Run and become: The Dissertations

1. JENNI ROSE HUMAN
Running, escape, and empowerment: construction of agentive bodies in narratives of marathon runners

2. SAM PEPPER
In Dialogue with the Selves: Personhood through the Narratives of Marathon Runners

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Sunday 18th April 2010 saw the advent of the annual Brighton marathon. This enormous public event attracted 10,000 entrants and inspired thousands of supporters to line the streets and cheer on complete strangers in their individual quests to complete the marathon. In the approach to the finish line, many of the fresh-faced and optimistic runners had been reduced to struggling, exhausted bodies in great pain, desperate to give in but determined to carry on. The reasons behind this odd behaviour are fascinating: the pain and dedication required in the 3-12 months of training culminating in the marathon commands attention and analysis. Why has the social phenomenon of the urban marathon captured so many imaginations and willing bodies to participate in this 26.2 mile event? The marathon can be conceptualised as a focus point for further thought on the interrelationships between bodies, selves and society, provoking further questions about the nature of the role of fitness in morality and individuality. The benevolent, moral aspects of marathon running can be expressed through the inherent charity link present in UK understandings of marathons, or equally in the more individualistic, progressive 'goodness' currently perceived to be a quality of 'fitness' itself (Maguire 2006, Gillick 1984). The material and symbolic dimensions of marathon running must be culturally examined to fully understand why marathon running has become such a highly popular phenomenon.

Entry into a marathon is currently very competitive: Many of the participants of the Brighton marathon were unsuccessful entrants into the routinely oversubscribed London marathon. Participation is completely voluntary- so why do people feel such a strong urge, in some cases, almost an obligation to participate ('I just had to do it')? The benefits marathon running confers for the participants and the society will both be examined in this essay. Explication of the fluid mechanics of the motives of marathon runners will be examined through Foucault's theory of docile bodies, governmentality and critical structural approaches to the discourse of fitness, before moving onto personal narratives suggesting the utility of phenomenological

approaches. I will propose that both need to be combined in order to make sense of marathon runner's bodily and societal empowerment.

Throughout dialogues with runners, the common themes that emerged most strongly in narratives throughout were those of escape and empowerment. These common strands in motivations to run could illuminate what is culturally expected and therefore sought after and experienced in marathon runners. I will attempt to put forward an analysis that allows marathon runners' narratives of bodily experience, empowerment and self-transformation to be acknowledged as valid, but only in relation to the values held important within society by taking a historical approach. Sociological and historical forces and influences go some way to explaining the popularity of the urban marathon, but where do structural explanations lose their value and personal narratives become a valid method of understanding motivations to run it? There are certainly cultural antecedents to the popularization of the marathon, but personal narratives add a creative richness to the suggestion that runners are merely embodying pressures from discourse.

Self and society must be construed in a dialectical relationship, but how much agency should be attributed to the individual? Running in itself is rarely seen as a pleasurable endeavour, which further complicates the reasons people want to enter a marathon. The benefits individuals gain from running will be discussed: in terms of participants' own narratives and contextualized by social theory, leading to a greater understanding of how society, self and body mutually constitute one another through the medium of bodily experience. As Husserl says, the body provides the zero-point of orientation to the world, and exists as a concrete 'ontological, spatial, temporal instrument of experience in the here-and-now' (Husserl in Wasskul and Vannini 2006: 8). After outlining some theories that implicate the body and self within power relations, I will examine how fitness came to occupy a privileged position. Through narratives selected from informants, I will suggest that marathon runners do more than just embody cultural pressures, but experience multifaceted benefits from long distance running. Sometimes the narratives even exposed a critical attitude towards the rationalization, commercialization and modernization exercise that structural accounts also criticise.

Body and Society, Body and self

The body has long been regarded as static, neutral and passive in academic theory and lay perceptions (Jackson 1983: 329). However, while examining marathon runners, it is clear that the body represents something that is controlled and manipulated through a creative agent-self, equipping them with feelings of empowerment, albeit in contingence with the values of society. An early anthropologist of the body, Douglas (1966), said that the body occupied both physical and symbolic realms, the social body constraining the way in which the physical body is perceived. Douglas's distinction between the natural body and the social body arguably only reaffirmed the dualism of body and mind and privileged the latter. (Van Woolputte: 2004: 25). However, the body, mind and society are mutually transformative. The symbolic and the physical can be mediated by the labour undertaken by body (Woolputte 2004: 25) during a marathon. The 1975 Association of Social Anthropologists studied the human body as a privileged medium of expression and nonverbal communication (in Van Woolputte 2004), and this can certainly be perceived in marathon runners. Theoretically structural approaches to health and fitness concentrate on power relations and create grand narratives where individual experiences fade into the irrelevance. Originally, Foucault's (1975) theory of 'docile bodies' seemed appropriate to explain the appeal of marathon running.

His microphysics of power revolutionised prior theories of that saw it intentionally forbidding and repressive. Instead of theorising power as a purely top-down coercion in the interests of the ruling classes (elsewhere known as 'domination'), Foucault recasted power as a productive force, essential to collective functions and practices of society itself: power also comes from below, through tiny, everyday naturalized modes of behaviour enacted through the individual's mastery of self-surveillance and discipline, subconsciously reenacting the asymmetry of power relations. In industrialized society, enforcing productive behaviour and the regulation of citizens' conduct was no longer appropriate for public punitive displays. The new, diffuse discipline means that individuals do not need to be explicitly coerced to submit to the dominant discourse- voluntary submission involves restricting or altering wills. Foucault talks of embodied surveillance playing a role in shaping behaviour:

'Our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance; under the surface of images, one invests bodies in depth; behind the great abstraction of exchange, there continues the meticulous, concrete training of useful forces [...]; it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies. '

[Foucault 1975: n.p]

It can be argued that the marathon- as part of a dominant discourse of fitness- plays an institutional role in shaping the possible, acceptable and encouraged field of action for citizens (Lemke 2000). Foucault's concept of 'mentality of governance' or 'governmentality' is useful here, where power and knowledge becomes de-institutionalised and circulate in a 'free' state.

Foucault also critiques the 'disciplining' of society that emerged through charitable institutions which served particular ends to benefit the ruling classes: 'religious (conversion and moralization), economic (aid and encouragement to work) or political (the struggle against discontent or agitation).' (i.b.i.d.)

Foucault's analysis of the primacy of practices and their influence over institutions allowed Foucault to trace historical developments, or genealogies, of institutions such as the prison and the clinic, in his seventies work. Foucault's theory lends itself to the suggestion that the marathon is another regulating institution that encourages productive, obedient behaviour, or 'docile bodies'. Despite the marathon being experienced by participants as an entirely voluntary undertaking, the marathon could be argued to share qualities with the panopticon: the internalization of societal expectations regarding health, fitness and charitable giving transformed into self-regulations and self-discipline on an extreme scale, played out in a public spectacle. Marathon runners embody societal pressures, internalizing and regulating expected bodily, and indeed, moral conduct, but how do we make sense of their narratives of being empowered, exercising free choice and 'doing it for themselves'?

Self-discipline has become a dominant theme both in discourses of exercise- of which the marathon arguably has become one of the most 'extreme' forms- as well as within

wider capitalist society. Body maintenance, or indeed modification by means of exercise, is a project recently popularised. The increasing pressure to 'look after oneself' via 'reflexive body techniques' (Crossley 2004: 37) where self aware actors intentionally interact with the environment to improve the former, have been examined by Crossley in the context of gym-based workouts. He argues that people who embrace societal pressures to be fit and healthy do not necessarily have to be 'docile bodies'.

The intentional interactions of the bodily 'I' with the environment serve to modify and maintain the embodied 'self', Crossley argues. In the case of running a marathon, these reflexive body techniques can also be used to produce impacts on the world around, through charity. Not only does society produce individuals, but the body/self also impacts upon and modifies society. Marathon running has come to have a link with morality (see Mitchell, unpublished) , an opportunity to raise money for a 'good cause' (Nettleton and Hardey 2006) concurrent to the personal transformation of the self that is often experienced (Reischer 2000). In the process of attaining fitness via reflexive body techniques, the body is both subject and object of change. The privileged discourse of health and fitness provides a framework in which reflexive body techniques, in which embodied actors act back upon themselves, acquire meaning and direction. Crossley's article raises many questions about the active role of embodied agents. The 'messy and complex reality', the 'witches brew' (2004: 41) of living up to 'plans' is focussed on within Crossley's analysis, which is an ethnographic study of sociality and individual and group dynamics in the context of an exercise class. In the same way Foucault recognized that Bentham's panopticon was a device designed for a purpose which would be imperfect in practice, it was outside Foucault's aim to examine the practical workings of day to day life. Of course there is a place for detailed ethnographic analysis, 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) of actions and meanings that need not be reduced to background noise within political grand narratives and social theory, but by incorporating Foucauldian ideas about prominent discourses and the historical construction of truth and power one can make sense of why narratives and experiences of runners are so pervasive and inspiring within context. The notion of docility implies a reduced agency which is inadequate for fully appreciating the narratives of empowerment and individuality that my

participants expressed- though the manner in which that agency is exercised is highly contingent upon the local habitus.

Foucault's early analysis is unsophisticated in explaining the relation between body and agency, states Giddens, as it exists only at the point where power meets the body (1991: 57). Foucault's later contributions on 'technologies of the self' provide a rather more subtle account of modern subjectivity. Individual bodies are not reduced to objects of domination, but instead are permitted to effect change upon themselves: 'operations on their own bodies, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power, and so on' (Foucault 1993: 203). This idea, elsewhere referred to as 'governmentality', is closer to explaining how motivations in marathon runners work, but still do not fully engage with the inner, bodily pleasures runners receive and the way in which they can experience transformations and empowerment within their habitus.

Marathon running as capital in the field of fitness

So, why has the marathon become the focus point for so many people? Although it is not the biggest crowd-drawing sport in UK, it holds a special place in the public imagination as a unique symbol of 'everyman' human endurance and perseverance. It is seen as the ultimate challenge of bodily and even moral fitness: one informant runner described it as the 'Holy Grail' of exercise. However, the privileged position of the marathon in UK society is fully culturally bound.

Its history can be traced back to the Ancient Greeks, its namesake allegedly arising from a fateful run by Pheidippides from the Plains of Marathon to Athens. After having run the 20 odd miles to deliver a message of victory, the story had him collapse and fall to his death. Despite historical scholars widely disproving this oft-asserted 'fact', the myth still remains strong in public imagery, essential to the marathon's appeal and 'superhuman' significance. Not only does this account go some way to describing some of the marathon's historical appeal, it also exemplifies how the body and society are intimately linked and co-construct each other. According to scholars, the actual 100-mile journey that Pheidippides completed as a

hemerodromoi, or day- runner, was not particularly strenuous or extraordinary in ancient Greek society (MacAloon 1981: 226). Elsewhere, among the Tarahumara Indians of Mexico, 250-mile runs are practised over a gruelling course of 3 days and nights and entail keeping control of a ball simultaneously. When 1932 race directors asked the Tarahumara to send some participants for the 26.2 mile marathon, some young girls were sent to participate in the comparatively 'short and easy' race (Pierce 1982 in Reischer 2006: 33).

When examined anthropologically, the significance of such long distance running can only be described as culturally constructed. Bodily limitations are culturally shaped and conceptualised: although marathon running is widely perceived to be a 'testing of natural limits', it is clear that these limits, and indeed nature itself, are contingent on cultural shaping and definitions. The marathon is still seen as an extraordinary achievement, but the marathon's importance is fitting with the current privileged position of health and fitness within Euro-American society.

Fitness in our society represents evidence of self-discipline, labour and self-improvement, fulfilling social responsibilities both to the self and to civilization, especially in the cases where running a marathon is combined with charity fundraising. The category of 'fitness' however, remains as unquestioned 'good' (Smith Maguire 2006), and it is important to unpick why fitness has become so fetishised.

Health and fitness in the West has been constructed as both a public health and a moral issue and has held an increasingly prominent position in the public eye. The 'social ill' of increasing obesity and disease has coincided, paradoxically with a fanatic obsession with health and fitness (Maguire 2006), most noticeably within American society, where individualisation of responsibility for health, as well as the commercialisation of fitness has increased most dramatically in the past 40 years.

Constructed as a 'cure-all', fitness is widely thought to provide defence against ills such as obesity, stress, low energy levels and ageing (Maguire 2006:). The class-based availability (Abbas 2004, Maguire 2006) and the unproblematic construction of fitness as a morally good use of 'leisure' time has been criticized by some authors as a

way of obscuring the cultural and social problems associated with our contemporary and sedentary lifestyles. ‘Fitness’, in this particular historical and cultural milieu has been packaged and sold as a pursuit that is a matter of personal choice and responsibility, contingent upon ability to consume (Maguire 2006: 4), obscuring social and political roots of problems like obesity and inactivity (Maguire 2006: 4, Gillick 198: 384).

The resurgence of interest in health promotion has been attributed to many factors. The slow decrease in religious authority and eventual increase of scientific, rational bureaucratic modes of thought (Weber 1905) represents a time in history which hoped to have heightened control of nature, expected to result in human progression and happiness. However, in the late 20th century, a loss of control was suspected, with the prevalence of heart disease, cancer, and environmental and societal pollution. Promises of consumer happiness became exposed as false and stable identities and selfhoods became hard to anchor in a postmodern world (Glassner 1989: 182) Aerobic fitness was proposed as the answer to sedentary lifestyles and salvation from disappointing healthcare institutions (Glassner 1989: 182) as it became clear that medicine could not be relied on to prevent death. (Gillick 1984). The 'fitness boom' in the 1970s was marked ad encouraged by publications like Sheehan's 'Running and being: the total experience' (1978) which promoted the 'highs' achievable through running (Nettleton and Hardey 2006: 443).

Marathon running was publicly advocated in 1974 as a preventative measure for heart disease by Jack Scaff and Thomas Bassler, two physician members of the American Medical Joggers’ Association. They wrote to the New England Journal of Medicine that they advocated the activity of marathon running for everyone. Gillick noted that this 'academic' proof of marathons' value opened the way for millions of Americans who were at risk for developing heart disease to seize upon running as 'living insurance.' (Gillick 1984: 373)

The marathon in Britain today rather conspicuously promotes two main themes: those of health and charity; benefits for the self and other. Nettleton and Hardey describe the marathon as the ‘most visible contemporary spectacle of health’ (2006: 457). Through these themes, the body’s work is experienced as empowerment. The

marathon has become a symbol of positive change and optimism, both of personal development and societal. Crawford (1984 in Nettleton and Hardey 2006: 454) pointed out that health is a metaphor for self-control: control, in turn, being perceived as a prerequisite for health, wealth and happiness.

The strength of the current fitness field lies in its serving of equally 'top down' and 'bottom up' interests. Governmental policies, hoping to decrease stress and absenteeism in the workforce and increase productivity, as well as commercial leisure industries rely on the privileged discourse of fitness being a 'good, leisure-time' activity (Maguire 2006). At the same time, individuals sense benefit by being able to rebuke reliance from medical professionals- an empowerment sensed in the greater defence against noninfectious diseases, such as heart disease, cancer and stroke (Gillick 1984: 370)- a kind of 'demedicalisation'. However, the 'bottom-up' motivations that support the status of fitness are not all directional and deserve fuller exploration.

Feelings of freedom, competence and strength may arise from the embodied pleasures gained through exercise, but these non-instrumental pleasures are not promoted by the discourse of exercise, preferring to promote 'control over' the body rather than 'pleasure in' the body (Huzinga in Maguire 2006: 3) Freedom, power and strength are therefore experienced through the bodily pursuits of informants within the constraints of their class-based habitus.

We live in a society where not only individual bodies, but organizational and collective bodies and institutions profit from being 'lean', 'fit', flexible' and 'autonomous' (Lemke 2000: 13). 'Health' could even be conceptualized as being well adjusted to the qualities that society deems worthwhile (c.f Parsons 1951) But while society certainly benefits from fitness, how do individuals benefit? I wish to see how grand narratives of fitness as a political, controlling field correlate with individual experiences of marathon runners. Cockerburn (1993) asserted that health lifestyles are carried out through formal rationality, an attempt to gain benefits such as looking good and enhanced life expectancy in the most efficient manner, at the expense of more substantive rationality which is concerned with ideal qualities and values.

Through interviews with runners however, running does seems to represent an end in itself: even as escape from 'modern' pressures spaces and rationalities.

Methodology and the elicitation of personal narratives: escape and empowerment

The interviews took place in the run up to the first Brighton marathon, using volunteer informants. The 30 one-hour long interviews were semi-structured and focussed on eliciting accounts on motivations to run and the concurrent transformations of the self, body, and life during training. The dialogues suggested that runners experience a deeper significance in long distance running than just fulfilling social obligations to be, fit, self-driven, or charitable. Agency and bodily discipline are closely linked: in running a marathon, agency is demonstrated via discipline and control of the body: power over the body, self and world is asserted. Phenomenology allows us to deal more closely with the way in which the body produces its surroundings through the immediacy of perception. Through first-person accounts of experience, we can understand how bodily meaning is informed by cultural meaning, helping to give actions intentionality.

Carla was a 30-year-old research project manager at a prestigious university. It was clear that for her, running provided both an escape from her busy life, and empowerment within it. She says she enjoys the

'freedom, the sort of self-mediation, the switch-off […] being able to compartmentalize everything in my head with clear space, getting a little meditation and breathing… and a lot of freedom really, no one around telling me what to do or where to go, not responsible to anybody. Running is definitely an escape, yeah, so busy every day, I don't get any other time that's genuinely my own'.

By physically taking her body away from the workplace and her boyfriend (who needed constant care and attention) she managed to stabilize her sense of self. Clearly, for Carla, the marathon provided a sense of empowerment in relation to her peers.

'*I do feel a sense of wellbeing, even if it's partly physical and partly psychological, having bragging rights of why I'm fitter and healthier than you, because I go out running, yeah I do more than you do, so I must be happier than you'.*

It is clear that Carla feels empowered through her being able to run, using the privileged discourse of health equalling happiness to her advantage.

Carla applied for a Sports Science degree as a result of her experience of running, and took pride in her ability to tailor highly specific scientific knowledge to her own feelings and knowledge of her body. She took pride in her deeper, biomedically based knowledge of running and the bodily processes it provokes and took it upon herself to advise and encourage fellow runners: her sense of empowerment came through socially mediated respect, and her voluntarily participation in an authoritative discourse of biomedicine. As a university drop-out now employed as a project manager at a prestigious university, she has always felt disempowered by her intellectual colleagues. Running has given her a renewed sense of self –worth,

'If I didn't have that hobby, I think I'd feel a lot more belittled in my environment- I can do something they can't do'.

The respect she gets from her academic colleagues for being a marathon runner reassures her and makes her feel more confident in her other abilities. Carla thinks her earlier struggles with her health have also been managed and controlled via her interest in running. She feels personal responsibility for her health, and attributed running to her greater sense of 'safety' in her thirties.

'I suffered a lot with my health in my early twenties, because I used to smoke, had a bad lifestyle, burnt the candle at both ends […] I had pre-cancer when I was 19, 20, on my cervix, had an operation for that, and I had endometriosis when I was 24, and I had heart problems as well […] I think that's one of the reasons why I transformed and started going to the gym more, but I'm far more aware of my own health no as well, far more aware of trying to keep that fitness up, keep my heart healthy, and it kind of feels nicer as a result, I've gone the longest amount of time ever since my teens without having to go for an operation or a test! I like to think that by continuing

the running, I'm keeping myself a lot healthier than I was earlier on: trying to correct my mistakes I guess. '

She says she is more in control, more aware of her body now and what is abnormal. Strong themes of self control emerge in her narrative: Giddens has noted that lapses of 'bodily self management' can threaten 'the framework of ontological security' (1991: 57). For Carla, 'the tightly controlled body is an emblem of safe existence in an open social environment' (Giddens 1991: 107). Growing feelings of impotence in this increasingly complex sociocultural context (c.f Giddens 1991) seem to be somewhat alleviated by the marathon runners' management and development of the body (Reischer 2001: 32). By focusing on our bodies and working on them for public displays, we turn ourselves into our own 'project' (Nettleton and Watson, 1998, p. 1). The ability to exercise agency on our own bodies allows us to change how we perceive ourselves in relation to society, in addition to how we think others see us. How we think about ourselves can be open to negotiation in a neoliberal society where 'choice' reigns, (if you have the means). Investing in the body is perceived as an effective way to transform social roles.

Narratives of escape from everyday life came through equally strongly when marathon runners talked about their training.
For Sharon, a retired lawyer, running was used to provide her with the space she needed, providing a contrast with her past:

'*The opposite has been my whole life, deadlines, pressures, working with lawyers, you know, it was […] God, hard. A completely pointless existence…. It's almost getting back to fairly simple, I wouldn't say, simple pleasures, but a simple view of the continuum of life as it is probably meant to be, but we forget […] it's sort of almost a spiritual thing, as I say I'm not religious, but it's at one with nature […] I like the peace, like being by myself, just time to think things through, to myself'.*

Removal of the bodily from 'rational', modern, organized spaces and feeling 'at one with nature' characterized the pleasures for Sharon. The keenness to get 'outside' on long runs resonated strongly among most of the participants, who saw gym running as

artificial, boring and too controlling of a natural movement of running. Many, like Roger, emphasized that running is a 'natural' thing:

'*We are meant to be using all four limbs, testing and bending. Most people don't nowadays'*. Ellen spoke of the 'primal' appeal of exercise.

In contrast to structural fitness discourses which see runners as 'buying into' ideologies of fitness, many runners enjoyed the low level of economic commitment running requires (with the exception of 'running shoes').

Bob talks of his hostility to gyms and the modern rationalization of exercise:

'This is it, this is the real world. It feels like you're reading a textbook when you're in a gym. 'You're supposed do this, do X amount, you'll be fine, get rid of X amount of fat from your body, you end up having your BMI…' –NO! It's not like that. What if somebody lives far away from a gym, why is it that they live up to 80, 90, when they have never seen anything like a gym in their life? They actually use their body for what it is used for, as natural as possible, the better the chances.'

Running also provided Bob with 'mental space':

'It's my little cave, my haven. That's what I'd use actually, it's my haven, it's personal, it's me. I can do what I want, achieve what I want, no interventions, no interruptions. Everything around me is moving so fast, but when you're running, it's you who's moving. So you can control your body. If you want to move there, how long it will take you there, what to do, where to go. So it's sort of a control thing as well. To an extent, it allowed me some freedom'.

Themes of power and control come across very clearly in Bob's account of running during training, feelings which he transfers to other parts of his life:

'it reminds me that in life, generally, things might get tough but if you push through something then you know there's a definitely good outcome after that hurdle: enjoy that pain, and you'll be fine.'

Bob says it makes him 'feel alive': his sense of being-in-the-world (c.f Heidegger 1962) is heightened by the pain he feels after a long run, but it feels good to him as it reminds him of the goal-oriented nature of our society and the worthwhile nature of 'hard work'.

Shantelle, a nurse, talked about how long distance running has resulted in a feeling of being more in tune with her body.

'*I'm just, I'm so aware of me, physically. More so than I ever have been before, how capable my body is of doing something extreme, you just get so in tune with everything […] it's all associated with pain, maybe that's why, it's kind of, it alerts itself to you, so you kind of, watch for it, look for it, it just affects every part of your body, it's bizarre.'*

Her narrative also illustrates the how the kinds of bodily and social empowerment work together:

'I signed up to do the marathon; it must have been about September time. And I kind of started working towards it so it was starting to help me relieve my stress and helping me to think more clearly and I decided, although I'd been saying it for a long time, to look for another job and, you know, really go for it, so I changed my job, probably because I think the running gave me the opportunity to sort my thoughts out and just made me feel more self- assured, a bit more confident in my abilities, and that's still going on. I'm in my new job, and, it's hard to settle in but I feel really positive and really focused on it and I definitely think that's as a result of all this training. Definitely. I don't think I'd be so strong if I wasn't doing this marathon. It's been an amazingly positive experience.'

The physical process of getting fitter underpins the self-regarding project of transformation engendered by the marathon. The body is the essential medium of the self's engagement with the world, the body and self separable only is discourse (Reischer 2000, Merleau Ponty 1962). The 'body effects a concurrent transformation of self, in that […] the very nature of one's being-in-the-world is transformed'.

(Toombs in Reischer 2000: 28). Changes in the material body impacts one's own sense of self, but also in the regard of others: through changes in self-presentation and under the influence of cultural attitudes on the body.

Phenomenology allows a more fluid and dynamic notion of the habitus that is shaped processually, through interaction with the body-self and environment. Through social interactionist understandings of lived experience, there is no body without a reflexive and agentive self, and no self without a reflexive or agentive body. (Waskul and Vannini 2006: 10, Merleau Ponty 1962). The 'structures' that runners find themselves in may be perceived to modify due to their own perceptions.

The pursuit of fitness is often promoted as an opportunity to avert risks to selfhood that are present in modern social organisation (Glassner 1989: 180). For example, Jane, an NHS mental health manager whose job has been threatened by the recent reshuffles, says, of long distance running:

'You go out with problems and you come back with solutions.'

The bodily experience of running, for Jane, allows her to start thinking about problems with a much more 'solution-focussed approach' and helps her deal with her stress levels. On entering the marathon, she sees the achievement as a form of symbolic capital, a concrete proof of her self-worth:

'*There was a prospect of losing my job, and that went on for 6 months really. It was fairly horrible, really. If I'm truthful, it was about having something that couldn't be taken away from me, and I knew they wouldn't be able to ask 'have you got a health problem?' because you're not allowed to ask things like that, but if I was able to say 'I'm training for the marathon', then I was able to answer that question really'.*

For Jane, marathon running provides an opportunity to both escape from work stresses and to empower her abilities and competence within it.

Neil is a very keen runner who attributes exercise to helping him cope.

'Running [is an escape], without a doubt. I'm pretty sure I'm borderline hyperactive, I don't sleep well at night, I have to do some form of exercise, I think on top of that, work's sometimes really stressful. I'm sort of like, quite masochistic, in that I enjoy the pain that I'm in, to an extent: It's sort of like, pulling out a wobbly tooth, you know it hurts, but at the same time it's quite good'.

Yet again, the bodily pain experienced in long distance running provides an escape from conscious, intellectual, abstract modes of thought demanded in the workplace. For Neil, culturally authenticated sensations of self-inflicted pain produced and experienced by the body are perceived as a signifier of control and agency over one's environment and body by an embodied mind. In changing his own body through self-tailored exercise programmes, he feels powerful and agentive.

'I like changing myself, and it's not the change itself that inspires me, it's the fact that I can and I know I can and I have and I've proven it to myself.'

Balancing grand narratives with personal narratives- how the hobby of running gets justified in relation to the habitus

For the runners, the marathon is experienced as more than just a race. Although quite simple in its premise- to run 26.2 miles, preferably without pausing, the marathon symbolizes more than just a physical achievement. The marathon provides a visible, tangible, concrete realization of months of training and even provides a medal for the achievement. Quotes from marathon runners about turning their hobby into a recognized achievement refer to 'doing something properly' (Eve) or, most commonly, 'achieving something'. The marathon provides a locus around which a multiplicity of benefits arise for the participant. Completion of a marathon empowers the runner through a renewed and expanded sense of personal agency (Reischer 2000: 31), as well as the respect it commands from peers and perceived superiors, and the tangible 'benefits' of the body. After so many years of dualist theory that saw the body as a vessel for the superior and 'real' force of the mind, it is refreshing to see the body taking a privileged role within bourgeoisie society.

Participation in a marathon can elucidate contemporary discourses on citizenship, responsibility to the self and even to society. Berking and Neckel suggest that the urban marathon is 'bursting with normative significance, the staging of individualized society as a spectacle, a symbolic and real experience, which narrates directly the character qualities in demand today' (1993: 68). For Nettleton and Hardey, the marathon is a display of fit and 'charitable' bodies 'ostentatiously fulfilling their rights and responsibilities' (2006: 457). They focus on the optimistic and progressive character of the London Marathon, a spectacle of self-improvement, fit bodies and charitable giving. The enormous charity aspect of the London Marathon allowed participants to fill the role of 'charitable bodies', displaying concern with public health and philanthropy through participation in the charity industry and running for the 'cause', largely the fit bodies raising money for the 'sick'.

However, from my research, five years later and fifty miles south, it is clear that far more individualistic concerns were paramount to individual motivations for running the Brighton marathon. In fact, several informants posited running as a 'selfish' activity, in stark contrast to Nettleton and Hardey's angle. Mitigation for an egocentric activity perhaps goes some way to explaining the large amount of participants who did promote a charity for sponsorship concurrent to training. The large percentage of marathon runners who also raise money for charity could be rationalized as the transformation of hedonism into altruism. One informant asserted that anyone who stated they were running primarily for concerns outside their own immediate benefit was lying: although many of the runners raised money for charity 'on the side', only one or two of the thirty informants cited raising money for charity as their main motive. I would agree with Nettleton and Hardey that the marathon creates a space where bodies occupy a positive, moral role, as opposed to the body in religious and political history, constructed as a site of lust, gluttony and sloth; torture and control (Foucault 1975). The body in the marathon occupies a clean, fit ascetic role which can be moral in its purely secular, individualistic and bureaucratic senses: the drive, self discipline and determination showcased in a marathon illustrate the qualities valuable in capitalist society.

The overwhelming primary motivations that Brighton marathon runners cited were not charity, but personal benefits. There was a perceptible disinterest and in some

cases, distrust of pure charity running- where runners apply for a free ‘golden bond’ place in return for an obligation to raise thousands of pounds for a branded charity- possibly in some part down to a recent television expose on the dubious earnings surrounding charity places in the London Marathon and Brighton’s liberal, critical attitude. The preference of the majority was to suggest charities that were less well established; local or that had a personal significance. By using the body as an instrument around which to raise money for a ‘worthy cause’, the most evident sense of empowerment arises: a resistance to being productive in a capitalist framework, purposeful and intentional labour of the body becomes a moral effort.

Nevertheless, the results of my research display a very mixed attitude to charity fundraising. For some, the marathon provides an opportunity to gain more empowerment by raising money for something they see as important, some use it to keep their motivations up, whereas some hold charity as a confusing complication for a bodily project that is valid in its own right. Most of the runners interviewed did use the opportunity to raise sponsorship, but a large proportion regarded it as a secondary motivation, because it is ‘the done thing’, and people are often made to feel ‘selfish’ by peers if they are ’the only people benefiting’ from the marathon: running was often seen as quite a self-indulgent activity, both by the runners their partners, and charity could be used as a way to offset this. Although the strong link with distance running and charity in Britain is unusual, globally, for many, it is used as another way empowering element as part of the complex matrix of motivations in marathon running.

The ‘sense of achievement’ is so often quoted as a reason for participation, encapsulated by being able to say ‘I did it’. In many cases, running a marathon emerged as a goal to the otherwise less ‘productive’ hobby of running. After a marathon is completed, one can call themselves a ‘marathon runner’ and self identify as more accomplished, even ‘better’ person (Reishcer 2000: 20). The transformative, empowering and optimistic image of the marathon is central to runners’ positive experiences. Embodied understandings of marathon runners allow us to appreciate how running provides a ‘taking back’ of power and agency for participants. Bodies are experienced not so much as a vehicle for the mind, but as an embodied demonstration of it for many runners. Many commented on the mutual progression of

physical and mental wellbeing, believing that tangible, visibly healthy bodies and fit, capable, robust personalities develop in tandem.

In many cases, such as PhD students who likened their studies to the marathon, it became a metonymic symbol of one's life (Reishcer 2001: 29). Runners said it had made them more confident in their abilities and has given them a more positive outlook, Annie says:

'It all comes back to this sort of achievement thing again, that I've achieved something that get recognition from other people, and erm, it gives you that sort of base, it makes you think "oh, yeah, I can set my mind to something and do it […] as soon as something's attainable, you look for the next challenge'.

External validation authenticates the casual hobby of running for pleasure: through running a marathon, an 'escape' can be transformed into a valid, 'extra-curricular' activity, suitable for self promotion among an increasingly competitive market of bodies. One informant spoke of the debate within running circles about who may legitimately define as a 'runner' as opposed to a casual 'jogger'. She used information like her marathon running on an application form onto a university course. This level of bureaucratic attention harks back to Weberian musings: nothing is valid in our society unless written down and demonstrable. Some runners even mentioned their increased employability and value on the labour market due to the additional feature of being a marathon runner on their curriculum vitae. Annie said

'I put, "I ran the London Marathon in this time, raising this much for charity." I put the charity bit on because it makes me look like a good person, whereas the 'I have run the marathon in this time was –"hey look at me, I'm amazing!"'

In this sense, we can see that being a marathon runner is a form of symbolic capital, a sort of bodily intelligence that can be used to reappropriate power and agency within the cultural field. Training of the self is regarded as a desirable quality in our bureaucratic society where efficiency, determination and self-control are central to rationalized efficient profit making (Weber 1905). These qualities are all demonstrated neatly in the proclamation of being a marathon runner: the

empowerment comes both from an expanded sense of agency and increased respect and respect from outside eyes, shaped by the habitus. Marathon runners deliberately use the personal pleasures of space, freedom, increased control over the body and 'feeling alive' and direct them towards empowering themselves not only to themselves, but towards wider society. Through working within the dominant discourse and 'grand narratives', runners can cleverly transform their self-benefiting activity into one that is socially recognized as an achievement.

Therefore, getting fit and healthy is seen as a good, a healthy, and progressive exercise and is therefore experienced as an empowering thing to do. I have previously mentioned that marathon running represents a form of symbolic capital, (Bourdieu 1977). In foucauldian terms, it could be accounted to the internalization of the medical gaze, or self surveillance. Our society's drift towards individualization has meant the intensification of self-reflexivity and overwhelming social control, in equal measure. (Berking and Neckel 1993: 64), and it is true on the most part, that marathon runners are highly self regarding. All informants reported doing the marathon, in some capacity, 'for themselves'. But entry into a marathon means that the allegedly self-regarding project becomes validated towards society: a product packaged and ready to be used as symbolic capital (c.f Bourdieu 1984). This notion of escape: from the inhibiting environments of stressful office or home environments, from problems, and the bodily 'zen moment' of suspended thinking is not usable as capital in its own right: It must be transformed into a social endeavour, a spectacle, a verifiable feat in order to be productive. Instead of negating the pleasures gained from running, it is an agentive choice to commit to a marathon, and one which will ensure those pleasures are acknowledged.

The marathon provides an opportunity for participants to assert their individuality in relation to the established mode of activity: many runners say they see it as an opportunity to act freely and create their own exercise routines to get to the required level of fitness to run a marathon. Giddens says that the capability to act and think creatively is a 'routine phenomenon that is a basic proposition to a sense of personal worth and therefore psychological health' (1991: 41) Fitness is an area that allows participants to disenthrall themselves from the perceived shortcomings of modern every day life, allowing them to overcome constraining dualities between work and

leisure, expert and amateur, self and body (Glassner 1989: 182). Ability to create a higher sense of agency and ability is a self-demonstrated trait that does not just speak of 'docility' in regards to externally prescribed ways of acting (Crossley 2004: 41). Governmental and media pressures to prescribe the 'right' ways of acting to not reduce marathon runners to blindly obedient actors: they create their own 'messy and complex 'ways of acting and responses to what a Foucauldian may term 'biopolitical agendas' are steeped in self interest, flexible tailoring and dynamically experienced benefits. The practices that 'invest' bodies are enacted as a personal choice of those same bodies (Crossley 2004: 42).

Turner (1982: 254) likens the medical regimen that pervades running magazines to religious ascetism. Exercise, in its original form was traced back to the devoted self-governing disciplines of the monks, whose attention to diet and regimens paved the way for modern bodily disciplines and the rationalisation of diet exercise, and the idea of the moderation of pleasures. This notion of sacrifice, regulation and adherence to externally imposed regimes came through in was expected to surface more in marathon runners' narratives. However, most participants took pride in the fact that although they could be 'disciplined', they also listened to their own bodies and took a flexible approach to training if they were in any sort of pain, and also listened to their desires. Many runners, instead of saying that their marathon training inhibited their diet and enjoyment of 'naughty' food and drink, that they could actually indulge more in the foods that they enjoyed, knowing that they deserved it. Yet again, the marathon runners felt empowered rather than oppressed by adherence to an externally enforced regime.

The fact that runners experience very personal pleasures gives running a double advantage: it helps the self feel good, and participation in events confers some sense of social standing and credibility for the benefits runners enjoy. The pressure to be productive remains: it is considered a waste of effort to train and not be able to demonstrate your achievements in a social milieu. Nearly all runners denied that they would run 26.2 miles without it being within a marathon setting, considering it pointless, difficult and not worthwhile, as it could not be proved to others.

‘Embodied interaction is therefore an active process of practical meaning making occurring in an exo-semiotic field inevitably informed by power relations’ (Wasskul and Vannini 2007: 10). The positive self-transformations that runners report can be explained through the phenomenological habitus: a flexible and changing processual framework that evolves through the interaction of the (changing) body-subject and world. Whereas agency for Bourdieu and Foucault (1975) was an essential part of larger power relations, agency that has power to change future interpretations, interaction through innovation, embodied intention and accidental shaping of future interactions was not given full enough emphasis. The theory of embodied subjectivity (Merleau Ponty 1962, Crossley 2004) helps us understand the habitus as a dynamic and changing sediment of past experiences, allowing agency and innovation to transform self-perceptions and in turn, have some influence over peers.

Conclusion

The urban marathon is often seen as an extraordinary undertaking, but it has strong historical and cultural factors leading to its popularization and current position as the ‘holy grail’ of running. Marathons are far from an isolated event- they are the pinnacle of a 3-12 month training programme and often form the target that gives meaning and a goal to training. The marathon is a process, more than just an event, and the study requires a broad focus on the meaning and practice of running to participants, not just of the marathon itself. What is missing in some structural analysis is close attention to detail in personal accounts, reducing them to misrecognitions. Whereas in structural approaches, the opinion of the analyst is seen as authoritative, phenomenology allows the participants’ experiences to be taken as valid. It is clear that marathon runners see themselves as empowered and agentive, via the body, but this can be contextualised with historical approaches. More phenomenological analyses may be better equipped to deal with disentangling the motivations to run. Purely structural and semiotic analyses tend to lose lived experience from bodies: it is wiped out by ‘conceptual emphasis on omnipotent forces of culture and discourse’ (Howson in Waskul, Vannini 2006 :10)

Although participation in the marathon can have numerous ‘positive’ impacts on the lives and bodies of the participants, its significance and experience is still embedded

in a meritocratic (post)modern world where bureaucratic achievements mean social mobility and greater respect in society. ‘Fitness’ is only available to those who can afford to participate within it, but even for the bourgeoisie middle classes, long distance running can provide benefits that are seen as virtuous and experienced as transformative and positive. The recentralization of the somatic in bourgeoisie society is perhaps illustrative of the reacceptance of bodily knowledge and skill as a valid one: it demonstrates skills and qualities that are desired within the workplace. It is not only intellectual culture that is respected, now health has become a field that is worthwhile to invest in.

Paradoxically, marathon distance running can be seen as a site of escape, or resistance to modern life, and a complete submission to it at the same time. Running and exercise demonstrate how the corporate and the corporeal are mutually constructed: there is no doubt that urban marathons are run as a business and the popularization of exercise and production of ‘healthy bodies’ is evidently a central concern for state sponsored public health policies. However, for marathon runners it is not a case of simply conforming or not conforming. Everyone interviewed had a personal story laden with personal significance and meaning. The marathon can be used as a pivot, a focus point for a self-directed project, which requires an engagement of both ‘bodily’ and ‘mental’ capacities, which are often closely considered as closely related in marathon runners. Carla says a marathon 'teaches you a lot about yourself, mentally and physically, because I think a lot of people see it as a physical challenge, when it's a mental challenge'. The pleasures experienced by runners are beneficial in themselves: that the individuals truly feel the motivations as coming from within themselves can be disputed as misrecognition and desire to align themselves into larger power relationships, but their experiences of escape, individuality and consequential empowerment cannot be dismissed. Despite having to work through the bureaucratic system of producing demonstrable achievements, they do not experience it as oppression but feel empowered. Psychological, symbolic and emotional qualities are enacted through the body (Scheper Hughes 1987: 6) and to see it as a political body only would be reducing the intentional and experiential.

The high level of self discipline and self-enforced labour required to succeed in a marathon is initially very easy to attribute to the discipline and power regimes

essential to succeeding in a individualistic, 'civilised', bureaucratic society.: 'Individualization means in equal measure intensified self-reflexivity and overwhelming external control'' (Berking and Neckel 1993: 64). The embodied self-surveillance required to complete the training and partake in this event is very telling of the context of a capitalist target-oriented culture but the benefits reaped by participants speak more deeply of selfhood, individuality and agency than I originally anticipated. The central paradox of increased self surveillance in a capitalist world being experienced as an empowering exercise reignites the debate about structure and agency: but the research shows that an increased focus on the body and self does not have to be conceptualized as a symbol of the repressive, hegemonic power of society. Pleasures and pains gained from running are, like every feeling, experienced individually and interpreted within a cultural context, but also subject to critical thinking and creative innovation by the agent.

The body, although embedded in cultural pressures, represents something that can be controlled, transformed and displayed by the 'self' in this fragmented modern world (Reischer 2001: 32). Although the body is the target in training and the tangible instrument of a marathon, both the motivations and effects are attributed to more mental or 'spiritual' benefits and speak more loudly of 'positive' qualities, both internally to the runner and to others in society. The increased sense of agency marathon runners experience feeds into other parts of their life ('now I can do anything') suggests that the mind / body hierarchical dualism is being given more equal weight in both bodily agents and, perhaps the bourgeoisie field in general.

Even if 'health' could be conceptualized as being well-adjusted to society's dictates, the intentional and directional process of self-development required to run a marathon is far from just blindly conforming: narratives communicate a way of looking out towards the world through the feelings of the body. Despite Turner's (1984: 81-2) critique of phenomenology's limits- its intimate, individualistic approach ill-equipped to tell us about the wider 'ownership' of the body in the interests of political and economic and public health orders - I believe it can tell us a lot about peoples' reactions to, and experiences of them. People are not oblivious to the discourses of health but they are motivated by their own reasons and experience, justifying their actions within it.

Just as the body has been problematised in recent social theory, and is increasingly seen as a fluid and changing phenomenon, theories of power and agency must follow suit. For the individual, the body can be used as a site of resistance and agency: at the same time as an anthropologist's 'professional transformation' (Kleinman and Kleinman 1991) may reduce narratives of runners to 'background noise' within a hegemonic discourse of health, bureaucracy and discipline. The body is beginning to attract attention as not only a site of society's inscriptions, but as a medium of personal creativity and struggle where personal and social truths and contradictions are played out (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987: 31). Reduction of individual reasons for acting in 'docility' in relation to societal pressures may not be equipped to comprehend the benefits individuals gain from marathon running. A more phenomenological approach allows us to take bodily experience as paramount to understanding motivations to act and the transformations perceived. Since the world is perceived through our bodies (Merleau-Ponty 1962), experience should and will be given more importance in future studies. Although political influences cannot be ignored, they contextualise rather than invalidate the positive impacts and benefits individual lives encounter. The synthesis between structuralism and phenomenology would benefit academia in comprehending how bodily experience relates to larger power dynamics and hegemonic discourses: how social 'grand narratives' shape and influence the 'invisible' but central first-hand experience that we are all accustomed to.

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Agency and bodily discipline are closely linked: in running a marathon, agency is demonstrated via discipline and control of the body: power over the body, self and world is asserted. Phenomeology allows us to deal more closely with the way in which the body produces its surroundings through the immediacy of perception. Through first-person accounts of experience, we can understand how bodily meaning is informed by cultural meaning, helping to give actions intentionality.

Shilling's (1997) concept of the body project is useful in understanding the empowering element of long distance- and marathon running. The body represents a constant that can be controlled in a world characterized by 'risk' (Giddens 1991). . Seen as an extreme test of endurance, the marathon, although physically completed, has become regarded as a test of mental qualities, determination and focus, suggesting that stark Cartesian dualism is undergoing a redefinition: marathon runners consistently correlate bodily achievements with those of the mind and vice versa.

Increased attention to bodily matters like diet and exercise help stabilize the sense of self, at a time when health is threatened by global dangers (Shilling 1997: 180). Health has been cast as a matter for individual responsibility, promoting the body as an 'island of security in a global system characterized by multiple risks' Shilling 1997: 70). These 'body projects' are not entirely about preventing disease, but also about feeling good about how bodies, and by implication selves, appear to ourselves and to others. (Shilling, 1997: 70).

SAM PEPPER

In Dialogue with the Selves: Personhood through the Narratives of Marathon Runners

Abstract

What do narratives reveal about personhood and the nature of being? Narratives are a fundamental way of making sense of experience, but they do not present us with a straightforward path to understanding that experience. Narratives give rise to multiple, temporally located selves; sometimes the body is alienated from the sense of self, as during injury, and other times the two are fused, as during the meditative state of running. I explore these issues through an examination of running narratives.

Contents:

> "I exist...as the tension between all my "versions", for that tension, too (and perhaps that above all), is me". (Havel in Ochs and Capps 1996:29)

> "Being that can be understood is language." (Gadamer in Kerby 1991:2).

This paper is an inquiry into personhood.[1] I wish to explore the conversations that people have with themselves and their bodies which are revealed through their running narratives, the experience of wholeness as one coherent self, and what these multiple (yet united through narrative) selves reveal about the nature of being, in this case, the running subject.

Through involvement in a research project which was carried out as Brighton was to host its first ever marathon event, I interviewed 15 informants in the weeks and days leading up to the marathon. All had volunteered to tell their stories and be a part of the research project which was investigating the motivations and transformations experienced by runners in the Brighton marathon. With the focus of my own research to be the body, and having collected the narratives of the informants, I found my interest being directed towards the nature of self-reflection and how, through it, an understanding of bodily experience may be arrived at.

Looking over the narratives, what I found striking and rather problematic was that the self did not seem to occupy a single position in relation to itself and to experiences throughout the narrative, which led me to ask: who is doing the talking here? Often a relatively straight-forward account of how the informant had come to enter into the marathon was given at the beginning of the interview with few or no conflicts. Further questioning, however, would reveal inconsistencies, doubts and contradictions which the informants would either attempt to resolve then and there, or leave unresolved. The informants had volunteered to give an account of themselves through which I had hoped to investigate the nature of bodily experience; yet these accounts brought the conflicted nature of self and narrative

[1] I define personhood as being body and a sense of self.

to my attention, leading me to problematise concepts such as self and body, narration and experience, interpretation and the possibility of what can be known of the self and of others.

I came to realise that the act of narrating is multi-dimensional, a fundamental means of making sense of experience (Ochs and Capps 1996:21) for both the narrating self and the listener. As such it is a negotiation, between me as interlocutor, and the interviewee as the source of experience and representation, as well as a negotiation between the present narrating self and the past self/selves; it is a flexible and fictionalised working-through of ideas in which the story may be changed as new realisations come to light. It is both a reconfirmation of self and a journey of self discovery. Moreover, it is the only access that I as researcher had to the experience, bodily or otherwise, of the informants, given that one cannot fully enter into the experience of another person (Gadamer 1976). Anthropologists come up against multiple selves in and through narratives, and it begs the question of who, or what, to believe? The nature of narrative is contingent on many factors, and is created through the act of being told; the tale does not lie beyond the telling (Young cited in Ochs and Capps 1996). Given its temporal aspect, a partial rendering of a person in a particular place and time is the most that can be hoped for: as soon as an account of a self is given, it is liable to be appropriated and reworked into the next narrative rendering.

The inquiry is laid out as follows: first I shall lay the groundwork for an examination of selfhood by discussing narrative theory; then I shall examine the various types of dialogues which I identified in the interviews, namely a thread of narrative which presents a coherent self, the dialogue which the self engages in with other people and a further two more dialogues that the self has with the self; then I will turn to bodily experience to firstly examine what happens to the self when the body is injured and finally during running when the self appears to disappear entirely.

Narrative

The temporal dimension of narrative lies in the difference between the here-and-now world of the telling and the multiple worlds of emergent, apprehended narratives. The self multiplies along past and present dimensions (Heidegger 1990) in which the fiction of a whole or coherent self may be created in the process of narrating the self, yet can also be undermined in the telling (Byrne 2003:31).

> "Narrative activity seeks to bridge a self that felt and acted in the past, a self that feels and acts in the present, and an anticipated or hypothetical self that is projected to feel and act in some as yet unrealised moment – any one of which may be alienated from the other." (Ochs and Capps 1996:29)

It is in this sense that we actualise our selves through the activity of narrating. We use narrative as a tool for probing and forging connections between our unstable, situated selves, and for imposing order on disconnected events, creating continuity.

Conceptions of self

The nature of the self is central to the concern regarding whether or not we can access peoples' lived experiences through narration. What "self" is taken to mean fuels debates around whether the self comes about through narrative. I shall present two perspectives.

The first is that the self is a *semiotic subject* (Kerby 1991:101), situated in language and signification which arises out of signifying practices rather than existing prior to them (ibid:1). Kerby follows Ricoeur's stance in this respect: "there is no self-knowledge without some kind of detour through signs, symbols and cultural works etc" (ibid:41). Persons only "know" themselves after the fact of expression and in this way language constitutes the self through discursive praxis. In such a conception of the self, language is viewed not simply as a tool for communicating or mirroring back what is otherwise discovered in "reality" but is itself an important formative part of the texture of that reality. Being is experienced in

and through language, not mediated by it: "[human life] is nothing but stories, and such stories provide the only access to oneself and to others" (Schapp in Zahavi 2007:184).

The second approach, taken by Zahavi (2007), is that there exists a prelinguistic experiential self which can be known to itself prior to narrative. Critiquing the narrative approach, Zahavi argues for recognition that the self is a "who", a creation, an achievement, the narrative construction of person imposed upon a "what" of existence: the experiential core self. This separation of selfhood projected through time from the primal, experiential self is echoed by Louis Mink: "stories are not lived but told. Life has no beginnings, middles or ends." (cited in Kerby 1991:41). Thus if life has any narrative structure it is one we have put there after the fact. According to adherents of the narrative basis of self, the organising of structure and time in narrative *is* the self, not *done by* the self. The problem lies in the inseparability of narrative and experience in the real world. We all engage in narrating ourselves and our experiences, to ourselves and to others; and yet action is more than mere text, undertaken blindly at the point of encounter and incomprehensible until it is recounted. It is a conflict of two epistemological approaches, one which, according to some, has been resolved by Paul Ricoeur (1991) (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003:6).

Ricoeur's stance

Ricoeur moved beyond the structuralist notion of an autonomous, intra-referential system of signs postulated without a speaking subject, bringing the referent into the field of inquiry; discourse says something about something, and so refers to a world outside the language system (Moore 1990:90). Discourse is also an event, realised in the here-and-now, distinguished from the structuralists' a-temporal system of language; words find their meaning in their context of use (ibid:114), which brings language into the sphere of *action* as speech. The fundamental act of telling *is* the tale; words are embodied.

Extending Ricoeur's theory of interpretation to encompass meaningful action requires that action be abstracted, thus removing the lived human body from the frame of inquiry and elevating action itself as object of study, intelligible by explanation. This works for the discipline of history where the event of doing is eclipsed by the significance of what has been done. Action is freed from the situation of performance; reflection intervenes and effects separation between action and the human body.

Thus with Ricoeur, we have language relating to its referent, i.e. the external world; but we can only understand that external world by objectifying it in order to study it. Action-as-text involves the removal of the human body from the frame; the significance of an act can only be apprehended through its abstraction, its liberation from its performance, and the body disappears from view.

Ricoeur's analysis privileges cognitive processes (interpretation as thinking and memory) over selfhood as lived experience. As with the narrativists' account of the self, the lived body is absent. The mode of accessing the experiences of the informants I interviewed is language; language facilitates entry to a world of experience in so far as experience comes to, or is brought to, language (Csordas 1994:11).

Language recreates an experience in the telling of it; but we must also ask how and why something is experienced how it is in the first place. Semiotics answers with signs, phenomenology with the pre-abstract the moment of perception, keeping the body at the centre of analysis.

Co-authorship of the emergent self

Narrative is a sequencing of something *for* somebody (Scholes 1981:205). The inseparability of narrative and self is grounded in the assumption that narrative is an essential resource in bringing phenomenological experiences and our subjective involvement in the world to conscious awareness (Ochs and Capps 1996:21); not only for the individual, but also for the interlocutor. Selfhood emerges in the public domain as others are called upon to hear and accept narrative accounts. Even the most silent

listener is an author of an emergent narrative (ibid): as interviewer, the anthropologist also participates in the emerging narrative. The interviewer asks people to focus on only certain facets of their selfhood, engendering a somewhat selective memory which elevates certain events to impose coherency and order, whilst sidelining other non-conducive events from the (narrative) sequence. The interlocutor is thus as much structuring the narrative as the narrator. The creation of selective narratives around certain aspects of our lives highlights the inherently social nature of narrative and hence the informant, particularly the voluntary informant, may themselves desire such narrative order. I now turn to the various aspects of selfhood.

Self projects

Preparing for a marathon involves intensive physical training, maintaining the motivation for which many informants reported as one of the most difficult aspects, whilst from the successful surmounting of such difficulties sprang a sense of achievement. Two of my informants, Debbie and Karen, describe the difference between running for pleasure and running for a marathon as “pushing through pain”; running is for health and fitness, but marathon running is for self-transformation through the marathon’s symbolic status as a challenge to “natural” biophysical limitations (Reischer 2001:23). Successfully “pushing through pain” is a demonstration of self-mastery evinced through the disciplined and controlled use of the body (ibid:28), wherein we see multiple selves emerging who give form to the various protestations of the body and self against the meta-narrative of the “running self”. Different desires manifest themselves as different facets of a person.

Many of the motivations given by the informants for entering a marathon are tied to ideas of selfhood, self-transformation (Reischer 2001) and achievement. The exercise in reflecting upon the impact of regular running seemed easier on the whole for those who were able to more easily contrast a pre-running self with a more recent self for whom running is now an integral part of their life. For many of

the informants, the body was foregrounded in purposeful activity as a conscious, reflexive practice in which the body was a central object of cultivation in its own right (Giddens 1991). For Steve, stress and grief manifested themselves as his “out-of-control” body, which he managed and transformed through taking up running. But as Lisa notes, “I felt like my life...needed a bit more validation to it, and at least by doing a marathon and raising money it felt like I had a bit more purpose”.

Achievement is a word that rings throughout the narratives. Emma runs marathons to prove to people that she can do it: “I've got a few friends and family who think I’m nuts and don’t think I can do [two marathons] back to back so yeah, it’s a goal, prove myself right”. Additionally, the after-effect of being able to *say* they have done it is a sought-after possibility. The project of self-development through the accumulation of achievements, completing the marathon being just one amongst many, is underpinned by the body; thus the physical act profoundly and powerfully impacts one’s self experience (Reischer 2001:23). Other transformations of self valued by the informants include control: Steve said, “I’m more in control of things whereas I felt totally out of control before and I think that running has given me a discipline that I lacked”.

For some people, the sense of achievement lay in the fact that they felt they had successfully prepared for something that they had never thought they would do. Steve said he valued being able to “push your body further than you thought you could push it, and realising that you can do things that once upon a time you thought you’d never be able to do”. Likewise, Debbie said, “it’s something that is completely alien to me...it seems so unachievable for somebody like me. It’s so different”. Here we can see clearly the transformative distinctions that informants were able to make about their pre- and post-running selves following their engagement with running, Steve because he was overweight and stressed with running his own business and Debbie because her “area of expertise” was managing her charity or being

a councillor. In this sense, runners have "reflexively mobilise[d]" (Giddens 1991:68) their bodies in the service of the self, such that self has (re)made body and body (re)made the self (Reischer 2001:29).

In most narratives, people talked about "the next level" – that is, through firstly experiencing the tangible benefits of running they decided to pursue further benefits by training harder and entering the marathon. Many people talked about the next thing they would embark on after the marathon. The marathon is one in a series of projects which push the self and its perceived boundaries. The attitude that being able to run 26.2 miles is impossible is integral to the marathon experience and its transformative power (ibid:20).

Trajectory of the running self

> "The unity of the self resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end" (MacIntyre 1981:205).

Within the narratives I would like to refer to what I call a "trajectory of self", a more or less consistent rendering of a cohesive self. People experience the wholeness of a cohesive self even in the face of conflicting narrative accounts because "an experience of wholeness and coherence is encapsulated in a self-representation, in a semiotic process that highlights and organizes certain fragments of experiences" (Ewing 1990:263). "Life-stories" are trajectories that account for a person over a long stretch of time; in this research, informants were asked to account for one aspect of their lives (running) whose beginning usually started within the last few months or years. As such, it is a story within a life-story.

For instance, Steve presented himself as someone who "loves running"; he enjoys wearing the right clothes, buying the running magazines and generally being a part of the community of runners and culture of running. This presentation of self (Goffman 1969) is generally narrated more easily and

consistently at the beginning of the interview when first asked to talk about themselves and their relationship to running. Yet later on, the narration will include the aspects of running which are more difficult to reconcile with the trajectory of the self who "loves running", such as the difficulties in motivation encountered in going running when the weather is unfavourable. It is important to draw attention to this trajectory of self as the fragmentation of the coherent self into many selves may be highlighted against it, and ultimately it may be seen that the cohesive self is one other of the many selves that make up our being. It is another story we have learned to tell ourselves (Kerby 1991:12).

It is important to note that the anthropologist has a large part to play in the elicitation of this kind of narrative. At the start of each interview I asked the informants to describe how they first became involved in running, which in effect invited the story of how the runner came to be where they were now, at the point of running the Brighton marathon. Even if such a trajectory had already been narrated in the past to others, or indeed to the self, I was complicit in its re-presentation to me over any other kind of narrative which could have been forthcoming if other questions had been asked.

Who is talking to whom?

a) The self talking to others.

To start at the beginning of this exploration of dialogues, most obviously perhaps the informants talk to other people about themselves and their experiences. All of the informants volunteered to "tell their story" as a way of participating in the research project on marathon runners, and were keen to hear other people's narratives as well. Some people have acknowledged that they have a strong desire to talk about running with other people a lot. Lisa, for instance, said, "[with] my running friends, it's all we talk about" and Sophie concurred, "it's not just me...because other people I know that are running the marathon, they all say 'I'm such a bore, it's all I want to talk about'. So this is just heaven! [referring to

the interview with me]". Steve feels that he has to control the amount he talks about running with other people: "I am aware of how boring it must sound to non-runners". The nature of the conversations of the self that people have with others does not necessarily need to be conceptualised as different to the conversations the self has with the self. In both cases, the narrating self may come against conflict, as Steve and Emma do with friends and family who ask "Why do you bother?" The trajectory of self also serves to support informants from opposing attitudes both from others and from themselves. As Lisa said, "I can get quite competitive...I have to remind myself, *this* is why you do it".

Chris informed me that he wished to speak to me in order to talk through some issues regarding his self-belief which had been destabilised following injury, which he wanted to do through narrative *with me*; it was not enough to do it with himself, and thus for Chris there was a fundamental difference between talking to himself and talking to another person. The therapeutic aspect of narrative allows a person to understand and cope with a current concern and to arrive at "closure" of a destabilising experience by incorporating it into a narrative of the self (Ochs and Capps 1996:25).

b) <u>The self motivating itself</u>.

A process of conceptualising opposing voices, or selves, appears to be common amongst runners in which a relatively simple bifurcation good/bad is characteristic and correlates with high/low motivation. Steve objectifies his protestations as manifestations of the self that he is proud to have transformed: the overweight, out-of-control self: "I can get home and almost talk myself out of [a run] and think 'oh, why don't you just put the telly on' and that reminds me of how I was". Lisa describes a "continual conversation in your mind"; in order to deal with the self that hinders motivation for running, Lisa objectifies it as "a little creep on your shoulder". She recalled having read about needing to have "all your soldiers lined up ready for action", which clearly correlate to the parts of her self which protest against having to train. She also described observing herself procrastinating: "I knew what I was doing

but I didn't want to admit it...I was like 'you stupid cow, you completely created that'". It seems that there are two conversations competing within these persons, with the body as the location of the exercise of will over desire (Turner 1984:177).

Chris described enlisting a guardian angel and "army of the dead" of deceased friends and relatives to help him get up a hill, which he described as positive conversations that go on inside his head, a prior, negative one having been vanquished. It is a psychological resource "that, if need be, will be one more thing that I can pull out of the kitbag and hope to get me through the miles". Other runners employed more practical acts of trickery in order to remove the possibility of collusion between the body and the negative, de-motivated voice. For example, Karen runs half the distance she wants to run away from her home so that she has to run all the distance back and not cut corners; she found running in a figure of eight difficult as half way round she was back near her home and was tempted to cut short her run. Furthermore, she does not trust herself to be able to stay on a treadmill for very long, as she could get off at any point. Similarly, Steve makes sure he does not carry any money with him when he goes for a run so that he is not tempted to get a bus back home before he has completed the target distance. He also makes deals with himself: "I'll say to myself 'if it's that awful, do a mile and then come home'". Lisa allows herself cake with the logic: "go on, you've earned it!" highlighting the fluctuating relationship and dualism of asceticism and hedonism (Turner 1984).

c) <u>The self in dialogue with who it would like to be.</u>

Runners experience contradictions between the kind of personality traits they perceive they have, and thus the kind of person they feel they are, and actions and thoughts that deviate from that. Both Karen and Dan expressed opinions regarding running and the marathon event in the trajectory of their running self; the opinions they put forward shape the narrative that they give which in turn gives form to and delineates the boundaries of the self of whom they wish to give an impression. For Dan, the act of

running should be enough in itself, without having to be concerned about special running clothes, which he sees as reflecting an effort to present the self to others; yet Karen acknowledged that the idea of the simplicity of running is itself a construct and is perhaps no different a presentation of self than the wearing of certain clothes. Dan also rejects the idea of doing a marathon "just to be able to say I've done it...I wouldn't like that to be a part of my personality". Such an attitude caused Karen and Dan much anguish in attempting to locate the reasons why they entered the marathon, as they perceived the event to be a capitalist celebration of societal values and of marathon runners being a certain type of individual who has something to prove.

From Dan's statement we can see that, in narrative, the self is not so much an experiencing self as a planning, reflective self; to reflectively talk about one's personality is to distance oneself from it: so who here is the "real" self? It seems to be narrative itself. In Karen's self-analysis running makes her competitive, an aspect of herself that she does not like. In simultaneously objectifying and identifying with this aspect which she dislikes she becomes both the subject and the object of pressure and disappointment. She increases the pressure on herself by setting temporally distinct selves against one another, using her present, narrating self to berate her past self for not having acted in a way that would have produced desirable results in the present. Even in these contradictory narratives in which the informant identifies to some extent with the less favourable voice, one self, or one voice, seems to stand out in their telling as the "real me", the authentic (and therefore authoritative) self. For example, Lisa gets competitive, and so "I keep reminding myself why I do it, keeping myself in check!" also "there's always the feeling that you should've done this, should've done that, should've done a bit more...but I've got to remember that I did the best I could". A second, rationalising voice is apparent here and is the authoritative voice as it passes judgement on the utterances of a past self. Dan feels that when he is in the gym, he is not being true to himself, as the conscious training to get fit divides the unity of the harmonious lifestyle in which fitness occurs as a by-product of lifestyle. He likes being fit but training to

get fit is perceived as being “false”: too much awareness of fitness as a state of being is too self-conscious and objectifies the self or the body too much.

Injury: the self talking to and about the body

Becoming injured is a frequent occurrence amongst marathon runners, and can set up a particular relationship between the body and the self. Dan injured his foot two months before the marathon date, and he felt that the breakdown of his body brought a distinction between his body and mind. The temporality of the selves is noted again in the utterance “I’m really annoyed with myself that I’ve injured my foot”. The intrusion of the body in pain upon selfhood, or the trajectory of the running self, is manifest as a dys-appearance (Leder 1990) of the body as a disruption of the biographical trajectory. The body is now foregrounded in consciousness yet alienated from the sense of self. Alienation occurs also between the present self and the past self; regret manifests as the objectification of a past self which did not act to prevent the injury. The self wills the body to continue running but for Charlotte the body in pain is in dialogue with the self: “your body says ‘right, we’re going to carry on running, I might as well just blank out that pain’...but then it comes back...your body goes ‘no, actually I’m still hurting under here’”.

The new centrality of injury in her running narrative was expressed by Charlotte in frustration: “it always comes back to these bloody injuries”. With the informants who had experienced injury which had been disruptive to their training, their injury was one of the first things they mentioned once conversation had turned to their running narrative. Bodily experience and concerns became deeply embedded in narrative (Becker 1997); the felt and perceived condition of the body became crucial to the kind of story told, and how the running narrative was constructed. In contrast to the temporally differentiated self, which reprimands the negligence of the past self for its role in the bodily injury that we saw in Dan’s causal narrative: “I injured my foot”, Wikan, rather than objectifying the past self, instead objectified the

illness, thus creating a distance between “my illness and me” (Wikan 2000:218). She felt that communicating the physical problem removed disease from her personhood to create a disembodied injury (ibid:224). Interestingly, Karen’s understanding of her injury was a much more unified, bodily one; she did not feel that her self was divided in injury and illness, more that it was an all-encompassing experience of the body.

What emerges as significant here for our purposes is the elevation of the injury to that around which the runner’s narrative fixates, regardless of how the informant perceives their relation to that injury. Wikan, drawing on Mattingly, takes to task what would be the uncompromisingly linear interpretation of narration as found in some literary theorists, such as Olafson and Ricoeur, which claims that narrative begins with an end (2000: 216). Such an approach inflates the end point as a correlate of the narrator’s attempt to take control of the telling; Wikan disputes this suggestion as being too remote from lived experience. Certainly in my case, the stories I recorded from my informants were all before the “end”: before the marathon. Biography, or trajectory of self, is susceptible to disruption by injury or illness; as such, a model of narrative which begins from an end fails to account for its inherent instability. This is not to remove the directive power which injury elicits over the narrative course; rather, injury is an irruption which re-focuses the narrative trajectory: it is a turning point. Commonly, the informants’ narratives started with a turning point at the beginning, either this injury event or their discovery of running. Moreover, emplotment serves to reconfigure memory; both Charlotte and Claire began their interviews with an account of their injuries and from that point the rest of their narratives evolved, narrative here providing an arena for “coming to terms” with a problematic experience and making some sense of what is happening (Mattingly and Garro 2000:28). The process of narration enables the narrator to mend the disruption by weaving it into the fabric of life, to put the experience into perspective (Becker 1997). This was exactly Chris’s intention in coming to the interview with me, as discussed in a previous section.

Complimentary to Karen's comments that her illness was not other to her experience of selfhood is an aspect highlighted by Sophie, whereby the body or body part in pain is not in conflict with the desires of the self or the trajectory of achievement; her damaged feet are rather in line with the new self as a running self: "I kind of see it as a badge of honour that my toenails are falling off". Furthermore, such an attitude is reminiscent of the ascetic, disciplinary relationship which informants at times forged between their bodies and their training, as was discussed earlier. The body is not united to the self but it is not biographical disruption either. This attitude to the body in pain is mirrored for Steve as he imagines how he will feel after the marathon: "I know a few hours [after finishing the marathon] I won't be able to walk properly and I'll be like 'why did I do this?'...but that's almost part of it". Body pain is part of the experience of running a marathon and embellishes the trajectory of selfhood and may be seen as a valuable experience, concomitant to the process of self-transformation (Reischer 2001:29).

The integration of the selves through bodily experience

The absence of fragmentation

If injury brings up feelings of confusion brought about by biographical disruption and a new relationship between the intentional self and the newly-realised vulnerable body, then this section looks at the opposite: "how it's supposed to be", or the beingness of running. Most informants mentioned one of the highlights of running for them, indeed, for some, the main reason for running, was an experience that they found hard to put into words, poignantly, were sometimes keen not to put into words as it occupied for them a space away from the expressible. It was variously described as "that 'Zen' moment", "a meditative state", and "being in the zone"; Chris said, "there is a time in everyone where you get to a flow of everything just naturally happening." He elaborates:

> "It's a state where you aren't pushing, you aren't consciously asking your body to do what you want it to do, it's just doing it automatically...there's no resistance from that clever part of you that says 'actually you

> should be in bed by now or whatever everybody else is doing', you're just naturally doing that and nothing is tweaking, none of your joints are hurting...your body is at peace with what it's doing...you forget the individual components. You're aware of the continual movements that you're doing but nothing is coming at you in isolation. "

Here an awareness of the body has not diminished, but the opposition between temporally-situated selves has. The absence of pain in the body and achieving the "flow" allows for the reintegration of not only all the selves into a whole, but also the disappearance of the opposition between the self/selves and the body.

In other accounts the body is less foregrounded as central to this experience than the mind; Lisa's experience is that "on a higher level, when you get in the zone so to speak, when there's nothing else that I'm thinking about...you have a real clarity about things and that's really what's sustained me doing it now, it's what I enjoy the most." Lisa's clarified mind, for Karen is more of a removal or freedom from the constraints of a linear narrative, or "human time" (Ricoeur 1984). She described a circularity of thought whereby the ordering, narrating mind has receded, which does not necessarily suggest that a focusing on bodily processes and feelings equates to less thinking, rather that it seems less outcome-oriented, or linear. In the following quotation, it is clear that Lisa is thoughtfully engaged in her running, yet she describes this engagement in contrast to other forms of self-reflection:

> "I have gone to therapy in the past, and its always about looking to the past whereas with running its not, you're focusing on right now...its that simple...I think its quite a good lesson to take from that in your everyday life...stop worrying about the past or the future, you've just got to deal with right here right now."

Such a bifurcation of narrative time as against experiential time in which the former is structured by language, suggests that the latter, in its "right here, right now", is the pre-abstract (Csordas 1990:6).

Remembering the informants' difficulty and reluctance to fix this experience in words, the pre-abstract here stands for that which is beyond, or before, representation.

Lifestyle

In the previous section the focus was on a body-self harmonium; here, in what appears to be a similar process of unification of different aspects of life and self through the body and its experiences, we consider exercise and health woven into lifestyle: integral to it rather than add-ons. Dan said that he aims for a harmonious lifestyle of which running forms a part and health and fitness are central yet do not need to be thought about separately. He set up a dichotomy: natural/un-natural, whereby the natural stands for a lifestyle in which health and fitness are integrated consequences of it; whilst un-natural fitness is cultivated in a time and space manufactured specifically for that purpose, the gym in particular. Dan described his experiences of this cultivated element of training in terms of his self. The time and space which he allocates within his lifestyle for running he sees as affecting and informing his self: in the gym he feels that he is not being true to himself, that his self is split: he likes being fit but not training to be fit, which is "false". A "natural lifestyle" stands in morally superior opposition to a "modern lifestyle", this offset will be further elaborated in the following section. The morality of the "natural lifestyle" stems not only from the notion of being in harmony with nature, but also, in Dan's words, "being useful", which includes for example, manual labour. Here we see the coming together of different aspects of self: purpose, personal fitness, a sense of not being in conflict with one's environment; many of which were seen by informants to counter undesirable elements of the "modern lifestyle" and self. For example, competition in modernity was perceived as objectifying certain aspects of the self and the body, and is seen as fundamentally fragmentary: separating people from people, and people from aspects of themselves. The part of running identified by most runners as desirable is the part in which a unification of body and self appears to occur. This experience is not isolatable from other

views on life or other experiences; for Dan, running is a search for a better state of being, which he describes as being in harmony and not in resistance, with himself and the world.

Environment

Many informants reported experiencing a heightened state of awareness of their environment whilst running, yet appeared to find it difficult to put into words exactly what they were aware of. There seems to be a paradox in what the informants say regarding their heightened awareness of the environment; indeed, they claim to be more aware yet simultaneously much less aware. This contradiction is illustrated by Lisa:

> "once that rhythm's going then I find that you open your eyes a lot wider and you're more aware of your surroundings...I appreciate nature more...[but] I'd run past Elvis and I probably wouldn't even notice!"

People appear to be aware on a functional level where their running is not disrupted, yet, as Debbie said, "I know my mind actually switches off. I don't realise it at the time, but I'll think 'I don't remember running that stretch, but I must have done because I'm here now'"; but this does not help to explain why they claim to feel *more* aware. In the phenomenological advocated by Merleau-Ponty (1962), in the pre-abstract realm, experience continues whilst language ceases; this is the primordial, experiential self which Zahavi (2007) argued recognition for. As we saw before, the narrating construction of self appears to cease during these moments.

I turn now to briefly analyse the space occupied by the runner, since if I am to take a phenomenological approach then it is necessary to discuss the emergence of beingness *in* space, or being-in-the-world. Social space is produced and not merely a physical container for action (Lefebvre 1991); the world emerges with its properties alongside the emergence of the perceiver in person, against the background of involved activity (Ingold 2000:168). In this case, it is important to examine the running body which

comes into being with the world through the situatedness of embodied experience; bodily movement carries its own immanent intentionality (ibid:170).

Two words that informants would frequently use to describe this particular bodily experience in space were “nature” and “freedom”. Both running and the environment in which they run were frequently described as “natural”. How is this experienced then as an “existential immediacy” (Csordas 1990) rather than merely cognitively understood? We can find an answer through the paradigm of embodiment. If the human body provides the fundamental mediation point between thought and the world, then both exist in a co-dependent relationship to one another. Representation, on the other hand, implies a detached observer. It is possible to observe the informants’ ideas of “nature” which determine how they experience it whilst running. As I have said already, many informants found it difficult to put into words exactly what they experienced, so I asked Debbie what the opposite of the “oneness with nature” was:

> “the opposite has been my whole life of going in to work, deadlines, pressure, working with lawyers...there is that whole toughness of the city...a completely pointless existence...and it’s the opposite of that...nature continues in its own form...the tide comes in when the tide comes in...you can’t stand there and say ‘you have got to do what I want you to do’”.

Such an idea of nature is clearly culturally determined and has its roots in the period of industrialisation. Nature is seen as that which cannot be produced and is part of the discourse which is concerned with the alienation of modern man from “nature” which, as a concept, emerged in contingence with the birth of capitalism as a reaction against a rapidly modernising world. Lisa has similar ideas of nature:

> “it’s basic, primal...a survival thing...you’re not concerned about daily worries...there’s no phone, you’re just at one with nature” ...sitting in an office in an enclosed space...it doesn’t feel natural to me whereas running actually does feel really natural.”

Thus, how are we to account for the feeling that running is "natural"? In perceiving the world, meanings embodied in environmental objects are drawn into the experience of subjects (Tilley 1994:23). If perception occurs at the preobjective level of consciousness which, as Csordas points out is *not* precultural, or in other words, sensory presence and engagement are temporally and historically informed, then cultural knowledge and classifications become embodied and are in turn produced by the body at the experiential level as it engages with the world. The body itself *produces* a "natural" space with which it engages in a "natural" activity. If then, as noted before, the narrating, constructing self is silenced through running, then perception remains pre-abstract, which would explain why the informants found it so hard to articulate their experience, attributing it instead to a spiritual connection with nature. "Nature" is thus experienced through the body drawing on the (culturally determined) preobjective reservoir of meaning (Csordas 1994:11).

This experience of nature relates back to Dan's desire for his lifestyle to be a harmoniously integration of body, self and environment, rather than in submission to the objectifying, planning self. Both Lisa and Dan spoke of the therapeutic values of running which are coupled with those of nature, advising that "it's important to engage in the environment in a way that is therapeutic to you". The essential partiality of the informants' views of "nature" does not diminish their reality, rather it establishes them (Csordas 1990). An appreciation of nature and feeling of oneness with nature is created each time that running is performed. It is an experience which is, in its turn, objectified in narrative, and having been so, perhaps inevitably seems, as one informant made explicit, to lose some of its significance.

The paradigm of embodiment is necessary for understanding the runners' experiences of nature, since we arrive at very different conclusions using Ricoeur's interpretative approach. If action is read as text, then one must first divorce action from the moment of its production, which would explain the objectification of the environment as "natural" in terms of the history of representation, but it does not

explain precisely *how* it is physically experienced by runners as natural or spiritual. The action-as-text paradigm privileges the consequences of actions over the production and the existential immediacy of such actions, and it does not speak at the level of experience; using this approach, action is apprehended as cognitive process and turned into history, or memory.

Conclusion

"To build is in itself already to dwell" (Heidegger in Ingold 2000:185)

Marathon narratives offer a rich source of possibilities for exploring the question of self and personhood, since they combine physical, bodily experience with narrative construction (the how and the why of undertaking the challenge) in a project of self-transformation. This is narrated in a linear, temporal fashion through entering, training and finally completing the marathon. Yet when the interviews were carried out, the marathon had not yet taken place; the trajectory of the running self was, in a sense, incomplete and the fragmentary nature of the narratives can be partly attested to the unknown outcome of the marathon day itself. The participant could achieve or even surpass their target time and complete the marathon, or injury or exhaustion could result in having to withdraw. Whichever the outcome, the narrative of the running self is likely to be recontextualised in light of its ending. The uncertainty of the outcome and nervousness of the informants was part of the context in which the interviews took place and must be acknowledged as formative of them.

Although I have argued for the recognition of prelinguistic, existential selfhood which exists outside narrative, ultimately I have only been able to do this through the use of people's narratives. Amongst its other functions, narrative enables a person to socialise their experiences and to create sense and order out of a displacing experience such as injury by contextualising it within or against a trajectory of a coherent self. As many informants disclosed, they wished to participate in the project in order to learn

about other people's experiences, which in turn may make them rethink how they narrate their own experiences, or even affect their experiential base, *how* they experience running in the future; after all, preobjective perception is informed by cultural practice, including language.

The narrating self and the experiencing self are separable only in discourse (Reischer 2001:27), but this separation renders analysis highly problematic. Recognising the (running) body as the essential medium of the self's engagement with the world (Merleau-Ponty 1962) acknowledges the body as both the ground for being-in-the-world, that is, the source of all experience and knowledge, and the source of (self) representation *as* a mode of being. Corporeity intrinsically has a dimension of expressivity which is fundamental to the constitution of subjectivity. The experiencing body-subject produces space and culture and thus the conditions of its own experience, which provide the ground for the cultural process of self-objectification and the production of the self/selves through narrative which, as objectified abstraction, conceals the existential immediacy of experience. The informants' account of the running selves was both the situating of the self/selves in its own marathon narrative *and* an act which occurred in the real world; this act may itself then be appropriated to constitute another narrative in the future. Narrative as action may be appropriated as an experience itself; and indeed, as Mattingly (2000) has demonstrated, narrative may also give shape and structure to an experience. Narrative and experience feed into each other and continually give rise to each other in a non-linear, never-ceasing way.

We start our inquiries from a position of involvement in the world. The manner of our involvement is mediated by the limits of our environments and bodies, which are equal measure determined by and determining of each other. The nature of running is determined in part by environmental constraints yet in turn helps to create that very environment as a *space in which to run*, in which to experience freedom, and "oneness with nature". This involvement of body, environment and practice gives rise to narrative, as the subject attempts to communicate this relationship. As Ingold reflects:

> "The forms people build, whether in their imagination or on the ground, arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings. *Only because they already dwell in the world can they think the thoughts they do*" (2000:185 my emphasis).

This brings us back to Heidegger's quote at the beginning of this conclusion. To build is to dwell; to construct is be in the world; to construct narrative and thus self is to already *be* and *do* in space. Only because the informants ran could they construct running narratives. World, self and language belong inseparably together and develop together (Kerby 1991:66).

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