

Showcase body type, being a woman and health: sense production on the covers of *Boa Forma* magazine

Corpo-vitrine, ser mulher e saúde: produção de sentidos nas capas da Revista *Boa Forma*

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Abstract

Considering the representations of beautiful, young, thin and imperfection-free bodies, idealized female bodies seem to be governed by the widespread idea in advertising campaigns that the more sculpted a body is, the happier and more confident their owners are. In this scenario, the aim of this study is to understand how feelings are produced about women and the body in the discourse produced by the covers of *Boa Forma* magazine. Supported by the discussion in the fields of nutrition and psychology, this study was based on qualitative research. Twelve covers (editions) were selected, printed in the year 2015. The covers underwent discursive analysis, first by enumerating the more evident aspects, and later the more thorough aspects, which led to the creation of three *corpóra*: Embodied speeches: the ideal of beauty as an object of study; Being a woman, being a body, being an abdomen and The obese body, diets and health. There was an intrinsic relationship between diet, health and beauty, using the media strategies of persuasive connotation about the necessary precautions with the body. The allusion in the concept of good shape seems to be available to all women and linked exclusively to their merit. It could be inferred that, as an exercise of control over women's bodies, diets are designed not to work and ideal body images are produced not to be achieved, which can generate feelings of guilt, eating disorders and tensions, with consequences to the identities of subjects. Thus, the study showed the importance of awareness of naturalized "truths" we are subjected to.

Key words: Body. Health. Beauty. Women's Magazines. Discourse Analysis.

Resumo

Considerando as representações de corpo belo, jovem, magro e livre de imperfeições, corpos femininos idealizados parecem ser regidos pela ideia difundida, em campanhas publicitárias, de que quanto mais esculpido, mais felizes e resolvidas são suas donas. Diante desse cenário, o objetivo deste estudo é compreender de que forma ocorre a produção de sentidos sobre o feminino e o corpo no discurso produzido pelas capas da revista *Boa Forma*. Respalçado nos campos de discussão da Nutrição e da Psicologia, o estudo pautou-se na abordagem qualitativa de pesquisa, selecionando as 12 capas (edições) impressas do ano de 2015. As capas foram submetidas a análise discursiva, primeiro elencando aspectos mais evidentes e, posteriormente, mais profundos, que originou a constituição de três *corpus*: *Discursos corporificados: o ideal de beleza como objeto de estudo*; *Ser mulher, ser corpo, ser abdômen*; e *O corpo obeso, as dietas e a saúde*. Observou-se intrínseca associação entre dieta, saúde e beleza, utilizando estratégias midiáticas de conotação persuasiva sobre os cuidados necessários com o corpo. A alusão ao conceito de *boa forma* parece estar ao alcance de todas as mulheres e ligada, exclusivamente, ao mérito delas. Foi possível também inferir que, como um exercício de controle sobre os corpos, as dietas são planejadas para não funcionarem, assim como os ideais de corpo são feitos para não serem atingidos, podendo gerar sentimentos de culpa, transtornos alimentares e tensões, refletindo nas identidades dos sujeitos. Assim, o estudo mostrou-se importante para atentarmos às “verdades” naturalizadas a que estamos sujeitos.

Palavras-chave: Corpo. Saúde. Estética. Revistas Femininas. Análise do Discurso.

Introduction

Considering that body aesthetics conceptions are closely intertwined in political, economic, sociocultural and historical transformations, it seems inevitable to mention that the ways of existing and presenting themselves, according to the values of the time, are socially constructed and arising from a process. It is a process in which cultural signs are overestimated so that there is a constant adaptation to social demands, especially through a marketing camouflage, fomenting an insatiable search for an investment in themselves for acknowledging others.¹

By casting doubt on well-being in view of society's demands regarding, for example, habits, attitudes, and behavior patterns to achieve prestige, the idea of an ideal body ends up inciting

men and women to submit to influence not only on their bodies but also on their subjectivity. Specifically on women. Although their social achievements are highlighted when contextualized in a culture of gender inequality that places them in a condition of social inferiority², they remain the main target of advertising campaigns. These advertisements tend to allude to the greater freedom and appropriation of their own interests, which incites the idea that they should follow models of aesthetic appreciation. At the same time, this autonomy must be curtailed by some mechanism of control.^{1,3} That is to say, in addition to provoking identifications with the products sold, advertising ends up selling a way of thinking and acting that supposedly would be personalized in a way of being, being remembered and above all being recognized/known.

In this way, from discourses that would construct “truths” transmitted by the media, submitted to ideas conveyed as to how best expose themselves and relate to the world, women end up facing a paradoxical double trap: feeling socially excluded and frustrated by failing to achieve their goals, generating an eternal dissatisfaction that leads them to adopt radical measures that can in turn trigger eating disorders or even psychopathological symptoms.¹⁻⁶

Formatted in thin, curvy patterns, idealized female bodies seem to be governed by the a widespread idea that the more sculpted, the happier and more balanced their owners are. Based on this assumption, rooted in the imagery of bodies that are beautiful, young, light and free of imperfections, instigating a sculptural image, the object-body seems to take place in a universal logic that refutes singularity and originality, standardizing and unifying utopian expectations and perspectives. And, as if it were not enough, under the propaganda of immediacy and speed to reach feminine stereotypes.^{2,4,7}

Marketing strategies are developed by an association between diet, health and beauty, as if beauty and health mutually corresponded under the same imperative: care for the body⁵. And images in the media and in ad campaigns showing women’s bodies as objects of desire reinforce hyper individualism, culminating in feelings of responsibility and blame for not conforming to what is culturally worshiped and valued.^{6,8} Therefore, it is worth emphasizing the regulatory connotation of prescribing, surveilling and demanding the scope of so coveted well-being under the background of praise for moderation and the search for fruitful results permeated by the illusion of access to the beauty that would be “within everyone’s reach.”⁶

As Goldenberg⁹ would say, talking about body and gender in other times would mean talking about futile topics. However, considering the numerous debates that seek to include reflections on culture, gender, corporeity and advertising influences as potential sources in constituting subjectivity that is not only individual but collective, the literature has been advancing in studies that seek to understand how such issues reverberate in micro and macro social perspectives, especially in the Brazilian culture.^{7,10-13} In view of this scenario, the objective of the present study is to understand how the production of meanings on the feminine and the body occurs in the

discourse produced by the (Brazilian magazine published by major Brazilian publisher and printing company *Editora Abril*) *Boa Forma* (Portuguese for Good Shape) covers. In this sense, the present discussion also aims not only to raise questions about the way information is transmitted and repeated to generate impact in readers, but to compare the discourse produced from magazine covers about bodies and eating with that produced in the health area, supported by considerations from nutrition and psychology fields of discussion.

Method

Accomplishing this study was based on a qualitative approach of research, seeking to highlight the meanings produced and transmitted about bodies and the feminine by *Boa Forma* magazine. The choice was made because this is a health and wellness women's magazine with the largest national circulation today. In order to do it, we selected 12 covers printed in 2015 to have a sample of one year of production, which is more recent and near in time to this article writing. The period of one year was prioritized as a sample, since this is usually the time interval considered by the fashion and beauty industries to start and end cycles of trends and norms about what is beautiful, appropriate and pertinent in this universe.

Once the sample was selected, all materials passed, firstly, through a superficial analysis, with the most obvious and most impactful aspects shown on the covers. Then they were listed and submitted to a discursive analysis. Subsequently, a more in-depth survey was conducted, looking at issues which were not so obvious at first glance. After the analysis, three corpora were constituted: *Embodied speeches: the ideal of beauty as an object of study*; *Being a woman, being a body, being an abdomen, and Obese bodies, diets and health*. The three topics shall be presented and discussed below.

Results and Discussion

Understanding the importance that the theoretical reference selected for the analysis of the data represents for the delineation of this discussion, it is important to present a brief explanation about the foundation that supports it and about the justification for its choice. The Discourse Analysis of French tradition, established by (French philosopher) Michel Pêcheux¹⁴ shall be used to analyze and discuss the data. The choice is due, among many reasons, by two in particular. The first one is because it allows one to look at all materiality that produces meaning – that is, there is no need for oral or written language for its application. And it may reach, for example, the meanings produced by the choice of the image on the magazine cover. The second reason, in turn, refers to the importance that the discursive analysis attributes to the Ideology that operates

in the discursive processes of meaning production, emphasizing the power relations that are present in its conjuncture and in the process of human constitution, be it individual or social.¹⁵

It is worth mentioning that the Discourse Analysis refuses the conception of language as a neutral and naive tool of explanation and interpretation of the world, assuming that it is designed so that mistakes occur, allowing Ideology to act through its cracks. In this way, discourses production material conditions are evidenced, demonstrating that language goes beyond what is said, situating the subjects that speak in relation to the position and the socio-historical-cultural context from where they speak.¹⁶

Ideology is an indispensable concept for Discourse Analysis and is understood as an unconscious mechanism of falsification of reality that maintains the interests of the ruling classes. For this, it uses two main mechanisms, the first of which is the naturalization of modes of relation in society. And the second one is the individuation of the subjects tied to the idea of meritocracy. That is, it is the illusion that subjects are detached from each other and are solely responsible for their successes and failures, withdrawing them from their socio-historical contexts and positioning them as history-free and immune to the social conditions that circumscribe them.¹⁷

With regard to language, there are two essential mechanisms that allow the manifestation and perpetuation of Ideology: Forgetfulness 1 and 2. Forgetfulness 1 can be defined as the illusion of authorship that subjects have when producing discourses, while Forgetfulness 2 is the idea that the discourse produced can only consist of the exact words that were used by them.¹⁸

Finally, understanding that language transcends the idea of a mere communication tool and is able to reveal ideological aspects operating in maintaining power discourses, this study has considered Discourse Analysis as an appropriate instrument to analyze the data obtained. Such a choice makes it possible to transcend what seems obvious in producing magazine covers and reach the meanings produced (and sold) on female bodies today.

Given the conception of language, discourse and Ideology presented by the Discourse Analysis, the data collected from magazine covers made possible the constitution of three analytical corpora that shall be worked on in detail in this discussion.

Embodied speeches: the ideal of beauty as an object of study

What does advertising say? In what form does it say it? Does it contradict itself? Questions such as these gain visibility when the discussion points to the dilemma between the publicity side of advertising and the side of the insatiable desire of people motivated to ensure the *product* offered, loaded with expectations and fantasies of how promising life shall be from this illusory guarantee.¹ A guarantee of good shape/mold, well-being, fitting the beauty standards highlighted

in society, happiness for essentially meritocratic conquests¹⁷ and, in a constant struggle against time, to achieve their goals in a quick way.

As mentioned, the analysis of this article rests on 12 covers of *Boa Forma* magazine in 2015. Immediately, it is inevitable to comment on the speeches contained in mind games of images, words and fonts used as media resources to impact with the message to be not only transmitted but bound to affiliations of senses evoked from memories and circumstances, interwoven and interlocking between the immediate and socio-historical contexts, leaving vestiges of apprehension for the Discourse Analysis (DA) that allows to cross the imaginary in which the discursiveness is (re)produced.¹⁸

In all the covers it is possible to assume that the ideal body exhibited by the models – always smiling and sensual – is enclosed in the possibilities of a lean body, molded to soft curves and sculpturally worked out at gyms. There is also concern about the bodies' aesthetics in relation to fashion clothing used, often associated with both the message conveyed and the background that aims to draw attention to green spaces, fitness and beaches, combining shades. In this sense, toned bodies must be exposed with the least possible clothing, given that the body would be the true clothing, advocating for the idea of a woman that is outgoing, full of life, independent and in balance. That is, configured as a symbolic space in the construction of modes of subjectivity and identity, linked to states of mind, the body becomes a possible target of domination and control, prescribing norms of conduct and values, a form of (physical, economic, symbolic and social) capital, and its exaltation and overvaluation are used as mechanisms.^{7,12}

Since for the DA all materials producing meaning are amenable to analysis¹⁸, deepening details make possible to note not only the body type to be diffused but what transcends language and the meanings produced by images from the way certain words and expressions appear in high relief, instigating their essentially female audience to pay attention to: (a) Parts of the body – abdomen, belly, waist, hair, skin, legs, buttocks; (b) Eating – detox, functional menu, quick and easy recipes, diets, foods that melt fat, food reduction and restriction, tips for eating better; (c) Exercise and fitness – “four-exercise workout,” power series, accelerated circuit; (d) The promise and guarantee of results to be obtained – fat freezing, extra weight elimination, “burning for 48 hours,” reduction of swelling and metabolism acceleration, balancing hormones, toning and definition of muscle tone, making desires come true; and (e) The promise of short-term time – “in a month,” express strategies and tricks, “jumping once,” “in five minutes,” flexible diet, “fast results.” As it is possible to infer, since manuals and magazines would promise infallible diets and strategies, body care seems to have gradually acquired a characteristic of necessity, much from a the body industry persuasive power, which stimulates concern with food, beauty, physical activities and even other medical resources of aesthetic intervention.^{7,19}

Specifically on the last aspect highlighted, it is worth mentioning that the magazine covers present the information above about the speed in obtaining a thin body, denoted as ideal, or to get it as close as possible, burning calories in the shortest time possible. But when thinking of women's routine in both the public and private realms, do they really have the time to respond to the social demands they are and are found subjected to at every moment and also to set aside a time to sculpt and maintain a showcase-body? Two editions point out that (Brazilian fashion model and actress Gisele Bündchen and Brazilian comedian and television personality Sabrina Sato) models' tight schedules are not an obstacle to working out even when not having enough time. On this aspect, as pointed out⁷, specialized magazines lead readers to believe that not following experts' guidelines would constitute a personal negligence, since with discipline and will power anyone could at least get close to the appearance of the current standard of beauty and immediately conquer the dreamed satisfaction, recovering the concept of meritocracy by the idea that the same conditions would be available to all.^{17,21}

Starting from this discussion, it is relevant to point out the use of verbs that invite not only the idea of doing and conquering, but also *what you should do, the challenges that must be overcome* or even the idea of *being able to do everything, although with restrictions*. In this sense, the use of metaphors and euphemisms is found to replace expressions of impact with others that are more pleasant and softer, such as: "*Foods to make the flaccid belly disappear*," "*Stop being overweight*," or else, "*Slimming aids that melt fat*."^a As proposed by Vilhena et al.²¹ on television advertising, the language should be as simple as possible, interspersing good and bad news – as in the magazine it is plausible to say of the headlines guaranteeing the promises, as well as the duty to perform what is being proposed for that scope, sparing the reader of the work of thinking from a critical and selective appropriation of the discourse conveyed.

It should be emphasized that the magazine headlines are not restricted to invitations to conquer and reach good shape. Rather they seem to encourage greed by the devotion to conquer an ideal/lean/perfect body since it will always be possible to improve and perfect it.⁷ Thus, a strategy of instigating the reader to delight in carrying out the activities proposed is observed: "*Fall in love with running: we teach you how*,"^b in order to promote the idea of an encounter with themselves and the pleasurable sensations when caring for their bodies, disguising the idea of a necessary evil.¹⁹

But are these suggestions accessible to all women and all female bodies? Being the center of attention, the prominence of advertising seems to camouflage the paradoxes and conflicts between extolling singularity and at the same time denying the otherness and difference, dissimulating social, historical, contextual and even organic particularities. An ideological illusion that all women

a These excerpts were taken from *Boa Forma* magazines of August, April and August 2015, respectively.

b These excerpts were taken from *Boa Forma* magazine of February 2015.

are born with the same tools and therefore have the same conditions to try to have the body advocated as ideal⁷ is fomented, which explains the idea by Siqueira & Faria²² on the “production of a capitalistic subjectivity,” in which the focus is the universal, the mass communication. This aspect may lead us to suggest the idea of social coercion and control that leads to conforming the body to a demanding aesthetic pattern¹⁹. Thus, in all these cases, what is observed is a falsification of reality, as well as inclusive practices in which women would have to “squeeze in” in order to fit in a discursive-social medium, understood as dealing with the representation of a perfect feminine body²³ and rescuing past experiences made present in new wording.¹⁸

It should also be added that, of all the magazine covers, only one presented the advertisement “Health Alert^b” which supposedly would lead the reader to question possible health risks to some beauty care, suggesting that it was not a recurring concern in the magazine. In addition, another proposal refers to steps to achieve happiness with the desired body, allowing us to allude to responsibility and hyper individualism^{6,8} by the guarantee of physical, emotional and nutritional well-being, which can trigger feelings of frustration, impotence and guilt if you can not follow such “easy” commands. As a strategic resource, it is important to mention that the magazine presents a few headlines to refine the relationship between physical well-being and mental well-being, such as “*Know why a smile is worth a beauty treatment*” or “*It’s in your mind,*”^c perhaps under the implied concept of wellness mentioned by Siqueira and Faria.²² Thus, the idea of an unattainable beauty pattern seems to be made evident, as well as being subject to getting sick in view of the demand for understanding what slimming down and being beautiful and healthy are, disregarding the fact that a lean body depends on other domains of care, not being restricted to diets and physical exercises, and confusing certification of social inclusion and body conditions.⁷

In view of this contextualization, it is worth mentioning that the models used to convey the message represent mainly white bodies and women of status with the same aesthetical lean stereotype, producing an air of perfection.¹² The magazine seems to take advantage of the already socio-culturally widespread conception that the relationship with the world, especially when we speak of the bridge from the private domain to the public one, involves the mediation of corporeality – that is, the body in a dialectical relationship with the social.⁷ Besides, it takes advantage of the fact that the Brazilian culture turns natural bodies into a capital.¹²

For such, specialized magazines like this one seem to use what Orlandi¹⁸ calls a *mechanism of anticipation*, in an attempt both to experience what readers “hear” and to anticipate the meaning produced by readers when accessing the information in order to regulate the effect to be produced in them. Therefore, it is interesting to think *to what type of woman* this type of magazine is addressed, considering the idea that no discourse is merely naive, without a purpose or neutral, and that

c These excerpts were taken, respectively, from *Boa Forma* magazines of May and December 2015.

what is non-spoken speaks for itself, being also a resource of communication in which the senses are constantly being “managed.”¹⁸

By the young models’ profile, it is possible to infer that married women with children are not the focus of the magazine. Despite the headline that in a single edition it instigates husbands’ inclusion in diets and strategies for not fattening after marriage, a certain invisibility is observed both in an image of a model that represent these women and in a speech that is not taken from acquiring a young beauty.¹² One can notice the efforts in some editions about the possibility of reaching a perfect body after gestation or after a certain age, but also an interpretation prevails that, in fact, it reinforces the feeling of guilt culturally placed on these women.

In the meantime, translated into a finer and more elegant body, it is evident how appearances are speculated about both as a gateway to knowledge/acknowledgment from others as a prerequisite for conquering suitors³. Presenting women as “more contemporary than contemporaneity,” an ideal type, the press seems to occupy the role of an educator/trainer, using a strong set of means of power – marketing communication²² – which we shall better explore in the corpus below.

Being a woman, being a body, being an abdomen

From a very early age, once one is conceived as a human being, several discourses of power and standardization involve individuals, directly or indirectly affecting their bodies, identities and subjectivities. These discourses trace and determine what is or is not appropriate for each one, dictating how behaviors, affections and even bodies aesthetics must take place.²⁴ Such discourses are reproduced by the habitual institutions/activities of the individuals’ routines, and also the Ideology uses such mechanisms, such as, for example, magazines about body care, as the one used by this study.²⁵

Therefore, it is possible to note that the magazine not only promotes a body pattern to be adopted but also carries with it an idea and conception of the feminine. By looking at the cover, it is immediately possible to see the models’ profile: lean, perfectly matching the standards of what is considered beautiful in contemporary culture, perfectly groomed hair, absence of any skin marks, alternating expressions of happiness and sensuality, white (although there is an apparent effort to represent the various aesthetic possibilities of Brazil, only one black model is shown on one of the covers over a year, with a recurrent ethnic pattern in the publications), famous and successful. It is important to point out that the models chosen are usually in a prominent position in the month of the magazines release, such as in leading roles in some TV soap opera that is getting high ratings.

It is noted that a model woman is presented by the magazine, in which other women can/should mirror, a woman who manages to cover all the demands that pervade her existence with beauty, that is, women who are in the upper class, work in prestigious jobs and get along with it

all while remaining beautiful and lean. Throughout the presentation of these women, it is possible to perceive a decontextualizing of both the models and the target audience of the magazine. The illusion that all women are or may be as the ones presented by the covers is created, having their particularities discarded and going through a process of historical-contextual emptying, an important ideological tool that allows the falsification that occurs when it is believed that all subjects are in the same historical-social position¹⁷.

It is possible to perceive other strategies used to create the illusion of closeness between the readers and the cover models, as for example in the use of the word “secret,” always applied in a nominal relation with the model – “(Brazilian actress and model) Camila Queiroz, the beauty secrets of the actress of the year,” or in “(Brazilian actress) Tainá Muller, the secrets that keep the actress’s body slim (and the beautiful hair).”^d By writing the word “secret,” an illusion of intimacy between the reader and the model is created, bringing the latter’s reality into the field of what is possible, of close relations, causing the readers to “buy” (both in the sense of acquiring the magazine and the acceptance of the stereotype of ideal women advocated by it) the woman sold by the magazine.

This strategy can be understood as an exchange in the discursive position occupied by the models. Therefore the magazine makes a movement of removing them from unattainable or impossible places that they occupy in the social imaginary and moving them to the discursive position of ordinary women, that is, like the reader, but having a secret capable of making them able to achieve the body and status those possess. The need for a movement in the models’ discursive position (a place occupied in the discourses constructed by the social and cultural imaginary) is then observed so that the magazine is able to reach the place (an empirical place in which the readers are situated) occupied by the women who seek the content that it discloses.¹⁸

The choice of the term “good,” already used in the magazine title (“Good Shape” in the translation from the Portuguese) reveals the idea that a thin-bodied woman is not only one of the aesthetic and identity possibilities that a woman can assume, but one that is correct, appropriate and qualified, the one which the “good” woman must take on. This argument is possible when we reflect on Forgetfulness 2, which creates the illusion that the only way to structure a discourse is by using the exact words that were used in it, when in fact the words used reflect the ideological affiliations adopted by those who produce it.^{15, 18}

Another relevant topic on magazine covers refers to reducing women to the body they have and, even more specifically, the aesthetics of their abdomen/belly (“Have a six-pack with our plank workout series”/“A TOP belly”/“Thin waist by jumping”/“Zero belly: Lose 5 cm off your waist with our menu”).^e There are no news or articles throughout 2015 referring to other aspects of

d These excerpts were taken from *Boa Forma* magazines of January and May 2015, respectively.

e These excerpts were taken from *Boa Forma* magazines of March, April, May and September 2015, respectively.

women's life beyond the search for the body that reaches the "good shape." But the models chosen to illustrate them permeate the popular imagination loaded with other meanings such as success, competence, status and personal/professional achievement.

In this sense, it can be said that the magazine does the exercise of unconsciously insinuating in its discourse an association between "good" shape and well-being/achievement/success in all other fields of a feminine existence, as if the ideal body were the accessing path for all of them. And, more than that, as if every woman, by appropriating the models' "secret", would be able to reach the fullness of their existence – such fullness socially constructed and reaffirmed by the magazine in its dissemination. There is in this movement a complete withdrawal from women's history, both in an individual sense (in the disregard of their subjective, biological and contextual particularities) as in a social one, since Brazilian society is still marked by male domination. This accentuates gender inequality and consequently causes the search for female fulfillment to be cluttered by obstacles that are not related solely to their bodies and permeate both the public and private environments frequented by women.^{26, 27}

Finally, it is possible to say that, according to the covers analyzed, being a woman and being in "good shape" are ideological constructs, since the meanings produced by the magazine are essentially permeated by the two pillars of Ideology: the naturalization of modes of relation and meritocracy.¹⁷ In this way, women's bodies (which is what remains of them, after the reduction they suffer when printed on the covers or having access to them) are emptied of their history and particularities, and also what is beautiful/good, undergoing a process of naturalization as if there were no cultural and social influences on the constitution of bodies and concepts of beautiful/good. Besides naturalization, there is meritocracy, since in the process of disregarding the historical-social conditions presented by each reader of the magazine, the idea is created that each woman is the only one responsible for achieving the "good" shape and then any accompanying personal and professional fulfillment.

Obese bodies, diets and health

Observing the magazine covers, one can note the recurrent and always prominent use of terms such as "succeed," "get very thin," "get very slim," and "melt" (fat), which refer to ways of "exterminating" unwanted body fat. The use of such expressions is not accidental if we take up the concept of interdiscourse.

According to Orlandi,¹⁸ the interdiscourse refers to something that has already been said and that has an effect on what is being said. In all discourse (saying) an interdiscourse is present (already-said) since the latter is the whole set of formulations made and already forgotten that make it possible for us to say. In this sense, the choice of these terms refers to what is in the memory

and in the contemporary socio-historical context of rejection of obese bodies by stigmatizing fat and considering lean bodies as the standard of an ideal and undeniable beauty.

It can be affirmed that we live in a lipophilic society, where beliefs, attitudes, values and negative stigmas towards overweight individuals are common.²⁸⁻³¹ Having a lean body in a society that abhors fat ends up becoming a symbol of power since the body size ends up classifying and qualifying people in relation to their morality and personality.³²

Thus, all symbols and values historically constructed and related to obese and overweight individuals are also signifying in what is being said on magazine covers. Overvaluation of lean bodies as the only body type acceptable in today's society turns fat into a symbol of moral bankruptcy.³³ Fat becomes the great enemy of the body and health, hence the need to "exterminate it." From this perspective, even if not explicitly written or exposed on the covers, all these meanings are present and assist in the production of senses.

Desirable bodies, culturally and historically constructed, reflect not only the social context but also carry with them power relations.³⁴ Excess fat in the body becomes an undesirable social and moral mark that disqualifies the individuals due to noncompliance with the current appearance patterns.³³

With the process of medicalization of body and diet, fat people have been increasingly stigmatized as transgressors of nutritional standards. And even though obesity is tied to various organic causes, fat people are considered as the ones who overeat.³⁴ As an additional example, it is also possible to mention countless pranks, easily found on the Internet, associating the consumption of caloric foods, such as sweets and fried foods, with the expression "high-fat foods." The use of this term evokes a sense that the consumption of these types of foods, these "high-fat foods," is an inherent characteristic of obese people: the ones with bad eating habits, who do not care for their food, who have no control. The term stigmatizes at the same time the obese individuals and certain types of food, considered "enemies of diets."

The exaltation of lean bodies and diets as a way to conquer them brings in itself, albeit covertly, an ideological position and the expression of values, beliefs and symbolisms, built in a given historical context of society. Since obesity is a symbol of transgression of norms and a disease to be avoided, "dieting" symbolizes control and morality³⁴ because diets are efficient ways of "getting rid of extra kilos in a short time," which is something culturally desirable. In this context, it is possible to infer that diets are a form of exercise of control over bodies to adapt them to an established aesthetic standard. It is not without reason that the "lost kilos versus time" ratio gains prominence in basically all the covers analyzed. The promise of weight loss in a quick/immediate/almost instantaneous way ("Lean in 5 minutes"/"Lose up to 3 kg in 1 week by having soup at

night”/“Clean diet: lose 5 kg in 21 days”/“Gluten-free: lose 4 kg in 15 days”),^f always associated to some “fashionable” diet is recurrent in the covers analyzed.

Recalling the concept of interdiscourse, we also emphasize that the recurrent use of the word “diet,” always highlighted in large letters or in colors contrasting with the background, is not a matter of chance. According to Orlandi¹⁸, when we speak, we join a network of senses and the way words affect us, produce meaning and signify in us is determined by our socio-historical context and by our symbolic and world experiences. Turning our attention to the process of constructing the meaning of the word “diet” in contemporary society, we emphasize that, historically, this word is linked to the meanings of weight loss/putting weight down through diet restriction/control aiming to “eliminate” the body fat, since fat, in addition to being immoral, is seen, especially in industrialized countries, as synonymous with disease and bankruptcy.^{32, 35}

The sense of ease attached to diets is also part of the covers speech, such as “Flexible diet: lose 4 kg in 30 days, just reduce the meat in the menu.” Or an “Easy menu to exterminate fat.”^g This speech reminds us of the blame on obese individuals for their condition: since diets are sold as something so simple and easy, it would be enough for individuals to want and have the willpower to achieve them. In this discourse, we have distributed the concept of meritocracy¹⁷ since it considers obese individuals as being solely responsible for their success (and also their failure) with diets and weight loss, removing them from their social and historical contexts. Society attributes to overweight individuals all responsibility for their condition and also the solution is up to them.³⁶⁻³⁸

Such a speech also presents a rather simplistic view of the weight loss process, as if it depended only on the ratio of calories intake versus calories burned, reducing eating to a simple mathematical operation. This medicalized view of nutrition, based on nutrient/calorie intake standards and recommendations necessary for the proper functioning of the biological body, reduces food to a mere supplier of nutrients, ignoring social, political, cultural, symbolic, and emotional dimensions of food.³⁹

The growing knowledge about the role of diets in disease prevention and health promotion has contributed to the medicalization of eating and obesity. The normalization of diets, by establishing rules to teach people how to eat – that is, what to eat, when to eat, how much to eat, foods that should be restricted or chosen – are part of the purely biomedical discourse of obesity in contemporary society³², which the media appropriates to produce its own discourse. Since they reduce food consumption to a mere nutrient intake, these diets incorporate, in addition to the restrictive dimension, an element of food misidentification that proposes a conditional separation of the hedonistic dimension of eating.⁴⁰ This in no way contributes to real changes in eating behavior

f These excerpts were taken from *Boa Forma* magazines of June, July, November and December 2015, respectively.

g These excerpts were taken from *Boa Forma* magazines of July and October 2015, respectively.

and life habits inherent to the process of weight loss that, contrary to what is preached on the magazine covers, is difficult to reach and requires great efforts. Faced with this complexity, it is clear that dealing with eating changes and restrictions can not be an easy task.

Restrictions imposed by diets have an extremely negative effect on individuals' eating behavior, being a strong trigger for excessive eating, craving^{h41,42}, especially for foods that are being restricted, for the development of severe eating disorders and even for weight gain in the medium and long terms, which is exactly the opposite of what is desired when carrying out diets.⁴³⁻⁴⁷

What is not made explicit is that the (false) promises of diets that shall “eliminate,” “dry,” “melt” and “exterminate” the (supposedly) extra kilos in such a short time conceal inefficiency, infeasibility, and harm of restrictive diets to lose weight. It can be inferred that the diets proposed are restrictive based on the fact that rapid weight losses, such as those proposed, necessarily involve the adoption of significant dietary restrictions, both in quantity and quality of what is eaten. Souza et al.⁴⁸ have evaluated the nutritional adequacy of diets for weight loss in nonscientific magazines and found that 64% had a caloric value less than or equal to 1,200 kcal (mean of $1,183.3 \pm 428.0$ kcal). And that 53.6% and 45.7% had insufficient amounts of carbohydrates and lipids, respectively. And 78.1% had an excessive amounts of protein.

Unrealistic weight loss goals and unattainable beauty ideals reinforce bodily dissatisfaction and misrepresentation with eating, in no way contributing to individuals' physical and mental health. On the contrary, one might venture to say that diets in general, such as those on magazine covers, are designed to not work, just as body ideals are made so as to not be hit. Otherwise it would not be possible to renew, with each issue, the promises of rapid weight loss with the newest fashionable diet.

Final thoughts

After realizing that the body can not be reduced to its physical dimension but that there are a number of other dimensions that simultaneously permeate it and constitute it – such as social, historical, cultural, economic aspects, among others –, it becomes extremely important to understand which senses have circumscribed the individuals and in what way they undergo influence and control through the mechanisms of power that are disseminated in the discourses conveyed, for example, in the magazines that make up this study.

h *Craving* is defined as an intense desire for some substance, with increased efforts and motivation in the pursuit and obtainment of that substance^{40,41}. The term has also been used to refer to the desire to seek and consume certain foods, or difficulty in resisting them.

It was possible to perceive that, apart from the clear information shown in creating the covers, some things are not said and this resonates and produces meaning when historically, socially and culturally contextualized. That is, there are not only suggestions on diet meals and propositions of physical exercises capable of operating miraculous weight losses but the exposure of ideal bodies and women (or an ideal of woman). In this sense, the magazine perpetuates a model to be followed, which disregards the differentiated contexts to which each reader belongs, making the propositions crystallize by strong ideological tools of historical and social deletion of individuals who have an access to the magazine, such as meritocracy and the naturalization of what is good/beautiful as truths, not cultural reflexes.

It was also possible to perceive that the lean body, which meets the expectations of the socially instituted beauty, is treated as an indispensable apparatus for personal and professional fulfillment, making a direct association of an adaptation to beauty standards and well-being and success in the most varied dimensions of women's existence. Thus, the model of the feminine advocated by the magazine demands that women be able to feel accomplishment in all the scopes through which they go through, which represents a disregard for the difficulties faced by women in the different social positions that they occupy, arising from a society with strong patriarchal traits and demarcated by a still present domination of the masculine over the feminine.

Finally, it is possible to say that advocating for a lean body as a standard is significantly based on the biomedical discourse that legitimates thinness as a body ideal. That is, there is a socially constructed link between the lean body and the healthy body, which is constantly reaffirmed by discourses laden with naturalized and culturally instituted "truths." Therefore, this association of a lean body with a healthy one generates a connection that is contrary to the fat body in terms of disease, which, coupled with the ease with which the search for an ideal body is treated on magazine covers, generates feelings of guilt, eating disorders and directly impacts the individuals' identity, self-image and ways of relating in society.

Given this scenario, it seems essential to deepen our reflections on the simplistic visions that set the tone for the concept of an ideal body and of health that permeate the fact of being a woman in the contemporary world, which carries the illusion that there is some magical, universal "recipe" that is within everyone's reach. Professionals, especially in the area of health care, should focus on incorporating information relevant to the individuals' pluralities and singularities in order to work under a physical and mental health perspective.

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