

INTRODUCTION

Modernity, Racial Difference, and Fitness

Defining fitness culture today has become an increasingly difficult task. Its permeation into, and indeed centrality in, global popular cultures complicates any attempt at comfortably bracketing it away as a subculture, or as a category of media production (fitness magazines, YouTube channels, and home exercise videos), or even as an industrial sector of commodity production and consumption (supplements and exercise equipment). Fitness culture can be conceptualized, ostensibly, as all of these components and more. I am most concerned with the mechanisms that make it a culture and an integral part of dominant narratives and structures of power; namely, its role in subject-formation, hegemonic historicity, and the meanings through which bodies and spaces are made knowable. In other words, I approach fitness culture as a set of racial, ethnic, gendered, sexual, and ableist discourses and signifiers of normativity at the level of corporality—images of the body, what it should like, and how it should function.

To this end, the visual fabric of fitness culture can be traced back throughout the imperial construction of the West, with fit/muscular bodies occupy-

ing a central trope in the corporal schematizations of power and normativity found in visual cultures across the sculptures of classical antiquity, eugenic pamphlets, and Hollywood cinema. More recently, fitness culture has further developed and become interwoven within contemporary neoliberal capitalism, with not only the commoditization of fitness products, services, and spaces but also with the increasing presence of fit/muscular bodies as central components of mainstream visual media and celebrity culture.

What follows, therefore, does not aim to analyze the psychological effects of the mass dissemination of idealized corporality that undergirds global fitness culture and its many assorted commodities. Such an interrogation has been commonplace in the fields of sociology, psychology, and social psychology. Instead, this book, with a geocultural focus on Brazil, proposes a critical genealogy of fitness culture and its present existence and circulation. In doing so, I aim to unearth an archive (Stoler; Lowe) of fitness culture's discourses of valid personhood, which can be traced back to Western imperial forms of domination based on racial, gender, sexual, ableist, and socio-economic difference that have constructed the ideological fabric of European expansion, slavery, nation-building, eugenics, and contemporary global flows of capital and bodies. The development of these images of valid personhood has undergirded the continuity of imperial power structures across different periods and their normalization in different locales (e.g., nations), often constituting the frameworks through which these times and spaces have been conceptualized.

The signifiers, tenets, and commodities of fitness culture easily flow and are consumed across geocultural spaces (and their porous borders) that have been structured according to Western imperial patriarchal power. This has been very much the case with the economic and cultural growth of fitness imagery and commodities in Brazil, where elite-driven projects of post-independence modernization aimed at "progressing" of the nation's largely nonwhite population via Eurocentric cultural, medical, and educational models. The goal of engineering a modern nation was thus enacted at the level of the body as a site of social ills and backwardness. Toward this end, fitness was posited as a collective goal through the institutionalization of physical education in public schools as a tool to remedy the ills associated with the pathologization of nonwhite Brazilians, and as a cultural practice derived from Europe and North America.

The book is, therefore, less concerned with the perils and struggles of attempting to achieve the ideal corporalities than with the origins and reproduction of these ideals. In the context of collective Brazilian claims to

modernity, it is important to examine what it means to participate in and consume these normalized corporal ideals through fitness culture. Furthermore, participation in fitness culture ties the practicing subject, especially in the moment of neoliberal capitalism, to different and overlapping terrains of collective identity and consciousness; namely, those of the national, global, and adjacently, the frayed dichotomies of urban and rural, white or nonwhite, bourgeois or working-class, abled or disabled. Concerning the national terrain of subjectivity and the national ubiquity of fitness culture in Brazil, fitness culture represents an ideological mechanism through which to partake in modern Brazilianness. As a result, to participate in the hegemonic rendering and vision of the modern Brazilian nation, negotiated and perpetuated by white elites, national consciousness has come to imply an understanding of one's body and subjectivity through the imperial ideals of modern personhood. Long-established imagery and discourses of adequate normative bodies have signified the parameters of national subjectivity and corporality. The corporalities visually displayed within cultural products associated with fitness culture articulate not only a social ordering based on the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class, and disability but also the discursive fabric that guides the different bodies making up the nation toward the individual and collective ideals of modern Brazilianness.

As a representational force from and for the structuring of national power and the modern public sphere, fitness culture, dispersed throughout fitness-oriented visual media products and mainstream popular culture, circulates through the codifications of race-, gender-, class-, sexuality-, and ability-based power that have undergirded Brazilian nationhood. Although these forms of imperial power have been narrativized and misrecognized through narratives of multiraciality and racial equity (*mestiçagem*, racial democracy, the myth of the three races), the interwoven white patriarchal foundations of power and privilege in Brazil are articulated within the rendering and performance of fit bodies in the public sphere. At the same time, the multifarious and dispersed collection of images composing fitness culture in Brazil have become integrated into the fomented misrecognition of power that undergirds national consciousness—one that gives primacy to nationality over imperially derived taxonomies of human life. The discourses of imperial oppression thus became integrated, normalized, misrecognized, and consumed under an array of narratives composing Brazilianness.

As I further elucidate ahead, I utilize the term *modernity* as a convenient yet complex theoretical term that concisely names the continuous national hegemonic project of producing a body politic, economic structure, and insti-

tutional edifice grounded in the aforementioned Western imperial discourses of economic, corporal, psychic, individual, and collective life. To be more precise, the Western project of modernity in the Americas is not a merely philosophical set of presuppositions, but an imperial field of meanings, epistemologies, social organization, power structures, and ideals of valid personhood based on the interrelated and shifting categories of whiteness, heterosexuality, gender binarism, and abledness. My approach to modernity is thus most concerned with its implications for, and contributions to, the ideological fabric for the reproduction of Western imperial bio-power across locales, spaces, and time.

The history of fitness culture cannot be separated from the history of domination, oppression, and privilege based on imperial categories of difference. In this sense, what follows is not concerned with a neat genealogy of fitness culture based on clear temporal boundaries, but rather with its contributions to imperial and capitalist systems of representation and power, by examining an array of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century visual media products—namely, magazine covers, television programs, advertisements of fitness-related products (e.g., clothing, supplements, health clubs), and social media content. To understand this relatively contemporary collection of artifacts that tie bodies and consumers in the present to narratives of the past and ideals of the future, we must also examine key moments in the development of fitness culture as a global phenomenon, beginning with early cultural representations and constructions of fit bodies, as corporal schematizations of social power and legitimacy.

The development of fitness culture must be understood through the relationship between cultural constructions of “fit bodies” as normative and aligned with white masculine patriarchal concentrations of power. This particular relationship fundamentally undergirded imperial forms of knowledge and official policies of national progress around the globe, including military development, eugenics, urban renewal, and demographic whitening via incentivized immigration programs for Europeans into different nations of the Americas. This is especially the case with the geocultural focus of the project—Brazil—and particularly the intimate relationship between the discourses of fitness culture and the history of Brazilian society, its social order, and its national narratives of the past, present, and future.

However, the national fulcrum of the project, one that fundamentally traces the articulation and representation of nation as body politic, is also a porous one that is not neatly separable from global process and expressions of power. In this regard, this undertaking is not merely about Brazilian society

and national power structures but also about how these have come to be informed by global modes of domination and related flows of capital, bodies, and ideas; from colonialism and the slave trade to independence, abolition, eugenics, and national economic growth within late capitalism.

My exploration of fitness culture thus begins with the relationship between bio-power and modernity; the latter being a consistently and dynamically renegotiated, disjointed, and fragmented project. As a result, I begin by positing fitness culture within dominant articulations of Brazilian nationhood as a contemporary ideological, economic, and corporal mechanism through which the ideals of modernity are once more deployed at the service of colonially ordering the body politic while also being a structuring claim at the level of national narrative. In other words, to understand the popularity, presence, and roots of fitness culture in Brazil, one must grasp the ideological project of nation-building as one undertaken by local elites whose identities, privileges, and desires had already been shaped by colonialist ideals and racial/gendered economic structures. After all, Brazilian political sovereignty was conferred to white colonial elites that had served as agents of a colonial ordering of power and bodies according to the tenets of modern imperialism.

Furthermore, independence and political sovereignty were indeed couched as a modern transition based on the political philosophy of the Enlightenment, thus shifting the meaning of modernity, how bio-power is exercised. This ultimately inaugurated a historiographic temporal compartment of modernity by which pre-Enlightenment time became categorized as “early modern” or “medieval” in relation and opposition to the “modern,” as impacted by political, epistemological, and economic ideals of the Enlightenment. In the context of Latin American history, the historiographic categories of early modern/modern often run parallel to colonial/postcolonial as democratic and sovereign nationhood became the ideal model of political and economic organization in Enlightenment thought. More importantly, political sovereignty steeped in the discourses of the Enlightenment did not constitute a rupture from imperialism, however, but a reinvention of Western imperial bio-power. Post-independence elites thus aspired to foment a nation/body politic guided by established and revised tenets of modernity in the realms of political organization, cultural production, economic structures, social compartmentalization, and an array of public policies. Therefore, the relationship between nation and modernity became predicated on modeling the structures and narratives of the former on the ideas of the latter. As such, the modernity of the nation exists fundamentally as a claim through which power is consolidated, carried out, displayed, and historicized to not only the corresponding

national body politic, but to the global flows of meanings, capital, and bodies in relation to which it is tentatively defined.

This has subsequently implied the development of a national public sphere, in many ways continuous with the antecedent colonial public sphere, based fundamentally on the maintenance of slavery (only abolished in 1888) and its white patriarchal cultures and socioeconomic structures. The formulation and consistent reconsolidation of a modern national public sphere had to occur in parallel with the formation of a national culture and nationalist consciousness based on and regulated by the ideals of modernity. Such a national culture can be considered the normalization of, and created consent to, bio-power and its local ordering of bodies and spaces. Therefore, in order to understand the different discourses governing fitness culture in Brazil as part of the persistent reproduction of a modern nation, throughout this book I gauge the complex relationship between modernity, Brazilian nationalism, and national culture. Within this relationship, and in reference to the project at large, I look to locate the emergence of fitness culture within the codification into national culture of Western imperial bio-power and its discourses of normativity and alterity based on race, gender, sexuality, labor, and (dis)ability.

THE ECONOMICS OF FITNESS CULTURE

What the history of Brazilian modernity elucidates is that bodies, as locales where power is carried out, are also sites of collective claims to national modernity—via the historical intertwining of social policies, the imperial hegemonic creation and negotiation of national culture, and different forms of social engineering. This is where the various industries and cultural praxes associated with fitness and body building come in. Like the medical and scientific innovations of plastic surgery and the celebrations thereof, fitness, body building, and the products of exercise and nutritional science (such as workout programs, supplements, and diet plans) circulate in the Brazilian public sphere as modes of attaining, engineering, and improving upon the corporal symbols of national exceptionalism and global universality.

Fitness and body building, as an industry of different types of products and as a repertoire of cultural practices (in short, how people simultaneously give meaning to their bodies in relation to the webs of cultural meanings—national, racial, sexual, etc.—around them) has emerged throughout the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries as yet another tool to structure the body, often in accord with hegemonic notions of valid personhood and national citizenship. In this sense, contemporary fitness culture represents a continuity of modernizing social policies, a manifestation of the discourses

of modernity circulating in a globalized economy, and a claim to national modernity on the global stage. These have largely occurred through an array of the different growing industries in Brazil related to fitness, including gymnasiums, supplement brands and retailers, print and digital media (i.e., fitness magazines), and cultural production coming from producers ranging in capital and social power from media conglomerates to individual social media personalities on YouTube and Instagram.

The growth of industries tied to both plastic surgery and fitness dovetails and has contributed to the larger growth of the Brazilian economy since the turn of the twenty-first century. Considered one of the BRICS (the acronym for the fastest growing economies of the so-called developing world, along with Russia, India, China, and South Africa) over the last decades, Brazil's economy ascended to as high as seventh in the global nominal GDP rankings according to the International Monetary Fund. The modes of attaining this economic growth has come to define national claims of economic modernity; that is, being an agent of global capitalism on the global stage, rather than an object (i.e., a locale of raw material extraction and commodity importation). In the lexicon of world-systems theory, this has meant a move away from the global economic periphery toward the center. Over the last decades, the basis of the Brazilian economy has relied most heavily on import substitution; manufacturing goods domestically rather than importing them. As such, Brazilian economic growth has meant becoming a producer of exportable manufactured commodities, rather than importer of them. Establishing high rates of production and reproducing the national socioeconomic conditions for it through surplus labor has meant the continued marginalization of a significant portion of the population while the wealth accrued continues to be concentrated among a small number of elites. A study conducted by *Forbes* in 2010, for instance, listed Brazil as having the fifth largest number of billionaires in the world (Kroll).

The industries tied to fitness have been part and parcel of this economic growth, with access to such products spreading, though unequally, to more of the population as policies and cultures of neoliberalism have become more cemented in the Brazilian public sphere. The health and fitness supplement sector, for instance, has been one of the fastest growing in Brazil since the beginning of the twenty-first century. As a study reported by the widely read Right-leaning weekly news magazine and website *Veja* reveals, 54 percent of Brazilians consume some form of supplement. What is perhaps most interesting is how the magazine contextualized such findings. The headline notably read: "A new study shows that 54 percent of Brazilians take some type of

dietary supplement. This rate is almost the same as that of the United States, where 68 percent of people report using them” (Redação).¹ The writers and editors at *Veja* thus make it a point to place these findings in relation to similar indexes attributed to what is commonly regarded among Brazilians (including its political and financial elites) as the apex of contemporary modernity as nation, society, and economy—the United States. The article also posits the supplement industry and supplement consumption as markers of late capitalist modernity. Both the industry and the consumption of supplements represent claims to modern knowledge, as represented by the interviews with Brazilian experts on diet, nutrition, and health. As I further examine in subsequent chapters, contemporary practices and discourses surrounding fitness emerge and are derived from those of modern public health policies at the turn of the twentieth century that dovetailed with other eugenic thought, most vividly represented by the hygiene movement. The larger public health objective was to engineer a population whose collective lifestyle adhered to dominant Western notions of health—measured by the absence of bodily or mental illness, body mass index, and infrastructural issues tied to socioeconomic status, such as access to clean water and medical counseling. To be healthy, in other words, indexed modernity. It is very much in this implied historical context that *Veja* places the results of this study, thus indicating that Brazilians are nearly as healthy, and therefore nearly as modern, as residents of the United States.

Aside from Brazilians now producing knowledge on health and nutrition, this knowledge is applied to modes of production that dovetail with the Brazilian economy’s import substitution structure. Since the early twentieth century, health, including exercise, has become integrated into scientific communities around the world, with fields of inquiry tied to the natural sciences (medicine, nutrition, pharmaceuticals, biochemical products) becoming producers of contemporary knowledge and signaling the emergence of new fields of scientific specialization, such as exercise science and sports medicine. The consolidation of these fields and industries, including the development of fitness equipment and nutraceuticals, index modernity and contribute to the international dissemination of the Brazilian nation-sign today as a modern powerful economy allied not to a peripheral sign in the world system that is object of global bourgeois consumption, but more importantly as a site of bourgeois production, namely of products made by high-skilled labor and born of what are accepted as scientific methodologies. These would seem to be in opposition to other international mainstream consumer desires regarding Brazil, concentrated mainly upon erotic and exoticist views of Brazilian

bodies, natural landscapes, fascination with Indigenous communities as a sort of search for a premodern other, and, increasingly, interest in favela communities imagined and consumed as sites of racialized socioeconomic abjection derived from the history of capitalism. Instead, the claims to scientific modernity often and inevitably overlap with signifiers that constitute the national narrative of multiracial modernity as well as with those pertaining to commonly held views and narratives in the Global North regarding Brazil, its forms of production, and the bodies that circulate within national boundaries. At the heart of this convergence of discourses is the persistent exoticization and multifaceted othering to which particular bodies in Brazil are subjected from both national and international gazes as well as the concomitant discursive fields in which their social power resides.

As noted earlier, fitness culture represents a set of discourses that have long impacted the development and consolidation of a profoundly hierarchized society based on the reproduction of the privilege of some and the social and cultural disenfranchisement of many along the intersecting lines of labor, race, gender, sexuality, and disability. In this regard, it is difficult to approach the emergence of fitness culture as isolated from the reproduction of neoliberal capitalism, an economic structure itself facilitated by the marginalizing discourses and policies associated with modernity. In a strictly economic sense, fitness culture in Brazil and other nations has grown in parallel with several large corporations that have dedicated their business models to products associated with fitness.

Supplementation, like fitness clothing and accessories, has become what its name suggests not only in terms of diet and exercise, but in terms of the performance of identity in the era of fitness commodities; the ways in which the consuming subject in the national or global public sphere presents and performs the body within the realms of social meanings. In this regard, the consumption (purchase and ingestion) of supplements becomes part of the fitness practitioner's repertoire of actions that ideologically articulate their relationship to production, history, and the larger field of modern society. Therefore, in order to comprehend the depths of the impact of fitness culture and its discourses of and for the reproduction of modernity, it is imperative to examine how fitness culture is consumed, embodied, and realized at the level of the subject. Toward this analytical and theoretical objective, in several of the following chapters I interrogate the different modes of identitarian production (always in intimate conjunction with dominant modes of modern power's reproduction) carried out by some of Brazil's most popular fitness personalities on social media. Such prominent figures in the Brazilian public

sphere range from professional body builders to gym-goers that balance a passion for fitness with other forms of labor.

In observing statistics related to the growth of different fitness and exercise nutrition industries, Brazil demonstrates metrics similar to those of the United States (two of the world's largest markets for fitness-related goods and services). Though this book is concerned less with measurables than with qualitative analysis of cultural and social impact, some data helps illustrate the considerable growth undergone in these industries within Brazil, especially in relation to the United States—the largest market for fitness-related industries as well as the constructed epicenter of body building and fitness culture, from the agency of “fit” bodies in American cinema to Gold's Gym Venice Beach being understood as the “mecca” of world body building. As noted earlier, with respect to the health club industry, a 2020 report by the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA), which functions “to grow, protect and promote the health and fitness industry” (“About IHRSA”), counted the United States as the world's leading market in fitness club count with 41,190 in 2019, while Brazil occupies second place with 29,525 (“IHRSA Global Report”), translating to one health club per 7,148 residents in Brazil and one per 7,968 residents in the United States according to 2019 population estimates in each country (Worldometers.info).

In parallel with such trends in Brazil, numerous organizations and business associations have emerged looking to expand to different fitness markets the reach of related products. This has been the case with Fitness Brasil, for instance, which positions itself as a business solutions provider for fitness-related ventures, large and small. Fitness Brasil hosts numerous conferences and trade shows, bringing together business leaders from different fitness industries from around the world in an exchange of business knowledge. Fitness Brasil also offers an array of business education programs and workshops for different companies and entrepreneurs. The growth of fitness in Brazil—its cultural manifestations in conjunction with its multifaceted industries—is thus part and parcel of the nation's trend toward, and fomented culture of, economic modernization; that is, the transformation of its economy and cultures of production and consumption aligned with global neoliberalist dynamics.

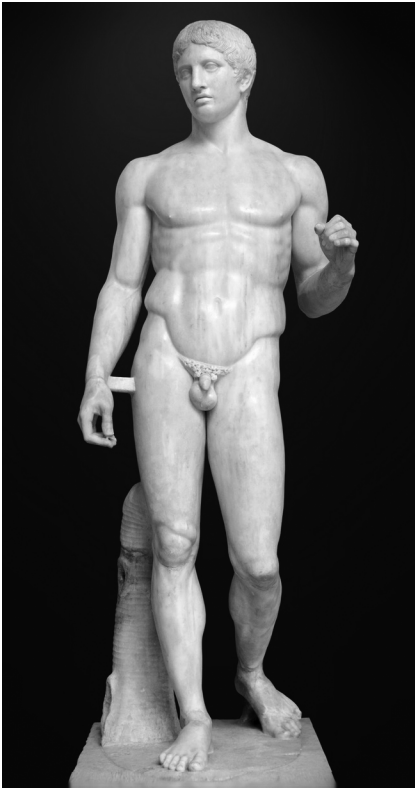
THE BODY AS A SITE OF MODERNITY

In tracing a brief history of the development of fitness culture into a series of commodifiable goods, bodies, and images, we must pay particular attention to its use as a mode of modernizing the body politic, especially in national-

ist contexts. The recovery of fitness, exercise, physical education, and their corporal aesthetics from ancient cultures has profoundly dovetailed with nationalist projects and the production of the nation-state model of social and political organization. As early as the first decades of the nineteenth century, the creation of a body politic, and especially a military composed of physically fit bodies, became an integral part of the development and performance of modern sovereign statehood. Most notably, following Napoleon's conquest of Prussia and occupation of Berlin in 1806, Prussian thinkers and authorities, led by physical education teacher Friedrich Jahn, sought to "redefine exercise as a mass movement of national salvation for Prussia...target[ing] men of fighting age, who, he hoped, would succeed where Prussia's professional army had failed in defeating the seemingly invincible French" (Chaline 87). Jahn and his mentor, Johann Christoph Friedrich Guts Muths (1759–1839), argued that the implementation of physical exercise into education curricula was a crucial measure in order to combat the supposed excesses of Prussian bourgeois civilization; namely, lethargy and obesity, which made the Prussian body politic physically and militarily unable to defend itself against Napoleon's armies.

Both Guts Muths and Jahn took ancient Greek cultures of physical exercise and sculpted bodies as their point of reference for defining the corporal contours of a physically fit and healthy body politic. In referring to Greek and Roman antiquity, Guts Muths and Jahn tapped into both a web of visual artifacts and a corpus of knowledge pertaining to the body. In the case of much Greek sculpture of cisgender male bodies, knowledge and visual cultural production complexly intersect. For instance, Polykleitos designed his sculpture *Doryphoros* (figure 0.1), of a naked athlete, based on his written treatise *Kanon*, where he established the aesthetic perfection of the human body and its visual representation based on not only technical definitions of symmetry and equilibrium but also visible muscularity and low body fat. These would be the corporal signifiers and embodiments of what Polykleitos defined as ideal mathematical proportions. The "fit body" was thus already a visual schema and product of scientific knowledge, as it would be in the era of eugenics and in contemporary neoliberal commoditization of exercise science. For sculptors such as Polykleitos, these ideals were best exemplified, of course, by the body of the cisgender male warrior and athlete. Muscularity, as a signifier of cisgender masculinity, came to represent ideals of societal progress and Greek imperial power.

Male muscularity, and low body fat, would come to be a central aesthetic component in the visual representation of empire in later millennia. Numer-

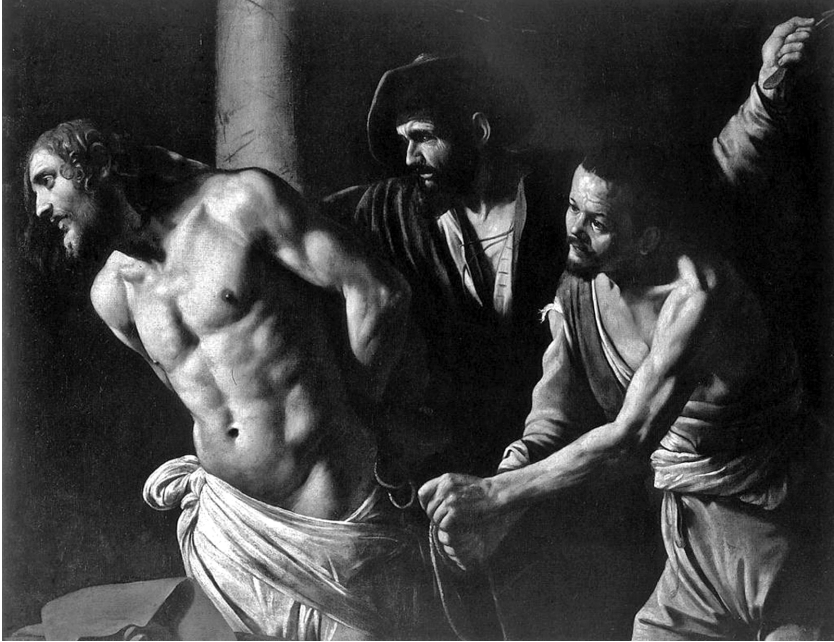


0.1 Polykleitos's visual rendering of the aesthetic perfection of the human body. *Doryphoros*, circa 440 BCE.

ous Renaissance and baroque paintings of Jesus Christ, for instance, deployed muscularity as a core representational element in the visual creation of his white masculinity; his body being a central symbol of Christianity and the metaphysics of European imperialism. Such visual presentations situated the Christian messianic body as a site through which the history and existence of the imperial West could be visually extended back to ancient Greece by utilizing the muscular imagery of Greek sculpture. Such renderings of Jesus Christ also underscore the racialization and gendering of savior figures, so integral to Western imperial narratives, such as the “white man’s burden” and US global exceptionalism as “bestower of democracy.”

With regards to the latter narrative of US imperialism, in the context of 1980s and 1990s Hollywood cinema (as part of global mass culture), muscularity became a central visual trait of action stars such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone, and Chuck Norris, especially in films in which they play American protagonists performing conquest in the Global South (*Commando*, *Rambo*, and *Delta Force*, among others).²

Eric Chaline’s historical exploration of the gymnasium and the cultures of physical exercise, *The Temple of Perfection: A History of the Gym* (2015), importantly locates the institutionalization of physical education and exercise practice into social policy within the larger goal of national agency on an international scale. Mass physical education, as an early institutional configuration of fitness culture, thus contributed to the development of modern notions of nationhood predicated on military, economic, and political power. Consequently, a physically fit body politic and population became a criterion for claiming the modernity of the nation, while also serving as an index of other criteria, such as military capability, political prowess, scientific knowledge of building the body, and sufficient economic prosperity to build the physical infrastructures of modern fitness culture.



0.2 Caravaggio's painting of a white muscular Jesus Christ. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Christ at the Column*, 1607.



0.3 Sylvester Stallone as white muscular action hero. Credit: Carolco Pictures, *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, 1985.

Jahn and Guts Muths's reasoning behind instituting physical education and exercise among Prussian society also captures the logic behind its continued existence in later eugenic societies. For both, physical fitness "was not an individual attainment freely offered to the state by the citizen, but a social obligation demanded by the state of its citizens" (Chaline 85–86). The exercises Guts Muths prescribes in his 1793 publication (translated into English in 1800), *Gymnastics for Youth: Or a Practical Guide to Delightful and Amusing Exercises for the Use of Schools, an Essay toward the Necessary Improvement of Education Chiefly as it Relates to the Body*, would serve to remedy and prevent physical weakness, lethargy, and subsequently strengthen moral health and energy. He referred to these maladies as effeminacy, semantically associating these supposed physiological and social illnesses with a particular conception of feminine corporality as a site of deficit regarding the positive physical attributes that were to make up a modern (strong and healthy) body politic. This sort of rhetoric would continue to play a central role in the conception and social production of modern valid corporality in the discourses of eugenics in the second half of the nineteenth century. I look to pinpoint how these discourses have been reformulated and have impacted subjectivity through their different applications in Brazil, ranging from the discourses of public health in the late 1800s to the circulation of global and national mass culture in the twenty-first century.

VISUAL CONSUMPTION AND FITNESS CULTURE'S SUBJECT PRODUCTION

A crucial mechanism in the growth of fitness culture into the ubiquitous global phenomenon it is today concerns the visual consumption of muscular bodies through globally circulating events, print media, and digital platforms. Temporally overlapping with eugenic discourses around physical fitness, global forms of visual consumption of muscular masculine bodies had shifted from sculpture and painting to performance in circuses and world fairs. This trend was arguably ushered in via the emergence of the earliest fitness celebrity, the German performer Eugen Sandow, in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, the very emergence of body building as a sport can be owed in large part to Eugen Sandow's muscle-display performances in carnivals around England in the late nineteenth century. Sandow, known today as the "father of modern body building," and after whom the Mr. Olympia contest trophy is modeled, began his career as a circus athlete, touring parts of Europe in the late 1800s as a member of different circus groups and performing strength exercises with barbells and completing physical obstacles for crowds. He lat-

er began his own tours, displaying his muscularity through a series of poses similar to those of contemporary competitive-stage body building. His poses, moreover, were based on those found on ancient sculptures and canonized into the construction of Western culture and corporalities. In fact, his books on strength training and muscle building offered specific guidelines regarding weight and repetitions in order to specifically obtain the corporal proportions of the Grecian ideal found in Greek and Roman sculpture. Throughout the height of his popularity in Europe and the United States, Sandow was often photographed in poses re-creating canonical sculptures such as *The Dying Gaul* and Polykleitos's *Doryphoros*.

Such early corporal displays of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that led to the development of competitive body building and modern fitness cultures must be understood in relation to a larger culture of corporal voyeurism and consumption undergirding the circus, carnival, and ethnological expositions (also known as human zoos) of the period, including the World's Fairs. These were commonplace exhibitions in Europe and the United States that made the imperially signified world knowable to audiences via an array of cultural artifacts and, especially, via bodies contracted, or often kidnapped, from colonized parts of the world and displayed to European and American consumers. Such expositions came to be a central force in the modern signification of racial difference and the racialization of gender performance/corporality, labor, and health. The most notable, and perhaps most well-known, example of this concerns the experience of Sarah Baartman, known as Hottentot Venus, who was exhibited throughout Europe in such expositions and in circuses as an object of wonder and abjection.³

In order to understand how Sandow's muscle-display performances were consumed, and by extension, how these cultural politics of consumption contributed to body building's development as spectacle, one must consider them in relation to racialized exhibitions such as those of Baartman; with both as part of an early global visual mass culture through which Europeaness came to be understood in relation to its racialized, gendered, and sexualized others. Although both bodies were consumed as spectacles of difference in relation to everyday life and corporal culture, Sandow's body came to stage imperial modern corporality—an embodiment of Greek and Roman ideals that were retroactively posited as part of the birthplace of the West. Baartman, on the other hand, through her very nickname of Hottentot Venus, was framed by exposition curators and circus promoters as an abject corruption of the Western ideals of corporality and personhood. Through Sandow's public exhibitions, whiteness is staged and traced back to Greece and Rome, integrating

these into the history of the West and providing it a long-stretching historicity that is placed into contemporary corporality. At the same time, racial otherness is elaborated and presented to the public as corporal corruption, insufficiency, and historylessness.

These modes of imperial signification of bodies and geographies are, therefore, at the heart of not only the development of fitness culture but also of contemporary global visual mass culture. The Sandow-Baartman comparison reveals what we may call the imperial economy of corporal currencies that continues to undergird global mass culture, and within it, global fitness culture. It is this economy that structures the discourses and visual content of eugenics, as well as preceding notions and images of human progress in Europe, such as those evident in the works of Guts Muths. The different cultural products surrounding body building and fitness, as early as Sandow's performances, have posited and articulated white masculine corporality as the imperial embodiment of global agency and mastery. It is a white corporality located largely in central and northern Europe and the United States, as early as Sandow, but translated within different local specificities. One can argue that the development of global fitness culture and the reproduction of white masculine mastery have been parallel processes.

The earliest commodities associated with fitness culture and physical exercise were marketed to white (upper-)middle-class men and deployed images of white muscular masculinity as corporal ideal and mode of understanding other bodies. Sandow's tutorial books, as well as his monthly periodical, *Sandow's Magazine of Physical Culture*, the first major body-building competition founded by him, and his own line of exercise equipment were not only geared to men but were packaged and framed by visual content that reformulated what white masculinity was supposed to look like. This was taken to new heights of popularity by the Italian-American body builder Angelo Siciliano, best known as Charles Atlas—yet another reference to Greek mythology and sculpture. The legal name change fundamentally allowed him to more easily situate himself within white Anglo-Saxon hegemony, thus permitting his image and different commodities to be marketed more broadly during the 1920s and 1930s. Atlas came to relative prominence on the heels of the interest in fitness and body building in the United States and Europe spawned by Sandow's performances and magazines, with the publication of his own exercise booklet and guide to building muscle, *Dynamic Tension*. He became a fixture in weight-lifting competitions in the United States during these decades, while also becoming the face and body of an array of different fitness and grooming products, in addition to being named "America's Most Handsome Man"

THE INSULT THAT MADE A MAN OUT OF 'MAC'



Let Me PROVE I Can Make YOU A NEW MAN!

ARE you "fed up" with seeing the huskies walk off with the best of everything? Sick and tired of being soft, frail, skinny or flabby — only HALF ALIVE? I know just how you feel. Because I myself was once a puny 97-pound "runt." And I was so ashamed of my scrawny frame that I dared being seen in a swim suit.

The Secret of How I Got My Build

Then I discovered a wonderful way to develop my body fast. It worked wonders for me — changed me from the scrawny "runt" I was at 17, into "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." And I can build up YOUR body the very same natural way — without weights, springs or pulleys. Only 15 minutes a day of pleasant practice — in the privacy of your room.

My "Dynamic-Tension" method has already helped thousands of other fellows become real he-men in double-

quick time. Let it help YOU. Not next month or next year — but Right NOW!

"Dynamic-Tension" Builds Muscles FAST!

If you're like I was, you want a powerful, muscular, well-proportioned build you can be proud of any time, anywhere. You want the "Greek-God" type of physique that women rave about at the beach — the kind that makes other fellows green with envy.

Mail Coupon Now for My 32-Page Illustrated Book

Mailing the coupon can be the turning point in your life. I'll send you a copy of my 32-page illustrated book, "How Dynamic-Tension Makes You a NEW MAN." Tells how and why my method works; shows many pictures proving what it has done for others. Don't delay. Mail coupon NOW. CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 60X 115 E. 23rd St., New York, N.Y. 10010.



Charles Atlas

Awarded the title of "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 60X
115 East 23rd St., New York, N.Y. 10010

Dear Charles Atlas: Here's the kind of Body & Want:

(Check as many as you like)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Broader Chest and Shoulders | <input type="checkbox"/> More Energy and Stamina |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ironhard Stomach Muscles | <input type="checkbox"/> More Magnetic Personality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tireless Legs | <input type="checkbox"/> More Weight—Solid—in the Right Places |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slimmer Waist and Legs | |

I enclose 10c. Please send me a copy of your famous book showing how "Dynamic-Tension" can make me a new man. 32 Pages, crammed with photographs, answers to vital health questions, and valuable advice. This does not obligate me in any way.

Print Name.....Age.....

Address.....

City & State.....Zip.....

In England: Charles Atlas, 21 Poland St., London, W.1

0.4 Charles Atlas's workout regimen promising young men hypermasculine bodies. Credit: Charles Atlas Power Isotonics.

by Sadow's aforementioned magazine. Atlas's Dynamic Tension mail-order physical training course, comprised of isometric exercises with no equipment, was famously followed by several male athlete/celebrities, such as boxers Joe Louis and Rocky Marciano. The commercial success of his course hinged on widely circulating advertising campaigns that made him a fitness icon even today, with snippets of these campaigns posted on online fitness forums and remembered in different magazines.

Appearing in newspapers, comic books, and boys' magazines in comic strip form, Atlas's campaigns were arguably the first widespread fitness marketing initiative in the United States, with different versions running from the 1930s to the 1950s. The different advertisements all presented similar scenarios, with a skinny young cisgender white male, as protagonist, being publically bullied and humiliated in front of his girlfriend by an older and more muscular white man, as in the advertisement above, titled "The Insult that Made a Man out of 'Mac.'"

Each scenario, such as the one above, takes place in a locale of mid-twentieth-century white middle-class leisure; namely, a beach, carnival, or dance ball, while centering on a clash of masculine corporalities signified as disparate currencies (based on body mass and muscularity), and valued as such through the ventriloquized cisgender female subject, who also represents a form of patriarchal heterosexual capital to be obtained in the performance of masculinity. The protagonist cannot access modern masculinity and its privileges; namely, the sexual accumulation of white women, without reformulating his body in accordance with the corporality embodied by Atlas himself in the advertisement. Herein lies a central aspect to the initial growth of fitness culture in the industrial Global North. What is packaged and sold is not merely a corporality per se, but the promise of greater access to the societal components that comprise modern masculine corporality such as mastery, accumulation of capital (financial and sexual), and performance of power over an array of intersectionally othered bodies. Through Atlas's popular advertisements, this sort of increased access to imperial power becomes represented in terms of a specific corporal image tying together whiteness, muscularity (as defined through the Grecian ideal), middle-class life, heterosexuality (including as object of heterosexual feminine desire), and health/abledness.

As Atlas's comic strips highlight, the drastic transformations promised are not only corporal, but more importantly, imply profound shifts in the consumer's societal life and position within the meanings that give life to imperial power. The commodities of fitness culture, predicated on transformation, from Dynamic Tension to the Ab Wheeler and the Brazil Butt Lift exercise

program, advertise to consumers the assumption of corporalities of supposedly higher values. Dynamic Tension's advertisements, through their plots and visual renderings of bodies, reveal and disseminate a revised corporal ideal image of normative masculinity. The muscularity of this image stages and enunciates a masculine corporality of increased imperial value while teaching consumers and readers to not simply desire the product, but first and foremost, desire its advertised image of masculine corporality. Atlas and his program thus became part of a larger discursive terrain and field of cultural products that gradually inaugurated a revised masculine subject, with the newly muscularized corporality as object of desire (sexual and identitarian).

Herein lies one of fitness culture's deepest nexuses with neoliberal consumer culture. As Rachel Bowlby theorizes, consumer culture is predicated on reproducing a relationship between the consumer's lack in relation to advertised specular images of totality. Fitness culture has played a dynamic role in the consistent reformulation of what constitutes corporal totality in accordance with existing notions of normativity; whether it concerns overall muscularity of the masculine body, a fragment of the splintered feminine body like the fetishization of thigh gaps and thigh brows, or a particular commodity that has become an appendage to this totality. In other words, fitness culture, as part and parcel of broader consumer cultures and imperial meanings pertaining to corporality, participates centrally in the persistent production of different images of corporal totality and modern subjectivity.

EUGENICS, FITNESS CULTURE, AND BRAZILIAN MODERNITY

Embodying Modernity is guided by the following overarching objective: to understand how racial, gendered, heteronormative, and ableist discourses are reproduced through fitness culture in Brazil. To answer this question, one must understand the relationship between fitness culture and Western imperial bio-power in Brazil through its turbulent claims to modernity and more specifically modern nationalist projects from the end of the nineteenth century to the present day. In this regard, this book is as much about fitness culture as it is about Brazilian nationalist discourses and exceptionalist narratives. Fitness culture offers nuanced and multilayered case studies as to how nationalist discourses, especially those concerning racial, gender, sexual, socioeconomic identity, act upon different bodies. Relatedly, *Embodying Modernity* examines how fitness culture, fitness celebrities and athletes, and sports science (always in tandem with existing standards of beauty and health) enacts racialized and gendered nationalist discourses and narratives.

Numerous Brazilian thinkers associated with eugenics theorized and de-

veloped modes of curtailing the nonwhite, especially African-descendant, population that was supposedly holding back the nation's progress into modernity. The Brazilian criminologist Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, one of the loudest and most-read voices in support of whitening the population, famously posited the large population of "uncivilized" nonwhites as a contagion of social backwardness and the most significant danger posed to the nation's future:

The Aryan civilization is represented in Brazil by a weak minority of the white race to whom remained the task of defending it against not only anti-social acts—crimes—of its own representatives, but also against the anti-social acts of the inferior races, be these actual crimes in the conceptualization held by these races, or be they, on the contrary, manifestations of the conflict, the struggle to exist among the superior civilization of the white race and the traces of civilization of the conquered and subjected races.⁴ (*As raças humanas* 162)

The proposed destruction of the nation's population of African and Indigenous descent would guarantee and reproduce the concentration of power as aligned with whiteness. Although ultimately unsuccessful, the means by which this genocide was attempted nonetheless contributed immensely to this reproduction of power. Scientific discourses of modern progress, such as those espoused by Nina Rodrigues and scholars of other disciplines contributing to eugenic thought like psychiatry, biology, genetics, medical anthropology, anthropometry, and public health, were ultimately integrated into public policy.

The overt and widely disseminated narrative pertaining to eugenics is that it would render a prosperous future for privileged identities, particular nations, existing societal structures, and Western epistemologies. In this regard, it also defines the contours of a "prosperous future" in accord with coloniality's desire for its own reproduction and augmentation of power. At the same time, this narrative also reveals its own undercurrent—a persistent search for, and reproduction of, the colonially constructed legitimacy of white patriarchal supremacy by "scientifically" establishing this subject position as the embodiment of normalcy and thus the incarnation of a flourishing future. The celebrated and normalized corporal symbol of the nation's future, therefore, also represents its core of power and wealth concentration. In this sense, eugenics provides an important component to Eurocentric hegemony, helping translate power into a cultural fabric and superstructure.

The term *eugenics*, coined by Francis Galton in his 1874 paper, "One Men of Science: Their Nature and Their Nurture," would go on to become an in-

terdisciplinary school of thought, circulated transnationally, and its very discourses carried significant ramifications in the transnational movement of bodies, privileging the national immigration and integration of some ethnic groups while calling for the exclusion or systematic genocide of others. Furthermore, it emanated from the colonial geocultural and economic place of universalism—Global Northern whiteness—and thus served as a “scientific” search for the legitimacy of this universalism.

Eugenic ideas of racial progress were, as Jerry Dávila notes, carried out through Brazilian social policy in ways that differed from other nations in the interwar period. Remedying the social and biological pathologies of the population necessitated particular and locally adapted measures in the eyes of Brazilian eugenicists. In addition to methods of disease prevention and control, ranging from continued vaccination, sterilization, and internment into hospitals and psychiatric asylums of pathologized nonwhite and poor bodies, many policies, especially those pertaining to education, employed “soft eugenic” approaches aimed at fomenting cultural and behavioral changes. The premise behind this set of measures was that cultural changes in behavior and everyday actions could mitigate genetic deficiencies, with the subtext being that national popular cultures and everyday social life tied to subaltern experiences (i.e., capoeira, samba, residing in tenements or the national “backlands”) were manifestations of underlying biological pathologies and degeneracy. To be clear, these measures also conceptualized illness in racialized terms while targeting and policing particular social illnesses and forms of deviance ascribed to racial difference—such as, criminality, sloth, and alcoholism. Herein laid the crucial role fitness was to play within the cultural corrections proposed by educational policies and the eugenicists behind them.

Crucial to this end was the continuity of eugenic thought among politicians and policymakers across different municipalities and states in Brazil, throughout the early twentieth century and even after the gradual discrediting of eugenics following the rise of the Nazi Party. In the case of the directorship of Rio de Janeiro’s Department of Public Education, for instance, Antônio Carneiro Leão was a self-identified eugenicist who occupied the post between 1922 and 1926, then returned to his native state of Pernambuco to take up a similar role there. As Dávila relates regarding Carneiro Leão’s tenure, his

reform of the Rio school system introduced to daily practice such institutions as the *pelotão de saúde*, or student health brigade, in which designated students in each classroom oversaw the health and hygiene of their classmates. He also pioneered the practice of physical education in elementary schools, believing it would “combat vices and illnesses, making it decisive

in elevating the race.” In 1924, his Department of Education produced a documentary, *For the Grandeur of the Race*, that showcased twelve thousand students performing calisthenics in order to promote physical education in other parts of the country. (33)

As the title of the aforementioned documentary indicates, eugenic measures like those contained in the film were largely introduced to students as ways of serving the ideals of the nation—specifically those of racial progress. Cultural and instructional products such as the documentary served important propagandistic purposes toward creating self-representations of modern nationhood. Such products made the national narrative in transition knowable to recipients throughout the public sphere as one conveying an interpersonal collective enacting societal progress and modernity. The ideological purpose at the level of the interpellated subject was that performing identity through modern means related to health and hygiene was a way of pledging allegiance to a modern version of nation that was celebrated and disseminated by various elites.

Physical fitness and education classes were integrated into a curriculum that, as part of elitist efforts to disseminate modern European cultural practices (like fitness), looked to culturally whiten and relatedly sanitize the nation’s large and pathologized nonwhite population. Health and physical fitness thus became crucial signifiers in the glossary of whiteness and the increased societal adherence to such health regimens would imply and demonstrate a national subjection to the markers and measures of whiteness—themselves to be found at the core of modernized Brazilian nationhood proliferated in the public sphere. As a result of this cultivation in the public sphere of a modern national corporality and body politic, training the body and placing it within European epistemes, and making it healthy, cisgendered, and heterosexual, became a practice in nationalism. Educational policies introducing fitness and other measures of modernizing postcolonial personhood can thus be considered state-driven instruments, as well as of several dispersed elites and social actors exercising power over the public sphere, toward the elaboration of a new ideal national body that would inscribe onto it the cultural ideals of whiteness while also serving to misrecognize colonial imbalances in social power.

The ideological project of nation, and in this case eugenic nationalism, posited belonging to it, in the form of national consciousness, as the primary, if not singular, form of communal subjectivity, while establishing the ideal identitarian and corporal parameters of such belonging.⁵ To be, or to at least live in the illusion of participation in national life, one had to take on these

mandates of modern nationhood. Embodying the signifiers of modernity—health, embracing science over religion, working for capitalist production—did not, of course, grant political power, but rather provided a largely symbolic distancing from marginalization through a set of social and cultural rewards. These included the mitigated likelihood of suffering the consequences of societal surveillance and policing of bodies deemed deviant in relation to modern ideals of personhood. Some of these potential consequences included but were not limited to incarceration, sterilization, and the stripping of social rights as parts of “hard eugenic” initiatives. Performing these signifiers of modernity at the level of the body would, on the other hand, be rewarded through the visibility and celebration of these in the mainstream dissemination of modern nationhood.

The emergence of physical education as one such measure for improving “national races” through school curricula thus put its methods into practice as a means of achieving a particular ideal body (politic) that possessed low body fat and light skin, was gender-conforming, heterosexual, and that conveyed mastery over its own mind and body. The curricular ideals and “learning” goals set within physical education courses began to officialize and narrow the criteria by which ability and abledness would come to be defined. Those deemed unable to physically participate in human improvement through exercise (as a vehicle toward “health”) would come to be placed within the eugenic taxonomies of disability. Decades after the advent of policy installing physical education into all levels of schooling, fitness culture’s insertion into global popular culture continues to play a key role in the straightening and enforcement of what constitutes corporal normalcy and the simultaneous policing of bodies, actions, and corporal signifiers that are deemed deviations, to be placed within the ambiguously drawn and persistently reformulated borders of disability.

Like most athletic fields, fitness practice is more than a measure of one’s ability—it is a measure of one’s abledness—for example, how many pull-ups or push-ups one can perform, or how much weight one can lift. In this sense, fitness and body building play a central role in the contemporary production of ableist society and culture through the identification (implicit or overt) of those who deviate from the new standards of abledness that it disseminates. In other words, the culture of fitness contributes, in many ways, to the placement of bodies into the abled-disabled spectrum regulated by a historically contrived ableist gaze. As Lennard J. Davis points out, both ability and disability are parts “of a historically constructed discourse, an ideology of thinking about the body under certain historical circumstances” (2). As a result,

“disability is not an object—a woman with a cane—but a social process that intimately involves everyone who has a body and lives in the world of the senses...the concept of disability is a function of a concept of normalcy” (2).

As I explore in greater length throughout this book, fitness culture, in its multifaceted and broadly encompassing life, has continued to codify eugenic and Western imperial concepts of normalcy, packaging these into cultural products, commodities, and organization of public exercise spaces. In the process, fitness culture has cultivated widespread participation in the cultures and episteme of empire, circuiting individual and collective desires into those of power and capital and their concomitant narratives. The story of fitness culture in Brazil, and its permeation into different components of public life and the public sphere, ultimately tells a story of Brazil’s ongoing nation-making process, its racial and gendered ordering of capital, its exceptionalist narratives, its historical pathologization of particular bodies, and how various social and political forces continue to render certain identities as violable and discardable.

INTERROGATING FITNESS CULTURE AND POPULAR MEDIA IN BRAZIL

In chapter 1, “Gendering Muscle and Selling Corporal Fragments: Global Designs and Nationalist Narratives in Fitness Media and Commodities,” I examine how discourses of national exceptionalism and multiracial modernity have been integrated into contemporary images of national feminine corporality within fitness culture in Brazil. Through different products of popular culture and fitness hinging on the hypersexualization and fragmentation of women of color, the term *bunduda* (meaning “woman of ample buttocks”) has emerged; one that has accompanied the whitening of the mulatta corporal image of national racial exceptionalism, fusing Eurocentric ideals of beauty with racialized notions of sensuality and accessibility. The whitened *bunduda* body has thus become a central image in the nationalization of fitness. This chapter thus examines how the hypercirculation and consumption of such corporal images recalibrates discourses of national modernity and identity through new instantiations of whitening, racial othering, and constructions of feminine corporality.

In chapter 2, “Exceptionalist Imageries: *Bunduda* Spectacle and Gluteal Muscularity in Popular Visual Culture,” I follow up on chapter 1 by interrogating how the aforementioned recalibrated discourses of national modernity and exceptionalism operating at the level of feminine corporality have structured what has become a ubiquitous white *bunduda* spectacle. In doing so, I examine how overlapping sexual and nationalist politics undergird the dis-

semination and consumption of racialized feminine bodies. In other words, I critically engage how the construction and fetishization of so-called bunduda corporalities circulate in Brazilian visual media as a problematic mode of participation in national public life and identification with exceptionalist narratives of national history and the orders of power these reproduce. Toward this end, I study specific media products—television and digital—such as the Miss Bumbum contest and the prolific rendering of women’s bodies (specifically nationalist corporal archetypes) into mascots for an array of other entertainment industries and even for national politics.

In chapter 3, “*Bunduda Exportação*: The Whitened National Symbol in Global Fitness Culture,” I explore the different ways in which the whitened bunduda corporal image of national exceptionalism has circulated beyond Brazil, being utilized to sell an array of fitness-related commodities to white bourgeois audiences of the Global North, as in the case of the gluteal workout program Brazil Butt Lift. I also examine the ubiquity of this racialized and ethnicized corporal image as an ideal of sorts within the patriarchal structures of global fitness culture, found in fitness magazines, media platforms, body-building competitions, and advertisements around the world. The hypercirculation and consumption of this image within fitness culture has accompanied and contributed to the reformulation of feminine corporality within professional body building and fitness; a process through which muscle mass has been regendered and permitted only on certain fragments of women’s bodies; namely, from the waist down. I argue that this form of sexualized circulation of women’s bodies has become one of the main vehicles through which fitness culture is produced and consumed, as evidenced by the ever-increasing amount of digital content dedicated to contemporary imagery of “fit” feminine corporality in men’s fitness websites, websites like *GirlswithMuscle.com*, and the rise in popularity of fitness models on social media.

Although the corporal image of multiracial modernity has become increasingly staged through somatically white bodies, it nonetheless continues to be articulated through racialized signifiers of deviance tied to body type. In chapter 4, “Fitness, Alterity, and Orders of Whiteness in the Configuration of Modern Feminine Corporalities,” I thus pay attention to how, in opposition to the whitened bunduda image, the national project of Eurocentric modernity has become more strongly embedded in the visual production and circulation of a different type of feminine corporality found in upscale, Eurocentric fashion, beauty, and health magazines as well as in mainstream films and soap operas depicting national bourgeois spaces and everyday life. I argue that this particular construction of normative feminine corporality has come to ex-

press bourgeois life, culture, and labor of an upper middle class guided by Eurocentric ideals of corporality, postindustrial corporate employment, and full participation in the neoliberal circulation of commodities, including those of fitness culture.

The articulation of different images of feminine corporality is merely one part of the binarist logic of not only mainstream fitness culture, but more broadly, of modernity. In chapter five, “From Magazines to Social Media: White Masculine Corporality and the Brazilian Public Sphere,” I turn my attention to the construction of Brazilian modern masculine corporality through fitness culture and its distribution of muscularity. While women’s bodies have constituted the imagery of national exceptionalism and multiraciality, the visual articulation of masculine corporality, and its “fitness,” has become a central component in the staging of white, masculinist, heterosexist, ableist, and bourgeois power structures and performances. This staging is particularly visible in the increasing overlap between celebrity and fitness cultures, with white male bodies of slim yet muscular builds taking center stage on the television screen and gracing the covers of fitness magazines, thus emphasizing the white bourgeois contours of normative masculinity. I also examine different renderings and embodiments of white masculine corporality; namely, pertaining to particular Brazilian male body builders that have been signified through a lexicon of nationalism in mainstream media, social media platforms, and in advertising campaigns. Such bodies are particularly signified as images of Brazilian modernization and development while they compete abroad in international body-building competitions. I thus explore how participants and commenters on the social media accounts of such body builders reproduce fundamental structuring discourses of the Brazilian public sphere by inscribing these bodies as flagbearers of the modern nation.

In chapter 6, “Marginalized Masculinities and Deviant Muscularity: Race, Disability, and Sexuality,” I offer an in-depth examination of how the muscularity of nonwhite men has been utilized in different mainstream visual media to stage national and global structures of racialized power and reproduce the racial signification of particular bodies. Across different visual media, the muscularity of nonwhite men, especially those of African descent, has become a signifier of modern otherness, abjection, and deviance, serving to place nonwhite bodies as subordinates to the white masculine corporality that controls the visual space. While the bodies of nonwhite women have long been a ubiquitous sexualized and historicizing presence of the national past, the bodies of nonwhite men are rarely present in mainstream bourgeois-oriented media. This analysis of the racialization of muscularity, from televi-

sion variety shows to social media, leads to a broader critical inquiry into the ways in which the participation in fitness culture of nonwhite bodies has been signified in the same mainstream media that centralizes the social agency of white cisgendered masculinity. Beyond mainstream heterosexist media, the intersection of race, masculinity, and muscularity plays out in similarly complex and marginalizing ways in queer media in Brazil (and abroad) as well as in queer spaces and in locales of sex work. Within the latter, and through the gaze of white male sex tourists, muscularity becomes operationalized to reproduce problematic and racialized notions of gay masculinities based on frayed dichotomies of active versus passive sex partners.

Within the various realms of fitness culture in Brazil, the marginalization of particular masculinities and muscularities analyzed in chapter 6 overlaps with the signification of different fitness and exercise spaces. Like bodies, exercise practice and locales are also racialized and gendered in ways that intersect with and give meaning to labor, socioeconomic status, and purchasing power in the era of neoliberal capital. The point of departure of chapter 7, “Race and Fitness Space: Signifying Modern and Unmodern Fitness Locales and Praxis,” is the signification of bodies as deviant and abject in relation to spaces they occupy. The corporalities and fitness practice of nonwhite men have thus been signified and consumed through signifiers of deviance in the viral circulation of certain videos and news stories online, locating the fitness practice of nonwhite bodies in abjectified locales like urban margins not only in Brazil, but in international spaces marginalized via the development of empire and global capitalism. I argue that these corporal and geopolitical meanings not only reproduce existing national structures of domination based on the ideals of modernity but also stage locales and bodies of imperial otherness as signifiers over which the modern ideals of the nation can be articulated. The signification of particular muscular bodies as abject exists in opposition to the creation and commodification of bourgeois exercise spaces from luxury gymnasiums to outdoor gyms in affluent urban neighborhoods.

In discussing images and discourses of fit bodies in the history of Brazil and broader empire, I am especially interested in the racial and gendered meanings attributed to muscularity (or lack thereof) and its placement on bodies. My project focuses temporally on late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Brazil and how its ongoing nation-building project is structured politically, economically, and culturally on the anti-Black and anti-Indigenous logics of coloniality and capitalism. The modern nation-state was constructed as upholding these logics of racial and gender orders codified by Enlightenment discourses and the web of cultural terrains spawned from them. Through the

media images analyzed in this book, I look to understand the ways in which the Brazilian nation-state, as an ongoing colonial project, is reproduced on a quotidian level.

NOTES

1. “Uma pesquisa inédita mostrou que 54% dos brasileiros tomam algum tipo de suplemento alimentar. O índice é quase igual ao dos Estados Unidos, onde 68% das pessoas afirmam utilizá-los.”
2. For a detailed exploration on the representation of whiteness and white masculinity in Western film history, see Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture*.
3. For an in-depth critical analysis of Baartman’s life under the gaze of Western imperial epistemology, see T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Black Venus: Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears, and Primitive Narratives*; Deborah Willis, ed., *Black Venus 2010: They Called “Her Hottentot”*; and Natasha Gordon-Chipembere, *Representation and Black Womanhood*.
4. “A civilização ariana está representada no Brasil por uma fraca minoria da raça branca a quem ficou o encargo de defendê-la não só dos atos anti-sociais—os crimes—dos seus próprios representantes, como ainda contra os atos anti-sociais das raças inferiores, sejam estes verdadeiros crimes no conceito dessas raças, sejam, ao contrário, manifestações do conflito, da luta pela existência entre a civilização superior da raça branca e os esboços de civilização das raças conquistadas ou submetidas.”
5. For more on the implementation of eugenic policies through nationalist discourses, see Jerry Dávila, *Diploma of Whiteness: Race and Social Policy in Brazil, 1917–1945*.