

Chapter 3 Reconstructing fitness

Defining Fitness

This chapter engages with questions of fitness in order to examine how fitness is implicated in the construction of the kinds of environments constructed from hybrid network which were discussed in the previous chapter. Drawing on a number of theoretical and empirical works, I illustrate that within the context of contemporary political and discursive economies of risk, flexibility, response-ability, and responsibility, there is a proliferation of a range of practices directed at the continuous improvement and reconstruction of the embodied self in spaces such as the home. This opens up a range of market opportunities for particular centers of translation to attempt to mobilize and translate actor-networks, in the guise of providing consumers with meaningful environments of self-management. In this way, centers of translation inscribe fitness in the construction of particular environments.

In making this argument I refer extensively to the activities of “corporations”, “technoscience”, and the “State”. It is necessary at the outset to qualify the use of these terms. Frequently, within popular and academic discourse, these terms are used to refer to singular, monolithic, and clearly bounded entities, “things” which act by themselves in a coherent fashion. In keeping with the argument outlined in the previous chapter it is extremely problematic to think of these as coherent “actors”, as neatly defined “black boxes”, clearly separate and distinct from other black boxes.¹ Rather, each of these “actors”, is made up of networks of further actors, whose actions have achieved sufficient legitimacy and stability that they appear as “real” and coherently bounded identities. The “State” for example, only appears to be an “actor” to the extent that certain centers of translation have been able to mobilize the necessary actor-networks, both human (populations, armies, employees) and non-human (communication networks, physical resources, territory) which grant it legitimacy as something representable as unified and coherent. Achieving such stability involves a governmentality of these networks, which are arranged so as to lead to “the right disposition of things” and the most convenient ends. As Nicholas Rose (1996: 43) puts it

The ‘power of the state’ is a resultant, not a cause, an outcome of the composition and assembling of actors, flows, buildings, relations of power into relatively durable associations mobilized, to a greater or lesser extent, towards the achievement of particular objectives by common means. This is not a matter of the domination of a “network” by “the State” but rather a matter of translation.

The “corporation” and the technoscientific laboratory can be considered in a similar fashion, as centers of translation which attempt to enroll, mobilize and “speak for”, actor-networks. All such “centers” can be thought of as being engaged in the governmentality of actor-networks.

¹ Callon et al (1986: xvi) define a “black-box” as a “way of thinking of the simplified points that are linked together in an actor-network. A simplified entity that is nevertheless also a network in its own right”.

In the previous chapter, I noted that Foucault's work suggests that technologies of governmentality are closely linked to technologies of the self. In particular, government comes to be seen as a

'contact point' where techniques of domination - or power - and techniques of the self 'interact', where 'technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself and, conversely where techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion (Rose, 1996: 38).

In acknowledging this however, it is necessary to avoid the tendency to counterpose techniques of domination operating at the global or macro scale over and above technologies of the self operating at a local or micro scale. Indeed the metaphor of "contact point" is perhaps misleading in that it suggests that a boundary exists between two distinct forms of power. Rather, it is better to conceive of power in this case as the ability to increase the length and intensity of associations between diverse actors. The purchase and use of fitness machines, for example, as technologies of the self, are not imposed from above, but are effects of the extension of networks of human and non-human actors by particularly powerful centers of translation. The governmentality of geodemographically defined "target" populations and the governmentality of the self are all part of the same networks.

I explore these issues by rethinking the category of fitness and the discursive and political economies surrounding it. Fitness is popularly understood as referring to a condition where the body is in good working order, and is able to physically perform. That fitness is centered around the body is all too evident. A recent cover article in the 'lifestyle' section of *Newsweek* magazine for instance stated that the latest scientific models of the body point to the fact that when it comes to recognizing the strength or weaknesses in one's bodily condition, "it's not fatness that counts..it's fitness" (1997: 59). The cover of the same issue featured two ideal human torsos, one male, one female, as can be seen in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Photograph from *Newsweek* cover story about health and fitness (April, 1997:3).

This article is perhaps symptomatic of the ways that body is defined not merely in terms of *health*, “that idea of the standard of normalcy and of keeping that standard stable and unscathed” but increasingly also in terms of *fitness* (Bauman, 1997:89).

The fit body and the techniques used in the never-ending effort to achieve this bodily ideal must be situated within broader political and discursive economies. As Cole and Hribar (1995: 348) note, although we tend to imagine popular fitness as an inevitable dimension of our lives, it is a complex historical category

whose meanings, relations, and effects can never be confined to spaces that are immune to the complex web of social, political, and economic forces that have re-shaped the American popular.

Contemporary notions of fitness are multidimensional and are inextricably bound up with questions of risk, flexibility, response-ability, responsibility, mobility, and consumption, questions which also remain central to the experience of embodiment. Thus, in speaking of “fitness”, I draw upon Bauman’s suggestion that “fitness stands for the individual’s bodily and spiritual capacity to absorb, and creatively respond to, a growing volume of new experience, ability to withstand a fast pace of change, and ability to ‘keep on course’ through self monitoring and inadequacies of performance” (1995:154).

Such notions of personal fitness are mobilized to serve a range of possible ends. From the point of view of fitness professionals, for example, fitness can be promoted as something of a panacea for society’s ills. An article in the magazine *Fitness Management* is illustrative of this and is worth quoting at length. According to this article

Fitness professionals have an underlying belief in the positive power fitness offers our bodies, minds, families, communities, country and economy. Fitness offers positive solutions to many of societies ills. It provides alternatives to circumstances that can lead to drug-use, gangs and violence. It promotes health, self-esteem, relationship building and a positive focus among youth. It offers older adults a means of maintaining quality of life. It contributes to one of the most strategically and economically viable solutions to the health care crisis - prevention. It increases the productivity, creativity, health and well-being in the work-force. It can help “mainstream” the physically and mentally challenged into society.

Fitness is clearly being proposed here as a solution to the problems of the body-politic to be achieved through making the bodies of individuals fitter. Such examples suggest that being defined as fit, and the definition of what fitness is, are important questions. This chapter is intended as preliminary exploration of the category of fitness, and how fitness is also inscribed in and through certain spaces. It argues that fitness gives rise to the construction of particular environments, constituted by actor-networks, both non-human and human, mobilized, translated, and arranged by particular centers of translation.

Embodying Risk

Ulrich Beck (1992) has argued that we are witnessing the emergence of a “risk society”. According to Beck, “risk may be defined as a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself” (21). The increase in the level of risk is an outcome of societal development. The greater awareness of the risks associated with modern societies is in turn part of a broader increase in the level of reflexivity of such societies. For Beck, the supposed benefits of progress associated with Enlightenment reason and rationality have come under increased question. Ideas of “development” and unquestioned beliefs in the benefits of resource exploitation and industrial production receive greater critical scrutiny, and their inevitability is problematized, contested, and protested. While economic development is welcomed, there is an increased tendency to consider the potentially negative and life-threatening impacts of such development. The discourse of environmentalism and the “green” movement are manifestations of this. Additionally, many practices which were formerly thought of as harmless, such as smoking and even excessive inactivity, are now identified as practices involving high levels of risk.

Questions of risk in contemporary societies are intimately bound up with questions of knowledge. The ability to define these risks, or appeal to the authority of those who attempt to define them is of particular importance. In this situation “the mass media and the scientific and legal professions in charge of defining risks become key social and political positions....and new antagonisms open up between those who produce risk and those who consume them” (Beck, 1992). Popular media play a crucial role in mediating the experience of risk insofar as they function to make the scientific knowledge concerning risk more easily intelligible and digestible for consumers.

Awareness of such knowledge claims about risks becomes important in allowing the individual subject to calculate and estimate his or her own risk position, and to take the necessary steps to reduce this risk. In this way, as one becomes more informed and thus more exposed and aware of various risks, one also becomes more dependent on the expertise and the discourse of those who purport to know about the dangers posed by particular civilizational risks. Such a close relationship between risk and knowledge means that “quality of life” increasingly is assumed to rest upon one’s knowledge about the risks surrounding particular practices. However, this dependence on authoritative sources of knowledge for definitive statements on the risks associated with modern living is complicated by the fact that the same individual who is increasingly aware of risks is also more likely to challenge traditional sources of scientific authority. Thus, while the apparent proliferation of visible and invisible risks places the individual in a situation of dependence on experts for the correct knowledge about these risks, at the same time this individual tends to have less confidence in, and be more skeptical of, such authoritative sources of knowledge production and definition.

In a situation where consumers are increasingly skeptical about claims surrounding the potential benefits of commodities, the onus is on those who speak about risk to attempt to appeal to some definitive authority in order to legitimate the risk-reducing qualities of their products. One of these authorities is the category of “nature”, an entity which has no “vested interests” in making false claims and which, (or “whom”, for nature is often personified and gendered) if it can be made to speak “through” science, delivers a truth that can appear unassailable. At the very least, “natural” products, in being perceived as apparently untainted, unpolluted, and unadulterated by human or technological contact, are frequently seen as benign in terms of the risks associated with them. This means that standards of “objectivity” become particularly important, in that the technoscientific process must not appear to pollute the “natural” objects it investigates.²

Beyond nature, finding the highest “human” scientific authority also becomes crucial in marketing commodities with an appeal to risk reduction. Given this, the importance of the recent publication in the United States of the *Surgeons General Report* (1996) as an authoritative statement of the risks of sedentary lifestyles was not lost to the fitness industry. Shortly before the publication of the report an editorial in *Fitness Management* (1996:6) noted that “Fitness facilities are about to have their best opportunity to make physicians in their market areas active producers of new exercising members.....The Surgeon Generals Report (SGR) will be the most powerful encapsulation, ever, of the scientific knowledge of the benefits of exercise and the dangers of remaining inactive”. This promotional pill was interpreted as “a virtual gift to our industry from the highest medical authority; essentially, the Surgeon General’s office is endorsing our principle product - exercise”. In this way, science is mobilized in the promotion of products that appeal to the possibility of reducing the risks associated with contemporary living.

Because risks are susceptible to social construction and contestation, a situation arises where “demands, and thus markets, of a completely new type can be created by varying the definition of risk, especially demand for the avoidance of risk - open to interpretation, casually designable and infinitely reproducible” (Beck, 1992:56). Risks and the knowledges surrounding them are highly commodifiable, as perhaps they have always been. Marketers can play upon the uncertainties of consumer subjects who have objectified themselves as embodying a multiplicity of risks in order to sell of a whole range of commodities.

Additionally, questions of risks are intimately related to questions with technologies. On one level, particular technologies can be perceived as the “cause” of an increased incidence of risk. As Gregory et al (1996:213) note, technologies such as

nuclear power or recombinant DNA research generally evoke a deeply-rooted sense of concern or dread among wide segments of the public and capture the attention of local and national media. As a result the adverse impacts of these technologies may be amplified over and above any calculation of their expected damages; consideration of the small

² It is worth noting then that the same issue of *Newsweek* featuring the story about fitness also ran an article titled “Science Wars” which asked “how much is research influenced by political and social fashions?” It also observed that the widespread posing of this question is “making scientists re-examine their assumptions of objectivity”.

probabilities associated with the occurrence of these events appears to be forgotten in light of the fears associated with their possible human health or environmental consequences.

From this perspective, such technologies are inherently risk producing. Yet, other, considerably more risky technologies are viewed much more positively. This is especially so in the case of the automobile, potentially the single most risk-producing technology existing. While spewing thousands of tons of carbon dioxide into the air as well as offering its users a high probability of being killed while using it, the automobile is overwhelmingly viewed as a liberating machine, enhancing the spatiotemporal flexibility of the individual.

Paradoxically, as one of the socio-technical developments associated with modernity, the automobile has contributed to the increasingly sedentary aspect of contemporary lifestyles. Various physical labor-saving technologies have increased the degree of physical inactivity which characterizes daily life both in work and non-work environments (a distinction which itself is blurring), a process which has of course been extremely selective and socio-economically differentiated. An article in the February 1996 issue of *Business Week* humorously captured the part that technologies play in being identified as simultaneously encouraging the proliferation and prevention of risks. It noted that

we're the quirky civilization that rides elevators to the second floor and buys electronic stair steppers to condition our thighs. We drive to convenience stores and hurry back to our treadmills. We rely on machines to save us from working, then buy other machines to save our bodies from terminal flab.

An article in the April 1997 issue of *Health*, titled "rebel against a sedentary life", echoed this stating that, because of the socio-technical developments of the 20th century

We've created a society that compels us *not* to move. We have constructed a world in which you have to go out and make a conscious decision to be active (Griffin, 1997:84-86).

There is an additional technological variable in this question. Much information through which knowledge about technologies, whether presented as risk reducing or risk increasing, is disseminated through technologies such as print media, TV, and the Internet.

However, for the purposes of this thesis there are two important qualifications to be made about Beck's discussion of risk. First, risks are hybrid networks composed of nature and culture. Beck approaches such a position in his recognition of the difficulty and futility of trying to classify risks. Thus,

risks bring the substantively, spatially and temporally disparate into a direct, threatening connection. They fall through the sieve of over specialization. They are what lies

between the specializations. Coping with risks compels a general view, a cooperation over and above all the carefully established and cultivated borders. Risks lie *across* the borders of specialties and disciplines, *across* specialized competencies and institutional responsibilities, *across* the distinction between value and fact (and thus between ethics and science), and across the realms of politics, the public sphere, science and the economy, which are seemingly divided by institutions (1992:70).³

Yet in pointing to the hybridity of risks in this way, Beck fails to mention that risks also cross the divide between the “natural” and the “cultural”. Thus, he remains rooted in the terms of what Latour calls the “modern constitution”. While Beck correctly points to the social quality of risks it is important not to lose sight of the “natural” in this context. Rather than seeing risks as either social or natural it is better to see them as hybrids in the Latourian sense, constituted by networks that are both human and non-human, natural and cultural.

Second, because bodies are part of these networks, risks must be seen as part of the experience of embodiment. The fact that embodied risks are part of networks of nature and culture was dramatically illustrated in the recent and much publicized case of BSE, where a lethal “natural” virus made its way into a culturally embedded food chain. In this situation, cows came to embody a risk that had the potential to enter the human body. The drastic measures that followed the hysterical reaction to this outbreak were based upon the perceived necessity to reestablish the body of the cow as a risk-free, and therefore a consumable space, thus reducing the extent to which the body of the consumer of this beef is perceived as a body of risk.

During this “crisis”, there was continual appeal to scientific studies about the risks from BSE. The body of risk, constituted through networks of humans and non-humans becomes the object of scientific expertise, as science attempts to rigorously define the extent to which particular bodies are at risk, the causes of this risk, and how this risk may be reduced. Evidence of this is provided by an International Scientific Consensus Conference on Physical Activity, Health and Well Being which was held in Quebec during May 1995. Following the conference, whose main sponsor was Mars Inc., a consensus statement was issued which subsequently appeared in the December 1995 edition of *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*. This consensus statement emphasized that the promotion of physical activity was crucial in the reduction of a number of life and mobility threatening risks including arteriosclerosis, hypertension, diabetes-mellitus, colon and breast cancer. It also stated that there was evidence which pointed to a “50% reduction in the risk of dying from cardiovascular disease in men who increase physical activity and improve physical activity” (1995:5). In such texts, the body is continually produced as a body of risk.

However, recognizing the importance of risk as such is not to claim that risk is the definitive modern experience. Indeed, it is necessary to counter the ideas that (a) risks are a distinctively novel or singularly defining characteristic of contemporary societies, and (b) that there is a shift

³ Italics in original.

from the production and consumption of wealth to that of risk. With regard to this latter qualification, it may be better to conceptualize an intermeshing or intertwining of the production, distribution, and consumption of both wealth and risk and the constitutive knowledge surrounding these processes. Therefore, while acknowledging the prevalence of risk and the discourse that surrounds it as extremely prevalent I want to avoid constructing an argument around the idea of risk as the definitive contemporary experience. Rather, risks and knowledges surrounding them can be mobilized in certain ways thereby making particular environments, constituted by networks of human and non-human, of bodies and technologies, intelligible and thereby either inhabitable or uninhabitable.

Accordingly, as I illustrate in the following sections, it appears that one's body-pace, mental and physical, one's body-space, stress free or stress-filled, and one's knowledge about these (s)paces increasingly comes to define one's risk position. Remain static and inactive and one is categorized as being at risk from a whole host of diseases associated with sedentary living. On the other hand, move too fast, become too ensnared in what Virilio (1995:104) sees as the rigging up of the "human body to bring it up-to-date with the age of absolute speed of electromagnetic waves", and one becomes a candidate for burnout or stress-related disease. Finding the optimal position between these poles, the ideal (s)pace suggested by a range of often conflicting authoritative voices takes on an increased importance. Risk management then, becomes a priority.

Corporate/corporeal flexibility

One of the most important contemporary embodied risks is that of inflexibility, which has become the embodied other to the ideal of flexibility. As Emily Martin (1994) convincingly argues, over the last decade and a half one of the most important metaphors by which the economic, and the corporeal, and thus the cultural and the natural are woven together and made mutually intelligible is flexibility. Accordingly,

arising as a trait to be cherished and cultivated, from corporations and city governments to credit cards and shoes, flexibility is an object of desire for nearly everyone's personality, body, and organization. Flexibility has also become a powerful commodity, something scarce and highly valued, that can be used to discriminate against people (xvii).

Martin also points to the myriad ways in which ideas of flexibility exist in contemporary American culture, from computer software packages to yoga. In her book *Flexible Bodies*, she is concerned to examine how such examples of flexibility within contemporary culture have arisen contemporaneously with moves towards flexible specialization within the organization of business. The practices surrounding flexibility within corporations and the emergent importance of immunity as means of understanding how the body works have been conflated within contemporary culture to form a discursive framework through which particular bodies are made intelligible and differentiated. The contemporary significance of flexibility is also acknowledged by Lowe (1995:2) who suggests that "all body practices have become commodified to such an extent, that the satisfaction of our diverse bodily needs is reconfigured by the requirements of flexible accumulation". For Martin, however, the importance of flexibility marks a particular cultural conjuncture in which the metaphors which provide the intelligibility for a range of practices in a number of "domains" traditionally viewed in isolation - the scientific, the economic, and the cultural - are seen to overlap.

The emphasis on flexibility within corporate organization is couched in terms of the body. Emerging in the 1980's, the "lean" corporation, having reduced any competitiveness constraining excess "weight" through "streamlining" employee structures - a process which was captured in the popular term "downsizing" - became the ideal corporate model. As one CEO remarked, "rigid hierarchies are the corporate cholesterol of organizations" (Gordon, 1996:90). In this context "to compete successfully in the 'corporate olympics', corporate bodies must become agile, leaner, in shape, and flexible enough to change. Like the human body, American corporate bodies that are healthy are 'focused, fast, friendly and flexible'....[because] to survive, corporations will have to be 'fluid, ever shifting in size, shape, and arrangement'" (Martin: 1994:210).

Questions of technology are also important here because the introduction of new technology is central to the facilitation of moves towards corporate flexibility. Such technologies allow the efficient handling of smaller production batches and mean that the production process can be rapidly reconfigured to suit the quickly changing demands of individual clients. This functional flexibility in production technologies increasingly mirrors the functional flexibility expected of

workers who are not expected to stand in one place and repetitively perform the same task time and time again but need to be able to switch between tasks as different situations demand (Harvey, 1989; Harrison, 1994).

These technologies also register the relations between risk and technologies. This is especially so in the case of the introduction of flexible systems in the production process (encompassing both “manufacturing” and “services”). From the perspective of the owner of a corporation, technology may offer increased flexibility in the face of increased competition thereby reducing the risk of uncompetitiveness. On the other hand such technologies increase the risk of reduced employee job-security.

Corporations also benefit from a greater degree of numerical flexibility through engaging employees on short-term contracts or on a part-time basis. Importantly for this study, the kinds of flexible corporate organizations outlined above are evident in the organization of the NordicTrack corporation. NordicTrack does not have a static work-force. On the contrary, the numbers of its employees changes seasonally from about 3000 to 4800 largely due to the fact that most of the “kiosks” that NordicTrack operates as part of its retail strategy only function on a seasonal basis, when demand for its products is expected to be greater. In effect then NordicTrack maybe thought of as a flexible company, constantly growing and shrinking to suit market and seasonal demands (NordicTrack, 1996).

The implementation of such corporate visions has important consequences for employees. Flexible corporate organizations mean decreased job security and contingency, and greater flexibility in working hours. As Schor (1991) illustrates, it is also part of a broader and longer trend in which the leisure time of American workers has decreased dramatically. In this light, for the employee, flexible corporations are riskier corporations insofar as they are more likely to resort to contingent and part-time labor. Indeed, according to Beck, part of what contributes to the proliferation of risks are the inter-related trends towards the “flexibilization of working hours and the decentralization of the work-site” (1992:129).

The extent to which this leads to the corporation becoming a more risk-filled environment is increasingly recognized by management literature. This is evidenced in books such as *Behavioral Risk Management: How to Avoid Preventable Losses from Mental Health Problems in the Workplace* (Yandrick, 1996). According to this book,

the management of workplace behavioral risk is an increasingly important concern for employee benefit managers, disability managers, and risk managers on the staff of self insured employers...[because] downsizing, reengineering, outsourcing, and the implementation of new technologies across virtually every sector of the US economy has contributed significantly to occupational stress and disability (xii).

As a means to avoid the preventable losses associated with these changes the book is intended to “help employers find every opportunity to reduce direct and indirect costs associated with a

company's most valuable resources - its people, or "human capital" (xvii). As one example of the preventative strategies it advocates, it suggests that "a service company with a lot of sedentary jobs might focus on 'wellness, fitness, and lifestyle management'", thereby "packaging corporate loss management inside an upbeat promotional message that focuses on benefits to employees" (35).

"Developing human capital" in this way is one way to allow employees to cope with the greater risks, in the form of stress, insecurity, and contingency, associated with an increasingly flexible corporate environment. It is worth quoting Martin (1996: 224) at length to illustrate this point;

Human resource managers see themselves as midwives helping old, stiff rigid organizations die and new, flexible, innovative ones to be born. They describe themselves as agents of change who lead individuals on journeys during which their old selves die to give birth to new persons, persons who take risks, innovate, flexibly adapt to constant change, supercharge their immune systems, ...persons who, all the while, glance uneasily over a terrifying edge into an abyss, inhabited by the unemployed, underemployed, temporarily employed, and destitute, fearing extinction from neglect and disease.

The flexible corporate body must be peopled by fit workers, workers ready and able to rapidly respond to changing market conditions. The relationship between the healthy corporate and corporeal body is defined in a book titled *Organizational Risk Factors for Job Stress* (Sauter and Murphy, 1995). It suggests that

the model of organizational health must integrate and go beyond the prevailing paradigms. The core of this new conceptual framework is a new employer-employee relationship: one that is healthy and positive, is mutually reinforcing and brings together successful healthy adults with healthy productive organizations (ix).

Within the context of such a framework, "many corporations in the United States have been at least experimenting with one or another innovation bearing such banners as 'high-performance practices', 'employee involvement,' 'employee participation', or 'flexible work organizations'" (1996: 91). Thus, when *Professional Manager* in the title of its July 1996 cover story, asks the question "are you fit for the fight" it is referring to the inter-related fitness of both the corporate and corporeal body.⁴ Corporate and corporeal management are defined here in terms of mutually necessary fitness. In this context, the same article suggested, one should "work that body to improve the bottom line" (see figure 3.2).

⁴ As Turner (1984: 111) notes, "in the managerial class, in order to be successful it is also important to look successful, because the body of the manager is symbolic of the corporation."

Figure 3.2: Cover of *Professional Manager*, (July, 1996).

What such evidence suggests is that both corporate bodies and the corporeal bodies that they employ are increasingly made intelligible in terms of possessing the fitness, manifested in lean and flexible bodies, necessary to reduce the risk of being uncompetitive in an increasingly competitive market situation. Being flexible is therefore an integral part of fitness in that it gives the individual the greatest potential to fit into an increasingly unstable and contingent labor market.

It is hardly surprising then that this imperative to be flexibly fit is built into the design of contemporary commodified fitness machines. For instance, according to Universal, the manufacturers of “Proflex”,

there was a time when a total body workout consisted of aerobic and strength training alone. Times have changed. The hottest trend today is *flexibility*. Fitness experts are regularly citing flexibility as the third component of the total fitness triangle; a component so integral to total fitness, that no total body workout is complete without it. Flexibility has been practiced throughout the world for thousands of years to enhance mobility and relieve stress. Medical professionals and athletes have long recognized the value of stretching for injury prevention and performance enhancement. Until now, there hasn’t been an effective, safe way to stretch and accurately quantify your flexibility gains. Flexibility is fundamental to all aspects of daily living (Universal, 1996).⁵

However, pointing to such evidence should not be taken as a suggestion that either risk or flexibility are the defining characteristics of the contemporary. Rather, this section and the previous one have been an attempt to argue that the discourses and practices surrounding risk and flexibility are increasingly important in constructing the environments to be negotiated by the contemporary individual. In Beck’s (1992:136) terms, risk and flexibility are among the highly commodifiable factors

that impact one’s own life [and which] must be conceived of as ‘environmental’ variables that can be modified, subverted or nullified for one’s personal life space by ‘creative’ measures suited to one’s own sphere of action and corresponding to the ‘internal differentiations’ of possible contacts and activities.

Fitness is therefore partly defined in terms of one’s response-ability, or ability to respond, to conditions of risk and flexibility.

The individualization of response-ability

But who is responsible for the working out of this body? The increased emphasis on the need for fitter and more response-able employees does not necessarily mean that the means to become fit are provided by the corporation. The beginnings of a move towards making the individual employee more responsible for his or her own fitness can be discerned. For instance,

⁵ Emphasis in the original

NordicTrack has realized the marketing opportunities that are associated with corporate strategies aimed at improving employee fitness. It recently introduced *Benefitness*, a corporate fitness program, developed “in response to requests from corporations and health care providers to provide an in-home fitness solution at no cost” to the employer (NordicTrack, 1996). The program is centered around the creation of awareness and response in employees in order that they may be “educated” and therefore initiate permanent lifestyle changes, the intended result of this being the individual purchase of home-fitness equipment by the employee.

The requirement of being able to fit into fit corporations is also felt in university education. Accordingly,

Bowling Green State University in Ohio has taken a logical sequential step by introducing its program Fit-for-Hire (FFH). The eight week program aims to enhance employment opportunities for graduates by teaching them how to market the healthy lifestyle as a desirable plus in later one-on-one encounters at the personnel office (Fitness Management, February 1996).

The program is prompted by the questions - “are you fit for hire”, and “as employers look for health-care cost containment” can “you show evidence that you can deliver your share?”

As these two examples suggests, there is a desire on the part of corporations to reduce their costs by getting employees to take on the responsibility for managing, and perhaps marketing, their own fitness. This must be situated within broader moves towards the individualization of the responsibility to respond to changing political economic conditions, conditions which have generated much of the increased importance of risk and flexibility outlined above.

At the heart of these moves towards the individualization of responsibility is the changing relationship between state, capital, and labor. In the decades following the Second World War, a national bargain came into existence between these “actors”, in which labor discipline, quality of life, and consumerism became ideologically linked (Ingham, 1985; Reich, 1991). In this context, the individual was still faced with a myriad of socio-economic risks, but there was an attempt to collectivize the management of these risks through various technologies of government. These technologies served to collectivize

the management of the individual and collective dangers posed by the economic riskiness of a capricious system of wage-labor, and the corporeal riskiness of a body subject to sickness and injury, under the stewardship of a social state (Rose, 1996:48).

However, with the collapse of this post war-national bargain, there has been an increased emphasis on individual fitness and the maximization of individual powers as the standard of economic health (Luke, 1989). This greater individualization of responsibility is not merely a phenomenon of the late 20th century but is part of the larger process in which the individual is

“removed from traditional commitments and support relationships, [and] exchanges them for the constraints of existence in the labor-market as a consumer” (Beck, 1992).⁶

In this situation “state structures” have increasingly been divested of the responsibility to provide the safety net for individuals in a system which appears increasingly capricious and risky for them. This divesting of responsibility does not represent a “de-governmentalization” per se, but rather, a degovernmentalization of the state, and a switch to an emphasis on individuals as agents of their own governmentality, one which is mediated by the commodities supplied to them by corporate capital. This in turn has led to a privatization of risk-management, characterized by the emergence of what O’Malley (1996:197) call a regime of “prudentialism” which can be thought of as

a technology of governance that removes the key conception of regulating individuals by collectivist risk management, and throws back upon the individual the responsibility for managing risk. This is advocated by its supporters as ‘efficient’, for individuals will be driven to greater exertion and enterprise by the need to insure against adverse circumstances - and the more enterprising they are, the better the safety net they can construct.⁷

Thus, under the guise of neo-liberalism, the individual has been loaded with an increasingly greater share of the burden of responsibility to respond to increasingly complex political-economic conditions. Indeed, it has become morally irresponsible to appear to be attempting to rely on the “state” in one’s efforts to manage risk. Increasingly, malingering, or appearing to be indifferent to this necessity for constant self-improvement is measured against the criteria of at least *attempting* to maximize one’s self performance and is viewed as a moral weakness, as a deliberate and parasitic attempt to “free-ride” through dependence on the “state” and on responsible tax burdened self-improvers. “Just doing it yourself” takes on a moral imperative because inattention to the state of his or her body visually represents the failure of the individual to take the necessary risk-reduction steps to minimize possible dependence on the infrastructures and budgets of the state.

The fit citizen of contemporary neo-liberal societies is the actively responsible individual. Such individuals are to become “experts of themselves”, adopting an educated and knowledgeable relation of self-care in respect of their bodies, their minds, their forms of conduct and that of their families (Rose, 1996; 59).⁸ Disease and bodily disabilities are seen as resulting from a lack of

⁶ Bauman (1995:113) points to the same trend when he says that “processes are now by and large de-institutionalized, building up from the grass-roots level out of the individual, DIY efforts at self-formation.”

⁷ Bauman (1997:37) articulates a similar idea when he suggests that no more is there “collective insurance against the risks; the task of coping with the collectively produced risks has been privatized”.

⁸ It is important to qualify this emphasis on the care of the self. As Dean (1996: 215) notes “Foucault’s researches into the ‘care of the self’ of late antiquity and early ‘hermeneutics of the self’ suggest that many of the features held to be specific to the quest for self identity in late modernity are part of the longer and more complex trajectory of techniques of the self.”

awareness about one's own lifestyle habits. Reducing these risks demands that the individual educate themselves in order to change these habits and develop the ability to be totally self-managed, self-independent, and self-sufficient. In this context, fitness machines are presented as solutions for fitness in an increasingly fast and flexible world. As such, they and their "users" perpetuate rather than problematize the conditions which give rise to their apparent necessity. However, such self-problematizing is hardly likely because, without engaging in such machinically mediated practices of self-reconstruction, one quickly becomes defined as a high risk, inflexible, and morally irresponsible body in the sense that one is excessively dependent, at the same time as one fails to fit within increasingly lean and flexible economic landscapes.

Embodying Fitness

As the preceding discussion suggests, within liberal political economies of fitness "the body is charged with the responsibility for success and failure in earthly endeavors, and the urge 'to do something about my life' is most eagerly translated into a precept 'to do something about my body'" Bauman (1983:41). The body then becomes the target for a whole range of techniques of self-improvement, self-reconstruction, self-discipline, and self-management.

Actively responsible citizens then look to sources of authority to supply them with information about the fittest bodily ideal. However, the definition of this ideal state of fitness is by no means stable and varies from one historical and geographical context to another. For instance, in America at the turn of the century and in the 1920s definitions of fitness centered around the idea of bodily strength (Corbin, 1991; Boscagli, 1996). While strength was the most important component of idealized model of bodily fitness in the early decades of the 20th century, cardiovascular fitness began to be incorporated into this model as early as the end of World War 1 (Corbin, 1991). The importance of cardiovascular fitness increased dramatically in the 1960's. In this decade, deaths caused by cardiovascular diseases and cancers replaced contagious diseases as the main causes of death in Western societies. The increased incidence of these diseases was attributed to various lifestyle factors, such as lack of exercise, obesity, smoking, and fat intake, part of the expansion of the environments of risk discussed earlier. More recently, as has been noted, flexibility has increasingly become important as a measure and standard of bodily health.

These elements are worked together to produce multidimensional models of physiological fitness. Corbin (1991) presents one such multidimensional model of health-related physical fitness whose components "consistent with modern definitions, include cardiovascular fitness, muscular endurance, strength, flexibility and body composition." Despite this, physiological fitness remains a contested concept so much so that "among professionals the term physical fitness, may be so vague, ambiguous, and nonspecific as to be almost meaningless" (Pate, 1988:174).

Current models of scientifically defined fitness are an outcome of the continuous process of working out the body by scientific disciplines such as physiology and kinesiology. From a

rational, scientific perspective, such models of the body represent the best that the objective and value free methods of science have been able to achieve. They represent a continual improvement in the ability of science, to render the optimal performance of the body visible, to chart the limits of bodily endurance, and to suggest achievable body ideals.⁹ It is hardly surprising that this process has produced a predominantly mechanistic model of the body and its performance. As Loy (1991:119) notes, “given the performance enhancement ethos of biomechanics, exercise physiology, motor learning, and sport psychology, it is not surprising that “a huge volume of knowledge about human bodies is restricted almost totally to the atomistic, instrumental, and mechanistic perspectives of sports scientists”.

However, these models are increasingly being challenged by more holistic models of fitness. For instance, while still claiming to aspire to a more “scientific” understanding of the body, Maguire (1991:190) attempts to go beyond mechanistic models, by suggesting that “human beings are studied ‘in the round’, capturing them as whole selves, not as isolated physiological units.” This is increasingly necessary because today’s “informed”, “sophisticated” and “reflexive” consumer to whom publications such as *Women’s Sports and Fitness, Health, Prevention, Self, Heart and Soul, Home Gym and Fitness, Living Fit, Men’s Fitness, Men’s Health, and Shape* are marketed is increasingly aware that this more holistic model of the self, linking the healthy and proper working of the body’s interior with an appealing exterior, is necessary in order to manage one’s fitness within the political and discursive economies of risk and flexibility outlined in the previous sections. This is also associated with the aestheticization and commodification of disciplines such as kinesiology which, as the scientific study of movement in all of its dimensions, can be marketed as a sophisticated, energetic commodity by departments of kinesiology (Slowikowski and Newell, 1990). Models of fitness are therefore increasingly global, indeed almost ecological, in that they link mind and body in models of total kinesthetic fitness.

Consumer fitness

The totally physiologically fit, risk-free, flexible, and response-able body, can only be achieved by actively responsible citizens purchasing the necessary commodities provided by corporations within the “fitness industry”. The risk-filled, flexible, liberal, political economy of fitness generates a plethora of market opportunities for corporations seeking to sell risk reducing, flexibility enhancing, and self-sufficiency improving commodities by which the individual is encouraged to take control of his/her life and remobilize the productive potential of his/her body.

Corporate marketing departments have identified and constructed models of the ideal consumer seeking to maximize control over the contingencies of contemporary conditions. For instance, the cover story in the September 1996 edition of *Demographics* described the rise of “self-navigators” as a distinctive section of the consumer market. According to the report, “self-navigation is a life-strategy emerging from the realization that ‘it’s up to me to create my well being’. In a fast changing and often hostile world, self-navigation means relying on oneself to be

⁹ Indeed, there is an explicit geographical imagination in this pursuit of the body, an example of which is the volume edited by Shepard (1971) titled *Frontiers of Fitness*.

the captain of one's own ship and charting one's own course. It means resolving the opposing forces of uncertainty and endless possibilities that surround us. It means self-reliance". However, the same report on "self-navigators" noted that while self-reliance is crucial to self-navigators, this "doesn't mean businesses can't help them help themselves. Major companies are already taking advantage of the self-navigation *zeitgeist* in advertising campaigns such as Saab's "Find your own road" (42). The report in *Demographics* also raised a further characteristic about "self-navigators" which is relevant here. These "self-navigators" are "open to new things, especially when it comes to new technology. Despite the negative forces which challenge their trust, they appreciate the fact that technology can make life easier and more exciting" (42).

Increasingly aware of the civilizational risks in the form of environmental variables which surround them, individual consumers can seek a more risk-free and flexible position through self-empowerment, self-improvement, self-enhancement, and self-management attainable by the purchase of innumerable commodities, as they become the agents of "their educational and market mediated subsistence and the related life planning and organization" necessary to facilitate this (Beck, 1992:87).¹⁰

Excellent illustrative of this is the current advertising campaign of Reebok Corporation which continually attempts to create the environments in which individual subjects can map their embodied needs onto particular arrangements of commodities as part of "Planet Reebok". The following quotes were taken from Reebok advertisements in recent issues of *Women's Sports and Fitness*.

My workout is different now. I get beyond burnout, boredom. I got into Versa Training. It starts with my goal (pick one - weight loss, tone, endurance) and from the Versa Training Program I create the workout to get me there. I do things I enjoy (honestly). I have the right mix of strength, flexibility and Cardio-training. It's very precise. It's kind of personal. It's a Reebok total fitness thing. The program, the equipment, the clothes, and of course the shoes. The point is - my body keeps responding. And my motivation keeps happening.

Dara Torres. This is my planet

Monogamy. Don't ask me to be faithful to only the treadmill, only one class, only one free weight. I will flex and sweat and work out according to my goals, and how I feel now, this instant. Not according to what day of the week it is.

Lisa Bircher. This is my planet¹¹

These examples are noteworthy for a number of reasons. First, they appeal to a specific geographical imagination in which the body of the individual becomes conflated with the earth. Reebok, by offering a type of total commodity environment plays upon the need to master and discipline both spaces through appealing to what Cole and Hribar (1985:347) call a "deep,

¹⁰ Bauman (1995:44) also refers to this when he claims that "Navigation turns into *risk-management*."

¹¹ There is also a subtext of sexual freedom here, suggesting that the individual can freely engage in intimate relations with more than one machine.

authentic self located at the crossroads of power and lifestyle”. Second, these examples also appeal to ideas of flexibility, both in terms of bodily flexibility, as part of the total fitness regime, and in terms of spatio-temporal control. Third, it is also made clear that Reebok are providing the motivational environment in which the body continually responds. According to the advertisement the Reebok “total fitness thing” provides the consumer with the environment with which to best navigate the shoals of risk and flexibility upon which one can so easily perish. Reebok is thereby attempting to offer an environment of total body fitness. Indeed, by conflating the organic, planetary, and commodity environments, Reebok is implicitly appealing to a holistic model of health that emphasizes relationships, information flows, systems, and ecology.

Such attempts to provide total commodified fitness environments are registered in other advertising campaigns. The individual consumer situated within commodified corporeal environments can perhaps splash themselves with Ralph Lauren’s “Fitness Fragrance” *Polo Sport* (see figure 3.3), which is available with the “basic training package”, a “modern concept in men’s technologically advanced, fragrance free skin fitness essentials that address all your grooming needs”.¹² Notions of fitness, as the Reebok and Ralph Lauren advertisements attest, are highly commodifiable.

As these example also suggest, the ability to consume is another important measure of one’s fitness. One must consume to become fit, because that is the only way that one can construct an aestheticized personal safety net under pressure from increasingly risk-filled and flexible socio-economic conditions. Such commodities also enable the consumer to construct their identity as one that embodies fitness, but one that is also flexible. In such a situation,

the snag is no more how to discover, invent, construct, assemble (even buy) an identity, but how to prevent it from being too tight and from sticking too fast to the body. Well sewn and durable identity is no longer an asset; increasingly and ever more evidently, it becomes a liability. The hub of postmodern life strategy is not making identity stand - but the avoidance of being fixed (Bauman, 1997:89).

One must then avoid at all costs a situation where one fails to “acquire the shape and form one wished to acquire, whatever that form might have been; failing to stay on the move but also to stop at the spot of one’s choice, to stay flexible and ready to assume shapes at will, to be simultaneously pliable clay and accomplished sculptor (Bauman, 1995:113). Illustrative of this is the fact that there is little consistency in the ideal female body images that are portrayed in the media. They are at one and the same time “firm but shapely, fit but sexy, strong but thin”. (Markula, 1995:424). In such a contradictory situation, there is no single ideal state of embodied fitness, rather, pursuing fitness becomes a “sort of meta effort, the effort to stay fit to make efforts”. (Bauman, 1995:114)

¹² From an advertisement in *Vanity Fair*, June 1997.

Figure 3.3: Advertisement for *Polo Sport*, “the Fitness Fragrance” by Ralph Lauren.

Thinking about fitness goes beyond mere physiological notions of corporeal fitness. These notions are extremely important but must be situated at the confluence of a range of political and discursive economies of risk, flexibility, response-ability, responsibility, physiology, and consumption. Keeping fit then, requires the individual to constantly monitor his or her body (s)pace, in order that s/he may avoid becoming immobilized. The ideally fit individual is mobile enough to avoid being fixed as too old, too young, too slow, too fast, too unable, too disabled, in other words - fit enough to avoid being defined as unfit.

Home-body-shopping- Tracking the set-up of the fit home.

The imperative to become fit is inscribed in and through particular spaces. As has been suggested above, this can take place within the context of the corporation. It is also registered in the growth of health and fitness facilities. However, because I am particularly concerned with the individualization of the responsibility to become fit, this thesis focuses on the space home as a fitness environment.¹³

The home as a particular “environment” is culturally constructed, and the definition of what constitutes an “ideal home”, and the possibilities of obtaining such an ideal home, vary across time and space as well as across gender, race, and class. In this section I briefly consider how, situated within the context of the political and discursive economies of fitness discussed above, the ideal home of the fit individual is constructed as a “body-shop”, an environment where the embodied subject can manage his or her self through engaging in technologically enhanced tactics of self-management, self-reconstruction, and self-discipline.

¹³ Sibley (1995:129) suggests that, “human geographers have generally shied away from domestic interiors, restricting their investigations to public spaces”. It does seem that for the most part, geographers have tended to avoid critical engagement with questions of the home and domestic space, the ways in which these environments are materially and discursively constructed, and the types of practices that occur within them. This is largely as a result of the casting of the “private” space of the home as somehow clearly separate from, and less “important”, than so-called “public” spaces of production and consumption.

Nevertheless, within geographical literature there has been some engagement with questions of the home. Humanistic geographers engaged with the embodied space of the home and thus contributed to the retrieving of the body from its invisibility within the discipline of geography. However, despite their awareness of the affectionate attachment to places such as the home they nevertheless neglected to consider the gendered aspect of different lived experiences in the home (Rose, 1993). Critiquing this, feminist theorists have illustrated the ways in which the embodied experience of the home is also gendered, in that the “private” space of the home occupied by the female contrasted with the “public” space occupied by the male. In the addition to the public/private dualism, feminist critics have problematized the home/work dualism, arguing that both spaces are inextricably bound up with one another and that changes in the constitution and organization of one space impact on the other (Hanson, 1992). Such a constitutive relationship between events supposedly taking place beyond the home and those inside is also evident in the recent bringing to bear of various strands of psychoanalytic theory on questions of the home. Sibley, for example draws on object relations theory, to recover geographies of childhood, and the boundaries, generated by fear, desire, disgust, that shape these geographies. In such a view, the experience of the self is strongly based upon and related to the experiences of the home, experiences external to this being constructed with varying degrees of otherness. Indeed, according to Sibley, the experience of “public” space is increasingly seen as threatening, further strengthening the boundary between the space of the home and the “outside” world. In this way the “private” space of the home and public space are “reciprocally conditioned” (1995b: 77).

Feminist and psychoanalytic perspectives are both sensitive, albeit to different degrees and in different ways, to the fact that the what counts as “the home” is inextricably bound up with broader social/cultural/political economic conditions. They are also sensitive to the fact that what is meant when referring to the “home” is not some static category, which remains essentially the same while all around changes.

Before proceeding however, it is necessary to briefly draw attention to the fact that such constructions of the home as a space of self-discipline where individuals workout with the aid of machines are not necessarily new. It is easy to think of the types of fitness technologies designed, manufactured, and marketed by companies such as NordicTrack, Nautilus, and the plethora of other fitness companies as representative of distinctively contemporary phenomena, having originated solely during the decades since the Second World War, and especially since the early 1970's. This is not entirely correct. As Green (1986:ix) has demonstrated, "we of the last quarter of the twentieth century did not invent aerobics, weight-lifting, exercise machines, health foods, or the variety of other ways we employ to attain the bodily state we desire". As early as the second half of the 19th century for instance, many exercise books were promoted as family instruction manuals for the home. Around the same time the "parlor gymnasium" became popular in middle class American homes. One such piece of equipment, "appropriate to the drawing-room, the study, the office, and to the use of both sexes" was offered by a Dr. Barnet. Endorsed by most of the major fitness advocates of the period, this "gymnasium" was essentially a rubber cord with handles at each end. This equipment came in six different sizes from children's to "gentlemen of extra strength" and was also offered in set "for family or office use". The same company offered a more sophisticated home work-out in the shape of a "parlor rowing machine", a device which cost \$10 and was made of maple and walnut. Mann's "Health Lift", offered a "thorough gymnastic system in ten minutes a day". The variety and complexity of such home fitness devices quickly increased at the turn of the century. D. L. Dowd's "Health Exerciser" for instance, "attached with strong bolts to the wall, with a weight and pulleys hooked to the floor, was a permanent device for serious "brain-working and sedentary people" (Green, 1986: 200. See appendix 2). As can be seen from these brief examples, attempts to design, manufacture, and market home fitness environments as spaces where bodies and machines mesh in order to enable and facilitate self-reconstruction, are nothing new.

Contemporary examples of the discursive construction of the home as an environment for self-reconstruction in contemporary American culture are legion. The pages of magazines such as *Prevention* attest to this. A special advertisement section in the September (1996) issue concerned "The Healthy Home". This article noted that

Every Family is concerned about good health - how to promote it and maintain it. We all know that eating right, getting enough sleep and exercising regularly are keys to staying healthy. They build the body's natural defenses and give it the strength it needs to stay fit. But the fact is, all of these things may not be enough. Another element that's important to your family's health is a clean, healthy home environment.

After this introductory paragraph, the first subheading in this article was "Your family at risk". In a different issue, another article about the home noted that "no matter who we are or where we live, *home* means the same thing to us all" (April 1996). The article went on to offers solutions for a "body and soul soothing home" to make it a "little less accident prone, a bit more congenial and a lot less stressful", in short, to make it a "low key recharging station for both mind and

body”. Additionally, as the article suggested, “like a good fitness trainer, your home can encourage you to be more physically active” if it is configured in certain ways, one of these being to put your “treadmill next to your easy chair”. Clearly, this article is playing upon the idea that the home is a place for stress-, and therefore risk-management, and that it can be configured in such a way as to provide a suitable self-motivational environment.

Given this, “whoever has the necessary long-term financial cushion at hand can attempt to avoid risk through the choice of a place of residence or the set-up of the residence itself” (Beck, 1992:35). The ways in which the set up of the home can be materially reconfigured in this way were illustrated in the January 1997 issue of *Women’s Sports and Fitness*, which was devoted entirely to providing a “Gear Bible for Women” and included a section on home fitness. An article entitled “Home-Gym Dandies” began with the following:

Envision your dream home gym: multiple cardio machines to alleviate boredom and promote cross training, shiny weight machines to strengthen and tone, and a spacious cool-down area with enticing toys to make sure you stretch after every workout.

However, the article recognized that such an ideal was not within the reach of everyone. It therefore employed the president of *Frontline Fitness*, a New York consulting business, to design ideal home gyms in three price ranges. The cheapest included workout videos, resistance tubing, dumbbells, jump ropes, an “ab-shaper” and a non-resisting step. The offerings in the mid-range could be combined for a total-body, heart-conditioning, and muscle-toning home gym for under \$1500. At the top of the list here was a NordicTrack ski-machine, followed by recumbent bicycles, step-machines, and free weights. Finally, with those for \$4000 or more to spend the article listed some machines, such as the Precor EFX, which provided computer controlled conditioning programs, heart-rate sensors and “cutting-edge technology”. Through the purchase of such equipment the home can be set up as a high-tech personal gym, allowing the individual to work out inside. The possibility of configuring the home as a high-tech personal gym is echoed by NordicTrack which suggests that, “energized by the latest discoveries in exercise science and physiology, the Ultralift catapults quality strength training into the 21st Century, moving it out of the health club and into the home” (NordicTrack, 1997).

The fit home, set-up with the right equipment, is materially and discursively constructed as place of spatio-temporal control. Exercise needs be reconfigured around one’s schedule, fitting into one’s routine. Given this, the degree to which machines allow their users to undergo a total body workout is important. Contemporary machines that exercise more than one part of the body are attractive because in many homes, the limitations of space, time, and resources prevent the individual from purchasing a whole range of fitness machines, each for a specific purpose. Fitness machines can offer their users greater flexibility within the confines of their home if they can be quickly reconfigured at will to suit bodily needs, thereby providing a “total-body-workout”.

The television set is central to the reconfiguration, or setting up of the fit home as a body-shop, continually displaying as it does constant images of ideal bodies and inducements to consume. TV is perhaps the most important of the technological networks that map bodily ideals into homes, because of its almost inevitable presence in the homes of the majority of Americans, accompanied frequently by a VCR. Together these domestic technologies were facilitative of a massive increase from the 1970's on of sales of home exercise videos, the most popular being those videos produced by the actress Jane Fonda. More generally, daytime TV scheduling is still littered with lifestyle segments encouraging people to work out in front of their TV. Brightly clad fitness enthusiasts exhort couch potatoes to get up and "just do it". This is perhaps epitomized by *Victoria's Body Shoppe*, hosted by Victoria Johnson, which began in October 1995 seeking to offer "mind-body alignment" for "total fitness". The set for this 30 minute fitness program

is a slick garage, with a clean, contemporary feeling lending itself to a variety of performance themes, often using the automobile as a metaphor for the body's and mind's need for good fuel and tune-ups for high performance (Victoria Johnson 1995).

Continuing the metaphor of the body shop, Johnson asserts that "each of us are in the driver's seat", and thus "all we have to do to reach success is grab the wheel and take control". Here, the televisual home-body-shop exists in the "real" home-body-shop as a screen of self-empowerment where the consumer is continually exposed to images suggesting the kind of ideal human-machinic assemblages that are best for their home-work-out (see Luke, 1989). This in turn is part of the way that "technological images have become the mirrors in which to look for an identity" (Olalquiaga, 1992: 4).

Television is built into the design of home fitness in another way. As the television ads of numerous fitness machines illustrate, being able to engage in additional "leisure" activities while working out is also important. As *Business Week* (February 1996) noted, "if you want to get a good workout in front of the tube, an exercise machine may be just the ticket". Given this, an element of the HealthRider's marketing is its quietness, allowing the user to watch TV while exercising. However, it is also enabling the home-body-shopper to be more efficiently embedded in technologically mediated circuits of consumption, by being exposed to further ceaseless inducements to consume.

Toward Fitness Environments

Such examples illustrate how the home is continually reconfigured as a space where fit bodies are reconstructed, a space which must fit into the increasingly flexible spatiotemporal schedules of the individual. However, in keeping with the argument outlined in the previous chapter about the ways in which environments are constructed as networks of human and non-human actors, the home cannot be considered in isolation, as a "black-box". Rather, its construction as a fitness environment must be thought of as a part of the governmentality of much longer networks. Accordingly, in the previous section an attempt has been made to briefly illustrate how the advertising and motivational programming found in contemporary American mediascapes offers

constant inducements to the consumer to combine his or her body with a whole range of fitness machines in the context of a home which is already mapped into circuits of consumption, technological networks, and political and discursive economies of risk, flexibility, responsibility, response-ability and fitness. In this way, the home is constructed as a particular fitness environment, a “body-shop”, where consumers engage in tactics of self-discipline, self-management, self-monitoring, and self-mobilization, all in the pursuit of fitness. In its ideal set-up then, the home as body-shop is a personal temple of self-absolution, in which the consumer can pursue machinic salvation. From the perspective of ANT, this set-up of the fit home is constructed through the attempt by particularly powerful actor-networks to enroll, mobilize and translate diverse actors into stable networks that can be represented as meaningful fitness environments. In the following chapter I explore this process with reference to a specific example - NordicTrack.