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## From “Body-in-Culture” to “Body-in-Sport-Culture”: A Deconstructive Critique and Reconstruction of the "Body Aesthetics" Paradigm

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### Abstract

This study applies a deconstructive approach to body aesthetics in sports culture, challenging traditional symbolic frameworks. It examines how body aesthetics, not just physiological phenomena, are shaped by cultural symbols, social relations, and identity. The paper critiques static views of body symbolism and introduces a more dynamic deconstructive perspective, positioning the body as a cultural and social construct influenced by changing societal contexts. Drawing on Derrida's deconstruction theory, it highlights the evolving and multi-dimensional nature of body aesthetics in sports. Findings show that body aesthetics play a key role in shaping cultural identities and social interactions, emphasizing the body's active role in cultural transformation rather than as a passive symbol. This approach offers fresh insights into the body's significance in sports culture.

**Keywords:** *Body aesthetics, Sports culture, Deconstruction theory, Cultural identity, Social interaction*

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### 1. Introduction

With the accelerating process of globalization, sports culture has increasingly emerged as a transnational social phenomenon. Within this cultural framework, the body functions as a central element, carrying rich cultural symbols and social meanings. The study of body aesthetics in sports culture, particularly the symbolic representation of the body in the contexts of globalization, commodification, and mediatization, has become a significant focus of academic inquiry. However, existing research predominantly emphasizes the symbolic dimensions and representational analysis of the body, while paying insufficient attention to the fluidity of the body in social interactions and the dynamic processes of cultural construction. In response to these gaps, this study aims to critically reconstruct the paradigm of body aesthetics in sports culture through a deconstructive lens. It seeks to re-examine how the body performs complex and multifaceted roles within sports culture and to reveal its intricate interactions with broader socio-cultural and power structures. This critical perspective not only challenges the conventional static representations of the body but also contributes to a deeper understanding of the body as an active site of cultural negotiation, identity formation, and social meaning-making within the evolving landscape of global sports.

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Existing literature reveals a significant tension between theory and practice in the study of body aesthetics within sports culture. Scholars have widely explored how the body in sports serves as a cultural symbol, transmitting social values and cultural meanings. The body in sports is not only a vessel for cultural symbols but also an active participant in the transmission of cultural meaning and social interaction (Leonard, 2009). The sporting body constitutes a site where power operates and social relations are shaped—serving as an arena for the contestation of social forces (Hargreaves, 1986). *Sport, power, and culture: A social and historical analysis*. University of Illinois Press). This growing body of research underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of how the body functions within sports culture—not merely as a passive object of representation, but as an active agent within complex socio-cultural and political processes.

However, existing research tends to remain confined to static analyses of symbolic systems, often overlooking the dynamic nature of the body as cultural practice and social behavior. In this regard, the introduction of deconstructionism offers a new theoretical framework for the study of body aesthetics within sports culture. Derrida (1976) argued that the meaning of symbols is never fixed; instead, it is continuously generated through processes of difference and deferral. This perspective provides valuable insights for rethinking the fluidity and polysemy of bodily symbols in sports culture. Accordingly, this study adopts a deconstructionist approach to critically examine the symbolic tendencies embedded in current paradigms of body aesthetics and seeks to redefine the significance of body aesthetics in sports culture, with particular emphasis on the dynamic construction of the body within processes of cultural interaction.

The primary aim of this study is to address the existing gap in the literature concerning the aesthetics of the body within sports culture by proposing a novel deconstructionist paradigm. This paradigm focuses on the multidimensionality and fluidity of bodily symbols and their interactive roles within broader socio-cultural contexts. Specifically, through a deconstructionist critique of body aesthetics in sports culture, this study seeks to reveal how the body transcends its representation as a singular symbol to become an intricate intersection of social identity, cultural background, and power structures. The innovation of this research lies in its provision of a fresh theoretical lens through which to examine the aesthetics of the body in sports culture, while simultaneously offering a theoretical framework that supports interdisciplinary inquiry within the field of sports and cultural studies.

The methodological framework of this study is grounded in deconstructionist theory, integrating perspectives from semiotics, cultural studies, and sociology. Through a multi-layered analysis of bodily symbols and aesthetic meanings within sports culture, this research explores how bodily expressions in sports practice generate meaning through processes of symbolization and social interaction. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its deconstruction of traditional symbolization frameworks, offering a more dynamic perspective on body aesthetics. By revealing the multidimensional construction of the body as a cultural symbol within sports culture, this study advances the theoretical development of sports culture and social interaction research.

## 2. Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research approach grounded in deconstructionist theory to conduct an in-depth analysis of body aesthetics within sports culture. The methodological framework is structured around the following four interconnected components, aiming to explore the multiple meanings of the body as both a cultural symbol and a carrier of social practice.

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework: Deconstructionism and Interdisciplinary Integration

This study is primarily guided by Derrida's deconstructionist theory, which serves as the core analytical lens. Concepts such as "difference" and "textual deconstruction" are employed to analyze bodily symbols, with a focus on their fluidity, polysemy, and indeterminacy. To build a solid academic foundation, we first conducted a systematic literature review, synthesizing research from sports culture, body aesthetics, semiotics, and cultural studies. This process allowed for the construction of an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates perspectives from sociology, semiotics, and cultural studies, enabling a multifaceted understanding of the research problem.

### 2.2. Case Study Analysis: Examining Bodily Practices in Specific Contexts

To ground the theoretical analysis in empirical reality, this research adopts a case study approach. Representative sports events and athlete performances are selected as research subjects for in-depth analysis. This method allows for a detailed examination of how symbolic meanings and social interactions are constructed through bodily expressions in concrete sporting activities. The focus is on observing the body in action—during competitions, in athletes' gestures and performances—to understand its role as a dynamic site of cultural practice.

### **2.3. Textual Analysis: Deconstructing Media Representations**

Complementing the case studies, textual analysis is employed to investigate the construction of the body in sports media, including reporting, advertising, and social media content. This method is crucial for uncovering how symbolic representations in public discourse influence perceptions of the body and shape social evaluations. By deconstructing these texts, the study reveals the underlying cultural, social, and power structures that are embedded within and reproduced by media narratives.

### **2.4. Analytical Synthesis: A Critical and Reflexive Approach**

The final stage of the methodology involves an integrative synthesis of the insights gained from the above components. This study employs a critical and reflexive analytical approach, drawing interdisciplinary perspectives to question traditional semiotic frameworks and propose new interpretations. The analysis emphasizes the dynamic, socially embedded nature of bodily symbols and explores how they are continuously reconstructed through interaction. This approach not only facilitates theoretical critique but also aims to foster innovation by connecting abstract theory with real-life cases, ultimately redefining body aesthetics within the deconstructionist paradigm.

## **3. “The Body in Culture” and “The Body in Sports Culture”: From Separation to the Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Bodily Aesthetics**

The above discussion lays the foundation for a shift in bodily aesthetics; the following section further reveals its deconstructive pathway.

### **3.1. “The Body in Culture” and “The Body in Sports Culture”: Separation and the Deconstruction of Bodily Aesthetics**

Under the influence of contemporary consumer culture and media dissemination, the boundaries of body imagery are continuously reshaped. Nonetheless, the body always exists within culture, giving rise to what is commonly referred to as “the body in culture.” This conceptualization of the body transcends mere physiological existence, representing a complex synthesis of cultural, social, and psychological dimensions. Correspondingly, regardless of how the notion of sport is reconstructed, the body remains embedded within the aesthetics of sport, giving form to what cultural researchers describe as “the body in sports culture.” The former refers to an ordinary yet powerful body that can be analyzed through the lenses of cultural studies, sociology, and related disciplines but proves difficult to apply within the theoretical discourse of sports aesthetics. The latter, by contrast, represents an abstract conceptual system endowed with interpretive and critical significance. Although it rarely focuses on empirical studies of the former, it emphasizes abstract discourses within bodily aesthetics and often offers reflective critiques of modern sports, wellness practices, and embodied behaviors. As an “embodied” aesthetic activity, sports and fitness fundamentally entail the treatment of the body as both aesthetic object and aesthetic subject, as well as the practice of embodied aesthetic experience (Zhao, 2019). This suggests that sports and fitness are not solely physical exercises but also aesthetic experiences and cultural practices. In the era of consumerism, sports and fitness have become vital means for constructing body imagery, reflecting the visualized, desirous, and commodified characteristics of the body (Zhao and Zhao, 2021). The construction of such body imagery represents not only a pursuit of health and beauty but also an expression of individual identity and social status.

However, the body within sports culture is not merely a physiological entity; it also involves the athlete’s self-construction, the exercise of subjectivity, and the articulation of existence (Zhou and Song, 2022). Sport, as a cultural phenomenon, not only pertains to the individual but also embodies profound social significance, reflecting the prevailing social values and ideal pursuits of people in specific historical contexts. Therefore, the body in sports culture represents a complex phenomenon, simultaneously the outcome of individual bodily practices and the product of social and cultural forces.

Shusterman’s somaesthetics offers a novel perspective for understanding and analyzing the body within sports culture. Somaesthetics emphasizes the unity of body and mind, highlighting the aesthetic awareness and philosophical significance inherent in bodily practices (Jiang and Huang, 2016). This perspective facilitates a deeper comprehension of the multiple dimensions of the body in sports culture, including its materiality, autonomy, temporality, and spatiality (Zhao, 2007). Through the lens of somaesthetics, the body in sports culture is revealed not merely as a physiological and aesthetic object, but also as a carrier of cultural and philosophical meaning.

However, the relationship between these two conceptions of the body is neither a simple integration nor a complete separation; rather, it exists within a spatial dynamic of proximity and distance, forming a relational separation similar to that between the spectator and the performer. Without the performer, the spectator cannot be provoked to reflection, while the performer, in striving to exclude the spectator’s influence during the act of performance, is nonetheless shaped

by the spectator's responses. This notion of relational separation provides a key to bridging the divide between the "body in culture" and the "body in sports culture," opening new pathways for understanding their interconnection.

The concept of separation, originating from contemporary cultural studies theory and proposed by the deconstructionist thinker Jacques Derrida, differs fundamentally from the notion of "traditional integration." Under the framework of traditional integration, cultural symbols are designed to "lead the audience as close as possible to the core meaning and symbolic value of the symbol itself. To achieve this goal, cultural symbols evoke resonance in the audience's mind, blending perception with the intended meaning of the symbol, while striving to minimize the gap between the symbol and reality, presenting an expression of seamless connectivity" (Derrida, 1990). In contrast, the notion of separation moves in the opposite direction: "it prevents the viewer from becoming fully immersed in the cultural meaning of the symbol or merging completely with its representational content, instead skillfully creating a distance between the symbol and reality." At its core, this is a "strategy of defamiliarizing the object represented by the symbol," producing a "defamiliarization" effect (Derrida, 1990).

Within the framework of body aesthetics, this defamiliarization is not merely a formal distance but reveals the inherent complexity of the body within cultural contexts. For instance, the body is not only the executor of athletic movements but also serves as a carrier of cultural symbols, capable of conveying information related to gender, power, social status, and other dimensions. Therefore, the analysis of body aesthetics must extend beyond the concern for the body's external performance to delve into the deeper cultural meanings embodied within the body itself.

Derrida, drawing on collage techniques and symbolic installation art from Western modern art, illustrates that such defamiliarization does not aim to directly convey the cultural meanings behind symbols to evoke resonance. Instead, it seeks to create distance between the symbol and the viewer through symbolic and metaphorical means (Derrida, 1990). "It directs the viewer's attention toward the symbol itself and its representational content, making it appealing," and "serves to reveal underlying structures and contradictions," with the purpose of "encouraging viewers to reflect on and interpret the symbol with an attitude of inquiry and critique" (Derrida, 1990). By analogy, the relationship between traditional cultural studies and related disciplines such as semiotics and sociology is characterized by what Derrida termed a "traditional integration." In this conventional relationship, the objects of study in cultural research—whether in semiotics or sociology—are generally the result of reflections on "human relationships to culture" or "human relationships to society." The conceptual systems of semiotics and cultural studies, as well as sociological analyses of cultural phenomena and value systems, are typically interconnected, with the former often serving as observations and summaries of the latter.

In contrast, the relationship between cultural studies and specific sports cultures is better understood through a lens of separation, or what Derrida would term a "relation of *différance*." This relationship is vividly reflected in the conceptual pair of "the body in culture" and "the body in sports culture." Under this framework of separation, these two concepts are initially distinct: "the body in culture" is framed as a symbolic system of representation, while "the body in sports culture" is understood as a concrete cultural body. Yet the separation also acknowledges their latent connection. "The body in culture" defamiliarizes, symbolizes, and re-signifies "the body in sports culture" through cultural theories, thus facilitating a renewed philosophical inquiry into bodily aesthetics.

As Foucault (2013) insightfully noted, "The most common illusion is to assume that certain things are already well understood, thereby abandoning the need for deeper inquiry. Yet without thorough exploration, no amount of reflection can lead to genuine insight." Without processes of defamiliarization, individuals embedded in everyday cultural activities may routinely engage their bodies within sports culture while assuming a superficial familiarity with "the body in sports culture." This apparent familiarity often masks the absence of critical reflection, leaving individuals in an unexamined state of cultural assumption. The concept of "the body in culture" serves precisely to disrupt these taken-for-granted perceptions, opening space for deeper inquiry into the underlying structures of "the body in sports culture" and enabling critique and reflection. Such reflection extends beyond the physical body itself to encompass the cultural, social, and aesthetic meanings embedded within and expressed through bodily practices.

If this separation between the two bodies—conceptual and cultural—remains at the level of vague description, it risks limiting the depth and rigor of research into the aesthetics of the body within sports culture. Only through disciplinary elaboration and theoretical refinement can this conceptual distinction serve as a meaningful methodological guide. By positioning bodily aesthetics as a central analytical tool, researchers can move beyond a narrow focus on the technical and performative dimensions of the athletic body to critically examine the body's symbolic role within social and cultural contexts. This process demands a deconstructive approach that interrogates the aesthetic values and cultural symbols embedded in sports practices, fostering a deeper critique of the social messages and value systems that such embodied performances both reflect and reproduce.

### 3.2. *The Separation of Two Bodily Concepts and the Deconstructive Paradigm*

By analyzing the separation between the concepts of “the body in culture” and “the body in sports culture,” it becomes evident that the study of bodily aesthetics within cultural research, while on the surface appearing to explore their disconnection, actually serves as a bridge linking cultural studies with sports culture research at a deeper level. Bodily aesthetics does not merely focus on the external representation of the body; it also emphasizes the symbolic and aesthetic functions of the body within broader cultural sign systems. The notion of separation is not an absolute or static state; rather, it reflects an interactive distance between the observer and the symbol. This implies that cultural research and sports culture research should not exist in isolation. Instead, the theoretical framework that supports “the body in culture” must engage with the research underpinning “the body in sports culture” through a distinctive form of dynamic separation. This fluid and interactive relationship creates the conditions for a more nuanced understanding of bodily aesthetics. Such a dynamic separation fundamentally shapes the deconstructive paradigm of bodily aesthetics, with deconstruction theory and methodology serving as the central intellectual tools for its formation. By embracing Derrida’s ideas of *différance* and textual instability, this paradigm resists fixed interpretations of the body, encouraging scholars to continually interrogate how bodies are symbolized, represented, and re-signified within shifting cultural and social contexts. In doing so, bodily aesthetics emerges not as a static descriptive field, but as a critical site of ongoing reflection, cultural negotiation, and theoretical innovation within both education and sports studies.

As a philosophical theory, deconstruction has consistently maintained a profound connection with cultural critique, both in its early formation and in its contemporary critical development. Deconstruction theory highlights the multiplicity of signs and meanings, paying particular attention to the polysemy and indeterminacy of symbols within specific cultural contexts (Derrida and Kamuf, 2015). Sports culture, as a distinct cultural environment imbued with unique symbols and values, inevitably generates specific bodily symbols that carry multiple layers of meaning, including cultural aesthetics, gender politics, and social identity. By adopting the theoretical and methodological tools of deconstruction as a research paradigm, it becomes possible to construct a bridge between the concepts of “the body in culture” and “the body in sports culture.” This approach reveals the inherent separation between the two while simultaneously fostering a multidimensional understanding of bodily aesthetics. Through this lens, the body is not viewed merely as a static symbol or biological entity but as a dynamic cultural construct whose meaning is constantly negotiated and reconstructed within social and symbolic frameworks. Thus, the integration of deconstruction offers new pathways for exploring the complexities of embodiment in sports culture, challenging fixed narratives, and opening space for critical reflection on identity, representation, and power.

The deconstructive paradigm is inherently critical in nature, a characteristic already revealed in Derrida’s philosophical thought. Derrida described deconstruction as a means of “re-examining and exposing the hidden forces within existing structures,” rather than simply dismantling or overthrowing them (Derrida, 1976). He asserted that the task of deconstruction lies in “unveiling the internal contradictions within texts and systems of symbols, exposing the instability of structures through deconstruction, and thereby disrupting fixed frameworks of meaning to allow symbols to present multiple interpretations.” Within the framework of bodily aesthetics, deconstruction is not merely concerned with the surface structure of bodily symbols. It also reveals the underlying cultural forces, power dynamics, and aesthetic values embedded within these symbols, prompting observers to critically reassess the aesthetic forms and social constructions of the body. Foucault further emphasized that the core of critical analysis is to “uncover the relationship between knowledge and power,” a methodological stance that “does not belong to any particular ‘position’ or ‘school’ but focuses on the processes through which meaning is generated” (Foucault, 1977). He stressed that critique “rejects any explanation grounded in universal truth or overly simplistic concepts” and “questions all structures and theories that appear superficially rational, while uncovering the truths concealed by power discourses and the roots of misunderstanding” (Foucault, 1980). Foucault’s injection of a profound interrogative quality into critical theory thus breaks through the symbolic limitations posed by the notion of “the body in culture” and provides an open, multilayered structure for the study of “the body in sports culture.”

At the same time, the deconstructive paradigm possesses strong practical implications. Foucault, in his exploration of the operation of knowledge and power, proposed a methodological principle of “revealing the inner workings of power mechanisms.” He emphasized: “The mode of analysis we adopt must allow the network of power to emerge from within its operational structures. In other words, such analysis should expose the micro-level operations of power in everyday life and reveal its real state within individual and social relations” (Foucault, 1978). Foucault argued that by exposing the concealed presence of power within symbols and discourses, the relationship between “the body in culture” and “the body in sports culture” can be illuminated. This perspective offers practical guidance for the application of deconstructive methods in the critical study of symbolized bodies. Through this lens, the symbolic construction of the body is no longer seen as a neutral or purely aesthetic act, but rather as a site where power relations, cultural narratives, and social dynamics intersect and are continually negotiated.

Setting aside for the moment Foucault's detailed definitions of the complex relationship between "power" and "knowledge," it is evident from his discourse that deconstruction, as a paradigm, is equally inseparable from its practical dimension. Expressions such as "revealing the micro-operations of power in everyday life" and "the network structure of power" indicate that the deconstructive method must be applied within real social contexts to uncover how power actually functions, thus shaping the critical nature of the deconstructive approach. This perspective also provides an interpretive space for understanding the discourse of power embedded in the "body within sports culture" situated in specific cultural contexts. In this sense, deconstruction is not merely a theoretical tool for textual analysis but also a methodological strategy for revealing how symbolic representations of the body are shaped by, and in turn reinforce, underlying social power structures. Through this approach, the study of sports culture moves beyond static aesthetic readings of the body to a more dynamic and critical exploration of its cultural, social, and political significance.

The process of critique and meaning generation within body aesthetics is not a disconnected or isolated endeavor; rather, it represents a deepening of thought in which critique serves as the foundation for deconstruction. The progression from critique to the deconstruction of meaning simultaneously marks the gradual formation of the paradigm of body aesthetics. In the deconstructive critique phase, the underlying presupposed symbols and symbolic concepts embedded within the "body in culture" are unveiled. In the deconstruction and reconstruction phase, the "body in culture" and the "body in sports culture" establish a genuinely distanced yet fluid relationship, thereby enabling the dynamic interaction between cultural symbolism theory and sports culture studies (Foucault and Gordon, 2000). This process equally provides theoretical support for the development of sports aesthetics, as it facilitates the dismantling and reconstruction of the symbolic meanings and cultural connotations associated with the body. Through this ongoing process, the multiple dimensions and aesthetic values of the body are continuously revealed and redefined. In doing so, the study of body aesthetics transcends mere surface-level analysis and advances toward a more comprehensive understanding of how bodies function as cultural texts, social markers, and aesthetic expressions within the context of sports culture.

#### **4. A Deconstructive Critique of Two Symbolic Paradigms: Constructing a Research Paradigm of Sports Cultural Body Aesthetics Based on the "Body in Culture"**

Research on sports cultural body aesthetics based on the concept of the "body in culture" has predominantly employed a symbolic research paradigm that constructs theoretical frameworks derived from systems of symbols. This approach represents an essential process of moving from surface-level symbolic cognition of the body toward in-depth cultural critique, which can also be viewed as a progression of dialectical transcendence in thought. Within this process, the study of body aesthetics emerges as a critical dimension. It not only focuses on the symbolic significance of the body but also explores the multiple dimensions of the body as a cultural symbol within aesthetic expression and social practice. Thus, body aesthetics serves as a bridge in this paradigm, connecting semiotics with the complex dynamics of socio-cultural contexts. The symbolic paradigm consists of two key stages: the first is the symbolic paradigm phase, in which semiotic theories are directly applied to interpret bodily symbols; the second is the culturalized paradigm phase, which incorporates the symbolic understanding of the body into broader cultural analysis. The sequential development of these two paradigms reflects the evolutionary nature of dialectical transcendence and marks the continual deepening of body aesthetics as an academic perspective. This progression highlights the shifting role of body aesthetics from a purely symbolic analysis to a more comprehensive exploration of the body's aesthetic expression and its embeddedness in cultural and social meanings.

##### ***4.1. The Symbolized Research Paradigm of Sports Cultural Body Aesthetics: A Deconstructive Critique of the "Mirror Maze" and the Dissolution of Symbols***

In the exploration of body aesthetics within sports culture, symbolization theory has long served as a crucial tool for human understanding of the world and culture. However, this process of symbolization inherently carries the characteristic of "infinite deferral and dissolution." "Symbols constantly refer to other symbols rather than to any fixed reality, and meaning is always in a state of perpetual postponement" (Derrida, 1976). When we attempt to construct the cultural significance of the body through systems of symbols, the symbols themselves gradually displace the original embodied experience, leading to the formation of a "mirror maze." Within this symbolic labyrinth, the endless interplay and mutual referencing of symbols replace direct engagement with the physical body itself. This, in turn, results in the ceaseless dissolution of meaning within body culture, a predicament of symbolic nihilism that deconstruction seeks to critique. From a deconstructive perspective, this reliance on symbolization risks severing the connection between bodily presence and cultural expression, trapping interpretation within an endless cycle of signifiers detached from lived physicality. The critique therefore calls for a return to the body not merely as a sign, but as an active participant in cultural meaning-

making—a call to resist the abstraction of bodies into hollow symbols and to restore their dynamic role within aesthetic and social practice.

The symbolized research paradigm of sports cultural body aesthetics gradually took shape and gained widespread application from the late twentieth century to the early twenty-first century. Symbolization theory has profoundly influenced the representation of bodies in sports culture, especially under the conditions of consumerism and media saturation, where the tendency toward symbolization has become increasingly pronounced. Scholars such as Baudrillard, Barthes, and Eco have provided in-depth analyses on the consumption meanings of body symbols, the symbolic representations of sports in media, and the symbolic significance of bodies within sports culture. Their work has significantly advanced the study of body aesthetics in sports culture. During this period, scholars have not only examined the question of “what the body in sports culture signifies” but have also explored “how cultural meanings of the body are constructed through symbols.” This line of inquiry has given rise to the symbolized research paradigm of sports cultural body aesthetics, with a central research focus on “how the body is presented as a cultural symbol.”

Within this paradigm, the “body” is often regarded as a representation of symbols—no longer merely a physical entity but rather a bearer of cultural signification. This theoretical approach has generated two core points of discussion: the body as a symbol and the body constructed through symbols. The former emphasizes the symbolic characteristics of the body, while the latter focuses on how culture and ideology shape the body through symbolic processes. This dichotomy is reflected in the exploration of body aesthetics within sports culture, where the semiotic distinction between “sign” and “meaning” serves as the analytical foundation. From this perspective, the body in sports culture is situated within a symbolic matrix that simultaneously reflects and constructs social values, cultural identities, and ideological positions. The symbolization of the body thus becomes both a site of aesthetic display and a medium through which deeper cultural narratives are conveyed, requiring critical reflection on how these symbolic practices shape our understanding of bodies in contemporary sports contexts.

One of the defining features of the symbolization paradigm lies in its emphasis on the precise definition of symbols as a means to analyze the symbolic nature of the body and its cultural extensions. Within this framework, sports are viewed as an activity characterized by symbolic representation, with the body positioned as its central symbolic element. As a result, academic discourse has frequently employed assertions such as “the body possesses symbolic significance” and “sport is a symbolic activity,” establishing the theoretical foundation for sports cultural body aesthetics.

However, this symbolization paradigm has also led to what may be termed the “mirror maze” dilemma. As scholars continuously dissect the symbolic meanings of the body, the definitions and interpretations of these symbols expand without end, resulting in an endless loop of reference. Within the logic of semiotics, researchers attempt to uncover the cultural meanings of the body through “precise interpretations” of symbols. Yet symbols, by their very nature, always refer to other symbols, ultimately circling back to their point of departure. This perpetual process gives rise to the dissolution of symbols, rendering it increasingly difficult for research on body aesthetics in sports culture to break free from the “infinite deferral” that semiotic systems inherently produce. Consequently, while the symbolization paradigm has enriched the theoretical exploration of the body in sports culture, it also risks trapping researchers within an analytical cycle that privileges signification over embodied experience. Without critical intervention, this paradigm may obscure the lived realities of the sporting body, reducing it to an abstract construct disconnected from its material, social, and aesthetic dimensions.

As deconstructionism highlights, symbols are not fixed entities but are instead dynamic processes characterized by continual change and evolution. There is no stable relationship between symbols and meanings; rather, there exists an ongoing interplay of difference and deferral. This is particularly evident in the symbolic representations of the body within sports culture, where the emphasis lies on the continual generation of bodily symbols rather than on their fixed definitions. As a result, the traditional framework of symbolization fails to fully capture the multiple and fluid symbolic meanings associated with the body in sports culture.

Foucault has noted that “power relations exist prior to any established meaning,” indicating that power is already embedded within symbolic structures. Within the critical framework of deconstructionism, the symbolic representations of the body in sports culture cannot be understood as mere combinations of signs and meanings; rather, they preexist and transcend the formal processes of cultural symbolization. Foucault’s perspective allows us to rethink the symbolic dimensions of the body in sports culture, revealing that symbols are not merely surface representations but are deeply intertwined with power, social structures, and cultural identity. Deconstructionist theory thus offers a research approach grounded in “revelation” rather than traditional “analysis and generalization.” It emphasizes the importance of critically unveiling the hidden power relations embedded within symbolic forms. In the context of sports culture, this means shifting from a focus on fixed bodily representations to an exploration of how bodily symbols both reflect and reproduce

complex networks of power, identity, and social meaning. Such an approach not only enriches the aesthetic understanding of the sporting body but also deepens our insight into the cultural and political processes that shape its significance.

From the perspective of deconstructionism, bodily symbols within sports culture are not merely expressions of cultural semiotics; rather, they embody complex networks of power and social structures that cannot be fully explained through binary oppositions inherent in traditional semiotic analysis. Within this conceptual framework, body aesthetics is no longer understood as the study of fixed meanings and representations of symbols, but instead as an exploration of how bodily symbols are generated and continually redefined.

Although the statement that “the body is a cultural symbol” holds a significant place in the study of bodily aesthetics within sports culture, its fixed meaning warrants critical re-examination. Derrida distinguished between “sign” and “meaning,” asserting that meaning is not fixed but emerges through the play of differences between signs. In the deconstructionist framework, a “sign” is not simply a vessel carrying a predetermined meaning; rather, it is a dynamic process through which meaning is generated. This theoretical shift provides new insights for bodily aesthetics, suggesting that the body is not merely an object passively inscribed with cultural symbols. Instead, its cultural significance emerges through an ongoing process of generation, difference, and interaction among symbolic forms. In this view, bodily aesthetics moves beyond static representations to emphasize the fluid, relational, and contested nature of bodily meaning within sports culture. This approach invites scholars to examine how bodies in sport are continuously constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed through cultural practices, social discourses, and power relations.

Therefore, the hypothesis that “the body is a cultural symbol” should no longer be regarded as the ultimate endpoint of research in the bodily aesthetics of sports culture. Instead, it should serve as a starting point for deeper inquiry into “how” bodily symbols within sports culture are generated. This shift opens up new pathways for the study of bodily aesthetics within a deconstructionist paradigm.

In summary, while the symbolic paradigm of bodily aesthetics in sports culture has provided an effective conceptual framework, it is not without limitations—chief among them being the “hall of mirrors” dilemma of endless symbolic deferral and dissolution. The critical lens of deconstructionism offers valuable theoretical tools to transcend this impasse. Drawing on the deconstructive ideas of Foucault and Derrida, we come to recognize that the body within sports culture is not merely a straightforward signifier but a site where multiple meanings are generated within specific cultural contexts and power structures. Bodily aesthetics, therefore, must move beyond the confines of defining and analyzing fixed symbols to engage in a deeper exploration of how symbolic meanings are produced, circulated, and transformed. This approach reveals the multidimensionality and fluidity of the body in sports culture, emphasizing its ongoing reconstruction through cultural discourse, social practice, and power relations. In doing so, it enriches both the theoretical depth and practical relevance of bodily aesthetics within the broader field of sports cultural studies.

#### ***4.2. A Structuration Paradigm for the Study of Bodily Aesthetics in Sports Culture: A Deconstructionist Critique Based on the Separation of “Text” and “Code”***

##### *4.2.1. The Structuration Paradigm: A Research Framework Focused on “How Symbolization Occurs”*

Although the transformation of research paradigms has brought about shifts in the symbolic approach to sports culture, it is equally essential to interrogate the foundations of this shift through the lens of deconstructionist critique. The structuration paradigm emphasizes the question of “how symbolization occurs,” which implicitly encompasses both “accurate symbolization” and “misleading symbolization.” At the level of philosophical theory, any direct definition of the accuracy of symbols is inherently fraught with complexity. Deconstructionist theory offers a valuable opening for grappling with this seemingly impossible task. Within deconstruction, the concept of “symbol” itself carries an inherent critique and reconstruction: the “truth” of the symbol only emerges through the continuous questioning of what is “fiction” or “illusion.” This theoretical insight provides a renewed opportunity for the critical transformation of bodily aesthetics research in sports culture. It enables scholars to move beyond surface-level interpretations of symbolic representations and instead engage in profound re-examinations of bodily symbols and the aesthetic meanings they embody. By unsettling taken-for-granted symbolic frameworks, deconstruction encourages a deeper exploration of how bodily aesthetics in sports are constructed, contested, and perpetually renegotiated within broader cultural and social contexts.

In deconstructionist thought, the distinction between “symbol” and “fiction” is presented as the separation between “symbol” and “representation.” The “symbol” is understood as “an existence that refers to meaning in itself,” while “representation” refers to “the conveyance of an absent meaning through some form of appearance,” which can be regarded as a form of “fiction” (Derrida, 1976). This conceptual distinction holds particular significance for the study of

bodily aesthetics in sports culture, where the body within the sporting arena is not merely a physical presence but also a bearer of symbolic meanings that embody deep-seated cultural and social structures. Derrida's differentiation between "symbol" and "representation" allows us to think more clearly about how the body in sports culture is constructed as a symbolic system and how this system intertwines with social, historical, and cultural frameworks to produce specific aesthetic representations. From this perspective, bodily aesthetics in sports culture is not limited to the physicality of the body but extends to its symbolic and representational dimensions. The sporting body becomes a site where meanings are continuously negotiated, deferred, and reconstructed, reflecting not only individual identity but also broader cultural discourses and power relations embedded within the social fabric. Deconstruction, therefore, provides a critical lens to re-examine the assumptions underpinning bodily representations in sports and offers new pathways for theorizing the dynamic interplay between the body, meaning, and culture.

Derrida offers a vivid example: "Within a text, a word may present a specific meaning, and this apparent meaning may imply the existence of deeper metaphors, while those metaphors reveal a broader network of meanings underlying the text" (Derrida, 1976). In the context of sports culture, the "word-apparent meaning" undoubtedly represents the "symbol," while the deeper layer of "metaphor-meaning" constitutes the "representation." Between symbol and metaphor lies a complex set of associations, and the key to unveiling the "representation" back to the "symbol" lies in dismantling the artificial interpretive frameworks and subjective tendencies imposed upon them. Similarly, when cultural researchers come to realize the limitations of directly borrowing traditional symbolic concepts to interpret the embodied symbols within sports culture, they gradually shift towards exploring the actual cultural manifestations of the body as a symbol. This transformation moves beyond mere concern with the body's external expressions and focuses more deeply on the cultural values, social identities, and aesthetic norms they reflect. In this shift, bodily aesthetics becomes a central concern—particularly within the deconstructionist framework, where the body is no longer simply a passive container for symbolic meaning but an active site of cultural production.

At present, research on bodily symbols and bodily aesthetics within sports culture not only draws from the perspectives of symbolic behavior and cultural significance but also engages in the deeper analysis of cultural codes, bodily performances, and social aesthetics. For instance, distinguishing which symbolic expressions serve as "self-referential symbols" and which function as subjectively intended "representations" is crucial for deconstructionist critique and for the study of bodily aesthetics. The field of bodily aesthetics in sports culture often involves both the social construction and deconstruction of bodily symbols and aesthetic perceptions. Thus, the process of critically dismantling false representations is not merely an academic exercise—it is the key prerequisite for restoring authentic symbolic meaning and reconstructing a richer, more dynamic understanding of bodily aesthetics.

#### *4.2.2. The Construction of the "Body Imagery": A Structural Paradigm as "Code"*

Derrida's in-depth exploration of the construction of signs offers a further expansion of the deconstructive critique of symbolic systems. Unlike objects that present themselves directly, "a sign does not express its essence directly; rather, it conveys deeper meaning through the manifestation of certain representations." The sign implies presence, but this presence inherently involves a "referent" that remains concealed behind the sign itself. At the same time, Derrida emphasizes that "in the process of conveying meaning, the sign points toward layers of significance that remain undisclosed." Derrida's illumination of the "implicit meanings," "referents," and "unrevealed connotations" embedded within signs is profoundly instructive and constitutes the core entry point for deconstructive critique. This theoretical lens offers a pivotal opportunity to further advance the critique of the symbolic paradigm in the study of bodily aesthetics within sports culture. It prompts a re-examination of how the construction of body imagery as a symbolic "code" operates not merely on the surface of representation but draws from hidden layers of meaning that demand critical unpacking within the cultural and social dimensions of sport.

In addition to the symbolic paradigm, contemporary research on bodily aesthetics in sports culture is increasingly shaped by a "codification" paradigm, which is primarily guided by structural analysis. Cultural codes establish the relationship between signs and meanings through social practice, thereby advancing the understanding of body imagery within sports culture. This codification perspective has significantly influenced semiotic scholars' interpretations of sports culture, and in concrete studies of bodily imagery, the work of Pierre Bourdieu on "bodily practice" stands as a representative approach. Bourdieu posits that the body in culture is not merely a material manifestation but serves as a social and cultural symbol, thereby reinforcing the relationship between codes and social structures (Hall, 1997). Centering on the concept of "bodily aesthetics," Bourdieu (1984) asserts that "the body is not only an individual's physiological existence; it is gradually codified through social practice and becomes an integral part of the social structure." Some scholars even argue that such codification restricts the flexibility of individual expression to some extent. He further

contends that “bodily imagery is no longer a spontaneous medium of expression but is gradually constructed as a cultural code through socialization, rendering the body more inclined to reflect social norms rather than embody purely individual characteristics.” Bourdieu’s exploration of the codification of the body offers profound insights into the interaction between signs and society and has, to a large extent, shaped the analytical direction of bodily aesthetics and body imagery in sports culture. His theoretical contributions have propelled subsequent semiotic research in the field of bodily aesthetics, providing an essential framework for understanding the cultural construction of the body within sporting contexts.

Finally, Bourdieu concludes that “the body is not merely a vessel for symbols; it acquires specific cultural roles through its interaction with social codes. Through the codified construction of bodily imagery, individuals are positioned and defined within social structures, thus forming distinctive cultural identities.” Bourdieu’s research trajectory, grounded in a sociological perspective, has provided a theoretical pathway for interpreting cultural symbols and has established a codification paradigm that holds a significant place in contemporary semiotic and sociological research. In Bourdieu’s theory of “body imagery,” the body is not only an expressive medium for social and cultural codes but also serves as a symbol of social structures, endowing the body with deeper cultural and societal meanings. From this perspective, Bourdieu’s analytical approach begins with understanding the body as a social symbol embedded in cultural contexts, further exploring its role within social order and power structures. This, in turn, profoundly shapes the interpretation of bodily aesthetics within sports culture, highlighting the interconnectedness between physical expression, social identity, and cultural meaning.

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984) asserts that “the body is not only the product of individual habitus but is also continuously shaped as a symbol within society, reflecting the symbolic meanings of social class, economic status, and cultural capital.” He emphasizes that the individual body, within the cultural field, is not merely a material manifestation but becomes an invisible social language through the process of codification, profoundly influencing both individual social roles and collective identity. Within this analytical framework, bodily aesthetics emerges as a critical medium through which to explore the relationship between social structure and cultural identity.

The notion of “bodily movement” constitutes the core value of the “body image” as a code within sports culture. In the presentation of “bodily movement,” the concrete formation of codes depends on the interactive relationship between the body and the cultural context within sports activities. When “bodily aesthetics” and “body image” are further examined through the semiotic distinction between “sign” and “code,” inherent challenges emerge: the sign itself cannot directly reveal the deeper cultural meanings embedded within the code—meanings that Bourdieu’s theory of habitus seeks to analyze. Nevertheless, an exclusive reliance on Bourdieu’s sociological theory to interpret “body image” in sports culture risks reducing cultural capital to a singular explanatory framework for the sign, thereby remaining confined within a structuralist paradigm. Only by returning to the lived reality of bodily movement and consistently grounding the analysis in the cultural function of bodily aesthetics can a deeper critique be conducted from a deconstructionist perspective, thereby restoring the polysemy of the sign.

French semiotician Roland Barthes, through his exploration of the problem of “sign polysemy,” offers a core pathway for multilayered critique within a deconstructionist framework. Barthes’ analysis of “bodily aesthetics” enriches the understanding of codes and reveals the complex interactions between symbols and culture within sports, further advancing the pluralistic interpretation of bodily aesthetics (Barthes, 1977).

#### 4.2.3. *Deconstructing the “Body Image”: Intersubjectivity and the Fragmentation of Meaning*

The concept of “bodily movement” serves as the foundational element for the existence of “body image” and its structured paradigm, providing the basis for subsequent inquiry into bodily aesthetics. The body image not only embodies the individual’s physiological existence but also represents a social construction shaped through cultural symbolization. Through the performance of “bodily movement,” the body image becomes interwoven with the socio-cultural context, forming a complex system of symbols. The core of bodily aesthetics research lies in understanding this interweaving process—revealing that the body is not merely a vehicle of physical existence but is deeply embedded with symbolic meanings derived from social and cultural frameworks. Within this process, the work of French semiotician Roland Barthes offers an essential pathway for multilayered critique under a deconstructionist framework. Barthes’ exploration of the polysemy of signs, emphasizing that “the meaning of a sign is never fixed but exists in a constant state of reinterpretation and reconstruction” (Barthes, 1977), provides the theoretical foundation for analyzing the multiple cultural significances of body images. In the framework of bodily aesthetics, the body serves not only as a carrier of cultural symbols but also as the intersection of aesthetic experience and social forces, where the deconstruction of meaning reflects an ongoing process of cultural reconstruction.

In the context of sports culture, the “body image” is not a singular, static expression but a dynamic process shaped by the interplay of social forces and cultural identities. Bodily aesthetics enables us to understand the aesthetic and symbolic transformations within this process, revealing how the meanings attached to the body shift across different socio-cultural backgrounds. When the “body image” is further examined through the semiotic distinction between “appearance” and “substance,” potential issues of intersubjectivity come to light. Within this framework, the construction and reception of body images are inherently interactive processes involving how individuals position themselves in society and how society, in turn, defines individuals through cultural symbols. Bodily aesthetics thus provides essential tools for understanding how individuals and societies co-construct meaning through bodily interaction. This interaction is often influenced by social structures and power dynamics, leading to the fragmentation of meaning in body images across diverse cultural contexts.

At the same time, as Foucault emphasized, power does not stem from a singular source but is dispersed through intersubjective relationships. This perspective reminds us that in examining body imagery, it is essential to attend to the social context and the dynamics of power within which the body is situated. A deconstructionist analysis of bodily aesthetics seeks precisely to uncover how these power relations are conveyed through bodily representations and symbols, thereby shaping understandings of the body itself. Through the deconstruction of body imagery, it becomes apparent that in sports culture, the body is not merely an appearance or surface—it serves as a carrier of cultural meaning and power relations. In this process, bodily aesthetics moves beyond mere aesthetic appreciation; it offers critical insights into how the body performs roles that transcend appearance, assuming cultural, political, and historical significance within society. The interpretation of body imagery faces the inherent challenge of meaning fragmentation, wherein cultural symbols may be interpreted in vastly different ways across diverse social contexts, potentially leading to confusion and divergence in understandings of the body. This instability highlights the need for a reflective and critical approach to bodily symbolism.

In summary, the construction of body imagery as a cultural symbol reflects both the influence of social forces and the positioning of individuals within complex cultural relationships. By deeply analyzing the interactions between body imagery and social structures, bodily aesthetics offers a novel perspective—one that not only reveals the deeper meanings embedded within sports culture but also encourages a critical rethinking and reevaluation of the field of sports philosophy.

## **5. Deconstructionist Research on Bodily Aesthetics in Sports Culture: Theoretical and Practical Reconstruction**

This study, grounded in the theoretical framework of deconstructionism, offers a critical analysis and reconstruction of bodily aesthetics within sports culture, proposing new perspectives for understanding this phenomenon. By deconstructing the inherent frameworks of traditional semiotic theories, this research reveals the multidimensionality and fluidity of bodily aesthetics in sports culture, emphasizing the body as a nexus where cultural symbolism, social practice, and identity intersect. Through theoretical reconstruction and practical application, this study deepens the understanding of bodily aesthetics in sports culture and provides new directions and reflections for future research. The following sections will explore the theoretical contributions, practical significance, and future research directions in detail.

### ***5.1. The Theoretical Dimension of the Deconstructionist Paradigm for Bodily Aesthetics in Sports Culture: The Reconstruction of Cultural and Philosophical Dimensions***

Deconstructionism in its pure form undoubtedly serves only as a critical framework; the mere application of deconstructionist principles to the study of bodily aesthetics in sports culture remains insufficient to transcend the pre-existing research paradigm of “the body in sports culture.” The true potential of the deconstructionist paradigm lies in its deep integration with cultural studies, whereby the fusion of cultural context and philosophical reflection facilitates a comprehensive theoretical reconstruction.

#### ***5.1.1. The Evolution of Semiotics and Postmodern Cultural Theory: The Cultural Dimension of the Deconstructionist Paradigm***

The formation of the deconstructionist paradigm is inextricably linked to the critical development of postmodern cultural theory. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the emergence of “structuralism, post-structuralism, and semiotic theory” transformed cultural studies into a discipline increasingly dedicated to exploring the diversity of symbols and modes of interpretation. This transformation necessitated both a clearer theoretical framework and broader methods for analyzing cultural phenomena. Such developments have significantly influenced the study of bodily aesthetics,

particularly within the context of sports culture, where bodily aesthetics has moved beyond traditional forms and aesthetics to embrace multidimensional symbolic interpretations embedded within socio-cultural contexts. As a result, bodily aesthetics, within the deconstructionist framework, has become a means of critically analyzing the intersection of the body and social identity in sports culture.

However, this development is also double-edged. Although semiotics, propelled by postmodern theory, has freed itself from the constraints of traditional meaning systems, it has also led to a form of “hollowness,” in which symbols, through multiple interpretations, gradually lose fixed meaning and fall into excessive fluidity. While this multilayered interpretation of symbols has expanded the possibilities for cultural understanding, it has simultaneously blurred core meanings, rendering the relationship between symbol and meaning increasingly ambiguous—a conceptual fluidity that resonates with poststructuralist thought on the slippage of the signifier (Lacan, 1978; Derrida, 1990). As symbols continuously circulate through layers of reference, this “de-substantialization” of symbols pushes original cultural significance toward infinite deferral, resulting in the hollowing out of cultural codes. Within the context of bodily aesthetics, this “de-substantialization” is similarly manifested in the polysemy and continual transformation of bodily meanings, leading to a fluid and often blurred state of body symbols and aesthetic expression in sports culture.

At the end of the twentieth century, Stuart Hall introduced the concept of “cultural constructivism,” arguing that “the construction and transmission of cultural symbols are equally products of social history, inseparable from language, customs, and collective memory.” He further emphasized that “symbolic phenomena are the outcomes of social interaction and serve as the foundation for constructing social identity and cultural recognition.” This perspective has exerted a profound influence on the study of bodily aesthetics. In the context of sports culture, bodily aesthetics is not merely about physiological perception or morphological appreciation; rather, it is closely linked to the construction of cultural symbols, reflecting the processes through which social identity and cultural recognition are shaped. Within sports, the body is not only an object of sensory perception but also a cultural symbol that carries multiple layers of individual and collective identity.

The convergence of semiotics and postmodern cultural theory has become a key turning point in the field of cultural studies. The development of semiotics, the evolution of cultural theory, and the rise of postmodernism have collectively contributed to a series of theoretical innovations, many of which have been actively integrated into contemporary sports culture research, offering cultural support for the emergence of the deconstructionist paradigm. In this process, the theoretical perspective of bodily aesthetics has played an equally significant role. It has not only expanded the understanding of the body within sports culture but also deepened the analysis of the body as a cultural symbol and as a core site for the construction of social identity.

### *5.1.2. Derrida’s “Différance” and “Textual Deconstruction” Theory: The Philosophical Dimension of the Deconstructionist Paradigm*

The deconstructionist paradigm offers a critical reinterpretation of the relationship between the “body in culture” and the “body in sports culture,” while the development of postmodern cultural theory provides essential support for its cultural dimension. Derrida’s theories of “différance” and “textual deconstruction” further enrich the philosophical dimension of this paradigm. In the study of sports culture, bodily aesthetics—as a form of cultural symbol—is situated within the dynamic logic of “différance,” where meanings are never fixed but constantly generated and deferred through symbolic interplay. Bodily aesthetics, therefore, is no longer confined to static aesthetic expressions but emerges as a fluid symbolic system whose meanings are continuously shaped in relation to other cultural symbols.

The concept of “différance” represents an expansion of traditional notions of meaning, enabling philosophy to transcend the constraints of “meaning unity” inherent in classical thought. Many philosophical concepts depend on the abstraction of fixed meanings; however, Derrida’s theory of textual deconstruction, along with his notion of “différance,” offers an alternative pathway. Derrida argues that “‘différance’ is not a fixed referent but the force that perpetually defers meaning within language.” In this conception, meaning and text are engaged in a relationship of perpetual movement—“because I use language, because I express myself through text within the world, meaning ceases to exist as a unified core and becomes an infinitely deferred possibility; language is not merely a transparent window to meaning, nor is the text merely a vessel for meaning—they together weave an open-ended symbolic network.” In the context of bodily aesthetics in sports culture, this dynamic symbolic network is equally relevant. The body does not merely convey an external physical form; it also embodies multiple layers of cultural, social, and historical symbolic meaning. Bodily aesthetics thus transcends the static, fixed image, unfolding instead as a process of continual différance, shaped by the interplay of diverse social and cultural forces.

Derrida's concept of "différance" does not reveal a static and closed system of meaning but rather presents a dynamic network that is continuously generated through processes of interpretation. Meaning is no longer conceived as a predetermined reality existing independently of the text; instead, it emerges interactively in relation to the text itself. Similarly, in the field of bodily aesthetics, the body in sports is not a singular or fixed symbol but a site where meaning is constantly produced and reconstructed through social interactions, historical developments, and cultural dialogues.

Derrida further elaborates on the idea of "textual deconstruction," arguing that "deconstruction demonstrates how meaning is generated—not from a singular center, but as a dynamic structure emerging from multiple sites simultaneously." As he observes, "a text is a multiplicity of meanings, never reliant on an 'original' or fixed signification; meaning unfolds within the play of différance." This perspective reveals that meaning is inherently unstable, continually deferred and never fully present, as it relies on both what is said and what is absent. At first glance, Derrida's notions of "différance" and "textual deconstruction" may appear to be abstract philosophical interpretations. However, their profound significance lies in how "différance" operates within the very structural foundations of language and meaning, showing that language itself exists through constant absence and deferral. Derrida writes, "Every word not only conveys what it expresses but also extends its meaning through what is absent." In this sense, the concept of "presence" inevitably invokes its counterpart—"absence"—thus enabling meaning to emerge through this continuous play of difference. In the realm of bodily aesthetics, a similar mechanism of différance is at work. The body within sports culture is no longer a fixed biological form but a fluid and evolving construct shaped by shifting social ideologies, gender norms, racial identities, and cultural symbols. The meanings attached to the body are inherently multiple, often contradictory, and perpetually in flux. The body itself becomes the product of différance, and its aesthetic significance is likewise continually deferred and reconstructed through this ongoing process.

Under the logic of "différance," every word does not exist in isolation or in a static state; rather, its meaning is always generated through the relative absence of other words, rendering the interpretation of any text an endless, open process—constantly subject to reconstruction and reinterpretation. Derrida's thought reveals the multiple references embedded within différance: there is neither ultimate reality nor fixed order between words and meanings. Every sign and every semantic layer is fluid, incapable of being anchored within any predetermined certainty. Through the notions of "différance" and "textual deconstruction," Derrida fundamentally dismantles the traditional philosophical reliance on essence and presence, framing meaning as an endlessly deferred philosophical journey. In this deconstructive perspective, language and meaning are perpetually in motion—generated, reconstructed, and dissolved—thereby not only challenging the fixity of language but also highlighting its infinite possibilities as the expression of différance. Bodily aesthetics follows the same trajectory of infinite différance. The representation of the body in sports is continuously produced, reconfigured, and deconstructed through the flow and collision of cultural symbols, presenting limitless aesthetic possibilities. In this process, the body is no longer a static or purely aesthetic entity but an ever-shifting cultural construct that reflects changing social values, identities, and power relations.

Derrida's theory of "différance" reveals the inherent relativity and endless deferral in the generation of meaning between signs, but différance alone is insufficient to fully explore the deconstructive potential of texts. His complementary theory of "textual deconstruction" addresses this limitation. Through textual deconstruction, Derrida not only challenges the inherent meanings of signs but also questions the traditional philosophical reliance on the stability of language. He asserts that "the meaning of a text always unfolds in endless interpretation and différance, and its essence lies only in the oscillation of multiple meanings" (Derrida, 1976). Within this framework, textual meaning is neither singular nor fixed but always in a state of reconstruction and deconstruction, revealing the non-centrality of language and the indeterminate nature of meaning. Bodily aesthetics, similarly, manifests as the oscillation of multiple meanings. In the realm of sports culture, the meaning of the body is no longer a singular, fixed aesthetic concept but a fluid, shifting, and reconstructive entity shaped by ongoing cultural and social interpretations. This dual theoretical system not only illustrates the fluidity of symbolic systems but also dismantles the hierarchical distribution between sign and meaning. Every sign derives its place within the text through its interaction with other signs rather than from any a priori assignment of value. In this way, bodily aesthetics and sports culture emerge as dynamic, living texts—open to perpetual reinterpretation, critique, and aesthetic renewal.

### ***5.2. The Practical Dimension of the Deconstructive Research Paradigm in Sports Culture and Bodily Aesthetics: A Practical Reconstruction of Cultural and Philosophical Dimensions***

The deconstructive paradigm establishes a profound connection between cultural inquiry and philosophical reflection. However, if this paradigm remains solely within the realm of theoretical critique and textual deconstruction, it inevitably risks falling back into the limitations of the traditional semiotic framework. The innovation of the deconstructive paradigm lies not merely in its in-depth theoretical analysis of sports culture and bodily aesthetics, but more importantly, in its

practical application—focusing on the actual representation of the body within specific cultural contexts and reinterpreting it through diverse symbolic meanings. In doing so, it fosters a form of practical reconstruction that integrates both cultural and philosophical dimensions. Through this practical reconstruction, deconstruction transcends its conventional role as a tool for textual critique. Instead, it facilitates the concrete analysis of bodily aesthetics within the lived realities of sports culture, allowing the dynamic relationship between cultural symbols and bodily imagery to gain greater relevance and effectiveness. In this way, bodily aesthetics moves beyond abstract theorization and is embedded in everyday cultural practices, where meanings are constantly negotiated, contested, and redefined. This practical turn ensures that the study of bodily aesthetics in sports culture is not confined to theoretical abstraction but is actively engaged with real-world cultural dynamics. It highlights how bodily representations in sports are situated within broader social and cultural contexts, shaped by power relations, identity politics, and shifting aesthetic values. By grounding theoretical critique in practical analysis, the deconstructive paradigm offers a more comprehensive and actionable framework for understanding the complex interplay between the body, culture, and meaning in sports.

### *5.2.1. From the “Symbolic Body” to the “Performative Body”: The Application of Semiotics in the Study of Bodily Aesthetics in Sports Culture*

Contemporary sports philosopher Heather L. Reid has conducted extensive research in the field of sports aesthetics, exploring the complex relationship between the body and sports culture. Drawing on hermeneutic theory, Reid systematically examines the interplay between the socio-cultural context of sports performance and individual bodily action. Reid argues that “the body is an artistic practice,” meaning that in the context of sports, the body not only conveys cultural meaning but also actively participates in the creation and transformation of aesthetic expression (Reid, 2012).

Reid’s work goes beyond a narrow focus on either “bodily symbols” or “bodily actions” as isolated concepts. Instead, she investigates how the body realizes aesthetic transformation through cultural practice, shedding light on the process through which cultural meaning is generated. In her analysis, the body is neither a mere biological entity nor a static symbol; rather, it is a “performative body”—a dynamic presence manifested through concrete sporting activities. Without analyzing this performative process in practice, one risks reducing the body to a superficial notion of the “body-in-action,” failing to grasp its deeper cultural significance (Reid, 2015).

Reid resists reducing the body to a singular symbol or limiting its understanding to physiological explanations. She emphasizes the body’s essential role as a carrier of socio-cultural meaning. For Reid, “the body is not only a cultural symbol but also a site of aesthetic generation and transformation.” In the realm of sports culture, the interaction between the body and cultural symbols is inevitable, revealing the intricate relationship between individual agency and social context. The meaning of the body is continuously shaped through social interaction, reflecting both personal experience and broader cultural narratives. In other words, bodily performance, the formation of consciousness, and symbolic transformation constitute an integrated, dynamic whole (Reid, 2018). Thus, the “performative body” can be understood within a hermeneutic framework: its integration of movement, gesture, and psychological content, as shaped through cultural symbols and social interaction, constitutes a continuous process of negotiation analogous to that between a “text” and its “meaning.” This perspective highlights the body as an active participant in cultural expression, transcending simplistic interpretations and inviting deeper reflection on its role within sports aesthetics.

### *5.2.2. Aestheticized Bodily Schema: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Body in Sports Culture*

Reid’s research further extends the theoretical framework of sports aesthetics. She proposes an analytical model of the “aestheticized bodily schema,” which elucidates how bodily performance is transformed and reconstructed under the influence of cultural and social forces. This model emphasizes how bodily aesthetics are not fixed but evolve as the body engages in various sporting activities, influenced by the broader social and cultural dynamics within which it exists. The aestheticized bodily schema shows how sports culture not only shapes bodily actions but also allows for the reinterpretation and reconstruction of bodily aesthetics. In sports, the body’s movements, gestures, and expressions are not merely actions but are symbolic, resonating with larger cultural values and aesthetic norms. This model thus provides a lens through which to understand how the body participates in the construction of cultural meaning through sports. It also underscores the role of the body in actively engaging with and reshaping cultural symbols, enabling a more nuanced understanding of bodily aesthetics in sports culture.

## **6. Conclusion**

### ***6.1. Body Aesthetics in Sports Culture: From Symbolization to Deconstruction***

This study provides a new perspective on the “body in culture” paradigm, particularly in the context of sports. It shows that body aesthetics is not merely a physiological expression but a convergence of cultural symbols, social relationships,

and identity formation. This deconstruction challenges our traditional views of body aesthetics in sports and emphasizes its dynamic role in cultural and societal identity. It also opens up new avenues for understanding how the body performs as an aesthetic expression, carrying multifaceted cultural meanings and social power relations.

### 6.2. Evolution of the Body Aesthetic Paradigm

By deconstructing the body aesthetic paradigm, the study reveals its evolution influenced by philosophical traditions, social changes, and technological advancements. However, the body aesthetics development does not follow a linear or continuous path, and the theoretical and methodological approaches have gradually converged across semiotics, cultural studies, and related fields. This shift represents a move from superficial observations to deeper explorations of cultural and symbolic meanings, urging us to reconsider body aesthetics beyond just external appearance and performance.

### 6.3. The Mission of Body Aesthetics: From “Interpreter” to “Navigator”

The shift from semiotic analysis to a practical deconstructive approach highlights a significant change in the mission of body aesthetics research in sports culture. Deconstruction, as a methodological principle, pushes us to rethink the body’s role as an active participant in the construction of cultural identity. This new framework challenges fixed interpretations, emphasizing the body as an ongoing cultural practice that embodies changing social values and identities. It prompts a more comprehensive and nuanced approach to body aesthetics that reflects the social and cultural forces shaping athletic performances.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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