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Mundane Ritual Practices and Distance Running Training

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Abstract

To date, there has been little research into the mundane social practices of sport which underpin competitive sporting events. This paper seeks to address this lacuna and expand the literature via an examination of one specific activity: distance running training. Using data from a two year collaborative autoethnography, the paper portrays the mundane *ritual* practices of preparing for, doing, and departing from distance running training.

Introduction

As Breckhus (1998: 36) has noted, forms of mundane activity pervade social life generally, but much of it remains 'unmarked' by social researchers, and as a result is largely 'unnamed and unaccented'. The importance of mundane activity should not be underestimated as this level of social phenomena provides the foundation for wider social patterns (Hemmings et al. 2002). However, as Crossley (2006: 24–25) notes, apart from some notable exceptions (Coates 1999; Sassatelli 1999; Smith 2001; Gimlin 2002; Crossley 2004b) there has been little investigation at this level of sporting phenomena. One can, for example, peruse recent texts on the mundane aspects of social life and find no mention of sport (Bennett and Watson 2002; Highmore 2002). Hence this paper's aim is to contribute to that small literature on the mundane activity of sport, by focusing on the particular example of training for distance running, and revealing what de Certeau (1988: 19) has called the 'subtle logic' of the ordinary. This training far outweighs runners' involvement in racing, but constitutes the essential foundation which allows effective racing to take place.

At this juncture it is worth outlining the factors which have been linked to the mundane and everyday in social life. Felski (1999–2000: 18) views these as being: time, space and modality. Temporal in terms of the day by day repetition of particular activities, which in the case of athletics constitutes the repeated running of particular distances. Spatial in that this training pattern takes place on particular kinds of familiar terrain, from and to particu-

lar places. Modal in that the characteristic way of experiencing daily training is that of habit. This paper's particular focus is upon the mundane *ritual* practices of such repetitive training: in other words, upon activities which, whilst mundane in terms of them being habitual and routine, are nevertheless vital for the accomplishment of such training. Hence, they function to propel distance runners through a series of different states which make up the physiological but also the psychological and social process of doing training. In order to portray this ritual activity, the paper is structured in the following way. First the literature on ritual and sport is portrayed. Second, the main theoretical resources which are utilized are outlined. Third, the research approach is briefly addressed, and the biographical context delineated. Fourth, the ritual practices involved in preparing for training sessions are portrayed. Fifth, those practices are again examined in their directly embodied form during training itself. Sixth, the ritual practices evident in the process of exiting from training sessions are scrutinised.

Ritual and Sport

When examining ritual one is initially struck by how its definition, function, and meaning vary (Mitchell 2001). This is perhaps due to ritual belonging to what Bourdieu (1992) has termed the 'fuzzy logic' of commonplace linguistic codes. As a result ritual has been used to categorise a diverse range of personal behaviour and social processes. These range from Goffman's (1967) everyday 'interaction

rituals' in contemporary western society, to bureaucratic rites of passage such as higher education graduation events, to religious ceremonies in non-industrial cultures. There is, then, a diversity in terms of how the concept has been defined, used and to what social phenomena it has been applied. Given this diversity, rather than being able to pronounce on a single authoritative definition, or class of phenomena upon which to apply 'ritual', one is left realising, as Crossley (2004a :32) indicates, that 'rituals enjoy a family resemblance rather than a fixed and clear essence'. He goes on to note that we 'would be ill-advised to define ritual in a neat or conclusive fashion'. Instead he calls for researchers to work with this ambiguity and he notes that 'for this reason it is also inadvisable to attempt an analysis of ritual that would apply in all cases', concluding that the 'meaning, function, and characteristics of rituals will be different in different cases'. This is acknowledging, as others have (Cohen 1985: 53; Bell 1992: 91; Light 2000: 461), that rituals are often specific to local circumstances.

In the light of the realization that the concept of ritual can be applied not only to religious phenomena but also to local secular contexts (Moore and Myerhoff 1977), the relationship between ritual and sport has been given some attention in psychology, sociology and anthropology. The first discipline (e.g. Miracle and Southard 1993; Jackson and Baker 2001) appears to be mainly concerned with optimal task performance, whereas the other two disciplines focus on ritual as a transformative process (Miracle 1980; Birrell 1981; Foley 1990; JRS 1993; Blanchard 1995; Ward 1998; Srinivas 1999; Dyck 2000; Light 2000; Jones 2002; King 2003; Muir and Seitz 2004), which is the topic of this paper. Much of this latter research has traced the connection between sport as a ritual process which fosters national, ethnic and group identity (Foley 1990; King 2003). At a different level of analysis, and on occasion in combination with the aforementioned structural approach, the work of Goffman has been used to examine the processes of interaction which make up such sporting rituals (Granskog 1993; Light 2000). However, the relationship between *ritual* and the mundane activities of sport has been given much less attention, as the focus of the literature tends to be on the sporting events themselves, rather than the mundane ritualised practices of habitual training (Devine 1984; Donohue 1993) which make such events possible.

The local mundane ritual process depicted in this paper is made up of a number of practices. Firstly, there are those which need to be done so as to be able to engage in daily distance running training: these are categorised as ritual preparation. Secondly, there is the actual doing of distance running, within which the athletic body does

embodied ritual practice. Thirdly, after training there are other ritual practices which take place, effecting disengagement from distance running. As Segrave (2000:61) notes: 'One of the sources of sport's enormous contemporary appeal is that it provides an escape, a brief and often intoxicating respite from the complexities and confusion of everyday life'. To escape requires preparation, and return to the non-athletic life also requires certain kinds of ritualised practice. These three forms of practice are mundane in that they occur habitually, and their ritual function in the auto-ethnographic case examined here was to move the author and his training partner/co-researcher through a series of transformative states.

Theoretical Resources

To explain getting ready for training—and the leaving of it—use is made of Nippert-Eng's research on the ritualised boundary work used to categorise 'work' and 'home'. She notes that such daily boundary work 'helps us sculpt these concepts into experiential realms, and, in the process maintain the boundaries we impose' (1996: 28). In this paper the transitions are from the primarily sedentary world of academic work which dominates existence (at least in terms of hours) to the corporeal endeavour of distance running, and subsequently the leaving of that domain, for the domestic life of showering, eating, and relaxing. For Nippert-Eng (1996:117) boundary work is made up of 'bridges' which are 'objects, and activities that facilitate, even encourage, mental transitions between home and work, between one way of being and another'. These form part of 'ritual activities and routines performed prior to leaving one realm and just before full immersion in the other'. She concludes that 'these common bridging elements provide a framework for innovative and purposeful transition behaviour' (ibid.).

In contrast to preparing for and departing from training there is the actual ritual embodiment of distance running itself, and to examine this phenomena another theoretical resource is used. Drawing on the work of Mauss, and Merleau Ponty, Crossley (2004a: 38–40) portrays ritual as 'a form of knowledge, mastery and understanding'. He notes it 'is an embodied knowledge of the social world, which is at the same time, a practical technique for reproducing aspects of that world'. He points out that the performance of ritual requires this combination of understanding and bodily action: a combination which results in pre-reflective knowledge being physically enacted. Crossley depicts learning swimming and word processing skills as examples of such taken for granted 'body techniques'. He (2004a: 40) maintains that these embodied techniques have a ritual function, going on to note that

such rituals can 'effect transformations in our subjective and intersubjective states'. By enacting the ritual, made up of embodied practices, individuals and groups transform their emotional states. Emotions are not seen as 'inner states', but rather, in accordance with Merleau-Ponty's position, they are viewed as 'ways of acting towards, perceiving, thinking about, and being affected by the world' (Crossley, 2004a: 43). Rituals for Crossley are then 'body techniques for modifying our relationship to the world', and he (2004a: 39) notes that the 'ritual is the technique for achieving the transformation', a means by which a different state of being is arrived at. By focusing on the bodily basis of ritual practice Crossley incorporates a practical individual agency into his analysis. Individuals know how to do the appropriate rituals in a corporeal sense. They learn and enact those rituals with others who possess the same embodied understanding and who are predisposed to engage in that particular form of ritual, so as to move from one particular corporeal and interactional state of being to another. The predispositions to engage are themselves rooted in the norms and the collective 'habitus' (Mauss 1979) of the participants: in the case of the subjects of this paper, the UK distance running subculture (Smith 1998). Crossley's way of viewing ritual is helpful for it furnishes the means to examine the part played by individual and collective embodied practices in helping to propel participants through a series of transformative states. Having outlined the main theoretical resources used in the body of this paper, I proceed to an explanation of the research approach.

Autoethnographic Data and Analysis

Whilst having its detractors (Coffey 1999; Delamont 2007), autoethnography has also a growing number of advocates within anthropology and sociology, who have developed strong justifications for its use (Allen Collinson and Hockey 2005). It emphasises the linkage between themes within the author's experience and broader cultural and subcultural processes. For the author and his co-researcher who wished to portray the relationship between the distance running 'mind' (emotions, sensations, knowledge) and its embodied activity, it constituted the best means of accessing and depicting that relationship.

In order to contextualise the events to be described, it is first of all necessary to make visible some "accountable" knowledge in terms of athletic biographies. My female training partner/co-researcher and I (male author) trained together habitually for 19 years, both having a background of distance running which ranges over 5-mile races to marathons. This has required a commitment to training 6

or 7 days a week, on occasion twice a day, for 20 years and 40 years respectively. Coincidentally during the same wind-swept week we both suffered knee injuries, occasioned by having to train in the winter dark. It was apparent at the onset of these injuries that they did not constitute the usual small niggles which plague the habitual runner. Consequently, we rapidly arrived at a collective decision to document systematically our response to these injuries, our principal motive being to achieve something positive out of a negative experience. The process of injury and recovery and its documentation took a full two years.

Runners habitually keep logs of their daily training performance, so the discipline of daily recording information was already in situ. Rather than training logs we constructed logs on the process of injury-rehabilitation so as to document our collective and individual endeavours to return to the status of fully functioning athletes. Each of us constructed a personal log (indicated at the end of the extracts from field notes as Log 1 or Log 2 respectively) which was individually and jointly interrogated for emerging themes using a form of the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss 1967). We then created a third collaborative log made up of these joint themes. Micro tape recorders constituted the usual daily means of recording our experiences, and recordings were transcribed and the collaborative log constructed within a day or two of events occurring. A by-product of our data analysis was that we became aware of a 'stock of knowledge' (Benson and Hughes 1983: 52), which we had previously taken for granted when running. The documentation of this was then added to our initial main analytical task, that of recording our response to being injured (Allen Collinson 2005; Hockey 2005).

At this juncture the paper begins to explore some of the autoethnographic data which forms part of that knowledge stock, via a portrayal of the mundane ritual practices involved in doing and surrounding distance running training. Parts of the data are directly taken from the Logs 1 and 2, whilst other parts are narratives constructed from the data from both logs. In the latter case the 'I' in the narrative is a collaborative one, a fusing of both accounts in an attempt to convey the 'immediacy' (Sparkes 2000) of particular embodied ritual practices.

The Ritual Practices of Preparation for Training

Nippert-Eng's (1996) ethnographic research portrays in great detail the boundaries people erect between domestic and occupational spheres, and the kinds of prac-

tices they move through so as to be able to manage the movement between one sphere and the other. For her these transcendental activities have a 'ritualistic function' facilitating the cognitive changes from one kind of being and thinking to another, and from one kind of self to another. These transitions are not unproblematic, hence the 'work' which is needed so as to achieve them successfully. As she (1996: 107) puts it: 'the problematic nature of transitions between home and work varies depending on how different are these realms'. She (1996:108) stresses what she calls the 'cognitive engineering' required for individuals to move from one state to another: a movement which is facilitated and propelled by particular sets of often sequential activities, which are habitually accomplished. These practices constitute *bridges* and by doing them individuals move themselves cognitively, corporeally and interactionally through a process of change. As she (1996:113) notes:

One of the purposes of routines or habit is to reduce repetitious decision-making and limit the number of things to which we must attend while trying to accomplish specific goals. In fact, if one's goal is to gear up into a certain mentality, routines are essential ... And the sequence of activity not only allows a mental transformation to take place, it actually encourages it. It pulls us along, taking us toward the given mentality that we have come to associate with the routine tasks at hand.

The difference between the domains of work and athletic training in the case at hand is considerable, for both research participants are sociologists employed at universities. Thus, our workdays are dominated cognitively by disciplinary and teaching processes, whilst physically they are constrained and static, by long hours at meetings, and the desk-bound processes of research. Sport is carried out in particular contexts and the context in which the data were collected is one characterised by both participants being veteran amateur athletes, about which there has been little research compared to investigations of younger elite competitors (Tulle 2003). A consequence of this context is that daily distance running training has to be squeezed in around the larger full-time work, and domestic processes, which make up the overwhelming bulk of everyday life.

Training time is, then, time which has to be secured, safeguarded against the perennial demands from other spheres of everyday existence. Getting home to run after work, and running out of one's front door, demands the building and deploying of *momentum*, physically, emotionally, and just as important socially, as that momentum is also an interactional accomplishment (Adler 1981).

There was, then, a daily routine, a process which involved my training partner and I letting go of intellectual concerns as we prepared for intense physical effort, for distance running necessitates considerable physiological and mental endurance.

This process of preparing for training, or to put it another way 'gearing up' (Nippert Eng 1996:103), started with the commute from our respective workplaces to our home. The commute is in anthropological terms a 'liminal space' (Van Gennep 1960; Turner 1974) par excellence. It constituted a transitional zone between work and training and one within which the transformation from academic to athlete started to take place, via 'transitional work' (Nippert Eng 1996:105).

Our mutual commutes provided us both with opportunities to start to establish our athletic selves both corporeally and cognitively, and some of our individual ways of doing this are revealed in the following two Log extracts:

"I realize I use the radio and tape player in the car as a device to get myself up and ready for training. As soon as I get in the car and leave the campus I crack on the radio. If I can't find a station with some decent rock, it's on with the Zep or Coverdale tape. I need something with a rocksteady beat, something with a lot of whack to it, something you can feel deep down. Sometimes passing motorists smile at me, rockin' along in the car! It's an energizing thing really, such a change from being so static and sedentary at work, so mind-orientated. I really need that change of tempo, to wake me up, to get everything moving so as to be ready to pull on the training gear as soon as I get home. It's like I have to prepare my muscles and also get myself focused for the sensations of running. A lot of academic thought is abstract, it's mediated and disembodied, but distance running demands right-on physicality from the very first step, when the elements hit you—and you need to be ready for the effort." (Log 2)

"I always walk the 15 minutes from campus to home as quickly as I can. It's not just that time is always limited when fitting training into daily life, it's also about getting up to speed for the training. My hamstrings and back are always stiff from sitting at my work desk, so the walk serves to shake them down, to get them sorted for running. It's also about keeping 'up' and not letting yourself slump after a days work. You have to establish a particular frame of mind, which is the opposite of falling into the armchair with a stiff drink!" (Log 1)

As indicated in the last log extract, to inhabit 'home' even momentarily in terms of being relaxed was perceived to inhibit the momentum required to effect training. Relaxing in terms of ceasing physical and mental effort are not features which will propel bodies (and minds) out onto training routes, after a long day in the labour market. Home for this short period of time between arriving and the commencement of training, constituted another zone of transition, another liminal space.

In it during this transitional period the author carried out a daily routine, accomplishing various domestic tasks (preparing the evening meal, and making the next day's work sandwiches), which allowed training time to be possible. This routine also involved making ready the running kit of his training partner, prior to her later arrival from work, so as to effect a speedy exit from home to train:

"I'm chopping vegetables for the evening meal, 'dunk, dunk, dunk' goes the knife to my habitual chopping CD, 'Ole' by Coltrane which blasts along! On to the sandwiches as I look at the kitchen clock, ten minutes before J. is due to get home, gotta move! Put our training shoes alongside the door, then whizz around the house collecting running tights, fluorescent rain tops, socks, t shirts etc and dump them in the living room. Get two glasses of apple juice and water and a handful of dried apricots for us to share, back into the living room, and open a pot of Vaseline (for nipples, toes etc), phew! Ready!" (Log 1)

In the above log excerpt and the first one featuring a car journey, one can identify the use of music to establish and maintain individual cognitive and corporeal momentum, part of the transitional work of preparation for training. One can also identify the provision of certain specific kinds of drink and food which whilst functional in terms of hydration and fuel for distance running, also have another function. The very act of ingesting them prior to training informed us in a symbolic fashion that what we were about to do requires endurance, and that we as athletes are ourselves enduring. Hence, as soon as my female training partner arrived home we consumed these substances, immediately becoming what the food and drink symbolized (Nippert-Eng 1996: 129).

The next stage in the sequence of ritualised practices involved changing from our work clothes to our athletic apparel. As Stone (1977: 101–102) has perceptively noted: "In appearances, selves are established and mobilized. As the self is dressed, it is simultaneously addressed, for, whenever we clothe ourselves, we dress "toward" or address some audience whose validating responses are essential to the establishment of our self". Here the exter-

nal audience constituted each other as athletes, but also our individual internal audience, that part of the reflective self (Mead 1934) which identified with being a distance runner. Moreover, this process is also a sensual one developed via touch which is a directly embodied way of *feeling* the world and understanding its properties. Montagu (1971) has shown, that the skin provides the largest area of touch in the human body, and when running apparel is pulled onto the body a particular kinaesthetic awareness is initiated, and as a result a particular sense of being central to our athletic identity was established by us. As Attfield (2000: 121) notes: 'Clothing and textiles have a particularly intimate quality because they lie next to the skin and inhabit the spaces of private life helping to negotiate the inner self with the outside world.' The following extract reveals the combination of visual and haptic elements which habitually helped establish our athletic identities:

"I have been repeatedly struck by what the *feel* of pulling on training gear does to me. It's a very different sensual experience from putting on the work gear. It's a much more streamlined feeling for a start. Pulling on running tights your quads, hips and glutes are intimately caressed by the material, it's a sort of mutual touching and being touched experience. The contours of the muscles are revealed in tights, but simultaneously you feel those muscles much more intensely, you feel them moving more, working, in this kind of clothing—so you not only look like a runner, you *feel* like one too." (Log 2)

Other parts of our training apparel included a particular set of house keys and particular watches, which have obvious everyday functions. Yet once again, these are objects which did symbolic work in establishing and demarcating athletic time and selves for us. Thus the keys containing no other (work, car etc.) keys, hung on a bright yellow key ring, and were taken out only when we went training. In addition our training watches were of a particular kind which allowed us to time particular kinds of training sessions in terms of their parts (usually termed 'splits'). As Nippert-Eng (1996: 139) notes, putting on watches can involve self transformation, as the act indicates where we are going. In our case our training and each training time-piece induced 'us to adopt our destination's mind set' because it symbolizes it. Lastly, there were our running shoes, always covered in dirt—symbolizing our past training efforts, and what was to be done that evening. Thus, whilst there was a logical reason for donning athletic apparel, the act also served to continue to initiate and contain our mental transition between the different domains and selves of

work and athletics. It thus had a particular 'transformative power' (Davis 1983: 58) aiding our sociocognitive change from one role (worker-academic) to another (distance-runner).

In addition during this brief liminal period prior to actually exiting the house and starting to run we habitually practiced particular kinds of ritual utterances (Goffman 1967, 1974) which focused upon how unready our bodies felt for the effort which was to come. These constituted interactional acknowledgements of our embodied frailties which we needed to steel our selves to surmount. The most common of these utterances was one which according to distance running lore was originally used by the Australian five and ten thousand metre world record holder Ron Clarke, namely: 'Well this old track suit doesn't want to go tonight'. This was routinely chanted in a joking fashion as we opened the house door to start to run, and marked the boundary of our preparation, as training now had to be initiated. This section of the paper has depicted how mundane 'bridges' (music, clothing, keys, watches, utterances, food etc) did symbolic transitional work (Nippert-Eng 1996), helping us to move from work to training itself, and the latter will now be examined.

The Ritual Practices of Training

Doing distance running training involves athletes practicing a 'reflexive body technique' (RBT), a shared form of practical, embodied reasoning, which is prereflective (Crossley 2005). Simply put, distance runners run; however, that general technique is more complicated than non-athletes might appreciate, for the distance running RBT consists of an ensemble, that is a group of techniques which are done together to effect a common objective (Crossley 2005: 10). The most fundamental of these are rhythm and timing (Goodridge 1999). Rhythm organizes or shapes the flow of action, and at the same time is part of that action. So our different training sessions had different rhythms depending on a number of factors such as aim of the session (endurance or speed or a combination of these), weather, terrain, etc. To achieve such rhythm requires a high degree of coordination of bodily parts, which itself is dependent upon developing a particular sense of timing. This is so much so that the author and his training partner could accurately identify the pace of running, using a spectrum of bodily indicators, from the 'stream of kinesthesias, cutaneous and visceral sensations' (Leder 1990:23) emerging from muscles, tendons, ligaments, skin and organs. The following field-note depicts the realization that we had re-learned that sense after our period of prolonged injury:

"Going well today, and for the first time I acted like a real runner again. I suddenly said to J: 'This *feels* like 7s' (7 minutes per mile), and he nodded agreement ... Once finished, I checked on the watch and it was indeed approximately the pace I had felt intuitively. That's a big marker for us—on the way back!" (Log 2)

Another part of our distance running RBT was rooted in how runners use their visual powers during training sessions. Ingold (2000: 226, 230) has asserted 'people see as they move' and 'our knowledge of the environment undergoes continuous formation in the very course of [our] moving about in it.' Thus as athletes we had built a visual store of knowledge about our training routes. This knowledge constructed *how* our routes were seen as they were traversed, attending to concerns of safety and performance. So like other runners we saw and understood terrain in terms of 'going', which allowed us to do particular types of training or not. So for example, a stretch of flat smooth road may be prized for doing 100–400 metre efforts, whereas attempting to do such efforts on a ploughed field invites damaged ankles. Routes were also seen in terms of their propensity for harbouring venues for harassment and on occasion assault by the public (Smith 1997). As Emmison and Smith (2000:185) note, 'environments are not simply places where we see things in a passive way. They are also locations where we must look in active ways.' The following narrative is derived from both our individual logs, and was constructed so to convey our 'active looking' whilst training:

"On to the big, flat vista of the park, a long line of trees sought out as shade for the whole run when the high summer sun burns my celtic skin—up and down, up and down, monotonous but necessary. Now in the autumn, I reject that line covered as it is with pine cones and tree debris. Pine cones are not innocent; they lie in wait for the unwary runner, rolling perilously under the foot with potential injurious consequences. Innocent neither are the multi-coloured piles of leaves concealing kerb edges, roots and other booby-traps. Moving alongside but outside the tree line, keeping the rhythm and the cadence high, lengthening the stride, increasing the pace to accomplish four long efforts. Mouth dry and gasping, I look with suspicion at the autumnal offerings fallen from trees". (Constructed from Logs 1 & 2)

A further component of our athletic RBT involved the auditory practices that we engaged in when training. As Rodaway (1994: 95) has noted, 'sound is not just sensa-

tion: it is information. We do not merely hear, we listen.' One focus for these listening practices was safety, particularly when training in urban areas with high traffic levels. A second focus for this auditory work was our own respiratory systems which we constantly evaluated, and which provided instantaneous feedback upon the state of each training session. Thus physiological processes interrelate with socially mediated or external processes (Lyon 1997), to connect respiration to the socially constituted normative order of doing training. Experienced runners possess considerable knowledge of what they should be able to achieve (in terms of time taken to cover distance) when doing particular sessions. The latter are always evaluated against these individual embodied standards:

"Nothing fancy, just get out there and run seven miles easy. The problem was it wasn't easy, felt out of sorts right from the start. Normally when going up the first hill I would just click into it, shorten the stride, work the arms, lean into it, get the rhythm going with the breathing. I couldn't do it though, I was all over the place like some overweight jogger! Uaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah! I could hear myself wheezing and moaning and gasping. It was a struggle all the way round and I *felt* embarrassed". (Individual Log 1)

An additional RBT component involved us using our olfactory receptors en route. Just as maps are read as a 'set of sequential particulars' (Psathas 1979: 224) such as hills, valleys etc, runners mark out sets of olfactory sequential particulars on habitual training routes. Thus a curry aroma from an Asian restaurant located us as a mere 300 metres from finishing a particular route. The flood of vehicle pollution from a busy crossroads told us we were barely at the start of a route and that the cleaner air of a park would soon be inhaled. In contrast the inhaling of rotting algae from a lake told us we were at the end point of another route.

"On this particular eight miler there is a stretch of pavement which is quite narrow and the rear of workshops and businesses back right onto the pavement. Habitually as we run this stretch we always inhale a big blast of starch wafting out of huge extractor fans from a commercial laundry. That's now associated with being the mid-point in the route, which it is geographically, but the habitual smell now marks it for us, and we always mutter 'halfway' to each other as we pass by." (Log 1)

The identification of these sets of aromatic markers signalled to us in an immediate way our positioning on

particular routes, and we used them to 'order the experience and understanding of space' (Classen et al. 1994:98).

A final component of our athletic RBT involved us touching our routes in a reciprocal haptic relationship. The body when training is an active one, combining pressure between footfall and the ground and a kinaesthetic awareness of the body as it moves. The athletic touch is as Hetherington (2003:1941) notes of touch generally, 'a way of removing doubt—of confirming.' It is a directly embodied way of feeling the world and understanding its properties. Runners through touch constantly improvise their footfall, 'tuning in' (Ingold, 2004: 332) to the changing properties (chosen direction, weather, ground etc) of their training routes. Hence, there was a haptic component (as well as a visual one) to how our routes were evaluated and categorised. For example, flat, soft, forest paths were vastly preferred to uneven, rubbish strewn pavements on grounds of both performance, safety and enjoyment (Bale 2004: 74):

"I am running on air, six miles of *plush*, my feet bits are relaaaaaaaxed, no tension, every ligament, tendon and muscle *flowing*—smooooooooooooothly down the level pine needle caressed forest path. The ground giving me back *bounce*, it's so cushioned". (Constructed from Logs 1 & 2)

By habitually practicing the aforementioned RBT ensemble, I and my training partner/co-researcher became not just physically but psychologically and socially distance runners. It was through these specific practices made up of corporeal, cognitive and social elements, that a particular kind of athletic self was forged. As Crossley (2005:13) notes: 'By means of these techniques we learn to constitute ourselves for ourselves, practically'. Practicing the RBT of distance running produces particular emotional states (Merleau-Ponty 1962), which are themselves vital to the successful inhabiting of the athletic role. Of particular relevance to distance running are the states of pain and fatigue which need to be tolerated so as to achieve the necessary combination of speed and endurance required to run considerable distances and race effectively. Often during such training the individual's perceptual field can become narrowed as the impact of pain and fatigue dominate (Scarry 1987; Bendelow and Williams 1995) and runners become more inwardly focused, as they fully take on and inhabit their embodied athletic selves. The ritual function of RBT practice is to symbolically mark the movement of the self from one context to another (Crossley 2004b). It is then transformational, that transforma-

tion occurring through the corporeal techniques as distance runners move, see, hear, smell, touch, and consequently feel and understand in particular corporeal ways, which are fundamental to the performance of an athletic self which is distinct from other selves (occupational, familial, etc). This daily embodied ritual process from its very first strides constituted a 'call to order' (Crossley 2004b: 49) for our particular way of athletic being to be deployed.

The Ritual Practices of Leaving Training

When we returned to our house from running, the ritual process of leaving training unfolded. Initially there was the repetition of acts which had taken place in our preparation phase, namely immediately eating certain high energy snacks and consuming particular drinks which aid hydration. Once again this consumption had the same symbolic resonance (Nippert Eng 1996: 129), for we were re-fuelling and hydrating our running bodies, in preparation for the next day's training. This signalled a long term commitment to the distance running role. Then we divested ourselves of our wet (either through sweat/rain or both) running clothes, and donned other athletic apparel, which we never trained in but wore during the ritual process of leaving training. This apparel constituted another 'bridge', helping us to leave training:

"When we come back into the house we put on gear which is athletic but not as athletic as the stuff we wear when training. So for example, instead of tights we put on training pants which are more voluminous, and sweat tops, gear which we would never run in as it's just not streamlined enough. There are functional reasons for changing our gear, mostly to do with being wet in one form or another, but the change seems to have some kind of symbolic function as well. The clothing is a sort of half-way house, we can stretch effectively in it, but it's also gear which is to use J's terms 'cuddly' which one can also begin to relax in, with the actual running finished for the day". (Log 1)

Once clad in this transitional clothing we then engaged in a twenty minute stretching routine, at the same time watching the evening television news. This period functioned to lengthen all the main muscles and tendons which tightened during training, thus maintaining flexibility in an attempt to prevent athletic injury. It also functioned on a symbolic level to gradually effect socio-cognitive movement from the athletic domain to the domain of the

domestic. This was achieved by attention being divided between the stretching routine, watching the television news and the pattern of discourse between us:

"It's interesting what happens in front of the tv. We start off stretching and chatting and the chat is always about what the run was like, how we felt, which bits of our bodies are aching or tight or downright painful. Like 'you need to slap some ice on that achilles (tendon) tonight'. There is also some chat about athletics generally, particularly if we have met other runners when out on the session. Then what happens is that gradually that kind of chat tapers off, and what replaces it is chat which is derived from what's on the tv news. What's happening in Parliament or maybe an accident on the local motorway or something. We finish stretching just as the news is ending and we sort of let go of distance running at that point." (Log 2)

What occurred during this post-training phase was a gradual transition from the athletic to the domestic domains, this transition being accomplished by our bodies tapering down in terms of their physical endeavour (stretching is a lot less vigorous than running) and thus collective tempo. Also, the transition is accomplished by cognitive and interactional movement towards the domestic. The achievement of this transformation occurred as stretching and the television news programme were attended to simultaneously. Via this daily sequence of activities the role of athlete was gradually let go of, and the domestic role eventually fully reoccupied. One social world and version of the self was left and another taken up (Van Gennep 1960: 10). At the point of reassertion, as the television news finished, another ritual utterance (Goffman 1967, 1974) symbolic of UK domestic life generally, was habitually delivered by either of us: 'Fancy a cuppa (of tea)?' It was at that point that our house no longer constituted a liminal space, but rather became a 'home' in which we could finally fully relax with distance running finished for that day.

Ritualised Identity

Some time ago Sacks (1984) pointed out the large amount of work required 'to be ordinary' in social life, and what has been portrayed in this paper are the kinds of habitual work required to be ordinary veteran athletes. This is work which involves the use of the previously depicted corporeal, interactional, and material resources to construct and enact the daily ritual practices of doing training for distance running. This habitual ritual work

was accomplished via sub-culturally specific meanings, objects, utterances, postures, and movements. The result for both research participants was the formation and maintenance of a distance running identity. In effect the doing of the ritual practices portrayed constituted our everyday running 'identity work' (Snow and Anderson 1995). At its core this identity is a felt one (Goffman 1963: 106) grounded in self feelings and sustained by those habitual ritual practices. Whilst the latter built and sustained our athletic identities, they simultaneously helped create perceptions of difference, which we used to separate us from and contrast ourselves with the non distance running majority UK population. For, as Bell (1992:220) has noted: 'Ritualization is fundamentally a way of doing things to trigger the perception that these practices are distinct and the associations that they engender are special.' Thus, 'they' sat and watched television whilst we were training, they were overweight and static whilst we were light and moving; they were unfit but we were conditioned perpetually ... (Allen Collinson and Hockey 2001) Whilst this distance running identity might well be viewed as positive or healthy, or even perhaps by some elitist, there were also arguably other, closer to home, negative consequences produced by its enactment. The habitual ritual practices which sustained it created powerful subjective states (Crossley 2004a: 42) comprised of positive self feelings about being distance runners. These were states within which pain and injury were accepted as normal features of occupying that sporting role, a relationship which has been documented elsewhere in research on committed sportspeople (Howe 2004). Consequently there was also the normalization of a certain degree of risk (Pike and Maguire 2003) when doing distance running, so for example running in extremely high temperatures and risking heat stroke, or running in dangerous urban areas, or in particular running in the winter dark after work. The latter was the context in which the author and his co-researcher both sustained the knee injuries which occasioned this research originally.

Conclusion

Particular identities are lodged in particular social worlds which are themselves founded upon particular orders of experience that are meaningful to participants. The order of experience itself is constructed and maintained by specific kinds of ritual practice. In Crossley's (2004a: 39) terms, 'the ritual entails embodied knowledge of the social world which, at the same time, is a necessary constitutive element of that world'. Moreover, as Ekstrom and Hecht (2007: 246) indicate one of the 'singularly important powers of ritual is to position ideas in a

series of actions which constitute or reconstitute a web of meanings that provide an orientation to the small and big questions of human existence'. In the case under scrutiny the particular web of meanings and understandings is fused with particular actions to sustain a distance running order of experience, one which, whilst perhaps minor in the grand scheme of things, is highly significant to the participants and their particular social world.

Hence, the habitual and mundane nature of everyday ritual practices should not conceal their power to move participants through a series of subjective and intersubjective states, whilst simultaneously sustaining particular social orders of experience. Each ritualised practice is necessarily laden with significance, which when combined with other practices produces a sequence of events, full of import specific to the social world in question. The core question about the nature of social order as Lynch (2001: 131) has perceptively noted, is not so much one of understanding its general presence via edifices of abstract social theory, but rather one of explaining 'the substantive production of order on singular occasions', a task to which hitherto sociology has devoted little attention. Nippert-Eng's (1996) research which focuses on the relationship between work and home, and this paper which focuses on the work-sport nexus, constitute case studies of how particular social orders of experience are built and maintained by mundane ritual practices. The latter are enacted on a singular (daily) but also repetitive basis as activities are habitually prepared for, accomplished and then left until the next daily repetition. These are practices which are vital for helping to ease 'instances of disjunction' between different social worlds (Schechner 2007: 20) in contemporary society. In this particular practical way the continuity of social order is maintained, and Crossley (2004a: 47) encapsulates this continuity concisely: 'As repetitions, rituals conserve specific action patterns through time'. This particular stance affords primacy to ritual as a series of embodied techniques or practices placing the corporeal centre stage (Crossley 2004a: 46, Bell 1997: 82), and one within which sequences of action and meaning come to prevail 'in a seemingly natural chain of association' (Bell 1997:81) so as to achieve objectives meaningful to particular social groups. Viewed from this perspective ritual is then both practical know-how and simultaneously strategic action (Crossley 2004a: 41, Bell 1997:82).

Mundane, routine, individual and collective ritual practices constitute the foundation of social activity, for they sustain minor and major social processes which underpin the general order of social life (Giddens 1984). Sport is no exception, as its order is also based on mundane ritual practices, yet there is little sociological material on sport at this level of analysis, and even anthropology with its

overwhelmingly ethnographic focus can be found wanting in this regard. Indeed Klein (2002: 13) has, somewhat depressingly, portrayed the anthropology of sport as 'moribund' generally. Moreover, most of the material that there is on sporting ritual focuses upon particular competitive sporting events, rather than upon the mundane rituals which ultimately make such events possible.

To add to the small stock of literature on the everyday in sport, this paper has portrayed the distance runners'

experience of mundane ritual practices involved in preparing for, departing from, and doing daily distance running training. It has portrayed the 'work' of transformation (Turner 1988:26) which helped create a movement from the non-athletic life into the overwhelmingly corporeal world of distance running and back again. Given that there is little material at this level of analysis, there would seem to be fertile ground for the investigation of mundane ritual practices in sport generally.

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