12 Ultrarunning

Space, place, and social experience

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While the marathon is precisely defined as 26.2 miles, ultrarunning refers to any running event over 26.2 miles. Typical ultrarunning distances are 50 km, 50-miles, 100 km, and 100-miles, but also include multi-day or timed running events such as 12 or 24 hours. Notably, over 85 percent of ultra races occur on mountain trails, forest paths, or dirt surfaces ("Year in review," 2013) with elevation gains and losses substantially more than most marathons. According to *Ultrarunning* magazine, there were 30,789 finishes in the US in 2008, but by 2012 that number more than doubled to 63,530 finishes. While participation is not on the scale of the marathon, the rapid growth of ultrarunning indicates a significant interest in this particular endurance experience.

In this chapter, I explore what it means to endure in ultrarunning. In particular, I am interested in the complex ways that participants make sense of endurance as moving bodies within ultrarunning spaces. While the strict definition of ultrarunning is simply comprised of the measured distance, physical space appears to figure prominently in the production of this social space and informs what it means to endure. In order to examine these interrelated meanings, I employ LeFebvre's (1991) "spatial trialectic," in which space is considered beyond its materiality. Namely, LeFebvre theorizes space as being produced through not only by the physicality of any given place, but also by how people understand those places and how they move within those spaces. In this way, LeFebvre's (1991) spatial triad helps us move beyond simple descriptions of space and facilitates an examination of the power relations within spatial productions. In other words, LeFebvre suggested that spatial productions are always imbued with cultural and ideological values, and that there are always those who benefit and those who are excluded. In particular, I consider ultrarunning spatial practices as visible markers of the ideal citizen in a neoliberal context.

At its core, neoliberalism positions individuals as unequivocally responsible for the consequences of their actions. Thus, ideal neoliberal citizenry is displayed by making individual choices among various economic and social options that satisfy their own needs and desires (Larner, 2000). Further, these desires often align with socially conscious values that become a form of individual empowerment. The heightened emphasis on the individual has unintended consequences. Namely, neoliberal logic "uses progressive social values while the consequences

of these practices tends toward an increasing striation of society along both economic and social lines" (Erikson, 2011, p. 479). One outcome of this logic is the conflation of rational action and morality (Harvey, 2005). As a result, the neoliberal citizen becomes a desired position *because* progressive social values are overtly supported despite the fact that, paradoxically, these choices may reproduce inequalities. I am especially interested in the ways that "moving forward" in ultrarunning sustains such neoliberal sensibilities, becoming simultaneously a sporting site for empowerment, contradiction and marginalization.

A note on methods

My analysis is based on data from an ethnographic study of ultrarunning conducted from 2009 to 2013. Data collection consisted of interviews, participant observation, and observation. I also gathered media data comprised of blogs, websites, magazines, and 25 podcasts of interviews with ultrarunners. I conducted 32 semi-structured interviews, ran seven ultras, and volunteered at 12 races over the course of four years. Data analyses were ongoing. All interviews were transcribed and media content were analyzed via two processes. First, directed content analysis (Hsiu-Fang & Shannon, 2005) was employed to identify key elements of the spatial triad. Directed content analysis involves beginning with predetermined codes. As such, I began with the three definitions of the spatial triad, showing how each manifests in ultrarunning. Given that these moments of space are interrelated and interdependent, I engaged in an iterative process to confirm or disconfirm particular aspects of ultrarunning that fit within these theoretical constructs (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). Second, I employed a dialectic approach, which focuses on the tensions and contradictions that emerge in the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991). This approach facilitated identification of the complex, often paradoxical, relationships between ultrarunners' everyday practices, beliefs, and values that arose from the synergistic relationships among the three elements. Finally, utilizing the dialectic approach, I conclude with implications of these findings within the neoliberal context.

Lefebvre's re-conceptualization of space

Lefebvre's (1991) consideration of space begins with a critique of the ways that space is constructed in the modern era. Namely, he shows how space becomes predominantly understood as a tangible, physical entity that can be measured, described, and categorized through scientific explanations. He observed that these ways of understanding space relegates all conceptions of space to "Euclidean space which philosophical thought has treated as an 'absolute'" (p. 285). LeFebvre argued that through this lens space becomes a static thing, only relevant enough to be described as where life occurs. Furthermore, static space becomes attached to specific socially constructed mental propositions about what that space means. For instance, ultrarunning spaces can be understood in terms of many physical aspects including distance, total elevation gain and loss,

smooth terrain, rooty or rocky terrain, ascent and descent parameters in terms of gain/loss per mile, aid station locations, locations of easy access points, and descriptions of sections of trail that are remote. These scientific descriptions serve as the "absolute." In the case of ultrarunning, these concrete descriptions of ultrarunning spaces produce the mental representation that ultrarunning is about overcoming these absolute challenges. One outcome is that ultrarunning spaces described in this way positions "endurance" as an abstract concept. Lefebvre argued that this perspective is incomplete because it fails to take into consideration the physical and social realities of the lived experience, which leaves "our lived experiences estranged from the conceptions that purport to represent them" (Watkins, 2005, p. 210). Correspondingly, such considerations of space disassociate the lived experiences of ultrarunning bodies from what it means to endure in ultrarunning.

In order to understand more fully what it means to endure in ultrarunning, I drew on Lefebvre's (1991) reconsideration of space, which views space as a dynamic interplay of direct experiences and discursive constructions of space. Thus, space becomes a fundamental way in which we understand the world and, as living bodies in spaces, become key elements in (re)creating those fundamental understandings. In order to engage this dynamic, Lefebvre proposed a way of theorizing space that would render these relationships visible, the spatial triad. The triad is composed of three viewpoints: discursive constructions of space, everyday practices that are viewed as "normal" within spaces, and the ways that people actually act in spaces. LeFebvre considered the triad a conceptual tool given that the interactions between the three positions are inseparable, continuously and iteratively informing each other. He further suggested that it was important "to pay critical attention to the ways in which spaces are produced and maintained through social conflicts that are inherently political and ideological (van Ingen, 2003, p. 202). In other words, to understand lived experiences requires understanding what each of these three concepts consists of in any given space and how these elements work together synergistically to both reproduce dominant power relations as well as provide opportunities to resist and reconfigure power relations. To this end, Lefebvre intended the spatial triad to be a practical entry into the complex relationships between the abstract and the lived experience. Elaborating on the significance of Lefebvre's spatial triad, Watkins (2005) noted,

> It is this process of creation and being, the production of present space rather than the privileging of a singular aspect of space, which needs to be apprehended as fully as possible if a richer understanding of the world is to be achieved.
>
> (p. 211)

In what follows, I employ Lefebvre's spatial triad as a practical approach to bridge the abstract and lived experience in order to gain deeper understandings of ultrarunning endurance and the ideological implications.

The spatial triad: conceptions and manifestations in ultrarunning

Lefebvre's (1991) first kind of engagement with space is called "representations of space" (p. 38). This concept refers to the "logic and forms of knowledge, and the ideological content of codes, theories, and the conceptual depictions of space" (Shields, 1999, p. 163). Lefebvre considered this aspect of space to be the most dominant form of thinking about space in the modern world. This form of space is the discursive construction of space. Specific forms of knowledge in ultrarunning include the logic of longer distances and knowledge about how the terrain, weather, and rules shape the experience. For example, the longer the race, the steeper the terrain, or the more technical the running surface, the more difficult the race is perceived to be. Extreme temperatures bring in other difficulties. An ultra taking place in mostly wilderness versus being highly accessible also affects how ultrarunners approach the undertaking. The detailed knowledge of distances between aid stations as well as rules around the type of and how much support from others is allowed also make up representations of space. More importantly, the ideological content of these representations of space shapes the meaning of challenge for ultrarunners.

The dominant mental representation (meaning) attached to these absolutes is that the greater the challenge, the more runners value the experience. They often constructed this experience as restorative as illustrated by one runner, who indicated, "It wasn't pleasant, but I bounced back renewed, awakened and rejuvenated" (Tim). Another runner reflected on why she finds a difficult race more satisfying than one that feels easy says, "people DNF [did not finish] from races all the time … it is always an option … but when we push through, we restore our faith in ourselves. We fill up our holes" (Sandy). Race directors shape these experiences by establishing races that take place on physically challenging terrain. As one race director said, "I go out of my way to have challenging races … I want them to go through a lot of different emotions out there" (Joe). The "conceptual depictions" of ultrarunning spaces position them as "absolute" physical difficulties, that when overcome, lead to an improved sense of well-being.

Lefebvre's (1991) second concept in his triad is spatial practice. Spatial practice consists of "commonsense" understandings about what activities happen within which spaces (Friedman & van Ingen, 2011; Simonsen, 2005). For Lefebvre, spatial practices are everyday routines, the movements and physical activities that occur automatically and unreflectively. While ultrarunning is not an everyday activity, there are specific practices that are considered routine within these spaces. The strongest practice considered routine in ultrarunning is that walking and power hiking are considered a normal part of "running." These particular practices become very apparent when newcomers from other types of distance running, marathon distance or shorter, take up ultrarunning. As one accomplished distance runner but newcomer to ultrarunning noted,

> I had to give up the idea that I was going to be able to run the whole time. That was the hardest thing because you just didn't do that [walk] in these other races, it was considered a failure, but in ultrarunning, it's a necessity. (Sam)

Many runners remarked that it takes time to learn both physically and mentally how to transition between running, walking, and power hiking, but that this skill eventually becomes second nature and is essential to success. As Sally noted, "I got really good at going between walking and running, which helped me be more efficient out there." Another common practice is carrying extra clothing, food, and water. Even though aid stations containing food, water, and electrolyte drinks are dispersed throughout ultra races, eating and drinking between aid stations is common. The extra clothing is carried because of the wilderness settings in which access to help is often many hours away. These practices are based on the common understandings that the amount of time between aid stations can vary significantly depending on the concrete, physicality of those spaces.

The third aspect of Lefebvre's (1991) spatial triad considers spaces of representations. These moments are those "as directly *lived* [emphasis in the original] through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of "inhabitants" and "users"' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). In other words, spaces of representation are those lived moments in which people simultaneously negotiate the representations of space and spatial practices, which produce "specific ways of knowing" (Collinson, 2008, p. 46). There are two important possibilities that arise out of this dynamic. On the one hand, it is the lived space that "forms, informs and facilitates the deviations, diversity and individuality that are a fundamental aspect of any social encounter" (Watkins, 2005, p. 213). Lefebvre was insistent upon the importance of this experiential aspect of space, noting that discursive constructions of space and commonly understood spatial practices do not account for all the ways that people live and move in spaces. It is attention to lived space that allows for identifying moments when conventional understandings of spaces are resisted or modified. On the other hand, it is lived space where unreflective movements and physical activities occur that become powerful reproductions of the power relations already present in any given space. It is the complexities and paradoxes that emerge from these two possibilities to which I now turn.

The problematization and privilege of pace

Ultrarunning spaces complicate traditional understandings of distance running that depend on the scientific measurements of time and distance (Bale, 2004). In most distance running training practices and racing aims are governed by minutes per mile. The goal for most distance runners is to run faster in terms of absolute pace. However, in ultrarunning, pace becomes much more fluid and relative. One contributor to the destabilization of pace as an absolute measurement of improvement or success is the physical space in which most ultra races take

place. Given that over 85 percent of ultras take place on trails in parks or national forests, ultra races are subject to highly varied terrain, weather, trail conditions, and elevation gains/losses. Furthermore, despite there being four common distances in ultrarunning (50 km, 50 miles, 100 km, 100 miles), courses are never measured precisely. One outcome is that an advertised 100-mile race could be 103 miles in reality. An analysis of the spaces of representation (lived experience) of moving over ultrarunning courses reveals that high variability in the ultrarunning physical spaces results in high variability of pace. To illustrate the significance of this difference, I consider the average elevation gains/losses of marathons compared to ultra races.

According to a marathon pacing website (Maclin, 2014), most marathons do not exceed 1,000 feet gain/loss for the entire marathon. In contrast, 3,000–6,000 feet gain/loss for an entire 50 km (31 miles) would be in the normal range ("Year in review," 2013). This increase in total gain/loss in ultra races also results in either significantly steeper sections or hills that last significantly longer in any given race compared to the average marathon. As noted above, one spatial practice that facilitates moving over this terrain is varying pace from walking to running, resulting in pace difference averages from 8-minutes per mile to 30-minutes per mile. Other factors result in large differences in pace during any ultra race. For instance, rain produces muddy conditions that slow down runners. Extreme weather can mean bringing along clothing or other supplies in a pack that makes one go slower due to carrying added weight. In this way, pace becomes destabilized as an absolute measurement in ultrarunning.

Such destabilization opens up multiple meanings associated with endurance. Most importantly, endurance becomes the ability to complete the distance. The spatial practices of walking, power hiking, and running are engaged to make completing the distance more possible for more people. These spatial practices help produce the representation of space (meaning) that finishing an ultra signifies success. A second practice that emerges via the representations of space lens is that runners talk more about what their next challenge will be in terms of increasing the difficulty or attempting longer distances. Specifically, overcoming challenges (representations of space) combines with acceptance of widely varied pace (spatial practices) to produce the desire to engage in subsequent ultra races in which pace will inevitably get slower. As Holly noted when talking about her next ultra,

> I know I can run 100 miles, so I'm looking for something that will be harder because I don't know if I can do that. That's why I keep putting my name in for the Hardrock 100 [a race that takes place between 8,000–14,000 feet with a gain/loss of 66,000 feet].

More recently, 200-mile trail races are becoming more prevalent. Notably, the 205-mile Tor de Geants in Italy has been around since 1999, and there will be at least five 200-mile races in the United States in 2015. One ultrarunner remarked, "It's about seeing where your ceiling is and realizing it might be higher. Can I

go farther? I don't know. It's pushed by a series of I don't knows." These questions are notably different from other distance runners where the question is more frequently, "Can I go faster?"

It is the lived experiences of ultra races that in turn shape the representations of space in an iterative manner. Specifically, the relationship between time and space is continually re-imagined. Amy's description about how she views success illustrates this nuanced troubling of time and distance. She commented,

> the mountains and trails don't really care about time. It will take what it takes to go up and down a trail and that trail will never change. In the long run, who cares? What does it matter if I finish a race in 32 hours or 28 hours? I've had this relationship with the mountains and my running and that's a beautiful thing.

Another runner confirms the idea that the experience is more valued than going fast when he stated that he had "extraordinary moments of elation for a million reasons, nearly none of which had anything to do with running quickly" (Sam). In contrast to the marathon, endurance in ultrarunning becomes the experience itself, which further relegates pace as much less relevant to abstract understandings of ultrarunning. The experience becomes another way of gaining a sense of well-being, a significant representation of space in ultrarunning. Thus, the three forms of space work together synergistically to produce ultrarunning spaces, that in turn shape ultrarunners' experiences and understandings of their practices. More importantly, the interrelationship of the triadic elements lead to a desire to increasingly experience greater challenges requiring more time on the trails, which is valued as an experience in and of itself.

While most ultrarunning bodies move within the abstract understanding that finishing and enjoying the experience equates to success, there are elite runners who aim not only to finish, but to finish ahead of other runners. The spatial practices during a race with respect to these faster bodies weaves additional, contradictory representations of space into the physical spaces of ultrarunning. Namely, slower runners always give the right of way to faster runners. Sometimes these practices become official stated rules, other times they are grounded on common understandings that privilege faster bodies. As such, the spatial practices of ultrarunning infuse these spaces with a representation of space aligned with dominant representations of space attached to most other forms of distance running. Because of these spatial practices, the trails become re-appropriated space during ultra races. Namely, forest trails were built for leisure, facilitating the movement of people through wilderness spaces for enjoyment of natural beauty. The representations of space of forest trails from this perspective results in trail etiquette for hikers that gives people moving uphill the right of way. However, during ultra races, the trails become a social space altered by the spatial practices of ultrarunners. Bodies move faster in these spaces and faster bodies are privileged regardless of direction. In this way, trails become sites for active personal achievement rather than for passive personal enjoyment.

Yet, even these faster bodies are shaped by the representations of space in ultrarunning. Specifically, the idea that the experience itself defines success manifests in how elite ultrarunners talk about what makes for a good race. Notably, winning does not always equate to a good race while feeling good during the race does. A common understanding of good races of elite ultrarunners is illustrated well in the following comment:

> A good race for me is feeling good, not performance. It's being able to have lows and highs, physically and mentally, but really, it's about staying out of those really horrible times. I'm feeling happy, dancing, enjoying the terrain, and being happy. It's this intense feeling that has nothing to do with performance. I've had races I've won and not wanted to talk about because I didn't feel like it was a good race because I pushed too hard. Those are not good races.
>
> (Ana)

Another runner confirms this idea, when he says, "It's really about staying out of the pain cave" (Justin). Thus, through the interactions of the three elements of spatial production, the complexity of ultrarunning spaces becomes apparent. While going fast is a spatial practice within ultrarunning by some runners, most remain unconcerned with pace as a definitive measure of success. In this way, the representations of space and spaces of representations (lived experiences) are mutually constitutive in unique ways for runners of varying paces. Runners draw on various representations of space specific to ultrarunning and from the larger distance running domain, combining them in individual ways. These complex intersections between ultrarunning specific representations of space, dominant social constructions of distance running, and spaces of representations (lived experiences) result in multiple, often contradictory spatial practices within ultrarunning.

"Do what works for you"

While Lefebvre (1991) suggested that representations of space and spatial practices work together to constitute the basic framework for moving within spaces, he asserted that spaces of representation (lived experiences) are equally important to the production of spaces. Common sense understandings of how to (not) plan for a race rely substantially on personal experimentation and in the moment judgments. In this way, ultrarunning practices challenge the priority of planning found in high performance distance running (Denison, 2010), recreational runners to a lesser extent (Bridel & Rail, 2007), and other sports (Heikkala, 1993; Shogan, 1999). For instance, although nutrition protocols and race strategies are shared among ultrarunners and specific ideas governing these practices exist, the dominant way to approach endurance is to "do what works for you" in training and in the moment determined by lived experiences. Ultrarunners at all levels talked about the need to draw from what other people are

doing and experiment. When talking about nutrition, Alex observed, "There's a middle ground that everyone can start with, but in the end, you have to figure out what works for you. Everyone is so individual." The "middle ground" manifests as guidelines such as: eat early and eat often; optimum caloric intake is 200–300 calories per hour; keep electrolytes balanced; and, train the body to use fat as a fuel among others. Despite the prevalence of scientific knowledge that makes up some of the spatial practices in ultrarunning, lived experiences are essential to ultrarunning spaces. One runner sums up the methods in which ultrarunners engage in the following:

> After doing this for a while, I'm better about figuring out what's going on when I feel crummy in a race. Based on how I feel, I go through a list of things that I think it might be, like have I eaten enough, is it an electrolyte thing or do I just need to slow down. You never know what's going to happen in an ultra. I just do what seems right at the time.
>
> (Andy)

In the above comment, it is evident that prior lived experiences both shape the disruption, an issue in moving forward during an ultra race, as well as inform the spatial practices of ultrarunners in individual ways. Thus, responding to issues during a race requires an intuitive, highly flexible response, resulting in a new lived experience upon which runners can draw in any future moment. It is the balance of all these aspects working together that produces ultrarunning performances rather than the strict adherence to a specific plan.

Despite the fact that lived experiences inform divergent, individually based practices with respect to planning (Watkins, 2005), and position ultrarunning practices as different from other distance running, the increased emphasis on these experiences intensifies the importance of the individual. One effect is heightened self-surveillance and self-responsibility during races in order to avoid the DNF, did not finish (Hanold, 2010). Avoiding the DNF becomes the primary logic of competing in this context and often shapes spatial practices in ways similar to rigid protocols. For instance, one common spatial practice is setting watches to beep at regular intervals in order to remind runners about nutrition intake. Another practice is to carry information about location of aid stations, distances and estimated times of arrival at each, which regulate movement during races. Paying attention to lived experiences in order to better move forward reinforces ultrarunning's representations of space in ways that privilege bodies able to complete ultra distances. As Heikkala (1993) noted, such focus on performance, however it is defined, functions as power over bodies in ways similar to strict plans. Although the basic frameworks of ultrarunning need to be transcended by engaging what is learned during lived experiences in order to be successful, success is reinforced as an individual accomplishment. These practices complicate other common understanding of ultrarunning, to which I now turn.

Social support, success, and significance

Another significant finding that emerges from ultrarunners' lived experiences is relying on others for success. While social support during training runs and races manifests in many micro-level behaviors, these practices can be grouped into two distinct, interrelated types. First, runners overwhelmingly talked about moments during races in which they experience mutual encouragement in relation with another runner. David elaborated on the importance of social support during his first 100 km ultra.

> I was sitting on the side of the trail. I was really in the pain cave when a runner came up behind and said, "come on man, you can just walk with me." I thought, ok, I can walk. Was he a distraction from the pain? Was it because I realized that I wasn't the only one feeling this way? I'm not sure, but we talked and I learned a lot from him. Then, he took a dive the last five miles and within the context of one race, the tables were turned. When we finished, we knew it was because of helping each other out.

Similar to individual body knowledge, these experiences are talked about as occurring spontaneously, emerging from the experience itself. The lived experience of social support becomes part of ultrarunning spatial practices as evidenced when ultrarunners articulate the common understanding that people help each other. Alison illustrates this sentiment well when she commented, "When I'm in a race, even if I have a race goal, if I see someone having trouble, I'm gonna check in with them, you know, walk with them, make sure they're ok." Here, social support is part of the representations of space. The second way that social support emerges in races is through reinforcement of the eminence of the experience, a key representation of space in ultrarunning detailed above. Dan noted that at the start line of his very first 50-mile race, runners were saying, "Let's have some fun and enjoy this experience." Ultimately, social support can be viewed as a spatial event that is produced through the interaction of the triadic elements.

Social support takes on another meaning when examining ultrarunning lived experiences, which "allows us to identify the moments when conventions of moving through or knowing space are disrupted and new spatial practices and experiences of space become possible" (Jeyasingham, 2014, p. 1884). Further experiences of ultrarunning spaces that become possible are the development of significant social relationships, which are unequivocally framed as different from other types of distance running as well as everyday life. Runners agreed that the slower pace, induced by the length and terrain of ultras, facilitates these social relationships. Brenda illustrates this idea when she said,

> In road running, it always seemed like people were going fast, but in ultra, the nature of the training, the nature of the events lend themselves to really getting to know people. You're running slow enough that you can talk. It's amazing how intimate your conversations can be with other people. Something about being out there makes you more talkative.

In addition, the following comments illustrate how runners' lived experiences contribute to a complex web of mental representations in ultrarunning:

> During the race I never felt alone; a feeling quite different from that which I experience on a daily basis waiting for public transportation in the big city surrounded by lots of people.
>
> (Stewart)

> When in real life do you get to have a four hour conversation with someone? It leaves me feeling really connected.
>
> (Brenda)

In this way, previously understood ways of moving through distance running spaces, which entail a focus on speed and individual achievement (Bale, 2004; Chase, 2008; Denison, 2007), are disrupted. However, while the social relationships enhanced through ultrarunning provide unique opportunities for connection, these connections tend to strengthen relationships among like minded people, often bolstering prevailing economic and social divisions (Erikson, 2011). It is this issue that I take up next.

Spaces of (in)(ex)clusion

LeFebvre (1991) contended that social inequalities are often concealed in spaces due to who does and does not occupy those spaces. He noted, "there are beneficiaries of space, just as there are those excluded from it (p. 289). He further pointed out that spaces may be discursively constructed as inclusive or considered "open" to everyone, but fail to function as inclusive spaces upon examination of who occupies spaces. This move towards examining the production of space requires engagement with the tensions and contradictions of social space. As such, I consider the discursive constructions of inclusivity in ultrarunning as compared to which bodies occupy these spaces, noting which bodies are invisible or silenced.

Not only do ultrarunners construct their sport as an inclusive, supportive running space based on the social support they feel, they consistently express that ultrarunning is open to everyone because it does not require much gear or equipment. The framing of inclusivity as related to economic means is dominant throughout ultrarunning narratives. Runners frequently remarked that only shoes are required, race fees are cheaper than the marathon, and gear is cheaper than for triathlons. Nowak (2010) even summed up his study of Polish ultrarunners' opinions of whether or not ultrarunning is healthy by noting that, "Ultramarathons are egalitarian sports events open to everyone. They do not require any expensive sports equipment or special athletic skills" (p. 38). Furthermore, observations based on my personal experiences in ultra races and training reveals that social justice issues are part of the ultrarunners' public discourse. Open support for racial equality and gay marriage frequently emerged in conversations

on the trail within the context of discussing current events. Despite the discursive production of ultrarunning spaces as inclusive, further examination of this social space reveals notable contradictions.

The bodies that take up ultrarunning spaces are predominantly white, well-educated, married men. Recent studies have shown that 80 percent of ultrarunners are men (Hoffman & Fogard, 2012), 70 percent are married (Knechtle, 2012), and nearly half of all ultrarunners have either undergraduate (43.6 percent) or graduate degrees (37.2 percent). As one runner observed, "It's a fairly homogenous group" (Anna). As van Ingen (2004) noted in her study of marathoners, "Whiteness conveys privilege and normalcy so pervasive that it's virtually invisible to its beneficiaries" (p. 264). Similarly, the dominance of white, heterosexual, middle/upper-class men in ultrarunning renders privilege invisible. Notable evidence of this invisibility is that there are no ultrarunning demographic studies that include race or ethnicity as a category. Further, diversity is a word that is practically non-existent in any ultrarunning media. I found only one blog post that talked about the lack of racial diversity in ultrarunning. Roes (2012) observed, "there just aren't that many non-white and/or lower economic class individuals taking part in this sport" (para. 2). Finally, I found only one ultrarunning website post about gay ultrarunners. The website host remarked, "From my perspective, there are very few–if any–elite LGBT MUT (acronym-palooza!) runners, and I can't figure out why" (Schranz, 2014). There were only two responses in the comments below regarding this comment. "Thanks for the video about Matt Llano. I'm a gay ultra runner, and wish there were more out athletes out there!" and "Hm, I thought I was the only one." These comments combined with the lack of commentary on this post and general non-recognition of LGBTQ ultrarunners renders this group invisible within ultrarunning spaces. Notably, I never encountered openly gay ultrarunners, and only one African-American runner along with a few self-identified Hispanic and Asian runners. I suggest that it is the un-remarkability of male, white, heterosexual, and middle/upper class bodies in ultrarunning spaces that sustains the invisibility and silencing of these groups despite discursive constructions to the contrary.

Conclusion

What does it mean to endure in ultrarunning? At the most basic levels, ultrarunning endurance is about moving over distances longer than a marathon. It is further understood as overcoming the difficulties that the physical spaces present. Yet, through LeFebvre's spatial triad nuanced understandings of what it means to endure in ultrarunning are possible. The synergistic relationship among representations of space, spatial practices, and spaces of representations reveals that common (Western) understandings of distance running are challenged while dominant ideologies and social power relations are sustained.

Consideration of ultrarunning's social space reveals that ultrarunning endurance is shaped by practices that emphasize flexibility rather than tightly

monitored ways of moving forward. Ultrarunners rely on training and planning in order to be flexible on race day. This flexibility is evident at the individual and social level. Ultrarunners develop individual body knowledge so that they can be flexible in the moment and respond to how they are feeling. Training and race practices are guided more by "feel" and loose guidelines than by strict adherence to plans and scientific principles. In addition, they count on the norms in ultrarunning to engage social support for race success and for social well-being. These practices contrast prior understandings of running that reflect modern society's emphasis on planning, efficiency, and scientific perspectives such as pace and focused, efficient training (Bale, 2004, 2005; Denison, 2007). Such valuing aligns with Ong's (1999) notion of the "flexible citizen" who "respond[s] fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions to accumulate power and capital" (p. 6). Ong posited that the flexible citizen is positioned as a key attribute within the context of late capitalism.

As van Ingen (2004) noted, "a Lefebvrean production-oriented approach to examining space would more clearly link the relation between identity and the spaces through which identity is produced and expressed" (p. 208). Here I consider the production of the "flexible" ultrarunner as a specific form of identity work particularly salient within the context of late capitalism. While flexibility as a practice for success distinguishes ultrarunning from prior practices in distance running, I propose that it reflects "a new type of capitalist production" (Kedhar, 2014, p. 25) that Harvey (1989) suggests is a result of and response to volatile, uncertain competitive environments in a more global marketplace. This new form of production revolves around flexibility (Harvey, 1989) and depends on the flexible citizen (Ong, 1999) who is able to employ creative strategies to adapt to new environments. Ong argues that more than simply a practical strategy, flexibility can be a way for the late modern individual to gain social and cultural capital. The reliance on flexibility as the foremost value and strategy for success in ultrarunning is not only a practical strategy as suggested by the runners' practices and mental abstractions of what it takes to succeed, but also provides a site in which flexibility helps them accumulate social capital. Through the demonstration of "successful flexibility" in increasingly more difficult ultra races, ultrarunners gain social capital not only within this running space but also in the larger social context. Specifically, ultrarunning endurance becomes a marker of the ideal citizen (Larner, 2000), who makes choices that result in success and satisfies individual desires. Individualism paradoxically grows stronger through the social relationships precisely because the social relationships support individual success.

Moreover, every social space has boundaries that become evident by "the 'properties' of a space" (LeFebvre, 1991, p. 289). A significant property of ultrarunning social space is the dominant visible demographic. Specifically, it is white, heterosexual, middle/upper class males who benefit from the mobilization of flexibility. While these boundaries do not appear to exist in discursive productions of ultrarunning spaces, they manifest in the relative *im*mobility of other identities to move into and be recognized in ultrarunning spaces. The spatial effect of who occupies space and who is displaced are imbued with power

relations (LeFebvre, 1991; Taylor, 1998). The sociospatial effect of the *im*mobility of other identities is the ideological positioning of flexibility as a white, heterosexual, middle/upper class, masculine characteristic. I suggest that such effects contribute to the conceptual subordination of other identities as capable of flexible citizenry and position ultrarunning endurance as a cultural signifier of the ideal citizen both conceptually and materially.

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