

Celebrity Feminism: Nike Style Post-Fordism, Transcendence, and Consumer Power

Cheryl L. Cole and Amy Hribar
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

We interrogate Nike's implication in the developments of 1980s and 1990s popular feminisms by contextualizing and examining the advertising strategies deployed by Nike in its efforts to seduce women consumers. Although Nike is represented as progressive and pro-women, we demonstrate Nike's alliance with normative forces dominating 1980s America. We suggest that Nike's solicitation relies on the logic of addiction, which demonized those people most affected by post-Fordist dynamics. While Nike's narrations of "empowerment" appeal to a deep, authentic self located at the crossroads of power and lifestyle, we suggest that these narratives offer ways of thinking/identities that impede political action. Finally, we consider the relations among Nike, celebrity feminism, and the complex and invisible dynamics that enable transnationals to exploit Third World women workers.

Nous interrogeons l'implication de Nike dans le développement des féminismes populaires des années 80 et 90 en examinant et en contextualisant les stratégies publicitaires déployées par Nike dans son effort pour séduire les consommatrices. Quoique Nike soit vu comme progressiste et pro-femmes, nous démontrons son alliance avec les forces normatives dominant l'Amérique des années 80. Nous suggérons que les sollicitations de Nike reposent sur une logique de la dépendance qui "démonise" celles et ceux qui sont les plus affectés par la dynamique post-fordiste. Si le discours de "prise en charge" de Nike séduit le soi profond, authentique, situé au carrefour du pouvoir et du style de vie, nous suggérons qu'il offre cependant des façons de penser et des identités qui empêchent l'action politique. Finalement, nous considérons les relations entre Nike, le féminisme de célébrité, et la dynamique complexe et invisible qui permet aux transnationales d'exploiter les travailleuses du tiers-monde.

The celebrity zone is the public sphere where feminism is negotiated, where it's now in most active cultural play. (Jennifer Wicke, 1994, p. 757)

One author's story: I was a bit puzzled by a recent interaction with a flight attendant and her more than evident enthusiasm about Nike. Apparently inspired by her sighting of my recently purchased copy of *Just Do It*, she made a point

The authors are with the Department of Kinesiology, the Women's Studies Program, and the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory, 221 Freer Hall, 906 S. Goodwin Ave., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, IL 61801.

of returning to me at least three times to talk about and celebrate Nike and its attitude. She told me that the "just do it" mantra had helped her to take control of her life. It had, she claimed, even authorized her to leave a bad marriage. She clearly believed that Nike was responsible for her new-found sense of agency and empowerment. By her view, Nike had provided her with a way of thinking that enabled her to take action and to assert her will in a way she could not before . . . Nike. She told me that she now lived by *their* motto. What grew even more apparent was that by her view, we shared "Nike"—we were part of a community imagined through a spiritual sense of womanhood that had been cultivated and that was signified by Nike's now famous swoosh and directive. Although I was discouraged that she credited her attitude and identity to a multinational corporation rather than what I perceived to be the more deserving feminist movement, perhaps I was mistaken to assume a distance between Nike and feminism. Indeed, the Nike-identified flight attendant did not see Nike and feminism as strange bedfellows.—*clc*

Some might regard the above interaction as trivial and innocent, as a friendly flight attendant simply doing her job. Like the commonsense understanding of our interaction, Karl Marx (1970) suggests that "[a] commodity appears, at first sight, a trivial thing, and easily understood." But, Marx continued, "Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing" (p. 71, emphasis added). We understand the Nike-identified flight attendant as one of innumerable examples of Nike's invisible and visible participation in 1980s and 1990s popular culture and its production of desires and identities. An analysis of the visible effects of Nike will show that Nike is, in reality, *a very queer thing* that cannot be separated from identifications and ways of thinking that are inextricably bound by invisible powers and particular historical conditions. Over the last 15 years, the everyday presences of corporations like Nike, Reebok, and Nautilus have made them into *things* that play an increasingly influential role in popular politics as they, in their multiple guises, including the hard, firm, tight bodies made under their signatures, have captured America's imagination. Indeed, the contemporary mood in America cannot be understood apart from the exercise equipment, infomercials, sneakers, spandex, diets, and fitness gurus and entrepreneurs constituted by and constitutive of its political and emotional imaginary.¹ Although we tend to imagine popular fitness and popular feminism as inevitable dimensions of our lives, both are complex, historical categories 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 reshaped the American popular.

But of all the elements surrounding the sport/fitness complex, none has captured the American imagination in the ways Nike has: the Nike swoosh, the directive "just do it," and Nike signature advertisements are, indeed, everywhere. Despite the ubiquity of Nike and its signature swoosh, the powers that generate and maintain Nike and structure our relationship to "Nike" as a thing largely remain invisible. In Marx's terms, the powers that condition our relations to Nike, our selves, and others are not visible at first sight. In this context, the notion of invisible powers can be understood, in part, through Marx's conception of the governing logic of commodities (the subject-commodity relationship), commodity fetishism, through which Marx distinguished between the appearance and the essence of things. By Marx's analysis, the appearance of things masks the social relations among producers. The social relations among producers appear

not as relations between themselves but as relations among the products of their labor in the realm of exchange. In other words, the governing logic of commodities shapes how we see objects, what and who are made visible and invisible, and what relations are easily and not so easily imagined.² As Marx emphasized in *Capital*, appearance constitutes a dimension of reality and is not to be dismissed as mere illusion.

To a great extent, Nike was made visible through basketball, especially its most famous embodiment—Michael Jordan. Nike's visibility, in general, tends to serve as a ritual of affirmation of identity for "us" and for Nike despite its more visible articulation with criminality during the mid to late 1980s media-hyped crime wave.³ Since Jordan's return to the NBA, the hype around new NBA superstars, and the spectacle of *Hoop Dreams*, the association of Nike with criminality has, at least for now, receded into the background. Nike is routinely celebrated in American culture for its overall achievements, which are regularly made visible through its cofounder and self-made businessman Phil Knight, and for its apparent generosity and concern for America's youth, which have been made most visible through its P.L.A.Y. campaign.⁴ More recently, Nike has been celebrated for its apparent role in encouraging women to become physically active. The depth of Nike's appeal to women is demonstrated by the more than 250,000 phone calls, ranging from appreciation to requests for advertisements, received by Nike during the first 2 years of its women's campaign.

The promotional discourse produced and circulated by Nike's women-centered advertisements is particularly interesting because of their high profile and affective purchase in a complex historical moment marked by backlash politics and transnational capitalism. Given this, our interest in this project is to interrogate Nike's implication in the trajectory of 1980s and 1990s popular feminism. In this paper we ask, How are we to understand feminist politics in 1980s and 1990s America? What has come to count as empowerment? How does feminism à la Nike participate in the construction of identities in 1990s America? How are we to understand the success and appeal of the emancipatory narrative advanced under Nike's signature? The answers to these questions (as well as the questions themselves) are not evident at first sight: They are multidimensional, complex, and historically specific.

We understand Nike as a component embedded in a discursive formation that has generated and legitimated a popular feminism: the rearticulation of what counts as "women," "women's problems," and "solutions" to those problems and, by extension, the production of popular knowledges of social stratification that shape everyday lived experiences, pleasures, and values. The high profile of Nike, especially as it has become intertwined with popular feminism, suggests that we consider how ongoing cultural dynamics have rearticulated the public discourses of feminism and fitness: It suggests that we need to reconsider the *how*, *what*, and *who* that have been shaped and reorganized through the postfeminist imaginary. Efforts to understand the contemporary politics of popular feminism require that we consider the specific cultural, economic, and political conditions that have given rise to the force and momentum of particular identificatory possibilities and their investments. Given this, our work seeks to contribute to an understanding of the dynamics that have forged contemporary feminism as well as an understanding of the location of Nike in the postfeminist imaginary.

In order to understand Nike's affective purchase, we begin by reviewing feminist critiques of images of women and the forces constituting 1980s America because they, to a great extent, constitute the conditions of possibility that shape the Nike-woman alliance. We do not suggest that Nike simply co-opted feminist rhetoric and values; instead, we argue that Nike's financial success as well as Nike's position in the national imaginary must be understood within the dynamics of what has been called post-Fordism and its corresponding postfeminist imaginary and affective culture. We contend that Nike has become a celebrity feminist through its rearticulation of women's issues and the position of bodily work and consumption in stabilizing identity in a historical moment marked by instability and insecurity. Finally, we locate the production of this postfeminist imaginary within a global social formation that produces Nike, Western women's bodies/identities, and popular and consumer feminisms.

The Seduction

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than a negative instance whose function is repression. (Michel Foucault, 1980b, p. 119)

In our effort to respond to the question, "How are we to understand the appeal and financial success of the emancipatory narrative advanced under Nike's (feminist) signature?" we need to call attention to the early feminist criticisms of images of women because they, to a great extent, motivated 1970s feminist identities, drew attention to the popular, and established feminism as a force that capitalism had to accommodate. Such critiques targeted a wide variety of images ranging from those that were depicted as distorting reality and stereotyping women to images that were depicted as portraying women as inadequate (associated with beauty culture) to those depicted as displaying women's bodies in disturbing ways (associated with pornography and advertising). Feminist critiques highlighted a system of representation that produced damaging illusions and psychological harm and that undermined self-esteem (in ordinary and not so ordinary women) while objectifying and fragmenting women's bodies for male heterosexual desire and pleasure (male spectatorship). Such critiques led some feminists to advance a position that viewed such images as the product of a patriarchal culture in which women were devalued, were seen as mere sex objects, and became targets of violence. Additionally, this position mobilized and was mobilized by multiple feminist projects including feminist antipornography movements. It led to the endorsement of what were understood to be styles of refusal and what has been referred to as the development of a feminist uniform. These styles of refusal revered the natural, authentic self through various antifashion, anticapitalist styles and healthy looks.

Most feminist scholars are now familiar with the devastating critiques of what Griselda Pollock (1990) called the "images of women" position. This position (images of women) was immediately criticized by other feminist scholars who argued that its assumptions were determinist, simplistic, and reductionist. Theoretical and stylistic critiques have increasingly characterized the position as puritanical and out-of-date, flawed in its overestimation of the power of images and beauty culture and its underestimation of the oppositional potential of consumer culture and the agency of women. Our interest in this paper is not to enter the debate over images of women *per se*; instead, we are interested in how the politics of positive images advanced under the images of women debate have been rearticulated in the postfeminist imaginary.

Linda Scott's (1993) "Fresh Lipstick—Rethinking Images of Women in Advertising" illustrates one dimension of the debate and is useful for our project both for what she does and does not consider in her analysis of Nike. Scott defines her project as one that confronts feminism's vexed relationship to beauty culture. By Scott's view, the feminisms developed over the last century have dismissed beauty culture as a series of practices that contribute to capitalism and women's subordinate position. She contends that beauty culture is more adequately understood as a site of contradictory images that invites readers to negotiate particular practices and identities. As an example of its complexity, she cites an advertisement developed by Nike in 1992 that featured a full-page photograph of Marilyn Monroe (as a hybrid of beauty and tragedy), which, by her view, makes explicit the logic motivating Nike advertisements. In part the advertising text reads

A woman is often measured by the things she cannot control. . . . Inches and ages and numbers don't ever add up to who she is on the inside. If a woman is to be measured, let her be measured by the things she can control, by who she is and who she is trying to become. Measurements are only statistics and STATISTICS LIE. (p. 144)

Scott commends Nike and contends that the values it upholds are those advanced by feminism. She emphasizes the correspondence between the values of Nike advertisements and feminism by calling attention to the text of one of Nike's earliest ads:

"Face lifts, body tucks, liposuction, electrolysis, collagen implants, breast lifts, wrinkle creams, face masks, mud baths, chemical peels, wrinkle fills, liquid diets, cellulite reduction, tweezing, plucking, straightening, waxing, waving, herbal heat wraps." Then you turned the page and saw a young woman in athletic gear sprinting up the stairs, "The 60 minute makeover by Nike. Just do it." (pp. 146-147)

Additionally, Scott maintains that Nike's campaign is progressive because of *who* authored the advertisements: The campaign was developed by the advertising team of feminists Charlotte Moore and Janet Champ rather than, as Scott, apparently mimicking the feminist stereotype, puts it, "a snarling group of male capitalists" (p. 146). Nike's signature is authenticity and Scott sanctions that signature: "Instead of being motivated by a desire to manipulate or by a feeling of condescension toward their readers, Champ and Moore felt able to communicate their message to other women because they had 'been there' themselves" (p. 147).

Although we tend to agree with Scott's critique of vulgar demonizations of beauty culture and advertisements, we also suggest that her position does not significantly differ from that which she criticizes. In "Fresh Lipstick," Scott imagines the complexities and possibilities of beauty culture by placing (a particular version of) feminism under scrutiny. Her primary criticism of this feminism is premised on its object of scrutiny: its preoccupation with the natural/unnatural. However, rather than interrogating the category and production of the natural, Scott redefines the natural as artifice, "given the propensity of human beings everywhere to change their physical appearance" (p. 145).⁵

How is it possible that Scott understands Nike as an alternative, even socially responsible, corporation when its identity, like that of feminism, is built on its criticism of "unnatural beauty practices"? And, what would we need to consider if we were to position Nike as the object of scrutiny? We can begin to answer this question by examining how and in what context Nike constructs and stabilizes its identity. Like the feminism dismissed by Scott, Nike gains its identity as a progressive and pro-women corporation by defining itself over and against what it now (and feminism previously) positions as manipulative, dangerous, unnatural, and even unjust practices. Nike appeals to a discourse which judges as unnatural those practices that alter the natural body and apparently falsely represent the self. Nike's appeal to a more authentic, internal self that can be realized through exercise is generated over and against external practices and the inspection of the body's surface (the site of gendered pleasures).⁶ Nike (as a metonym for exercise) situates itself as a better version of a beauty practice through its apparent recognition and affirmation of an inner and more authentic self. Nike directs our gaze away from bodily surfaces to depth, to the qualities of the essential self. In Michel Foucault's terms, Nike wants to display, free, and celebrate the *soul* contained within the body. Why is this deep self so appealing? And, how is the deep self implicated in America's postfeminist imaginary? How are women being repositioned in the world according to Nike? In the remaining sections, we consider the dimensions that help explain the context, content, and effects of Nike's seduction.

Working Out the Reagan Era: The Politics of Hard Bodies

There can be no exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth In the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living and dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power. (Michel Foucault, 1980c, pp. 93-94)

The fusion of new right ideology and right-thinking common sense thus promotes a lifestyle which exhorts us to save our hearts by jogging in the arsenic filled air of Tacoma. If jogging is not for you—then there are other routes to fitness—routes which conveniently ignore the fact that millions

of people who hover around and below the poverty line cannot afford tennis, tennis racquets, and memberships in health fitness centers. And, as an active rather than passive lifestyle, it exhorts us to burn off calories while denying State dependents the food they need to survive. This "slim and trim," "lean and mean" lifestyle of self-improvement is one of independency and self-sufficiency. Independency and self-sufficiency promote success and self-esteem. Dependency promotes anxiety, failure, and guilt. (Alan Ingham, 1985, p. 50)

Although the Nike swoosh and the matrix of images generated under its signature appear to exist outside of context and struggle, they are products of material conditions and cultural forces. These conditions and forces worked to establish Nike cofounder Phil Knight and the sneaker as icons of advanced capitalism in the same way that Henry Ford and the car served as the icons of an earlier stage of the industrial order. Still, Nike's slogan "just do it" encourages, in fact, commands "us" to ignore the historical, cultural, and structural circumstances and constraints through which "we" make history and history makes "us." Given these erasures, what does Nike (ask us to) imagine? What sort of identities and desires does Nike participate in creating? In order to answer these questions, we need to reconsider the economic and political conditions that led to the cultural preoccupation with the body in 1980s America.

Alan Ingham's (1985) "From Public Issues to Personal Trouble" offers what continues to be a highly suggestive argument about the relations among the economic, political, and cultural dynamics structuring 1980s America and the national preoccupation with the body. As Ingham explains, postwar economic development was accompanied by an altered perception of quality of life. Quality of life, its reliance on consumer culture, and its promises and possibilities were imagined through mediated images (especially advertising and Hollywood films) of the good life. Postwar economic growth and its enhanced quality of life were supported by tripartism that drew the forces of state, capital, and labor into an alliance premised on their common investments in economic development. As Ingham (1985) explained,

The representatives of labor were asked to provide a stable labor force for capital; the representatives of capital, in turn, were to provide a high level of employment, better wages and benefits, and thus guarantee labor access to the consumer culture and the good life. For its part, the state could promise more welfare from its expanding tax base. Labor discipline, consumerism, and quality of life became ideologically linked—a link which perhaps was plausible in the postwar period but which became tenuous in the 1970s. As the long boom of capitalism waned and the recession deepened, unemployment increased and the promises of consumerism were abrogated. The bases of tripartism steadily eroded. (p. 45)

The foundations of tripartism were dissolved by the dynamics of late capitalism, which advanced global interdependency and generated an economic, industrial, and cultural reordering in the United States. (We discuss the relocation of industry in the final section of the paper.) The formation of technologies that facilitated the global mobility and operation of industries such as athletic footwear

led to the deterioration of the manufacturing class, subverted labor organization, elevated unemployment and inner-city poverty, and multiplied the percentage of part-time and temporary workers. In response to heightened unemployment and poverty, the Reagan administration established a national common sense that transposed structural and social problems into individual inadequacies (mobilized through a logic of lifestyle) in order to legitimate its defunding of social welfare programs. Additionally, Reagan's revisionist history indicated that the welfare state encouraged "dependency," national debt, unemployment, and inner-city poverty. The Reagan administration's charges directed at federally funded social programs were inextricably bound to the new right's pro-family (antifeminist, antigay) agenda. Most specifically, feminism was condemned for subverting proper gender, breaking down the (mythic) family, and, by extension, threatening the American way of life. As feminism and improper genders and sexualities (those outside the mythic family) were blamed for America's problems, the bodies of those marked as deviant (as Other) came to occupy a central place in the national imagination. It is in this sense that we can think about the 1980s national imaginary as a postfeminist imaginary in which familial heterosexuality and traditional gender were rendered invisible but normative.

Ingham (1985) convincingly argues that the anxieties produced by the crisis of the welfare state (and, again, we would emphasize the crisis of the family) were magically resolved through the national preoccupation with the body and lifestyle politics.⁷ Most explicitly, Reagan's appeal to individualism and his rearticulation of individual (as well as national) will were figured through the hard, masculine body (Jeffords, 1994). While Hollywood-circulated images of Rambo captured the national imaginary, the working-out yuppie, defined by a "self-betterment ethos" and "consumerist definition of the quality of life," became the trickle-down lived experience of this philosophy (Howell, 1991). The articulation of the family with the economy and of fitness, health, and hard bodies with success, ambition, discipline, will, and effort established the body as the normalizing lens through which other bodies were judged and condemned (Cole, 1993).

Here, we draw on Foucault's notion of normalization in order to explain the force and momentum of corporeal identities or, in Ingham's terms, the national preoccupation with the body. Informed by Foucault's understanding of modern powers, we have used the term *imaginary* to underscore that *what* and *who* we "see" are not transparent, self-evident, or self-contained but are the products of the modern epistemic regime. As Foucault explained, the modern epistemic regime transformed particular acts like sodomy and drug taking into criminalized and pathologized bodies/identities through the positive effects of power:

The modern regime organized itself through a division between the normal and the pathological—producing a deviance and threat located in the body—corporeal identity. That is, in a disciplinary society, power operates by subjecting individuals to practices of normalization—strategies and operations through which bodies are endlessly subjected to detailed surveillance, including medical and psychological examinations, in the form of measurement and standardization. . . . Foucault argues that dividing relations work through the production of deviance which then produces and stabilizes the norm. (Cole, 1993, p. 15)

The normal and abnormal must be understood as both contingent and mutually implicated and dependent categories: The border that marks the self is continuously generated through a social process of producing and policing the other. Although the techniques and strategies of modern power are masked, the productivity of power is rendered visible in its effects: the deviant, pathological, and delinquent.

The central trope of Reaganism, the discourse of the body/anti-body, marked patriotism, sexuality, race, poverty, contamination, and threat by producing an affective economy of images populated by AIDS bodies, crack bodies, criminal bodies, welfare bodies, hard bodies, and productive bodies. As the hard body was articulated in the U.S. in the context of Reagan's war on drugs and AIDS, it was most explicitly bound within the logic of addiction, a logic that depends on free will and locates insufficient free will in the bodies of Others (Cole, 1993, in press; Cole & Andrews, 1995; Cole & Denny, 1994; Cole & Orlie, 1995). The accrued force of the productive/nonproductive (free will/addiction) images cannot be separated from the images (especially those images articulated through the ubiquitous "just say no"/"just do it" campaigns) circulated through mainstream media and promotional culture (Cole, 1993, in press). It is in this sense that the hard/soft body is implicated in the continual making and remaking of the national imaginary.

Advertising, central to the governing logic of capitalism and one of several nodes that negotiates between production and consumption, capitalized on the trope of the body/anti-body dominating Reagan's America. The images disseminated by promotional culture routinely and repetitiously solicit the hard body, the deep self, and free will (which aroused the desire to work on the body and consume commodities in order to maintain the body and stabilize identity). We can see how promotional discourses, situated in this context, are central to the rearticulation of the body, identity, and difference. It is not a coincidence that Nike became Nike during the decades marked by significant economic and political shifts, whose corresponding cultural emphases were on fitness, health, lifestyle, addiction, and individual responsibility. Stated somewhat differently, Nike did not become Nike because of the immediate supply of or sudden demand for fitness clubs, equipment, and apparel, but Nike became Nike through a complicated network of economic, cultural, and psychic relations. In the next section, we concentrate on the elements of popular feminism in order to show that Nike achieved what we argue is a feminist celebrity status through its ability to capitalize on postfeminist values and identities.

Popular Feminisms and Promotional Culture

The predominate research trend in U.S. advertising for the past two decades has been VALS (values and lifestyles) research. By combining information on demographics (sex, income, educational level), buying habits, self-image, and aspirations, VALS research targets and, in the case of yuppies, effectively "creates" consumer lifestyles that are profitable to advertisers. (Danae Clarke, 1992, p. 189)

Women's Lib made me feel inadequate and useless. (Barbara Bush)

The affective and identificatory powers of Nike's (as well as other corporate) advertising strategies aimed at capturing the imaginations of women cannot be understood apart from the dynamics discussed in the previous section. In order to understand how Nike repositioned itself in relation to women in the postfeminist imaginary and became a force organizing popular feminism, we want to more specifically consider how feminism was placed on offer in 1980s and 1990s America. As we suggested in the previous section, the meanings of 1970s movement feminism were revised through the terms of the debate established by the neoconservative agenda that dominated the Reagan era. In this case, liberal as well as neoconservative discourses gathered momentum and force by making movement feminism into Other: Even when not an explicit presence, movement feminism remains the invisible other through which the popular feminisms that constitute the postfeminist imaginary accrue their meaning and force.

The term *postfeminism* typically refers to the rise of anti-(movement) feminist sentiment, which became increasingly visible in 1980s America. Additionally, it refers to the escalating number of women who began to take for granted the accomplishments and goals of second-wave feminism (Goldman, 1992; Rapp, 1988). Although postfeminism does not refer to the absence of feminism, it signifies the shift from a historical moment characterized by activist feminisms (which took their form in demonstrations, the establishment of domestic violence shelters and feminist health projects, and political identities) to a historical moment dominated by popular feminisms. In a more general sense, postfeminism can be characterized as the process through which movement feminism was reterritorialized through the normalizing logic (and its associated social and psychic networks) governing 1980s America. While movement feminism generated spaces and identities that interrogated distributional and relational inequalities, meanings, differences, and identities, the postfeminist moment includes spaces that work to homogenize, generate conformity, and mark Others, while discouraging questioning. It is, in other words, a normalizing discourse. Those spaces are established in the realm of the popular and include, for example, the news, films (ranging from *Fatal Attraction* to *Thelma and Louise* to *Disclosure*), television programs (such as *thirtysomething* and *Roseanne*), advertisements (ranging from Nike to Victoria's Secret), and celebrities such as Madonna, Jane Fonda, and Camille Paglia. These spaces constituting postfeminism have been variously called commodity feminism, the new traditionalism, style wars, the fitness boom, and celebrity feminism. Although diverse, these postfeminist spaces are not self-contained nor are they mutually exclusive; they most unequivocally converge around a sense of women who had it all—and still have it—or who have had enough and women who have not had it all because of their own inadequacies. Regardless of the limitations of the political spaces available in the postfeminist imaginary, in the postfeminist moment, the politics associated with movement feminism seem troubled, less compelling, and outdated.

Postfeminism is also marked by the displacement of potential antagonisms between feminism and consumption through the remaking of feminism into desires and identities that are accomplished through consumption. For example, advertisers responded to the heightened awareness of images of women by converting feminism into sign values associated with certain products in the context of so-called positive images of women. That is, promotional culture turned

feminism into things: Objects (in this case, commodities associated with femininity) are made to represent feminist values, meanings, and goals. This "commodity feminism" was instrumental in generating and circulating images of the "new woman" who was defined through a series of signs and attitudes (now visual clichés) that converged around the characteristics of the liberal subject: individuality, self-acceptance, choice, and independence.

The displacement of anxieties between feminism and consumption also surfaced in what have been called the "style wars." Arlene Stein (1989) uses the term *style wars* to describe the reconfiguration and contradictions in lesbian/dyke styles that became increasingly noticeable during the 1980s: the rise of a fashionable campy style built on traditionally feminine apparel and gender ambiguity that challenged the politics of the natural, healthy, antifashion look of movement feminism. But, as Danae Clarke (1992) reminds us, the refusal of the natural, anticapitalist style is as much about the marketing strategies of consumer culture as it is an embrace of masquerade and camp (p. 198). The marketing strategy is called "gay window dressing" and deploys gay/lesbian subcultural codes that appear but as a doublespeak. That is, the advertisements preserve their mainstream appeal and ordinary appearance because only those already familiar with the codes can read them. As Clarke (1992) explained, gay window advertising is a dual marketing strategy which

avoid[s] explicit references to heterosexuality by depicting only one individual or same-sex individuals within the representational frame. In addition, these models bear the signifiers of sexual ambiguity or androgynous style. (p. 188)

These discourses create identificatory possibilities, but these identities are consumer identities. Lesbian consumers, like feminists, are invited to purchase and pass without claiming the politics of lesbian identity.

In its most explicit insinuation, the New Right positioned itself as pro-women by rearticulating movement feminism as antifamily, antiwomen, antifreedom, and anti-American. As Nancy Gibbs, author of the March 9, 1992 *Time* cover story on the 1980s feminist backlash summarized it, "In the decade's dismissive shorthand, [1980s] feminism came to mean denigrating motherhood, pursuing selfish goals and wearing a suit" (p. 52). During the 1980s, the popular landscape was saturated with images of girls and women whose sexualities were marked as out of control and in need of discipline: These images were generated through, for example, the debates around abortion, which demonized potentially pregnant women; debates around urban poverty, the war on drugs, and welfare, in which racially coded epidemics of teenage pregnancy and crack mothers were made visible; and debates around AIDS, through which all women who were sexually active outside the mythic family were codified as prostitutes. The anxieties generated in response to so-called crisis of the family and the destabilization of women's security and economic well-being that accompanied post-Fordism made the nostalgic discourse of domesticity particularly appealing (Leslie, 1993). As Leslie explains it,

As a traditional sense of place has been eroded by the instantaneity of electronic culture and the proliferation of homogenized landscapes of consumption, it has been replaced by idealized community and place, such as

the concept of the "home" as it was constructed in the 1950s. Marketers see this return to the past, to tradition, and the home, family, and community, as a useful way to repackage consumption: Levis, for example, ran a very successful campaign which managed to connect Levis' 501 jeans to a longing for simpler times. (Leslie, p. 691)

In her work on new traditionalism and postfeminism, Elspeth Probyn (1990) suggests that the new traditionalism rearticulates the categories of choice, home, and family. While both new traditionalism and more liberal postfeminisms turn on the liberal notion of choice, they reaffirm and naturalize the optional categories and thereby direct what counts as natural and normal. For example, both affirm and invoke the normative category of "the home" as the fundamental site of safety, love, and fulfillment (making explicit the heterosexual economy in which consumption is embedded). The terms of normative femininity (defined through consumption and male heterosexual desire: the family, marriage, heterosexuality, and proper gender) limit what can and cannot be easily imagined through popular feminism. Taken together, these dimensions of postfeminism illustrate how nationally sanctioned images of womanhood were promoted in the realm of the popular.

Finally, popular feminism generated a celebrity industry which includes, among others, proud to be an antifeminist feminist Camille Paglia, antipornography feminist Catherine MacKinnon, "Stop the Insanity" star Susan Powter, and (at least temporarily) ice skater and thug Tonya Harding (Wicke, 1994). We would add Nike to the list of celebrity feminists. Like the celebrities of celebrity culture in general, Nike has achieved the status of the extraordinary in the national imaginary. That is, Nike is the corporate version, albeit an anthropomorphized one, of a celebrity feminist.

A recent article in the *Christian Science Monitor* entitled "To Get to Her Feet, Speak to Her Heart" (MacLachlan, 1995), which attempts to capture Nike's relationship with women, is a clear sign of Nike's profile in the postfeminist imaginary. Nike is depicted as a site of action and affirmation. It is celebrated (as it is given credit) for its participation in changing American values related to gender, fitness, and advertising. That is, Nike is credited with questioning prevalent ideas about women and for raising America's consciousness. Nike is narrated as a caring corporation that encouraged and motivated women to become physically active when it was not fashionable to do so. Nike is narrated as a visionary corporation whose advertising strategies have revolutionized how women are addressed in advertising in general. As Alan Holiday, advertising professor at Boston University, depicts Nike, Nike reestablished an advertising standard in 1989 when it "tapped into a whole area of advertising that created the consumer, in this case adult women, as intelligent human beings" (quoted in MacLachlan, 1995). Nike's popularity with women is portrayed in terms of its ability to communicate with ordinary women and its ability to persuade them that Nike was not exclusively for men and boys. *Leary* describes Nike's feminism, its innovation, and its courage:

With its graceful prose and keen insights into the way women struggle with impossible ideals of beauty, the so-called Empathy campaign struck a chord. The ads don't exhort women to achieve physical perfection, but

rather urge them to accept themselves for what they are—a bold departure for any company marketing fitness. (Pomice, p. 105)

Nike is characterized as oppositional, as breaking away from previous antiwomen practices and for doing so in a woman's voice.

And, Nike is revered for its most recent efforts directed at a generation of more athletic women and its plan to produce its first athletic shoe named after a woman athlete: Air Swoops, named after basketball player Cheryl Swoops. Nike's latest advertising direction is represented as an indication of progress and evolution. Overall, Nike is imagined as a force in the radical transformation that has occurred in women's physical activity. Clearly, the popular narration of Nike as celebrity cannot be understood apart from the postfeminist imaginary of which it is part.

Just Do It: Empowerment Buy Nike

The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself. A "soul" inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body. (Michel Foucault, 1979, p. 30)

According to dominant narratives, Blue Ribbon Sports, the forerunner of Nike, was formed by runners, *for* runners, during the 1960s. As a joint venture between Phil Knight and his former running coach at the University of Oregon, Bill Bowerman, Blue Ribbon Sports began marketing the Nike brand in 1971 as the running movement was gaining visibility and popularity in the U.S. In 1978, Nike went from brand to company name. Three years later, Nike replaced Adidas as the number one athletic shoe company as its sales exceeded \$458 million, and Nike became a public corporation (Strasser & Becklund, 1991). While America struggled with an economic recession, Nike, whose image suggested that it was recession proof, began to register declines in 1983. Those declines were attributed to Nike's narrow product line and limited quality apparel as well as an overall decrease in demand for running shoes. While Nike's running shoe sales declined by \$80 million during the 1985 fiscal year, its basketball shoe sales increased by \$20 million because of the popularity of Michael Jordan and the Air Jordan line. However, the sales from Air Jordan were not enough to sustain Nike's position as the premiere sneaker corporation in the world.

While Nike's economic success had escalated in 1981, Reebok experienced a significant decline in sales. Reebok's response was to direct its efforts to the new women's market that was developing through aerobics and health clubs. Whereas Nike continued its market focus on high-tech athletic shoes, Reebok marketed lifestyle: comfortable shoes with consumer appeal. With only one aerobic shoe, The Freestyle, on the market, Reebok's sales increased from \$3.5 million to \$12.88 million in 1981. Although Nike had been advised of the potential of the women's market as early as 1979, Nike's executives had dismissed the market because they felt that it would compromise Nike's authentic and serious sport image. By Nike's

view, aerobics was not a sport but a fashion-oriented California trend. While Nike had a 28% market share in 1985 and Reebok 13%, by 1986 Reebok's market share had increased to 30% while Nike's declined to 21%. This shift in market share was predominantly attributable to the women's market.⁸

Despite Nike's anxieties about its masculinist identity, Reebok's earnings made visible a group whose market potential could not be ignored. After a failed attempt to bypass Reebok by establishing itself in the women's casual wear market (a market where the brand Nike had little capital), Nike developed its first ad that targeted the women's fitness market in 1987. The ad preserved Nike's established focus on sport and performance: It featured triathlete Joanne Ernst moving through a gruelling workout and a voiceover continuously repeating the "just do it" directive. The ad ended with what Nike intended to be a humorous tag line: "And it wouldn't hurt if you stopped eating like a pig." The ad's accusatory address failed to seduce women consumers. Given the failure of the explicit accusatory address and the value of the women's market, Nike hired women to develop an advertising strategy that would encourage women to identify with and buy Nike. The campaign, which came to be known as the "Empathy" (Pomice, 1993) or "Dialogue" (Grimm, 1992) campaign, was created by Janet Champ and Charlotte Moore of the Wieden and Kennedy ad agency. The campaign marked a shift in Nike's advertising strategy that continues to inform their advertising efforts directed at women.

The campaign was a well-negotiated seduction that called women into conversation through what has become Nike's familiar style. The advertisements are expensive: The print versions are multiple pages of poetic verse and glossy images of transcendence that evoke misty-eyed responses. When we read the ads, we feel as if we have found a friend who understands, who can see from our point of view, who knows what it is we want. Hence, Nike's *Empathy/Dialogue* campaign. The ads target ordinary 18- to 34-year-old women, emphasize self-esteem, and are self-affirming (Pomice, 1993). The celebration of the authentic self is heightened through exercise as a strategy for locating, expressing, and caring for the self. The campaign, popularly described as personal and inspirational, was effective.

The first year of the campaign, 1990, the advertisements focused on lists of practices that dominated beauty culture (see our earlier discussion of Linda Scott's essay): Sales increased 25%. In 1991, the advertisements combined print (poetic verse) and images: Sales increased 25% for the second consecutive year. By 1992, women had become one of the fastest growing segments as sales increased 28% (Pomice, 1993). In 1993, women accounted for 20% of Nike's \$3 billion in worldwide sales, and Nike directed \$13 million of its promotional budget to a multimedia campaign that targeted women. By 1995, according to the International Sports Marketing Council in Atlanta, women accounted for \$4.7 billion in annual athletic shoe sales and constituted the largest segment of the athletic shoe market (cited in MacLachlan, 1995). And, along the way, Nike entered the realm of celebrity feminism. Consider the following advertisement.

It is without doubt a compelling image: a black-and-white photograph of a young, white girl, perhaps 10 years old, centered on the inside front cover of the July 1992 *Self*. She sits on a bench, her dark, shoulder-length hair falls carelessly, one hand grips a softball, the other dons a mitt. Her look is direct and simultaneously displays desire, regret, and pain. Her position on the bench, the ball and glove, and her dress—an oversized sweater, a dark knee-length skirt,

white crew socks, and lace-up shoes—tell her story, a story that suggests and accentuates a time before now, perhaps 1960s/1970s America. The uneasy juxtaposition of femininity and sport is underscored by the text that follows and especially by its opening question, a question all too familiar to lesbians and gender benders: “Did you ever wish you were a boy?” Her story is now our story. This is doublespeak (wittingly or not).

Did you ever wish you were a boy? Did you? Did you for one moment or one breath or one heartbeat beating over all the years of your life, wish, even a little, that you could spend it as a boy? Honest. Really. Even if you got over it. Did you ever wish that you could be a boy just so you could do boy things and not hear them called boy things, did you want to climb trees and skin knees and be third base and not hear the boys say, Sure, play, but that means you have to be third base. Oh ha ha ha.

But did you ever wish you were a boy just because there were boys, and there were girls and they were them, and we were, well, we weren't them, and we knew there must be a difference because everybody kept telling us there was. But what was it? You never knew. Like you knew that you were a girl (you run like a girl you throw like a girl you girl you) and that was great, that was swell, but you couldn't help wondering what it would be like if you . . . had been . . . a boy.

And if you could have been a boy, what difference would it have made? Would it have made you faster, cuter, cleaner? And if you *were* a boy, this incredibly bouncing boy, what boy would you have been? All the time knowing no two boys are alike anymore than all girls are.

So you wake up. And you learn that we all have difference (Yes!) You learn we all have similarities (Right!) You learn to stop lumping everybody in the world into two separate categories, or three, or four, or any at all (Finally!) And you learn to stop beating yourself over the head for things that weren't wrong in the first place.

And one day when you're out in the world running, feet flying dogs barking smiles grinning, you'll hear those immortal words calling, calling inside your head *Oh you run like a girl* and you will say shout scream whisper call back *Yes. What exactly did you think I was?*

The copy ends with Nike's familiar tag line and directive, “just do it.” Nike's now-famous signature swoosh intersected by a to-scale “NIKE” stands in its now-familiar right-hand corner of the page position. The copy is punctuated by another, this time celebratory, photograph of a twenty-something woman jogging: The image is of a hard, contained, slender body, midstride, shoed in Nikes, dressed in spandex. Her strength and capability are accentuated through broad shoulders and a lift that suspends her just above a wooden bridge. The runner is alone and safe in nature. Her androgynous look and her isolation suggest independence, a body produced for oneself rather than the object of male desire. The advertisement captures action, affirmation, peace, harmony, and progress. Her body, her look, and the setting connote *now*, 1990s America: youth, nature,

peace, freedom, health, and satisfaction. The natural setting also appeals to simpler and more peaceful times. The ad turns on a time before and after . . . Nike.

Nike's promise that women can transcend the weight of history and the social depends on the invocation of the normalized self whose purchase is established through the discourses on offer in the postfeminist imaginary. The advertisements are part of a broader cultural narrative in which power is imagined as temporarily restrictive, and as something that can be overcome by working out and on the body. Working on the body is a means for taking control of, caring for, and displaying one's self. The ads are propaganda for the healthy self, a self achieved by eating good food, exercising, choosing the happiness that one is free to choose. The advertisements appeal to self-transformation and growth through exercising the body. They are propaganda for free will in an age when the logic of addiction populates everyday culture. They recall past moments and practices through and in which women have been wronged, but the ads assure us that times have changed. Again, the historical context of the advertisements assures us that movement feminism is outdated, as the ads appeal to the normalizing discourse generated in 1980s America. The hard bodies in the ads address white, middle-class women whose identities are established over and against the Other: those bodies marked as anti-bodies.

The advertisements stake a claim not only on the behalf of women but on the behalf of Nike. Nike's logo, the swoosh, serves as a form of cultural capital that, by 1992, says at least as much as the advertising text from which it continues to accrue meaning. Despite a narration of power, struggle, and individualism that relies on the politics of lifestyle advanced by the new right during the 1980s, Nike poses as a counteridentity, as a refusal of and opposition to hegemonic forces: Nike presents itself as pro-women, progressive, and socially responsible. Nike signifies resistance and struggle, and while the style addresses the collective memory of the thirty-something generation, the issues of justice and equality continue to define "our" time. The issue of justice is acknowledged in ways that authorize Nike while discouraging readers from questioning. In the narrative produced by Nike, Nike is portrayed not only as an advocate of women's rights but as a corporation in long solidarity with women. In so doing, Nike rewrites feminist history, identity, community, and solidarity by promoting a popular knowledge of empowerment embedded in bodily maintenance and the consumption of Nike products. Nike stabilizes its popular pro-women position by defining itself as an alternative to the new traditionalism on offer in contemporary popular culture. It is a tale of consumer power and transcendence through the physical in a moment in which other political options are absent.⁹

Just Doing It? The Production of a Celebrity Feminist

Self-control, assertiveness, self-empowerment! The advertiser's audience recalls the slogans with a vague sense of *deja vu*. But did we learn them from a rally or some film about the 60s? For our mothers, the phrases mean solidarity, sisterhood, overthrowing the power structure. Now they stand for self-involvement, strength as a fashion statement. . . . I see no causal connection between sweating and social change. Eighteen-to-30-year-old women are being invited to bond over sneakers, as we shrug off

debilitating problems that demand far more energy than exercise does.
(Karen Avenose, 1992, p. 18)

Nike became Nike through the expansionist politics and practices that are characteristic of capitalism. As we stated earlier, Phil Knight and the sneaker are to post-Fordism what Henry Ford and the car were to Fordism.¹⁰ Whereas Fordism was characterized by the mass production of standardized items, post-Fordism (flexible accumulation) is characterized by agile relations among labor, products, and the market (Harvey, 1989). Just as the economy and the relations between state, labor, and capital underwent substantial shifts during the 1970s that can never be understood apart from gender relations, the global dispersion of production and its corresponding transformation to a more "flexible" system cannot be understood apart from gender and gender relations in the Third World.¹¹ Although we have thus far concentrated on the conditions that energized the investments in and identificatory possibilities created through Nike's marketing strategies, our concern in this section is to demonstrate how those identities are entangled in transnational interests by rendering visible the global sexual division of labor that sustains Nike's production and status as the premier sneaker distributor in the world.

As the sneaker claimed a semiotic space of progress, freedom, and possibility in the U.S., it also claimed the sign of possibility, progress, and development in Third World imaginaries. The category of "development" is typically deployed to intimate the potential of economic growth and advancement for so-called underdeveloped countries and to authorize transnational ventures. For example, in response to numerous criticisms directed at Nike for its exploitation of Third World workers, Nike spokespersons have justified Nike's production practices in Third World countries as contributing to an overall economic development strategy by providing otherwise unavailable opportunities for their populations to increase their personal incomes. We view development as a category that conceals the underdevelopment and dependency required in the global system of capitalism. Nike's image as a corporation that cares about women and that attends to "women's issues" not only is implicated in a postfeminist imaginary that demonizes poor women and women of color in the U.S., but depends on complex and invisible relations with Third World women workers that have contributed to extreme unemployment and poverty in the U.S. It is these invisible relations that permitted Nike to reach an all-time profit high of \$298 million in 1993.

Flexible accumulation is characterized by the production of goods in smaller quantities in order to target smaller segments of a given market, to enable quick adaption to changes in consumer demand, as well as to create new markets. Flexible accumulation is also marked by technological shifts that make transnational production easier and profitable and the escalation in temporary work and subcontracting. While Ford was a manufacturer, Nike is a merchandiser. That is, Nike is a core company in what is called a buyer-driven commodity chain: It has no factories. Like other brand-name companies such as Reebok, L.A. Gear, the Gap, the Limited, and Liz Claiborne, Nike directs and controls the design and marketing of its product but contracts production to foreign-owned factories in other countries. As Gary Gereffi (1994) explains,

The main job of the core company in the buyer-driven commodity chains is to manage these production and trade networks and to make sure all the

pieces of the business come together as an integrated whole. Profits in buyer-driven chains thus derive not from scale, volume, and technological advances as in power-driven chains, but rather from unique combinations of high-value research, design, sales, marketing and financial services that allow the buyers and branded merchandisers to act as strategic brokers in linking overseas factories and traders with evolving product niches in their main consumer markets. (p. 218)

In an attempt to encourage foreign investment, governments frequently grant tax exemptions and provide low rent; cheap, readily available labor; and infrequent or weakly implemented labor and environmental regulations (Chapkis & Enloe, 1983; Fuentes & Ehrenreich, 1983). International trade agreements like the North America Free Trade Agreement work to lower tariffs, promote low-cost production, and deregulate trading in ways that work in the interests of multinational corporations. Governments that guarantee low-cost production depend on poorly paid and unorganized labor forces that are typically made up of women. Women are favored because they can be paid less and because their cultural sense of feminine duty is often connected to a sense of duty in terms of national development. Additionally, established conceptions of gender suggest that women are naturally more manually dexterous, disciplined, and docile (Chapkis & Enloe, 1983; Elson, 1983; Fuentes & Ehrenreich, 1983).

Not only are women paid low wages, but women who work in the international athletic footwear industry often labor and reside in dangerous environments (Ballinger, 1992; Goozner, 1994). Annette Fuentes and Barbara Ehrenreich (1983) suggest that factory-provided housing is typically inadequate and unhealthy: For example, as many as three workers who work different shifts may share the same bed and up to 20 women may be crowded into one small room (p. 17). Work conditions extend from monotonous and repetitive tasks and dangerous work with acids and other chemicals without safety equipment, to exposure to dangerous sources of light and hazardous lint fibers and chemical fumes (Fuentes & Ehrenreich, 1983). Because factories are foreign owned, multinational corporations like Nike can declare that they are not accountable for the health and safety practices and policies that affect laborers.

Women are also regarded as the ideal workforce because local unions typically refuse to give their concerns priority. Women who attempt to organize women workers have been fired, and organizational meetings have been interrupted by government riot police. In "The Globetrotting Sneaker," Cynthia Enloe (1995) discusses what eventually resulted in South Korea's successful attempt to organize for better working conditions:

At the first sign of trouble, factory managers called in government riot police to break up employees' meetings. Troops sexually assaulted women workers, stripping, fondling, and raping them "as a control mechanism for suppressing women's engagement in the labor movement." . . . It didn't work because the feminist activists in groups like the Korean Women Workers Association held consciousness-raising sessions in which notions of feminine duty and respectability were tackled along with wages and benefits. (p. 12)

When labor in a given area is able to successfully organize to improve work conditions and wages, corporations relocate their factories to zones where labor is less organized, less costly, and more plentiful. In the pursuit of profit and the lowest possible production costs, Nike has moved from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea to Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, China, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Burma, which share the ambition of conserving inexpensive labor forces in order to attract multinationals. India, Sri Lanka, and Africa remain possible future sites of production (Katz, 1994). By continuously searching for the lowest production costs, multinational corporations collude with Third World governments and businesses to undermine the human rights of Third World women by suppressing their efforts to improve their social and material conditions. Cheap labor at the cost of the health and welfare of Third World women made and continues to make Nike, Inc., possible. The story of Nike is one of global trade in the body.

Conclusion: Disturbing Pleasures

In late twentieth-century America, the cultural capital of corporations has replaced many human forms of cultural capital. As we buy, wear, and eat logos, we become the henchmen and admen of the corporations, defining ourselves with respect to the social standing of the various corporations. Some would say that this is a new form of tribalism, that in sporting corporate logos we ritualize and humanize them, we redefine the cultural capital of the corporations in human social terms. I would say that a state where culture is indistinguishable from logo and where the practice of culture risks infringement of private property is a state that values the corporate over the human. (Susan Willis, 1993, pp. 132-133)

The alliance between Nike and women is undoubtedly about the commodification of feminism. But, there is more at stake in commodity feminism than the co-optation of feminist rhetoric to sell products. In late 20th-century America, Nike has been positioned and has positioned itself as a celebrity in a zone of popular feminism. Although celebrity feminism may not appear, at first sight, to comprise a serious form of feminism or a form of feminism that should be taken seriously, to merely dismiss it as politically bankrupt is to obscure its reality and its production of reality. Despite their erroneous characterization of the material circumstances and governing powers of our lives, celebrity feminism/popular feminism are the discourses that provide women with ways of thinking and talking about the conditions of their lives, their selves, and their relations to other women. In a historical moment marked by absence of movement feminism, celebrity feminism and popular feminism appear to fill the void by representing politics in the spaces where power and lifestyle intersect.

Nike has indeed captured the mood of the times and the emotional and political imaginations of "women"—a political category reinscribed at the level of the popular in 1980s and 1990s America. It provides women with identities that impede the recognition of historical conditions and circumstances—identities enveloped by America's mood to transcend history, to refuse our materiality. In

Nike's advertisements, the historical contingencies and social effects of gender are erased in the name of the liberal subject based on free will. Women's everyday concerns are narrated through presentations of authenticity and the exercise of individual will. In this case, physical activity is narrated as a form of empowerment. Nike defines itself as pro-women by positioning itself through the themes of natural, authenticity, and self-growth. By defining itself in relation to these issues, Nike establishes itself as a socially responsible corporation, as a symbol of collective progress and possibility. The success of Nike's advertising is evident in the popular praise it receives and its profitability.

But, there is more at stake here than Nike identifying itself as socially responsible. The narrative of "just do it" turns on a notion of individual choice that limits what and who we recognize. In this case, the conditions of everyday life are not so much challenged as they are reinforced. Nike narratives mobilize the experiences, values, and pleasures of biological self-betterment implemented by the Reagan administration. Whereas movement feminisms sought to generate political identities that motivated social critique and action, popular feminisms modify what is perceived as political action and generate identities invested in the status quo.¹²

At other points in the network that is the international political economy, women cannot exercise away the weight of history. Although the women in Third World countries who stitch and glue the swoosh to shoes may imagine Nike and other transnationals as offering possibilities, they also see the swoosh from a perspective that differs from that of Western women. For example, most recently in the U.S., Nike has been recognized for its promotion of serious women athletes and celebrated because it is going to name its first athletic shoe after a woman, basketball star Cheryl Swoopes. While Nike and the popular media may encourage us to see and celebrate Nike's pro-women activities and its social responsibility, women who work in the factories that produce Nike products are more likely to see and feel the effects of an aggressive marketing strategy aimed at women in Nike's continued attempts to expand what has already become the largest segment of the athletic shoe market. As Nike attempts to mobilize U.S. women around Cheryl Swoopes, Third World women will be organizing around the sneaker as they continue in their attempt to develop international strategies to mobilize against transnationals like Nike.

References

- Avenose, K. (1992, November 23). Forum. *Advertising Age*, p. 18.
- Ballinger, J. (1992, August). The new free-trade heel: Nike's profits jump on the backs of Asian workers. *Harper's Magazine*, 285(7907), 46-47.
- Chapkis, W., & Enloe, C. (Eds.) (1983). *Of common cloth: Women in the global textile industry*. Amsterdam: Transnational Institute.
- Clarke, D. (1992). Commodity lesbianism. In H. Abelove, M. Barale, & D.M. Halperin (Eds.), *The lesbian and gay studies reader* (pp. 186-201). New York: Routledge.
- Cole, C.L. (1993, November). *Technologies of deviant bodies: The ensemble of sport and (re)territorializing practices*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport, Ottawa, ON.

- Cole, C.L. (in press). Containing AIDS: Magic Johnson and [post]Reagan America. In S. Seidman (Ed.), *The social construction of homosexual desire*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Cole, C.L., & Andrews, D. (1995). Look—it's NBA Showtime!: Visions of race in the popular imaginary. *Cultural Studies Annual*, 1.
- Cole, C.L., & Denny, H. (1994). Visualizing deviance in post-Reagan America: Magic Johnson, AIDS, and the promiscuous world of professional sport. *Critical Sociology*, 20(3), 123-147.
- Cole, C.L., & King, S. (1995, April). *Just do it/Just say no: Promotional culture and the new politics of urban consumption*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association, San Francisco.
- Cole, C.L., & Orlie, M. (1995). Hybrid athletes, monstrous addicts, and cyborg natures. *Journal of Sport History*, 22(4).
- Elson, D. (1983). Women worker/working woman. In W. Chapkis & C. Enloe (Eds.), *Of common cloth: Women in the global textile industry* (pp. 49-54). Amsterdam: Transnational Institute.
- Enloe, C. (1995, March/April). The globetrotting sneaker. *Ms*, pp. 10-15.
- Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and punish: The birth of a prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980a). *The history of sexuality* (Vol. 1, R. Hurley, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980b). Truth and power. In C. Gordon (Ed.), *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977* (pp. 109-133). New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault, M. (1980c). Two lectures. In C. Gordon (Ed.), *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977* (pp. 78-108). New York: Pantheon.
- Fuentes, A., & Ehrenreich, B. (1983). *Women in the global factory*. Boston: Institute for New Communication/South End Press.
- Gereffi, G. (1994). Capitalism, development, and global commodity chains. In L. Sklair (Ed.), *Capitalism & development* (pp. 211-231). New York: Routledge.
- Gibbs, N. (1992, March 9). The war against feminism. *Time*, 139(10), 50-55.
- Goldman, R. (1992). *Reading ads socially*. London: Routledge.
- Goozner, M. (1994, November 6). Asian labor: Wages of shame. *Chicago Tribune*, pp. 1, 20-21.
- Goozner, M., & Schmetzer, U. (1994, November 4). Asian workers fighting back. *Chicago Tribune*, pp. 1, 9.
- Grimm, M. (1992, October 5). A \$30 million 11 week blitz woos women: Nike. *Brandweek*, 33(1), 6.
- Haraway, D. (1989). *Primate visions: Gender, race, and nature in the world of modern science*. New York: Routledge.
- Harrison, B. (1994). *Lean and mean: The changing landscape of corporate power in the age of flexibility*. New York: Basic Books.
- Harvey, D. (1989). *The conditions of postmodernity*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Howell, J. (1990). *Meanings go mobile: Fitness, health and the quality of life debate in contemporary America*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Howell, J. (1991). A revolution in motion: Advertising and the politics of nostalgia. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 8(3), 258-271.
- Hribar, A. (1995, November). *Scientific movements: Bodily knowledges and info-queen Susan Powter*. Paper presented at the annual meetings for the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport, Sacramento, CA.

- Ingham, A. (1985). From public issues to personal trouble: Well being and the fiscal crisis of the state. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 2, 43-55.
- Jeffords, S. (1994). *Hard bodies: Hollywood masculinity in the Reagan era*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Katz, D. (1994). *Just do it: The Nike spirit in the corporate world*. New York: Random House.
- Leslie, D.A. (1993). Femininity, post-Fordism, and the "new traditionalism." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 11, 689-708.
- Lippert, B. (1991, October 1). The sole of a woman. *AdWeek's Marketing Week*, pp. 32, 37.
- MacLachlan, S.L. (1995, April 4). To get to her feet, speak to her heart. *Christian Science Monitor*, p. 9.
- Magiera, M. (1993, January 4). Nike has women in mind. *Advertising Age*, 64, 36.
- Marx, K. (1970). *Capital* (Vol. 1). London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- McGinn, M. (1995, March/April). How GATT puts hard-won victories at risk. *Ms*, p. 15.
- Orlie, M. (1995). Forgiving trespasses, promising futures. In B. Honig (Ed.), *Feminist interpretations of Hannah Arendt* (pp. 337-356). University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Pollock, G. (1990). Missing women: Rethinking early thoughts on images of women. In C. Squires (Ed.), *The critical image* (pp. 202-219). Seattle, WA: Bay Press.
- Pomice, E. (1993, March). They just did it. *Lears*, pp. 105, 130.
- Probyn, E. (1990). New traditionalism and post-feminism: TV does the home. *Screen*, 31(2), 147-159.
- Rapp, R. (1988). Is the legacy of second wave feminism postfeminism? *Socialist Review*, 18(1), 31-37.
- Ross, A. (1991). *Strange weather: Culture, science and technology in the age of limits*. New York: Verso.
- Scott, L.M. (1993). Fresh lipstick—Rethinking images of women in advertising. *Media Studies*, 7(17), 141-155.
- Strasser, J.B., & Becklund, L. (1991). *Swoosh: The unauthorized story of Nike and the men who played there*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Stein, A. (1989). All dressed up, but no place to go? Style wars and the new lesbianism. *OUT/LOOK*, 1(4), 37-39.
- Wicke, J. (1994). Celebrity material: Materialist feminism and the culture of celebrity. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 94(4), 751-778.
- Willis, S. (1993). Disney World: Public use/private space. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 92(1), 119-137.

Notes

¹Although not addressed in this paper, the consumer market generated around New Age individualism and personal growth is clearly intertwined with exercise, health, and fitness itinerary. For a discussion of New Age individualism, see Ross (1991). For a discussion of New Age individualism, the exercise industry, and Susan Powter, see Hribar (1995).

²The dynamic of invisible powers and governing logics that shape what we can and cannot see is central to Foucault's work. We address Foucault and the imaginary later in this paper. The epigraphs included in the paper are key to understanding what we presume based on Foucault's work.

³For discussions of criminality and its association with the NBA and Nike, see Cole and Denny (1994), Cole and Andrews (1995), Cole and King (1995), and Cole (in press).

⁴P.L.A.Y. is the acronym for Participate in the Lives of Americans Youth. Nike's promotions for that project suggest that sport can be the remedy for problems that have become articulated with urban black youths in the national imaginary. The campaign encourages us to become more socially responsible by dedicating time and effort to programs that encourage more inner-city youths to become involved in sport. The promotions for P.L.A.Y. in the U.S. have become omnipresent.

⁵A growing body of literature convincingly demonstrates that it is less useful to ask what nature and the natural *really* are than it is to ask what has been made to count as nature in particular historical moments and in whose interests it works (e.g., Haraway, 1989). The question of what is made to count as the natural is a subtext in this paper.

⁶For discussions of the relationship between exercise and free will in 1980s America, see Cole (1993, in press).

⁷Alan Ingham's (1985) "From Public Issue to Personal Trouble: Well-Being and the Fiscal Crisis of the State" is an excellent overview of the politics of the body and the state in Reagan's America. We suggest that Ingham's argument can be extended into the 1990s since the terms of the debates that dominate today's national agenda were established by the 1980s New Right.

⁸For discussions of Nike's investments in advertising campaigns, annual sales and profits, see, for example, Grimm (1992), Katz (1994), MacLachlan (1995), Mageria (1993), Pomice (1993), and Strasser and Becklund (1991).

⁹The magazine in which this advertisement appears, *Self*, is a health, beauty, and fashion magazine whose primary target group is white, middle-class women between the ages of 18 and 34. Magazine features such as "You *can* reshape your body" suggest that the magazine, like the Nike advertisement, is engaged in a project that reterritorializes feminism through individualism, self-growth, the body, and the commodification of everyday life.

¹⁰*Fordism* refers to an arrangement that extended the logic of mass production and rationalized and improved the principles of the division of labor principles established through Frederick Taylor's notion of scientific management. Ford implemented practices related to purchasing power and time (8-hour work day, \$5 per day wage) that created the consumers required for capitalism's success. This work arrangement also created a management-worker relation and a disciplined worker capable of efficient and highly repetitious tasks required to enhance assembly-line production.

¹¹The flexibility of the global manufacturing system in which Nike is implicated and integrated traverses production, consumption, and the symbolic. How else could we explain Nike's "All-American image" when "not one of the 40 million pairs of running shoes that Nike produces annually is manufactured within the United States" (Harrison, 1994)?

¹²For a highly insightful and suggestive discussion of the ethical and normative dimensions of identities and everyday life, see Orlie (1995).

Acknowledgments

We would like thank Cynthia Hasbrook and two anonymous reviewers for their suggestions. We are particularly grateful to Melissa Orlie for her generous comments and suggestions.

