

Fashion, thinness, and female empowerment: cigarette consumption as the modern woman's lifestyle in the US

Moda, magreza e empoderamento feminino: o consumo de cigarros como estilo de vida da mulher moderna nos EUA

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Resumo: *Nosso objetivo é verificar a atuação da comunicação publicitária como uma convocação biopolítica para a magreza corporal, e para um estilo de vida que associa magreza, moda e empoderamento feminino por meio do consumo de cigarros, entre as décadas de 1920 a 1990 nos Estados Unidos. Para isso, analisamos um material empírico composto por anúncios de cigarros voltados para mulheres de três marcas estadunidenses (Lucky Strike, Max e Virgínia Slims), veiculados em dois períodos (1920-1930 e 1970-1990). Como procedimento teórico-metodológico, nos guiaremos pelas reflexões sobre biopolítica (FOUCAULT), convocações biopolíticas (PRADO), corpo feminino, beleza e pressão estética (BORDO e FEATHERSTONE), e estigma ao corpo gordo (FARREL e FRASER). Esses anúncios evidenciam uma biopolítica que atua sobre o corpo da população feminina em dois momentos, primeiro para o corpo magro, na década de 1920, e depois, nas décadas de 1980 e 1990, para o estilo de vida moderno. Também evidenciam um paradoxo em “escolher” engajar-se em práticas que, em última instância, reforçam as normas do corpo, indo contra a liberdade e igualdade de direitos que as mulheres haviam conquistado até então.*

Palavras-chave: *cigarros, corpo magro, neoliberalismo, biopolítica, feminismo.*

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Abstract: *Our objective is to verify the performance of advertising communication as a biopolitical call for body thinness, and for a lifestyle that associates thinness, fashion, and female empowerment through smoking, between the 1920s and 1990s in the United States. For this, we analyzed an empirical material composed of cigarette ads aimed at women from three American brands (Lucky Strike, Max, and Virginia Slims), aired in two periods (1920-1930 and 1970-1990). As a theoretical-methodological procedure, we will be guided by reflections on biopolitics (FOUCAULT), biopolitical calls (PRADO), female body, beauty, and aesthetic pressure (BORDO and FEATHERSTONE), and stigma to the fat body (FARREL and FRASER). These ads show a biopolitics that acts on the body of the female population in two moments, first for the thin body, in the 1920s, and then, in the 1980s and 1990s, for the modern lifestyle. They also evidence a paradox in “choosing” to engage in practices that ultimately reinforce the norms of the body, going against the freedom and equal rights that women had earned.*

Keywords: *cigarettes, lean body, neoliberalism, biopolitics, feminism.*

Introduction

Fraser (2009) states that, between 1880 and 1920, thinness had risen to the status of body ideal in the United States, especially for women. Farrell (2011) also locates the origins of the cult of thinness in 1920 as an influence on that fashion period, when women wore short, sleeveless dresses, exposing arms and legs. Directing his view to a broader context, Vigarello (2012) corroborates these authors, identifying a significant change in Western societies throughout the first decades of the 20th century in the scope of customs that would have been decisive for the valorization of thinness in women.

The transformation of the female condition suggests a new thinness, further eliminating breast and chubby references. A new technological imagination also points to more fluidity and nervousness, accentuating what is agile and slender at the same time as the desire for control and self-affirmation grows. (VIGARELLO, 2012, p. 287)

This process of change in taste, from a society that worshiped a larger body to an appreciation of thinness, was possible thanks to the existing mass communication vehicles of that time, such as newspapers and magazines. The intense dissemination of texts and images, especially ads, which presented the thin female body as healthy, beautiful, and successful in media outlets in the United States, had the potential to persuade the population to appreciate the slim body. In this way, it was decisive in guiding the lifestyle of modern women.

Farrell (2011) emphasizes that, although ads for weight loss medicines already appeared in the United States before 1920, only from that decade on did the consumer and advertising industries start to solidify and reinforce anxiety about body fat. During this same period, there was a development of consumer society and the feminist movement in the global social context, especially in the United States, the country we will focus on in this article.

This scenario constituted fertile ground for the American cigarette industries to turn their strategies towards winning over the female public,

associating smoking with the search for body thinness and freedom. Previously associated with the male universe, “cigarettes ceased to be a practice restricted to men in the 19th century and became appropriate as a symbol of female freedom in the early decades of the 20th century” (LEAL; FREIRE FILHO; ROCHA, 2016, p. 51). Smoking comes to represent, for the female public, a transgressive act and a kind of passport to gender freedom. “The movement to occupy spaces previously restricted to men gave female smoking an aura of revolution in that period” (LEAL; FREIRE FILHO; ROCHA, 2016, p. 50).

Thus, during the first feminist wave in the USA, between 1920 and 1930, which mainly demanded the political equality of women with the achievement of the right to vote, cigarette smoking was introduced to the female public. We can observe how advertising rhetorical strategies promote a new feminine subjectivity, influencing women to build a lifestyle centered on consumption, in which smoking, being thin, using fashion trends, and gaining independence from men go hand in hand. During this same period, Hollywood cinema, often sponsored by cigarette brands, started showing scenes of female characters smoking (LEAL; FREIRE FILHO; ROCHA, 2016), which helped glamorize the practice and connect it to women’s freedom and weight loss.

Women’s achievements in the male-dominated job market and changes in their social roles contributed to them seeking to lose weight as the fat body was associated with the reproductive ideal and, thus, with their previous condition in society as wives and mothers. Furthermore, having a thin body offered women more agility, freedom, and modernity. Feminist aspirations, in this sense, played a significant role in strengthening the ideal of body thinness. It is interesting to notice paradoxes in this process because women end up subjecting themselves again to an ideal body shape by associating freedom with the body.

This paper analyzes some advertising pieces from three famous American cigarette brands (Lucky Strike, Max, and Virginia Slims), published in two specific periods: the 1920s and 1930s and from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s. These ads promote smoking as part of

the “modern woman’s lifestyle,” linking it to autonomy, success, and thinness. Advertising campaigns encouraging smoking offer interesting material to investigate media calls (PRADO, 2013) for thinness in the USA from the 1920s onwards.

Therefore, by examining cigarette ads for women, this paper aims to verify the role of advertising communication as a biopolitical call for body thinness and a lifestyle that associates slenderness, fashion, and female empowerment with cigarette consumption. The theoretical-methodological framework that guides the analysis includes reflections on biopolitics (FOUCAULT, year), biopolitical calls (PRADO, year), female body, beauty, and aesthetic pressure (BORDO, year; FEATHERSTONE, year), and the history of stigmatization of the fat body (FARRELL, year; FRASER, year).

The valorization of female body thinness: neoliberalism, consumption, and Protestantism in the USA

Farrell (2011) notes that, until the late 19th century in the United States, fat was the prerogative of a few with wealth and health. However, throughout the 20th century, cultural changes, specifically those related to the intensification of capitalism and the development of consumer society and liberalism, reinforced the ideal of thinness in the United States. According to the author, from 1900 onwards, magazines and daily newspapers around the country began intensely disseminating ads for weight loss, which promised what became known as “the cure for obesity.” In 1912, commercial products sold as weight loss medications already constituted an industry to the point of worrying the American Medical Association, which began to denounce these medications and their potential dangers and side effects.

For example, Fraser (2009) brings two testimonies from the American doctor Woods Hutchinson (professor and former president of the American Academy of Medicine) in 1926 and 1984, respectively, positioning himself against what he called the “new weight-loss fashion.”

In 1926, he wrote for a women's magazine advocating for body fat. In short, he stated that adipose tissue is benign and gives women beauty and that diet and exercise would not be able to reduce more than 10% of someone's size. Thus, fat women would remain fat, and thin women would remain thin, despite all efforts they made to modify their bodies, proving that both enjoyed health, each in their way.

In 1984, the doctor repeated his discourse defending the fat body, but, in this case, against fashion. Hutchinson tells the readers of the *Saturday Evening Post* magazine that, unfortunately, the trend seems to have the support of some doctors, physical trainers, dieticians, and even insurance companies, which united in convincing and encouraging women to lose weight. He regretted that girls were now hiding their bodies, ashamed of their fat, and warned that doctors were prescribing very restrictive diets to girls and women, risking their health to make them appear thinner by the current aesthetics. In the end, he extended this warning to future generations.

Fraser (2009) supposes that one of the reasons that drove the admiration for the thin and slender body during this period was the cultivation of this ideal in Europe. This process began on European land between the 18th and 19th centuries, when many poets and artists acquired tuberculosis, which gave them a pale and thin appearance. Members of high society began to spread the belief that having tuberculosis and being thin indicated that the person had a superior, delicate, and intellectual nature.

As a result, North American women, who saw the old continent as the ultimate symbol of fashion, class, and sophistication, soon began to seek body weight loss at any cost. However, Fraser (2009) emphasizes that, over time, Europeans adopted more moderate attitudes toward weight loss than people in the United States, who developed the cult of thinness more intensely.

As a result of this process of upholding the thin body, its opposite extreme, the fat body, became stigmatized and associated with several negative meanings. One of these meanings was political corruption.

Since fat was, for a long time, linked to wealth in the imagination, notions about capitalism also became attached to the fat body. Farrell (2011) exemplified that with several cartoons representing rich and powerful men with bulky bodies and associating these characters with the ills of the capitalist economy, such as the constitution of monopolies or exploitation of child labor.

Farrell (2011) also draws attention to an association between fat people and the middle class. Ridiculed and cast as excessive consumers who lacked the refinement to discern what they consumed, middle-class individuals supposedly could not control themselves and deal with the pleasures of modernity in moderation. As the author reflects, the fat body expresses ideals of neoliberalism and consumption, demonstrating an individual's inability to manage the resources and prosperity the modern world brings.

The author highlights this as a significant change compared to the previous understanding of fat as a sign of belonging to a higher social class. "In the late 19th century, dietary gurus and Protestants such as Fletcher and Kellogg emphasized the superiority of the thin body, as it showed restraint and control in the face of the excess of urban and commercial life" (FARRELL, 2011, p. 45). Negative views about the fat body helped to construct thin individuals as superior.

In this way, according to Farrell (2011), the fat body becomes an emblem of concerns about excessive desire and consumption, which intensified during the Depression, an economic recession that began in the USA in 1929. It is worth noting the American consumer society that developed in the 20th century, while promoting consumption as a way of accessing freedom and cultural pleasures, also recriminated excessive consumption, identified as a testament to the individual's inability to maintain discipline and self-control.

A relationship between body weight, capitalism, and Protestantism began to emerge. In this context, having a thin body became a sign not only of class but of morality. There was a long tradition in North American culture condemning excessive appetite as immoral, sexual,

and sinful. Fraser (2009) highlights that this view was strongly associated with Protestantism and religious puritanism. Farrell (2011) also shows that fatness is associated with an uncivilized body and thinness with a civilized body, a connection verifiable since the 19th century but has been little explored in studies of the modern period and the history of fat and diets.

Farrell (2011) presents reports that show the appreciation of the fat body among supposedly “inferior” cultures, such as Africans and the aborigines of Australia, while the modern English and Americans, individuals considered “more civilized,” would have high standards and, therefore, did not admire body excess. The author also observes that the stigma of the fat body appears weaker among people of African descent and people of color who live in the United Kingdom and the United States, highlighting the relationship between racial identities and corpulence and how discourses of depreciation of the fat body were related to cultural, religious, and political meanings.

In the 19th century, studies on the natural evolution of humans as stages of civilization articulated according to gender, sexual, and racial hierarchies gained strength along with the construct of superior body types. The thought of 19th-century philosophers and scientists, particularly evolutionary scientists, already designated the fat body as inferior in the typography and descriptions of human classificatory schemes. In other words, being fat also meant not being white. “A fat body, then, was a primitive body, lower on the scale of civilization and highly sexual.” (FARRELL, 2011, p. 68).

From the end of the 19th century, white Protestants increasingly perceived the fat body as deficient, a sign of gluttony and poor relationship with God, while the thin body was closer to God. So, “with Protestant thought established as dominant in this period, fat became a sign of a deficient body, a body that did not sufficiently demonstrate the containment and control God requested” (FARRELL, 2011, p. 45).

This perspective, which locates the beginning of the stigmatization of the fat body with the development of Protestantism, capitalist economy,

and consumer society, finds resonance in the theory proposed by Campbell (1940), who sought to explain what were the conditions that led to the growth of consumerism as we experience it in contemporary times. For him, although the Protestant reform, together with Puritan ideals and asceticism, did not aim to establish a new economic order but rather a moral one, it began to support the formation of modern capitalism.

This thought, which locates the beginning of the stigmatization of the fat body with the development of Protestantism, the capitalist economy, and the consumer society, finds resonance in the theory proposed by Campbell (1940), who sought to decipher what were the conditions that led to the development of the consumerism as we experience it in contemporary times, observing the advent of Protestantism as a determinant for the formation of modern capitalism. For him, although the Protestant reform, together with Puritan ideals and asceticism, did not aim to establish a new economic order but rather a moral one, it began to support the essence of the capitalist system.

To prove this, the author resorts mainly to the classical theories of Veblen, McKendrick, and Weber, writing a detailed work to correct the theoretical deviations that neglected the importance of the 18th-century romantic movement and religious Protestantism in the development of capitalism and consumer society. In this way, we could also associate Protestantism with the development of the standard of body beauty that elevates the thin body to the position of an ideal, pure, civilized, and divine body.

However, the demand for a thin body in the USA, the depreciation of the fat body, and the imposition of meanings on it affect women much more than men. Susan Bordo (1947) reminds us that between the late 19th century and the early 20th century, a relationship between body and soul emerged, in which the female body became an object of aversion, while the male body was associated with rationality. According to the author, the prevailing cultural idea was that women lacked sufficient rational qualities; they were weak, could not control their wills, and,

consequently, could not contain themselves in the face of the appeals of the consumer society.

Thus, having a fat body meant a greater transgression for women than for men. For men, a fat body was even positive, meaning they had violent impulses, sexual desires, and an appetite for food; that is, they had not weakened with modern life. As for women, they should maintain the line of cultural civilization not only by controlling their impulses but also by ensuring that the impulses of their husbands and children are also under control. Furthermore, there was a process of emphasizing beauty as an essential value for women and an association between beauty and body thinness.

As cultural anxieties induced by the processes and excesses of modern life became fixated on the body, the first advertising industries found a perfect new niche of products and services to sell, designed to shrink bodies to a size that would not cause any recrimination. (FARRELL, 2011, p. 58)

Therefore, at the beginning of the 20th century, female fat became less and less associated with health, fertility, attractiveness, or sensuality and increasingly undesirable. Farrell (2011) assesses individuals, doctors, and industry quickly assimilated the stigma that emerged regarding the fat body, articulating it back to consumers and exacerbating the cultural fear of fat.

The habit of smoking in American society in the 1920s: biopolitical calls for the consumption of thinness

Foucault (2001) considers that powers do not come from a single source, such as the State or the dominant classes (macro-power), but from various directions, daily, on multiple scales, and interconnected with each other. Micropower spreads throughout productive society in a network of people internalizing norms, ideologies, disciplines, etc. Bringing the notion of a microphysics of power, the author invites us to investigate different forms of exerting power in everyday life, as is

the case with advertising communication, which we will analyze in this paper.

Foucault (2009) observed how capitalism invests heavily in the biological dimension of the body and builds a micropolitical technology for the normalization of society, identifying and characterizing the performance of mechanisms for managing life, which he calls biopolitics. “Biopolitics, therefore, designates this entry of the body and life, as well as their mechanisms, into the domain of explicit calculations of power” (PELBART, 2011, p. 24).

To understand the constitution of capitalist society in terms of the production of truths and subjectivities, Foucault identified that capitalism promotes disciplinary power, whose main function lies in making the individual body docile and ready for production. For Foucault, biopower emerged in the second half of the 19th century with disciplinary techniques directed at the body of the population. According to Pelbart (2011), if disciplines aim at the man-body, biopolitics aims at the living man. The “making alive” that Foucault refers to, characteristic of biopower, takes two principal forms: discipline and biopolitics.

Training the body for discipline and optimizing its strengths and integration into control systems means conceiving it as a machine (machinebody) subject to political anatomy. The second form, biopolitics, mobilizes another strategic component, namely, the management of life with a focus on the population as a species (PELBART, 2011, p. 57). Biopolitics aims to manufacture, organize, and plan the regulation and government of the population’s life (FOUCAULT, 2008, p. 21).

However, in the 20th century, it is possible to observe transformations in neoliberal capitalist society with the intensification of consumption, which indicates biopolitical action at the micro level. During this period, cigarettes were introduced as a facilitating element in obtaining and maintaining a slim body, becoming fundamental to the construction of the modern woman’s identity.

In ads for the famous North American cigarette brand Lucky Strike, manufactured by the American Tobacco Company, we can see

advertising acting as a disciplinary power that calls on women to control and lose weight. The ads in Figure 1 are part of the successful campaign launched in 1928 by Lucky Strike with the slogan “Reach for a Lucky - instead of a Sweet,” which mostly showed female figures.

Figure 1: Lucky Strike cigarette ads, 1928

“I know an easy way to keep from getting fat Light a Lucky instead of eating sweets.”

Hayimora
Naturess
Famous Weight Star

THE modern way to diet! Light a Lucky when fattening sweets tempt you. That's what thousands of lovely women are doing—successfully! The deliciously roasted flavor of Luckies makes them a delightful alternative for fattening sweets. Tasting does it. Tasting removes the impurities and improves the flavor of the finest tobacco. That's why folks say: “It's good to smoke Luckies.”

Men who pride themselves on keeping fit discovered this long ago. They know that Luckies steady their nerves and do not impair their physical condition—many prominent athletes have testified to this fact. They discovered, too, that Luckies don't irritate the throat—a fact subscribed to by 20,679 physicians.

Naturess
Famous Weight Star
has expressed with Gladys
Thames

Reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet.

LUCKY STRIKE
“IT'S TOASTED”
CIGARETTES

“It's toasted”
No Throat Irritation—No Cough.

“REACH FOR A LUCKY INSTEAD OF A SWEET.”

**“We know our Luckies
That's how we stay slender”**

VERY women who face overweight find tend to attain in size and convenience ways to keep a slender, fashionable figure. Overweight must be avoided. “Better to light a Lucky whenever you crave fattening sweets.”

Tasting does it. Tasting develops and improves the flavor of the world's finest tobacco. Lightly drying outside the longing for things that make you fat, and food-sufficing with a normal appetite for healthful foods. That's why Luckies are good to smoke. Tasting makes Luckies the healthy cigarette for you to smoke.

Many men who carefully watch their health discover the advantage. They know that Luckies steady their nerves and do not impair their physical condition—many prominent athletes have gone on record that this is so. They know that 20,679 physicians have stated that Luckies are less irritating to the throat than other cigarettes.

A reasonable proportion of sugar in the diet is recommended, but the authorities are over-weighing that too many fattening sweets are harmful and that too many such are eaten by the American people. So, for moderation's sake we say—

“REACH FOR A LUCKY INSTEAD OF A SWEET.”

The Misses Catherine Harlan, Merna Darbo, Mabel Fitch are quoted by English's “Woman”

Reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet.

LUCKY STRIKE
“IT'S TOASTED”
CIGARETTES

“It's toasted”
No Throat Irritation—No Cough.

Reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet. The Lucky Strike Cigarette Company's trademark. The Lucky Strike Cigarette Company's trademark. The Lucky Strike Cigarette Company's trademark. © 1928 The American Tobacco Co., Winston-Salem, N.C.

Source: Available at: <https://www.vintag.es/2021/03/lucky-strike-instead-of-a-sweet.html>. Accessed on December 21, 2022.

The campaign slogan suggests exchanging sweets/fat for cigarettes/thinness. The emphasis on using cigarettes for weight loss is evident, promoting the replacement of sweets with cigarettes. The tobacco industry, whose product is addictive, suggests a depreciation of sweets (sugar) in favor of cigarettes (nicotine). Sugar consumption is frowned upon, as it would harm the female body, causing weight gain, while nicotine appears beneficial and healthy, as it produces thin bodies.

Thus, the Lucky brand uses knowledge and power to legitimize thinness as healthy and smoking as a formula for achieving it. We also verified knowledge production about health in the ad's statement that the brand's cigarettes, when toasted, would not cause throat irritation or coughing.

In the ad on the left (Figure 1), we see a female illustration and, next to it, an advice/ invitation: "I know an easy way to keep from getting fat: Light a Lucky instead of eating sweets." Below the advice, a long text states many women are losing weight with this recipe. Hence, the ad presents smoking as a medicine or formula that would lead women to lose weight, as if it were a dietary prescription to achieve this purpose.

In Figure 1 still, the piece on the right side shows images of three Hollywood celebrities of the time inside stars with the title: "We know our Luckies. That's how we stay slender." With the endorsement of personalities admired by women of the time, Lucky Strike ratified its strategies for controlling the female body/desire. We observe the production of female subjectivities and, mainly, knowledge expressed in advice that has the power (discipline) to shape behavior and direct women's actions towards consuming cigarettes to avoid sweets and, consequently, fat. Discipline is "a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a physics or an anatomy of power, a technology" (FOUCAULT, 2001, p. 177).

In Figure 2, we present two more advertisements published in 1928 by the same cigarette brand. In the ad on the left, we have a female illustration and the title "Light up a Lucky and you'll never miss the sweets that make you fat", with the handwritten signature of a woman called Constance, described as the star of a film. Prado, when characterizing media calls, observes that personalities are presented and function "as attractors that model success narratives" (PRADO, 2013, p. 58), in this way the celebrity's weight loss is attributed to smoking to inspire women to copy strategy in order to achieve success.

Figure 2 presents two more ads published in 1928 by the same cigarette brand. The advertisement on the left has a female illustration and a title,

“Light a Lucky and you’ll never miss sweets that make you fat,” with the handwritten signature of a woman called Constance, described as a film star. When characterizing media calls, Prado observes that personalities are presented and function “as attractors that model success narratives” (PRADO, 2013, p. 58). This way, celebrity weight loss is attributed to smoking to inspire women to copy strategies to achieve success.

The emphasis on “avoiding” a fat body shows how the advertising narrative helped to construct the thin body as superior and the fat body as inferior. As Prado (2013) states, the biopower exercised by media devices calls us to be successful people, building narratives of transformation that provide body-shaping maps fueled by slogans that privilege some discourses and negativize others (PRADO, 2013).

Figure 2: Lucky Strike cigarette ads, 1928

“Light a *Lucky* and you’ll never miss sweets that make you fat”
Constance Talmadge
 Constance Talmadge
 Famous Actress
 “Reach for a *Lucky* instead of a SWEET.”
“It’s toasted”
 No Throat Irritation—No Cough.

“To stay slender—reach for a *Lucky* a most effective way of retaining a trim figure”
Miss Billie Burke
 Miss Billie Burke,
 Famous American Actress and
 Host of the Stage
“It’s toasted”
 No Throat Irritation—No Cough.

Source: Available at: <https://www.vintag.es/2021/03/lucky-strike-instead-of-a-sweet.html>. Accessed on December 21, 2022.

Below the title, on the left side of the ad, a long text aims to convince the reader, presenting “proof” that cigarettes are capable of causing weight loss. We highlight the following excerpt:

For years, this has been no secret to those men who keep fit and trim. They know Luckies do not clip their wings or harm their physical condition. They know that Lucky Strike is the favorite cigarette of many prominent athletes who must stay in good shape. They respect the opinion of 20,679 doctors who say that Luckies are less irritating to the throat than other cigarettes. A reasonable proportion of sugar in the diet is recommended, but the authorities are overwhelming that too many fattening sweets are harmful and that too many such are eaten by the American people. So, for moderation’s sake, we say: “reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet.”

Constructing Lucky Strike cigarettes’ weight-loss and health-boosting potentials involved endorsements from successful athletes and more than 20,000 doctors. On the other hand, doctors are concerned about the harm to health that sugar can bring. Thus, authorities exercise the power to prove the association between cigarettes and health (truth). Power, therefore, institutionalizes truth, “We are subjected to the production of truth through power, and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth.” (FOUCAULT, 1999, p. 28).

The ad on the left uses the same production strategy of knowing about weight loss. In it, a woman, Billie Burke, whom the ad describes as a popular actress in the US, advises, “To stay slender, reach for a Lucky – the most effective way to get a trim figure,” and signs below in her handwriting. These ads also structure their discourses based on a logic close to that of the immunological device described by Han (2017).

The author tells us that the 20th century was an immunological era for establishing a clear division between inside and outside, friend and enemy. This immunological scheme went beyond the biological field to the entire social sphere. Thus, the object of immunological attack is foreignness. Even if this stranger does not represent a real threat, the organism’s defense eliminates it due to its otherness.

Sweets, which fatten the female body, as the ad says, represent strangeness, the target of attack, and negativity. Therefore, women should eliminate sweets in favor of smoking, which, by promoting weight loss, serves as a strategy to defend a thin body shape, understood as positivity. Defense removes everything foreign due to its otherness. Thus, every immunological reaction is a reaction to otherness (HAN, 2017).

Thus, Lucky Strike's consumer narratives construed the fat body as otherness or something every woman fears. Sweets are guilty of producing fat (resistant) bodies. So, women should eliminate them in favor of cigarettes, which make thin (docile) bodies: smoking cigarettes is an immunological reaction to the negativity represented by fattening sweets. From a Foucauldian perspective, we can understand cigarettes as a disciplinary device that acts inside a woman's body, controlling her body weight to obtain a thin/obedient body, as the control/consumption society desires.

Figure 3: Lucky Strike cigarette ads, 1929.



Source: Image on the right: Available at: <https://stanford.io/2u1yxDv>. Accessed on December 21, 2022. Image on the left: Available at: <https://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2012/02/27/torches-of-freedom-women-and-smoking-propaganda/>. Accessed on December 21, 2022.

Figure 3 presents two more Lucky Strike ads published in 1929. The ad on the left shows the campaign slogan at the top and an illustration of a modern female figure below it. The ad on the right shows a woman smoking with the text “To keep a slender figure, no one can deny...” and the campaign slogan highlighted in a circle, “Reach for a cigarette instead of a sweet.”

It is worth highlighting the statement no one can deny, reinforcing the truth constructed in the brand’s discourses about cigarettes □ its weight loss potential is irrefutable. Therefore, we see an evolution in the brand’s advertising discourse. In 1928, Lucky Strike was committed to producing the truth about the benefits of cigarettes for women’s health and weight loss through testimonials from authorities and long, persuasive texts. In 1929, ads had less text and only reaffirmed the truth already constructed and legitimized.

Figure 4 shows two Lucky Strike ads published in 1930. In the ad on the left, the title says □ “Is this you five years from now? When tempted to overindulge, reach for a cigarette instead.” Below, an illustration shows a slim woman wearing swimwear in a diving pose and, behind her, a shadow of her but with a fat body. The fear of fat is evident in this advertisement, which also contains a short text advocating moderation □ ‘Be moderate, be moderate in everything, even smoking. Avoid that future shadow by avoiding over-indulgence if you would maintain that modern, ever youthful figure. “Reach for a Lucky instead”.’ Finally, the ad stresses, ‘We do not say smoking Luckies reduces flesh. We say when tempted to over-indulge, “Reach for a Lucky instead”.’

Figure 4: Lucky Strike cigarette ads, 1930



Source: Available at: <https://brian.carnell.com/articles/2021/lucky-strike-ad-1930-is-this-you-five-years-from-now/>. Accessed on: December 21, 2022.

In this ad, the brand admits, for the first time, that cigarettes do not in themselves make you lose weight but could be a way to fight the desire for sweets that make you fat. If, on the one hand, it seems to adopt a more responsible stance, on the other, it creates even more powerful meanings that associate cigarettes with thinness and the fear of fatness, bringing the frightening image of a shadow of the fat future.

The same happens with the ad on the right, which features the face of a thin young woman with a fat shadow behind her. The text says, "First a shadow, then a sorrow. Avoid that shadow in the future by refraining from over-indulgence if you would maintain the modern figure of fashion." Once again, the brand has a text explaining that, though smoking Luckies will not lead to weight loss, it helps to avoid the lack of control that leads to overeating and making one fatter.

By suggesting that smoking cigarettes can help women control their urge to overeat, ads from 1930 subtly emphasize a relevant aspect

of disciplinary society, which is surveillance. For Foucault (2001), surveillance is the main gear of disciplinary power: it contributes to automating and de-individualizing power while individualizing the subjects under its influence and generalizing discipline. For the disciplinary device to fully exercise all its effects, it is enough for those subject to it to know that they are being monitored or could potentially be. The potential of surveillance, its possibility alone, is sufficient for exercising disciplinary power precisely because an actual subjection arises from a fictitious relationship with it.

Thus, ads from 1930, by evoking the fear of a fat body in the future, mentioning sorrow, and suggesting moderation in eating, trigger a fictitious surveillance on women, which has real effects. By proposing women internalize the discipline, ads help produce subjects/women who increasingly seek ways to maintain a slender body and consume more cigarettes to that effect. Another difference noticed in the 1930 ads is they do not repeat the entire campaign slogan, only “Reach for a Lucky instead.” That indicates the strengthening of the brand, whose slogan had already become popular and internalized.

Therefore, in the ads analyzed, the association between cigarette consumption, body, and thinness is clear, while the association with fashion, although it exists, remains in the background. However, the ad in Figure 5 from the same campaign produced in 1929 emphasizes the association with fashion. The ad, with a black and white aesthetic, features a famous fashion designer of the time, Paul Poiret, signing a message in his handwriting: “If you want to keep slender - and who doesn’t these days - avoid sweets and smoke Lucky Strike.”

Figure 5: Lucky Strike ad, 1929



Source: Available at: <https://stanford.io/2u3tDWy>. Accessed on: December 21, 2022.

With the stamp and signature of a respected expert in the fashion industry, the ad links cigarette consumption to fashion and a slender body – the fashion body. Once again, the ad has a biopolitical call, as defined by Prado, for consumption. In the fashion designer’s recommendation, “if you want to stay thin, and who doesn’t these days,” lies an assumption that having a slender body is the ideal everyone wants, placing Lucky Strike as a formula to achieve it. Thus, “the media not only act to inform but to provide cognitive/semiotic maps to their readers, packages for the reader to live in the globalized world, situate themselves in it, act in it according to specific directions, aiming to have success and pleasure.” (PRADO, 2013, p. 107).

The sphere of advertising communication educates women on consumption and makes the female body docile for its entry into the job market alongside men (the thin body is superior, light, agile, and civilized for consumption, as it controls your weight/cravings). Thus, they achieve empowerment conditioned by a way of living characterized

by consuming cigarettes, fashion, and a thin body. Only through consumption, they can enjoy their independence and autonomy in society.

Therefore, media communication exerts power over modern women, either subjecting them to lifestyle standards, clothing norms, and behavior prescriptions or as the very life force they need to feel free. In other words, ads promote cigarette consumption as a mechanism of subjection and freedom at the same time. Although women seek freedom, by associating it with the body, they end up imprisoning themselves again in an ideal body shape and a way of achieving a thin body. Therefore, advertising contributes to producing two forms of subjection: to the standard of beauty and the consumption of cigarettes.

Evolution of women and cigarette consumption in the USA: from the 1970s to the 1990s

British sociologist Mike Featherstone (1991) and American philosopher Susan Bordo (1993) are among the academics who linked the presence of a discourse of the body directly to the functioning of capitalism in the 1980s and early 1990s. In their respective works, they explored the body in the context of consumer culture, recognizing and discussing the effects of capitalism on body image and maintenance and the gendered social construction of the body. Thus, capitalism (especially neoliberalism) is strongly associated with body politics in the context of consumer cultures.

Nos anos 70, no anúncio da marca de cigarros Max é identificada uma intensificação na associação entre consumo de cigarros, moda, magreza corporal e feminismo em relação aos anúncios da década de 1920 e 1930, embora ainda se mantenha a lógica discursiva. No anúncio adiante (Figura 6), uma mulher, usando vestido da moda, está sentada numa pose confortável, com aspecto livre e feliz, e acima o *slogan*: “*Vista um Max hoje*” (*tradução nossa*), *sugerindo que um cigarro possa ser vestido como uma peça de roupa, o que revela a íntima relação entre*

consumo de moda e de cigarros. Em outras palavras, o anúncio reforça a necessidade de a mulher moderna adotar um estilo de vida voltado ao consumo nessa nova configuração social.

Figura 6: Anúncio cigarro da marca Max, 1977



Fonte: Disponível em: <https://bit.ly/2XQQHWO>. Acesso em: 24 fev. 2023

In the 1970s, advertising for the Max cigarette brand intensified the association between cigarette consumption, fashion, body thinness, and feminism, which existed since the 1920s and 1930s, maintaining the same discursive logic. The ad in Figure 6 shows a woman wearing a fashionable dress, sitting in a comfortable pose, looking free and happy. The slogan on the top, “Wear a Max today,” suggests the cigarette is like a piece of clothing, which reveals the intimate relationship between fashion and cigarette consumption. In other words, the ad reinforces the need for modern women to adopt a lifestyle focused on consumption in this new social configuration.

The ad also makes a clear anatomic analogy between the cigarette and the female body - "Great looking. Great taste too. Long, lean, all-white, Max 120s" - affirming the body standard that represents the ideal woman model valued in that period - long, lean, and white. Thus, as an advertising appeal, the cigarette form acquires the power to regulate and determine the ideal body for women and their behavior and autonomy in society. Implied in this advertising strategy is the negative meaning attributed to the opposite body type of what the cigarette shape represents, a fat, short, and black body, which is unapproved as the path to the rise of modern women.

However, the Virginia Slims cigarette brand is probably the most successful in associating cigarette consumption, fashion, thinness, and autonomy. The brand established itself in the North American imagination through a series of ads that ran since the 1960s and lasted for several decades, celebrating the rights and independence that women had achieved with the slogan "You've come a long way, baby."

Most ads in that campaign present two images in different planes as if comparing them. In the background, a smaller image showed aspects of women's submission in previous decades. In the foreground, a bigger contemporary image showed a model with full make-up dressed in the latest fashion trend, posing with an independent and free attitude and holding a cigarette.

Figure 7: Virginia Slims cigarette ads in Vogue magazine, New York, 1976 and 1990.



Source: Available at: <https://bit.ly/2EUx8Ut>. Accessed on March 11, 2023.

Figure 7 shows two ads for Virginia Slims cigarettes, produced in 1976 (piece on the left) and 1990 (piece on the right). The 1976 piece shows an old newspaper ad in the background asking married men if they felt ashamed when their wives smoked. As a solution to the problem, the ad offered a mask to be placed on the wife's face, imprisoning her and, thus, preventing her from smoking. In the ad piece on the right (1990), the background image shows a woman in 1960 hanging the laundry out to dry.

In the foreground of the two ads appears the photographic image of an empowered and beautiful contemporary woman, made up and dressed in the latest fashion trend, holding a cigarette. By showing that contrast, the Virginia Slims brand aimed to associate the evolution of women and their social role with cigarette consumption, which acts as a practice that mediates autonomy, freedom, beauty, and identity evident in this new woman. Thus, Virginia Slims' advertising rhetoric sells a

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lifestyle for the modern woman. “What is sold to us all the time, if not this: ways of seeing and feeling, thinking and perceiving, living and dressing? The fact is that more than just goods, we consume life forms” (PELBART, 2011, p. 20).

From this perspective, consumption becomes an essential element in forming the subject’s identity (CANCLINI, 1996). “Considered the hallmark of contemporary society due to its condition of constituting subjectivities and identities” (BACCEGA, 2010, p. 30), consumption becomes an articulator of biopolitical strategies in the management of subjects’ bodies and lives. There is an invitation for the female public to enjoy a “positive” lifestyle (HAN, 2017) with a focus on consumption. In other words, women can gain independence as long as they are consumers, which includes participating in the consumption circuit of products such as cigarettes and fashion clothes. Thus, ads sell us a lifestyle, and the fashion system operates by helping the public to realize or enable the experience of lifestyles.

Companies no longer produce commodity objects only. They produce worlds. So, companies need to sell a world before selling things. “Consuming is no longer reduced to buying and ‘destroying’ a service or product, as political economy and its criticism teaches, but above all means belonging to a world, joining a universe” (LAZZARATO, 2006, p. 100). These worlds affect the body, feelings, intellect, that is, the whole of subjectivity. Advertising “ceases to be an ideological assessment and becomes an incitement, an invitation to share a certain way of dressing, having a body, eating, communicating, living, moving, having a gender, talking, and so on.”

Hoff (2010) indicates we can understand consumption as a biopolitical strategy if considering its action as a reordering of life, as it proposes ways of belonging, identity construction, and existing. The management of life – something along the lines of “self-care,” updated for the conditions of late capitalism – through consumption experiences is at the base of power relations in contemporary times.

Figure 8: Virginia Slims cigarette ad in *Vogue*, New York, 1984



Source: Available at: <https://bit.ly/a2F6BXv6>. Accessed on December 21, 2022.

In the ad above, published in 1984 (Figure 8), the emphasis on thinness is noticeable again in the analogy with the cigarette's shape itself, which now appeared in an even longer and thinner version, accentuating the ideal characteristics of the female body (tall, slender, and white). The image shows a model with hair and makeup styled according to the latest fashion, wearing a haute couture dress. Next to her, a text says:

According to the Theory of Evolution, men evolved with fat, stubby fingers and women evolved with long, slim fingers. Therefore, according to the Theory of Logic, women should smoke the long, slim cigarette designed just for them. And that's the Theory of Slimness.

Once again, the ad compares the shape of the cigarette to the woman's, explicitly referring to her finger but implying that it extends to the whole female body, which must also be long and slim. Furthermore, the text reiterates gender binarism, describing specific bodily characteristics that supposedly differentiate women from men: women must have a thin and elongated body structure, and men must have a broad and stubby body structure. In this way, the ad associates the fat body with the masculine universe and the thin body with the feminine, corroborating the stigmatization of women with fat bodies.

As Farrell (2011) observed, since the 19th century, fatness has been associated with an uncivilized body and thinness with a civilized body. Following that line of thought, the ad for Virginia Slims links evolution, consumption, and femininity with slenderness, which implies that those women whose bodies are fat do not know how to control their consumption desires and, therefore, would not be adapted to live in the capitalist world and enjoying a modern lifestyle. Besides the depreciation of the fat body, we also observe moral disapproval of consumption in line with Protestant ideals, as already discussed.

We can see the same meanings in the Virginia Slims ad published in 1985 (Figure 9). In it, the model, aligned with the body and fashion standards of the time, says: "Take that, all of you short, fat cigarettes. Now we're even longer." The statement is not only a way of subjugating all other cigarette brands and praising the Virginia Slims brand but also of devaluing and stigmatizing fat women since all pieces compare the brand's cigarettes to the female body.

Figure 9 New Virginia Slims ad, 1985.



Source: Available at: <https://bit.ly/2Ht2yEn>. Accessed on December 21, 2022.

Thus, the ads presented make clear the established gender norms for acceptable body sizes and heights. According to Bordo (1993), deviating from those norms can lead to terrible consequences, from discrimination to outright harassment and even violence. We also identify marks of neoliberalism, mainly in the emphasis on individual choice, as women who have a fat body are blamed for their physical appearance, indicating they are not “choosing” to engage in supposedly beneficial practices, opting instead for “wrong” methods to produce their body, taken as a project of the self.

Given this perspective, the fat woman’s lifestyle appears negative. Featherstone (1991, p. 171) suggests that, “in consumer culture, concern with appearance has the effect of reducing one’s acceptability as a person, as well as indicating laziness, low self-esteem, and even moral failure” (FEATHERSTONE, 1991, p. 186). It is this negative meaning that the Virginia Slims brand attributes to the fat body in its advertising pieces.

This government of the self promoted in consumer culture is an illustrative example of neoliberal governance. The body becomes something changeable and part of a personal “project,” a matter of

choices made in market systems, as is the case with smoking, which ads for American cigarette brands show as a path to obtaining a slim body.

Cigarettes begin to exercise discipline over the female body for consumption practices. As a disciplinary device, the cigarette works within women's bodies by making them lose weight and in their behavior, giving them attitude and voice to no longer accept a position as male objects, relegated to the private environment of their homes and apart from social life. On the other hand, they are subject to body norms and the biopolitical control exercised by the consumption of brands. There is an apparent paradox between "choosing" to engage in practices that ultimately reinforce body norms and go against the freedom and equal rights that women have achieved.

Therefore, while in the 1920s and 1930s, the Lucky Strike brand sought to build an association between cigarettes, health, and weight loss through persuasive discourses and endorsements of various professionals, in the 1970s and 1990s, there was no longer a need for the testimonials of personalities, as women consumers had already internalized control and discipline. Advertising strategies revealed the sophistication of biopower, and we see the emphasis on building slenderness as a lifestyle, which was not so evident in the 1920s and 1930s.

Smoking inserted itself into a neoliberal logic of the performance society, whose modal verb is unlimited power, "project, initiative, and motivation instead of prohibition, commandment, or law" (HAN, 2017, p. 24). Thus, while playing their role as consumers, women gain freedom, a form of empowerment conditioned on consumption. That is how cigarette and fashion consumption merge in ads for Virginia Slims, expressing a modern lifestyle where women can be free and happy as long as they adapt the "correct" consumption practices.

Final considerations

The body consists of an experience of the self, and consumption builds on individuality or in a process of individuation, in which brands and signs seek concreteness in the body. Thus, the body is a place that connects

individuals in their daily lives to consumer cultures, becoming a central element in the structuring of consumption practices and experiences.

Advertising for American cigarettes presented here sells the thin female body, a central element that connects fashion and cigarette consumption practices and materializes the modern woman's lifestyle. Media calls for the consumption of modern women were, in large part, responsible for associating freedom, empowerment, and success with work on the body, promoting the idea that women with slim bodies tend to be more successful and dominate all the spheres of life in society since market logic permeates everything in a neoliberal economy. Therefore, a woman who seeks freedom needs to have the body desired by capitalism and subject herself to the norms of body standards. In this sense, domination and liberation are two sides of the same coin.

Prado (2013) observes that calls from communication devices, at first, confront us with a given situation. Next, we embody and experience the constructed discourse. Finally, we always return to an imaginary world built by the media. We observed this evolution in the ads of American cigarette brands. In the 1920s and 1930s, ads drew attention to the weight-loss potential of cigarettes, educating and encouraging women to consume them. In the 1970s and 1990s, ads began to sell a modern/thin lifestyle, enabling the construction of a consumer experience lived through women's bodies and minds.

Therefore, the analysis of the ads reveals media communication as a biopolitical strategy that acts on the body of the (female) population in two moments, first for the thin body in the 1920s and then for the modern/slim lifestyle in the 1980s and 1990s. Images of women in the 1920s, the 1970s and 1980s, and today are very similar, which shows how the dimension of biopolitics (which acts on the body of the population) is present in the development of consumption practices.

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