

Popular Culture, Religion and Society. A Social-Scientific Approach

Volume 2

Series editor

Adam Possamai, Western Sydney University, Australia

What happens when popular culture not only amuses, entertains, instructs and relaxes, but also impacts on social interactions and perception in the field of religion? This series explores how religion, spirituality and popular culture co-exist intimately. Religion sometimes creates and regulates popular culture, religious actors who express themselves in popular culture are also engaged in shaping popular religion, and in doing so, both processes make some experiences possible for some, and deny access to others. The central theme of this series is thus on how religion affects and appropriates popular culture, and on how popular culture creates and/or re-enforces religion. The interaction under scrutiny is not only between the imaginary and 'real' world but also between the online and off-line one, and this revitalises the study of popular religion through its involvement in popular culture and in new social media technologies such as Facebook and Twitter. Works presented in this series move beyond text analysis and use new and ground-breaking theories in anthropology, communication, cultural studies, religious studies, social philosophy, and sociology to explore the interrelation between religion, popular culture, and contemporary society.

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/13357>

Martin Radermacher

Devotional Fitness

An Analysis of Contemporary Christian
Dieting and Fitness Programs

 Springer

Martin Radermacher
Center for Religious Studies (CERES)
Ruhr-University
Bochum, Germany

ISSN 2509-3223 ISSN 2509-3231 (electronic)
Popular Culture, Religion and Society. A Social-Scientific Approach
ISBN 978-3-319-49821-8 ISBN 978-3-319-49823-2 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-49823-2

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016961696

© Springer International Publishing AG 2017

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made.

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Preface

This book tells a story of how American evangelicals see their bodies in light of the Bible. It emerged from an initial bedazzlement at how lightly and naturally evangelicals in the United States seem to merge their striving for a perfect body with their deep religious beliefs. Over the course of four years, from 2010 to 2014, I delved into this topic; read through books, Internet forums, and blogs; watched Christian television and fitness DVDs; and attended Christian diet groups and fitness classes only to realize that, strange as they might seem, these activities have a specific place within Christians' lifeworlds and are shaped by the contemporary American environment. It is this interplay of an inherent Christian logic and the impact of a secular society that I want to focus on in this book.

In July 2014, when I completed my dissertation at the Philosophical Faculty of the Westfälische Wilhelms-University in Münster, Germany, many people had supported me along the way.

First and foremost, I want to express my gratitude to the people I met and talked to during my fieldwork and who generously offered their time and shared their knowledge about how they combined their spirituality with their physical health. While I realize that my rendering and analysis of their accounts may not always agree with their own understanding, I hope that this book will reflect my serious respect for the personal accounts and religious convictions I encountered and recorded. It should be clear from the outset that it is not my intention to judge these programs from a medical perspective or to find out if and how they work in terms of losing weight, becoming fit, or growing spiritually. I can and will, however, analyze them from the perspective of the study of religions.

I am greatly indebted to my academic advisors, Annette Wilke and Courtney Bender, for sharing their experience and insights. With their perspicacious thinking and prudent comments, both have enabled me to complete this project. I am especially grateful to Annette Wilke for offering me the opportunity to enroll in a fast-track PhD program at Münster University and for accompanying and encouraging my studies over the last years. I express my heartfelt gratitude to Courtney Bender for the many times we met and discussed various issues relating to my research

during a stay at Columbia University, New York City—and for attending to this project diligently and knowledgeably ever since.

To colleagues and friends at Münster University and Columbia University and those I met at various conferences and colloquia over the last years, I am thankful for their support and help. Special thanks go to Judith Stander, Klaus Brand, Ann-Kristin Beinlich, Melanie Möller, Sebastian Schüler, Andres Wischnath, and Bertram Giele. Also the members of the working group “Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Charismatic Movements” in the German Association for the Study of Religions (DVRW) have given valuable feedback on various occasions. Corina Delman eliminated manifold affronts to the English prose and cleared out improper Germanisms. I also thank two anonymous reviewers for helpful comments on the penultimate version of this book. While all of these people inspired my thinking in many ways and supported me in different steps of the project, I naturally remain accountable for flaws and inaccuracies of every kind.

Finally, my family has made this project possible in the first place and has followed it with interest and encouragement through its various stages. Special thanks to Eva, whose concise revision of the bibliography is only the smallest part of her contribution to this project.

Münster, Germany

Martin Radermacher

Contents

1 Introduction	1
Part I Theoretical and Methodological Background	
2 State of Research on Devotional Fitness	15
3 Goal, Theory, and Method	33
3.1 Goal and Basic Concepts	33
3.2 Theoretical Perspectives: Semiotics and Somatics	39
3.3 Method of Data Collection and Data Analysis.....	49
Part II Body and Religion in Twentieth Century America: From New Thought to <i>Bod4God</i>	
4 Shaping the Body Ideal	63
4.1 Prelude: New Thought and the Body	64
4.2 Body Ideals and Techniques of the Last Century.....	71
4.3 The Therapeutic Culture: Alcoholics Anonymous	83
5 Evangelicals and the Body	91
5.1 US Evangelicalism: Historical and Conceptual Notes.....	91
5.2 Muscular Christianity and the YMCA	96
5.3 Devotional Fitness: Selected Programs Since the 1950s	108
Part III Analysis of Empirical Data: Products, Narratives, and Theologies	
6 Devotional Fitness as Discourse and Embodied Practice	127
6.1 Devotional Fitness as Economic Sector and ‘Practical Product’	128
6.1.1 Operational and Organizational Structures	128
6.1.2 Needs of the Market and Target Groups	131
6.1.3 Effects, Application Range, Strategies, and Measures.....	136
6.2 Transformation: Embodied Conversion Narratives.....	158

6.3 Authority, Qualification, and Legitimacy..... 162

6.4 Body as Temple: Theologies of the Body..... 168

 6.4.1 Body as Instrument and Index of Relationships 168

 6.4.2 Healing Relationships for Physical and Spiritual
Transformation 185

**7 Between Inclusion and Exclusion: Devotional Fitness
in Its Environments..... 207**

 7.1 Devotional Fitness in Its Christian Environment 209

 7.2 Devotional Fitness and Society 217

 7.3 Devotional Fitness and Medicine..... 228

 7.4 Devotional Fitness and Non-Christian Fitness..... 232

 7.5 Devotional Fitness and Yoga..... 236

Part IV Theoretical Reflections—Reflecting Theory

**8 Somatics, Semiotics, and the Study of Religions: Concepts
and Approaches Reconsidered..... 251**

9 Conclusions..... 267

Index..... 271

About the Author

Martin Radermacher is an associate researcher at the Center for Religious Studies at Ruhr-University Bochum (Germany). He received his PhD from the Westfälische Wilhelms-University, Münster (Germany), in 2014 and is currently working on religious “atmospheres” in both theoretical and empirical regards.

D 6