

## **Educating bodies for the nation: schools, masculinity and transnational knowledge in 19th century Brazil**

### **Educando corpos para a nação: escolas, masculinidade e conhecimento transnacional no Brasil do século XIX**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses the senses and meanings attributed to physical culture, its conceptions, functions, and role within nineteenth-century Brazil's educational system. By focusing on diverse kinds of schools as spaces of reference for children and adolescents and the efforts to shape their bodies, this work analyzes the importance of youth for national projects and how educators tried to represent young ideal bodies in school curricula as they made the transition from infancy to adulthood. It also shows how the body is a complex web of ideas and representations, a territory fought over within state institutional spaces. By understanding the "new behaviors" that the modern state wished to promote, the present paper focuses on how physical education shaped health and hygiene conditions through bodily exercises and the pivotal role played by schools within the strategy to transform young students into healthy, strong, disciplined citizens ready to serve the nation.

#### **KEYWORDS**

Education; Masculinity; Nationalism; Bodies; Brazil

#### **RESUMO**

Este artigo discute os sentidos e significados atribuídos à cultura física, suas concepções, funções e papel no sistema educacional brasileiro do século XIX. Ao focar os diversos tipos de escolas como espaços de referência para crianças e adolescentes e os esforços para moldar seus corpos, este trabalho analisa a importância dos jovens para os projetos nacionais e como educadores tentaram representar corpos jovens ideais nos currículos escolares durante a transição da infância à idade adulta. Mostra também como o corpo é uma complexa teia de ideias e representações, um território disputado nos espaços institucionais do Estado. Ao compreender os "novos comportamentos" que o Estado moderno pretendia promover, o presente artigo centra-se em como a educação física moldou as condições de saúde e higiene através de exercícios corporais e o papel central desempenhado pelas escolas na estratégia de transformar jovens estudantes em cidadãos saudáveis, fortes, disciplinados, prontos para servir a nação.

#### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Educação; Masculinidade; Nacionalismo; Corpos; Brasil

## INTRODUCTION

In a letter from the imperial government dated 30 April 1828, the bylaws of an orphanage in the province of Bahia, the Casa Pia e Colégio de São Joaquim dos Meninos Órfãos, emphasized the importance of physical education in shaping the behavior of daily life (Carta Imperial, 1878). The document stated that the type of physical education Brazilian orphan students had to receive was to be a veritable mixture of rules for life and behavior; “so that they acquire the greatest degree of strength and robustness that their bodily constitutions are capable of, and become fit to serve society with their arms,” building in them the manners of “civility” desired by the state (Carta Imperial, 1878, p. 52)<sup>1</sup>. The document not only mentioned how the pupils’ rooms should be “airy and visited by the sun,” but also recommended cold baths as an integral part of student health care. The rules of the orphanage for the students’ physical education thus prioritized bodily hygiene, food, clothing, lodging, and also endorsed “all sorts of proper movements to strengthen the body, such as running, jumping, climbing trees, fighting, lifting and carrying weights, ball games, swimming, and elementary military tactics with wooden sticks” to be executed every day (Carta Imperial, 1878, p. 54-56)<sup>2</sup>. By accustoming young students to life’s “intemperance,” the intention was explicit:

our physical perfection, from which we can still derive very great advantages today, and which is closely linked with the intellectual and moral perfection of the spirit. This project of improvement and physical perfection is not chimerical, because continued exercises will form a new corporal constitution. Therefore, by that simple process it is to be expected that we will approach those beneficial results in favor of the present generation (Carta Imperial, 1878, p. 53)<sup>3</sup>.

The physical education of students played a pivotal role within Brazilian schools in the nineteenth century, being part of a state strategy targeting health and hygiene conditions through bodily care in order to shape and discipline citizens for a desired, “civilized” nation of the future. But how?

This article attempts to answer this question by finding new paths through the existing theoretical and methodological scholarship on the nation-state and understand how the relationship of identity and alterity worked in the debates for the construction of a local self, a national “Brazilian body.” Moreover, while dialoguing with a Foucauldian theoretical understanding that power over bodies is in favor of the ruling classes (Foucault, 1980), this article explores Brazil’s longstanding debates on the physical education of its youth to illustrate the ways in which it shaped and reshaped elite discourses about the formation of the Brazilian nation. In addition, this article aims to shed new lights on the theoretical questions related to modern state building and how we think about the major narratives of nationhood during the nineteenth century. Using documents that address schools as spaces of reference for children and adolescents, this paper interacts with those who investigate the mechanisms, propositions, and methodological procedures by which the “rational organization” of physical culture produced significant effects in the political speech and the construction of knowledge within nineteenth-century Brazil’s educational system.

## PROJECTING “CORPOREAL IMPROVEMENT AND PHYSICAL PERFECTION”

After the independence of Brazil, conflicts and disagreements marked Pedro I’s reign (1822-31) and the political projects designed to guide the nation building project. Pedro I abdicated the throne in 1831 when his son was just five years old, initiating a decade of political and economic instability until Pedro II was crowned at the age of fifteen, in 1841. The young emperor proved to be an important figure in settling armed conflicts, keeping the

<sup>1</sup> Título III. Da educação dos collegiaes. Capitulo I. Da Educação em Geral.

<sup>2</sup> Título III. Da educação dos collegiaes. Capitulo II. Da Educação Physica.

<sup>3</sup> Título III. Da educação dos collegiaes. Capitulo I. Da Educação em Geral.

country unified, and imposing a degree of political stability (Morel, 2003; Carvalho, 2012, p. 83-130). Under Pedro II (1840-89) Brazilian elites sought stability. In that context, education thus became a pivotal part of the reform projects discussed by Brazilian leaders after independence, even the aspects of the instruction of children, youngsters, and adults from the free and freed popular strata of the society. Social, racial and regional inequalities marked Brazil's daily life, with the country facing a high number of illiterates and the enslaved population prohibited from attending schools (Pang, 1979; Fraga Filho, 1995; Mattoso, 1997; Decreto nº 1.331 A., 1854)<sup>4</sup>. It not only jeopardized the access of many Brazilians to school but also revealed the difficulties in carrying out educational projects.

In general, primary education had been neglected and the Ato Adicional of 12 August 1834 sought to decentralize educational responsibilities. The provinces became responsible to legislate and control primary and secondary public education, and the central power had exclusivity of promoting and regulating higher education (Lei nº 16 de 12 de Agosto de 1834, 1866). The lack of resources and the flawed tax collection system for educational purposes made it almost impossible for the provinces to fulfill the role assigned to them. Even so, the projects for popular instruction and education followed the emphasis on hygiene not only in the spaces of Brazilian cities but also on the intervention of public authorities in the body of the population (Mattos, 1986). At the same time that the fight against diseases and the sanitation projects reached the various layers of the population, Brazilian political elites and educational reformers also saw physical education as an instrument for the physical and social "regeneration" of the Brazilian empire and its people, not only for shaping healthy, strong elites, but also to forge "robust" individuals from the lower classes (Brown & Paquete, 2013, p. 183-185)<sup>5</sup>.

The Seminário de São Joaquim, for example, a school dedicated to "orphaned and unprotected children," emphasized the physical education of its students as fundamental for their formation<sup>6</sup>. In 1837, legislation transformed the Seminário into a public secondary school called "Collegio de Pedro Segundo," becoming the first of its kind in the country and one of the most prestigious educational institutions during Brazil's imperial period (Cunha Junior, 2008). Such concern about physical education and daily exercises for students in orphanages, although not new (Leonard, 1923), represented a clear process of shaping and disciplining bodies for the newly independent Brazil<sup>7</sup>.

In 1841, the Collegio de Pedro II hired Swedish Captain Wilhelm Ludvig Taube (Guilherme Luiz de Taube) as its teacher of gymnastics (Ministério do Imperio, 1841; Vianna, 1843, p. 11-20). Before moving to Brazil and becoming a Brazilian citizen in 1837, Taube had been a teacher of gymnastics in New York<sup>8</sup>. In 1832, Taube sent a letter asking the Medical Society of Rio de Janeiro to appraise them of a study called "A Short Treatise on the Physic and Moral Effects of the Gymnastic and Kalistenic Exercises", which he claimed would be beneficial for Brazil

<sup>4</sup> Also known as the Couto Ferraz Law.

<sup>5</sup> In their very interesting chapter "Corinne in the Andes: European Advice for Women in 1820s Argentina and Chile," Brown and Paquette touch upon the issue of physical culture by mentioning "Gimnástica del bello sexo: Ensayos sobre la educación física de las jóvenes," from 1824, and the "Cartas sobre a educação das meninas por uma senhora Americana," translated to Portuguese in 1838.

<sup>6</sup> The institution was originally founded in the eighteenth century and closed in 1818 by King João VI. Emperor Pedro I reopened the school in 1821, although its complete reform only took place in 1831.

<sup>7</sup> The book written by Fred Eugene Leonard (a professor of Hygiene and Physical Education in Oberlin College, Ohio) was part of The Physical Education Series, edited by physician R. Tait McKenzie, Major of the Royal Army Medical Corps and professor of Physical Education and Physical Therapy at the University of Pennsylvania. It received the influence of Franco-Swiss physicians Clemens Josef Tissot (1747-1826) on the medical approaches to physical education. Publications by people like Tissot (in 1766) and Simon Andrew (in 1786) had also influenced Brazilians' concerns about the value of physical exercises from a medical point of view. Tissot's purpose, for example, was to teach how to conserve and restore health through physical exercise, defining gymnastics as one crucial part of medicine.

<sup>8</sup> In Brazil, Taube served as captain in the Imperial Army after marrying a Brazilian. He lost his military job as a result of a law passed on 24 November 1830, before receiving his Brazilian citizenship. By the terms of this law, foreigners were discharged from the army or forbidden to serve, with the exception of men who had taken part in the campaign of independence or were seriously injured in conflicts or considered disabled. See Decreto nº 144 de 20 de Outubro de 1837 (1861). See also Decreto de 20 de Dezembro de 1830 (1876).

(Sociedade de Medicina, 1832, p. 385)<sup>9</sup>. The Medical Society designated one of its members, Italian physician Dr. Luís Vicente De-Simoni, to evaluate this documented example of how networks of relationships intersected with physical culture (Góis Junior, 2013)<sup>10</sup>. De-Simoni understood the importance of Taube's work and reported favorably on it to the Medical Society (1832, p. 3). De-Simoni's report highlighted the value of physical education for medical practitioners, arguing that if many people's "strength, health, glory, and prosperity" derived from it, most importantly would be its "great influence on the character, glory, and prosperity of a nation" (1832, p. 11). For that reason, Brazilian physicians should support "the physical, moral and intellectual education of idiots [mentally impaired]," believing that hygiene, gymnastics and "the love for physical work" would benefit those children with "all the faculties existing in a congenital inferiority," aiming at "more robust and instructed disciples" (Neves, 1848, p. 42)<sup>11</sup>.

Brazil deserves greater attention for its adoption of progressive ideas of physical culture in the nineteenth century and the key role of the medical society in promoting them (Schwarcz, 1998; Carvalho, 2012). Physicians supported efforts to promote physical education among young Brazilians even beyond the educational environment of schools. Medical reports constantly observed the need to "establish the most vigilant inspection on the physical education of the youth" (Candido, 1852, p. 17)<sup>12</sup>. Brazilian physicians called school principals' attention to the broader aspects of physical education, that is, the eating habits of students, their clothing, and the adequacy of school spaces and facilities. Parents were criticized for delivering to society children with "their physical education led astray". These kinds of reports, in addition to illustrating medical concerns about the physical education of Brazilian students, are of evidence of physicians concerns about Brazil's fragile infrastructure, system of public health, sanitation, and the persistence of slavery. Cities like Belém, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, and Salvador, although eager to present an alleged European elegance, could not hide the stench of their streets, repeatedly struck by epidemics, and the clearly visible influence of Africa on these major metropolitan areas (Costa, 1985; Chalhoub, 1996; Schwarcz, 1998; Peard, 1999; Benchimol, 2001).

There was a close relationship among medicine, public health, and physical education within the educational system. Although recognizing that Brazilian medical schools followed very diverse approaches, "echoing French, Italian, and English" influences, physicians reinforced the common belief of articulating physical, moral and intellectual elements in the education of generations intended to become exemplary, and therefore suitable for the desired and expected path to becoming a modern, civilized nation (Ribeiro, 1863, p. 59). The growing preoccupation with the health of young people set new standards for primary and secondary education, explicitly requiring public schools to teach gymnastics as a complement of students' physical education (Decreto nº 1.331 A, 1854).

In a report dated 2 May 1858, addressed to Minister and Secretary of State for Imperial Affairs Sergio Teixeira de Macedo, the general inspector of primary and secondary instruction Eusebio de Queiroz celebrated the access students had to physical education and the progress achieved (Câmara, 1859, p. 18). Queiroz stated, however, that bodily exercises should be mandatory for all students "despite, unfortunately, all the baseless prejudice and

<sup>9</sup> Created in 1829, the Sociedade de Medicina do Rio de Janeiro brought together physicians keen to debate and advise the government on issues related to health and hygiene.

<sup>10</sup> Luís Vicente De-Simoni was an Italian physician trained at the Università di Genova and Università de Pavia. Moving to Brazil in 1817, he held leading positions, especially at Rio de Janeiro's Santa Casa da Misericórdia, becoming co-founder of Rio's Medical Society. De-Simoni also worked at Mozambique's Real Hospital Militar and from that country he wrote his "Tratado Medico sobre Clima e Enfermidades de Moçambique." De-Simoni became a Brazilian citizen in 1855.

<sup>11</sup> The Brazilian physician based his conclusions on the studies of French psychiatrist Félix Voisin (1794-1872) and physician, educationist Édouard Séguin (1812-1880).

<sup>12</sup> The report was delivered on 15 April 1852.

concerns of some families” (Câmara, 1859, p. 18)<sup>13</sup>. Eusebio de Queiroz strongly considered physical education “a part of education that undoubtedly deserves the collaboration and assistance of all who aspire to see Brazil’s youth achieving the degree of development for which, indeed, it is so well disposed” (Câmara, 1859, p. 18). In subsequent reports, the urgency of physical education, “its development, and wish to see it as soon as possible in all primary schools and private schools” became increasingly common, illustrating that the majority of “the young people of Brazil were almost completely deprived” of it (Câmara, 1860, p. 15). This connection between physical activity, youth, and the idea of the nation became central to nationalist discourses in the nineteenth century. The importance of physical education made it more than merely a school subject. In the long nineteenth century, physical culture became central to national discourses that promoted efforts to civilize the nation through the promotion of good health and hygiene (Gondra, 2008). New behaviors had to be adopted and bodies, the “physical,” had to be educated.

In the 1860s, efforts to promote physical education in schools ramped up in legislation and government reports. While gymnastics became part of the curriculum in the primary schools of Pernambuco in 1865, the number of students enrolled in those classes and activities like dance and swimming increased in Rio de Janeiro (Bello, 1978)<sup>14</sup>. Schools adopted methods based on works such as Louis Leonel’s *Traite Theorique et Pratique de Gymnastique* (1867), Eugene Paz’s *La Gymnastique Obligatoire* (1868), Alf Junod’s *Manuel de Gymnastique Pratique a L’usage des Escoles* (1869), and Archibald Maclaren’s *A System of Physical Education* (1869). For these authors the exercises were “the chief agent of bodily culture, agent of growth and development to be regarded in an *educational* light, capable of being permanently systematized and administered as a means of progressively physical culture” (Maclaren, 1869, p. 4-5)<sup>15</sup>. It does not mean the spread of those ideas was similarly promising in all of Brazil. As Minister Paulino José Soares de Souza warned in 1869, “the gymnastics normally taught, even at Europe’s most modest facilities, and which would contribute to the physical development of our young people who resent its absence, is only known in one or another province, as if its utility were problematic” (Souza, 1870, p. 51)<sup>16</sup>.

Those in favor of physical education repeatedly referred to its development in Europe and the United States, pointing to the insalubrity and “lack of appropriate and precise conditions of hygiene” in Brazilian schools. According to one proponent, the absence of physical education in schools was “one of the greatest difficulties we have to fight against” to achieve not only the desired physical development of students but also to promote rational discipline and social control (Souza, 1870, p. 42). As a matter of comparison, an increased interest in physical education and sport, which was already common practice in Europe, especially in Britain (Holt, 1989; Freeman, 2015), became an instrument of social discipline in schools and a source of military recruits. In the case of France, a degree of conflict existed among the supporters of different types of physical education (Weber, 1986). In Brazil, the growing concern about the physical education of students had an impact on how bodily care was perceived, permeating the discourses of modernity, the new organization of society, and the pursuit of health and civility

<sup>13</sup> Eusebio de Queiroz Coutinho Mattoso da Câmara (1812-1868) was a Brazilian magistrate and politician born in Luanda, Angola. During Eusebio de Queiroz’s term as the Brazilian Minister of Justice, from 1848–1852, the parliament passed the law on 4 September 1850 to abolish the international slave trade to the country. This law is known as “Lei Eusebio de Queiroz” (the Eusebio de Queiroz Law). After some orthographic reforms, his name is now written as Eusebio de Queirós. I preserved the original name from the primary sources.

<sup>14</sup> In 1865, Rio de Janeiro’s Colégio de Pedro Segundo registered 143 students enrolled to gymnastics classes, more than the number of students registered for most of the other subjects. This is explained by the fact that the class was open to students of all ages. In 1866, there were 566 secondary-school pupils enrolled in gymnastics and 368 enrolled in dance classes (boys and girls). In that same year, private schools enrolled 311 students for swimming lessons. Numbers continued to increase as the decade proceeded (Ministério do Império, 1866). See also Ministério do Império (1867).

<sup>15</sup> Emphasis in the original.

<sup>16</sup> It is worth stressing that from 1871 onwards there are also records of students enrolled in fencing classes. See Ministério do Império (1872).

(Decreto nº 4.468, 1870)<sup>17</sup>. Although some initiatives, such as collective sessions of exercises towards the end of the school year, emerged in order to provide public recognition for the best performing students, nevertheless, many political leaders did not have such an optimistic view about the progress of physical education in Brazil's schools (Decreto nº 6.130, 1877).

The overview sketched out in an 1873 report illustrates how physical education was ignored in many Brazilian schools, and the absence of exercises was not helpful to the physical development of students. A commission designated to inspect the province of Rio de Janeiro's public and private schools of primary and secondary education, highlighted the "defective sanitation system of latrines, too close to the classrooms, noxious to health" of many schoolhouses, some of which also exposing the children to lack of mobility and too much fetid air (Correa, Garcia & Jordao, 1874, p. 8 e 11). The commission also criticized the "sad spectacle" of physical punishment witnessed in many schools (Correa, Garcia & Jordao, 1874, p. 55-57)<sup>18</sup>. Those in favor of physical education continued to meld health and hygiene conditions with discipline and physical exercises, something they considered as a crucial strategy for the development of healthy habits. In fact, even though physical education had officially become mandatory in 1854, another law, from 1877, curiously restated that obligation, proving that the previous law had not been widely enforced (Decreto nº 6.479, 1877). The general understanding, however, was that "families and schools" had a quintessential role in respect to "the true education" – notably in the suburbs and "the rural populations" – seeking the "harmonious development of the child's aptness and organism" (Correa, Garcia & Jordao, 1874, p. 37-38)<sup>19</sup>.

The increasing appreciation for physical culture and for the specific contributions it could potentially bring to the education of the body *per se* was associated with the rise and increased legitimization of medical-scientific knowledge in Brazil. Those who promoted the importance of hygiene became the self-proclaimed authorities that simultaneously rejected other practices and forms of knowledge they considered unscientific. The educational system received close attention from the state, manifested in the ongoing reforms explicitly influenced by the scientific knowledge of its respective time (Xavier, Ribeiro & Noronha, 1994; Neto, 1996; Soares, 1994 & 1998; Gondra, 2000). In 1878, for example, the *Gazeta Medica da Bahia* referred to the education of young Brazilians as "the matter deserving the closest attention of public powers because there is no other that intimately affect the moral and social welfare of the country" (Pereira, 1878a, p. 194-195)<sup>20</sup>. Although recognizing the issue of education as "serious, difficult and complex," physicians understood "the simultaneous development of the physical, moral, and intellectual skills" as the main goal of pedagogy, so that citizens could be able to use "all their active strengths, of body and spirit, for the betterment of society. Brazilian physicians saw themselves responsible for improving the educational system, "facing especially one of its faces, which has been completely neglected, – physical education, which must be a magna question, urgent and vital in this country where the race visibly languishes" (Pereira, 1878a, p. 193).

Medical knowledge underscored "the serious problem of physical education" in Brazil by comparing it with "the most cultured countries" – such as the United States, England, France Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark – and their support for hygiene (Pereira, 1878a, p. 194-195). By citing Froebel, Hippeau, Laprade, Virchow, Lallemand, and Schreber, Brazilian physicians condemned "the terrible educational system" of the country and what they

<sup>17</sup> In 1870, the same year the Paraguay War officially ended, gymnastics became mandatory at the Collegio de Pedro Segundo and the syllabus required clear methods for its teaching. The 1870 regulations even determined that students should be split into three different groups according to their physical development. Only those students who had a proven health problem would be excused from those classes.

<sup>18</sup> "VI - Meios Disciplinares".

<sup>19</sup> "II – Da Educação: Educação Physica".

<sup>20</sup> Antonio Pacífico Pereira (1846-1922) was born in Salvador, Bahia. Along with Raymundo Nina Rodrigues and other important physicians, Pacífico Pereira participated in the Escola Tropicalista Baiana which consisted of a group of doctors, all established in Bahia, who from the 1860s dedicated themselves to the study and research of the etiology of tropical diseases that affected the poor populations of Brazil.

called the “tyranny of pedagogues” for mostly ignoring and neglecting the importance of “fresh air, hygiene, and exercise for the physical and physiological development” of students “in intertropical climates” (Pereira, 1878a, p. 198-201)<sup>21</sup>. Medical practitioners praised hygiene and physical exercise (even military gymnastics) to be “favorable for shaping intelligent, disciplined, and robust students,” not only for boys but also for girls to “preserve their health, vigor, and beauty, and create at the same time the salutary habit of exercise, preparing the young lady for the future duties of maternity, and spare us from all the evils of a sedentary life” (Pereira, 1878b, p. 436)<sup>22</sup>.

It is important to remember that medical knowledge developed in response to society’s questions, not within a scientific universe totally disconnected from reality (Faure, 2005). Ultimately, the value given to “hygiene as preparatory and a complement of physical education” had to do with the close link between the physical, moral and intellectual domains. It addressed not only childhood’s education but also “all the people, all classes, and all ages” within the process of “transmitting those notions from parents to children, incarnated in the habits of live, becoming the wholesome economy of family, the progress, the wealth and happiness of the forthcoming society” (Pereira, 1878b, p. 448). Physical culture formed part of a sort of utopia for a holistic instruction. Intellectuals like Ruy Barbosa considered schools a place for shaping a new Brazilian society, one that would end disorder and a lack of strong bodies, civility and rationality (Marinho, 1980; Machado, 2002). While citing Paul Roussetot’s *Pédagogie à usage de l’enseignement primaire*, Ruy Barbosa stated:

Thus, the whole civilized world, we may say, today imposes gymnastics as a vital necessity in the organization of the school, applied to both sexes. ‘We will create only ugly, vicious, exhausted generations, until the same cares are devoted to the woman’s body, which, after all, today everyone agrees to recognize as useful and even indispensable to man’ (Ministério da Educação e Saúde, 1942, p. 90)<sup>23</sup>.

## ENSURING STRONG GENERATIONS FOR THE HOMELAND

Rationalists and racial scientists had a pivotal influence in late nineteenth-century Brazil, notably in terms of the importance a robust and healthy youth would have for the future of the nation (Degler, 1971; Skidmore, 1992; Schwarcz, 1999). In general, Brazilian policymakers and scientists accepted that the discipline of the mind would be the result of a disciplined body, absorbing scientific theories from different sources and developing their own visions, understanding the body as an element in the production and conduct of a rational and vigorous nation (Adams, 1990; Moses & Stone, 2010; Turda & Gillette, 2014). Furthermore, it was necessary to offer not only to boys but also to girls the knowledge and bodily experiences necessary for them to transmit to their offspring the appropriate incentives for their development, focusing on discipline and morality. This morality, they believed, should be transmitted from the very beginning. Schools became key allies in achieving these goals.

Writing on the reform of Brazilian educational system in the 1880s, polymath Ruy Barbosa reinforced what seemed to be common sense about the future of the Brazilian people. Barbosa believed it was impossible to “build a hardworking and productive nation” without the hygienic education of the body during the entire schooling process (Ministério da Educação e Saúde, 1942, p. 173-174). According to Barbosa,

It will be more particularly concerned with calisthenics, in that combination of ‘exercises of movement’, designed by Adolfo Spiess, and destined to produce a symmetrical muscular development, without prejudice to the sweetness of

<sup>21</sup> Also Pereira (1878b). Pacifico Pereira mentioned and cited works by French Claude François Lallemand (1790-1854), Germans Friedrich Fröbel (1782-1852) and Rudolf Virchow (1821-1902) as well as Célestin Hippeau’s 1873 “L’Instruction Publique En Allemagne,” Victor de Laprade’s 1873 “L’éducation libérale: L’hygiène, la morale, les études,” and Daniel Gottlob Moritz Schreiber’s 1855 “Ärztliche Zimmerymnastik.”

<sup>22</sup> Pereira also cited Dr. A. Riant’s 1874 “Hygiène Scolaire: Influence de L’École sur la Santé des Enfants,” and J-B. Fonsagrives’ 1869 “L’éducation physique des jeunes filles.”

<sup>23</sup> Barbosa quoted Paul Roussetot’s *Pédagogie à usage de l’enseignement primaire*. Paris: 1881, Librairie Ch. Delagrave. p. 99.

manners, the grace and elegance, the beautiful harmony of female forms. One point in which we see the most considerable importance is the combination of rhythm and singing with gymnastics. The works of the most eminent European authorities leave no doubt about the perfect rationality and the extraordinary utility of the association of these two elements in school pedagogy (Ministério da Educação e Saúde, 1942, p. 90-91).

Calisthenics arose in the early nineteenth century from the work of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn and Adolf Spiess in popularizing gymnastics. Originally, calisthenics consisted of a system of exercise especially stressed by Per Henrik Ling of Sweden as important in the development of education for women. Calisthenics quickly became an activity for both sexes, and its physical exercises were divided in specific groups: arm and leg exercises; posterior-lateral, posterior-inferior and lateral thoracic exercises; stability and balance exercises; abdominal exercises; shoulder exercises; and plyometric jumps. According to its first manuals, calisthenics also had as one of its main characteristics the music associated with the rhythm of the movements. It could be done with dumbbells, sticks, or free hand clapping. In Japan (Robertson, 2002), for example, eugenicists also promoted calisthenics in the army, schools, and local communities in the name of empire and territorial expansion. Brazilian leaders, for instance, considered gymnastics and calisthenics as important tools in the development of the discourse on the health and the physical vigor of society, and physicians saw “the Spiess method currently serves more for our schools, taking into account our habits, education, and special conditions of our teachers” (Correa, Garcia & Jordao, 1874, p. 38).

Intellectuals, physicians, and politicians supported combining the principles of hygiene and morality with physical education and urbanity. Hence, the culture of the body would become a modern reality when physical culture began to articulate its practices around a cohesive discourse. In this way, education played a crucial role. Schools would become the spaces where Brazilian youth ideally would receive not only an intellectual education, but also the physical education necessary to forge healthier and stronger generations. Through building both minds and bodies, science, physical culture, and schools converged.

For boys, specifically, the preoccupation with the body mirrored the militarization of gymnastics. In the realm of patriarchy, policymakers and intellectuals like Ruy Barbosa agreed with physicians that Brazilians had neglected male bodily care more than other “civilized nations,” putting the nation itself to risk. The intention was that physical hygiene and exercises would give the civic body the aspect of neatness, discipline, order, and obedience:

The precision, the decision and the energy of the military movements constitute, together with an excellent way of cultivating the corporeal strengths, one of the most effective factors in the education of the virile character. All nations that are at the forefront of modern civilization recognize it, stating that the school is the citizen’s first initiator to the hardships of art that must prepare him for the defense of his country (Ministério da Educação e Saúde, 1942, p. 91).

The education of the body in the schooling environment was closely tied to civic education. The promotion of a morally educated body would appear in public festivities organized by schools or in civic parades, for example. Hence, disciplined bodies had to demonstrate righteousness, respect, and obedience to the norms and rules of the time. Physical education marched side by side with the pursuit of order. The 1881 regulations reinforced the need for this order<sup>24</sup>. By law, Brazilian representatives highlighted the importance of physical education in primary and secondary schools in reports during various executive and legislative terms (Decreto nº 7.247, 1879). The challenge of building a national physical culture, though, was how to deal with the rough-hewn reality of the Brazilian education system. Many hurdles had to be overcome. The resistance of many families, which considered the care of children’s bodies inappropriate – even undignified – for a schooling environment, often came up in the reports. Moreover, schools needed resources to supply the appropriate meals, better sanitary conditions, suitable physical spaces, and to remedy the lack of preparation of teachers on how to train students.

<sup>24</sup> Gymnastic teachers, for example, had to “send the school Principal a list of students who have distinguished themselves in performance and good conduct every year.” (Decreto nº 8.051, 1882, p. 225-238).

In 1884, according to an evaluation of the general inspector for education, the scenario was no better than it had been a decade earlier. For Antonio Herculano Bandeira Filho, even though a guide based on the Prussian principles of pedagogy had been translated and distributed, following the ministerial order of Joaquim Teixeira de Macedo, “the teaching of gymnastics, drawing and music, despite having been made obligatory for teachers by art. 23 of Decree no. 6.479 of January 18, 1877, is to this day not practiced except sporadically” (Bandeira Filho, 1884, p. 17). Bandeira Filho’s report pointed out that the legal deadline for the widespread introduction of physical exercises as a mandatory subject had already expired.

In that same year, the Central Board for Public Hygiene (Junta Central de Higiene Pública), under the chairmanship of Domingos José Freire, again mentioned the medical importance of physical education at schools. While issuing his report on epidemics in the Brazilian provinces, he suggested that the “means for preventing those scourges are multiple” if “both private and public hygiene are applied to physiology”. Domingos José Freire also criticized the fact that “physical education is despised in most of our schools; our habits condemned exercises and families’ reclusion is an established principle” (Freire, 1884, p. 24). For physician Domingos José Freire, “the well-known aphorism of *Mens sana in corpore sano* has never been more needed,” because “Health is the strength, and nations are nourished by the vigor of their children, as our tissues are nourished by the arterial blood that runs through them” (Freire, 1884, p. 31).

The nature of physical education and its importance became more marked, as it was also associated with infant mortality. Freire also wrote about the shortfalls in the physical education of mothers and children, bringing the subject closer to the areas of hygiene and puericulture. Domingos José Freire rhetorically asked if “the flaws in physical education,” syphilitic infections, and slavery were responsible for “such a dismal outcome,” contributing “to a great extent to the extinction of life at birth?” (Freire, 1885, p. 74). For the physician, “all these causes may coexist, but it is to be believed that one of them has a more powerful influence than the others” (Freire, 1885, p. 10). Freire argued that, “the physical education of mothers and children is undoubtedly not the most appropriate for our climate; and this proposition extends from the newborn to the child who walks into adolescence” (Freire, 1885, p. 10). Freire saw “schooling hygiene” as decisive. Citing authorities like Herbert Spencer, he understood that not attending to the needs of the physical would be providing an incomplete education. Schools had the mission to bring more balance, a “harmonious consensus” between the corporeal development of “Herculean athletes” and intellectual evolution: “There is therefore a need to find a compromise: to stimulate the intellectual faculties without failing to provide reasonable exercise for the bodily organs. The principle that should rule the education of children is this harmonious consensus between physical and intellectual development” (Freire, 1885, p. 11).

Freire also recalled that other countries such as Germany and France had “successfully adopted” the strategy of “military gymnastics and education at primary schools.” For Dr. Freire, Brazil should follow this “schooling hygiene” example and distribute “proper handbooks” to teachers, equip schools with “collections of apparatus for gymnasia” as well as provide “a certain number of weapons for the practice of shooting and fencing” (Freire, 1885, p. 11). In fact, sports such as swimming, equitation, fencing, and shooting legally became part of the curriculum for military education in Brazil a few years later (Decreto nº 10.202, 1889)<sup>25</sup>. For physicians like Freire, the hygienic function of institutionalized physical activities would extend beyond the schooling environment and overlap in multiple ways with other social dimensions, such as national defense. Civil and military teachers spread physical culture outside of the schooling environment, to private clubs and establishments such as circuses and theaters. Although not always done well, these efforts demonstrated that school and extra-curricular activities could interact to the advantage of both.

<sup>25</sup> See, especially, chapters V and VIII.

Physical education became a standard subject at educational conferences and congresses, events that gathered not only principals and instructors of public education, but also intellectual leaders and faculty from the medical and law schools of Bahia, Minas Gerais, Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo. Their aim was to “consult the enlightened minds and experiences of qualified people, submitting the main subjects concerning public education to their collective study” (Velloso, 1883, p. 83-85). The ninth primary education conference, for example, held in 1886, highlighted discussions on subjects relating to physical education, including teacher training and development. The second part of the event addressed the teaching of gymnastics, discussing its stage of development in Brazil at the time, how it should be taught, how those methods could be evaluated, and what kind of curricula should be adopted. The issue had been in the spotlight already during the Education Congress of Rio de Janeiro, in 1884 (Herold Júnior, 2007).

On the eve of the proclamation of the republic in 1889, physical education was on the authorities’ agenda as one of the many concerns relating to bodily care. Its introduction to school life had not progressed as much as expected, but it was certainly a reality by the time the monarchy entered its final years. The initiatives put forward during the empire show that leading figures deemed corporal education as crucial for the country and the nation. The authorities could see that the great gap between their modern ideas and the country’s reality, especially the glaring lack of hygiene and sanitary infrastructure.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, physicians and polymaths emphasized bodily hygiene and physical exercises and promoted them through the many educational reforms, from the capital in Rio de Janeiro to the extreme north in places like Maranhão. In the name of the fatherland, legislators considered physical culture an important part of what they called “scientific education”<sup>26</sup>. Political and medical authorities of the period considered Brazilian children fragile, poorly disciplined, and dedicated to idleness. Elites intended to change this scenario by promoting new conduct for Brazilian youth and found in physical education the ideal way to carry out their national project. Physical education drew on physiology and gymnastics and pedagogical methods from theoreticians like Adolph Spiess, becoming the “partner of health and strength” to the future of the nation (Scien-cias, *Letras...*, 1882, p. 1).

Physical education has been a perennial issue for Brazilian politicians and educators ever since<sup>27</sup>. Advocates believe that physical education should serve to shape and train bodies based on scientific discourses within the intent of establishing a strong, national, collective order. The improvement of citizens’ morality, discipline, and the hygiene of their bodies are at the core of the vision of civilization and modernity of Brazilian lawmakers and scientists in their efforts to build the national body politic. When looking at the specific civic space of schools (Almeida, 1998), proponents argued that local norms of conduct paved the process of educating bodies in different regions of Brazil, but as parts of a collective and broader narrative to achieve the social and political integration of the nation.

## CONCLUSION

This intention of this paper was to instigate the debate about the senses and meanings attributed to physical culture, understood in the nineteenth century as part of bodily care, and its role within Brazil’s educational system. A diverse scope of schools and educational institutions presents us a rich source of documentation to better

<sup>26</sup> Decreto nº 330 de 12 de abril de 1890: regulating and organizing education at military schools in Brazil, at: <http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/decret/1824-1899/decreto-330-12-abril-1890-524468-publicacaooriginal-1-pe.html>

<sup>27</sup> In my research at the archive of the Instituto de Educação, in Rio de Janeiro, I found dozens of books and manuals (in Portuguese and in other languages) related to gymnastics and physical education, such as M. Caldas & E. de Carvalho’s *Manual de Gymnastica Escolar*, Rio de Janeiro/São Paulo: Alves & Cia. Editores, 1896, code 371.73 Cal.

analyze those spaces of reference for children and adolescents in terms of the importance of shaping, disciplining, and militarizing especially young male bodies during their transition from infancy to adulthood. Documentation also presented interesting perspectives from educators about what ideal bodies would be and how to institutionalize that effort in school curricula. It also shows how the body is a complex web of ideas and representations, a territory fought over within state institutional spaces. The Brazilian case allows us to redirect our focus on how the body was institutionally educated and how the idea of physical culture influenced health and hygiene policies aimed at molding healthy, strong, and disciplined citizens. By analyzing how the institutional control of young bodies became a crucial issue to nineteenth-century Brazilian policy makers and educators, this paper welcomed us to rethink the pivotal role played by schools within the political strategy of creating the ideal young citizen for the future of Brazil as a nation.

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