

# Logic of sensations in physical activity: a review of Brazilian gyms' discourses and their projection in contemporary society

Lógica das sensações na atividade física: uma análise dos discursos de academias de ginástica brasileiras e suas projeções na sociedade contemporânea

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## **Abstract**

For the German philosopher Christoph Türcke, in “Excited Society” (2010), it is possible to identify a new standard of behavior, the “logic of sensations”. In this logic, human beings search incessantly for sensorial stimuli and sensationalize the everyday. Our review questioned if it would be possible to identify such logic in discourses on health and physical activities. For this, we analyzed the discourse from a hundred Brazilian gyms, through their web sites. In our methodology we used a coding process in which we grouped recording units into context units. We found five representative context units of the gyms’ discourse on physical activities and health, involved with the logic of sensations: promises of behavior, suggestion of emotions, proposals of sensorial stimulus, holistic concepts and esthetic projections. With that, we were able to make a lot of inferences, many of them around the premise that physical activity and health have been converging, in the gyms’ discourse, into an opportunity for to experience stimulating sensations and produce a sensationalized life style, for which the gym space itself would be onstage. Thus, we corroborate the initial hypothesis that Türcke’s thoughts probably apply pertinently to the harvest of physical activity in contemporary society, that this is present in the Brazilian gym discourse and that a specific sector of reflection is emergent in the context of the relation between health, physical activities and society: the philosophy of sensation.

**Keywords:** Physical Activity, Sensation, Contemporary Society

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## Resumo

Para o filósofo alemão Christoph Türcke, autor de “Sociedade Excitada”, de 2010, é possível identificar um novo padrão de comportamento nas sociedades atuais, o da “lógica das sensações”. Nessa lógica, buscam-se incessantemente estímulos sensoriais e a espetacularização do cotidiano. Nossa pesquisa teve como objetivo investigar a possibilidade de identificar tal lógica nos discursos sobre saúde e prática de atividades físicas. Para isso, analisamos os discursos de cem academias de ginástica brasileiras, por meio de seus sítios eletrônicos. Como tratamento metodológico utilizamos um processo de codificação no qual agrupamos unidades de registros em unidades de contexto para posteriores inferências. Reunimos cinco unidades de contexto representativas dos discursos das academias sobre atividade física e saúde, envolvidas com a lógica das sensações: promessas de comportamento; sugestões de emoções; propostas de estímulos sensoriais; conceitos holísticos; e projeções estéticas. Com isso, propusemos diversas inferências, a maior parte em torno da premissa de que a atividade física e a saúde vêm se convertendo, no discurso das academias de ginástica, em uma oportunidade para a experiência de sensações estimulantes e para a produção de um estilo de vida espetacularizado, para o qual o próprio espaço da academia seria palco. Dessa forma, corroboramos a hipótese inicial de que as reflexões de Türcke aplicam-se ao campo das atividades físicas na sociedade contemporânea, de que estão presentes no discurso das academias de ginástica brasileiras e de que um setor específico de reflexão emerge-se no contexto da relação entre saúde, atividade física e sociedade: o da filosofia da sensação.

**Palavras-chave:** Atividade Física; Sensação; Sociedade Contemporânea.

## Introduction

If, in previous eras the study of human movement and physical activity was limited to aspects connected to technical efficiency or biodynamic parameters, today we encounter a large variety of approaches uniting knowledge from diverse areas. As well as widening the scope of knowledge in the physical activities sciences, this epistemological opening up places them in contact with current polysemic discussions with a broader coverage of the social fabric.

Human movement, as one of man’s basic actions, is evidently related to such contemporary phenomena and undergoes changes influenced by them as well as being a vector of transformations in them. Sensationalism of daily life and the logic of sensations both affect and are affected by the human form in movement and, thus, in constructing discourses, language, representations, in sum, an esthetic.

Debord (1997), on the subject of sensationalized society, constructed a well-known reference which feeds discussion about information as merchandise and the aestheticization of news, as studied by Coan (2011). For this author, over time, the force of the image became added to the commodity, producing an informational-sensorial attraction effect on the consumer. In the economic sense, as Haug (1997) explains, there is a double restriction in this esthetic expression (from the Greek *aesthesis* - perception, sensation) of the commodity: on the one hand, beauty, the manifestation pleasing to the consumer’s senses; on the other, the beauty developed in service of realizing the exchange value added to the merchandise, exciting a desire of possession in the observer, promoting them to buy it (Haug, 1997).

For Debord (1997), the sensationalized society is a natural result of capitalist social organization, in sum, a mode of alienation choosing simple appearance as a way of life. In this author’s opinion, a well-structured criticism reveals that beneath this sensationalization of life lies a negation of existence, converted into pure commodity fetish. The term “sensationalized society” seems very relevant in today’s world, full of reality shows and mediated by the circulation of private events in the social networks. However, as explained, Debord seems more attached to sensation as an inherent result of

social life mediated by the dynamic of commodity, not taking an in-depth look at the interest in producing sensations.

With regards sensations, the recent work by Türcke (2010), proposing a “philosophy of sensation”, had a lot of impact. For Türcke, his studies advance along the path opened by Debord as they go beyond a commodity fetishism mechanic, in which sensation only appears as part of the capitalist consumption process. For this philosophy of sensation, a deeper immersion is needed, one which recognizes the logic in which sensation and perception constitute structural elements of social life, in other words, in contrast to Debord (for whom work based on social criticism appears to have already been done, it only remaining to uncover its contemporary effects, including the fetishism of sensations and the sensationalization of daily life), in Türcke (2010), the modern traffic of sensations is not just an effect of capitalist society, it is a type of reconfiguration of itself, requiring totally new criticism.

To realize this new criticism, Türcke (2010) erects this “philosophy of feeling” basically corresponding to building intelligibility links between contemporary man’s desire for sensations and the essential characteristics of modern society. If sensation were previously understood as merely physical stimulus to be processed with reason, Türcke (2010)’s proposal, in this philosophy of sensation, is to understand that the modern condition has reified sensation to the point of making it a new modern paradigm, a sort of common goal. It is, therefore, possible to understand that a whole set of social habits, trends and guidelines are directed at feeding this interest in sensory stimulus. A systematic study of the production and absorption of these stimuli brings forth an urgent discussion of modern life. Türcke names this intentional, methodological intervention the philosophy of sensation, and his work is one of the first efforts in this direction.

To better understand what the structuring role in this sensation is, Türcke indicates the change in the concept of the sensation and with it the transformation of the modern world in an “excited

society”. An excited society is that which constantly seeks stimulus, refusing to accept an interruption in sensation at any tie or in any area of life. As he says, this can be observed ranging from art to politics, from common sense to science, through a variety of examples that are shown to be strongly attached to the stimulant. Thus, the concept of “sensational”, at first simply designated as that which produces sensation, coming to be understood as a synonym of great or exciting. One of the central elements of this new configuration is the pressure of the news<sup>1</sup>, a logic in which “being communicated because it’s important” is supplanted by “being important because it is communicated” (Türcke, 2010, p. 17). According to the author’s theory, sensation has come to be something constantly sought after, leveraging unrestrained propaganda, promising sensations, as well as a number of initiatives in this paradigm.

For Türcke (2010), industrial society of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries brought with it the hope that men working together can be a great mechanism in favor of progress. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this hope dissipated, but the general effervescence did not, in other words, the impression remains that we are part of a mechanism, but an intense desire emerged for the individual to stand out from the masses.

Experiencing sensations and communicating these publicly became a fascination. Screens, first of televisions, then computer screens, reproduce these sensory experiences and freely publish them. Sensations become a type of addiction. Addiction was previously identified as dependence or a disease, nowadays the word is more often applied to stimuli. Thus, Türcke (2010) indicates modern man’s constant search after stimuli and how this is converted into a kind of compulsion, to use an overused expression: an escape valve.

In the history of humanity, palliatives against the weight of existence have always existed, but the strongest today are not, in the author’s opinion, drugs or alcohol but rather the sensory stimuli of the so-called accelerated information society. He sees it as a mistake to assume that we have created an information society, as the circulation of information

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<sup>1</sup> “News” is understood here as those from the official vehicles, as well as private facts circulating instantly and freely through social networks (Facebook, Twitter etc.).

has been, since ancient times, a social prerogative. What differs in modern times is the frantic search for news speed, explaining our desire not for the information itself but for the stimulus it provokes.

Tracing a historical path through the importance of ecstasy in different societies, the author shows us how various narcotics, such as opium, intermittently take on roles between being beneficial to society and being frenetic hallucinogenic. Caring for health predicts that, at certain moments, there will be the need to alleviate suffering (analgesics) and at others the need to incentivize life (stimulants and tonics). Historically, medicine has made extensive use of this balance. In the modern condition, due to the predictability of life based on class conditions, the desire for external sensations to regulate the state of mind have come to be compulsive. Evidently, a weighty set of goods and services offer stimuli began to form in the most varied areas of society.

It is no wonder, therefore, that physical activities are co-opted by this logic and that provoking sensations came to be the order of the day in these areas. Gyms, associated with modern lifestyles, are a privileged space for diagnosing this tendency. Previous studies have linked gyms with health paradigms and quality of life, largely represented that which Toscano (2001) identified in stating that the gym is a latent health service<sup>2</sup>. Our objective in this article is, therefore, to discuss the existence of this logic of sensations in the discourse of Brazilian gyms, which could lead to the conclusion that physical activities correspond to a space specially dedicated to producing stimuli following this logic. Thus, the health discourse attached to these spaces may be merely casual, as it is also conditioned by a sensory logic.

This text took the form of a pre-analysis drawn up according to the sampling rules, content analysis and an inferential discussion. It is, then, a qualitative methodology, although some data are presented in a quantitative mode to better illustrate the analysis and explore the argument. This form of approach is our attempt at interpreting physical activity discourses which exist in Brazilian gyms.

Under the pretext of promoting health and wellbeing, these academies appear to promote all types of stimuli, many of which are elements of the logic of sensations. The proliferation of gyms in contemporary society means they are ruthless in their search to attract members, making their advertising promises all kinds of benefits, many included in the philosophy of sensation proposed by Türcke (2010). The content analysis provided us with a cohesive organization of the data, allowing us to make inferences which were supported by the philosophy of sensation proposed by Türcke, a general outline of which is given above. Our investigative methods which led to the proposed inferences will be outlined below.

## Methodology

In this study we aimed to investigate the existence of a logic of sensations in the discourses of Brazilian gyms according to what Türcke (2010) named the philosophy of sensations. Thus, we investigated whether, under the pretext of promoting health and wellbeing to those who participated in physical activity, discourses from gyms are, in fact, selling sensations. In order to do this, following the reasoning of Türcke himself, we approach their advertising as a manifestation of this tendency, as the most convoluted modern way of announcing sensory stimuli.

Using a methodology based on Content analysis, as described by Laurence Bardin (2010), our first step was a “pre-analysis” in which we investigated 20 gym websites to draw up our body of research, in other words the data sets which would undergo analysis and the specific sampling rules for this analysis. It is important to remember that, in this text, our main aim is to discuss the conceptual appropriation of the philosophy of sensations regarding physical activity and health, thus, the data sets collected (the corpus) is solely material on which we reflected and is not the result itself. The pre-analysis, as proposed by Bardin (2010), is a stage of intuitions in which the aim is to make the variables

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<sup>2</sup> For the author, “health care service” is the generic term given to the place where health is promoted, protected or recovered, residential or otherwise. A gym is not considered a health service as it does not yet include epidemiological concepts within its practice. It does, however, have the same objective as a health care service: prevent disease, better quality of life etc., and thus can be considered a latent health care service.

operational. In our case, analysis of the discourses in the gyms' websites seem to be somewhat more pertinent by virtue of the framework we are using and the nature of the datum we sought. However, when the internet is chosen as the reference, the research is always built upon shifting sands, as we are aware of the extreme mobility of information in this media. The main aim of the pre-analysis, then, was to approach the object of the study and, firstly, evaluate the viability of obtaining data from this source. The 20 websites analyzed showed discursive and aesthetic congruencies, fulfilling the precepts of homogeneity and representativeness, leading us to assume that there was sufficient cohesion to be able to use this source.

The second stage of the pre-analysis consisted of attempting to make the variables of this source operational. In order to do this, according to Bardin (2010), the pre-analysis must stipulate the sampling rules based on the hypothesis erected from skimming the material, in this case, the websites of the 20 gyms researched in the first stage. We drew up five such rules, the websites having to contain at least one in order to be included in the study. The sampling rules resulting from the pre-analysis are:

- R1: Conspicuous images, large, striking or which, in general, overlap the text content
- R2: Presence of music and/or video, resources that are not informational but rather create the "ambience" of the site.
- R3: Words or expressions of an eminently sensory nature, similar to or metaphorically appropriate to the discourse. Words such as "stimulating" or "relaxing" and phrases like "welfare" or "comfortable environment", units directed at the sensations promised to the gym goer.
- R4: Words or expressions of emotional content, analogous or metaphorically appropriate to the discourse. Words like "satisfaction" or "happiness" and phrases like "environment full of joy" or "climate of friendship", units directed at the emotions the gym promises the gym goer.
- R5: Clearly aesthetic stimulation content not covered in the previous rules

The unit of analysis of this corpus is the gyms and, in line with our proposals, the form in which

the stimuli are expressed, what we intend to analyze is their advertising. Thus, our corpus was formed of Brazilian gyms and we chose advertising through the Internet (the gyms' own websites) as the focus of analysis. This was chosen as advertising across the websites was found to be reasonably homogeneous, thus fulfilling the rule of homogeneity as proposed by Bardin (2010).

In quantitative terms, we decided to deal with the Brazilian academies regionally. Thus, using data obtained from the electronic material on the Federal Council of Physical Education *Conselho Federal de Educação Física* (CONFED, 2013) website, units of the Regional Council of Physical Education (CREFs) in Brazil were chosen, as well as the states they covered: CREF1/RJ-ES; CREF2/RS; CREF3/SC; CREF4/SP; CREF5/CE-MA-PI; CREF6/MG; CREF7/DF; CREF8/AM-AC-AP-PA-RO-RR; CREF9/PR; CREF10/PB-RN; CREF11/MS-MT; CREF12/PE-AL; CREF13/BA-SE; CREF14/GO-TO.

As can be seen, in the CONFED division, the states of Goiás and Tocantins are grouped together as one unit (CREF14), making it impossible to divide the analysis according to region. Thus, to allow a format which is more loyal to the corpus, we chose a division based on regions with the following adaptation: Mid-West (including Tocantins); Northeast; North (not including Tocantins); Southeast; South.

Next, we counted the legal entities in each CREF unit, in other words, the "Nº of academies" per region, as shown in Table 1.

Given the total number of academies registered in Brazil, a second table (Table 2) was drawn up, grouping the CREFs by region (with the proviso for the grouping of Tocantins, as previously mentioned) and we can therefore find the percentage corresponding to the number of academies per region compared with the national total. This procedure follows statistical guidelines of authors such as Sounis (1979), Vieira (1986) or Magalhães and Lima (1999). Based on these guidelines we significantly divided the general sample in the analysis sample.

After this stage, we decided to analyze the websites of Brazilian gyms, with coherent distribution between regions, according to the percentages shown in Table 2. Although our sample size is a very small percentage given the total number of academies

**Table 1 - Number of academies de gymnastics according CREF, Brazil, 2013**

CREF	States	Region	Nº de academies
1	RJ/ES	Southeast	1857
2	RS	South	2184
3	SC	South	2163
4	SP	Southeast	8600
5	CE/MA/PI	Northeast	826
6	MG	Southeast	1375
7	DF	Mid-West	736
8	AM/AC/AP/PA/RO/RR	North	311
9	PR	South	1672
10	PB/RN	Northeast	653
11	MS/MT	Mid-West	701
12	PE/AL	Northeast	744
13	BA/SE	Northeast	1089
14	GO/TO	Mid-West + North	1282
Total			24,193

**Table 2 - Number and proportion (%) of gyms according to Administrative Region, Brazil, 2013**

Region	Nº de academies	Percentage
Mid-West (including Tocantins)	2719	11.24
Northeast	3312	13.69
North (excluding Tocantins)	311	1.29
Southeast	11832	48.91
South	6019	24.88
Total	24193	100.00

mies registered (24,193), for our qualitative analysis proposal it is a substantial number to support our inferences. We must remember, however, that we are not stating a datum existing in the Brazilian reality of this area, but rather discussing a possible trend based on theoretical support, illustrating this discussion with empirical data.

For a coherent distribution of the sample faced with the representativeness of each region, we maintained the percentages from Table 3 when choosing 100 academies, giving 11 academies in the Mid-West (including Tocantins), 14 in the Northeast, 1 in the North (excluding Tocantins), 49 in the Southeast and 25 in the South. All of the academies were analyzed through their websites. Inclusion criteria, to ensure we were not working with different provision of ac-

tivities (which would, of course, lead to provision of different sensations) the academies needed to offer weight training and fitness (we considered this to be largely representative of the identity of today's so-called gyms), excluding those offering only martial arts, swimming or Pilates, for example.

## Presenting the data

After analyzing one hundred gym websites, we used Content Analysis to organize the considerable variety of concepts and key words appearing concerning the logic of sensations. Based on Bardin (2010), we used a codifying process to group the recording units into context units to later draw up the study's conclusive indicators/inferences.

The recording unit is the unit of meaning to be codified and “corresponds to a segment of content considered as a base unit, with the goal being categorization and counting frequency” (Bardin, 2010, p. 130). The context unit serves as an attribute to understanding for codifying the recording unit and “corresponds to the segment of the message,

the dimensions of which (larger than those of the recording unit) are optimal for understanding the exact meaning of the recording unit” (Bardin, 2010, p. 133).

As described, we began by quantifying the sample by rules 1 to 5. To better visualize this operation, Table 3 was drawn up:

**Table 3 - Number of gyms in the sample according to sample rule and Administrative Region, Brazil, 2013**

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total Academies
Mid-West	4	6	3	7	3	11
Northeast	10	2	10	13	8	14
North	1	0	0	1	0	1
Southeast	27	6	30	34	24	49
South	12	3	15	18	9	25
Total	54	17	58	73	44	100

We will not discuss here the sample rules by region, as our objective is to construct a more panoramic analysis, giving preference to the Brazilian reality as a whole. As suggested by the data from Table 2, other studies may address the unequal quantitative division of academies by region. In our approach, an essentially qualitative one, this discrepancy becomes less necessary to the inferential process proposed.

In our analysis, based on the recording units corresponding to the raw data taken from the websites, we suggested five context units in which we considered we could significantly group the main records appearing in the discourse of the academies grouped in each of these units:

- Verbs utilized as promises: enchant, fall in love, encourage, enjoy, relax, make dreams come true, care, motivate, achieve goals, challenge, cheer up, have fun
- Emotions and emotional states: happiness, love, wellbeing, auto esteem, feeling good, feeling good about yourself, good mood.
- Sensations: sensation, feeling, satisfaction, fun, relaxing, freedom, vitality, dynamic classes, agreeable environment, familiar, laid back, welcoming, united, air conditioning, with music, TV, hot shower comfort.

- Holistic concept: Body in harmony and balance, integral development, complete care for the member, different from conventional academies.
- Relations and aesthetical projections in the environment: modern, well designed, charming, futuristic design. Bodily relationships and aesthetical projections: good shape, in shape, improving the body, beauty, corporeal aesthetics, beautiful, attractive body, buff, young, aesthetic transformation, mold the body, ideal body, style, cover girl.

The next section presents the inferential process based on analysis of each of the five context units. We chose to present the inferences in the Results section due to the position they occupy in Bardin’s (2010, p. 128) structure of developing analysis, in other words, at the distal pole of treating the results, although they are evidently part of data analysis.

## Results: inferences about the research corpus

For the purposes of content analysis, given the qualitative character of its methodology, the data were treated so as to form a corpus to interpret, an essential step which to some extent circumscribes what will be analyzed and therefore sets limits on what

can be discussed regarding the data in reasonable parameters of methodological safety. The inferential process, however, remains the central point of this form of investigation. Inferences are concurrently both the most unusual and the most productive nucleus of the research. This is because it is at this stage that the researchers become the protagonists in the investigation and produce argument capable of bringing a more profound phenomenon of discussion to the table, with all the risks and advantages of such analytical profundity.

In this case, based on the outline we made and the largely cohesive corpus we erected, this corpus was interpreted in the light of philosophical supports guiding our starting point. Our task, then, was to create a nexus of intelligibility between the philosophy of sensation presented by T urcke (2010) and the investigative scenario we constructed.

We associated the first context unit, “verbs utilized as promises”, with that which T urcke (2010) indicates as a current trend of intense circulation of messages. For the author, our culture has a propensity to accept news as if it was always true. This credibility is evidently greater in the established media outlets, but even in advertising activity, when the format of the message is similar to a news item, we tend to be taken in by the impression of truth in the message. Linking this to the widespread expectation that physical activity is good for our health, the discourses of academies frequently taken on a tone of making promises, mixing together the health expectation with the efficiency of the academies’ services. Along the same lines, it approaches what T urcke (2010, p. 15) calls “pure news”, in other words, affirmations announced as truths, indiscriminately applicable to all.

The use of the concept of health, in this sense, seems to have become a powerful weapon for the academies, as they are backed by the relationship between physical activity and health benefits. Based on this, the discourses list many promises, many of them revolving around the ideas of health, wellbeing and physical appearance. In some cases, these promises appear to extrapolate even the specific limits of the academies’ interventions, assuming that by promoting health and wellbeing they promise to better prepare the individual for daily life. Adhering

to the program proposed by the gym is more than an option for exercising, it is a wider engagement with modern life, supposedly dynamic and competitive. It is in this sense that verbs such as “free yourself” (from stress) “get” (in shape), “find” (balance, satisfaction, health) or “stay” (young, healthy), among others are freely associated with physical activity so as to promise results of the academia’s intervention in the subject’s life.

The second context unit, concerning “emotions and emotional states”, deals with the academies’ practices with the possibility of wellbeing giving pleasant sensations. The express discourse tacitly assumes a compensatory tone, in which the subject’s possible unsatisfactory emotional condition would be alleviated. The gym offers an emotional counterbalance to the supposedly exhaustive routine of modern life, in other words, the individual can seek relief from the pressures of such a routine through its practices. This dynamic is reminiscent of the notion of ecstasy in T urcke (2010)’s philosophy of sensations. For the author, ecstasy has existed since time immemorial and has always fulfilled the human need to bear the weight of life, especially at difficult or exhausting times. The gyms’ discourses analyzed here appear to carry the promise of ecstasy and emotional counterbalance. It is paradoxical that doing physical activity in gyms can also be exhausting, requiring diverse types of often intense physical force. However, this discourse loaded with emotional states also appear to attenuate this idea. It is in this sense that we find expressions such as “relax from the stress of S ao Paulo”, “pass through here and live better”, “a unique and innovatory experience”, as indicators of the emotional state promised to the member.

The third context unit groups the “sensations” in direct discourse. All of the units are, to some extent, associated with the logic of sensation, but in this third we group together the stimuli that explicitly appeal to sense. Presented in a sensory constellation in which the principle of pleasantness is constant, this directioning feeds the generalized compulsion to search for sensations which T urcke (2010, p. 65) names *sensation seeking*. For the author, in contemporary society, the attitude is “if you don’t have sensations you don’t exist” (T urcke,



2010, p. 65), in other words, the subject's identity appears associated with the set of sensations they experience and how they divulge these experiences. The discourses in social networks, to a great extent, feed this dynamic, making recording and divulging experiences the pattern of behavior. For TÜRCKE (2010), such behavior is a type of experiencing oneself, through recording and divulging their sensations collectively, the individual somehow certifies their own life. Evidently, this is not merely referring to proof of being alive, but more subjectively, to an "exciting existence" (TÜRCKE, 2010), substantiated by sensory experiences.

Selling elementary sensations, such as those provided by the body through physical activity, appears to be searching for such excitation. Once again, such a reconciliation is a project subsumed in the moral of a healthy and proactive body. At the same time as the principle of sensation seeking projects the individual to seek sensorial experiences, providing the subject's life with movement and activity, it can also make them hostage to these experiences. The compulsion to experience sensations may lead to a kind of numbness and isolation. For example, in the data obtained in our research, we found images of various gym goers doing exercise side by side on the treadmills, but each of them absorbed in their own sensations, basically corresponding to their headphones, televisions in front of them, magazines to be read whilst running (there are racks for them on the treadmills) or even to using cell phones or tablets while exercising. In this case, the search for sensations appears to isolate the subjects leading to sensorial introspection. The wider outlook is reminiscent of the Edward Hopper's paintings of modern solitude<sup>3</sup>. This corroborates the data we found in this context unit, such as "wi-fi" or "integrated with your iPod".

On the subject of this third context unit, referring more directly to the sensations, in the discourses of the gyms we can identify a form of expression that appears to be trying to capture sensation seek, associating terms that only make sense in their sensory impact. We found examples such as "more

summer for your body", or even "warming up to host the world's biggest sporting events" (this phrase appears without any previous explanation what it refers to). These examples seem to indicate that, in these cases, the phrases aim at sensory impact rather than clear logic. For TÜRCKE (2010), *sensation seek* corresponds to this broad, compulsive and not necessarily rational search. Words such as "pleasure", "pleasant" or "stimulating" can be found in almost all the discourses analyzed.

In the fourth context unit, we observe holistic tendencies, especially those aimed at the individual's supposed comprehensive wellbeing. In the context of the rejuvenating bodily practices, associated with the concept of Somatic Education (Strazzacappa, 2012), the process of deconstructing mechanized practices and dichotomous body concepts, conscience and the environment is frequent (Lima, 2010). In the material we analyzed, the promises for a "balanced body" or "comprehensive development", for example, are unaccompanied by any reference or mention of the practice that evidences this synergy, triggering the impression that these terms become autonomous as words with sensory appeal, in a process emptying them of their meaning. It is not difficult to observe a trend towards the holistic as more of an advertising resource than as an option of activities. In our data set, concepts such as "whole body" or "body in harmony" appear frequently without, however, any mention that explains what such concepts refer to. In TÜRCKE (2010) this process is understood as a form of aestheticizing production relationships. In this aestheticizing, the development of capitalist society leads to a perception of polarity between winners and losers. Basically, the losers are those who do not adapt to the conditions, the winners those who, beyond adapting, manage to gain some advantage. In dialogue with our results, we think that such aestheticizing also exists in these holistic trends to the extent that they appear to confer an association with this holism on the terms used in the dialogue, with positive integration in the course of life, in other words, expressions such as "body in harmony" or "body, mind and soul

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3 Edward Hopper (1882-1967) was a North American painter known for his work portraying modern loneliness in scenes in which the characters inhabited common spaces, but with significant isolation.

in balance” appear to be a form or better preparing the individual to live in society. As we expounded in the previous context unit, some expressions of holistic trends in the discourses also seem to be aimed only at the phrase’s sensory impact, without a more identifiable strict sense. For example, we found the expression “wellbeing in balance” or even “life full of vitality”.

Finally, the last context unit discusses relationships and aesthetic projections both in terms of what concerns the environment of the gym as in the supposed image of the gym goer in their medium. Returning to Berkeley’s position, in which “to be noticed is to be” (*esse est percipi*), TÜRCKE (2010, p. 39) discusses the actual outlines of this maxim. If for the XVIII century Irish philosopher this foundation launches us in the reality experienced, it is fundamentally relational, in today’s excited society advertising words or texts elaborate how a “second reality”, markedly sensory, “with no obligations or commitments, which they can enter and leave at their leisure” (TÜRCKE, 2010, p. 29). *Esse est percipi* comes to require effort and becomes a measure of behavior and of social status. For

TÜRCKE (2010, p. 56), this measure of behavior “achieves a new degree of compulsion to emit (*Sensenzwang*)” in Big Brother style reality shows. In them, ordinary people and situations were shown to be capable of emitting sensations on a grand scale, feeding back into the cycle of excitement in which the discourses we analyzed probably hitched a ride. It is no coincidence that the reality show in question generally has a gym in the center of the house on which many episodes central to the relationship developed.

It is in this seemingly health impulse (or taking on healthy-style labels) occupies more space than is actually healthy. It is evident that all sorts of products and services will direct themselves towards this appearance. Maffesoli (1999) argues that, in the present logic, appearances are more than a partial emanation of the essence, but come to represent the desire of “feeling like everyone else”. In Maffesoli appearance takes on a central role in the logic of everyday life, which to some extent approaches TÜRCKE’s analysis. However, while Maffesoli to some extent takes on this post-modern condition (a term

TÜRCKE refuses to use, preferring that of “modern condition”), seeing a new balance rather than forms of imbalance, TÜRCKE speaks explicitly of the difficulty of maintaining balance in the torrent of stimuli of the excited society.

In our results, various expressions in the discourses appear to reveal these aesthetic projections. From the recurrent idea of “satisfaction” which, to a certain extent, suggests the subject’s future behavior, to indications such as “in fashion”, “make friends”, or even “be happy” and “touch your heart”. Transform yourself and adapt better to the logic of sensations seems like an interesting selling point in academies’ discourses, allowing us to compose this context unit denominated aesthetic projections.

Overall, we perceived a highly possible dialogue between our context units and TÜRCKE’s philosophy of sensation. The dissemination of gyms throughout the country, as shown in our quantitative data, shows that these spaces had spread out, as had the proliferation of discourse on physical activity, health and aesthetic existing in them. We concluded that the results led us to understand the applicability of TÜRCKE (2010)’s philosophy of sensation in analyzing the discourses of gyms in Brazil. More aware discourse and effective health promoters appear to be given less space than the superficial proposals of pleasure, status and fun. We are not trying to say that physical activity should not be pleasurable or fun. What we found is that the logic of sensations appears to be the protagonist in the interests of gyms and that their discourses freely mix promoting health with selling sensory stimulus.

## Final Considerations

Before the survey and the inferences we constructed, it seems possible to say that Brazilian gyms are creating a discourse concentrated on provision of physical activity as a product associated with sensation seeking. More than complementary data to understand the phenomenon of gyms today, this finding seems to point to a complete reorientation of attitudes and projects that involve physical activity in these situations. Our inferences indicate a situation in which the movement of sensations seems to occupy a more central and determining

position than, for example, any scientific based theory directed at optimum gain of the results of this type of practice.

It is clear that our interpretation must distinguish discourse formulated to attract members. It is not possible for us to directly infer that the logic of sensations in the discourses is exactly that which they attempt to apply to the day-to-day life of classes. An experimental, longitudinal study could present this possibility, only briefly mentioned here, more consistently. However, the data and inferences we presented here oblige us to identify Türcke (2010)'s logic of sensations in the scenario of gyms. But it is also possible to understand that the topic is not secondary in this field and that its systematic and constant interpretation becomes necessary if we want to draw up any effective contribution for reflection on such phenomena based on academic, philosophic or scientific discourse.

Türcke (2010) does not specifically discuss health in his work although, as we can see, when referring to the many frenzies of human history, it is noteworthy that a variety of substances serve to treat diseases such as seeking ecstasy. The balance is usually the social reality involved. For Türcke (2010), the rootlessness caused by the collapse of the pre-modern condition (loss of connection with the earth, the end of inheritance, nomadism) fed a passage from the idea of curative substances, regular doses of the same substances used to bear day-to-day routine. We found points of convergence between this palliative logic and the practice of physical activity in the discourses of the gyms. Moreover, the concept of health appears to serve as a joker to the discourses' proposals, representing something that is always good to have, but conveniently suited to the academies' different actions. In the discourses, there is practically no concrete mention made of the specific benefits to health that physical activity provides. Health is an idealized goal in a thick cloud of sensations and vague promises.

Throughout the text we have avoided judging, preferring to expose our inferences in context. However, we can highlight the weight of Türcke (2010, p. 66) himself, for whom "the torrent of excitement represents too much stimulus, placing the organism

in the paradoxical situation of not being able to transform pure stimulus in perception". For him, those who are trapped in the whirlpool have a different here and now at every instant. It remains of concern to reflect on the integrity of the phenomenon of physical activity when drowning in this whirlpool. Of course, a conservative scaremongering or a lack of awareness of the inevitable flood of information that characterize contemporary life would not help the debate. In fact, the debate on today, as it is presented and with the discourses on what it can do may, however, identify with our possible collaboration. That was our initiative in this text, to appropriate a forceful interpretation of contemporary life, such as that of Christoph Türcke, and place it in dialogue with the polysemic phenomenon of physical activity, such as treated by Brazilian gyms.

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#### **Authors' contributions**

The three authors of the article worked together at all stages of the research and writing of the final text.

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