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Training Bodies, Building Status: Negotiating Gender and Age Differences in the U.S. Fitness Industry

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Abstract What role does the body play in facilitating interaction across status differences? Whereas previous scholarly work has focused on "roles" and "specialized knowledge," I investigate how bodies, appearances, and physical abilities are also consequential in these exchanges through the concept of "bodily capital." Coined by Bourdieu, bodily capital provides a way to understand why individuals invest time, energy, and resources into their bodies, and what they expect to receive in return. As a concept, bodily capital is necessarily broad as it encompasses a variety of forms, including athletic prowess, attractiveness, physique, muscle tone/strength, agility, and other modes of embodiment. Because the body is integral to a variety of status distinction-making processes, individuals invest in and exchange bodily capital to increase their relative status in specific fields. Drawing on interviews with 26 personal trainers and 25 clients, as well as more than one year of participant observation, I find that trainers and clients use bodily capital to negotiate gender and age differences, either by re-arranging interactional power dynamics or resisting stereotypes. The type of bodily capital that allows for such negotiations to take place, however, is the hegemonic thin-toned ideal—a classed and largely raced form of bodily capital that has purchase in the U.S. fitness industry. Although individuals in the study were able to use this form of capital to enable successful cross-status interactions, doing so reified the dominance of middle-class, white bodily aesthetics. Thus, while bodily capital may challenge some status hierarchies, it reinforces others.

Keywords Body/embodiment · Bodily capital · Gender · Age · Status · Inequality · Fitness · Health

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Mindee is a young, female, Asian American personal trainer at *Fitness Central*[1], a chain health club known for drawing a diverse array of clientele. Standing about 5'4" tall with long black hair, Mindee wears clothing typical of trainers in the gym: skin-tight shorts and a form-fitting shirt made of a thin, breathable material. Although there is some variation in how tightly trainers choose to wear their clothing, most is designed to showcase a trim and toned physique (even male trainers usually display well-developed muscles). Mindee is no exception, constituting what many would likely consider to be both "fit" and good-looking. During one training session I observed, she asked her older, white male client for some advice while taking a break between sets on a chest press machine. She said, "Hey, you're a professor, what do you think I should do? Should I just get my associate's degree and be done, or go on and get my B.A.? I'm not sure if I can afford the full bachelor's degree." The client then helped her weigh the pros and cons of two-year versus four-year degrees, and considered her goals of wanting to either "eventually get into physical therapy" or start a small, specialized gym of her own. As he was continuing to offer more advice, Mindee suddenly looked down at her watch, cut off the client mid-sentence and said, "Okay, that's enough rest. Let's go again—you're not going to get in shape by talking!" In that moment, Mindee's tone shifted from questioning to commanding. It was clear that she was finished casually chatting and had transitioned into a more serious mode of interaction. At this point, the client immediately stopped talking and turned his attention back to the machine, while Mindee offered strong verbal encouragement by loudly saying, "Come on, come on! Push it! Don't stop!" The client, grunting and sweating as he managed the last few repetitions, caught his breath and asked Mindee in a tone of genuine curiosity and hopeful approval, "So, how did I do?"

The above situation is not uncommon in many personal trainer-client relationships. Breaks are typically punctuated with conversations that begin and end abruptly, which might cover a variety of topics including family, work, relationships, and personal struggles. Yet these discussions do more than simply fill in the conversational space between trainers and clients—they also reveal places where status and status differences may be negotiated. As in the case of Mindee, where conventional structures of race, age, social class, and gender would typically place her in a subordinate position, she was able to manage a situation where she could gain deference from a higher status client. Although sociologists have illustrated the impact of status characteristics on social interactions (Mark et al. 2009), and how they are influenced by structural inequalities involving race, gender, and social class (Acker 2006; Crenshaw 1991; West and Fenstermaker 1995), there remain very few social spaces where a young, relatively un-educated, Asian American woman could gain the compliance of an older, white, male college professor. What, then, allowed her to exert this authority over her higher-status client?

While previous research on "roles" and "specialized knowledge" explains some interaction across status differences (Biddle 1986; Gimlin 1996), embodied factors such as appearance and physical ability may also be important in these exchanges. For example, patients regularly comply with nurses, even though they may inhabit higher status locations in terms of education,

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[1] Both "Mindee" and "Fitness Central" are pseudonyms.

occupational prestige, and social class (Russell et al. 2003). This compliance relies on the specialized knowledge of health practitioners, undergirded by the power of their role and supported by medicine's institutional authority (Playle and Keeley 1998). Yet such authority has come to increasingly rely on appearance, as patients expressed doubt regarding an overweight physician's competence (Monaghan 2010), and doctors themselves felt uncomfortable dispensing exercise and diet recommendations if they were heavier than their patients (Bleich et al. 2012). Similarly, stylists in hair salons routinely encounter higher-status clients, and Gimlin (2002) finds that a specialized knowledge of beauty, along with "emotional labor" (Hochschild 1983), allows working-class stylists to interact with their middle-class customers. However, she also notes that these interactions are not always successful, as the middle-class customers often resist stylists' recommendations because they did not want to look "like someone from Long Island" or "not sophisticated"—styles they associate with the beauticians themselves (Gimlin 2002, 38). In both fashion and medicine, then, appearance and physical abilities may matter as much as specialized knowledge or institutionalized role.

Such corporeal credibility is also necessary in the fitness industry. To step into the role of a personal trainer, individuals must complete a paid course that provides accreditation and specialized knowledge. But, to become a *successful* personal trainer—one who attracts and retains clients—requires individuals to look the part as well (Smith Maguire 2001; George 2008; Hutson 2013). "Looking the part" typically involves possessing an ideal (or near-ideal) physique. Indeed, neither role nor specialized knowledge alone seems sufficient to establish one as an exercise expert, as illustrated by the case of Jennifer Portnick, a plus-size aerobics instructor who was fired for not appearing "fit" even though she was able to perform all of the required routines (Kwan and Trautner 2011). Thus, within the U.S. fitness field, thin and toned physiques function as a type of "bodily capital" (Bourdieu 1984; Wacquant 1995)—a resource that individuals invest time, money, and energy into with an expectation of a return on their investment (Hutson 2013). Past studies have demonstrated the value placed on embodiment, including how appearance influences one's position in inter-personal groups (Anderson et al. 2001; Mulford et al. 1998), the evaluation of tasks or performances (Wapnick et al. 1997; Webster and Driskell 1983), and cases of beauty and weight discrimination (Rhode 2010; Puhl and Brownell 2001). Therefore, it is unsurprising that individuals often consciously work on their bodies as a means of raising their status, either to offset structural inequalities or provide some advantage in social life.

In this article, I ask: What role does the body play in facilitating interaction across status differences? Using data from interviews with 26 personal trainers and 25 clients, as well as more than one year of participant observation, I find that individuals use bodily capital to negotiate status differences involving gender and age. As spaces where attention to one's body is amplified, gyms represent ideal locations to investigate the production and deployment of bodily capital. In such settings, status differences are negotiated in two primary ways: individuals use bodily capital to negotiate interactional power dynamics, or to resist gender and age stereotypes. When negotiating power dynamics, female trainers often must display strength or athletic

prowess to gain deference from male clients, while younger trainers rely on their physiques to bolster authority with clients in higher-status locations. When negotiating gender and age stereotypes, female trainers and clients push back against cultural tropes that dissociated women from strength and physical endurance, while older clients resist the association of aging with frailty and degeneration. Such negotiations operate as a means of reclaiming and visibly displaying one's status (Bourdieu 1984)—status that is lost when moving away from the ideal of thin-toned bodies (for women) or from youth (for older clients). Therefore, as individuals train their bodies, they simultaneously build up their status.

The term "negotiating" is appropriate for describing such interactions, as it implies an exchange whereby both parties give and get something in return. As illustrated with the example of Mindee above, trainers who use their bodily capital to negotiate gender and age differences gain a degree of status and authority, and clients who comply give up some status in exchange. Additionally, this negotiation is mutually beneficial—trainers convert their bodily capital into economic, social, and symbolic capital, whereas clients convert their economic capital into bodily capital. The type of bodily capital that allows for such negotiations to take place, however, is the hegemonic thin-toned ideal—a classed and largely raced form of bodily capital that has purchase in the U.S. fitness industry (Dworkin and Wachs 2009). While individuals are able to use this form of capital to negotiate power dynamics and resist stereotypes, doing so reifies the dominance of middle-class, white bodily aesthetics. Thus, bodily capital may challenge some status hierarchies while reinforcing others.

Rise of the Thin-Toned Bodily Ideal

In order for a fit-appearing physique to be useful as a means of negotiating status, it must occupy a valued position. As a symbol of prestige, the thin (or, free of fat) and muscularly toned ideal developed historically due to both economic and cultural shifts. For much of Western history, individuals were constrained in how they might use the body to manage status inequalities due to rigid sumptuary laws. These laws, which legislated elaborate food and dress codes by social class, restricted such things as clothing styles, colors, fabrics, adornments, and types of food consumed (Mennell 1991; Belfanti and Giusberti 2000). Intended to rein in luxury spending, sumptuary laws divided people through appearance, allowing only those with enough wealth to wear certain types of apparel (Hunt 1996). However, the economic shift to modernity, as well as the advent of "fashion,"[2] did away with the need for much sumptuary legislation, and individuals began exercising greater freedom in how they appeared (Belfanti and Giusberti 2000). Particularly within the burgeoning consumer culture of the early twentieth century, identities transitioned from primarily communal to individual, as they came to rely less on place of origin or occupation and more on other traits such as race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and importantly, the body (Giddens 1991; Shilling 1993). As Featherstone (1991) notes: "The reward for ascetic

[2] Belfanti and Giusberti (2000) argue that fashion became the primary way to reinforce class divisions through appearance, particularly when second-hand clothing merchants began selling a wider variety of colors, fabrics, and styles to classes outside the nobility.

body work ceases to be either spiritual salvation or even improved health, but becomes an enhanced appearance and more marketable self" (170-71). Yet what is considered marketable depends on socio-historical context, and has solidified over time into the image of a thin and muscularly toned physique—colloquially referred to as "fit."

A preference for thinner and more toned bodies arose in the twentieth century as medical opinion and popular imagery shifted. Although plumpness as a bodily style was viewed positively throughout the 1800s (Schwartz 1986), by the early 1900s medical experts had cast "excess" weight as a dangerous health problem (Czerniawski 2007). Coupled with increasingly popular images of svelte women, such as the Gibson Girl, and male bodybuilders, like Eugen Sandow, a body that was free of fat, muscular, and toned became accepted as the beauty and health ideal. Accordingly, exercise was extolled as a primary means of bodily improvement, and gymnasiums became popular locations where such work took place. Originally introduced to the U.S. in 1823, gymnasiums allowed students in elite boarding schools to perform exercises all year round (Bundgaard 2005). By the late 1880s, achieving health through physical activity had become a national pastime, prompting interest in outdoor pursuits, the playground movement, and instituting physical education in schools (Park 1989). Although individuals in all social strata were involved to varying degrees with health reform movements, their effects were most pronounced among members of the middle class.

Disciplining the body through ascetic health practices fit within a middle-class ethos that stressed hard work and the deferment of gratification (Weber [1905] 2002; Wagner 1997). Attention to hygiene, adherence to diet, and daily exercise functioned to distinguish the middle class from the lower and working classes (Morantz 1977). Books dedicated to exercises for women, men, and children pervaded middle-class thought, and the notion that one could—and indeed, should—work on the body became normalized in U.S. culture. By the mid-twentieth century, the idea of "fitness" (previously reserved for elite athletes) had become democratized and available to individuals who could achieve—or afford—such distinction (Hentges 2014; Bourdieu 1984). Within the middle-class, then, a body that was lithe and toned through physical activity functioned to announce one's social status (Schwartz 1986). Because physical exercise was seen as important for maintaining health, and because outer appearance was believed to be a reflection of inner character (Synnott 1993), work on the body increasingly became synonymous with work on the self.

Such efforts to reform the body have been conceptualized as "identity projects" (Giddens 1991) or "identity work" (Snow and Anderson 1987), and encompass activities undertaken as a means of establishing or maintaining one's identity through verbal, as well as physical, constructions (Stone 1970). When more specifically applied to the body, these identity projects become understood as "body work" (Gimlin 2002)—practices aimed at changing one's body that also influence identity. Body work may take a variety of forms, including cosmetic surgery, weight loss, muscle gain, hair style, clothing, tattoos, piercings, and comportment (Thorsby 2008; Pitts 2003). At the same time, these efforts have effects beyond the level of identity. Precisely because the body functions as a symbol of prestige, work on the body is also a means

of building up status. In this sense, body projects are both about identity *and* about investing in a valued resource useful for navigating social hierarchies, usefully conceptualized as "bodily capital" (Bourdieu 1984).

Bodily Capital and Status Hierarchies

Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital represents a compelling explanatory framework for analyzing embodiment and social status, particularly given that he was concerned with the reproduction of inequality through economic, social, and cultural means. To theorize how inequality was maintained, Bourdieu elaborated three key terms: capital, field, and *habitus*. Capital, according to Bourdieu, may be understood as economic capital (financial holdings and money), social capital (networks and connections), or cultural capital (tastes and dispositions). Although these various types of capital operate independently, they may be converted from one form into another, such as when one's social networks increase employment opportunities, or when economic capital is used to increase cultural capital (for example, through wine tasting courses or art openings).

For capital to have value, however, it must be activated within a space where such knowledge or behavior is prized, what Bourdieu describes as a "field." Important to the concept of field is the notion that individuals within fields struggle and use capital to achieve their aims, whether that involves sustaining the status quo or altering it. For example, Bourdieu (1993) suggests that art and literature comprise two such fields where people employ cultural capital and vie for dominance. Finally, the development of one's cultural capital relies significantly on the *habitus*. One's *habitus* encompasses the everyday, semi-unconscious practices that make up routine ways of speaking, behaving, and looking at the world, and extends from social and economic location (Bourdieu 1984). The *habitus* functions to set parameters on certain tastes and dispositions, which in turn determine one's relative level of cultural capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Key to the growth of the *habitus* remains class culture of origin. While social class alone does not determine all aspects of the *habitus*, Bourdieu strongly links them in much of his writing, for instance when discussing working-class versus middle-class tastes for specific food and types of exercise (Bourdieu 1984). According to Bourdieu, the *habitus* represents patterned modes of behavior that emerge visibly through the body, which he conceptualizes as bodily capital.[3]

Bodily capital provides a way to understand why individuals invest time, energy, and resources into their bodies, and what they expect to receive in return. As a concept, bodily capital is necessarily broad as it encompasses a variety of forms, including athletic prowess, attractiveness, physique, muscle tone/strength, agility, and other modes of embodiment. When deployed within particular social spaces, this form of capital may be exchanged for other types of

[3] Bourdieu uses "bodily capital" (Bourdieu 1984) and "physical capital" (Bourdieu 1978) interchangeably in his work, both terms functioning as synonyms for "embodied cultural capital" (Bourdieu 1986). Although some theorists have utilized the "physical capital" concept (Shilling 1993; Smith Maguire 2008), I use the term bodily capital due to its more immediate corporeal connotations, and to avoid confusion with the term "physical capital" used by economists and political scientists to describe non-liquid assets and material wealth (Boix 1997).

capital that can raise or lower one's relative status. For example, Mears (2011) explores how elite fashion models translate their bodily capital into successful careers on the runway. Similarly, individuals may increase bodily capital for more specific purposes, such as with boxers who use "pugilistic capital" in the ring (Paradis 2012; Wacquant 2004), bouncers who rely on their size to control club patrons (Monaghan 2002), or employees who are required to perform "aesthetic labor" when aligning their appearance with an employer's brand (Witz et al. 2003). Within the fitness field, scholars note that personal trainers utilize their bodily capital to maintain relationships with clients, bolster authority, and even perform health work (George 2008; Smith Maguire 2008; Sassatelli 1999; Hutson 2013). However, the bodily style that trainers are able to capitalize on remains the thin-toned ideal—an ideal that is simultaneously gendered, raced, and classed.

Although Bourdieu did not specifically address gender in his analysis of capital,[4] researchers note how thin, toned, and normatively feminine bodies are valued in contemporary culture. Drawing on data from a content analysis of contemporary fitness magazines, Dworkin and Wachs (2009) find that women in myriad social locations face pressure to conform to this beauty and fitness ideal. Similarly, Kwan (2010) refers to the advantages gained from approximating this ideal as a type of "thin privilege," similar to those derived from whiteness or maleness in everyday life. Yet, as researchers have noted, not all women follow these appearance mandates. Black, Latina, and lesbian women—groups typically excluded from the white, heterosexuality of "hegemonic femininity"[5] (Schippers 2007)—illustrate resistance by displaying voluptuous figures (Overstreet et al. 2010), re-claiming "pariah femininities" (Finley 2010), or creating valued styles within lesbian subcultures (Cogan 2001; Kazyak 2012). At the same time, avoiding one set of bodily norms may bring another set to bear. Writing about lesbian culture, Rothblum and colleagues (1999) note "that appearance norms continue to exist among lesbians and bisexuals. Some women experience these norms as being just as restrictive as those of the dominant culture" (25). Thus, the value of bodily capital in certain fields may depend on (and be mediated by) both race and sexuality.

Literature also suggests that women's body work must further attend to age and social class. Black (2004) finds that middle-class women in beauty salons strive for what she terms an "appropriate" look that aligns their appearance with social location. Lower and working-class women, on the other hand, often work to achieve "respectability" rather than appropriateness (Skeggs 1997). Arguing that women use appearance to deflect negative assumptions about working-class femininity by looking "respectable," Skeggs (1997) suggests that such efforts ultimately involve appropriating a middle-class style. Similarly, in their study of how Indian women navigate both modernizing and historical forces, Talukdar and Linders (2013) note that this building up of bodily capital may contain contradictory imperatives: eliminating body fat to

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[4] Bourdieu's treatise on gender, *Masculine Domination* (1998), has been criticized by feminist scholars (McCall 1992) who argue that he positions gender inequality as subordinate to social class inequality (Lovell 2001).
[5] Connell's (1987) formulation of this idea was termed "emphasized femininity" to reinforce its subordinate relation to hegemonic masculinity. However, Schippers (2007) has explored the concept's utility for analyzing relationships between femininities.

approach a middle-class ideal reinforces hegemonic femininity within a patriarchal gender order. Yet their findings indicate that Indian women, while aware of the messages regarding thinness, do not necessarily adopt them uncritically, and may constitute a type of active resistance: "Instead, the women recruit and make use of both traditional and imported meanings of the body to construct a sense of self that gives them some freedom to move about in the modern world without challenging their claims to an authentic Indian identity" (118). Such agency in bodily appearance, then, allows women some maneuverability in negotiating public spaces and social interactions.

Men, too, have become targets of advertising campaigns involving their appearances (Bordo 1999), leading to increased bodily dissatisfaction and the desire to work on their physiques (Duggan and McCreary 2004). Although the body work that men and women do is typically quite different (Kwan 2010), scholars argue that men in modern society are increasingly required to adopt masculine appearance norms. This masculine capital, however, is evaluated differently depending on social context. Bridges' (2009) concept of "gender capital," which describes the value attached to men's bodies in particular social spaces, captures this phenomenon. He notes how the body type that gains men respect in the gym (i.e., highly muscled) carries some degree of stigma outside the gym as they are scrutinized for their "bigness" in everyday life. Further, men's appearances are also influenced by social class, race, and sexuality. For example, Barber (2008) finds that some middle-class men frequent salons rather than traditional barber shops to receive a pampered experience and achieve a middle-class look. Writing about gay Black men's "erotic capital" in various sexual fields, Green (2008) describes how many must play up or play down their ethnicity in primarily white spaces. Similarly, Han (2009) finds that Asian men face racial prejudice in the gay community, and are required to adopt either hypermasculine or hyperfeminine appearances to interact successfully.

Thus, although individuals may cultivate bodily capital to raise their relative status within specific fields, their ability to do so is constrained by existing social relations. Given that people inhabit multiple, often intersecting locations, many status hierarchies are often operating in any social interaction. Further, the setting where such interactions take place determines the value and type of capital deployed. As noted by Sassatelli (1999), gyms structure people's interactions through physical, as well as gendered, space and constitute a distinct "field." Because such fields are inherently hierarchical and involve conflict between individuals with differing statuses, the body—both its appearance and abilities—may constitute one resource for navigating such distinctions.

Methods

To investigate the operation of bodily capital in the U.S. fitness industry, I interviewed 26 personal trainers and 25 clients from five types of gyms: chain/franchise; boutique/specialized; community/health center; medical facility/rehab center; and home/non-traditional gym. I recruited using email, "snowball" sampling, and by posting flyers in high traffic areas at local gyms. To qualify for the study, clients needed to be working out with a trainer, or to have done

so recently enough to remember their experiences in an interview; trainers needed to be currently working as personal trainers. I did not intentionally recruit trainer-client "pairs," although in two cases I did interview a trainer and client who were currently working out together. Because of this, the negotiations described in interview data are based on trainers' or clients' recollections of the interactions and individuals involved. I paid interviewees $20 for their time, and each interview took place at a time and location of the interviewee's choosing, averaging 60 to 90 minutes in length. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed, and all names that appear in the study are pseudonyms. I asked interviewees questions in four broad areas: 1) starting a training program/becoming a trainer, 2) exercises and routines, 3) interactions with clients/trainers, 4) and health and appearance. This study was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board and was determined to constitute no more than minimal risk.

The majority of interviewees (*n*=45) originated from the southeastern Michigan area and answered ads posted in local gyms or from email flyers. Other interviewees (*n*=6) answered a more broadly posted ad and were interviewed via Skype from five large U.S. metropolitan areas (Chicago, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.). The racial composition of the client sample was predominantly white (*n*=17), with additional interviewees identifying as Black (*n*=5), white/Jewish (*n*=1), Hawaiian (*n*=1), and Mexican-American (*n*=1). The gender composition of the client sample included more women (*n*=20) than men (*n*=5). Ages were also diverse, with the client sample ranging from 18 to 65 and a median of 41. The majority of trainers also identified as white (*n*=25), with one person identifying as Black/Jamaican. Similar to clients, the trainer sample included more women (*n*=20) than men (*n*=6). Trainers were somewhat younger overall, with an age range of 21 to 56 and a median of 34.

To supplement the in-depth interviews, I conducted participant observation at *Fitness Central* (a pseudonym), a popular gym chain that attracts a variety of clientele because of their widespread advertising and moderate prices. Demographically, the gym skews toward white and middle-class, although the population is racially diverse and has lower-priced membership plans specifically targeting students. Also, men and women—both older and younger—frequent the gym in relatively equal numbers, positioning this setting as useful for capturing a range of trainer-client interactions. Even with catering to a wider population, however, individuals who pay for personal training typically occupy higher class locations than most trainers. Rates for personal training in the southeastern Michigan area ranged from $45 to $75 per session, varying by gym type and services offered. Personal trainers usually make a flat percentage of the total cost per session, such that selling a lower-priced package may guarantee a sale but mean less money per hour. Trainers reported making anywhere between $20 and $25 per hour, depending on the package sold and gym policies. Yet trainers rarely worked more than 20 hours per week, either due to lack of clients or cancellations. Because of such limited financial opportunities, many personal trainers saw clients on the side or started an independent training business where they received 100% of the income.

As a technique, participant observation helped me integrate into the trainer-client culture at the gym. While informally observing as a member, it became clear that trainers spoke with other staff members, their own clients, and with people who were clients of other trainers. In order to gain access to the trainer-client culture, I needed to become a client myself. This allowed me to bring a critical eye to the process of working out with a personal trainer, and to reflexively observe my own interactions and the interactions of others. As someone who has been involved with gyms since my early teens, I found that my insider knowledge of fitness provided many rapport-building moments. Yet, because I had never worked with a personal trainer before, and because of my own embodiment as a white male in my 30s who presented as overweight, I was enough of an outsider to ask questions as a participant who did not possess a thin or toned body. This provided key rapport-building opportunities with clients and allowed trainers to retain their position as exercise and health experts.

I worked out with the same personal trainer once per week over a 14-month period between 2010 and 2011 (with the exception of eight weeks due to travel or lapses in training packages). Initially, my observations were conducted covertly while I worked out, with only my trainer aware of my status as a researcher. But as I was integrated into the gym culture and more trainers became aware of my study, some would approach and ask how the project was proceeding. I attempted to vary the time and day that I trained in order to capture a wide range of trainer-client interactions. However, because trainers are required to work erratic hours from week to week, my observations were able to capture only the trainer-client interactions happening while I was present, rather than the same trainer-client pairs every week. As I worked out, I took notes when in the vicinity of trainers and clients, which went largely unnoticed as many gym-goers carry notebooks with them to track exercises. Any descriptors used in observational data identify individuals only based on my assumption of visible characteristics such as race, gender, age, height, and body morphology.

To analyze the data, I used qualitative coding software (*NVivo*), which allowed me to organize codes as the analysis advanced through several stages. Initially, I conducted "open coding," a more inductive technique inspired by "grounded theory" (Strauss and Glaser 1967) but modified by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), whereby the data are sorted into patterns and themes are allowed to emerge. This phase typically produces numerous codes that may comprise whole sentences or succinct phrases that capture a distinct phenomenon. During this first phase, I developed 85 open codes. Next, I used these codes to re-analyze the data and performed a more deductive "focused coding" (160) that allowed me to sub-divide data into more specific codes. This phase of analysis required two scans of the data, and I was left with 38 stable codes that encompassed themes such as "Resisting Gender Stereotypes," "Female Trainers Asserting Knowledge," or "Older Clients and Physical Exertion." In the second coding phase, I paid attention to contradictions in the data, as such instances may not disconfirm findings, but add nuance to the analysis. For example, some situations involving gendered power dynamics were unable to be negotiated. These moments suggest that while some forms of bodily capital are

useful for facilitating cross-status interactions, they are not uniformly applicable or always successful.

This study faces several limitations. First, the sample is non-representative and restricted to one type of bodily capital (i.e., thin-toned) among personal trainers and clients in the fitness industry. Although bodily capital operates for individuals in other contexts, exercise is often done for reasons of both fitness and appearance. The bodily capital gained from working out, then, provides a unique perspective on the interplay between "health" and "beauty" in social life, but cannot account for all instances where bodily capital functions. Second, the trainer and client samples skew toward white, middle-class women. While this reflects trainers' accounts of working with a predominantly white, female client base that could afford regular training, additional geographic locations may produce different results. For example, a more urban setting would undoubtedly yield greater diversity and allow for a broader understanding of how bodily capital influences cross-status interactions along the lines of race, class, and sexuality.

"But, That's Kind of a 'Girly' Weight": Negotiating Gender in the Gym

Status negotiations involving gender allowed for re-arranging interactional power dynamics and for resisting cultural stereotypes regarding femininity in the gym. These interactions typically intersected with other status characteristics, such as race and social class, thereby facilitating or impeding the negotiation of difference. Individuals who resisted stereotypes performed a kind of "body work" (Gimlin 2002) by re-articulating the meaning of their bodily capital—and thus, reclaiming a degree of status—within the fitness field.

Gender and Power Dynamics

When negotiating gendered power dynamics, female trainers often needed to demonstrate their knowledge or ability to gain respect from male clients. Almost all of the female trainers (n=20) expressed difficulties in dealing with male clients who resisted their authority. In one session I observed, a female trainer argued with her male client regarding appropriate weights for developing muscle tone by using her bicep as a model:

> A female trainer is working with a male client in the free-weights area. She is white, approximately 30 years old, has long black hair and is quite good-looking with a thin, toned, and muscled torso. Her client is a white male in his 30s, a little taller than her and somewhat over-weight. I am alerted to their conversation when he balks at the weight she has told him to use. He says: "But that's less weight than I used last week." She replies, "Yes, but we're doing a different type of exercise this week and we need lower weights." He hesitates and looks at the weight and says: "But, that's kind of a girly weight, isn't it?" Rolling her eyes, she walks over and picks up the weight and says (slightly annoyed), "There are no such things as girly or manly weights. There are just different weights for different purposes. You need to use this one to do more reps. We're doing high

> reps, low weight." She pulls back her shirt sleeve and says, "That is how I got these [points to her bicep while flexing] and you'll eventually get them too if you listen to me." Seeing her muscular bicep, the client takes the weight from her and begins the exercise. (10/12/10, 1:15 p.m.)

Here, the trainer asserted her expertise, illustrating that her method had produced a larger, more defined bicep than her client currently possessed. The trainer's tone of voice and body language were not overly confrontational, but she was firm in her insistence of knowledge. Whereas a male trainer may have been able to more forcefully address the client, she instead opted for a stern reiteration of technique and avoided the problem faced by many women in positions of power who are viewed negatively when asserting themselves (Rudman and Kilianski 2000; Hirshfield 2010). This negotiation of gendered power dynamics, however, was likely facilitated by her possessing a normatively feminine appearance, as well as thin-toned bodily capital, thereby challenging some status hierarchies while reinforcing others involving hegemonic femininity.

In other cases, female trainers had to use more creative methods to convince difficult male clients. Sylvia (white, female, trainer, age 22) had to manage a situation when one client refused to listen:

> I had one client who over-trained and didn't listen to me about stretching. I tell my male clients about him and how he had to sit out for six months because he wasn't stretching before doing the "girl exercises." So they stretch now and they feel better…That's kind of how I bring those things to light around the "girl exercises." Or, I have them do them and they're like, "Oh wow, these are really hard."…And, I'll get down there and be like, "You know, I don't lift weights," and I'll do more pushups than they do right next to them.

As a way to bolster credibility, Sylvia used her own bodily capital and a degree of physical one-upmanship. Proving that she was capable in ways her client was not gave her the authority to prescribe routines as needed. Similarly, Jane (white, female, trainer, age 29) explains how she used a harder routine to navigate a client's sexist joking:

> I had one guy client who was a talker. And he was not a good talker because he would make "dumb girl jokes" in the beginning of the workout. And then I'd beat the crap out of him and he'd wonder why…I mean, he was just kidding around, but still, don't make dumb girl jokes at the beginning of your workout when I'm a girl trainer and I'm gonna work you out. [laughs] He just couldn't keep up with me…Eventually he caught on and stopped making the jokes.

Jane demonstrated her bodily capital by exercising more rigorously than her client to dissuade future "dumb girl" jokes. As an educational lesson, utilizing her strength and ability to signal a higher fitness level was effective in highlighting the client's inappropriate humor. In both cases,

if the female trainers had been unable to out-perform their male clients, they likely would not have been successful in maintaining their authority.

Interactions where the trainer-client gender roles were reversed provided additional insight into negotiating status differences, such as when a female client's efforts to push herself were addressed by the male trainer:

> A short, thin, white woman with red hair, probably in her 30s, is working out with a taller, white, male trainer who looks to be around her age. He is broadly muscled, quite big physically, but not overly "cut." He has a military-style haircut, although he is not training in a harsh or military style. His client is doing leg lunges while holding weights, and in between sets they seem to have a casual interaction, almost as if they have a friendship outside the gym. The trainer has instructed her to do 12 controlled lunges. As he counts down from 12 and gets to zero, she keeps going. When she does one extra, he humors her by smiling and saying, "Ah ha, got another one in you, eh?" As she does yet another, he attempts to stop her by saying, "Okay, that's enough. Come on back up." But, she keeps going for two more before struggling to finish. Finally, the trainer uses a stern voice and says, "Look, I know you want to prove something, like you can handle my workout, but you're gonna hurt yourself and that's counterproductive" (2/18/2011, 2:25 p.m.).

In this example, the trainer had to re-establish his authority when the client challenged it by not stopping when instructed. Interestingly, this interaction is not unlike other instances I observed where trainers strongly encouraged clients to do one or two additional repetitions by telling them to "Come on!" or "Push it!" Clearly, the client proved that she was physically capable of performing more than the prescribed set. But because she did so by challenging the trainer's authority, the unsanctioned behavior did not garner the praise she expected. This suggests that women's negotiation of gender hierarchies using this type of bodily capital is perhaps more difficult without the additional support of institutional role or specialized knowledge. In effect, all three factors—role, specialized knowledge, and bodily capital—work concurrently to provide an explanation for why some gender dynamics are negotiated successfully and others are not.

Resisting Gender Stereotypes

Not all negotiations involving bodily capital rearranged interactional power dynamics so overtly. Many female participants recalled using their abilities to resist gender stereotypes that dissociated femininity from strength and physical exertion. This resistance served a dual purpose. First, it allowed them to assert their belonging in the gym space and illustrate their prowess at a variety of activities. Second, it functioned as a means of recouping lost status due to deviation from cultural ideals of thinness or strength. For example, Gwen (white, female, client, age 18) says:

> When I'm running, if there's a group of guys, I tend to speed up. Like, that's just

> an instinct that I know all my friends share too. You know, that mental wanting to show off…like, showing that I'm being fit, not lazy...Even in the gym…when it's practically all guys…I noticed that there's a drastic difference in my motivation…like, wanting to prove that I can be a strong girl.

Gwen explains that, whenever possible, she pushes herself to achieve beyond her perception of what others think she can accomplish. As a triathlon runner, she desired the recognition that she could undertake activities that many, if not most, of the men in the gym could not. By out-performing men on the track, Gwen resisted gendered stereotypes and reclaimed a degree of status in the process. Gimlin (2002) argues that this pushing back against stereotypes constitutes a form of body work, illustrated by members of the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA) who re-articulate their bodies in positive, rather than stigmatized, ways. For Gwen, doing so reinforced the image of a capable athlete—both to herself and others in the gym.

Although many negotiations took place between women and men, some female clients related instances of resisting bodily stereotypes imposed by female trainers. As Rebecca (Black, female, client, age 37) explains:

> I've been weight training for years…I feel like people see me, you know, I'm heavier, so they think like "Oh, she ain't ever seen the inside of nobody's gym"… I see female trainers in my gym, and I don't like them [laughs]. Because, number one, most female trainers are tiny. They're tiny, and they think you want to be tiny like them. I had an interaction with a trainer in my gym when I first joined. And, this woman trainer who does not know me goes: "Oh, so you're finally gonna do it, huh?" And I was like, "What are you talking about?" And she says, "You're finally gonna work out." I said, "I've been working out for years." And she's like, "Oh, well it doesn't count if it's just drudgery to you." I was like, "I like working out. I'm thinking that you just walked up here and made like 20 assumptions about me, and I don't know you."

Rebecca and the trainer went on to have a "nice conversation" in which she explained that "…you don't have to be skinny to feel good about yourself…a lot of skinny people don't feel good about themselves," with which the trainer agreed. Rebecca, who earlier in the interview said that she finds herself attractive and enjoys that others find her attractive too, sought out a personal trainer to improve her health and strength, not to lose weight. The trainer Rebecca spoke with evaluated her appearance, judged it as low bodily capital, and assumed she was interested in adopting an ideal femininity involving thinness—one usually associated with white women (Anderson et al. 2010). As scholars have noted, bodily ideals and image may differ widely between social groups based on race/ethnicity (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2003; Craig 2002), gender (Martin 1998), and sexuality (Hutson 2010; Pfeffer 2008). By asserting her desire to remain in the gym and expressing satisfaction with her own appearance, Rebecca pushed back against the thin-toned ideal with a curvy, full-figured body that resisted being disciplined.

Such negotiations with hegemonic femininity were common in interviews with female clients, many using appearance to indicate a dedication to fitness while working out. This involved a careful negotiation where some aspects of hegemonic femininity (i.e., appearance, hair, cosmetics) were given up in order to embrace others (i.e., thinness, muscle tone, health). As Tori (Black, female, client, age 26) notes:

> I see people who wear make-up at the gym and I think it's stupid. You know, you're in a place to better your appearance, so why come hiding something? But, I know there are some people who can't go in without make-up, and more power to you, but it's not for me. Once you own the fact that you're a woman, you walk with confidence and you don't need make-up. You're in a gym, men are gonna look anyway. You want that attention? Go drop something and bend over to pick it up [laughs]. Don't buy the make-up and burn your eyes. And men look, regardless of if the eye liner is on or not. Besides, if you want a man who's really in shape? He's going to be looking at what you're doing, like if you're really working out or if you're just trying to get his attention.

Tori equates make-up and too much attention to appearance with either trying to get noticed, not exercising very hard, or both. These associations were common in interviews with clients and trainers. As Jacob (white, male, trainer, age 26) explains:

> Well, I can certainly tell if somebody's putting on makeup before going into the gym. I think it's pretty funny. I'm not a fan of it [laughs], but I understand it. I mean, a lot of people do go to the gym to meet people. Or, at least they go willing to be met…So, they always have to be on their A-game…I'm not a fan of it. But, I understand it, so make-up…it doesn't bother me too much as long as, you know, they're still putting the same effort into what they're doing.

While Jacob acknowledges that he understands why some gym-goers wear makeup, it is clear that he categorizes such appearances as indicating a lesser interest in exercise.

What is noteworthy is how often men's appearance in the gym fits with stereotypes of ideal masculinity. Men, even if they might spend considerable time preparing for the gym, do not need to manage competing demands, as their expected appearance aligns with what Connell (1987) terms "hegemonic masculinity" (i.e., relaxed, rough, easy-going). In this respect, women are required to navigate multiple levels of bodily expectations when going to work out, usually having to choose between investing in "feminine capital" (Otis 2011) and adopting an un-adorned style that emphasizes their dedication to fitness. Similar to other "double binds" faced by women in professional contexts (Valian 1998), appearing in traditionally feminine clothing, colors, or styles comes at the cost of assumptions regarding competence and aptitude (McCall 1992). Such findings support Dworkin's (2001) assertion that women face a "glass ceiling" in the gym, due not to biological limitations, but to cultural stereotypes regarding femininity and fitness.

To resolve this double bind, some women side-stepped these issues by consciously disregarding the gym as a place to meet potential partners. This allowed many to revel in the space as one area where they did not need to worry about looks, sweating, or someone trying to flirt with them. As Anna (white, female, client, age 30) explains, "I mean, I hardly wear makeup to work, much less to work out…it's my space to sweat, not dress up…So, I mean, that might have happened [being flirted with], but I would have been oblivious to it because that's not somewhere I think about meeting people." Thus, many women negotiated against cultural stereotypes, relinquishing some aspects of hegemonic femininity to build up others. Similar to how women in contemporary India manage the demands of class and gender (Talukdar and Linders 2013), such agency in navigating the fitness field may constitute a form of active and creative resistance to structural inequalities.

"Well, They Treat Me Like a 'Nice, Old Lady'": Negotiating Age and Status

As with gender, status negotiations involving age also re-arranged interactional power dynamics and allowed individuals to resist stereotypes that associated aging with weakness and degeneration. As scholars have noted, dominant cultural narratives of the aging body are intertwined with discourses that position it as either a medical "problem" in need of solving (Dionigi 2006), or something to be ignored when associated with appearance and sexuality (Scherrer 2009). The most common construction of the aging body is one of decline, as Phoenix and Smith (2011, 630) note: "Deeply embedded within Western society, the prevailing master narrative associated with growing older is the narrative of decline…an inevitable downward trajectory of physical deterioration." Because of this, older clients often attempted to resist such narratives in their interactions with trainers. However, this required negotiation through the relinquishing of status, as they exchanged economic for bodily capital. Younger trainers—whose lower socio-economic status would typically place them in a subordinate position—relied on their bodily capital to achieve interactional authority over higher-status clients, thereby gaining economic capital in the process. Such negotiations allowed for contesting some aspects of age stereotypes while reinforcing others.

Age and Power Dynamics

Although male trainers in the study rarely needed to use bodily capital to negotiate gendered power dynamics, they often had to navigate age and occupational status differences between themselves and older clients. Chris (white, male, trainer, age 21), a younger personal trainer who had recently earned a B.A., notes that the boutique gym where he works selects employees based on their appearance: "They definitely hire attractive, fit people. So, it can be a little intimidating for clients coming in there." Yet, beyond just fulfilling the role of a trainer, he understands that bodily capital is what allows him a degree of authority:

> I doubt that an out-of-shape trainer could ever be successful, because that's part of the trust. How can you dedicate that much time, or that much money to this

> person who is trying to get you in shape? You have to practice what you preach…You have to demonstrate that you know this.

Chris acknowledges that part of demonstrating "you know this" involves possessing a thin and toned physique—a valued credential understood as bodily capital.

Because the gym caters to a higher-end clientele, he regularly encounters many occupational elites. Chris worries about how his youth is perceived by clients and feels that it might hinder his efforts to establish authority. Often, he prepares extensively before a session as a way to boost his own confidence when training clients, explaining: "I know I'm good at what I do, but some of my clients are doctors. This one woman is a double doctor—she's a medical doctor *and* she has a Ph.D." When I asked him about how he handles the many high-status clients he sees, he reflected on being a young trainer:

> I don't have a lot of clients who will tell me no, even though I'm just a kid. They won't—I have these adults who just won't say no. I'll do stuff that will make them extremely uncomfortable, and they'll hate doing it, but they'll do it because I'm the trainer. It's a weird dynamic. Because it's the opposite of culture, in general. I respect my elders and all that stuff. You go in there, they look to me for advice, and they want to get my approval.

In his interactions with clients, Chris understands that his bodily capital functions to provide him with authority and the ability to negotiate age and occupational status differences. Yet, drawing on thin-toned bodily capital reinforces the dominance of a largely middle-class aesthetic.

Other trainers negotiated status differences both by using bodily capital and by making connections with clients—often as a means of finding social or economic opportunities. Davin (Black/Jamaican, male, trainer, age 23), who believes that personal trainers should be the "epitome of physical fitness" in their appearance, explains how there is a give and take when training clients:

> What I love about training is that you can help people get to their goals…you can watch them change…But you also become friends with your clients, and you want to help them get in shape. And sometimes they give you advice too…Like one of my clients today…he's actually from Germany and here for work…but, he was giving me advice kind of as an older figure, you know, what I should do as far as grad school or law school.

As with previous status negotiations, Davin sees personal training as a mutually beneficial relationship whereby trainers provide exercise knowledge and motivation while older clients provide advice or personal connections. This supports Smith Maguire's (2008) findings regarding how personal trainers must perform emotional labor to establish trust and ensure future revenue. Davin recognizes that his bodily capital is "a privilege" and that "people will look to you as an expert," and he takes advantage of the position by soliciting advice from clients. Matt (white, male, trainer, age 25) echoes these sentiments when discussing opportunities that arise

from training: “I train a business professor…and we talked about business opportunities…And so, I try to play that out a little bit, when I’m training people because you never know when those opportunities are going to come about.” Both men used training to advance their careers, and in this sense were exchanging bodily capital for economic and social capitals. Additionally, although the majority of interviewees were women, none mentioned such conscious attempts to parlay training relationships into economic opportunities. These data echo past studies finding that women are less comfortable using (or are excluded from) informal networks that may significantly determine advancement (Liff and Ward 2001) and suggests that such behavior extends beyond the workplace into other areas of social life.

Clients, too, understood the negotiation of power dynamics in terms of give and take. Jessica (white, female, client, age 64), a professor at a large public university, notes how the trainer-client relationship permits different configurations of power:

> Well, [personal training] definitely has a different kind of authority to it. Like, my friend doesn't have any authority over me. [laughs] But with a trainer, I’m dutiful. It's a different kind of exchange relationship and a different kind of role. We're enacting really different roles. And I am, even though I'm the person who's older and paying, I feel like I'm subordinate to, you know, what I'm doing. I'm doing my role as trainee, and that person has the expertise and power.

Jessica recognizes that, although she is in an objectively higher socio-economic position, she defers to the expertise of the trainer—indeed, to the trainer’s “power.” Jessica later mentions, however, that part of this power relies on a trainer’s being “in shape and fit.” As scholars have illustrated, personal trainers’ bodies operate as credentials that allow them to assert authority over clients and claim expert knowledge (Smith Maguire 2008; Hutson 2013). Jessica’s compliance with the trainer acknowledges the temporary re-arranging of age and class power dynamics as a way to negotiate difference and achieve the level of fitness she desires.

Resisting Age Stereotypes

Older clients, more so than trainers, had to negotiate against dominant cultural beliefs regarding age. All clients age 50 and over (*n*=5) participated in what Dionigi (2006) refers to as “negative stereotypes of aging” (187) that cast older bodies as frail or incapable—even if they considered themselves exceptions. For example, Rachel (white, female, client, age 61) says:

> Yeah, those last 10 pounds are just not gonna budge. [laughs] I'm 61, I mean the clothes just don't fit like they did when I was 20. So I say, why use this as an indicator of how fit I am? It really has nothing to do with it. I’m more fit now than I was when I was younger anyway. If you put me up against a young person who is not fit, I can do a lot more than they can.

Rachel is confident in her strength and endurance, asserting that age has little to do with fitness, and in this way resists associations of aging with degeneration. Indeed, after her first session

with her trainer, who pushed her to the point of nausea (a common side-effect of intense exercise), Rachel decided that she would continue training, surprising herself and the trainer: "After that I thought, oh my god…But I came back the next time and I could tell he was surprised. And I thought, I'm gonna conquer this…and it took off from there, the intensity of it." Rachel's insistence made her feel confident that she could do things that others could not, both individuals her own age and even younger people who may not be fit.

Similarly, Vaughn (white, male, client, age 65) defied his trainer's expectations of what an older client could accomplish when embarking on bodybuilding in his 50s. He explains:

> Well, I was getting older, like into my mid-50s. And, I found this guy, a trainer—stunning looking guy…so I approached him and said that I wanted to work with him four days a week. I said, "I wanna work hard. We're really going to do this." Because, at the time, I was not in good shape at all…He said, "You've got to be shitting me." But I was like, "Nope. We're gonna do this. We're gonna go." He probably thought I was just one of these old guys who has it in his head to look like a magazine model…but I started eating really clean…my carbs were down to not much. It was all protein…So, I'd be there four and five days a week working hard…I even got to the point where I met all of the high school requirements, you know, when you do as well as any kid that ever got the highest score on that test?

Vaughn's hard work translated into a muscular physique by spurring his trainers' enthusiasm for pushing him beyond his own limits—limits that were in place based on assumptions about age and masculinity. Whereas many older men often turn to "age-appropriate" physical pursuits like golf (Eman 2011), Vaughn instead set out to fulfill his goal of achieving a muscular body. As Eman (2011) finds in her study of how older men navigate the loss of hegemonic masculinity, many become physically active to maintain a degree of masculinity. As with negotiations involving women, such resistance can be considered a form of reclaiming lost status—here, masculinity associated with younger men. This valorization of youth clearly influenced both Rachel's and Vaughn's experiences—they compared their own performance to that of younger people, thus reinforcing associations of youth with vibrancy. As such, pushing back against some stereotypes had the effect of reinforcing others.

Many older clients also noted that they had to advocate for harder workouts, as younger personal trainers tended toward a softer approach. Jessica began working with a personal trainer to improve her functionality and strength, but found that trainers treated her too gently:

> Well, they treat me like a 'nice, old lady'…"Oh, she's so sweet, she smiles a lot." And I'm like "Come on!" you know, I wanna get stronger, you gotta push me. [laughs]…But, I work out with these two guys…They're both young, and I think I'm their mom's age. But, I think they appreciate that I want to get stronger. And I can tell by the way they encourage me...they see that I'm trying to push myself.

Jessica pushes herself to contradict negative stereotypes of aging and resist the trainer's treatment of her as a "nice, old lady." This negotiation of age and status allowed her to reinforce

her identity as physically capable while insisting that her trainers help her cultivate bodily capital. In this example, the master narrative of decline (Phoenix and Smith 2011) worked against Jessica—trainers assumed she was incapable and treated her gently, thus continuing the enfeeblement of older clients, particularly women. Although research shows that older individuals rely on a variety of strategies for navigating aging and identity (Dionigi 2013), using bodily capital to negotiate age and class differences represents an effective, and under-studied, phenomenon.

These data suggest that bodily capital is one factor enabling interactions across status differences. In many cases, bodily capital acts as a type of corporeal credibility that either bolsters trainers' authority or allows clients to challenge stereotypes. Additionally, these interactions require a complex interplay of capitals that benefit both parties—trainers exchange bodily capital resulting from their fit-appearing bodies for economic capital, while clients trade some degree of socio-economic status for additional bodily capital. Successful negotiation, however, often comes at the expense of reifying youthfulness as the standard by which older (and younger) individuals are judged. This echoes earlier findings regarding the negotiation of gender, where resisting stereotypes of femininity reinforced the dominance of a middle-class, thin-toned bodily aesthetic. In both cases, it is clear that bodily capital remains useful for navigating some social hierarchies while leaving others in tact and perhaps stronger.

Conclusion

Successfully negotiating status differences in social interaction requires individuals to use a variety of available resources. The body—often overlooked in sociological studies of inequality (Frank 1991)—represents one such resource. To facilitate interaction across status differences, personal trainers and clients rely on bodily capital to navigate existing hierarchies. Status differences involving gender and age are negotiated in two ways: individuals use bodily capital to re-arrange interactional power dynamics, or to resist stereotypes. Female trainers utilize bodily capital to gain authority over male clients, and younger trainers rely on embodiment as a source of credibility when training higher-status clients. Gender and age stereotypes are negotiated when female clients resist cultural tropes excluding women (and femininity) from the gym space, while older clients push back against the association of age with debility. Such negotiations involve an exchange whereby both parties give and get something in return: trainers trade their bodily capital for a degree of status and authority, and clients give up some degree of status to invest in bodily capital.

These findings suggest that bodily capital is relevant in a variety of status distinction-making processes. Certainly this is true in the fitness industry, but also in related areas such as professional sports, modeling, entertainment, and perhaps some sectors of the sex work industry. Conceptualizing the body as a form of capital allows scholars to theorize appearance as an axis of inequality that shapes people's lives. Indeed, while bodily capital may function for personal trainers, models, and athletes, it also operates in everyday interactions, from jobs and promotions to classrooms and marriage markets (Rhode 2010; Saguy 2013). Both symbolic interactionists

and cultural sociologists have noted how micro-level interactions often function to reproduce macro-level social arrangements (Goffman 1967; Ridgeway 2006; Sewell 1992). Yet, because interactions are not always predictable, they "have a dynamic potential to introduce change into the larger structural patterns that they enact" (Ridgeway 2006, 5). For example, social psychologists have shown that individual prejudice against disadvantaged "others" is more difficult to sustain after interacting with a member from a marginalized group (Pettigrew and Tropp 2008). In turn, people in positions of power are less likely to actively discriminate in hiring or policy decisions, making micro-level interactions consequential for addressing inequality.

It is also clear, however, that men and women are able to leverage bodily capital to different extents when challenging stereotypes or attempting to rearrange power dynamics. Specifically, women face a double bind of femininity and fitness in the gym, where they are only able to capitalize on the benefits of bodily capital by forgoing other aspects of hegemonic femininity. Whereas men are able to appear in ways aligned with hegemonic masculinity and are accorded competence, women have to navigate competing demands around femininity, appearance and authority. Additionally, male trainers explicitly use bodily capital as a means of furthering their careers or finding additional opportunities, while no women trainers report attempts to parlay bodily capital into occupational advancement. As suggested previously, this points to continuing gender inequality in the fitness industry and calls into question the extent to which bodily capital can influence the wider "gender order" (Connell 1987).

Although this research was able to address only one type of bodily capital—thinness and muscle tone in the U.S. fitness industry—its potential usefulness for managing diverse status interactions is evident. Yet because of the study's limitations, additional questions remain. Future research might consider what specific types of embodiment and appearance are most effective in negotiating status differences. For example, as women and men age, how do they invest in and exchange bodily capital in different or similar ways? Do high-status men—for example, CEOs and politicians—care about their appearance and physicality? If using bodily capital to resist gender or age stereotypes is a means of reclaiming lost status through embodied distinction (Bourdieu 1984), what types of status are individuals most interested in regaining—economic, gender, age? Similarly, what facets of a professional athlete's ability can be considered bodily capital, and how do they harness appearance as "erotic capital" (Green 2008) when appearing in advertisements?

Of particular importance will be research that tries to disentangle the connections between health and appearance, specifically around thinness and muscularity. Although individuals may engage in "healthy" practices to obtain valued bodies, many activities that produce idealized physiques are far from healthy (i.e., cosmetic surgery, extreme dieting, liposuction, tanning, and steroid use). By the same token, many things that produce health often have little to do with beauty and appearance. As recent research has shown (Jutel and Buetow 2007), conceptualizing fitness through outer appearance presents problems in everyday life as well as for medical diagnoses. Untying these associations and investigating how such assumptions intersect with

gender, race, social class, and sexuality would better illuminate the role of the body in systems of inequality. Such research constitutes an important intervention in understanding the operation of power at both the interactional and cultural levels, and helps explain why individuals enhance or downplay aspects of their appearance in various social contexts. Rather than being seen as mere indulgences in vanity, these alterations to one's presentation of self represent strategic attempts to increase bodily capital and consciously navigate status hierarchies.

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