

Health, aesthetics, and efficiency: relationships between women's eating practices and their bodies

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Abstract

Research on food and body in the consumer society presents an increasing interest from academics in various fields. The aim of this paper is to understand the relationships between women's food consumption practices and their bodies. The authors use the perspective of the Theory of Practice to access the components of food consumption practices. In-depth interviews were conducted with twenty female informants, residents of the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro, who said that their bodies were central in food consumption practices. These practices are regulated by rules that take into account the distinction between nourishment, needed for surviving, and eating, a pleasure action, and women's strategies in combining short-term (pleasure) and long-term (body) goals. Food consumption involves commitments to health, associated with clinical aspects of food and body maintenance; aesthetics, which present the food as a way of molding the body within patterns of beauty; and efficiency, which orient eating towards the professional performance of the woman's body.

Keywords: Food Consumption. Body. Practice Theory.

Saúde, estética e eficiência: relações entre práticas de consumo de alimentos das mulheres e seus corpos

Resumo

Pesquisas sobre alimentação e corpo na sociedade de consumo apresentam crescente interesse entre acadêmicos de diversas áreas. O objetivo deste estudo foi compreender as relações entre as práticas de consumo de alimentos de mulheres e seus corpos. Para tanto, os autores utilizam a perspectiva da Teoria de Prática (TP) para acessar os componentes das práticas de consumo de alimentos. Foram realizadas observações e entrevistas em profundidade junto a 20 informantes do sexo feminino, moradoras da região metropolitana do Rio de Janeiro, que apontaram a centralidade do corpo em práticas de consumo de alimentos. Essas práticas são reguladas por regras que levam em consideração a distinção entre o alimento, que nutre, e a comida, que dá prazer, e as estratégias das mulheres para combinar objetivos de curto prazo (prazer) e longo prazo (corpo adequado). O consumo de alimentos envolve engajamento com saúde, associado a aspectos clínicos da alimentação e manutenção do corpo; estética, os quais apresentam a alimentação como forma de moldar o corpo dentro de padrões de beleza; e eficiência, que orienta a alimentação para o desempenho profissional do corpo da mulher.

Palavras-chave: Consumo de alimentos. Corpo. Teoria de prática.

Salud, estética y eficiencia: relaciones entre prácticas de consumo de alimentos de mujeres y sus cuerpos

Resumen

Las investigaciones sobre alimentación y cuerpo en la sociedad de consumo presentan un creciente interés de académicos de diversas áreas. El objetivo de este trabajo es comprender las relaciones entre las prácticas de consumo de alimentos de mujeres y sus cuerpos. Para ello, los autores utilizan la perspectiva de la teoría de práctica para acceder a los componentes de las prácticas de consumo de alimentos. Se realizaron observaciones y entrevistas en profundidad con veinte informantes del sexo femenino, habitantes de la región metropolitana de Río de Janeiro, que indicaron la centralidad del cuerpo en prácticas de consumo de alimentos. Esas prácticas están reguladas por reglas que tienen en cuenta la distinción entre el alimento que nutre y la comida que da placer, y las estrategias de las mujeres para combinar objetivos a corto plazo (placer) y a largo plazo (cuerpo adecuado). El consumo de alimentos implica compromiso con la salud, asociado a aspectos clínicos de la alimentación, al mantenimiento del cuerpo y a la estética, que presentan la alimentación como forma de moldear el cuerpo dentro de patrones de belleza; y a la eficiencia, que orienta la alimentación hacia el desempeño profesional del cuerpo de la mujer.

Palabras clave: Consumo de alimentos. Cuerpo. Teoría de práctica.

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INTRODUCTION

Beyond a human biological need, eating is a collective phenomenon, culturally influenced and experienced by the individual through the body. Through alimentary supply, relationships between individuals themselves and their environments are built. Such interactions are transformed by human work and by the application of technologies to produce means of survival and the consequent exchanges (CANESQUI, 2005). Food consumption has direct effects on the body, because the body is responsible for processing food but, moreover, the social role of eating is also based on body performance. The association between body and food is, thus, permanent and involves biological, social and cultural dimensions.

The field of Consumer Studies has already shown a concern about food consumption, as seen in Warde (1997, 2016), Casotti and Thiollent (1997), Casotti, Ribeiro, Santos et al. (1998), Hausman (2005) and Fonseca (2008). Likewise, Thompson and Hirschman (1995), Featherstone (2010), Sauerbronn, Tonini and Lodi (2011), Tonini and Sauerbronn (2013) and Cheung-Lucchese and Alves (2013) have explored the relationships between the body and consumption. However, the connections between food consumption and the body, despite occasional mentions, have not yet been the object of deeper researches. Thereby, attempting to offer a contribution to the field, the present research focuses on understanding female food consumption practices and the relationship between these practices and their bodies. The female body is the object of religious control (GOLDENBERG and RAMOS, 2007) and is used on advertisement to stimulate the desire to consume (FALK, 1994). As Tonini and Sauerbronn highlight (2013), women show more explicit concerns with their bodies because it has always been important for them to have good appearance in order to raise the possibilities of contracting a marriage and, in recent years, to ensure employability.

The goal of the present study is to understand the relationship between women's food consumption practices and their bodies. In order to reach that goal, researchers used the theoretical-epistemological cultural perspective of the Theories of Practice (TP) and the elements of practice, as proposed by Warde (2005). The *data corpus* is composed by observations and in-depth interviews, performed with 20 cisgender women, living in the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro. The content analysis of the data was based on the theoretical-analytical framework proposed by Warde (2005) for understanding consumption practices.

The investigation of the components of the female practices of food consumption reinforced the central aspect of the body for this practice and, through a dialogue between the data and the theory, showed the distinction between nutrition and food and the strategies used by women to combine ingestion control with the pleasure of eating. Furthermore, three different types of engagement with food consumption practices were observed, concerning health (clinical evaluation of the body), aesthetics (social evaluation of the body) and efficiency (professionally evaluated body). Such engagements refer to the consumption items used in the practices, which include nutritional compounds and medicines – thus, not limited to food products.

The structure of the article is divided into 7 sections. The next two sections present theoretical investigations on food and body, supporting the understanding of the data collected on the field. Section four brings a proposal for the use of the TP, which is the source of the theoretical-analytical board used for the data analysis and it is followed by the presentation of the methodological procedures. On section six the data analysis is presented and, at last, the final remarks conclude the article.

FOOD CULTURE AND FOOD CONSUMPTION

The comprehension of food is not limited to its nutritional aspects, but it is also rather deeply related to cultural aspects. As stated by Maciel and Castro (2013), eating combines biological, physiological and cultural aspects. Lévi-Strauss (2004) showed how much the study of eating could contribute to understanding societies. For Mauss (1974), eating constitutes “the total social fact”, since it encompasses several levels of reality and multiple dimensions (economic, political, social, demographic, cultural).

DaMatta (1984) presented an understanding regarding eating based on the differentiation between nutrition, that which is ingested to keep the organism alive, and food, which is eaten with pleasure, in the company of other people. The author

considers that food defines not only the substance (nutrition), but also the mode of consumption: "the way of eating defines not only what is ingested but also who is ingesting" (DAMATTA, 1984, p. 56). Food is associated with costumes, social classes and ways of identification of the subjects.

Food choices, ways of preparation and consumption are directly connected to the cultural identity of the individual, collectively built and shared (PATRIOTA, 2002). As observed by Casotti, Ribeiro, Santos et al. (1998), before the individual ingests any food, it is necessary to recognize, identify, understand its social standing and classify it as appropriate or not. According to Câmara Cascudo (1983), menus are formed and established collectively and are the object of little change to meet nutritional observations or concerns regarding energetic or protein balance. The individual preserves ways of eating due to being attached to habit built through sociocultural experiences based on taste, cost, accessibility or convenience of the food (CÂMARA CASCUDO, 1983).

The habits acquired through life exert great influence over the eating habits of each individual. Eating is intrinsically and directly connected to the emotional aspects of the individual (CASOTTI and THIOLENT, 1997), to religious practices and acculturation processes (ERGIN and KAUFMAN-SCARBOROUGH, 2010). The consumer attributes meaning to the food, which then has the role of helping to self-define its identity (HAUSMAN, 2005). Fonseca also emphasized the importance of understanding the meanings of the food (2008). The author defends that the study of apparently trifling practices of food consumption is relevant for the field of culture and consumption, given that the practice involves projects of identity of the consumer and market cultures, in addition to socio-historic patterns of consumption and market ideologies.

BODY AND EATING

The body is the theme of extensive literature and an object of interest inside and outside academia (SANTOS, 2008). In his study on worship of the body, Malysse (2007) indicates the social construction of the body and the promotion of certain attributes and behaviors in detriment of others, determining a typical body for each society. According to Goldenberg and Ramos (2007), since the second half of the XX century, the body became the object of growing interest and glorification, with greater public exposure and evident control. The media reinforced this apparent liberation of the body with the purpose of creating a civilization process of the body (EISEND and MOLLER, 2006; SCHROEDER and DOBERS, 2007). Body exposure demands not only biological control, but also control over its physical appearance, imposed by standardized body shapes in the media (GOLDENBERG and RAMOS, 2007; FEATHERSTONE, 2010). The body from advertisement, materialized and disseminated in several languages, expresses the meaning of a culture, since the representations created for the body describe how the subjects that form a society aspire to be (HOFF, VIDOTTO, MARIANO et al., 2005).

Thompson and Hirschman (1995) explore the socialization of the body in the postmodern consumption society and indicate the emergence of an ideology of self-control, based on social processes of normalization and problematization of the body and on the operation of a disciplinary social glance. According to the authors, the social construction of the self involves the entanglement of the individual in a system of knowledge that leads to sociocultural processes that define what is an attractive, health and beautiful body. For that matter, the individual is involved in a permanent monitoring of one's self image and makes an effort to adjust the body to the norm. Hence, the individual separates one's body from oneself and transforms it on an object that holds meaning on a certain social group. The market, in turn, interferes on the shared meanings of the bodies and offers products and services for the individuals to follow a tight cultural ideology, manifested through mass media, advertisement, scientific statements and through the course of social encounters (THOMPSON and HIRSCHMAN, 1995).

The body becomes the target of time and money investments and a fit body is the representation of success (GOLDENBERG and RAMOS, 2007). Magazines and television associate the image of actresses, models and personalities, implicitly or overtly, to the conception that successful women should be slim, sturdy, practicing physical activities and always concerned about food consumption (SABINO, 2007). Tonini and Sauerbronn (2013).

We adopt the perspective of the objectification of the body and borrow the idea of the body as capital, proposed by Goldenberg and Ramos (2007). Consequently, they come closer to the proposal of Thompson and Hirschman (1995) and perceive the

domination of the body by a market structure, which allows little action to the individual inside a frame of physical activities, diets and cosmetic cares offered as an investment in this body/object.

The mechanisms of individual accountability for the appearance of the body create a "morality of the good shape", in which each individual starts to carefully examine their own bodies and devote attention to physical activities and eating habits (GIACOMINI, 2004). As underscored by Witt and Schneider (2011), the number of women undergoing weight control diets is growing. The changes on eating practices are associated with two aspects: health and body image, which brings the body even closer to the eating habits.

Eating habits are, therefore, reflected on the body and are associated with vigilance and reconstruction of meanings. Therefore, the body should not be seen as a passive entity that one holds, but as a system of action (SANTOS, 2008), since it is through the body that practices are performed. In line with the proposal of the TP, subsequently presented, the practices are routine body activities and, thus, the social happens through the performance of the body (RECKWITZ, 2002). The consumption of food is an especially interesting body practice because the body practices it, in its complexity: in its execution and in its direct effects.

PROPOSAL OF APPLICATION OF THE THEORIES OF PRACTICE

As presented by Reckwitz (2002), TP is a culturalist theoretical perspective that presents its own concepts regarding body, mind, things, discourses, structures and processes of the agents. For the theorists of practice, the social space is located on the practices (sense and nexus of doing or saying), while for other traditions within culturalist theory it can be located in mental structures (inter-subjectivity) or in speech codes (textualism) (RECKWITZ, 2002). Thus, the understanding of the self and of the world happens through the engagement on practices and the analysis is focused on the practices generated as a result of the interactions between individuals and social structures (RECKWITZ, 2002). According to Borelli (2012), the TP understands the individuals as practitioners who perform, reproduce, resist and negotiate a series of different practices in their daily lives.

The studies of Shove and Pantzar (2005) and Warde (2005) rendered support for the TP in the field of consumption studies. The TP is in line with the perspective that understands consumption as a social activity immersed in various meanings, which approximates the field of consumption studies. However, there is no unified perspective regarding the application of the TP and there are multiple ways for the adoption of this theoretical-epistemological approach. In the present study, we employ the perspective developed by Warde (2005), because of the proximity of the author with the research on food consumption (cf. WARDE, 1997, 2016).

Warde (2005) categorizes the individual as a bearer of practices, which contain components and connections. These connections relate the practices of the individual to other practices, explaining the origin of the social activities of this individual, such as consumption. The inter-connections between the practices bring sense and meaning to the activities performed by the individuals. According to Warde (2005), it is possible to understand the practices as a type of routine behavior composed by four elements: understandings, procedures, engagements and consumption items.

The understandings concern the practical interpretations of *what to do* and *how to do it*, knowledge and *know-how* in a broad sense (WARDE, 2005). In this case, the understanding of the practices refers to how to do something and share common understandings. The procedures are defined as instructions, rules and principles of how to perform the practice. The procedures may vary, regardless of one or another component of the nexus, of their different learning ways and of the participating groups, but they provide order to the associated practices and processes.

The engagements involve the emotional and normative orientations regarding what and how to do. With the analytical proposal of Warde (2005), there is a necessity of understanding how the nexuses are acquired according to the development of practices. Finally, the consumption items regard the ways and contents of appropriation of goods and services. These four components of the practices form the theoretical-analytical framework of this study and are utilized in the data analysis, as discussed in the next section (cf. Box 1).

Box 1

Components of the practices according to Warde (2005)

Understandings	Procedures	Engagements	Consumption Items
Practical interpretations of what and how to do, knowledge and know-how in a broad sense.	Instructions, principles and rules of how to do.	Emotional and normative orientations concerning what and how to do.	The ways and contents of the appropriation of goods and services.

Source: Adapted from Borelli (2012).

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Given TP's culturalist proposal, this research was conducted within an interpretivist paradigm, which prioritizes qualitative methods of collection, analysis and presentation of data (SAUERBRONN, CERCHIARO, AYROSA et al., 2012). The strategy for data collection involved the observation of practices and in-depth interviews. The observations allowed the researchers to access the routines and the habits of the informants and to perceive how the practices are executed, while the semi-structured interviews made it possible to comprehend the connections between the eating practices of women, the processes of social differentiation present in the ways choosing, preparing and ingesting food and their bodies. These procedures enabled the construction of a dense description regarding the practices of food consumption.

The data *corpus* was built from the observations of practices and in-depth interviews with 20 cisgender women ages 23 to 58. The informants were selected from the networks of the researchers and from recommendations from other informants solely following the criteria of gender and age. The choice for women over 23 years of age, regardless of profession or social condition, was made taking into consideration the age profile of the female researchers and the necessary maturity for the respondents to be able to make deeper reflections regarding their bodies. The amount of respondents was defined by the saturation criterion (THIRY-CERQUES, 2009) and the collection of data ceased when the addition of information no longer altered the comprehension of the relationships between female food consumption practices and their bodies.

The interviews followed a semi-structured script developed based on the theoretical-analytical board of the components of the practices and were performed by female researchers, in order to create an environment that was as comfortable as possible for the respondents. The meetings with each informant lasted between 30 minutes and 2 hours and, in some cases, there was more than one meeting with the same informant. All of the meetings were registered in audio files and some were filmed.

The transcribe interviews, images collected and field notes from the researchers were analyzed using content analysis. As proposed by Bardin (2011), the content analysis can also be an analysis of meanings and, therefore, the collected material was organized and analyzed by each of the researchers individually and then discussed with all of the researchers. After the pre-analysis stage, the data were explored based on categories pre-determined by the theoretical-analytical framework of the given components of the practice followed by the interpretation and comparison of the data within itself and with the theory. During the data analysis, subsequently presented, the researchers sought a dialogue between data and the theory that would allow for an understanding of the food consumption practices and their relationship with the body. Excerpts from the interviews were included to support the discussion and the informants can be identified only by age and profession.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis was performed based on the theoretical-analytical framework of the components of the practices presented on the previous section and it brings the findings of the research stemming from the interactions between the data and the theories on food consumption, body and practices. This section is divided into four sub-sections, each referring to one component of the practices.

Understandings

The understandings concern the practical interpretations of *what to do* and *how to do it*, the knowledge and the *know-how* in a broad sense (WARDE, 2005). The eating practices are not exclusively restricted to their nutritional aspect, but in fact involve other very substantial dimensions, such as the food history and culture of the individuals (CASOTTI and THIOLENT, 1997). The informants attribute their learning about food, its understandings and techniques of preparation, to the human experiences that take place through life. The construction of the eating identity of the Brazilian woman is one of the sources of knowledge regarding food consumption practices. The multiple origins of the peoples that formed Brazil are reflected in the understanding of the women about food.

[...] you learn to eat well. The Indians, the Africans, and even the Portuguese themselves left us this culture. The, knowing what you can eat is definitely a learning curve, yes. For example, my family is Italian and I miss it [eating pasta]. The beans, the feijoada came as an African contribution, that is to say that you learn how to do it and eat it (Professor, 47 years old).

Regional aspects are also a cultural trait found in eating practices. The several ways of choosing ingredients and preparing food result in different understandings regarding food consumption. As noted by Patriota (2002), the identity differentiates the individual from others and is based on the notion of belonging to a certain culture. This identity is also a way of understanding, an interpretation of what is food and how to eat it. Eating works as a reinforcement of the identity of the woman, as proposed by Casotti and Thiollent (1997) and Hausman (2005).

I tend to consume the foods that I learn to eat back in Minas more. [...] It changed a little here. I like to prepare food from there. During the weekend I prepare a polenta that is from Minas. In Minas, for instance, this dish is prepared almost every day. In my house my mother makes angu every day (Student, 35 years old).

As noted by DaMatta (1984) and Câmara Cascudo (1983), cultural components shared in the bosom of the family influence the understandings of the eating practices acquired. Women carry within themselves the cultural orientations regarding eating from childhood. The concrete manifestation of practices and social rituals of the women become visible in this category of cultural understanding.

What the family has the habit of eating, which comes from other times and the family carries on, ends up influencing your upbringing and you will also carry this habit (Pedagogue, 23 years old).

The understanding of the food consumption practices differentiates eating and nourishment, in alignment with DaMatta (1984): feeding is ensuring proper nutrients; eating is seeking pleasure through food. In both cases, the body holds a central position, because it is the object of concern about functioning (feeding) and feeling pleasure (eating). The 35 years old teacher declared:

If I give it some thought, I probably eat for pleasure more than out of necessity.

The sensation of bodily pleasure is associated with some food consumption practices, in opposition to rule and conscious control considering the consequence to the body:

I believe that when we eat we pay attention to what we are eating. We eat consciously. When we eat, it can be a wonderful fast-food [...] sandwich, fries, everything that is unadvisable (Homemaker, 43 years old).

Regarding the understandings, knowledge about food and its techniques for preparation and ingestion are presented connected to the habits acquired throughout life. Such knowledge regarding food remains with women during adult life and serves as a reference for defining food consumption practices. Family and traditions, as well as social context, support the knowledge about food and its effects on the body. Hence, the practice of food consumption is related to the body through the distinction between nutrition (feeding) and sensation (pleasure), as presented in Box 2.

Box 2

Understandings regarding food consumption practices and its relationship to the body

Understandings	
Knowledge	Relationship to the Bodies
Family Tradition Social Context	Nutrition- Feeding Sensation- Pleasure- Eating

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Procedures

Procedures are, by definition, principles, instructions, rules and routine social norms (WARDE, 2005). Therefore, the procedures bring order to the practices and the processes associated. The sharing of similar practices can be presented in different ways, depending on the nexus of the actions and on discourse.

In the case of food consumption, the procedures are related to the ordering of the eating activities into practices. There are specific times for the consumption of different foods, which integrate with the bodily activity of the women along their routine. The routine practices of food consumption are associated with the physical practices, either related to work or exercise.

I only have breakfast when I get to work and around 12:00 pm I have lunch. Around 15:00 I have a snack and when I get back home I usually have dinner around 9:00 pm (Manicure, 23 years old).

At noon on the dot I go out for lunch, and when it's 1:00 pm I stop and get back to work. I have a snack at 5:30 pm and prepare to leave. Monday, Wednesday and Friday I do Zumba lessons from 7:00 to 8:00 pm (Buyer, 45 years old).

These excerpts display routine social practices and social structures consistent with the routines. The times mentioned by each informant represent the routines, rules and the ways of representing each meal. Eventually, the effects of the food on the body cause changes in the procedures, as portrayed in the following excerpt:

[...] I used to take many hours between one meal and another. I spent many hours without eating, so I changed. I decided to do a diet with natural pills for weight loss. I took three pills a day and ate every 3 hours. I gained a diet. I started to drink a lot of water, eating fruits with peels, a lot of fiber. Then my whole life changed. I learnt that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. [...] Between breakfast and lunch I usually have a fruit or a glass of juice so I don't spend too many hours without eating. I have lunch, a snack, and when I feel hungry I drink something or eat a fruit.

It is possible to observe that the changes in food consumption practices have the purpose of controlling the shape of the body. The informant sought professional help from a nutritionist and altered the procedures of her food consumption practices. There was a change in the components of the food consumption practice, once she “learned” about the importance of breakfast (understanding), she changed the rules for choice and ingestion of food (procedures), adopted a new attitude about the effects of food in her body (engagement) and embodied new foods and substances to her practice (consumption items).

The changes in food consumption practices take place because of the perception that the body needs to be altered, because it does not fit a standard, as pointed by Tonini and Sauerbronn (2013). Signposts present in mass media or shared among individuals from the same group serve as a starting point for the construction of new procedures within the practices of food consumption, seeking for a result on the body, as presented by Sabino (2007). The procedures show the imposition of times, rules and routines, which characterizes the instructions, the principles and the rules to perform the practice. Women follow the specific rules and instructions for food consumption to reach a specific result expressed on the body.

The routines, however, are not followed without some ruptures. The weekend offers women the possibility of changing eating rules. The controlled diet with pre-determined hours is abandoned during the weekend, in a negotiation between control, rules and concessions, which configures the procedures. There is a (re)definition of the rule in order to make moments of pleasure a part of the food consumption practices.

I call Sunday “trash day” because I can eat; we make an exception to eat fatty, heavy foods that are not a part of the diet (Student, 35 years old).

The “trash day” is a way of fitting pleasure into the eating rules. Hence, the rules embody short-term goals (pleasure), without sacrificing long-term goals (shape), which refers to the duality of food consumption approached by Hausman (2005). The procedures routinely embody two patterns of food consumption: the sacrifice of a controlled diet during the week and the reward with pleasant food during the weekends. The relationships between food consumption and the body help reinforce this procedures, once the rewards for the routine of control are expressed on the body, both on the desired shape and on the pleasure experienced by the body (taste, amount) during the weekends (Box 3).

Box 3

Procedures of food consumption practices and their relations with the body

Procedimentos	
Instructions, principles and rules	Relationship with the body
Consumption times spread out throughout the day (Re) definition of routine habits Weekday – controlled eating Weekend – free eating (pleasure)	Food consumption integrated with bodily activities Desired body – effort during the week Pleasure – reward during the weekend

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Engagements

Engagements concern the emotional and normative orientations of what and how to do and bring nexus to the practices. The data showed that the ways of relationship between food consumption and the body has an important role in the emotional and normative orientations associated with the food consumption practices. It was possible to differentiate three types of engagements with the food consumption practices: health, aesthetics, and efficiency.

The health engagements are associated with the practices of consumption of healthy foods. Medical aspects orient the eating guided by the women's health aspect. These are not engagements focused on the presentation of a healthy looking body, but an engagement based on the functioning of the body. That way, foods, medicines and physical activities have the purpose of keeping the body alive.

[...] I am overweight and take medication for blood pressure and gastritis... I have nervous gastritis. I am pre-diabetic and take medicine for that. This year I am very focused on losing weight, however, I am 47 years old and very secure in my marriage so I am not having a young girl's body. My health is the most important aspect, so I can stop taking medicines (Teacher, 47 years old).

The engagement with the healthy body is different from the body standards broadcast by the media, but involves a pathological control over the body and food, as discussed by Santos (2008). The engagement through health evidences the medicalization of the body, the evaluation of indicators that are not visible, such as cholesterol levels or the health of the vascular apparatus. The health professional starts to occupy a very important role on defining the food consumption practices. Food starts to be seen as a compound of nutrients, vitamins, carbohydrates, fats and the body becomes the place where the food consumption practices are clinically evaluated.

Another form of engagement observed was through aesthetics. In this form of engagement the emotional and normative orientations of the women regarding what and how to eat are based on the aesthetic dimension of the body. The respondents asserted that there is a beauty standard imposed by the media and that the body is their first contact with the social world that surrounds them. Within this context, the body is socialized (THOMPSON and HIRSCHMAN, 1995), exposed to other and, therefore, objectified (TONINI and SAUERBRONN, 2013).

The body is the first thing to be seen. The first thing we carry is the body and not the words, so I think it is our business card printing and it is something very important (Pedagogue, 23 years old).

The representation of the body as a *business card* sets clear the possibilities of investment in this object, which denotes the placement of the woman within the social structure. The inadequacy of the body to a socially accepted standard can be the cause of change in food consumption practices, form a change in engagement.

According to the findings of Thompson and Hirschman (1995), the discipline of the body around images generated by the market is clear, what Tonini and Sauerbronn (2013) called *virtual bodies*. Society and the media present the body standards and the procedures that women should follow to reach them.

I have friends who seek an ideal body because other friends ask that of her [...] you had to have big and defined muscles, they sought it and got it. But, for me, all of this has a big influence from the media, which, usually, is not the pathway to happiness, nor the way to being satisfied with your body (Pedagogue, 23 years old).

The media endorses the emotional and normative orientations of women. The feelings of women in face of the broadcast body images conflict with the principles and choices that each woman has to make regarding their bodies. Malysse (2007) notes that the body plays a fundamental role in social interactions. The informants notice the influence of society and the media over their bodies and change their food consumption practices in order to be able to participate in certain social groups.

The media shows a perfect body and everything. If you allow yourself to be influenced by it [...] you could end up taking it to the extent of a disease, you know? [...] I started a diet because it was bothering me (Student, 35 years old).

I am concerned about my health and also about my body image. I try not to overdo it with food or with alcohol. [...] Because I have many friends who drink a lot of beer and they have a huge belly. Women with huge bellies [...]. Overall I am very concerned about thi (Homemaker, 43 years old).

The body becomes the central aspect of the socialization process and the beautiful body, portrayed in the media, becomes a desire. The food consumption practices start to have the specific purpose of transforming the body, following an engagement determined by aesthetics, as declared by the 23 years old Manicure:

For you to have that worked out and defined body, it involves eating habits.

The 47 years old Teacher reinforces this engagement:

If you eat right, your body will acquire what you want. By doing so you can mold your body according to what you eat.

Similarly to the engagement through aesthetics, the engagement through efficiency objectifies the body, but it presents the more specific purpose of making the body productive. This engagement relates the body to the work market orients female

food consumption practices according to the possibility of professional success. The adequacy of the body to work and the image of a successful worker are the issue here.

For example: the body is essential for you to make your voice heard in the classroom and food can influence these situations. [...] What I very often see in teacher's lounges: we eat a lot of junk food [...] The point is why do we do that, if we know that we need our body? (Teacher, 33 years old).

The 27 years old nurse also talks about the food consumption practices as support for professional activities

If I don't eat properly, I won't be able to take it. The body gets tired quickly and the work is long.

Therefore, professional disposition is essential. The body has to be willing and able to meet the demands that arise in the workplace.

Box 4

Engagements in food consumption practices and their relationships with the body

Engagements		
Health	Aesthetics	Efficiency
Food has the purpose of maintaining life – nutrient compound, etc. Body as a place of clinical evaluation.	Food shapes the body Body as an object of socialization. Importance of the image.	Food adjusts the body to the task and to the an image of success Body as capital in the workforce.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Consumption items

The consumption items are ways and contents of appropriation of goods and services that take place along the food consumption practices. For that matter, the items involved in the food consumption practices are essentially food. However, the informants presented a few different consumption items as different engagements were presented.

The practices justified as healthy (engagement through health) involve the consumption of products that follow medical orientation, such as medicines for the control of blood pressure, control of the symptoms of diabetes or even body weight control, with the purpose of caring for women's health. Some restrictions to the ingestion of certain food items are imposed, such as fats and carbohydrates. In some cases, the addition of a medication (consumption item) to the practices leads to changes in the procedures of food consumption, as reported thereafter:

The first change was to take away supper, because I had the habit of eating too late and going to sleep right after eating. The medicine helped me eat small amounts and feel satiated. I always had breakfast. The most radical aspects for me were taking away supper and eating way smaller amounts of food, especially during lunch. I reduced the amount of carbohydrates. I got used to it (Pedagogue, 23 years old).

In the cases of engagement through aesthetics and engagement through efficiency, there is the promotion of food consumption items similar to the ones promoted in the engagement through health. However, there is no need for specialized professional assistance to work as source for the choice of food consumption items, once the market (through advertisement) serves as guidance (SAUERBRONN, TONINI and LODI, 2011). The "virtual body" (TONINI and SAUERBRONN, 2013) is defined and controlled by the market, which offers products and services that enable the woman to discipline her body, as proposed by Thompson and Hirschman (1995). Similarly, the body that is efficient and prepared for any professional demand requires certain consumption items that enable the capability of action and promote the image of a successful body. The concern with overweight and physical aptitude also causes women to include light and diet foods, shakes, herbal teas and medications for appetite control into their diets.

In the evening I drink a shake [...], I'm on this phase. Or I make a sandwich, because I'm allowed a diet ham and cheese. I don't have supper because now I am on a diet and I don't move much at night (Teacher, 47 years old).

On my diet I eat every three hours, I don't have lunch, I prepare a shake and drink it along two teas and make a healthy nutrition. Around 3 pm I eat one or two fruits and at 5:30 pm I have a small cookie. I like to have dinner. This is my fault; I've always liked to have dinner (Buyer, 45 years old).

The consumption items offered by the market enable meals to be exchanged by the consumption of a shake. The search for a healthier, more beautiful or more adequate for work body (the engagements) defines the consumption items of the food consumption practices. Once again, the body is the key aspect in defining these practices.

Box 5

Consumption items of the food consumption practices and their relationships with the body

Consumption items	
Ways	Goods and services
Ways Meals consisting of formulas (shakes, teas) instead of food	Foods Appetite Inhibiting Medication Shakes and Herbal Teas

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

FINAL REMARKS

The present study explored female food consumption practices and their relationships with the body seeking to better understand these relationships. Warde's (2005) proposal brought analytical components for this exploration and allowed to understand nexuses of the food consumption practices, making clear that food consumption practices are based on the results expressed on the body.

The reconstruction of female food consumption practices observed in our research through its components provides understandings of the relationship between these practices and the female body. Analyzing the understandings, it became clear that the origins of the food consumption practices are intrinsically connected to family and traditions, which serve as a reference for food choices. Moreover, it was possible to see that the distinction between nutrition and pleasure forms the relationship between the understandings and the female body. This distinction, already presented by DaMatta (1984), is key for the comprehension of food consumption practices and places particular emphasis on the body, since nutrition maintains the body and the body is also the source of pleasure with food. Unsurprisingly, the distinction between nutrition and pleasure is a reference for all other components of female food consumption practices. Regarding the procedures, there is a strategy of determining rules for weekdays that are revoked during the weekends. These procedures are part of a negotiation between short-term goals (pleasure) and long-term goals (ideal body), as discussed by Hausman (2005). The procedures also show how much the female food consumption practices are integrated with corporal activities that take place throughout the day and that the routines of food ingestion can be altered taking into consideration their effects on the body.

The analysis of the engagements brought more resources for understanding female food consumption practices and their relationships with the body. Three types of engagement were identified among the informants: engagement through health, based on the comprehension of food consumption based on its effects on the health of the body; engagement through aesthetics, when food is used to mold the body to the ideals offered by the market; and engagement through efficiency, when food consumption is centered on the capacity of being efficient and competitive in the work environment. The engagements have a direct effect on the items consumed. The intake of medication becomes associated with the consumption of food, both to maintain women's health (engagement through health) and to make her obtain aesthetic results, using appetite

inhibitors. The nutritional formulas (shakes, herbal teas) are used to replace food in some meals in weight control diets and are also consumption items.

Considering views more specific to the study of food consumption practices, this research can be expanded by analysis focusing on the moments of choosing food in the point of sale or by deeper observations of the processes of food preparation, as well as the ways in which food is served and shared. These research steps mandatorily demand the analysis of food consumption practices exclusive to women and demand greater investment in data collection. Still within the perspective of the Theories of Practice, and investigation of the food consumption practices that includes the concern with social classes more substantially needs more theoretical support, but could also be object of future research.

The present research offers a few resources for advertisement professionals who seek to work with food sales, but also attempts to be useful for consumers to better understand the consumption of food and become more aware of their choices.

There certainly is still space for broadening the comprehension of food consumption, which can be further developed in future studies that observe more deeply the relationship between advertisement and food consumption practices. There also is room for expanding the comprehension of food consumption practices through the analysis of the structures of the food production chain and its regulation. Such studies could bring the field of advertisement and the field of consumption studies closer to society's interests and needs and serve as a foundation for discussions regarding public policies and advertisement also within academia. The authors hope to have stimulated other researchers to follow these pathways.

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