



PHYSICAL CULTURE AND EMBODIMENT IN THE FIELD OF PHYSICAL CULTURAL STUDIES¹

CULTURA FÍSICA E EMBODIMENT NO CAMPO DOS ESTUDOS CULTURAIS FÍSICOS

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ABSTRACT: This article presents fundamental notions to understanding the emergent Physical Cultural Studies/PCS field. Through a descriptive-theoretical approach, the authors reflect on the genesis and development of PCS and focus on two key concepts: “physical culture” and “embodiment”. The discussions provide subsidies for approaches that are draw themselves as critical and committed to social changes, with a view to a fruitful dialogue between researchers who are involved with this field in the Brazilian scenario.

KEYWORDS: Embodiment; physical cultural studies; genesis; cultural studies.

RESUMO: Este artigo apresenta noções fundamentais para compreender o emergente campo Physical Cultural Studies/PCS (Estudos Culturais Físicos). Por meio de uma abordagem teórico-descritiva, tecemos reflexões relacionadas à gênese e ao desenvolvimento do PCS e focalizamos dois conceitos que lhe são fundamentais: “cultura física” e “embodiment”. As discussões fornecem subsídios para abordagens que se

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desenham como críticas e comprometidas com mudanças sociais, com vistas a um diálogo profícuo entre pesquisadores/as que se envolvem com esse campo no cenário brasileiro.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Embodiment; estudos culturais físicos; gênese; estudos culturais.

INTRODUCTION

Physical Cultural Studies (PCS), or "*Estudos Culturais Físicos*"² – how the term has been translated into Portuguese (LARA; RICH, 2017; LARA, 2019; MARANI, 2019; FULLAGAR, 2019; SÁ, 2019; Marques, 2019; MARQUES; SÁ; LARA, 2021; SÁ; MARANI; LARA, 2021; MARANI, 2021) –, can be understood as a field of “tensions, debates, policies and peculiar theoretical-methodological positions” (LARA *et al.*, 2019, p. 229). For this reason, according to Lara and Rich (2017, p. 1312), PCS is a term that is “[...] controversial and nebulous that has been referenced differently by the respective literature as project, intellectual formation, framework, movement, field of investigation, sensibility, mandate and approach”, driven by some definitional attempts (ANDREWS, 2008; SILK; ANDREWS, 2011; ANDREWS; SILK, 2015; SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017).

This field of studies, still little explored in Brazil, was constituted in the interface between, and as an unfolding of, Cultural Studies and sports sociology, driven by disciplinary clashes in kinesiology departments in the United States (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017). In its constitution, the concepts “physical culture” and “embodiment” are presented as basic and translated as potent forms of expression of the body in different contexts and analytical dimensions. Thus, when recognizing the relevance of these conceptual notions for the PCS, we turn to reflections on facts that determined and/or boosted the genesis of this field, as well as to guiding aspects of this understanding, notably through elucidations about the notions of physical culture and embodiment.

This theoretical-descriptive study dialogues with authors who belong to PCS and contribute to its understanding, either because of their explanations about the context in which this field emerges or because they develop their research in approaches guided by their assumptions. Thus, we propose to discuss, initially, some elements about the genesis of the PCS and the generating conflicts that made its delineation possible, highlighting tree conditions for the emergence of this field and central characteristics that demarcate it. Subsequently, we turn to the notions of physical culture and embodiment, in a more detained way, dialoguing with researchers in this investigative field on issues that contribute

² Despite translating the term, we chose to keep the abbreviation PCS because we recognize the acronym's notoriety in the international academic environment.

to understanding them, as well as the field in question. Finally, we make considerations outlined in order to bring these notions closer to the exercise of holistic perception of the body amidst the diversity of sociocultural practices and power relations.

PHYSICAL CULTURAL STUDIES

The formative process of Physical Cultural Studies is marked by several paths that hinder the exact statement of when and where this field of study arose. According to Silk, Andrews and Thorpe (2017), researchers located in various places of the world contributed, consciously or not, to the formation of the PCS, so that this field “[...] has multiple trajectories, different ways of materialization, different histories in different disciplines and geographical locations; it is a set of different conjunctures, formations and moments” (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017, p. 1-2). Therefore, the PCS opposes the idea of having a conformed and finalized formation. Instead, it is understood as a project under construction, and the lack of consensus – inherent to the field – is a basic aspect, since it results in a generative intellectual tension and propagates the understanding that this approach is configured in a permanent “state of becoming” (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017).

PCS does not aim to build disciplinary boundaries or fixed trajectories, but seeks to make them porous, fundamentally configuring a place of internal and external struggles that contribute to outline their project. Thus, the PCS project is (re)configured as researchers advance in their studies, and even in their criticisms of the field itself, in order to answer the questions emerging from the conflicting spaces they face (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017). Somehow, it is possible to indicate this generative tension even in the factors that determined and/or boosted the emergence of PCS: a) the unfolding of Cultural Studies focusing on the body; b) disciplinary struggles in North American Kinesiology departments; and c) the expanded epistemology in relation to the scope limitation of the field object of Sociology of Sport due to its nomenclature.

In the PCS genesis, we identified its unfolding from Cultural Studies, which emerged in England in the post-war period, due to the identification of PCS researchers as belonging to this field (SILK; ANDREWS, 2011). For this reason, some defenders of PCS attribute their derivation, constitution and focus to the alignment with the assumptions of Cultural Studies (ANDREWS; SILK, 2015), as do Vertinsky and Weedon (2017) when stating that PCS has appropriated the critical and political sensibility of Cultural Studies to question the active body and its emancipatory potential. Therefore, this appropriation

refers to the language, theoretical orientation and conceptual apparatus of Cultural Studies, amidst the struggle and resistance regarding forms of socio-cultural domination (VERTINSKY; WEEDON, 2017).

Among the characteristics of Cultural Studies that inspired the construction of “doing PCS”³ we highlight the discussions related to the political dimension of culture, the questioning about social hierarchies and the problematizations involving markers of body difference, such as race, gender, ethnicities and social classes, among others, which meanings are socially and culturally constructed. Thus, theoretical concerns are articulated with concerns about the implementation of interventions in the social reality and the appreciation of popular culture and the resulting productions. In addition, PCS adds to this direction concerns with issues concerning the body and physical culture.

Still regarding the unfolding from Cultural Studies, it is worth mentioning the study of Andrews and Giardina (2008) when, upon introducing what they called the “next movement” for Cultural Studies, presented some of the characteristics of PCS. In this study, the authors reinforce that Cultural Studies presuppose that “late-capitalist societies” are fundamentally divided along hierarchical lines of differentiation (organized around markers of class, gender, race, generation, among others), in which physical culture is configured as an important space in which these divisions are imposed, experienced and, eventually, contested. For this reason, Andrews and Giardina (2008) state that it is the role of Cultural Studies (and, by extension, Physical Cultural Studies) to identify and intervene in these places of inequality and injustice in the search to transform them.

Another factor that drove the creation of the PCS was the disciplinary struggles in the kinesiology departments of the United States, which occurred in recent decades. After all, PCS emerges as an alternative response to ambiguities and/or inadequacies that represented, and still represent, a series of intellectual and institutional threats to some researchers in these departments as there is overvaluation of the natural and biological sciences to the detriment of the human and social sciences, creating hierarchical scales in the production of knowledge, as if some were more important than others. Thus, this constituent rationality of the kinesiological field motivated the formation and development of PCS by intellectuals bothered by such a contradiction that tends to intensify competition and the devaluation of the areas of humanities (INGHAM, 1997; ANDREWS, 2008; SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017; ANDREWS; SILK, 2015).

³ Expression used by intellectuals of Physical Cultural Studies to refer to research carried out within this field.

In the struggle for recognition and equity in universities, Ingham (1997), pointed out in the literature (ANDREWS, 2008; SILK; ANDREWS, 2011; GIARDINA; NEWMAN, 2011) as one of the precursors of PCS, proposes the formation of a department of Physical Cultural Studies, emphasizing the need to break with the reproduction of subdisciplinary hierarchies of knowledge and segregation in departments in order to end the privileges of certain disciplines. In the same line of thought, Andrews (2008), when reflecting on the scientific *doxa* that constitutes the formation of kinesiology in American universities, names as “inconvenient truth” the predominance of appreciation (in terms of recognition and distribution of financial resources) of a *corpus* of knowledge built in this field based on criteria based on the quantitative, predictive and traditional model of science (positivist bias). Thus, he states that the biological sciences and the social sciences need each other, mutually, for the formation of the larger field, which is that of kinesiology.

The emergence of PCS also stems from the discomfort generated within the Sociology of sport due to the predominance of research aimed at sport with an end in it, leaving aside research with non-sporting focuses (involving dance, recreation, leisure and others). This condition generated concerns that motivated intellectuals of critical approaches within this area to create a movement in order to broaden the focus beyond sport, including, thus, the wide range of physical cultural practices, which encompass sport, but are not restricted to it. This movement of contestation impelled researchers in sport sociology to organize themselves around the field of investigation called Physical Cultural Studies – PCS (SILK; ANDREWS, 2011; ANDREWS; SILK, 2015; SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017; LARA; RICH, 2017), referred to in Portuguese as "*Estudos Culturais Físicos*".

According to Andrews (2008), sports sociology becomes an inappropriate term if we consider that the area is not exclusively sociological and, also, focused only on sports. This statement is based on the fact that “[...] the scope of research in sports sociology has expanded to incorporate the empirical domains of physical conditioning, dance, exercise, movement, well-being and health” (ANDREWS, 2008, p 51) In the same sense, Andrews and Silk (2015, p. 84) argue that they do not understand the sport sociology as “[...] an ‘expressive totality’ that unites around sport [...]”, but as “[...] characterized by a ‘unity-in-difference’ [...]”, which unifying element is the commitment to the understanding the various forms of “[...] cultures (institutions, interactions, experiences) of the physical (of which sport is only an element, although significant)”.

It is important to emphasize that this contestation movement did not occur peacefully and without criticism, since feminist researchers linked to universities, colleges and institutes in the United States and Canada, for example, expressed the discomfort generated by the presentation of PCS as a “new field” and with the ability to rid sport sociology of its obituary (ADAMS *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, these researchers criticized the way some PCS researchers disregarded feminist studies, directing their criticism not only to the intellectual movements that the PCS scholars said they were carrying out, but to how they were being done. With this, they expressed their concerns about the tone of some PCS writings and their territorializing effects.

In view of these conditions that help to explain the formation of Physical Cultural Studies and to understand the constitutive aspects of this field, we point out some central characteristics of PCS, based on elucidations proposed by Andrews (2008). The researcher writes about this approach in an attempt to contribute to the understanding and, consequently, to the delineation of the field and the PCS project. He explains that PCS performs the analysis of physical culture and its power relations from spaces/contexts (social, political, economic, technological, discursive, subjective) in relation to which bodies are organized, represented and experienced. The author also notes that PCS understands physical culture as a favorable space for the reproduction – and sometimes the confrontation – of norms and differences of class, ethnicity, gender, capacity, generations, nationalities, races and/or sexualities, seeking to illuminate and intervene in places of injustices and socio-cultural inequalities.

To enable and instrumentalize this search, the PCS proposes a multi-method approach (ethnography, autoethnography, participant observation, contextual, discourse and media analysis), thus drawing on concepts and theories of various disciplines (cultural, urban and media studies, economics, history, philosophy, sociology) (ANDREWS, 2008). Therefore, this field is guided by a relational and plural understanding of physical culture, a place where different embodiment expressions are made possible, materialized and examined along with socio-structural, discursive, institutional, community, subjective and/or corporeal processes (SILK, ANDREWS, THORPE, 2017). In this perspective, the PCS advances in critical, empirically grounded, theoretically informed, politically incisive, and methodologically rigorous investigations of physical culture (ANDREWS, 2008; SILK & ANDREWS, 2011).

It is important to mention that, despite some attempts to outline the field of Physical Cultural Studies (ANDREWS, 2008; SILK; ANDREWS, 2011; ANDREWS;

SILK, 2015; SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017), none of them had the intention of coining a definitive and finished concept. Researchers start from the assumption that the essential of the PCS is its constitution as a collective project in democratic construction, which develops in a community of dialogic learning and that, therefore, the valuation of dialogue is essential. After all, PCS researchers recognize the criticisms they have suffered over the years and seek to incorporate them into the project and the field (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017). It was in this sense that, in order to learn from previous neglects and demonstrate the current state of PCS, Silk, Andrews and Thorpe (2017) organized the collection entitled *Routledge Handbook of Physical Cultural Studies*.

In order to contemplate the diversity of ideas that help to establish support bases and expand the uncertain borders of PCS, the collection organized by Silk, Andrews and Thorpe (2017) brings together ontological, theoretical and methodological perspectives of several scholars around the object of this field. Thus, the purpose of the collection is not to offer a definitive metanarrative about what, after all, PCS is, but rather, it consisted of an attempt to gather different positions and tensions to help understand and think about how PCS could be an approach capable of understanding both the expressions of movements embodiment and also the manifestations of physical culture (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017).

Silk, Andrews and Thorpe (2017), when refining the previous descriptions of PCS, discuss this approach as a transdisciplinary intellectual project with roots in critical and qualitative forms of investigation, in which self-reflexivity (inherent to the field) demonstrates its dynamics. This approach takes as its object of research the physical culture in its wide range of expressions/forms of manifestation. Another aspect described in this collection refers to the PCS' concern with how to theorize the empirical process “[...] in identifying, interpreting, and intervening into the ways physical culture–related structures and institutions, spaces and places, discourses and representations, subjectivities and identities and/or practices and embodiments [...]” (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017, p. 5) relates to diverse social, economic, political and technological contexts.

By contextualizing physical culture, PCS seeks to understand how bodies are organized, disciplined, represented, incorporated and experienced from conjunctural inflections and operations of power in society (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017). Thus, according to Silk, Andrews and Thorpe (2017), the PCS, in the form of critical pedagogy, aims to generate and propagate a type of knowledge that is capable of helping

individuals and groups to discern, challenge and potentially transform existing structures and power relations, as manifested and experienced within and through physical culture.

To summarize our elucidation regarding the formation of the PCS and its characteristics, we emphasize that, in this definition effort, Silk, Andrews and Thorpe (2017) exposed eight dimensions that they consider important in the constitution of this approach, namely, the empirical, contextual, transdisciplinary, theoretical, political, qualitative, self-reflective and pedagogical dimensions. However, the indication of such dimensions is not intended to formulate a prescriptive model of PCS. Instead, they consider that, as a dynamic intellectual field, it is possible that these dimensions are incorporated into research - if not all, some-as studies progress in the search for engagement in reality under scrutiny.

PHYSICAL CULTURE IN PHYSICAL CULTURAL STUDIES

Physical culture is a complex and comprehensive term, since several understandings about it have already been undertaken throughout history. In this sense, according to Andrews (2008), physical culture, for some, evokes allusions to the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century referring to the cultivation of the physical body, while for others, it recalls the mass gymnastics exhibitions of the German and Czech movements. According to Kirk (1999), in the 1930s, this expression came into disuse in English-speaking countries and, after World War II, it referred to exercises with music for women to keep their bodies in good shape, in addition to the association with naturalism and bodybuilding.

The reuse of the expression physical culture by PCS occurred gradually from some publications by intellectuals in the field. In this sense, in the first historical and theoretical framework of PCS, Ingham (1997) pointed out the importance of interdisciplinary studies of practices in physical cultures, such as exercises, training, recreational and representational sports. For him, instead of continuing to reproduce hierarchies of knowledge and subdisciplinary segregation in the kinesiology departments, it would be necessary to carry out studies of the practices of physical culture, considering the historical, cultural, structural, personal issues and the components that are interrelated (involving social class, gender, ethnicity and others).

Kirk (1999) emphasized the need to reuse the term physical culture because it is capable of naming, theoretically, interests of a wide range of social scientists in sport, physical exercise, leisure and physical education. For the author, the notion of physical

culture could be a useful element to theoretically address the relationships involving practice places and the institutionalized forms of physical activities and specialized body practices. Specifically, according to Kirk (1999), the term physical culture refers to a series of practices related to the maintenance, representation and regulation of the body, centered on three institutionalized forms of physical activity: sport, recreation and physical exercise.

In order to address the relationship between physical culture and the body, Hargreaves and Vertinsky (2007) organized the book *Physical Culture, Power, and the Body*. The authors took the body in motion as central in different physical cultural practices and considered the ways in which bodies are invested with power, as well as exercise power socially and culturally. Thus, Hargreaves and Vertinsky (2007) seek to challenge old certainties about the body and physical culture and investigate changes in knowledge about the body and the ways in which it was and still is experienced, understood and transformed. Thus, in each chapter of the book, the authors discuss the attribution of meanings and impacts on the body in the midst of physical culture practices.

Andrews (2008), in the article “*Kinesiology’s inconvenient truth: the physical cultural studies imperative*”, considered the second milestone in the historical course of understanding and formation of PCS, clarifies that there are several reasons for the use of the term physical culture rather than sport, among them, the cultural shift⁴ in sociology, from the 1980s, which made the sociological study of the body and embodied increasingly important within the area. With this, there were numerous conferences and research publications that focused on the critical cultural analysis of the body in order to put it in the forefront of the intellectual agenda. It was from this period that researchers in sport sociology (re)discovered the body and, therefore, the issues involving physicality as the empirical nucleus of this field of study, gradually breaking with the focus of concerns in sport and progressively expanding it to other materializations of physical culture.

Based on these considerations, we understand that the term physical culture in the PCS approach encompasses practices in which the body itself presents itself as the objective and reason for these practices, considering its anatomy, its physicality and, mainly, its particularities of movement (HARGREAVES; VERTINSKY, 2007). Therefore, the human body and movement are central in physical culture (INGHAM, 1997), which expanded meaning makes it possible to understand it as “[...] constituted by, and constitutive of, *movements* – both in the local bodily kinetic sense and in the broader political

⁴ The cultural shift refers to the paradigm shift in the social and human sciences that came to think of culture as a constitutive condition of social life, and no longer as a dependent variable (HALL, 1997).

shifts and power relations the human body brings to life” (GIARDINA; NEWMAN, 2011, p. 41, author's emphasis). Thus, it is possible to say that physical culture is “[...] a place where social forces, discourses, institutions, and processes congregate, congeal, and are contested in a manner which contributes to the shaping of human relations, experiences, and subjectivities [...]” (ANDREWS, 2008, p. 56).

It is worth noting that this look at physical culture, focused on the human body and the particularities of this movements, is built in convergence with the conception of a specific academic practice, shared by researchers in Physical Cultural Studies. This conception refers to a multiplicity of ways of manifesting the body and physical culture, which include movement and, with it, practices related to sport, exercise, health, dance, among others, through which subjectivities, identities and experiences are experienced and negotiated by each subject (ANDREWS, 2008). In addition, Silk, Andrews and Thorpe (2017) explain that PCS understands physical culture from a relational and pluralist approach, in which the various expressions of embodiment – made possible by the experiences and negotiations of the subjects resulting from the involvement with such practices – are seen as constituent elements of the broader conjunctural formation in which physical culture is inserted.

The very nature of physical culture makes it an empirical local complex, in which several social markers of difference (class, ethnicity, gender, skill, generation, nationality, race and/or sexuality) are crossed, mixed and incorporated by the subjects, and can be staged, experienced and sometimes contested (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017; ANDREWS, 2008). Based on this understanding, Kohe and Newman (2011) point out that, in the approach of Physical Cultural Studies, the physical (or the body) does not concern only how the various practices of physical culture (or body practices) represent and reproduce meanings but, mainly, “[...] how bodies, when set in performative motion, hold the capacity to resist, negotiate, and challenge social and political structures, and transcend normative boundaries” (KOHE; NEWMAN, 2011, p. 72). Therefore, the body is not considered an object, nor abject, but is permanently dialectical in this approach (GIARDINA; NEWMAN, 2011).

Silk, Andrews and Thorpe (2017) state that in recent decades the expression physical culture emerges more intensely in several academic areas⁵, focusing on its social, political and economic meaning. For this reason, several scholars began to recognize it as a

⁵ The academic areas include fields such as American, anthropological, architectural, gender, geographic, Latin American, media and communication, ethnic-racial, and urban studies (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017).

significant form of intellectual and critical investigation regarding the relations between body, power and culture. Lara and Rich (2017), when investigating a set of articles authored by PCS scholars, sought to understand physical culture from articulations between practices, discourses and subjectivities, observing relations between body, sport, health/disease, physical activities and political-social, economic and technological contexts. In other words, physical culture, in general, can be understood as practices in which the body and its manifestations relate to social issues, crossed and constituted by power relations that are expressed by the “[...] existence of cultural inequalities or injustices; advantages or disadvantages; qualifications or restrictions; empowerments or disempowerments” (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017, p. 7).

Physical culture is configured from numerous events, such as conventional institutionalized body practices, that is, sports, dances, fights, recreation, leisure, fitness, physical exercises aimed at conditioning and health. However, other activities involving the body in performative movement can also be understood as forms of expression of physical cultural practices, thus constituting possible analysis objects of Physical Cultural Studies. Having this in mind upon carrying out their research, PCS scholars seek to understand their investigative concerns with a view to issues involving physicality and embodiment, as well as the observable relationships between the bodies of the subjects and the operations of power.

EMBODIMENT IN PHYSICAL CULTURAL STUDIES

Embodiment is an English-language expression used recurrently and, in a way, naturalized in studies of researchers linked to PCS. Therefore, the apprehension and understanding of its meaning occurs, in most cases, through the lines of the discussions proposed by the researchers in these productions. However, from the elements that configure and shape this investigative field, as indicated in the course of the previous topics of this article, we understand that this naturalness/naturalization is due, in addition to the particularities of the English language, to the engagement of researchers with their studies and, consequently, with the productions resulting from them, so that the questions under investigation are embodied by the authors themselves.

Vieira (2013) contributes to the understanding of this embodied condition by elucidating that there is, in the research development process, the incorporation of transformative experiences that become part of the researcher, also changing their ways of seeing and interacting with people and the surrounding world. However, the author

recognizes that it is also necessary to have a bodily engagement in the moment lived for this transformation to occur, that is, there must be a certain sensory involvement that enables the mobilization of multiple ways of perceiving and interacting with the moment lived by the subject – in this example, the subject-researcher and the moment of the research.

This aspect stands out when dealing with embodiment in PCS, given that the engagement with research and social transformation is latent in this investigative field and in “doing PCS”, evidencing commitments linked mainly to the political and pedagogical dimensions of this field, although not exclusively. In this engagement, the researchers identified in this field are driven, to a large extent, by concerns emerging from their contextualities and their involvement with specific physical cultural practices. Thus, embodiment is a term that also expresses the multiple ways in which these concerns are presented, being mobilized in these researches, above all, as a “construct” (KRIEGER; SMITH, 2004). In other words, embodiment is conceived as a conceptual notion referring to aspects not directly observable by the subjects in their involvement with physical culture, although they are subjective and corporeal experiences and, therefore, perceptible by the subjects through their senses.

This results, in part, in the centrality attributed to the body in PCS – which is not exempt from criticism⁶ –, given that it is in/through the body that transformation needs and, eventually, transformative experiences are perceived, felt and experienced by the subjects. However, it is noteworthy that, as demonstrated by Hall (1997) in relation to culture, the term embodiment (with regard to the production of understandings about it) is also a field of disputes and signification. As an instrumental and/or conceptual notion, embodiment receives different interpretative views, varying semantically according to the rationale and analytical direction attributed to it, which involves the different theoretical orientations that support the subjects-researchers to instrumentalize this notion. In this sense, with regard to the conceptual application, as pointed out by Castanho (2014), embodiment constitutes a “slippery” term, as it can assume different meanings depending on how it is undertaken.

The understanding problem of the meanings of embodiment, as reported by Castanho (2014), becomes even more complex when the term is contrasted with other languages. That is, when the translation of embodiment - an English language expression – to different languages is carried out, there is, consequently, the transposition to other

⁶ In this regard, see Millington and Wilson's (2016) critique of the anthropocentrism of PCS.

contexts, leading to the opening to recurring meanings in such contexts. This aspect is also presented in the study by Lara and Rich (2017) on physical culture studies at the University of Bath (United Kingdom), in which the authors emphasize the lack of a correlated term capable of dimensioning the expression embodiment in Portuguese. However, Lara and Rich (2017, p. 1312) point out that the term “suggests the perception of the subject in its holistic dimension from a body lived, experienced, incorporated, found in itself and in the relationship with the other, perceived as a relational unitary compound between matter, desire, consciousness, emotions and subjectivity”.

Aiming to contribute to the understanding of the issues around the construction of meanings of this expression, Castanho (2014) points out as possibilities of translations, that are more aligned with the genesis and semantics of the term in English, the expressions “incorporation”, in the sense of (re)incarnating, of entering and settling in the flesh (based on Christian ideals), and “personification”, referring to the act of performing, of giving form and making visible/observable a quality or condition of being, precisely in the figure of a persona. Thus, we understand that embodiment refers to the physical, psychological, affective and/or performative manifestations of internally and externally oriented institutions, which affect the ways of seeing, understanding and acting of the subjects in relation to others (subjects and objects/world) and also to themselves.

Castanho (2014, p. 11) argues that embodiment does not comprise only one concept, but a set of them, given the complexity of formulations undertaken for its understanding and analysis. From this perspective, embodiment can be instrumentalized as a concept that makes it possible to direct the attention of the subjects to the “holistic dimension” (LARA; RICH, 2017) of the bodies due to their multidimensionality⁷. This implies the understanding that the subjects' bodies are affectively related at different levels/dimensions, among which are movement, social action, organic matter, consciousness, emotion and desire: aspects notably related to the physicality, subjectivity and bodies of the subjects.

According to Krieger and Smith (2004), understanding the different levels with which bodies relate affectively means paying attention to the integration between social (context, position, production, consumption and reproduction) and biological (reproduction, development, growth, existence and evolution in time-space) processes.

⁷ It is important to highlight that although in this article we have approached approximations between the holistic perspective of the body and its embodiment dimension, this aspect does not constitute the focus or axis of the study in question. However, we recognize the thematic relevance to be considered in future investigations.

This understanding also permeates the understandings of Jette *et al.* (2017) and Glass and McAtee (2006) about the term, since embodiment is referred to by these authors as an “integrative concept” that allows understanding how social factors regulate behaviors and, also, how they become embodied, that is, the processes by which social stressors are inscribed and expressed in and by the bodies of the subjects, through and from the experiences lived in the course of their lives. Thus, the term refers to the daily experience, living and transcription/decoding of social stressors in the bodies of the subjects, specifically, from their movements and involvement with physical cultural practices, with regard to PCS.

By being instrumentalized as an integrative concept, the notion of embodiment is presented as a possible initial parameter for analytical incursions aimed at the object of PCS, as well as to “doing PCS” in research, since this notion is shown in the interface between body, physical culture and power relations, three elements dear to the premises of this investigative field (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017). In this regard, it is worth mentioning the understanding of Krieger and Smith (2004) that the term mentions the body constitution in its breadth and totality, that is, the origins and social and biological trajectories in a unitary way, based on the understanding that the human being is a social being, a member of a society, as well as part of a biological species. In other words, it is understood that these are categories that do not dissociate themselves in the real treatment of the subjects and their experiences. It is in this sense that embodiment mentions the holistic dimension of the subjects (LARA; RICH, 2017) and their embodied interactions (VIEIRA; BOND, 2017), and should be analyzed from the complexities that such dimension informs to research.

This broad and relational look at the “uses” of the term embodiment/embodied by researchers involved with PCS is in line with the efforts to build this project (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017), which seeks to maintain the dynamics of the investigative field in order to enable research aimed at different physical cultural manifestations (ANDREWS, 2008; GIARDINA; NEWMAN, 2011). In addition, this intentionality is associated with the commitment of researchers to denounce forms of inequality and injustice manifested in the relationships established between the subjects and physical cultural practices, as previously described. Thus, it is important that the researcher who seeks to instrumentalize this notion under the sensibility of PCS considers its complexity and dynamics when analyzing, interpreting and acting on the reality under investigation, in addition to exercising an integrated and comprehensive look at the phenomenon/object

under scrutiny and the complexity of the conditions from which the need and motivation for changes and contextual and/or social transformations emerge.

Therefore, in view of the issues presented in this topic, we discuss possibilities and/or paths by which other researchers may approach and, eventually, deepen this concept in praxiological actions. In this sense, we understand that an important aspect to be observed corresponds to the awareness regarding the attentive look at historical, economic, political and philosophical relations to which both the subjects – their bodies, subjectivities, identities – and physical cultural practices are subjected. We understand that this exercise consists of a movement that contributes to perceive, identify and challenge the relations of strength and power that permeate and constitute the phenomenon under investigation. This attention is signaled and exemplified by the criticism made by Jette *et al.* (2017) to the fragmentation and individualizing and strictly biological orientation of health interventions in the context of social epidemiology and body sociology.

An example of the instrumentalization of the construct/concept embodiment for an analytical and interventional practice oriented to PCS propositions can be taken from the general panorama of the works by Glass and McAtee (2006) and Jette *et al.* (2017). In these works, in general terms, the authors investigate ways in which risk factors and health disparities are internalized by the subjects and are “under the skin”, that is, they unveil them and demonstrate how discourses manufactured under the neoliberal logic of individualization of health responsibility hide embodiment processes related to social inequalities structured over the generations. Thus, these studies demonstrate how social inequalities become embodied, evidencing processes in which characteristics of the social environment and conjuncture alter the internal systems of the subjects and bring impacts to the health of people with regard to their subjectivity and their lifestyles.

The notion of embodiment apprehended from research linked to PCS, as we seek to demonstrate throughout this topic, represents a relevant conceptual instrument, especially considering the complexity and dynamics of the relations between the subjects and their bodies with physical culture and socially and culturally established power relations. Thus, as an integrative concept, embodiment alerts us to the need for attentive actions to the interactivity between subject and context/society in the approaches of the body and its practices. This implies, as researchers of practices related to the culture of the body and human movement, exercising sensibility and perception related to the factors that impact the manufacture of the conjunctures in which we move, experience, live and build our subjectivities and our lifestyles. From this, it is possible to put in perspective contextual

and multidimensional analyses of the body and physical culture, in order to apprehend the complexity and limits of the phenomenon investigated in a less or anti-reductionist way.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Physical Cultural Studies are constituted by different paths that converge into a project that proposes itself in permanent construction, with dynamic and non-consensual forms and possibilities, an attribute that configures PCS as a place of generative tensions. With this unfinished approach and in (re)construction, PCS is constantly moving, which raises a certain porosity and plasticity, both of disciplines and theories and of researchers who propose to critically analyze the complex conjunctures to which they turn. This stance is supported by a critical sensibility inherited from British Cultural Studies and turns to the struggles against forms of domination and, consequently, against forms of resistance, hierarchies and hegemonies that foster unequal and unfair ways of organizing human relations. In fact, this trait directly impacts the political dimension of PCS by translating into the analysis of the body in its processes of embodiment and the wide range of manifestations of physical culture.

Questioning and destabilizing hierarchical structures of domination that perpetuate inequalities and forms of injustice in human relations, in the first instance, also implies questioning the limits of the disciplines that inform about these structures. Thus, it is essential to tension the limits and disciplinary possibilities, exercising mutuality between them, from multiple perspectives, as well as their transcendence. Such tensions occur, as indicated by the discussions proposed in this study, based on the affectivity of the researchers in relation to the phenomena under investigation. However, given the fact that these tensions are inserted in a historicity and are related to social markers of difference that qualify the bodies of the subjects and their ways of life, the affectivity of the researchers moves from the plane of individuality to the plane of intersubjectivity.

Describing and delimiting the phenomena of PCS to order and indicate actions necessary and possible to understand them and eventually transforming them becomes a necessary action. However, we understand that the limits of PCS are subject to temporality and historicity, both of knowledge and of who works in its constructions, of the conjunctures in which they are formed and of the purposes assigned. In addition, disciplines and knowledge vary according to the complexity of the analytical levels that are intended about the factors that form a given phenomenon, in addition to the ways in which the phenomenon is conceived and affects those who investigate it. Hence the relevance of

contesting the physical body and culture as places, analytical spaces of the network of affections and power that constitute us as beings in the world, of embodiment processes that guide and impact values and worldviews that affect the ways we build interpersonal relationships and also power, as well as the ways we exercise them.

These are elements that PCS makes emerge to our consciousness as subjects-researchers by proposing a relational and plural understanding of the embodiment processes in physical culture, drawing attention to empirical, contextual, transdisciplinary, theoretical, political, qualitative, self-reflective and pedagogical dimensions that involve them, and also to approaches that defend democratic forms of access to them. Thus, we understand that this investigative field reinforces the need for a holistic perception of the body, contributing to approaches that focus on the diversity of social practices and power relations with which it dialogues. Therefore, PCS is a powerful approach to question and seek ways to challenge injustices and inequalities perceived in physical culture. This is the call that PCS makes to researchers, especially by signaling the importance of engaged research practices, with meaningful, transformative, embodied experiences.

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