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THE MEANING OF RUNNING IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

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THE MEANING OF RUNNING IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

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Abstract
The Meaning of Running in American Society

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Most media resources, medical associations, articles of popular culture, and sports-related companies promote running as an activity that builds self-esteem and supports general physical and mental health. This paper delves into the connection between running and the characteristics of our society. The analysis examines the meaning of running, as a symbol of our society that perpetuates ideals of corporatization, consumerism, capitalism, and gender stereotypes. Additionally, this paper examines the ways running is perceived and participated in; and how they have changed overtime, alongside political, economic, and historical events.

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Prologue

I began running when I was 11 years old, shortly after my family moved from North Carolina to Tennessee. It was a really difficult transition; we moved from a low income area to a very wealthy area and I felt very out of place. I dressed differently, used different slang, and had a different accent. I did not know that fuzzy stickers were 'cool' and I did not own a brown leather jacket with maps on the lining. I have always felt shy in larger groups and my family, friends, and teachers have continuously labeled me a worrier. One day in seventh grade there was an announcement regarding joining the Cross-Country team, for an unknown reason I felt compelled to check it out. Through Cross-Country and then Track I made friends and began to feel comfortable in my new home. After high school, I continued to run to stay in shape, relieve stress, and spend time with friends. I have completed six half marathons, three full marathons, two sprint triathlons, as well as many 5Ks, 8Ks, and 10Ks. Proceeds for many of the runs went towards raising funds and awareness for charities and during two of the marathon's training periods I personally raised money for Ronald McDonald House and Jamal Place. I am also an avid running fan and enjoy watching running events, especially the Boston Marathon and the Olympics. Running has been a significant part of my life and I had always considered it to be a positive, healthful activity. I never reflected on what meaning might lie beyond the surface until I saw a clip of Noam Chomsky (2002) in *Manufacturing Consent*.

Well in our society, we have things that you might use your intelligence on, like politics, but people really can't get involved in them in a very serious way – so what they do is they put their minds into other things, such as sports. You're trained to be obedient you don't have an interesting job; there's no work around for you that's creative; in the cultural environment you're a passive observer of usually pretty tawdry stuff; political and social life are out of your range, they're in the hands of the rich folk. So what's left? Well, one thing that's left is sports – so you put a lot of the intelligence and the thought and the self-confidence into that. And I suppose that's also one of the basic functions it serves in the society in general: it occupies the population, and keeps them from trying to get involved with things that really matter...And spectator sports also have other useful functions too. For one thing, they're a great way to build up chauvinism – you start by developing these totally irrational loyalties early in life, and they translate very nicely to other areas...But the point is, this sense of irrational loyalty to some sort of meaningless community is training for subordination to power, and for chauvinism (pp. 99 – 100).

In a despondent state, in the midst of coming to terms with the end of the 2008 summer Olympics, I was initially disturbed by Chomsky's argument and immediately rejected it. Chomsky's emphasis on the important social role of sports and his argument that it's "hard to imagine anything that contributes more fundamentally to authoritarian attitudes than ...[sports]" (p. 100) generated a lot of questions for me regarding what running means in our society, its impact, and how this meaning has changed and why. I was particularly interested in ideas around consumerism, the corporatization of running, and the ideologies that surround it.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis discusses the many aspects and perceptions of running, its influence beyond the exercise, hobby, and sports arenas, as well as America's running history, relationship with consumerism and corporatism, and how running is portrayed in popular culture. Running is more than a pastime, athletic activity,

work out, or profession, but actually a reflection and representation of our society birthed through a history as expansive as that of human beings. “Sports are more than just games: when we play or watch sports, we are forming the ways we look at our world and understand issues of sexism, racism, homophobia and nationalism” (Donohoe, 2011, para. 1). This paper delves into the connection between the endeavors and characteristics of our society to the running industry from its origins in transportation and as a spectator sport to its popularization, commodification, and commercialization. The analysis will also link popular culture and running as a symbol of society that perpetuates ideals of corporatization, consumerism, capitalism, and gender stereotypes. Furthermore, I hope to show this growth and transformation alongside political, economic, and historical events in order to highlight the close connection between our society’s ideological framework and the structure of our pastimes. In other words, I would like to demonstrate how our environment has influenced the way running is participated in and perceived.

Most media resources, medical journals and associations, as well as sports-related companies promote physical activity and running as an activity that builds self-esteem and supports general physical and mental health. The American Medical Association gave a Healthy Living Grant to Girls on the Run (American Medical Association, 2011), “a life-changing, experiential learning program for girls age eight to thirteen years old. The programs combine training for a 3.1 mile running event with self-esteem enhancing, uplifting workouts” (Girls on the Run, 2011, para. 2). The American Medical Athletic Association includes

eligibility for special entry into the Boston Marathon as part of their membership (American Medical Athletic Association, 2011).

Runner's World magazine, the most popular American running magazine with a circulation of 660,000 in the United States alone (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2011) also promotes these positive ideals. *Runner's World* articles often emphasize the cardiovascular, psychological, and weight loss benefits of running (Chock, 2012; Kolata, 2011; Lave, 2009; Remy, 2010; Rucker 2010). But information on negative aspects of running is not often included. I frequently read articles regarding injury recovery, issues with toenails falling off, or how to train effectively with limited time, but injuries and toenail issues are typically presented as badges of honor or marketing opportunities as illustrated below:

Run long enough and you'll wind up ruining a toenail or two. Whether it's because your shoes are too big or too small or because you've run a race with punishing downhills or the toenail gods happen to be in a foul mood, someday you will peel off your socks and see black where once there was pink. Congratulations! These bruised nails are tiny trophies conferred upon you for toughing it out. Just don't flash them in public. [Underlines not in original quote] (Remy, 2010, para. 6)

Minimal scholarly or academic articles and books have analyzed consumerism, gender roles, and the promotion of corporate agendas within running. As Theodor Adorno (2002) suggests sociology should be used for “the potential enlightenment, for the intellectual maturity, the possibility of becoming conscious of social processes instead of simply accepting them without reflection” (p. 45). It is essential to look beyond the surface elements of running in order to better understand what meanings are produced by running and thus to better understand our society.

Study Limitations

This is not an exhaustive account of the influences that impact how running is participated in and perceived. Rather it is a theoretical analysis involving key events and examples from popular culture, in order to illustrate some of the historical, social, and political powers, which dictate our views and how we make meaning related to running.

Running and Meaning Making

According to Stuart Hall (2005) culture exists due to shared 'meanings' or 'conceptual maps,' which depend on the relationship between things in the world – people, objects and events – real or fictional. These shared meanings allow individuals to communicate ideas and thoughts about the world (p. 18) and “to know how concepts and ideas translate into different languages, and how language can be interpreted to refer to or reference the world” (Hall, 2005, p. 22).

However, if meaning is constructed by human beings and is dependent upon people, objects, and events, then meaning is dynamic. Meaning is not rigid, stable, or predetermined, but the result “...of our social, cultural and linguistic conventions...meaning can never be *finally* fixed” (Hall, 2005 p. 23). And for that matter, according to Adorno (2002) “the process by which...[society] is maintained is, of course, the process of life, of labour, of production, and reproduction, which is kept in motion by the individuals socialized within society,” (pp. 37 – 38) therefore, meaning and society are both dynamic concepts.

The meaning of running in our society is fluid and it is the result of social, cultural, and linguistic conventions that modify the idea of running and its

function. This fluidity is given meaning through what Michael Apple (2004) calls "...complex ties and connections to how a society is organized and controlled" (p. 10). He discusses that "[t]he relations themselves are the defining characteristics" (Apple, 2004, p. 10). Therefore, to understand what running means, we must examine these conventions. Meaning "...is the result of a signifying practice – a practice that *produces* meaning, that *makes things mean*" (Hall, 2005 p. 24). For example, political, economic, and social changes can affect individual autonomy levels, which therefore, can cause changes in what running means to an individual and what purpose running serves in their life.

Although Americans share a common culture and thus 'shared meanings' – we all encounter different individuals, events, and objects, which influence this meaning. This contributes to the variations of our passions and perceptions. Running is often viewed as a painful, tiring, and boring task, but to others it is something else entirely, an opportunity to: listen to nature, think, be alone, release stress, seize control, enjoy movement, or express. Running can also be seen as an intrinsic and binding element of humanity as detailed in these two accounts:

- "There is something universal about that sensation, the way running unites our two most primal impulses: fear and pleasure. We run when we're scared, we run when we're ecstatic, we run away from our problems and we run around for a good time" (McDougall, 2009a, p. 11).

- “There is nothing quite so deep, gentle, and irrational as our running – and nothing quite so savage, and so wild.” (Heinrich, 2002, p. 12)

What ideologies ignite or produce these passions?

As running has existed since humans were biologically capable of standing upright or putting one foot in front of the other at a rapid pace – it could be understood that we have instinctual desires to run. But there is another dimension, as we do not always run for survival and the concept of the self resides within society – everything is socially mediated (Adorno, 2002, pp. 15 – 16). As a result running or the individual cannot be separated from society and to understand the notions and values of running or the running industry, we need to examine them as “ideological and economic categories that are essential to both the production of agents to fill existing economic roles and the reproduction of dispositions and meanings in these agents ...” (Apple, 2004, p. 10).

Accordingly the running industry has evolved from a mechanism existing purely for food, security, and transportation to a business that affirms power structures, is economically motivated, and communicates, or reflects ideologies.

The study of meaning underlines the crucial role of the *symbolic* domain at the very heart of social life” (Hall, 2005, p. 3). The “...sounds, words, notes, gestures, expressions, clothes – are part of our natural material world; but their importance for language is not what they *are* but what they *do*, their function. They construct meaning and transmit it” (Hall, 2005, p. 5). To understand the

role of running we must examine cultural productions involving running and their impact. In consumer societies,

all commodities have cultural as well as functional values. To model this we need to extend the idea of an economy to include a cultural economy where the circulation is not one of money, but of meanings and pleasures....meanings can be produced, reproduced, and circulated only in that constant process that we call culture (Fiske, 2000, p. 283).

Thus when we make sense of movies, news, and book narratives – we are getting educated, being sold ideas not just products and services, and learning to normalize concepts. Additionally, our movies and books are representations of the film and publishing industry owners as well as the audience members and readers, excluding those who participate, but are against them (more on this later).

Sports at its most basic level can be “entertaining, healthful, filled with honest, sustaining sentiment for warm times and the beloved people you shared them with” (Lipsyte, 2011, p.12) – imagine running around a park with friends. This basic level of sports has been distorted into a culture that “requires submission to authority, winning by any means necessary and group cohesion” suggesting that those who are molded into jock culture are perfect casts for military and financial leadership and less likely to desire individual expression or question authority. In fact, corporations often recruit former athletes for this reason – seeking out those who are willing to subordinate, work through illness sacrificing their health for the team or company, fit into groups and tolerate being pushed to capacity in order to meet another’s’ goal often with a never-quit attitude. This ‘jock’ culture “can be physically and mentally unhealthy, driving

people apart instead of together. It is fueled by greed and desperate competition. Sports, “[a] once safe place to learn becomes a cockpit of bullying, violence and the commitment to a win at-all-costs attitude that can kill a soul” (Lipsyte, 2011, p. 12). Picture the Vermont Death Race (with the url <http://www.youmaydie.com>), which boasts to be an amalgamation of Survivor, Jackass, and 300. It is a 48 plus hour test of cardiovascular endurance, agility, as well as physical and mental toughness through sinkholes, mud, barbed wire, and trails in order to be one of the 10% who finish. Race creators deem this 10% to be only the extraordinary people and apparently this label and the thrill of the challenge are worth risking death. How does a simple act of running transform a jog around a lake with friends to an opportunity to risk one’s life in a footrace?

Chapter 2: Running in History

The health benefits of exercise were actually scientifically unknown prior to 1953 when Jeremy Morris, a British professor, researcher, scientist, and the initiator of exercise science or physical activity epidemiology, determined that exercise can lead to good health through a groundbreaking study of London transportation workers. He determined that double-decker bus drivers who remained seated all day had significantly more heart attacks than the conductors regularly had to climb up and down stairs. These workers were otherwise similar, thus Morris concluded that exercise can help reduce the risk of heart attacks (Cheever, 2007, pp. 70-73). Per Morris “[t]he whole connection between exercise and health was postwar, ...post-Second World War” (Cheever, 2007, p. 71). Running was even thought to weaken the heart and shorten the life in the

early 1900s (Cheever, 2007, p. 83). Yet, marathons, the Olympics, and road race betting predate medical research promoting running. Consequently, running cannot possibly be isolated as a healthful exercise. The compulsion to run cannot be limited to instincts to survive and the desire for physical benefits.

The first Olympics were held in 776 BC with only one event, the 210 yard sprint (Perrottet, 2004, p. 51). The marathon event was added to the Olympics in 1896 and the first Boston Marathon was in 1897. It was not until the 1920s when track and field became more popular (AthNet, 2001, para. 8). “The first [American running] boom came during the Great Depression, when more than two hundred runners raced roughly 40 miles a day across the country in the Great America Footrace” (McDougall, 2009a, p. 11). The Great America Footrace or the Bunion Derby, as it was called due to the runners’ foot swelling and inflammation, was a male-only 84 day, 3,400 mile race from Los Angeles to New York. Charles C. Pyle (widely considered to be the nation’s first sports agent) attracted runners with the promise of food and shelter during the beginning of the Great Depression. Most participants were blue-collar men from farms, factories, and shipyards with limited running experience, but few options due to the slim employment opportunities at the time. A prominent physician, of this period, estimated the race would subtract five to ten years from the runners’ lives. Accounts of the race have described pure misery, barely surviving on dreadful food, sleeping in leaky tents, and spending each day running an average 40 miles (Kastner, 2009, p. 74). This was actually increased to 75 miles per day towards the end due to financial issues (Sears, 2001, p. 229). The race

included five African American runners and took them through the Jim Crow segregated and Ku Klux Klan infested South, where they were “bombarded with death threats and racial slurs” (Kastner, 2007, para. 5).

The Bunion runners ran not because they loved “cups or medals, but for prize money that could lift a mortgage off a farm, buy a house, or give their children some decent clothes to wear, and in the case of the black runners, they risked their lives to do so” (Kastner, 2007, para. 8). The top five runners were awarded cash prizes totaling to \$48,500, 1st prize was \$25,000 (Shangreaux, 2002, para. 2).

The purpose of the race was to promote Route 66 (Shangreaux , 2002, para. 1) and for personal profit. Charles C. Pyle, “a true showman in the P.T. Barnum tradition...[set] up a carnival at the end of each day's jaunt to take advantage of the local spectators who had been attracted by the ‘Bunion Derby’...[C]hambbers of commerce would pay for the privilege of having the marathon stop in...[their] towns and cities” (Rockett, 1990, para. 5). Due to the Great Depression many of the towns were unable to pay Pyle. The race almost ended in Chicago if not for a participant's father, F.F. Gunn who was said to have bet \$75,000 that his son would win. Gunn (whose son did not end up winning) had already hired two trainers and a sleeping bus for his son, but to ensure the race's completion he stepped in and covered Pyle's debts (Bunioneers, 1928). This popular and dangerous race was perpetuated by economic ambitions and illustrious desires. The participants in the Bunion Derby confirmed Bourdieu's statements regarding the factors involved to determine the probability that an

individual plays certain types of sports. Unmistakably, economic and cultural capital as well as the amount of available spare time influence the type of sport an individual plays (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 836) and how they participate in that sport. For example,

[g]ymnastics or strictly health-oriented sports like walking or jogging, which, unlike ball games, do not offer any competitive satisfaction, are highly rational and rationalized activities. This is firstly because they presuppose a resolute faith in reason and in the deferred and often intangible benefits which reason promises (such as protection against ageing, an abstract and negative advantage which only exists by reference to a thoroughly theoretical referent); secondly, because they generally only have meaning by reference to a thoroughly theoretical, abstract knowledge of the effects of an exercise... Thus it is understandable that these activities can only be rooted in ascetic dispositions of upwardly mobile individuals who are prepared to find their satisfaction in effort itself and to accept – such is the whole meaning of their existence – the deferred satisfactions which will reward their present sacrifice (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 839)

The economic circumstances of the Great Depression brought together individuals of low economic standing who according to Bourdieu (and their own admissions of no prior running experience) would have been very unlikely to spend their time running with the Great American Footrace. A new element, money, was needed as an incentive given the contestants' life priorities as they were unable to focus on long-term health or aesthetics during a time when food and shelter were difficult to obtain and preserve.

Through the 1930s, 40s, and 50s many phenomenal races and inventions occurred, including the invention of a camera that could take continuous pictures and thus creating the phrase "photo finish" in the 1930s, automatic timers in the 1940s, and powerful anabolic steroids in the 1950s. During this time Jesse Owens won four gold medals in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, which proved to be

fundamental in annihilating Hitler's plans to use the Olympics as a "showcase for proving the superiority of the Aryan race" (Sears, 2001, p. 182). Also, in the 1950s the Road Running Club of America was founded and began holding road race events (Road Running Club of America [RRCA], 2012, para. 1).

Then in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s running and jogging truly took hold of Americans. Exercise was becoming trendy and socially normalized, miles from the view of running as a dangerous, weird, or weakening practice. "Running ...[caught] fire again in the early 70s, when we were struggling to recover from Vietnam, the Cold War, race riots, a criminal president, and the murders of three beloved leaders" (McDougall, 2009a, p. 11 – 12).

During the 1960s and 1970s running, races, and running products expanded. Coach Bill Bowerman of Oregon and Phil Knight co-founded Blue Ribbon Sports, later renamed Nike (Moore, 2006, p. 316) and *Distance Running News*, later renamed *Runner's World* was started by Bob Anderson (Benyo, 1999, para. 4). In the late 1960s women began covertly entering or racing without a registered bib in the Boston Marathon against Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) regulations and physical attempts of removal (Boston Athletic Association [BAA], 2012, para. 6). In 1965, the distance women were allowed to run was extended to 2.5 miles for the National Women's Cross Country Championship in spite of tremendous AAU protests (RRCA, 2012, para. 7). In 1970, the first New York marathon was held and it is now sponsored by ING and boldly claims that "all city marathons are modeled on it. Modern marathoning owes its start -- and its world-class status -- to New York." (ING New York City Marathon, 2011, para.

1). In 1972, Frank Shorter won a gold medal in the Munich Olympics and became “a driving force in the distance running boom” (USA Track and Field, 2011, para. 1). And running books like *The Complete Book of Running* by Jim Fixx (1972), a book declaring “that running was the secret for health, wealth and an active sex life” (McDougall, 2009b, para. 4) hit the shelves. Even President Jimmy Carter was utilizing Fixx’s book for his running plan (“I’ve Got to Keep Trying”, 1979, para. 5). In 1975, the Marine Corps marathon was established. According to Colonel Jim Fowler,

[a]fter the Vietnam War, popularity of the military services declined in the eyes of many. At the same time, distance running was gaining considerable positive attention.’ This thought process lead Fowler to write a memo to his superior, General Michael Ryan, dated 17 October 1975, outlining his idea for a Marine Corps Reserve Marathon, to promote community goodwill, showcase the Marine Corps, serve as a recruiting tool and finally, to give local Marines an opportunity to qualify for the legendary Boston Marathon (Marine Corps Marathon, 2012, para. 3).

In the 1980s the women’s marathon was added to the Olympics (“Olympic Marathon Run For Women Is Approved,” 1981, para. 1), the Jesse Owens award was created (Browne, 2001, para. 5), and Dr. George Sheehan published *Running and Being*.

Yet, in 1987 George A. Hirsch former Publisher of *The Runner* and *Runner’s World* magazines (both acquired by Rodale Press¹) complained in a *New York Times* article that running does not require “a lot of equipment [which is]...a weakness for its magazines since there isn’t much natural advertising”

¹ Note: Rodale Press publishes *Runner’s World*, *Men’s Health*, *Women’s Health* and *Bicycling* magazines, as well as best-selling books including *Eat This Not That*, *The South Beach Diet*, *Picture Perfect Weight Loss* and many of the books listed in the Bibliography

(Phillip, 1987, para. 3). They seem to have solved this problem through the creation of needs. *Runner's World* engages in marketing that deems runner-specific products as necessary. They have created their own online store, are branching out to advertisers interested in the economic status of runners, and have gained funds through corporations who sponsor runs in the hopes of being associated with ideals of competition and speed. *Runner's World* presents themselves as unbiased experts with shoe and gear guides that promote runner-specific watches, gloves, underwear, jackets, shorts, sports bras, socks, blister-relief products, music playlists, mobile phone apps, headphones, running computers, heart rate monitors, headlamps, bags, sunglasses, mobile hydration devices, treadmills, locks, strollers, detergents, and even running wedding dresses. Their online store sells books, magazines, music, training plans, shoes, and apparel. Some of the direct advertisers include Merrell shoes, Nissan, Smucker's Natural Peanut Butter, Brooks shoes, Thomas Light Multi-Grain English Muffins, New Balance, Groupon, and Charles Schwab (which also provides an indication of the economic status of those visiting the *Runner's World* website). *Runner's World* has also created a site for the "latest news, events, and promotions from inside *Runner's World*" with sponsorships including nineteen races (many corporate sponsored), training teams, and industry affiliations. The site promotes body glides, Brooks DNA "A First-of-Its-Kind Running Shoe Cushioning System," organic solutions to global warming and The North Face products. Before watching a helpful video on stretching or exercises that Olympic athletes do, site visitors are prompted to watch advertising videos.

Runners have become marketing opportunities. Many runners identify themselves based on the brand of shoes or running clothes they wear. There is even a Nike Running podcast that begins by calling out to “all you Nike runners out there” (Nike Running, 2008).

In *Youth in a Suspect Society*, Giroux (2009) discusses the implications of these branding methods, “[b]randing empties young people of moral ideals while promoting the unchecked, rampant commodification, commercialization, and privatization of children’s culture and lives” (p. 59). He also quoted a president of a reputable advertising firm in saying that “advertising at its best is making people feel that without their product, you’re a loser” (Giroux, 2009, p. 54). I personally have been targeted by a sports apparel company, lululemon while running on the Chicago lakefront path and recently overheard a few young female front desk workers at my gym discussing being pursued by Nike for offers where they would receive free gear in exchange for their opinion on their products. They were allowed to invite their friends along as well. These are examples of aggressive recruiting by companies to “boost products, establish markets from among their friends, and initiate them into a set of stealth marketing methods in which they learn that all social relations, even friendship, are now largely defined as potentially lucrative sources of profit” (Giroux, 2009, p. 53).

The rise of organized sports coincides with the rise of capitalism in the nineteenth century. As the United States moved from agrarianism to an industrialized economy, immigrants began moving to growing cities – causing a surge in population. Sports were intentionally employed to create a connection

to a “fabricated national identity” and help improve the health and thus productivity of the industrialized nation’s new workers (Wolf, 2001, p. 30). Sports were regarded as a path for upholding the strength and fortitude of the elite; President Theodore Roosevelt asserted that “vigorous manly out-door sports’ ...[are] an antidote to effete urbanization” (Wolf, 2001, p. 30).

Although there were incredible and meaningful accomplishments in running during the 1940s to the early 1960s, this time was considered to be dormant in comparison to the 1930s and 1970s. These heightened periods of running popularity coincide with the Gilded Age of the 1930s and the rise of neoliberalism in the 1970s. The Gilded Age marked the escalation of

the Robber Barons; the merging of various backlash, nativist, and right-wing populist movements; legally sanctioned segregationism; a celebration of free-market economics; evangelical revivals; law-and-order moralism; limited government; violent labor conflicts; massive inequality; and the rise of a daunting nationalist capitalist class (Giroux, 2009, p. 148).

The neoliberal movement that began in the 1970s was denoted by a political, economic, and cultural development catalyzed by a government methodology that organized “a range of flows, including people, capital, knowledge, and wealth, transforming relations between the state and the economy by renouncing ‘big government’ (a code word for social state) as wasteful and incompetent...” (Giroux, 2009, p. 149). As previously discussed, changes in individual autonomy influence how Americans spend their time and what those activities mean. An example of how social power structures can be replicated from socioeconomic or employment conditions to running can be seen when comparing road race runners and race volunteers. In road races, runners have the attention of the

crowds and are viewed as the hard workers. Volunteers and spectators gather to focus on runners. Volunteers serve runners by giving them water and food and providing moral support. Runners toss their empty cups, goo wrappers, and orange peels on the ground for the volunteers to clean up. Racers or “...consumers are not finicky about consigning things to waste – they accept the short life-span of things and their mortality with equanimity” (Bauman, 2005, p. 84). The dichotomy that one group pays for entry and is therefore served by a group of volunteers is visibly seen in other aspects of American life including education, employment, and social settings based on different levels of power. The establishment and development of sports is clearly very political and linked to issues of power.

In the second half of the nineteenth century US high school boys organized sport clubs (also called fraternities) outside of school. Schools competed against young, local workers, and freshman college teams. Competition became so fierce that high school teams would often recruit players outside of the school or “ringers.” Teams could sometimes be exclusively composed of individuals outside of the high school. Well known conflicts would often arise that would damage the school’s honor even though the athletes were not actually students at the school. These conflicts caused disciplinary issues and a power struggle between the schools and students, as well as their families until the 1920s. During this time, parents brought court cases against schools citing their children’s Constitutional right to form clubs and associations. Eventually, “school officials became more aware of the pedagogical potential of

sports. This was stimulated by a more general movement on the national level to use sports as a means to strengthen and enable the population,” (Stovkis, 2010, p. 132) prompting schools to discontinue their objections to sports and integrate school authorities into the games. Control was realized through hiring school coaches and trainers for each area of sport based on student interest (Stovkis, 2010, p. 132). And this was not isolated to the United States, according to nineteenth century physical education pedagogues in Germany, the Netherlands, and other European countries “the purpose of physical education was to strengthen and revitalize the national population” (Stovkis, 2010, p. 134).

The influence of power and politics within sports is evident as Pierre Bourdieu (1978) demonstrates in *Sport and Social Class*. Bourdieu discusses the origins of sport within public schools as a way for educators to lighten the supervisory role and gain autonomy, but he explains the expansion of sports beyond the educational setting as an:

...extremely economical means of mobilizing, occupying and controlling adolescents ...predisposed to become an instrument and an objective in struggles between all the institutions totally or partly organized with a view to mobilization and symbolic conquest of the masses and therefore competing for the symbolic conquest of youth. These include political parties, unions, and churches, of course, but also paternalistic bosses, who, with the aim of ensuring complete and continuous containment of the working population, provided their employees not only with hospitals and schools but also with stadiums and other sports facilities... (p. 831)

This connection between sports and power is significant historically. “...[I]t has been argued that sport socialization might function to reinforce the power of the dominant group rather than the empowerment of the individual” (Shehu & Moruisi, 2010, p. 9). Wealthy landowners who prospered from cattle- and horse-

breeding in Elis (forty miles outside of Athens) were the original stewards of the Olympic Games; this “ruling class drew from their own ranks the Olympic judges and micromanaged every aspect of the festival” (Perrottet, 2004, p. 40). Thus even “...the first Olympic committee included innumerable dukes, counts and lords, and all of ancient stock...” (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 825). Additionally, the length of the marathon was modified from the original distance, 24.8 miles based on the desires of English royalty. Pheidippides, a Greek foot-soldier’s trek from Marathon to Athens to report a victory over the Persians was 24.8 miles and thus this was the length of the first marathons until the 1908 London Olympics. King Edward VII and Queen Alexandria decided that the race should start at Windsor Castle, so that the royal family could view the start. Beginning outside of the city and ending in front of the king and queen’s royal box in the Olympic Stadium, extending the race to 26.2 miles (BAA, 2012, para. 3 & 4).

Bourdieu (1978) also links the movement of sport from elite schools and mass sporting associations to changes in the functions and logic socially assigned to sports. Sporting can be used as a vehicle for transporting aristocratic ideas regarding fair play, team loyalty, and manliness (p. 832). Again, sports have meaning beyond physical exertion; “...the *social definition of sport* is an object of struggles, that in the field of sporting practices is the site of struggles in which what is a legitimate definition of sporting practice and legitimate function of sporting activity – amateurism vs. professionalism, participant sport vs. Spectator sport, distinctive (élite) sport vs. popular (mass) sport....” (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 825).

Chapter 3: Running Ideologies

The running industry conveys many notions that are camouflaged into our daily lives. Examples of such notions include: that there is one narrow, predetermined definition of beauty or masculinity, the endurance of pain and sacrifice is natural, individuals are responsible for their own success, the existence of winners and losers is normal, competition leads to peak performance, choice is always positive, time is equivalent to money, success is quantifiable and rules should be unquestionably followed. The late George Sheehan, M.D. (1992), an avid runner, cardiologist, and running author, wrote “[t]he more I run, the more I live a life conditioned and influenced and fashioned by my running” (p. 4). Capitalist and neoliberal ideologies influence marketing, advertising, race events, and other media forms, which communicate these messages to running consumers.

Predetermined Definition of Beauty and Masculinity

In running and in most advertising in general society’s narrow definition of beauty is easily identified. This definition must be limited, in order to be more marketable to the masses. Companies associated with running products or services tend to display various pictures of serious, muscular, and cut men along with happy, slim, and toned women. One of the many advertisements on *Runner’s World’s* website (<http://www.runnersworld.com>) shows a young brunette woman with slight smile. She is posing with her hands on her hips, exposing her slim arms and toned abs. She looks confident and is wearing a black sports bra. The caption reads “Innovative jog bras that hold up to the test.”

If they are truly attempting to sell a runner a jog bra to run in, then why is the bra not shown alone? Or if the purpose of showing it on a person is to show how it would fit, would it not make more sense to show the bra on a more average body? Although this strategy is not exclusive to running, perhaps, the goal is not to accurately display how the running top would look on the consumer and how it might meet the consumers' actual needs or expectations, but to sell the athletic physique along with the sports bra. Thus the picture is actually suggesting that by making this purchase, the consumer could look like the model, exuding her poise and satisfaction.

Endurance of Pain and Sacrifice is Natural, Individuals are Responsible for Their Own Success, and the Existence of Winners and Losers is Normal

The running industry also naturalizes the idea of sacrifice and pain as necessary modes for achievement. One of the *Runner's World* books (sold on their online store), *The Runner's Body* is marketed as an aid to assist with the "stress of running" (Dugas, Fitzgerald, & Tucker, 2009). Dr. George Sheehan an avid runner, author and physician wrote that "[r]unning provides that self-control, that discipline. It teaches about pain and guilt. But it also demands logic and teaches how results are obtained" (Sheehan, 1992, p. 211). These statements indicate that success is obtained through hard work, sacrifice, and the individual is exclusively responsible for that success. Others can help motivate, support, and advise runners, but it all comes down to the runner to push him or herself to the front of the pack. This individualistic mindset is also a component of capitalism. Capitalism encourages responsibility to lie on individual's shoulders;

so if someone is not successful then it is not the system's fault, but the individual's defect for being lazy or incompetent. The connection between sport and individualism was also seen in Ancient Greece during the early Olympics, "[n]ational competitiveness plunged the land into endless warfare, and was reflected within each city on a daily basis – not just in the chaotic internal politics of most states, but by the flamboyant individualism of its citizens" (Perrottett, 2004, p. 19).

Ideals regarding the association between pain and sacrifice for achievement and individual responsibility for success go hand in hand with the normalization of the concept that both winners and losers should exist. In races and in life ideas regarding winning and losing are associated with effort level. Excerpts from the following article discuss keys or crucial race strategies to win:

- "By running an even pace, you'll gradually catch runners who started the race too fast. Catching and passing other runners during the race will give you a psychological lift, and will weigh heavily on the other runners" (Pfitzinger, 1998, para. 8).
- "...steadily passing other runners as they wilted in the heat" (Pfitzinger, 1998, para. 6).
- "Rehearse running fast yet relaxed, and become aware of how to find the fastest pace that you can hold without tightening up" (Pfitzinger, 1998, para. 11).
- "Controlling pace is the key to effective training and essential to winning" (Ruth, 1999, para. 1)

- “Pace is the key to winning a race or producing personal records” (Ruth, 1999, para. 14).

These ideas coincide with the existence of successful and unsuccessful citizens or rich and poor consumers, equating their circumstances to their effort level rather than other factors such as privilege and discrimination based on race, sexuality, socio-economic class, or gender. Sports or jock culture are omnipresent in our society – the attitudes and codes are woven into medicine, law, and big business. Society labels “winners and losers... [and they are treated as] stars or slugs by coachlike authority figures who use shame and intimidation to achieve short-term results.” (Lipsyte, 2011, p. 12). This is not limited to fields of study or industry more commonly associated with completion, but also includes “symphony orchestras, university philosophy departments and liberal magazines” (Lipsyte, 2011, p.12). For economic reasons, winners are often redefined as “everyone who gets out there and tries” or “everyone who completes the race,” otherwise race registration and, therefore, profit would be negatively affected. But notions that normalize the subsistence of winners and losers and that winning corresponds to individual hard work alone essentially reinforce ideals that everyone receives equal treatment and opportunity and furthermore, that the past does not impact the present.

Competition Leads to Peak Performance

The idea of competition or the spirit of competition as the best way to achieve optimal performance is evident through our society including the various reality shows that showcase hardcore competition as a means of determining

who is the best, *American Idol*, *America's Next Top Model*, *Survivor*, *Project Runway*, *Biggest Loser*, and *The Apprentice* to name a few. These shows emphasize that sacrifice, hard work, and pain are cornerstones to obtaining ones' dreams. Contestants are mistreated, yelled at and sometimes placed in life-threatening situations all in the name of entertainment and to convey ideals that the best results are created through harsh conditions.

The reward, for such harshness and push to the limits, sacrifice all attitudes is often romanticized. Running is associated with ideas or feelings of freedom and autonomy, "[r]unning gives us many experiences, besides being tired, with a special intensity that is unusual among the comforts of modern life. It gives us a sense of free movement and personal physical power. If we race, it gives the excitement, risk, reward, and drama of competition" (Robinson, p. 12). Additionally, Dr. George Sheehan wrote that :

[R]unning has given me a chance to be a saint, to be a hero. Like everyone else, I wanted to be challenged. I want to find out whether or not I am a coward. I want to see how much effort I can put out....what I can endure...if I measure up. Running allows that." (Sheehan, 1992, p. 5)

Another athlete, Shola Lynch who utilized lessons learned from running was highlighted in a recent *New York Times* article, where she discussed the track experiences she applied to her career as a filmmaker. She discussed both what she took away and what she missed due to her involvement in running.

In sports, you learn that progress is not linear...You don't train for the Olympics in two weeks; it's a process, and it's a long-term process. There are dips, and you have to deal with the dips and keep your eye on the prize. You don't quit. As a young girl, I learned how to fight, through athletics. Competition is key in this country; if you can't compete, you're kind of screwed (Rhoden, 2012, para. 5).

This intense focus on winning and competition also led to a gap in her understanding. As “a championship athlete bent on winning every race she ran” (Rhoden, 2012, para. 7) Lynch did not understand the values of running a race that could not be won until she studied Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman to run for president. “‘Why would you run for president if you knew you were going to lose? As an athlete, that to me is crazy,’ Lynch said. ‘I didn’t understand it. I didn’t understand winning in other ways’” (Rhoden, 2012, para. 9).

The former Alaskan governor, Sarah Palin used her running abilities to suggest superiority to President Obama in an interview: “I betcha I’d have more endurance [than President Obama]...So if it were a long race that required a lot of endurance I’d win” (Westfall, 2009, para. 2). Whereas in France, running has been associated with negativity. President Sarkozy has often been criticized by the French media for his morning jogs. A leading French intellectual demanded Sarkozy stop running, labeling running as “undignified” (Garreau, 2007, para. 2). Charles Bremner, a Paris correspondent of *Times* London, criticized running as a sport for “self-centered individualists like Americans” (Garreau, 2007, para. 4) and relayed that “Patrick Mignon, a sports sociologist, noted that French intellectuals had always held sport in contempt, while totalitarian regimes cultivated physical fitness” (Garreau, 2007, para. 5). French critics mocked Sarkozy’s choice of exercise as “a sad imitation of the habits of American presidents, and a capitulation to the défi Américain as bad as the influx of Hollywood movies” (Johnson, 2007, para. 10). Although these views paint

running as a negative endeavor, they do not conflict with the idea of competition leading to peak performance.

Choice is Always Positive and Manufactured Needs

Consumer choice in running is ubiquitous and is commonly seen as positive as described in the *Runner's World* article, "The Match Game: Five outfits that complement your running moods and modes" by Lisa Jung (2008). This article discusses distinctive running clothes differing not according to weather requirements or some sort of an external basis that might require different levels of warmth or protection, but based on whether a runner is utilizing a tread mill or running outside (falsely implying that this meant the runner is executing a different motion that a certain pair of shorts would not support) or whether a runner is wanting to "feel like there was nothing holding them back" (para. 2). I can only assume this is in contrast to days when runners do want to feel like their apparel is holding them back. These apparent choices can serve as distractions and false satisfaction. As Giroux (2009) wrote regarding the continuous consumption-production cycle "there is more at stake here than ceaseless change; there is also the suspension of judgment, the inability to think critically, the avoidance of responsibility, the burst of pleasure that accompanies an endless reserve of choices, and the liberation of choices from either their consequences or public considerations" (p. 36).

During the 1980s there was a wide-spread change in branding methods turning running or exercise in general into an American cultural signifier of status. Naomi Klein (2000) discusses this in her first book *No Logo*, the idea of the brand

has been transformed into "...the core meaning of the modern corporation, and of the advertisement as one vehicle used to convey that meaning to the world" (Klein, 2000, p. 5). Branding has existed since the 1880s with Campbell's Soup, but a shift occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Klein traces this shift to changes in the idea of what was actually being sold. Marketing was no longer selling a product. In the new model, however, the product takes a back seat to the real product, the brand, and the selling of the brand acquired an extra component that can only be described as spiritual" (Klein, 2000, p. 21).

Companies like Nike were on the cutting edge of this movement. The Nike business model was built on buying cheaply from a Japanese company, Onitsuka Company that manufactured Tiger shoes (Moore, 2006, p. 157). Klein continues: "[w]ith this wave of brand mania has come a new breed of businessman, one who will proudly inform you that Brand X is not a product but a way of life, an attitude, a set of values, a look, an idea" (Klein, 2000, p.23). As Bourdieu discussed contemporary "*sports* in the strict sense" consists of "a field of production of 'sports products.'" (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 821). Nike was no longer a running shoe company, but an idea about "*transcendence through sports*" (Klein, 2010, p. 379).

In this same inclination, Giroux (2009) proposes that athlete celebrities, rather than using their

...status for educating young people about character, hard work, the value of sportsmanship, and the sheer joy of athleticism, these athletes deceive young people into believing that becoming the embodiment of a brand is the apogee of what it means to be a successful adult in the world of sports and that childhood is largely training ground for the eventual selling of the self (p. 57).

In *Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1947) discuss the creation of manufactured needs through advertising. These needs are created and fulfilled through capitalism, workers are seen as consumers, consumer choice is seen as freedom and consumer choice serves to distract from ideals of actual freedom. This notion dictates that the consumer:

be shown all [her or] his needs as capable of fulfillment, but that those needs should be so predetermined that [she or] he feels [herself or] himself to be the eternal consumer, the object of the culture industry. Not only does it make [her or] him believe that the deception it practices is satisfaction, but it goes further and implies that, whatever the state of affairs, [she or] he must put up with what is offered (p. 12).

Culture Industry discusses the creation of needs through ideas that “...because millions participate in it, certain reproduction processes are necessary that inevitably require identical needs in innumerable places to be satisfied with identical goods” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1947, p. 1). The consequence is a “circle of manipulation and retroactive need in which the unity of the system grows ever stronger. No mention is made of the fact that the basis on which technology acquires power over society is the power of those whose economic hold over society is greatest” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1947, p. 1). Thus all Americans are free through ideas of consumption and choice, but power is unequal in dual ways. Companies or products have different levels of power based on their capital and consumers have different levels of power based on economic need. “[F]reedom to choose an ideology—since ideology always reflects economic coercion—everywhere proves to be freedom to choose what is

always the same” (Adorno & Horkheimer , 1947, p. 24). Thus although autonomy to choose running apparel based on mood or identify with a brand like Nike is seen as evidence of freedom, this type freedom is merely a diversion, calling attention away from what really matters and fulfilling a manufactured need.

Time is Equivalent to Money and Quantifying Success

John Korff, a race director accounted for the reason that runners dedicate themselves to rigid training programs, “[p]eople need structure in their lives ... [t]hey can’t just sit around all day” (Albergotti, 2009, para. 10). Americans are trained to use their time efficiently and productively. Runners in particular are coached to work hard for results. Professional runners are rewarded thousands of dollars based on seconds. In the 2009 Chicago marathon Samuel Wanjiru nearly forfeited \$100,000 by waving to the crowds as this act took away seconds from his 26.2 mile race. No matter the distance time is incredibly valuable in running.

For example, Richard Wolff describes American workers’ response to the lack of wage rate growth starting in the 1970’s. Workers did not react by:

giving up the American dream of rising consumption, not by forgoing the measurement of one’s own success in life by what one can afford, instead Americans did two major things. The first one was ‘if I can’t get more wages for an hour of work I’m going to do more work’...[thus] the American working class suffered in two key ways. First it became exhausted. Today the average number of hours worked by an American worker is 20% more than the average number of hours worked by a French, German, Italian, or Swedish worker. That’s not a small difference. American workers are exhausted (Jhally, 2008).

This account demonstrates intensive sacrifice of time for money or consumption. In the running world, success is considered to be quantifiable and measurable. In running, achievement is assessed based on time, pace, and distance. A runner who pushes harder and endures more pain is congratulated. This same value is encouraged and rewarded in American society, both in school and work. For academics this means measuring success based on bubbled in responses to standardized tests, which are unnecessary, biased, deter collaboration, cause undue anxiety, and train students to accept thoughtless orders thus preparing them to be abused in their future workplace (Ollman, 2004). In the work place, this means that success is measured by hours worked and sacrifices made. Those who meet these expectations are rewarded with consumer goods that they park proudly in their driveways like race medals hung around their necks.

Rules Should be Unquestionably Followed

Rules are central to racing. Before the race even begins, runners are required to pick up a packet at a designated time and location. This packet pickup process is intentionally drawn out. The runner must go through a maze of booths designed to sell running foods, apparels, and other related products. The runner must enter and exit through this vendor maze in order to receive a packet, which usually contains a bib number, timing chip, t-shirt (swathed in sponsorship company logos) and tens to hundreds of advertisements. On race day, runners begin at a specified location and time, where they are able to stand in lines to check their bags or utilize specified port-a-potties. Faster runners receive corral benefits such as shorter gear check-in and port-a-potty lines and get to begin the

race closer to the starting line (which also helps the flow of the race at the beginning by organizing runners based on pace). Runners are usually required to wear a bib number to identify themselves as racers and consumers, as these numbers help the race photography company to identify and in turn sell the runner photographs throughout the race. Then runners must follow a designated course, where eating, drinking, and going to the restroom is designated in assigned areas. Once they complete the race they enter another line to receive their reward, which is sometimes the opportunity to be a walking advertisement via a medal with the race sponsor company's logo prominently displayed. Runners then enter another line to have their picture taken. For years after the race is over, the runner will receive emails compelling them to buy the picture as a necessary souvenir recognizing their accomplishment. If runners do not follow these rules they can be physically removed from the race or their legs might be stamped, labeling them as disqualified. How did running become such a process, involving so many rules? "We must never forget that what we do is tainted and distorted, inevitably, by the awe of expertise that is induced by social institutions as one device for enforcing passivity and obedience" (Chomsky, 2002, p. 119). The rule following and submission required in races translates into other areas such as the employment and education domains. Sports can be used to normalize social structures and ideas of resolute allegiance and to educate others' where power lies. "[S]port is conceived as a training in courage and manliness, 'forming the character' and inculcating the 'will to win' which is

the mark of the true leader, but a will to win within rules” (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 824).

Corporate principles and catchphrases are also making their way into other aspects of life, which shows the magnitude and span of capitalist corporate ideologies, such as the equation of time to money and the normalization of the existence of winners and losers is natural. The *Times* article “Person of the Year – Runners Up” described a man with great discipline and success:

In 1982 a freshly minted army captain named Stanley McChrystal arrived at Fort Stewart, Ga., and was invited for a run by a more experienced captain named David Petraeus...“I took a lot of pride in my running,” the general [Petraeus] told me recently. In fact, Petraeus famously was, and remains, a fitness fanatic. “But by the end of the run, I knew I was no longer the fastest at Fort Stewart. More important, we had talked about a lot of things, and I realized that I had met a kindred spirit’...The two men are similar in many ways. Both are fierce ascetics — McChrystal eats one meal per day and sleeps four hours per night — and both are military intellectuals. (Gregory, “General Stanley McChrystal,” 2009, para. 1)

Eating one meal each day is not promoted by the United States Department of Agriculture or the vast majority of the medical community, but this article paints this type of commitment to work, efficiency, and productivity as positive, and links dedicated, regimented running as a means to get there.

The *Runner’s World* article “A Few Rules to Run by” by Mark Remy (2010) equates black toenails as ‘badges of honor’ (see Introduction) is another example of pain and physical damage being mapped to markers of success, commendation, and merit. Additionally, the word “shoes” in the article serves as a hyperlink to the *Runner’s World* shoe guide, so that consumers can be praised for their black toenails, but are also encouraged to spend money to prevent future black toenails since they are not aesthetically pleasing.

This message is not limited to military-centered articles and running-specific magazines, the *New York Times* published an article earlier this year quoting NPR's 'Wait Wait...Don't Tell Me' host, Peter Sagal: "What is it about the pain of endurance sports that's fun?" he asked me. He added that when asked why he keeps running races, "I say...um...because the pain is sort of the point? Because it's good to push yourself to the point of breaking?" (Kolata, 2011, para. 2). The message that pushing yourself towards imminent destruction is always positive, pain is necessary, and competition leads to success is common in running guides and popular culture (as evidenced in the following analyses).

Chapter 4: Running in Popular Culture

As previously discussed, making sense of popular culture (movies, news, and book narratives) is actually a pedagogical process. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) argue that we as "humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives through stories of who they and who others; they interpret their past in terms of these stories" (p. 477). Audiences and readers are sold more than products and services, but also ideas. Popular culture helps to normalize concepts. Our movies and books are representations of the film and publishing industry owners as well as audience members and readers with the exception of those who participating to understand, but are actually against them.

According to Mark Fisher (2009) in *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* "[a]n ideological position can never be really successful until it is naturalized, and it cannot be naturalized while it is still thought of as a value rather than a fact" (p. 16). Thus in capitalism, ideologies are normalized "facts"

prevalent in our cultural patterns. Fisher also discusses how Alenka Zupancic's *reality principle* invites us to question anything that presents itself as normal or natural, in that "[t]he reality principle is ideologically mediated; one could even claim that it constitutes the highest form of ideology that presents itself as empirical fact (or biological, economic...) necessity (and that we tend to perceive as non-ideological). It is precisely here that we should be most alert to the functioning of ideology" (Fisher, 2009, pp. 17 -18). We are participating in reproducing hierarchical structures through running, whether an issue or message is true or not – what is important are the effects, real effects. And in that sense it becomes true as all social practices entail meaning. Therefore, although books, magazines, and movies serve as entertainment – in actuality they are much more than intermediaries of diversion.

Robert McChesney and John Nichols (2000) reported that "Americans devour media at a staggering rate...[the] average American spent almost twelve hours a day with some form of media" (p. 3). The average American is said to digest 34 gigabytes or 100,500 words of information outside of the workplace, daily from various forms of media. This is a 350% increase from three decades ago (Media Literacy Clearing House [MLCH], 2009, para. 68). These statistics become even more meaningful when considering that "...U.S. mass communication is controlled by less than two dozen, enormous profit-maximizing corporations, which receive much of their income from advertising placed largely by other huge corporations. But the extent of this media ownership and control goes generally unremarked in the media and intellectual culture, and there

appears to be little concern about its dimensions among the citizenry as a whole” (McChesney, 1997, p. 7). In other words, the average American spends over half their day receiving large amounts of information from a small group of profit-seeking corporations. These messages and corresponding agendas that are distributed in mass become normalized “facts” or ideologies. These are the types of observations and ideals that Zupancic’s *reality principle* encourages us to question.

In “Hollywood Film as Public Pedagogy: Education in the Crossfire” Henry Giroux (2008) discusses the intensely powerful educational effect of the cinema. Movies “...shape habits of thinking by providing audiences with framing mechanisms and affective structures through which individuals fashion their identities and mediate their relationship to public life, social responsibility, and the demands of critical citizenship” (para. 1). Films are “emotionally charged, image-saturated cultural practices where the coordinates of dominant power are often constructed and the 'state of things' seem evident, unquestionable” (Giroux, 2008, para. 1). They normalize concepts reflecting economic, social, and political discourses. This also coincides with Fisher’s assertion that ideological concepts must be normalized. Giroux (2008) emphasizes the breadth of movies influence in that,

...even a casual observer can see the potency and power of the movie industry and its influence upon the popular imagination and public consciousness ... the growing popularity of film as a compelling mode of communication and form of public pedagogy--a visual technology that functions as a powerful teaching machine--suggests how important it has become as a site of cultural politics (para. 12)

Giroux (2008) calls for audiences to read into the historical contexts, social formations, and institutional frameworks and to analyze whether the film representations distort reality, but he also says we should go beyond this scrutiny and “engage those hidden messages, exclusions, and social practices that loosen the bonds of the visible, the sensible, and the landscape of the possible” (para. 4). Thus I will be examining movies, books, and articles that convey meanings through the medium of running, including *Ultra Marathon Man: Confessions of an All-Night Runner* by Dean Karnazes (2006), *Born to Run* by Christopher McDougall (2009), *Chariots of Fire* directed by Hugh Hudson (1981), and *Run, Fatboy, Run* directed by David Schwimmer (2007).

Ultra Marathon Man: Confessions of an All-Night Runner, which sold over 100,000 copies is a memoir of the accounts of a white male in his forties who participates in various adventure activities, including ultra marathons, running 226 miles without stopping, and a marathon to the South Pole. His fervor for “extreme” activities began on his 30th birthday when in a drunken state he started to face feelings of emptiness regarding his yuppie lifestyle. Karnazes refers to himself as a “renegade extreme,” even titling one of his chapters “Leaving Normal” in attempts to present himself as someone outside of the establishment, but his book promotes ideals of consumerism, corporate loyalty, and capitalism.

Born to Run has been partially credited for the boom in barefoot running and is on the *New York Times* Best Seller list (currently at #21). The book details incredible athletic achievements, the Tarahumara Indians of Copper Canyons in Mexico and their super-athletic ability, a 50 mile race across dangerous chasms

and desserts, and relays human's evolutionary past as persistence hunters. McDougall (2009a) also vilifies and derides American sneaker companies for lying to consumers, weakening runners' feet, and partaking in dishonorable marketing techniques. He presses for natural foods and running gaits, but his book also commercializes running. He spends an entire chapter marketing for Vibram Five Finger running shoes, and exploits a tribe in Mexico he claims has been "hidden" for thousands of years.

Chariots of Fire, which was named for a line from a William Blake poem, *Jerusalem*, was nominated for seven Academy Awards and won four, including the Best Picture award. It tells the fact-based story of two British athletes who competed in the 1924 Paris Olympics. Harold Abrahams (played by Ben Cross) is an English, Jewish runner who considers running an addiction and wants to use his talent to fight prejudice. Eric Liddell (played by Ian Charleson) a Scottish, Christian runner who is a former missionary from China running in hopes of honoring God, comparing races to faith. The British runners train with smiles and laughs in beautiful sceneries, they triumph against heavily favored Americans who train with faces filled with anguish and pain while being yelled at by a drill sergeant-like coach.

Run, Fatboy, Run directed by David Schwimmer and based in London, is the story of a British Security Guard, Dennis (played by Simon Pegg) who attempts to win back his ex-girlfriend, Libby (played by Thandie Newton) whom he left at the altar when she was pregnant with their son five years prior. Libby has found a new boyfriend, a rich American, Whit (played by Hank Azaria) who

runs marathons for charity. Dennis, in an effort to show Libby his ability to follow through while also fulfilling a personal desire to compete with her new suitor decides to train for the Nike River Marathon in London (this race does not actually exist). Running is revered as the key to health and productivity – it is paralleled with corporate efficiency, affluence, and furthermore participation in charity runs is venerated as a marker of being a ‘good’ person.

Running, capitalism, and corporate ideals

Certain themes of capitalism are ardently present in the way running is depicted within popular culture, including that pain is the means for improvement and achievement and that individuals are solely responsible for their own success. Karnazes struggles (pathetically) throughout the book to present himself as a humble, hardworking do-gooder. He is constantly conveying messages of corporate ideals and self-discipline and pain as the modes to achievement and individuation. When explaining that he is a role model to his children, Karnazes says his kids have “...witnessed firsthand the struggles and sacrifices to achieve success. ‘Dreams can come true,’ I’ve told them, ‘especially if you train hard enough’” (Karnazes, 2006, p. 215). After his high school cross country team won a championship race, Karnazes (2006) said:

My head could be battered and bloodied, my muscles could ache for weeks, but nothing could replace the feelings of pride that came from physical accomplishment, feelings I carry to this day. Coming home and sharing my medal with the family was glorious. They were so proud, and I felt as though I’d done my family right. Pary [his sister] marveled at the colorful steel adornment but knew that it wasn’t the medal that mattered; it was the sweat and blood that went into winning that was the real prize (p. 37).

In this metanarrative, we discover that sweat and blood are the necessary mediums of exchange for pride and accomplishment. One should not only endure physical pain to get ahead, but revel in it and receive admiration and attention from others based on that fortitude. These ideals are woven through his book:

- “If it comes easy, if it doesn’t require extraordinary effort, you’re not pushing hard enough: *It’s supposed to hurt like hell*” (Karnazes, 2006, p.23)
- “I reminded myself that pain and suffering are often the catalysts for life’s most profound lessons.” (Karnazes, 2006, p. 65)
- Karnazes titled chapter 5 “No guts, no glory” after the WWII slogan to describe vomiting all over his Lexis after his first ultra-marathon.
- He titles chapter 8 “King of Pain”
- “Somewhere along the line we seem to have confused comfort with happiness. I’ve now come to believe that quite the opposite is the case. Dostoyevsky had it right: ‘Suffering is the sole origin of consciousness.’ Never are my senses more engaged that when the pain set in. There is magic in misery. Just ask any runner” (Karnazes, 2006, p. 220)
- “The highest form of competition is self-competition, and I was proving to be the cruelest of opponents, ruthlessly demanding more of myself, relentlessly doing battle with the road, with my own body, with my mind. Pain was my weapon of choice.” (Karnazes, 2006, p. 235)

Another capitalist ideology emphasized in *Ultra Marathon Man* is the idea that sacrifice is necessary to get ahead. Although Karnazes (2006) sacrifices seem rather superficial:

Complicating matters, I'm bulky. Muscles produce heat, and since I'm into a variety of outdoor sports, my upper body is pretty well developed. Carrying that extra bulk is not a good quality for a runner; a wiry body produces less heat. Yet some things in life are worth the sacrifice. I wasn't about to stop doing the other sports I loved to drop some upper-body mass. I combed my fingers through my short, dark hair, which was a different sort of sacrifice. Given my druthers, I'd wear it longer – I'd let the stubble on my face flourish for a few extra days before shaving, too – but my lifestyle had already deviated sufficiently from convention. I couldn't control my impulse to midrate like a wildebeest periodically, but I could keep my hair neatly trimmed and my face cleanly shaven. Probably best to maintain at least the overt signs of corporate conformity. After all, I did have a wife and family to support (p. 222)

In *Run, Fatboy, Run* the lead character, Dennis receives motivation from his two 'coaches,' Gordon (played by Dylan Moran), Libby's cousin and his best friend who has made a substantial bet on his marathon completion, and Mr. Ghoshdastidar (played by Harish Patel) his landlord, who uses pain-centered methods of training, such as using a spatula to spank him. What is expressed here is, not only is it acceptable to profit from another's suffering, but the key to performance and drive is linked to anguish and torment.

Chariots of Fire, set in the 1920's, actually conveys that pain is not the key to peak performance. The audience is shown two montages throughout the film. The first includes the British athletes, Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell training separately. Each athlete trains with their coaches who appear to be supportive, friends who provide guidance in a compassionate and encouraging manner. The runners smile and laugh throughout their training montage. They seem to truly

enjoy running and they are surrounded by beautiful sceneries – gorgeous beaches and stunning hillsides. The British runners seem to be in casual, personal gear even sporting suspenders on one occasion. The music that accompanies this scene is upbeat and energetic.

In stark contrast to the British training montage, the audience sees the Americans training on a track in matching uniforms with American logos. They are executing simultaneous, intense stretching and calisthenics led by a drill sergeant-like figure who yells aggressively into a megaphone. All of the athletes have looks of pain and anguish on their faces and are making many rapid, arduous movements. The song that supplements this scene is quick, bold, and coincides with a boot camp feel. Consequently, the Americans who are highly favored to win are out ran by the Brits (in the film and the 1924 Olympics) and their energetic, cheerful passion for running, illustrating that pain in the 1920s does not always bare the best results.

Capitalism and running are both heavily focused on the individual. Oliver James theorized that it is

...selfish (i.e. neoliberalized) capitalist policies and culture that are to blame. Specifically, James points to the way in which selfish capitalism stokes up 'both aspirations and the expectations that they can be fulfilled... In entrepreneurial fantasy society, the delusion is fostered that anyone can be like Alan Sugar or Bill Gates, never mind that likelihood of this occurring has diminished since the 1970s...The Selfish Capitalist toxins that are most poisonous to well-being are the systematic encouragement of the ideas that material affluence is the key to fulfillment, that only the affluent are winners and that access to the top is open to anyone willing to work hard enough, regardless of their familial, ethnic or social background – if you do not succeed, there is only one person to blame (Fisher, 2009, p. 36).

Running touts a similar motto as it is described in this *New York Times* article regarding Usain Bolt, the Jamaican sprinter, world record holder, and three-time World and Olympic gold medalist. The “beauty of sprinting lies in its simplicity. Running is the rawest form of athleticism: no piece of equipment can control your fate; no teammates can lift you up or slow you down. It's just you and your motor to the finish” (Gregory, 2009, “Usain Bolt,” para. 7). [underlines not in original quote].

These examples from popular culture also capture historical changes as variations in individual autonomy level can cause changes in what running means to an individual and what purpose running serves in their life. Additionally, changes in work responsibility can influence are perceptions of running, if “...we are disposed to view routine as inherently demeaning, then we will attack the very routine as inherently demeaning, then we will attack the very nature of the work process itself. We will abhor routine and its father, the dead hand of bureaucracy” (Sennett, 2000, p. 45). Citizens can experience “superficiality in trying to read the world around them and read themselves. Images of a classless society, a common way of speaking, dressing, and seeing, can also serve to hide more profound differences; there is a surface on which everyone appears on an equal plane, but breaking the surface may require a code people lack” (Sennett, 2000, p. 75).

As previously discussed, the concept of time is heavily focused upon in corporate life and running, as demonstrated in the following pieces: *THE 4-HOUR BODY* by Timothy Ferriss (a diet and fitness book from the author of *The*

4-Hour Workweek), the *Runner's World* article by Liz Plosser, "Make Every Minute Count," and the *Runner's World* article "Train Your Brain" by Gigi Douban, which teaches multi-tasking and mood regulation to increase workout productivity. "Work and life become inseparable. Capital follows your dreams. Time ceases to be linear" (Fisher, 2009, p. 34). Regulating running and exercise or comparing it to work, extends corporate ideals to times of leisure and entertainment. "For the professional hero, like the business executive, the only meaningful values are professional: his life is his work' ... The new ideology of corporation is accepted by a "depoliticized population" because 'the public becomes convinced that social values are coincident with technical needs of the economic system'" (Collins, 1989, p. 97).

Accountability, surveillance, and measurability can also be found as key principles in both corporate life and running. For example, GPS products for runners allow for self-regulation and documentation for times, distances, and paces. It is consistent with the corporate emphasis on measurability of results. These numbers, test scores, widgets sold – are all lumped as necessary data in order to identify and quantify success. As this runner details:

I am a GPS addict, someone who would no more run without a Garmin Forerunner strapped to my wrist than I would run without shorts. In fact, given a choice, I'd probably forego the shorts, because they don't provide mile splits accurate to 15 feet. Geosynchronous satellite technology, once used for such boring things as troop movements, now is a cornucopia overflowing with an amateur athlete's most precious commodity: data (Sagal, 2008, para. 1).

In *Run, Fatboy, Run* the lead character, Dennis is labeled as fat in the title of the film, but in actuality he is not fat. "Fatboy" takes on a meaning beyond

physical weight to describe Dennis as unfit physically, parentally, marriage-wise, career-wise (he works as a security guard at a clothing store, which he and other characters demean).



The marathon (which is intentionally cast as a corporate-sponsored event as the race does not actually exist) represents fitness physically and mentally – a way to seek efficiency and productivity through pain and hard work. This also shows how ideals of beauty and fitness can influence how individuals are perceived. Libby's new boyfriend, Whit is muscular and runs marathons and goes to spin class, he is also perceived as rich and successful.

Another supposed byproduct of competition is the creation of winners and losers and this normalized derivative breeds acceptance of inequality and relieves guilt on the behalf of the “winners.” The relationship between working hard and enduring pain in order to attain success suggests that perhaps, these losers did not work as hard as the winners and that is why the losers are not leading the pack.

As discussed earlier, in running if everyone who did not cross the finish line first was a “loser” then profits would suffer, so they built-in an inclusion

clause or slogan. By redefining our terminology, so that anyone who finishes the race is a winner or anyone who goes out there and gives it a shot is a winner, the race becomes more appealing and accessible, thus lucrative. Redefining what a winner is encourages more individuals to participate, thus increasing corporations' profits. In *Ultra Marathon Man: Confessions of an All-Night Runner* this concept is taken to another level. Karnazes (2006) explained that at the start line of his first ultra marathon the announcer declared: "[m]any of you will not reach the finish line. I applaud you for your effort and determination. Even though you do not finish this event, you will walk away a winner for having the courage to have tried" (Karnazes, 2006, p. 101).

Running and Consumerism

Howard Cosell, an American sports journalist considered jockocracy's rule number one to be keeping sports and politics as separate. Upon further analysis, it could be said that certain kinds of politics do not blend well with sports. "Athletes who speak out on issues of social justice invariably pay a price. It's a problem that powerful commercial interests control the language of sports, not just because it shuts out alternative perspectives but because sports culture shapes other cultural attitudes, norms and power arrangements" (*The Nation* Editors, 2011, p. 9). Sports and politics are actually inseparable, issues of gender, economic and racial justice and equality are played out on fields, turfs, and tracks. Companies that advertise corporate social responsibility initiatives encourage not only consumption, but consumption that provides consumers with a good feeling. In actuality the corporate social responsibility initiatives are

based on what is best for the corporation, profits. "...[C]orporations are legally required to maximize the financial returns of the corporation for shareholders even if this results in 'externalities,' that is, destructive social effects" (Saltman, 2010, p. 15), so although consumers might have a nice feeling about their purchases they could still be supporting a company like

an oil company that causes vast environmental devastation to cut costs, or an automaker who lobbies against airbags for decades causing untold deaths, or an agriculture company that genetically modifies crops in ways that threaten biodiversity and tries to patent life itself, or a fast food company that willingly destroys precious irreplaceable rainforest in South America for cattle grazing to make burgers" (Saltman, 2010, p. 15).

Movies, books, magazines, and news articles are clearly full of advertisements for products, including running products and "[t]he more postmodern culture develops, the more people come to define their identities based on media images and signs" (Elliott, 2008, p. 243). The accumulation of goods has transformed into a

...duty of the newly affluent professionals and yuppies who emerge as a result of the economy, and personal freedom is increasingly defined in terms of access to markets and the shopping mall. Yet how to assess the possibilities of autonomy when postmodernization of the subject involves both the spread both the spread of consumerism and the rise of pseudo-individualism? For Jameson, the problem is only compounded by the vast networks of corporate power and production, whose high-tech operations criss-cross the globe and wreak havoc upon both the cognitive and emotional capacities of human subjects to grasp the links and disjunctions of the new global capitalism (Elliott, 2008, p. 252)

Consumption is linked to ideas of freedom. Although a commonly cited asset of running is its lack of material requirements, unlike biking or swimming, which require expensive bikes, maintenance, or pool access – running can be done

anywhere and requires little (to none) in terms of consumer goods. On the other side of the spectrum, running can be quite costly.

Cash helps [referring to sponsorships], because the road to glycogen-powered enlightenment isn't cheap. Like most elite ultrarunners, Pam Reed² loses money. Between event fees, travel, and gear, she spent close to \$25,000 last year. A fraction of that was covered by two speaking fees and a few free products—shoes from a Tucson running shop, some Ensure, and all the Red Bull she can drink. (As a "friend of Red Bull," Reed does get some expense money, but she still sits a rank below their top athletes. "I want to be that, their top level," she says.) Although the family is comfortable—her husband, Jim, is a tax accountant and they spend summers in posh Jackson Hole, Wyoming—Reed's global competitions strain their finances. What Reed would like is, yes, a little validation, but mostly some cold, hard cash. (Williams, 2005, p. 4)

Karnazes in *Ultra Marathon Man* refers to himself as a "renegade extreme" and a "wildebeest," he even titles Chapter 6 "Leaving Normal," but his renegade mentality fits snugly within capital, corporate, and consumer ideals. He discusses the luxurious features of his Lexis, describes sitting at his desk wearing his "tailored suit and leather loafers..." (Karnazes, 2006, p. 73), and even remarks that the "...good folks at the Fleet Feet running store kept my credit-card information on file, since I was in every few weeks to purchase running shoes" (Karnazes, 2006, p. 75). Although he superficially would like to be seen as a rebel, he is an avid enforcer of consumerism.

Born To Run ridicules American sneaker companies for selling products that weaken runners' feet and accuses them of deplorable marketing techniques, like cancelling product lines to encourage stock-piling. "Dr. Daniel Lieberman, a

² Pam Reed is a two-time winner of Badwater, which is said to be 'The World's Toughest race.' It covers 135 miles (non-stop) from Death Valley to Mt. Whitney, CA in temperatures up to 130F (Williams, 2005)

professor of biological anthropology at Harvard University [stated]: ‘A lot of foot and knee injuries that are currently plaguing us are actually caused by people running with shoes that actually make our feet weak, cause us to over-pronate, give us knee problems. Until 1972, when the modern athletic shoe was invented by Nike, people ran in very thin-soled shoes, had strong feet, and had much lower incidence of knee injuries’ (McDougall, 2009a, p. 169). McDougall also discusses that runners “wearing top-of-the-line shoes are 123 percent *more likely* to get injured than runners in cheap shoes, according to a study led by Bernard Marti, M.D., a preventative-medicine specialist at Switzerland’s University of Bern” (McDougall, 2009a, p. 172). Yet, the author candidly endorses Vibram 5-Fingers barefoot running shoes. McDougall claims that people have a tendency to run with a heel-strike-first form promoted by the cushioning and shape of post-Bowerman shoes rather than a mid-foot strike. He claims this causes ‘most people’ to suffer from running injuries due to this marketing conspiracy. Yet, his book commercializes running, exposes a ‘hidden’ tribe that supposedly desire secrecy (the Tarahumara Indians of the Copper Canyons in Mexico who he describes as super athletes who experience “no crime, war, or theft...no corruption, obesity, drug addiction, greed, wife-beating, child abuse, heart disease, high blood pressure, or carbon emissions” p. 14), and exploits their way of life for personal profit. Furthermore, his book’s website advertises speaking and coaching events, as well as a ‘Born to Run’ Ultra marathon series.

Running for Charities

Charity runs function similarly to what Fisher describes in discussing Disney / Pixar's *Wall-E* (2008) film, which shows "an earth so despoiled that humans are no longer capable of inhabiting it. We're left in no doubt that consumer capitalism and corporations – or rather one corporation, Buy n Large – is responsible for this depredation; and when we eventually see human beings in offworld exile, they are infantile and obese, interacting via screen interfaces, carried around in large motorized chairs, and supping indeterminate slop from cups...A film like *Wall-E* exemplifies what Robert Pfaller has called 'interpassivity': the film performs our anti-capitalism for us, allowing us to continue to consume with impunity" (Fisher, 2000, p. 12). This concept of interpassivity plays heavily in running popular culture. In *Ultra Marathon Man*, Dean Karnazes recalls running through the night in a 199 mile race:³

- "I pulled out the picture of a little girl. Even with tubes and needles stuck all over her body, her face looked vibrant. But she was sick; in fact, she was near death, and I was running to help save her" (Karnazes, 2006, p. 10).
- "She did not look ready to leave this world, and I was committed to doing whatever I could to help keep her here" (Karnazes, 2006, p. 219).

³ The 199 mile race is meant to be an 11 person relay, but Karnazes runs it alone (Karnazes, 2006)

- “As the pain intensified and my mood sank deeper, once again I began asking myself *why* I was doing this. The explicit answer was to honor my commitment to Libby [the sick child] and her family, to help a little girl in need” (Karnazes, 2006, p. 235)

These seem like accurate statements if by committed to doing whatever I could to help” he meant doing exactly what he’s been doing for the last 10 years (running in extreme events). Rather than fighting against the causes of her illness, Karnazes participates in ‘charity’ and it is not a coincidence that this helps boost his image and in turn book sales, using a sick child for personal gain.

In *Run, Fatboy, Run* Libby attempts to explain why she is with her new boyfriend by telling Dennis that Whit is “a good man...You know, he runs marathons for charity, for Pete's sake.” Running for charity can represent an attempt to change the world for the better, make a sacrifice, and / or work hard the benefit of others. But it seems that it can also serve as an interpassive measure in place of more effective or direct methods of helping others or preventing corporations from damaging the environment and endangering the health of human beings through profit-seeking strategies that produce negative externalities.

Chapter 5: Running and Gender

“Jock culture applies the rules of competitive sports to everything. Boys in particular are taught to be tough, stoical and aggressive, to play hurt, to hit hard, to take risks to win in every aspect of their lives. To dominate” (Lipsyte, 2011, p. 12). Running in popular culture is also used to convey messages about

gender, what gender means, how the meaning of a runner can have different implications for females and males. In *The Codes of Gender* Sut Jhally draws upon Erving Goffman's revolutionary analysis of advertizing, in order to better understand the current commercial environment. Through this comparison Jhally demonstrates how American popular culture reflects, and consequently shapes normative ideas about femininity and masculinity. Goffman's central claim is that gender ideals are the result of ritualized cultural performances. Jhally looks beyond advertizing as a sales technique and beyond analyzing gender biologically, to provide a clear perspective regarding the terrain of identity and power relations (Jhally).

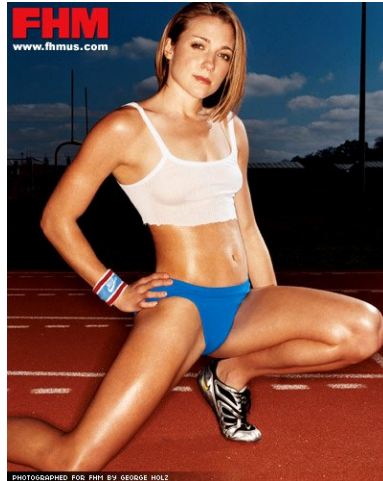
Jhally alleges that the best way to see codes (ways we communicate like how a gait while walking or running can communicate ideas regarding gender or sexuality) is through examining the culture, like advertisements as they normalize and attempt to present the world in ways that could be real (commercial realism). Jhally examines advertisements and photographs in order to decode the binary distinction between ideas of masculinity and femininity. He describes this relationship as binary in that the perceptions downplay the things that males and females have in common, while at the same time downplaying all the ways that males are different from other males, and females are different from other females. For example, when comparing masculine ideals to feminine ideals, he draws on the following relationships: strong/weak, hard/soft, active/passive, rugged/delicate, dominant/submissive, powerful/vulnerable, adult-like/child-like, sturdy/unstable, upright and in control/bent over and unable to defend

themselves, and alive and assertively taking control of surroundings/sleepy, gazing away like daydreaming unaware of surroundings.

In order to combat the masculine attributes of running or athletics, Jhally says that women in sports live in two separate worlds – one of athletics and one in which they disavow their power and strength through poses demonstrating defenselessness, modeling on all fours, acting child-like, or posing in highly-sexualized positions. He included multiple runners in his examples, including Leryn Franco, Tatiana Grigoreiva, and Jenny Adams (pictured below in the separate worlds described above, respectively).



Jenny Adams at the U.S. Olympic Team Trials – Track and Field Day 7
July 17, 2004 – Photo by Andy Lyons / Getty Images Sport



Jenny Adams, Haley Cope, Jenny Adams, and Amy Acuff, Jenny Adams
FHM September 2004

The *New York Times* article “Maria Sharapova Extends Her Reach” recognizes this link between images of gender and power. “One does not become the highest paid female athlete in the world without recognizing that the greatest potential for earnings comes not from winning championships, but from endorsement deals, particularly with fashion and sportswear brands. Ms. Sharapova, now 24 years old and the seventh ranked women's singles player, made \$24.5 million from June 2009 to June 2010, according to Forbes, about \$4 million more than her nearest competitor, Serena Williams” (Wilson, 2011).



Would these same comparisons be made to male athletes receiving sponsorship requests? Would male athletes be required to pose in un-athletic, powerless positions (lying down, bent knee, alluring looks) in order to be considered?

Mary Jo Kane (2011) reiterates this offensive portrayal of women in “Sex Sells Sex, Not Women’s Sport”:

Over the past three decades we have amassed a large body of empirical evidence demonstrating that sportswomen are significantly more likely to be portrayed in ways that emphasize their femininity and heterosexuality rather than their athletic prowess. Study after study has revealed that newspaper and TV coverage around the globe routinely and systematically focuses on the athletic exploits of male athletes while offered hypersexualized images of their female counterparts (p. 28).

The implications of these studies should not be trivialized. The media’s propensity to present women’s athletic accomplishments in a highly sexual, subordinate and weak light reinforces ideals of women as “second-class citizens in one of the most powerful economic, social and political institutions on the planet” (Kane, 2011, p. 28). This mass media campaign often boasts what has become a common assumption: that their methods of sexualizing female athletes increases interest in women’s sports. Studies show that although female athletes gain notoriety and that target audiences view “sexually provocative images... [as] ‘hot,’ they also stated that such images did not fundamentally increase their interest in women’s sports, particularly when it came to attending a sports event” (Kane, 2011, p. 39). For instance, FHM and Sports Illustrated readers might be compelled to buy issues clad with hot, scantily dressed female athletes, but that does not mean their interest in women’s sports has also been elated. On the contrary “a focus on great traditions, conference rivalries...physically gifted, mentally tough, grace-under pressure athletes” did increase attendance and TV ratings for women’s sports...hence the title of the article (Kane, 2011, p. 28).

As Anne Marie Jutel (2009) describes in “Run Like a Girl,” these issues of identity and power are not restricted to images of females. Authors of running books clearly acknowledge societal concerns regarding the

masculinizing affects of running, and the theme of “keeping feminine” threads throughout the typical women’s running book. Whether the preoccupation with femininity focuses on beauty and body image, or on being a good wife, it is prevalent in the women’s running book genre. Barron notes that “Many women worry that a lot of running will make them overly muscular and less feminine.” She is quick to assuage any concern: “this won’t happen unless it’s in your genetic makeup to be that way in the first place. Running improves muscle tone and strength, but only rarely does it increase muscle bulk. It’s really nothing to worry about” (40). In fact, she points out further along in her book, “It is quite possible, and rather easy, to run as hard and as fast as you can and still look nice” (p. 1011).

She describes how running books serve as tools, reproducing discourses that the female body is fragile, needs extraneous support, and reinforces the traditional roles of women as wife, mother, and nurturer. This traditional role contradicts recent arguments that suggest an increasing social empowerment for women within sporting contexts. Jutel (2009) contends that “[r]unning may have been a new activity for many women, but it was not an activity that forced women out of their traditional places, and the running books that helped them into running, reflected this: Women could run and remain feminine, which was perhaps what both they and the public wanted” (p. 1018). And this is not limited to running books of course,

[b]ooks guiding women’s behavior have figured prominently as educational tools for middle- and upper-class women over centuries. From etiquette to fashion, housekeeping to education, manuals range from *Every Woman’s Encyclopaedia* and *What a Young Woman Ought to Know* (Wood-Allen) to *White Gloves and Party Manners* (Young M & Buchwald)

In many ways, the running book continues this tradition” (Jutel, 2009, p. 1005 – 1006).

The jogging trend began in the 1970s alongside feminist awareness movements, women fought for inclusion in long-distance running events, like the Boston Marathon. Although, women began running in the Boston Marathon in 1967, this was against the BAA’s policies as women were not allowed to run in races longer than 1.5 miles. It was not until 1972 that women were sanctioned to run (BAA, 2012, “Women run to the front,” para. 1). This issue is still visible today. NBC Universal Sports covered the 2011 Stockholm marathon, but only showed the professional female runners a few times throughout the race and during the finish. The significant majority of the visual coverage and commentator’s reporting centered on the male contenders.

Even women’s running attire is evolving in an effort to fight masculine associations with running. The recent rise of the running skirt, which started when Nicole DeBoom won the 2004 Wisconsin Ironman triathlon while wearing a running skirt in order to “look pretty while kicking butt” (Armstrong, 2008, p. 1) has turned into an ideology involving choice of attire as freedom, rather than being revealed as another attempt for women to meet expectations of beauty even during physical exertion. For example:

I have to admit that I still love my shorts and my half-tights. But one of the best things about being a woman today is that we have so many options. Whether we are in the boardroom, on the home front, or on the starting line, we can bring it on like a man, but it doesn't mean we have to look like one (Armstrong, 2008, p. 2).

Another example of discussion regarding the running skirt trend can be found in everyday Internet dialogue, such as the posting and comments of Caitlin Chock’s

(2011) blog post of the subsequent comments of “The Arty Running Chick” followers. The author and commentators provide insights into different viewpoints on wearing running skirts from disapproval based on feminist ideals, promotion on the grounds of aesthetic effects or coverage, and approval with the idea that skirts embrace ideas of femininity. Many ideas about gender and running are entrenched throughout the article, but the mere fact that a primarily female group is compelled to discuss their judgments based on what other females would like to wear or to justify their own apparel choices is interesting. And along the same trend, Christine Nienstedt claims to have worn a polyester dress during a half marathon to remind herself “to have fun” and she then realized that “other runners had ‘dress envy,’ so she founded Nu-Muu, a company devoted to the garment. ‘Running dresses tap into a lighthearted, whimsical girl-power thing’” (Bowen Shea, 2011, p. 3, para. 3). After finishing second her debut marathon, Shalane Flanagan (who recently won the Houston Women’s Marathon Olympic Trials), was the focus of a *Runner’s World* article due to her marathon running apparel:

Olympic bronze medalist Shalane Flanagan wore knee socks in the New York City marathon, she made noise not only with her fast time – 2:28:40 – but with her flashy, bright-white, look-at-me color. ‘These women have an attitude that says, ‘I want to kick some ass wearing some bold outfit that shows people I’m not afraid to stand out’” (Bowen Shea, 2011, p. 1, para. 4).

The running skirt, running dress, and constant commentary regarding women being aesthetically pleasing even during physical activity affirms the position of women in sports as outliers struggling to find feminine apparel in order

to naturalize the presence of sweat on their foreheads. Running skirts and dresses function to bridge the gap between being seen as lady-like and maintaining unrealistic body images with the masculinity associated with sports.

In the books and movies discussed earlier the most striking note on gender is the lack of females viewed as athletes or runners, even when they participate in running. In *Once a Runner* (which was initially self-published in the 1970s) by John L. Parker, Jr., the lead character, Quenton Cassidy falls in love with his long-term girlfriend when she is running, but she is considered amateur and has 'a gimpy leg' (Parker, 1978, p. 40). Although they do present the main character's love interest as a strong, decisive character who refuses to put up with (what she sees as) Cassidy's self-destructive behavior – she also discusses the difficulties of finding a man who takes her career goals seriously:

One thing I'll say about him, he didn't flinch when I told him about medical school. Most of the guys I've ever mentioned it to just give me this weak little smile. They're right on the verge of saying something like, oh, you're much too attractive to blah blah blah and if I had a gun right then I would shoot to kill" (Parker, 1978, p. 73). Somehow, she runs throughout the novel (and sequel, *On to Carthage*), but her femininity and physical disability keep her from being considered a true 'runner' to the other characters.

In *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running* by Haruki Murakami (2008) the author does not mention female runners and he dismisses his wife as runner because of her metabolism, in that she eats whatever she likes and stays trim. He thus believes she has no need for running. Although throughout the book he describes running as a mentally beneficial act that is meaningful to his writing – he does not consider his wife having a desire to run outside of aesthetic purposes.

In *Ultra Marathon Man: Confessions of an All-Night Runner* Karnazes (2006) mentions his wife running during their first meeting. Karnazes falls in love with his wife when she is running and the uniqueness of seeing a female at the time running strikes him. "Most of the 'beauty queens' at our school would have nothing to do with running or sweating in public" (Karnazes, 2006, p. 39). After this story he only talks about his wife as a support system and the mother of his children. Her occupation is only mentioned to highlight that although he is busy with his extreme running he is not ignoring his duties as a husband since his wife is in dental school (this is before they had children). Once it suits him to present himself as a breadwinner and patriarch, he justifies his corporate-appearance by saying "[a]fter all, I did have a wife and family to support (Karnazes, 2006, p. 222). According to recent articles his wife runs her own general and cosmetic dentistry practice.

Dean Karnazes was also the subject of an October 2005 *Outside* magazine article called "Desperate Housewife Stalks Male Supermodel in Sports Death March." The article discusses the rivalry between Dean Karnazes and Pam Reed. The title of the article itself, says a great deal about how women are viewed, when an accomplished female athlete who is 44 years old, the Director of the Tucson Marathon, and the mother of five is referred to as a 'Desperate House Wife' and Dean Karnazes, a 42 year-old, who has won fewer ultra marathons, is President of Good Healthy Natural Foods, and the father of two is referred to as a 'Male Supermodel.'

In *Born to Run*, Christopher McDougall mentions two female athletes, Ann Trason and Jenn Shelton. McDougall described the Leadville 100 mile race in 1994, when Ann Trason was leading, a pacer helped motivate his runners by asking them to run down the La Bruja (the witch). Jenn Shelton is a talented runner, beat poet, and surfer – but special attention was brought to her bikini attire during races. On the other hand, *Born to Run* contends that women have been “evolutionarily shortchanged” in that “[w]e perpetuate this notion that they [women] were sitting around waiting for the men to come back with food, but there’s no reason why women couldn’t be part of the hunting party” (McDougall, 2009a, p. 241). He also discussed the success in general of women in ultra marathons as “nearly all women finish Leadville and fewer than half the men do.” Despite the fact that there are no women ranked in the top fifty in the world for the mile “the female world record for the mile, 4:12, was achieved a century ago by men and rather routinely now by high school boys,” but in ultras the gap between the top male and the female performances is much smaller (McDougall, 2009a, p. 79). Taking a look at sports culture, historically it “...doesn’t simply reflect prevailing gender and sexual biases of its time; it helps to shape them” (Wolf, 2011, p. 30).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The industry of running is clearly more than of physical act; it is a representation of the type of society we live in, visible evidence of what is valued and what is not, and a reflection of American ideals. The way running is performed and perceived has unmistakably changed in the last nine decades in

relation to the social and cultural conventions. The impact of the Gilded Age and Neoliberal ideals can be seen in the power structures established through running and sports, the corporatization of running through ubiquitous advertisements and corporate sponsorships, the disturbing financial and consumer crazed running market, and the ideals pushed through the running industry. These ideals also coincide with the model capitalist worker who is ok with inequalities, believes pain and competition are natural, follows obediently without questioning and lacks initiatives for communal responsibility. Additionally, these ideals encourage strict measurability, which stifles creativity and collaboration.

Running has been influential in our history and has many positive aspects such as the boosting of self-esteem, helping in weight maintenance, and increasing cardiovascular strength, but it has also become much more than a form of exercise. Running has changed alongside political, economic and historical events. Running serves as a reflection of our society's ideological framework. The way running is participated in and perceived is influenced by our capitalist and neoliberal environment. Running is a pedagogical act, training Americans about power, economics, and ideologies. Running throughout history and within popular culture conveys messages which help to normalize concepts like,

- pain is necessary for improvement
- individuals are solely responsible for their own success

- corporate principles are superior and valuable in other aspects of life outside of work
- time is equivalent to money
- the existence of winners and losers is natural
- consuming is a responsibility and freedom
- running for charity is productive, rather than interpassive
- women can compete in sports, but in order to receive positive attention for their talents they must offset their 'masculinity' by denying their power, appearing defenseless and / or highly sexualized

These corporate, consumer, capitalist, and gender ideals and norms are prevalent in our society and can palpably be seen in our forms of entertainment, education, and news.

Further Inquiry and Research

This paper does not detail all the ways that influence how we perceive and participate in running, but discusses some of the key aspects. In what other ways does our political economy affect the way we live and run? Is there a connection between the recent legitimization of torture and the view of torturing yourself through voluntary physical acts? Whether looking at torture as something we do to our enemies or as something we endure for personal growth and experience – the normalization of violence has clearly become more evident in American society. However, are there ways to imagine running as a culture outside of these principles? Are there groups that run and do not duplicate or reproduce corporatist, capitalist, consumerist cultures?

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