

Review paper

PHYSICAL CULTURE PATTERNS IN THE LIFESTYLE OF THE POLISH SOCIETY

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Abstract

Society's lifestyles, influenced by the evolving preferences of values of subsequent generations, are subject to gradual changes. This variation in lifestyles requires a reflection on the patterns of physical culture and values amongst the youth, adults and the elderly. Patterns of physical culture shaped in the European tradition are also present in the contemporary lifestyles of all generations. People's choices concerning physical culture depend on the type and level of their physical activity, attitudes towards the body, age, gender and education. In the classic physical types distinguished by Polish sociologists we can identify positive traits conducive to human development, traits inducing controversial attitude, and clearly negative ones that are health-threatening.

In conclusion the paper puts forward a question about the direction of the development of physical culture patterns in future and the level of recognition of particular values by different generations. Some of the contemporary lifestyles arouse concerns of educators.

Key words: lifestyle, values, physical culture patterns

Introduction

Lifestyle – “is a manifestation of a certain principle or principles in the choices made in everyday life, out of the range of behaviours possible in a certain culture” [1]. The style manifested in everyday life constitutes the basis for the distinction of individuals or groups from the wider social communities.

Individual lifestyle preferences are influenced by participation in physical culture, including “... a system of spontaneous and intentional behaviours, whose objective is the creation of the human body in accordance with accepted patterns ...” [2]. However, there are significant differences between the recognized patterns, which constitute some ideal behavioural rules desired in a given community, and the practiced ones, which include standards of behaviour and rules observed in the practice, as reflected in the real participation of adult Poles in physical culture [3, 4]. By comparing the recognized and the realized cultural patterns, conclusions can be drawn about the values perceived as important by people [5].

The value of the body is referred to the theory of the formation of physical types developed by Florian Znaniecki [6]. Znaniecki based his theory on the concept of humanistic coefficient, the theory of social systems and recognition of the processes of socialization and physical education as creative processes. The author distinguished the following types: hygienic (involving the development of health properties), geneonomic (importance of genetics for the quality and quantity of future generations), hedonistic (body as a value, a source of pleasant

and unpleasant experiences), moral-aesthetic (clothes, ornaments, appearance, physical activity habits, manner of eating etc.), physical-utilitarian (skill and habits as typical physical properties being the basis of any professional activity), and the sporting type (being a test of excellence in movement-sporting coordination). In this typology “... education that affects physical properties of future members, that is physical education in the broadest sense of the word, involves formation of physical types in accordance with the requirements of the society” [6]. Znaniecki's suggestions were far ahead of his times and could be realized much later; this is particularly true about the beginnings of the sociology of medicine and sport and sex education [7]. This theory has not become outdated. Contemporary sociologists, physical education theorists, educators, psychologists [8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13] refer to these patterns, modifying and supplementing them in accordance with contemporary civilization changes. The human body, shaped in accordance with the cultural patterns existing in a particular society, can be the media of multiple values (vitality, health, hedonistic, fitness, agonistic). Acquisition of these values takes place by gaining cultural competences, through participation in physical activity [10, 14, 15].

The variability of the range of behaviours set by cultural patterns and standards of behaviour is a significant determinant of lifestyle changes. Patterns of physical culture shaped in the European tradition are to some extent alive and in force today, also in the lifestyle of Polish society [16].

The aesthetic model

The aesthetic pattern is associated with one of the most important values – the category of beauty which functioned in the ancient axiology beside the idea of good and wisdom (*kalokagathia*). The Canons of beauty have changed in subsequent epochs; we can admire them in the works of art (sculpture, painting). The statues of athletes from the period of antiquity – discus thrower by Myron (460-450 BC) and a boxer resting after a fight (a bronze statue – about 50 BC) [17] – are examples of canons of beauty of the male body. The human body, which was characterized by harmony and the right proportion of its individual parts, is shown in a drawing by a Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius (1st century BC). The drawing was popularized by Leonardo da Vinci around 1490. Contempt for the body, on the other hand, found its expression in medieval asceticism. An example might be the painting of an ascetic dating from the 7th century AD, mortifying his body. The statue of David by Michelangelo (1475-1564), which corresponds to the ancient patterns, is considered to be one of the most important masterpieces of the Renaissance. The sculpture showing the figure of David preparing for battle, full of harmony and enormous inner strength, has aroused widespread admiration. A model of the beauty of the naked female body, in turn, is shown in the Renaissance nude “The Three Graces” (c.1504-1505) by an Italian painter Raphael Santi.

During the Renaissance the model of “created beauty” was originated (cosmetics and clothing), which has developed into a convention of alternative aesthetic patterns [16]. In these days this model takes a number of forms – from the most desirable ones – related to the acceptance of one's own body and the shaping of its form through physical activity and the use of diverse sports gear – to less desirable ones – related to the treatment of one's own body in an instrumental way, often involving a distorted image of the body (e.g. *bigorexia*). We can therefore speak about negative patterns or anti-patterns as they are called by Krawczyk [16]. Endeavours to achieve the desired appearance are fuelled by the changing fashion, requiring a specific style of dressing and makeup, but also tattoos, piercing, use of psychoactive substances and plastic surgery, which strongly affect the body. Until recently, only women were interested in plastic surgery. In recent years, more and more men seek to improve their appearance through surgery. Due to the lack of proper shape of the chest, calves and buttocks muscles they also seek to achieve the desired look by silicone implants, as well as tattoos imitating well shaped men's muscles. This is often accompanied by beautifying the body through piercing. Those who undergo procedures of anaesthetisation of the body believe they will result in an improvement of their wellbeing, self-esteem, and expression of their personality and beauty. People who devote a lot of attention to their appearance are stereotypically viewed by some people within the society as narcissistic and often mindless.

Despite public criticism they induce, activities leading to the improvement of the appearance of the body are practiced by both women and men. Today, the body has the status of a commodity which you can buy, fix, adjust, forget yourself and start to create it from the beginning “... it is a house, an asylum, something that you can control, unlike the untamed outside world” [18]. Perhaps that is why the body is for us such an important object of our actions.

Nowadays the cult of the female body is particularly significant, with the ideals promoted in the mass media. Striving to achieve the perfect figure leads to anorexia or bulimia; the desire to have a suntanned body can addict people to sunbathing (*tanorexia*). The dominance of the instrumental values of the body over the autotelic values becomes the cause of a number of behaviours that are against widely recognized patterns.

The hedonistic model

For the creator of hedonism, Aristippus of Cyrene (c. 435-366 BC), the body constitutes the most important value, because it makes it possible to achieve happiness by experiencing sensual pleasures. A moderate version of hedonism could be observed in the Epicureans, who, in addition to pleasures associated with the body, appreciated also spiritual pleasure, conversation, aesthetic experience, etc. [19], which have many advocates today as well.

From ancient times, participation in games, pastimes or dances has been the most common source of pleasure. Fun and games have accompanied people in all epochs. The need for exercise and drawing satisfaction from various forms of physical activity is reflected in participation in physical recreation. Contemporary recreation is no longer merely a form of regeneration of physical strength after productive work, but is becoming a source of pleasure, new sensations, emotions, meeting the need for creativity [20], a search for new incitements which everyday life does not provide. Physical recreation is an important element of a contemporary person's lifestyle and an essential prerequisite for its quality.

It has numerous functions: recreation, entertainment, cathartic, health-enhancing, educational, social, adaptive, compensatory, emotional, aesthetic [21]. At the same time, because of the infrequency of participation in various forms of recreation, medical statistics record a greater number of medical interventions caused by recreational activity, than it is the case with professional activity [22]. There is a need for education of society which would prepare them to participate in physical recreation in a safe way.

Recreation does not always take traditionally expected forms. In search of unknown pleasures, strong sensations and excitement, people take up extreme forms of activity [23]; men and women, young people, but also those in late adulthood. A parachute jump done by an 81-year-old female New Zealander, despite the arousal of various emotions and controversy, became a fact. The latest feat by F. Baumgartner, who after several attempts finally made a parachute jump from the stratosphere, earned him international fame.

Questions about the limits of human capabilities in the context of health, but also in connection with the fulfilment of lifetime wishes, being subject to much debate among experts in physical culture, medicine (including gerontologists) and sport, have become urgent and timely again. Extreme forms are still developing (regarded as recreation, sports, specific record mania) and it is difficult to assess today what kind of scope they will reach.

Another form of hedonism, not associated with physical activity, symptomatic of consumer society, is shopaholism, which involves: immediate achievement of pleasure without effort, incessant search for new consumer goods and new sensations (also on the Internet). Inconsistent with the essence of recreational activity is also seeking pleasure not in the sphere of kinetic sensations but in the realm of imagination (the Internet). Contemporary marketing and advertising are focused primarily on expanding these areas. Web games such as *Second Life* or computer games like *Kinect Sport-Dance* are supposed to prevent hypokinesia in Internet users. Limited by space, devoid of environmental stimuli, they are no substitute for a daily health-enhancing dose of exercise, especially with the growing average life expectancy and increasing disability of aging populations [24].

The hygienic model

For the hygienic model (existential and utilitarian type) [16], the chief value is health. The existential type manifested in previous epochs – focused on man's fight against disease and death – was reflected in the rituals, magic, and sometimes survived in regional customs (existing today). An example might be the so called institution of Szeptucha, a specific folklore element of Podlasie. Szeptuchas' activity, which has lasted for many years and still continues to find its adherents, is limited to undoing diseases and finding their causes; usually they happen to be stress and overwork, and invariably the prescribed remedy is rest. With the development of schooling and education, as well as democratization and popularization of health care, the utilitarian hygienic type has penetrated all developing societies and obtained the greatest scope [8]. Nowadays, both types show a tendency to integrate. The holistic concept of health which sees health in several dimensions (physical, psychological, mental, emotional, social) [25] aims to build a universal hygienic pattern. Activities of the WHO and the National Health Programs are aimed at popularization of health. The NHP treats health as a means to improve the quality of life through the development of healthy lifestyle [26], preventive measures, measures for the safety of the general public and protection of individuals [27].

The theoretical basis for the maintenance of an individual's health and development until they are very advanced in age in conjunction with physical activity has been confirmed by the results of medical, biological and humanistic research. Physically active people live longer than those who prefer sedentary lifestyle. Physical activity can help an elderly person to avoid partial disability and total dependence on other people in the final 8-10 years of their life [24]. Under the influence of a 3-month program of aerobic exercise human brain has been observed to generate new neurons. New cells appear in the dentate gyrus of the hippocampus, which is in the area responsible for cognitive processes, learning, memory, divisibility and focusing of attention, as well as recollections and emotions. The exercised muscle sends chemical signals to the inside of the brain and the brain-derived neurotrophic factor BDNF is activated. It has been shown that loss of brain cells is not irreversible [28]. These developments contradict the traditional notion that through exercise one can only expect activation of blood circulation and improved oxygenation and nutrition of brain cells. The demonstrated relation between physical activity and direct working of the brain is of great importance in the argumentation for the sensibility of engagement in regular physical activity with regard to people of different ages.

Just like the lack of activity, excessive effort can be harmful to man's health, psychophysical well-being and social functioning. In economically developed societies some people exhibit exaggerated concern with their own health, expressed for example in excessive, bearing signs of addiction, observance of the principles of appropriate nutrition (orthorexia). Physical culture experts are also worried about the recently occurring addiction to physical exercise, which affects men more often than women [29]. Physical exercise, initially done for health-related reasons, can become a coercive behaviour and lead to addiction. Physical activity which loses its health-enhancing character, may cause difficulties in the familial, social and vocational spheres. Physical training does not only serve the improvement of a person's condition and shape, but also allows them to break away from the problems of everyday life. Perhaps this explains why sport can gain control (being compelled to engage in sport or recreational exercise) over one's current life. The extent of this phenomenon, however, is incomparably smaller than the quite commonly found lack of physical activity in our society.

The ascetic model

The ascetic pattern is characterized by appreciation of spiritual values and depreciation of the value of the body. The pattern of Platonic kalokagathia has not been the only one. At the end of the Hellenistic period (323-30 BC) there was intensified criticism of the ideal of fitness and physical strength connected with competitive sport [30]. These threads of criticism of the body were followed by Aurelius Augustine 7 centuries later (4th century AD), who formed the basis for the philosophy of contempt and depreciation of the value of the body. In his opinion, carnal hedonism does not pursue the vocation of man. This had resulted in degradation of the position of carnality as well as of all the sciences whose objective was to gain knowledge of the natural world.

The ascetic pattern is present in contemporary culture. It manifests itself, for instance, in ascetic attitudes towards bodily needs, promoted "... in Catholic criticism of consumer societies, which lose, as it is made out, the spiritual values for the sake of the goods of the alienated technical civilization" [16]. Ascetic patterns can be found in physical training as well, e.g. in meditation combined with practicing yoga. There is also an extremely negative pattern reflected in the depreciation of the value of the body leading to disorders (anorexia, manorexia).

The fitness model

"A warrior, an artisan, an artist, a home keeper, they all have to have their bodies or individual organs fit to perform their specific activities" – this is how the physical-utilitarian pattern, based on the appreciation of the value of physical fitness, was described by Florian Znaniecki [6]. The value of utilitarian fitness in class societies was generally subordinated to production and military purposes [16]. The body was treated instrumentally. This kind of attitude toward physical fitness was due to the experiences of the Spartan educational model, and then the knightly education, which has its followers in present times (e.g. Knights Brotherhood of Kalisz Land, Brotherhood of Ruda Land). In fact, the same goals are pursued in physical education programs in the modern military. The development of military technology has somewhat reduced the importance of soldiers being physically fit. The importance of the production model in which utilitarian fitness is a value, has been declining in developed societies due to considerable replacement of manual work with machines. This pattern is more important in developing societies, where physical labour is treated instrumentally. Although contemporary productive labour is less often connected with physical fitness, the significance of physical recreation in maintaining and preservation of health is not declining. The utilitarian pattern of physical culture points to the social interests of countries in which the welfare of the nation depends on the health of individuals [26].

The agonistic model

The most important value for the agonistic pattern is sporting fitness. This value is most fully realized during high-level competition, mainly during the Olympic Games. Initially the Games had a class character and were associated with aristocratic lifestyle. Sporting combat and rivalry were a property of this class [31, 32]. Over time, however, these patterns became universal in character and penetrated other classes. The agonistic pattern comprises on the one hand a competitor, and on the other a spectator. The first documented Games were held in 776 BC at Olympia in Greece. The oldest ancient Olympic discipline was dromos: a short run over a distance of one stadium.

In 648 BC pankration was included in the program of the ancient Olympics (a combination of boxing and wrestling). The only rules in this discipline forbade biting the opponent and attacking his eyes [33]. Apart from that, everything was permitted, and the competitor who no longer had the strength to fight could finish the fight at any moment by raising his hand. At subsequent Olympic Games the range of disciplines and events was regularly widened. The process of inclusion of new disciplines to the Games is still continuing.

Modern Olympic Games follow the tradition of the ancient Greek Olympics. Old disciplines have reappeared, but there are also a lot of new ones. There are female participants. Some rules have been modified and new ones have been created. Preparations for participation in Olympic Games begin in childhood. Nowadays sporting competition has become a symbolic expression of dominance in international contention, not only in areas connected with sport, but also in economics, politics and culture. Sport is not free from distortions, which since the first Olympic Games have been manifested in behaviour contrary to the spirit of sport, today referred to as inconsistent with fair play [34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40]. The desire to win at all costs with no regard to the principles and values of sport (fair play) has also been observed in areas outside sport. The politicization of sport, corruption, doping, racism, terrorism, unsporting behaviour or aggression were also known in the ancient times. Nowadays they find many conscious and unconscious followers. These behaviours involve players, coaches and sports officials [12, 32, 41, 42, 43]. They were present at London Olympic games in 2012 as well. The media kept us up to date on the latest great records and victories, but also on behaviours unworthy of Olympians (including Polish athletes). Unsporting attitudes also apply to a considerable group of spectators, especially soccer fans, during matches which were not at the highest level. Polish population has been shaped as a spectator society as far as physical culture is concerned (mostly TV), and this is not changing [2]. But its negative manifestations in the form of hooliganism at sports grounds and stadiums are more problematic and disturb other fans who would like to cheer their players in accordance with the principles of safety and fair play. But the spectacularity of sport may also produce a specific social phenomenon, as the one connected with the person of a famous ski jumper, called "małyszomania". This sporting spectacle unites Polish fans all over the world. This group, just like the volleyball fans, can serve as a model of properly understood spectatorship.

What models of somatic culture dominate the lifestyles of youth and adults?

The aesthetic pattern is particularly attractive to young people (mainly to academic youth) [4, 44, 45], who are willing to make a lot of sacrifices in order to achieve the desired body shape. The ideal of harmony, strength and physical fitness seems to have a dominant role in contemporary canons of the beauty of the body [18]. Youth recognizes and follows mostly the aesthetic and hedonistic patterns, and less often the agonistic one [5]. The agonistic pattern is fashionable among young people who practice sport (mainly men). This pattern often remains in the sphere of recognized values, which influences the enormous popularity of sports champions and winners of world competitions [29]. The hygienic pattern, in turn, is realized by youth in the programs of health education and physical education. These attitudes do not always stem from actually felt needs, but rather from the obligation, if we consider young people's absence from physical education classes which amounts to nearly 10.0% [46].

For adults and elderly people the hygienic pattern is one of the most significant (participation in physical culture in order to enhance health and physical fitness) [47, 48], but also for the

greater part of society the underestimation of the value of the body [16], which is sometimes based on the ascetic pattern. In recent years, the realization of the agonistic pattern can be detected in the attitudes of high-performance athletes aged over 35 [49]. Physical activity can also be a source of pleasure after 50 years of age [49].

A study into students' preferences of sports programs broadcast on television confirmed previous research [45, 51] showing that women prefer to watch sports which are aesthetic and artistic in character, with a low level of aggression, while men opt for violent martial arts, based on aggression and rivalry.

What changes in the patterns of physical culture can we expect in the future?

This question is about the evaluation and the choice of the value of the body; it is also a question about the effects of the shaping of health-oriented choices in youth, adults and the elderly. Sports education is necessary for the positive development of the body and other sides of human personality at the same time. Participation in broadly understood sport is not only a form of autotelic behaviour, but also instrumental behaviour, which must be interpreted both in terms of freedom of choice and obligation.

Recent years have seen technological developments in the field of rehabilitation being employed in qualified sport (the case of Oscar Pistorius), which makes it necessary to ask further questions: How far can we increase human capabilities by means of technological devices?

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