion and collaborates with weight maintenance). One effect of this valorization of the lean body is the devaluation of the fat body, which becomes unwanted and discriminated.

In short, the public's daily life in relation to food and physical activity includes practices that seek to preserve or improve the body, the target of the biopower and the object exploited by the media in the field of health and well-being. The most outstanding consequence of these practices is an appreciation of the body as little or never seen: the body has always needed to be treated, but now, at the moment its secrets are unlocked on television, live and daily, one notices an orchestrated care, without slack, which does not allow anyone not to take care of the body.

This appreciation of the body opens the way for a series of interventions by classical biopower operators, such as doctors. It also collaborates with a growing market of products and services, strengthened by the belief that full health is in them.

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#### RESUMO:

Este artigo apresenta resultados de estudo com clientes de supermercado e alunos de academia de ginástica. Buscou-se saber se o cotidiano desses indivíduos (aqui chamados de "público") contempla elementos do conteúdo midiático sobre saúde e bem-estar. Na perspectiva deste estudo, esse conteúdo é compatível com o biopoder, técnica de poder que busca criar corpos economicamente ativos. A pesquisa usou observação participante. Foi realizada em Santa Catarina, Estado do Sul do Brasil reconhecido pelos altos índices de desenvolvimento humano e qualidade de vida. O manuscrito conclui que, entre o público, elementos do conteúdo midiático aparecem em práticas diárias que resultam em um tipo de corpo eficiente, ou economicamente ativo.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVES:** Mídia; Biopoder; Corpo.

#### RESUMEN:

Este artículo presenta los resultados de un estudio con compradores de comestibles y estudiantes de gimnasia. Intentamos saber si la vida cotidiana de estas personas (aquí llamada "pública") incluye elementos del discurso de los medios sobre salud y bienestar. Desde la perspectiva de este estudio, este discurso es compatible con el

biopoder, la técnica de poder que busca crear cuerpos economicamente activos. El trabajo utiliza observación participante. Se realizó en Santa Catarina, Estado reconocido por los índices de desarrollo humano y calidad de vida. El manuscrito concluye que, entre el público, los elementos del discurso mediático aparecen en las prácticas diarias que resultan en un tipo de cuerpo eficiente o economicamente activo.

**PALABRAS-CLAVES:** Medios de comunicación; Biopoder; Cuerpo.