THE BODY BEAUTIFUL: Symbolism and Agency in the Social World

Erica Reischer
Independent Scholar, Oakland, California; email: ericar@alumni.princeton.edu

Kathryn S. Koo
Department of English, Saint Mary’s College of California, Moraga, California 94575; email: kkoo@stmarys-ca.edu

Key Words  beauty, embodiment, gender, femininity

Abstract  The prominence of the body in popular culture has prompted intense academic interest in recent decades. Seeking to overturn a naturalistic approach to the body as a biological given, this broad literature redefines the body as a sociocultural and historical phenomenon. Within anthropology, two primary theoretical orientations toward the body have emerged: the body as “symbol” and the body as “agent.” This review article provides an overview of these dominant theoretical approaches in the context of recent scholarship on body ideals and, in particular, the body beautiful. The review explores also the body beautiful as a primary site for the construction and performance of gender, and specifically of femininity, with examples drawn from the abundant literature on women’s bodies.

INTRODUCTION

As the anthropological record amply demonstrates, bodies have been and continue to be reshaped in a myriad of culturally relevant ways. The evidence ranges from traditional practices of foot binding and neck elongation to more recent means of body modification through cosmetic surgery and scientifically sophisticated exercise regimes. Humans may be the only creatures that steadfastly refuse to let nature alone dictate their appearance. Indeed, our capacity for self-modification and adornment is a central and essential feature of our humanity, though the particular ways in which we alter our bodies are clearly a cultural phenomenon.

Bodies are modified for many reasons—for example, to register participation in a social group, to claim an identity in opposition to a social group, to signal a significant change in social status—but the overarching theme and primary end of most body work is the pursuit and attainment of beauty, however it may be defined. Among the tribes of the Kalahari Desert, shiny skin is considered an attractive feature, so much so that even in times of famine, the tribes choose to
use precious animal fats as a skin emollient rather than as food (Turner 1980). In the West, cosmetics are a multibillion-dollar industry in the United States alone. A more extreme form of beautification, cosmetic surgery, once restricted to the elite, has in recent years enjoyed a much larger and more diverse clientele owing to its rapidly growing popularity and social acceptance. Statistics reveal that in the mid-1990s, 1 out of every 35 surgical procedures performed in the United States was performed for aesthetic reasons alone (Gilman 1999, p. 4). And the number of such procedures continues to rise.

Even our toys are undergoing “the knife” in the name of beauty. In 1997, Mattel’s most famous toy, the Barbie doll, emerged from the factory operating room with a “wider waist, slimmer hips, and...a reduction of her legendary bustline” (Wall Street Journal 1997). This reconfiguration of the West’s premiere icon of femininity after nearly forty years suggests that the image of femininity embodied by the original Barbie of the late 1950s has undergone a radical transformation of its own. Beauty, though highly subjective, is more than simply a matter of aesthetics or taste. Cultural ideals of beauty are also an index and expression of social values and beliefs—so much so that “the history of [society] is in large measure the history of women’s beauty” (Jury & Jury 1986).

In the last few decades, the prominence of the body in popular culture has generated intense academic interest and activity. Instead of viewing the body as “an uninteresting prerequisite of human action” (Shilling 1993, p. 19), fields from across the disciplinary spectrum have turned their attention to the body as a central concern of social theory. Seeking to overturn a naturalistic approach to the body as biological given, this broad literature has redefined the body as a sociocultural and historical phenomenon (e.g., Bourdieu 1977, Elias 1978, Foucault 1979, Goffman 1968, Mauss 1973).

Within this rich and varied literature, two primary theoretical orientations toward the body, and the relationship between the body and society, have become prominent: the “symbolic body” and the “agentic body.” The first and more prevalent perspective focuses on the representational or symbolic nature of the body as a conduit of social meaning, whereas the second highlights the role of the body as an active participant or agent in the social world. This chapter provides an overview of these dominant theoretical approaches, with an eye toward their varied, nuanced expressions in the context of recent anthropological scholarship on body ideals and, in particular, the body beautiful.

Because “beauty work” has historically been the province of women, examples of the body beautiful are drawn primarily from women’s ideals of beauty. This is not to say, however, that male body ideals and the coding of masculinity through these ideals have been overlooked. Indeed, a number of recent works attest to the growing interest in the social and cultural production of the masculine. Connell (1995) has deployed feminist and queer theory in order to examine the highly constructed nature of Western masculinity. Bordo (1999), a prominent theorist on women and women’s bodies, has considered the “double bind of masculinity” that has emerged in a culture that both celebrates male “primitive potency” and forbids male sexual aggression. Faludi (1999) surveys male disaffection in our contemporary culture
(reflected in increased violence, resistance to feminism, extreme nationalism, etc.) as symptomatic of a growing crisis about the meaning of masculinity itself, a crisis that points to the “betrayal” of men by the very masculinist ideals that they are meant to embody. But beauty itself has been traditionally gendered as a female trait of desirability. This review focuses on beauty as read through women’s bodies because, as one cultural historian has observed, beauty has historically been a “special category of women’s experience” (Banner 1983, p. 9).

Authors across the disciplinary spectrum, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, and feminist studies, have written extensively on the body beautiful. Because it would be impossible to survey all the significant literature, this review focuses primarily on the key theoretical movements in the anthropological literature with an eye toward those theorists from other disciplines who provide a noteworthy addition, nuance, or complication to the cultural construction of beauty. This chapter is also bounded by geography. The growing number of studies concerned with the construction of beauty in non-Western contexts demands a specific framing of this chapter’s investments. The West serves as the central focus of this study, whereas the regions of Saharan and sub-Saharan Africa serve as critical counterpoints to the West and its hegemonic cultural dominance. In the West, the condition of thinness has become such a widely accepted prerequisite of the body beautiful that it almost seems “natural” to assume that a thin body is aesthetically preferable to a corpulent one. But the celebration of female obesity in one Arab culture of Saharan Africa (Popenoe 2004) offers a revealing opposition to that ideal and further serves to illuminate the constructed nature of all notions of beauty.

Starting from the notion that the bodies we cultivate are ultimately indexes and expressions of the social world they inhabit, the chapter begins by exploring two main representational approaches: the body beautiful as an icon of social values and, less benignly, as a mechanism of social power and control. The discussion then turns to more recent theoretical perspectives that emphasize an active role for the body in the social world. These alternative conceptualizations highlight the body as a fundamental aspect of the acting self, and so recognize the capacity of embodied selves to appropriate the symbolic nature of the body to their own ends. Here, beauty becomes an embodied concept that is not simply an articulation of dominant cultural values but also a negotiation of them. In the merging of its symbolic and agentic capacities, then, the body beautiful may be read as a primary site for the social construction and performance of gender. The chapter concludes by integrating these theoretical views of the body in society that together suggest the capacity of the body to signify the social and to transform social reality.

THE SYMBOLIC BODY

Mary Douglas, in her groundbreaking work *Natural Symbols* (1970), was among the first to articulate the symbolic significance of the body. In this work, Douglas argues that “there is a strong tendency to replicate the social situation in symbolic form by drawing richly on bodily symbols in every possible dimension” (1970, p. 32).
Given this notion that the social situation is reproduced or “replicated” through bodily symbols, the body is viewed metaphorically as a text that can be “read” as a symbol or signifier of the social world that it inhabits. Although this notion of the body as a homologous reflection of social form has drawn criticism as scholarly conceptions of the body have become increasingly complex (see, for example, Comaroff 1985), Douglas’s symbolic reading of the body stands as one of the defining works of the representational perspective.

If the body is, as Douglas argues, a “text” upon which social meanings are inscribed, then a common vocabulary, a common symbol set, is needed to decipher those meanings. Our bodies transmit a dizzying array of complex information about ourselves, with or without our intention, and we and other members of our culture tend to be expert at reading those culturally specific meanings almost instantaneously. But, whereas Americans would understand a ring worn on the third finger of a woman’s left hand as a signifier of her status as a married woman, they are likely far less adept at deciphering the significance of a woman’s white robes in India, which indicate widowhood. Even within a single culture, the message of the body is subject to change over time. Whereas in many Western cultures a large, plump body once connoted prosperity, health, and high social ranking, this same body now signifies quite the opposite: poverty, ill health, and low socioeconomic status.

Taking their cues from Douglas’s reading of the body as the site of symbolic representation, many writers have observed that bodies have the potential to express core social values (Becker 1994, Bordo 1993, Brownell 1991, Crawford 1984, Glassner 1988, Ritenbaugh 1982). From this perspective, the quality of attractiveness that we find in the bodies around us is not insulated from cultural and cognitive processes; attractiveness is that which is found ideologically appealing within an overarching set of values. As Balsamo notes, “The body becomes... the site at which women, consciously or not, accept the meanings that circulate in popular culture about ideal beauty... The female body comes to serve as a site of inscription, a billboard for the dominant cultural meanings that the female body is to have in postmodernity” (1996, p. 78).

Also characteristic of this perspective is Bordo’s Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body (1993) in which she argues that “the firm, developed body has become a symbol of correct attitude,” suggesting “willpower, energy, control over infantile impulse, the ability to ‘shape your life’” (1993, p. 195). Because in most Western cultures we generally take that which is communicated by the body to be a message about the self, Bordo notes that the size and shape of one’s body has come to signify the moral state of the individual. For instance, one’s body is a physical reflection of one’s internal capacity for commitment and self-control. Bordo argues that our contemporary cultural abhorrence of fat, or loose flesh in general, is not about the aesthetics of physical size per se, but rather about changes in the social symbolism of body weight and size. Developing and displaying an ideal body type thus signals one’s cooperative participation in a culturally meaningful system of values.
But feminist scholars such as Bordo view body ideals not simply as benign symbols of social values. Following the insights of Marx and Foucault, these feminist theorists also point to the ways in which body ideals serve as mechanisms of social power and control. For example, the slender body ideal symbolizes not only an aesthetic ideal but also the internal discipline that may be necessary to achieve it. As many critics have observed, the desire to demonstrate such discipline has manifested itself in the remarkable rise of eating disorders in recent decades (Bordo 1993, Callaghan 1994, Chernin 1981, Nichter & Nichter 1991, Orbach 1978, Wolf 1991, Vertinsky 1987). In their pursuit of this ideal, women have subjected themselves to extreme regimens of diet, exercise, and other forms of physical self-improvement, efforts that all too often become all consuming to the detriment of more socially relevant projects. Thus, the ideal gendered body does not merely remain in the realm of the symbolic; its power lies in its ability to directly influence behavior within the social domain.

Extending Crawford’s (1984) observation that the contradictory economic mandates of production and consumption are reproduced at the site of the body, Bordo argues that personal body management is intimately connected with the management of the larger “social body” through consumer culture (1993, p. 199). Our market economy requires that we participate in regular cycles of control and release, as exemplified by our rotations between work and play, weekday and weekend. Control is required by capitalism so that production continues, and release is necessary so that the endless stream of products produced in a capitalist society is ultimately consumed. Capitalist ideology requires us to work hard eight hours a day or more and then feel entitled to an indulgent break from that disciplined regime, only to resume work again the next day. Consequently, the slender ideal is capitalist ideology embodied: It reminds us that we must know when to say when. But as Bordo notes, the fine balance between control and release can be elusive, given the contradictions that emerge between our discipline as producers and our desires as consumers. With increasing frequency, we bear witness to what happens when one aspect of our capitalist personality dominates the other: excessive discipline that results in anorexia, or excessive desire reflected in obesity. In the case of bulimia, the body becomes the site of both forms of excess (Bordo 1993, p. 201).

In her book *The Beauty Myth* (1991), Wolf notes that the rise of eating disorders in the 1980s coincided with the rise of women to positions of power and authority within the workplace. Their simultaneous rise was no accident, according to Wolf, as women were feeling the effects of a feminist backlash and the deployment of a “political weapon” (1991, p. 10) by male institutions of power: “the beauty myth.” According to this myth, beauty is an objective attribute that all women necessarily want to embody. Representing fertility and evolutionary triumph, a beautiful woman is and always has been more desirable to men than are her peers. In debunking this myth, Wolf asserts that beauty is not a universal or natural category but rather a form of cultural “currency” used by male institutions to limit and control women’s access to power. Within this economy, beauty is not merely a desirable asset but a “legitimate and necessary qualification for a woman’s rise
in power” (1991, p. 28). Through a rigorous reshaping of the body and a constant vigilance against the noticeable (and ultimately unavoidable) effects of aging, women might attain the beauty upon which their professional success depends. According to Wolf, a new “meritocracy” based on beauty has emerged in opposition to women’s proven talents and capabilities in order to justify and maintain women’s secondary status in the workplace.

If maintaining a “beautiful” body—carefully monitored and controlled in its size and appearance—is a symbol of cultural and social cooperation, then striving for a body in direct opposition to that ideal is tantamount to civil disobedience. In her study of compulsive overeating, Orbach (1978) argues that in a society where thinness is central to the normative construction of femininity, being fat is not an issue of self-control or willpower but instead represents an attempt to resist gender stereotypes. “Getting fat,” Orbach writes, “is a very definite and purposeful act connected to women’s social position” (1978, p. 31). Here, fat is not a sign of a woman’s victimization by unattainable images of the body beautiful but rather is symbolic of her feminist rebellion against the dominant images of ideal womanhood that limit her ability to realize her own image. Orbach notes that excessive weight in the workplace can signify a revolt against the sexual objectification of the female worker, and indeed, may be an attempt to “neutralize” her sexual identity to gain power and respect in the work environment among her male peers. Overeating, then, may be seen as a direct attempt to symbolically overturn the limitations imposed on women.

Although obesity and anorexia are often viewed as separate disorders, Chernin (1981) views both as stemming from our cultural obsession with food and the body. Chernin argues that the anorexic girl and the obese woman both share “an unexpressed hostility, fear of sexuality, an uneasiness about what is expected of women in this culture” (1981, p. 73) that lead them to their respective behaviors toward food. Both disorders, Chernin asserts, participate in the symbolic in their reflection of women’s anxieties about fulfilling the culturally constructed notion of the “acceptable body” (1981, p. 36). The obsessive overeater indulges in excessive amounts of food not to feed the hunger of the body, but to feed the “yearning for permission to enjoy the sensual aspects of the self” (1981, p. 15) that are forbidden to women in contemporary culture. In parallel but reverse fashion, the anorexic starves herself to deny the pleasures and the potential of the body. The anorexic takes to the extreme the long-standing dichotomy between body and mind. Thus, according to Chernin, the anorexic’s disease is, above all, “an illness of self-division” that can only be understood as a “tragic splitting of body from mind” (1981, p. 47). It should not be surprising, then, that the opposition between celebration and denial of the female body gave rise to two “divergent movements” (1981, p. 99) that appeared in the same historical moment: the feminist movement of the 1960s, which envisioned new possibilities for women, and the simultaneous emergence of the new diet industry—heralded by the launching of an American cultural icon, Weight Watchers—that negated women’s own potential to take charge of their lives, and by extension, their bodies.
Gremillion (2003) recently noted that even the clinical approach to “curing” anorexia is paradoxically a participant in the very cultural discourses—discourses of gender, individualism, and physical fitness—that contribute to the pathology of self-starvation in the first place. On the basis of her fieldwork in a state-of-the-art inpatient facility, Gremillion observes that the modern-day treatment of anorexia attempts to involve the patient in her own recovery by inviting her participation in the setting of her goal weight. But Gremillion argues that despite such attempts to include the patient in her own treatment plan, the standing power differential between the patient and the clinical staff results in the anorectic feeling that her identity and self-worth are inseparable from her medical statistics: her body weight and pulse rate. Ironically, the treatment for anorexia resurrects the same antagonsms between willpower and the body that it attempts to resolve. As Gremillion notes, “The psychiatric representation of the ‘anorexic’—in particular, the anorexic body—as a pathologized object of therapeutic knowledge and practice recreates the culturally dominant idea that the female body is an obstacle in the making of fitness/health, and it also reinforces patients’ perceived dependence on others even as they seek self-control” (2003, p. 47).

In her study of the hunger strike, Ellmann (1993) finds that the political prisoner who engages in the hunger strike and the female anorectic share more in common than their radically different agendas might initially indicate. Both the hunger striker and the anorectic have identified the body as a powerful “form of speech” (1993, p. 3) capable of articulating their respective discontents, the former using the body as a protest against an unjust political regime and the latter using the body as a protest against patriarchal structures of power. In both cases, the body enables the striker or the anorectic to symbolically circumvent and even transcend the conditions imposed upon it. Ellmann argues that although self-starvation was ultimately self-defeating for ten Northern Irish hunger strikers who died in a notorious detention camp for political prisoners in 1981, the symbolism conveyed by their wasted bodies was not. The hunger strike resulted in the public disgrace of the Thatcher administration amid worldwide publicity of the prisoners’ plight. As Ellmann acutely argues, the body is central to personal and political expression, and when it is voluntarily starved and disciplined beyond its limits, it opens up a powerful symbolic territory for the articulation of dissent against forms of social or political oppression.

Since Orbach’s and Chernin’s linking of fat and feminist theory, social theorists have further interrogated the notion of fat as “transgression” by examining the ways in which the various discourses that have evolved around the corpulent body have attempted to “contain” and even “erase” that body (Braziel & LeBesco 2001). Further, scholars have paid increasing attention to the constructed nature of obesity, a condition that has most often been received as evidence of abnormality or pathological deviance without regard to the myriad number of influences—cultural, historical, political—that have shaped it (Braziel & LeBesco 2001). As a social construction, fat has thus become central to the shaping of identity politics. LeBesco attempts a “theoretical queering of fat politics” (2001, p. 77) in order
to explore the political possibilities of a fat identity, an identity that has thus far been relegated to the extreme margins of the social order, while Mazer’s study of a contemporary sideshow Fat Lady by the name of Helen Melon (Katy Dierlam in real life) reveals the ways in which the stereotype of the “smiling, fleshy woman in a baby-doll costume” has been problematized by her self-representation as an “appetite outlaw” and “sexual provocateur” (2001, p. 257), representations that challenge the very notion of the Fat Lady as spectacle and commodity.

In contrast to the majority of authors who focus their attention on adult notions of beauty, Mimi Nichter examines the ideal of the body beautiful as perceived by adolescent girls. In Fat Talk (2000), Nichter argues that the pervasive discourse among women and girls around the ideal of slenderness is a critical component of girls’ socialization in two important ways. First, participation in “fat talk” facilitates the creation and maintenance of social relationships: It provides a means for girls (and women) to signal their membership in a group and to demonstrate a socially appropriate degree of humility (2000, p. 55). A second socializing function served by fat talk is the actual shaping of body ideals. While acknowledging the significant role of the media in dictating acceptable body ideals, Nichter contends that women and girls also play a critical role in their formation (2000, p. 183). Shaping these ideals are female peer groups and, most notably, according to Nichter, mothers and daughters, since dieting is often a shared activity between them; moreover, mothers are significant figures in the transmission of cultural messages about gender and femininity, constructions that are played out at the site of the body.

In analyzing images of adolescent beauty, Nichter also uncovers meaningful differences between ethnic groups. In contrast to “white girls” who engaged in frequent fat talk centered around a hegemonic ideal of youth and slenderness, the African American girls studied by Nichter demonstrated a “more fluid, flexible image of beauty” (2000, p. 178) that placed more emphasis on attitude and style than on body weight or size. Nichter relates this difference to an “ideology of egalitarianism” in the African American community that is reproduced at the site of the body: “In contrast to the more static image of beauty as bodily perfection found in white culture... that fosters envy and alienation, an egalitarian ethos is promoted, marked by mutual appreciation, cooperation, and approval of someone “who’s got it going on”” (2000, p. 178).

The ideal of the body beautiful—and how to attain that ideal—can also serve to illuminate significant cultural differences between and among Western countries that are often grouped together as one monolithic West. Stearns (1997) notes that despite basic similarities between the American and French histories of weight concern and control, the two countries’ attitudes toward obesity and weight loss reveal important points of cultural divergence. Whereas in America obesity has been linked to moral degeneracy and social inadequacy, the same condition in France has not carried the same associations. Being fat, the French have long recognized, has serious consequences for one’s health and one’s appeal to the opposite sex, but it does not make one morally or ethically culpable (1997, pp. 202–10). In contrast, beauty in America has been so closely linked to character that a beautiful woman is...
necessarily one who has had the moral uprightness to achieve it (1997, pp. 202–3). To the French, beauty is an aesthetic quality and is therefore available to everyone, not just those with the moral rectitude to achieve it. According to Stearns, whereas the American dieter is haunted by the specter of social disgrace and moral failure, the French dieter is free to attempt individual bodily improvement without the presence of a “personal demon to exorcise” (1997, p. 210).

But the management of body size is only one area of reform. In the pursuit of body ideals that cannot be achieved by weight reduction alone, women in increasing numbers have turned to more radical means of body modification through cosmetic surgery. As Gilman (1998) argues, the rise of aesthetic surgery as a widely accepted practice reflects the popular belief in its ability not only to correct bodily deviance and deformation, but also to “cure” and “restore” the psyche that has been damaged by the body’s stigmatization. The role of aesthetic surgery, then, is twofold: In curing the ills of the body, it can also cure the “unhappy” psyche. That aesthetic surgery is now a “form of psychotherapy” (1998, p. xi) points to the symbolic power of the body to reflect the status of the psyche itself. Gilman also notes the ways in which aesthetic surgery has historically been deployed to address and correct sexual and racial stigma, for example, the syphilitic nose that “marked the body as corrupt and dangerous” (1999, p. 49) and the racial nose of the “Jew,” the “Irish,” the “Oriental,” and the “Black,” which signaled difference from the Western ideal of beauty (1999, pp. 85–118).

Kaw’s (1994) investigation of one specific surgical procedure among Asian American women points to the intersection between racial ideology and capitalist consumer culture. In an attempt to give their eyes a more “open appearance,” Asian American women in increasing numbers are seeking the help of aesthetic surgeons to achieve a double eyelid, a fold above each eye that creates the appearance of a wider eye and reduces the look of “sleepiness,” “dullness,” and “passivity.” As Kaw observes, Asian facial features have historically contributed to negative Asian stereotyping in this country: Asians’ small, squinty eyes indicate a “childishness, narrow-mindedness, and a lack of leadership skills” (1994, p. 251), traits that continue to haunt Asian Americans in even the “positive” myth of the model minority. Interestingly, Kaw’s subjects largely dismissed the notion that they were seeking the surgery in order to look more Caucasian, but they consistently recognized the socioeconomic advantages of having more open, and hence more alert-seeming, eyes; one such subject referred to the surgical procedure as nothing less than an “investment in your future” (1994, p. 254). As Kaw points out, “In the United States, where a capitalist work ethic values ‘freshness,’ ‘quick wit,’ and assertiveness, many Asian American women are already disadvantaged at birth by virtue of their inherited physical features which society associates with dullness and passivity” (1994, p. 250). Although the Asian American women who participated in Kaw’s subject group viewed their decision as a reflection of their own individuality and self-assertion, Kaw came to another conclusion: Their facial revisions reflected their internalization of society’s negative portrayal of the Asian body (1994, p. 260).
For most feminist critics, the rise of cosmetic surgery as a viable and acceptable means of self-modification represents the ongoing oppression of women by the ideology of femininity and the cultural tyranny of beauty. But feminist critic Davis (1993) views cosmetic surgery not simply as a sign of women’s victimization but rather as reflective of their engagement in a complex ideological dilemma, a dilemma “where women grapple actively and knowledgeably with opposing cultural discourse of femininity, beauty, and what should or should not be done about the female body” (p. 27). Contrary to the image of cosmetic surgery as an embrace of the coercive and oppressive demands of beauty within a capitalist consumer society, Davis finds that women who elect such surgery are acutely aware of the conflict between feminism and feminine ideology, and the decision itself may be more accurately described as an act of agency rather than as one of mere victimization. As Davis notes of one of her subjects, “Her decision is presented as a rational weighing of factors, and she emerges as an agent, exercising control over her life within a situation that is not entirely of her own making” (1993, p. 34).

In her history of American girlhood, Brumberg (1997) notes that the body has not always been the primary project and central focus of self-improvement that it is today. On the basis of her comparative readings of nineteenth- and twentieth-century diaries of adolescent girls, Brumberg finds that girls a century ago rarely focused their attention on their bodies as a means of bettering themselves or achieving personal distinction. On the contrary, the way to self-improvement was through minimizing the importance of the body and focusing instead on character development and performing good works for others. Today, good looks has clearly won out over good works (1997, pp. xx–xxii). With the help of a consumer industry that touts its ability to sanitize and perfect the human form, the body has now become the most significant and most preoccupying project of American girls because of its status as the “ultimate expression of the self” (1997, p. 97).

Although the work of Brumberg, Gilman, Bordo, and others is firmly rooted in the Western tradition that regards the body as the sign of individual selfhood, it is worth noting that the connection between body and self cannot be taken as a universal given. In contrast to the conception of the body as a message bearer about the “inhabiting” self, Becker (1994) notes that in Fiji the body is less a reflection of the self than it is a reflection of community. Becker claims that the Fijians do not see the body as a personal showcase but rather as a display of the nurturing or negligence of the larger community. The Fijian body is more of a collective achievement, and Fijians derive social prestige not from their own bodies but from the bodies of others with whom they are associated. Becker notes that this difference in the signifying potential of the body—that is, representing self versus others—is a function of culturally different notions of what it means to be a person and the relationship between self and body. In most Western cultures, this notion that the body “belongs” to the self is taken as hardly worth mentioning; from there, it is a short step to the idea that the body represents in some way the self’s essence. In Fiji, however, the body is community property, not a product of the embodied self, but rather an artifact of social connectedness.
THE AGENTIC BODY

Although the body may serve as a powerful symbolic medium, the body is also endowed with the capacity to participate in the creation of social meaning. Arguing that the body’s symbolic capacity to reflect the social world provides only a partial theoretical account of its significance in social theory, scholars more recently have conceived of the body as an active agent in the social world, on the grounds that our bodies inescapably mediate our relationship to the world around us. Drawing heavily on Merleau-Ponty’s insight that “the body is our general medium for having a world” (1962, p. 146) and Bourdieu’s (1977) notion that the body structures both how we act and how we perceive, theorists have pointed to the body as a fundamental aspect of the acting self, thus seeking to transcend the dichotomy of self as subject versus body as object in order to draw attention to the often overlooked role of the body in social action (e.g., Comaroff 1985; Comaroff & Comaroff 1992; Csordas 1990, 1993; Devische 1985; Frank 1991; Haraway 1991; Lock 1993; Scheper-Hughes & Lock 1987; Turner 1994; Wacquant 1995). Within this framework, a self that acts on the world necessarily does so through the medium of the body; accordingly, this approach is often referred to as “embodiment” (Csordas 1990).

To assert that the body is an agent is not to overlook that the body, as conceptualized in a dualistic Western philosophical tradition, is ultimately an object that in itself has neither subjectivity nor capacity for intentional action. However, the self is ultimately an embodied self, and the symbolic capacity of material bodies can thus be “employed” by this self so embodied as one way to act on the world. That is, bodies are not only constitutive of subjectivity, but also mediate the relationship between persons and the world: We meet the world through our bodies. Therefore, bodies necessarily participate in the agency of selves. This approach, and the term embodiment, which is often used to describe it, thus seek to create a new idiom for theorizing about the role of the body in the social world. Because the way we think about concepts or entities in themselves, or about the relationships between them, is highly influenced by the way we talk about them (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), a theory that seeks to reframe the way we conceive of the body in society must necessarily invoke different metaphors and alternate terms (such as embodiment, agency, etc.) by which the issue can be discussed. These terms thus metaphorically point to the central notion of the body as an active participant in the social domain. Thus, to say that the body is an “agent” or “subject” is not to assert that subjectivity is a feature of the body per se, but rather that bodies, because they are constitutive of subjectivity and also mediate the relationship between person and world, necessarily participate in the agency of the person.

Illustrative of this approach to the body is Csordas’s (1993) work on religious and traditional healing practices that focus on shared empathy between healer and patient. On the basis of his theorization of “somatic modes of attention,” which he defines as “culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one’s body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others” (1993, p. 138),
Csordas argues that religious healing practices do not merely seek to confirm divine intervention. In their focus on bodily experience, these practices seek to create meaning through the intersubjectivity between supplicant and healer. The healer “anoints” his supplicant through the touch of hands and gains the “word of knowledge” about the supplicant’s afflictions through sympathetically experienced pain. According to Csordas, healing shared between self and others offers up new ways of attending to an “embodied intersubjectivity” (1993, p. 146). Our attention to and with the body enables us also to redefine and reconceptualize our relationship to the categories of intuition, imagination, perception, and sensation.

Given its agency, the body necessarily plays a significant role in times of social, cultural, or political crisis. In a revolution, the established body ideal is one of the first things to be overturned or redefined in favor of a more ideologically appropriate replacement. In American history, for example, the 1960s slogan “Black is beautiful” served as the rallying call for the black power movement. The slogan was less about the attractiveness of a particular skin color than about the advancement of black consciousness and pride that was central to the civil rights movement. Such a perspective recognizes that “the body is not only a symbolic field for the reproduction of dominant values and conceptions; it is also a site for resistance to and transformation of those systems of meaning” (Crawford 1984, p. 95). In this capacity for “resistance” and “transformation,” the body—because it is ultimately the basis for such an endeavor at the level of symbols—is conceptualized as agentic. Within this formulation, social actors appropriate and manipulate the body’s symbolic capacities for their own ends, though this project is not necessarily a conscious endeavor. This perspective creates a powerful theoretical alliance, one in which the body is viewed as both “template and tool” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992, p. 87).

Because the body is such a potent symbol, its form and appearance often are highly politicized, as Comaroff & Comaroff (1992) discovered in their ethnographic analyses of neocolonial settlements in South Africa. Indeed, body reform, according to these theorists, has always been critical to the project of empire-making:

States old and new have built their esprit de corps by shaving, clothing, vaccinating, and counting their citizens, just as rising classes, ethnic groups, religious movements, and political associations tend to wear their self-awareness on their skin. For their part, conquerors and colonizers seem typically to feel a need to reverse prior corporeal signs, often making bodies into realms of contest. (1992, p. 41)

The body is at once a vehicle for the imposition of social, political, and economic forces onto individuals and groups and is a vehicle for resistance to these forces. Thus, the human frame “can never be a struggle-free zone, least of all when major historical shifts are under way” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992, p. 40).

As Comaroff & Comaroff have shown, colonial power in Africa has historically focused on and circulated through the black body. Comaroff & Comaroff argue that the project of nineteenth-century British colonialism in Africa was inseparably
linked to the rise of biomedical science that attempted to draw clear distinctions between what was perceived by the colonists to be the diseased and potentially contagious African body and the white, sanitized European body, which was then exposed to such sources of danger and disorder (1992, p. 216). In contrast to the dry and impermeable surface of the European body, the surface of the African body was “porous, dirty, and damp, one that ‘gave off’ contagion and odor to those with whom it came into contact” (1992, p. 225). As Comaroff & Comaroff have found, mid-nineteenth-century evangelists in Africa were as interested in bringing European methods of sanitation to the continent as they were in bringing Christianity to its peoples. Indeed, it was through the project of imposed sanitation that evangelists attempted to make “Protestant persons” (1992, p. 224) of their heathen charges.

But if the body is conceived as the means by which the colonialist project is enacted, it can also serve as the site of resistance to that project. In their ethnography of the South African frontier, Comaroff & Comaroff note that beauty itself can become the site of colonial contestation. Well aware of the power of European clothing to remake their people into something they were not, indigenous Tswana rulers took to embracing “fantastic fashions” (1992, p. 43) that both adopted and subverted the fashions of their colonizers. As Comaroff & Comaroff argue, “The Tswana ‘style wars,’ in which local leaders tried to fight off Western dress and architecture, were as much the site of colonial politics as were formal confrontations with government personnel or settler statesmen” (1992, p. 43). By subversively embracing the physical and cultural signs of British colonialism, South Africans found an alternative means of articulating their challenge to colonial oppression.

Thus far, to speak of “disciplining” the body has implied the willful work of self-deprivation in order to achieve a certain aesthetic and/or political ideal. In her study of the aesthetic of female fatness among the Azawagh Arabs of Niger, Popenoe (2004) found that bodily discipline can assume a far different form. Within this Islamic culture, fatness is considered such a beautiful and desirable trait in women that girls as young as five and six years old are forcibly fattened by an appointed female authority figure within the family. The force-feeding of young girls is intended to accelerate the process of sexual maturity because fatness is so closely associated with womanliness: The sooner a girl has assumed the contours and curves that come with corpulence, the sooner she is considered of a marriageable age (2004, pp. 44–45). By fattening, Muslim girls in this culture also hasten the fulfillment of their primary religious duty and purpose in life: to produce the next generation of the faithful (2004, p. 72).

Popenoe contends that in becoming fat, Azawagh Arab women actively cultivate an aesthetic of “softness, pliability, stillness, seatedness,” which is in direct opposition to the aesthetic of men that valorizes “hardness, uprightness, mobility” (2004, p. 191). In the West, such an opposition typically translates into an imbalance of power between the genders, but Popenoe guards against such cultural transpositions by grounding her work in the specific Islamic context of this Moorish people. According to Islamic scripture, men and women are radically different
kinds of beings that are best harmonized when opposed to one another. Differentiation between men and women in all aspects of life—in prayer, in work, in marriage—is not only to be respected but actively cultivated. Thus, the opposition between a woman’s immobility within the home and a man’s agility abroad is not to be taken as an automatic reflection of inequality, but rather as a sign of purposeful division. Indeed, whereas a Westerner might view a woman’s getting fat as reflective of her failure to work and compete within the social marketplace, the Azawagh Arabs view a woman’s getting fat as a form of labor itself (2004, p. 123). As Popenoe observes, “Female fatness among Azawagh Arabs is thus not only expressive and symbolic of fundamental cultural tenets, but also provides women with a powerful way of exercising agency in their own lives” (2004, p. 192).

By fattening and immobilizing herself, an Azawagh Arab woman simultaneously enhances her sexuality and sanctions her allure by becoming a powerful and culturally approved object of male desire. In her seeming inactivity and inertia within her tent, an Azawagh Arab woman nevertheless exerts a kind of “gravity” (2004, p. 195) in her social sphere, which serves to stabilize the transience and volatility of men’s lives spent abroad in herding and trading. Immobility through fatness also serves as a powerful expression of a woman’s self-control over her own sexual desires. By attaining a difficult body ideal, a woman proves herself able to control the dangers of her own desiring and thus proves willing to forego her own interests in favor of the interests of her society.

FEMININITY AND THE NEGOTIATION OF BEAUTY

What makes a woman a woman? The simplicity of the question belies the complexity of the answers that have been posited by theorists concerned with the categories of gender and sexual difference. Butler’s (1990) assessment of gender as a cultural construction, and the body as a “variable boundary” that performs the cultural meanings of gender, has been central to the ongoing discussion of what constitutes a “feminine” identity. Although gender is often mistaken for natural category or biological fact, Butler argues that “the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all” (1990, p. 140). If gender is a series of repeated performances, then the distinctions of gender are dependent on the quality of its enactment by the body. As a result, the body has become the battleground for the policing of boundaries between men and women.

Grosz (1994) also attends to the question of sexual difference by turning to the body’s vexed relationship with subjectivity. Overturning the long-established dichotomy between mind and body, Grosz approaches the corporality of the body itself as a “framework” for understanding sexual identity and subjectivity. To do so requires a rethinking of the “natural” body as having been socially constructed by the biological and medical discourses about the body, discourses that are commonly viewed as impervious to cultural or social bias (1994, p. x). According to Grosz, the body does not, in fact, belong to the realm of the “natural” but rather serves as
“a neuralgic locus for the projection and living out of unreflective presumptions regarding the sexes and their different social, sexual, and biological roles” (1994, p. x). As such, bodies “cannot be adequately understood as ahistorical, precultural, or natural objects in any simple way; they are not only inscribed, marked, engraved, by social pressures external to them but are the products, the direct effects, of the very social constitution of nature itself” (1994, p. x).

But Butler’s notion of gender as a performative category and Grosz’s reading of subjectivity as grounded in the body are relatively recent approaches to the problem of defining women’s experience. The ideologies that have defined woman’s nature (what a woman is) and her competencies (what a woman can and should do) have historically relied on the physical materiality of the female body. This body and its “natural” physical characteristics “come to count as definitive emblems of female identity” (Balsamo 1996, p. 43) and both, in turn, support and legitimate the gendered structure of society. Similar to Lock’s (1993) argument that even the “objective” sciences are culturally informed and constructed, Ludmilla Jordanova observes,

Women’s occupations were taken to be rooted in and a necessary consequence of their reproductive functions. ... Women’s destiny to bear and suckle children was taken to define their whole body and mind, and therefore their psychological capacities and social tasks. (1980, p. 49)

A significant correspondence, then, exists between women’s bodies and their position in society, a connection largely mediated by social ideologies of gender because gender is a bodily “fact” that carries also social import and consequences. As Jordanova (1980) argues, social constructions of gender typically seek material grounding in the body, invoking these body-based “natural facts” to sustain their worldview. But these natural facts or “natural symbols” (Douglas 1970) grounded in the body actually “produce and are part of ideological systems; they disguise and justify the social artifice as a natural part of the unchangeable ‘order of things’” (Devisch 1985, p. 409). In the nineteenth century, for instance, the archetypal feminine quality of softness became a physical metaphor for the construction of social views regarding both the nature of womanhood and the right and proper place of women in society (Jordanova 1980, p. 49). One prominent physician of the time wrote that “[women’s] muscular feebleness inspires in [them] an instinctive disgust of strenuous exercise; it draws them towards amusements and sedentary occupations” (Cabanis 1956, p. 278; c.f., Jordanova 1980, p. 49).

In her social history of beauty, Banner (1983) notes early feminists’ response to such culturally constructed notions of womanhood. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Amelia Bloomer attempted to signal the beginning of a new era in women’s consciousness by donning shorter skirts and pantaloons, which emancipated them from the traditional women’s dress that confined their movement and activity. But the growing unpopularity and eventual demise of the “bloomer” within a few years of its introduction were, as Banner argues, due to its failure to address the more powerful symbolic appeal of women’s fashion, that is, fashion as a means
of cultivating a woman’s ability to attract and hold the attention of men (1983, p. 100), still her primary concern in a culture that celebrated marriage as the goal of all women. According to Banner, the triumph of fashion over feminism as demonstrated in the demise of the bloomer was repeated again and again in American history. Indeed, Banner argues that even today we may witness the reenactment of this battle in the Miss America Pageant, a phenomenon that was first staged in 1921 and that has enjoyed popularity—and notoriety—ever since.

In her study of this long-standing cultural phenomenon, Banet-Weiser (1999) argues that today’s beauty pageant is much more than a carefully rehearsed spectacle of femininity. As a “civic ritual,” the beauty pageant participates in the realm of politics because it produces a national identity for its viewers through the mediation of ethnicity and femininity on the stage. Although beauty pageants have historically celebrated the “ideal female citizen” as incontrovertibly embodied by a white woman, the relatively recent phenomenon of nonwhite winners of beauty pageants demonstrates the function of beauty pageants as a mediation of race and ethnicity within national boundaries.

According to Banet-Weiser, the beauty pageant is caught in another crossroads: that between feminine objectification and feminine empowerment. Feminists have long argued that beauty pageants perpetuate the commodification of women as objects of display, which ultimately creates victims of its participants and profiteers of the spectacle’s many staggers: producers, directors, and the audience at large. But Banet-Weiser argues that the beauty pageant has also become a “kind of feminist space where female identity is constructed by negotiating the contradictions of being socially constituted as ‘just’ a body while simultaneously producing oneself as an active thinking subject, indeed, a decidedly ‘liberal’ subject” (1999, p. 24). Indeed, the appropriation of a liberal feminist discourse in the self-presentation of contestants is now commonplace; Banet-Weiser notes that contestants now emphasize individual achievement and career ambitions, not homemaking and motherhood, as the means of asserting selfhood.

Other authors have explored the construction and negotiation of femininity and beauty in broader contexts, such as the workplace. As a whole, these studies highlight the central role of the body in supporting a vast symbolic system that enables individuals to situate themselves in relation to other social actors. For example, previous research that compares employed with unemployed women has found that women in the workforce evince less concern with their appearance than do their nonworking peers (Hayes & Ross 1986). Working women, the authors argue, have more direct access to capital and so are less likely to cultivate personal appearance as an indirect means of gaining resources, that is, through alliances with men.

But the notion that women cultivate their appearance chiefly in regard to men’s preferences may be an oversimplification because this explanation overlooks other social and symbolic aspects of physical form. Researchers have found, for example, that women often idealize a different figure than their own estimate of what men would prefer (Fallon & Rozin 1985). The simple distinction between women working outside the home or not working outside the home seems less important,
however, than the shifting nature of women’s work as they enter positions and professions previously exclusive to men. Treating the secretary and the senior partner alike because they are both working women obscures significant differences in their social positioning and relationships with colleagues.

Recognizing this complexity and also addressing the issue of gender, Rodin (1993) contends that working women, particularly in certain kinds of occupations, may actually be more concerned with their physical appearance.

Women who are successful in previously male-dominated professions often need both to minimize their female status and to retain it. [Since] physically attractive women are perceived as more feminine, looking feminine, while displaying ‘unfeminine’ ambition and power, may serve to affirm a woman’s identity to herself and others. (1993, p. 644)

Rodin thus speculates that “looking feminine”—generally synonymous with beauty, as Callaghan (1994) notes—temper the impact of a woman’s “unfeminine ambition,” though this explanation somewhat takes for granted that what “looks feminine” changes considerably over time. What is notable about Rodin’s perspective is her recognition of the contradictions that women in male-dominated occupations must frequently negotiate through the medium of the body. Paradoxically, they must be feminine yet not too feminine. As Rodin notes, they must display their femininity to compensate for their display of putatively “unfeminine” qualities associated with success in a “man’s world.”

The double bind between minimizing and yet affirming one’s femininity in a gendered environment is explored also by Reischer (2000) in her study of the athletic/muscular body ideal that has emerged for women in contemporary American society. Like Rodin, Banet-Weiser, and others, Reischer shares the underlying notion that the body and its appearance are a prime site for negotiating women’s position in a complex web of social meaning and value. Noting that other female body ideals, such as thinness, have historically waxed and waned in social prominence, she begins with the observation that late twentieth-century America is the first cultural moment in which muscles, a physical attribute once antithetical to femininity, have come to be associated with the body beautiful. Moreover, the emergence of this new image of beauty coincides—meaningfully, according to Reischer—with a major transformation in women’s social position, particularly in the nature and meaning of women’s work.

On the basis of both ethnographic and survey research with more than 200 women, Reischer’s study has two key findings. First, it reveals that women of different cohorts or generations with respect to the modern women’s movement—those who led or witnessed its legal and social reforms, and those who have been its primary beneficiaries—hold substantially different notions about the ideal female form. Younger women, those who largely came of age after the successes of feminist social reform, tend to idealize muscular female bodies significantly more than do their older counterparts. A second and more provocative finding is that women in differently gendered occupational environments (that is,
male- versus female-dominated occupations) demonstrate measurably different sensibilities about their own and other female bodies. Specifically, women who work in male-dominated occupations tend to have a significantly more positive perception of muscular female bodies. Like Rodin, Reischer argues that women in male-dominated professions experience their bodies as central to workplace dynamics; they encounter a host of occupational pressures and challenges in their work environment—particularly around issues of appearance, reproduction, and sexuality—challenges that are largely related to these women’s common experience of a paradoxical imperative to minimize their femininity even as they must also affirm it.

Departing from Bordo’s (1993) notion of the muscular female body ideal as residing on a continuum with the slender body, Reischer argues that muscles participate in an entirely different symbolic category: Given the strong cultural signification of muscles as an emblem of masculinity, a muscular female body is qualitatively different from a slender one because it disrupts naturalized gender distinctions in a way that the slender body cannot. From this perspective, a muscular female physique embodies a new image of femininity that challenges naturalized social distinctions between men and women by acting on the social meanings grounded in the body. According to Reischer, by desiring to have muscles, women are seeking to embody social values associated with muscles and to demonstrate that muscles—which is to say strength, discipline, and other such socially valued qualities—are equally characteristic of women, within a revised definition of femininity that seeks to renegotiate its position with respect to masculinity, by acting on the social constructions grounded in the body.

In this dual capacity of women’s bodies to both reflect and challenge their social positions, Reischer finds that even the limits and boundaries of idealized female muscularity index women’s paradoxical position in the workforce and signal the deeply entrenched barriers to gender equality that women still experience. Although the cultivation and display of muscles is no longer exclusively a male prerogative, women are clearly expected to do so in manifestly different ways than are men. As many feminist scholars note (e.g., Balsamo 1996, Bolin 1992, Haywood 1998, Mansfield & McGinn 1993), women must take caution not to develop muscles that are too large or well defined. As Mansfield & McGinn observe, “There is a great deal of difference between two kinds of female hard body image. [In contrast to] an acceptable hard body image such as that of Madonna…[there is] another hard body image which appears…more threatening: the image of the female bodybuilder, an image which goes far beyond that of the ‘more athletic woman of today’” (1993, p. 54). For Reischer, this preservation of difference and distinction between gendered bodies reflects the barriers to income and status equality that women still confront in the workplace, despite their increasing presence in previously male-dominated professions; that is, the proverbial “glass ceiling” finds its analogue in the idealized shape of women’s bodies. The body is thus a prime site for the contestation of social and individual power; it is the locus of both oppression and empowerment, simultaneously.
The Evolution of Beauty

Recent investigations of the body beautiful demonstrate the extraordinary capacity of the body not only to symbolize the social world, but also to participate actively in the creation of that world. Indeed, the two theoretical views of the body in society— as “artifact” and “agent”—are essentially complementary because the capacity of the body to signify the social also entails the power of the body to transform social reality (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992). Because cultural meanings and values reside in and on the material body, the body not only reflects these constructions but also has the capacity to challenge them. The body thus serves as a vehicle for social action even as it signifies social realities: Bodily (re)form both reflects and motivates processes of social reform. Responsive to the highly coded nature of beauty, women have learned to appropriate the body’s symbolism to achieve their own ends. Women’s bodies, and social constructions of the ideal female form, do more than reflect women’s position in society: They offer a powerful means for negotiating, redefining, and reconceptualizing that position. However, these forms of resistance occur within overarching social structures that ultimately index existing power relations.

Despite our ability to theorize, analyze, and contextualize the underlying meaning of beauty in contemporary culture, we are no less enthralled by its display. To disavow beauty is ultimately to valorize its discursive power to define the “Good,” the “Desirable,” and even the “Ethical” and the “Moral.” As much as we may find solace in the well-worn adages that “beauty is only skin deep” and “beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” our daily experience in the social world, and even our own responses to the body beautiful, tell us otherwise. We are all beholders, and we are all looking far beyond the surface of the skin.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank Michael Mascuch, Hertha D. Sweet Wong, and Jennifer Heung for their insightful critiques of this review in the final stages of its development. We also thank Jean Comaroff, Gilbert Herdt, and Richard Shweder.

The Annual Review of Anthropology is online at http://anthro.annualreviews.org

LITERATURE CITED

Bordo S. 1993. Unbearable Weight: Feminism,
Glassner B. 1988. Bodies: Why We Look the Way We Do (and How We Feel About It). New York: Putnam


Orbach S. 1978. *Fat is a Feminist Issue.* New York: Paddington Press


CONTENTS

Frontispiece—Marilyn Strathern xiv

PREFATORY CHAPTER

The Whole Person and Its Artifacts, Marilyn Strathern 1

ARCHAEOLOGY

The Archaeology of Ancient State Economies, Michael E. Smith 73

Political Economic Mosaics: Archaeology of the Last Two Millennia in Tropical Sub-Saharan Africa, Ann Brower Stahl 145

Primary State Formation in Mesoamerica, Charles S. Spencer and Elsa M. Redmond 173

The Archaeology of Communication Technologies, Stephen D. Houston 223

Origins and Development of Urbanism: Archaeological Perspectives, George L. Cowgill 525

BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Early Dispersals of Homo from Africa, Susan C. Antón and Carl C. Swisher, III 271

Social Status and Health in Humans and Other Animals, Robert M. Sapolsky 393

The Peopling of the New World: Perspectives from Molecular Anthropology, Theodore G. Schurr 551

The Evolution of Human Skin and Skin Color, Nina G. Jablonski 585

LINGUISTICS AND COMMUNICATIVE PRACTICES

Language Revitalization and New Technologies: Cultures of Electronic Mediation and the Refiguring of Communities, Patrick Eisenlohr 21

New Technologies and Language Change: Toward an Anthropology of Linguistic Frontiers, Susan E. Cook 103

Language Birth and Death, Salikoko S. Mufwene 201

Talk and Interaction Among Children and the Co-Construction of Peer Groups and Peer Culture, Amy Kyratzis 625
# CONTENTS

## INTERNATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND REGIONAL STUDIES
- Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches, Birgit Meyer 447
- Anthropology in Area Studies, Jane I. Guyer 499

## SOCIOCULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY
- Music and the Global Order, Martin Stokes 47
- The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, Joel Robbins 117
- Hang on to Your Self: Of Bodies, Embodiment, and Selves, Steven Van Wolputte 251
- Inscribing the Body, Enid Schildkrout 319
- Culture, Globalization, Mediation, William Mazzarella 345
- Anthropology and Circumcision, Eric K. Silverman 419
- Thinking About Cannibalism, Shirley Lindenbaum 475

## THEME I: THE BODY AS A PUBLIC SURFACE
- Hang on to Your Self: Of Bodies, Embodiment, and Selves, Steven Van Wolputte 251
- Inscribing the Body, Enid Schildkrout 319
- Anthropology and Circumcision, Eric K. Silverman 419
- The Evolution of Human Skin and Skin Color, Nina G. Jablonski 585

## THEME II: NEW TECHNOLOGIES OF COMMUNICATION
- Language Revitalization and New Technologies: Cultures of Electronic Mediation and the Refiguring of Communities, Patrick Eisenlohr 21
- Music and the Global Order, Martin Stokes 47
- New Technologies and Language Change: Toward an Anthropology of Linguistic Frontiers, Susan E. Cook 103
- The Archaeology of Communication Technologies, Stephen D. Houston 223
- Culture, Globalization, Mediation, William Mazzarella 345