

**Cossacks, Holy Bread, Running Shorts and Energy Gels, the
Race for Religion in Modern Societies**

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Abstract

The main purpose of this research was to explore the relationship between religion and sports. In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, (1915) Emile Durkheim argued that religion was a function of society which contained symbols, rituals, feelings of reverence and a community of believers which provided social cohesion, social control, provided meaning and purpose to individuals and a sense of belonging in the world. The aim of this research project was to discover whether long distance running provides some, or all of the functions for society set out by Durkheim.

To do this, a qualitative research method was implemented. One round of six open ended, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted to gain an insight into the experiences of long distance runners and to understand how their involvement with long distance running may have an influence on other aspects of their lives. Thematic Analysis was employed to analyse the resulting data. What emerged through the analysis of the findings suggested that long distance running develops self discipline, provides a universally shared sense of identity amongst its advocates, which works to promote social cohesion, a shared set of beliefs, good moral conduct and positive social action. The subjective nature of an individuals 'spirituality' and its relationship with ones faith was discussed, however this study concludes that further research is needed to address the question of whether long distance running can be viewed as a form of religion.

Introduction

Religion and sport are two institutions which have helped to shape the social landscape for many people across the world. The relationship between religion and sports and to what extent religion is used in sports has been a significant area of study for sports sociologists Watson & Czech, (2005), who have recognized the importance of religion and spirituality in athlete's lives. There is a large body of academic writing that examines the symbiotic nature of religion and sport. Czech, Wrisberg, Fisher, Thompson, & Hayes, (2004), Hoffman, (1992) Jeroh, (2012), Jona & Okou, (2013), and Obare, (2000) have each studied the multi-dimensional interaction between sports and religion.

The most dominant approach administered by researchers has been through the use of quantitative measures, an example being Storch, Storch, Kovacs, Okun, & Welshe, (2003) who employed the use of the Duke Religion index to assess organisational and non-organisational dimensions of religion. The Duke Religion index is A Five-Item Measure for Use in Epidemiological Studies. However few papers have examined the importance of religion and spirituality at an individual level, or how intrinsic the relationships between religion, spirituality, prayer and sport are for those who participate in sports.

Relationship between Sport and Religion

Jeroh (2012) provided a useful paper which explores the concepts of "religion" and "sport" and offers a critical perspective into their history, relationship and common lines of development. Jeroh (2012) provides several variants on the definition of "religion" with the definition that is most relevant to this study being that of one of the leading scholars in the sociology of religion, Yinger (1957) who noted that

“Religion is a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggle with those ultimate problems of human life. It is the refusal to capitulate to death, to give up in the face of frustration, to allow hostility to tear apart ones human association”, Yinger (1957) (as cited in Jeroh 2012).

Pitts et al (1994) (as cited in Jeroh 2012) provided a broad definition of sport as

“Sport is any activity, experience or business enterprise focused on fitness, recreation, athletics or leisure. They also feel that sport does not have to be competitive nor does it always require specialised equipment or rules”.

To Pitts et al (1994), sport includes activities such as dancing, walking or running. The historical relationship between religion and sport is discussed and Jeroh (2012) roots the foundation of athletic activities firmly in religious ritual. Jeroh (2012) posits that the four “C”s (creed, code, cultus and community) which provide the basis for studying religion also pertains to the realm of sports. *Creed* being an authoritative statement of belief made by a group, used to invoke the belief that success is not achieved through losing, but by hard work, dedication and perseverance. Religion, as is sport is expressed in *codes*, which govern the behaviour of the group. In sports codes show both the athletes and the fans how to conduct themselves. *Cultus* is an aggregate of the ritual forms in a religious setting. Rituals, according to Jeroh are used in sport amongst other purposes, to recognise the competition as a whole. The fourth “C” the community can be viewed in many different ways within a sporting context, one example being the closeness of a particular team and their fans.

Further literature exploring the two concepts of sports and religion is “Sports and Religion” by Jona & Okou (2013) . This paper looked at sport and religion as essential tools for development. While this article reiterates much of the preceding article by means of the historical account of the symbiotic relationship of the two institutions, this article puts forward a number of modern parallels between religion and sports, and of the similarities

proposed, those that have most relevance to this thesis are that both religion and sport emerge out of a similar quest for perfection in mind, body and spirit. Both have events that celebrate shared values, such as commitment, hard work and community. Both have rituals before and after events. Both evoke intense emotions and give meaning to ones lives and both can be used to distract attention from important social and political issues.

Religion using sport

Eitzen & Sage (1992:1997) as cited (Watson & Czech, 2005) propose that religion has utilised sport through churches, religious leaders, and church affiliated colleges and universities and other religious organizations that are centred on sport. This is supported by Hartzel (1996) who noted that the involvement of sport activities can serve as a means of catching the interest of many un-churched people who may have a reluctance to attend church but are open to sports.

Religiosity

According to Macionis & Plummer (2005) religiosity designates the importance of religion in a person's life. A study by Storch et al (2003) explored the religiosity of 248 elite college athletes. The study explored the strength of religious faith at the University of Florida. One of the findings was that athlete's attendances at church provided an opportunity to reflect on earlier successes and to plan future ones thus attaching religious meaning to their sports participation. Another finding was that athlete's reported higher levels of religiosity and faith than non-athletes.

Kaufman and Wolff (2007) state that an increasing number of professional athletes and coaches identify themselves as evangelical Christians and the number of Christian organizations that target athletes as fertile ground for ministry outreach are expanding

rapidly. However Kaufman and Wolff (2007) find that the connection between religion and sports to be intriguing especially given what some feel are the contradictory values inherent in both social institutions. That is to say, they explore the conflicting principles between the principles of religion and sports.

Coakley (2007) offers a model of conflict, doubt, and resolution that many (Christian) athletes and coaches face as they try to reconcile their religious convictions with their competitive sports orientation. Many fail to draw connections between their religiously-based moral and ethical values with their involvement in sports. Instead, as Coakley notes, most athletes who profess a Christian conviction focus on “playing as hard and as well as possible for the glory of God, using athletic performances as a platform for giving Christian witness”

Sport using religion

Both Jona & Okou, (2013) and Jeroh, (2012) contribute interesting historical accounts of the co-existence of religion and sport, and both offer interesting parallels between the two institutions and provide examples of the intersection between religion and sport, yet neither study goes beyond the point of observational analysis, and fails to address the meanings placed on the religious practices by the athlete. Watson & Czech, (2005) revealed certain characteristics pertaining to the use of religion by sports men and women when faced with difficult phases in their sporting endeavours. However, the research does not provide an in-depth understanding of the levels of importance that the athlete places on their religion or of these rituals.

The use of rituals in sport

Obare (2000) discusses the Durkheimian belief that religion is a functional universal in all societies but it achieves that goal at the cost of any substantive content. According to

Obare (2000) religion promotes discipline, the mind is put at ease, or relaxation during the examination of the conscience, serving as an antidote to depression. Obare (2000) discusses the use of rituals amongst athletes to a greater extent and reminds the reader that rituals are grounded in religion, and that they work to reinforce values and belief. Hoffman (1992) as cited in Obare (2000) says about rituals “They frequently use rituals to make them feel as if they have some control over what happens to them. The uncertainty that exists in highly competitive sports is so great that many athletes use rituals.”

Jona & Okous, (2013) study ‘sports and Religion’ suggests that athletes and coaches use their religion as a source of psychological support as they face challenges and uncertainty in competition. It is suggested that coaches may also use various aspects of religious practice to produce team unity and to establish a basis for a form of social control over their athletes. Eitzen & Sage, (1997) as cited in (Watson & Czech, 2005) suggest that prayer is perhaps the most frequently employed use of religious ritual by coaches and athletes.

Czech et al (2004) investigated the use of Christian prayer in sport adopting an existential-phenomenological method to collect and analyse data. The participants were nine former Division I Christian athletes were interviewed using an interview guide comprising a series of open-ended questions. Findings showed that “...*ritualistic activity has a powerful influence on athletes...*” and they “... *use prayer as a coping mechanism to alleviate stress...*” (p. 6).

As mentioned above, one of reason why athletes use prayer is to help put their sporting lives into perspective. Hoffman (2002) states that the one way athletes can justify the self-focused, self-indulgent way of thinking that is so pervasive in competitive sports is to define sports participation as an act of worship and as an avenue of giving witness. Coakley (2003) in his book “sport in society” suggests six possible reasons athletes utilize religious

prayer: as a coping mechanism for uncertain stressful situations; the help live a morally sound life; to sanctify an athlete's commitment to sport; to put sport into perspective; to establish a strong bond between teammates and to maintain social control.

Czech & Watson (2005) employed the findings of two other studies (Park 2000 & Vernacchia et al 2000) which investigated coping strategies used by national Korean athletes (Park, 2000) and the determinants of professional and personal development in Olympic track and field athletes (Vernacchia et al., 2000). The results of both these investigations identified prayer as an important factor in coping with stress and anxiety, attaining peak performance and providing meaning to sports participation.

Spirituality

The concept of spirituality in the western world has been traditionally linked to religion and the Christian church. As a theological concept, spirituality is understood as a relation to the transcendent. From psychological and humanistic perspectives, spirituality is usually defined as a broader concept, where spirituality includes both religious and humanistic worldviews. (Ronkainen, 2011)

Ronkainens paper identifies a relative neglect of spiritual and religious research in sport psychology literature and her thesis is a positive step towards understanding the need the importance of spirituality in athletes' lives.

Ronkainen (2011) wrote a master's thesis and in this article, the spiritual dimensions of running were explored. Ronkainen (2011) used theological and existential perspectives, athletic career research as well as post-sport ideologies to construct a multi-voiced representation of the spiritual meanings of endurance running. Ronkainen (2011) applied narrative, analysis, reflexivity, interpretation and theorizing to the study and aimed to gain a

deeper understanding of how distance runners negotiate dominant discourses on sport and exercise in the process of making running meaningful to them.

According to Ronkainen the research on spirituality in sport can be roughly divided along two lines—the examination of altered states in sport performance, and the construction of meaning and value. Ronkainen (2011) discusses transcendent experiences such as flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1990), runners high (Sachs 1984) & ‘being in the zone’ (Dillon and Tait 2000). In exploring flow experiences among rock climbers, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) found descriptions which he categorized as ‘...transcendent, religious, visionary’ (p. 88). According to Privette (1983) the common characteristics of peak experience and flow include absorption, clear focus, and the ‘graceful, integrated, Taoist nature of the person in the event’ (p. 1366). Privette suggested that peak experiences occur spontaneously and flow states might be facilitated.

In the second line of research, Ronkainen (2011) investigates spirituality as the deeper purpose and value in sport participation. This research line focused largely on studying religious athletes lived experiences. However Ronkainen (2011) argues that there is a lack of research on spiritual meaning of sport from humanistic perspectives. Watson and Nesti (2005) suggest that the questions and reflection of deeper meaning in sport are most likely to emerge at critical points in an athletic career such as, transitions (different level, team), retirement and career-threatening injuries.

One of the methods employed by Ronkainen was to use discourse analysis to examine the Finnish runner’s magazine *Juoksija* for the years 2001-2010. Discourse analysis is a general term for a number of approaches to analysing written, vocal, or sign language use or any significant semiotic event. *Juoksija* is published as 10 issues per year and is the only printed runner’s magazine in Finland. The magazine covers both competitive and leisure

running and also dedicates space to seasonal endurance sports such as, cross-country skiing, orienteering and cycling.

Over the 10-year span studied, they found a variety of data discussing the spiritual dimension of running, including editorials, interviews, columns and research-based popular articles. From these sources they selected 34 columns written by 17 different authors for an in-depth textual analysis. The findings and discussions section born out of the 10 year span is most interesting as she narrowed the data to get first-person accounts of spirituality, and selected the 34 most relevant columns found for textual analysis. Ronkainen found that the majority of the writers discussed spirituality from an existentialist perspective - as a discovery of a broader purpose and meaning to sport and life - not as altered psychological states in sport performance.

Could running be a form of religion?

In the last major work published by Emile Durkheim '*The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*' (1915) Durkheim argued that religious phenomena emerge in any society when a separation is made between the sphere of the profane (the realm of everyday utilitarian activities) and the sphere of the sacred (the area that pertains to the numinous, the transcendental, the extraordinary). According to Durkheim an object only becomes the one or the other depending on whether men choose to consider the practical value of the object or certain fundamental quality that have nothing to do with its basic value. (Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 1915).

Durkheim gives an example of the sacred ritual significance of the use of wine at mass, and the extent that it is considered by the believer to symbolize the blood of Christ; in this context it is plainly not just wine. Distinctions between the spheres of the sacred and the profane are always made by groups who band together in a cult and who are united by their

common symbols and objects of worship. (Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 1915).

Religion is a representation of society and when men celebrate objects they deem sacred, they unwittingly celebrate the power of their society. If religion in its essence is a transcendental representation of the powers of society, then, Durkheim argued "We must discover the rational substitutes for these religious notions that for a long time have served as the vehicle for the most essential moral ideas." (Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 1915)

Durkheim's functionalist perspective on religion classified four major functions of religion as being disciplinary, cohesive, vitalizing, and euphoric social forces. That is, religious rituals prepare men for social life by imposing self-discipline and a certain measure of asceticism. Religious ceremonies bring people together and thus serve to reaffirm their common bonds and to reinforce social solidarity. Religious observance maintains and revitalizes the social heritage of the group and helps transmit its enduring values to future generations, and Religion has a euphoric function in that it serves to counteract feelings of frustration and loss of faith and certitude by re-establishing the believers' sense of well-being, their sense of the essential rightness of the moral world of which they are a part.

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) Weber explored the development of religion from a historical perspective and tried to understand the sociological fundamentals of religious belief and practice (Share, Tovey, & Corcoran, 2007). Weber theorised that religious Ideas were linked to the economic structure of society by actively shaping how individuals lived their lives. Weber's main concern was to explore how a set of beliefs about the world and the after-world was linked to individual or group behaviour, the kernel of his analysis was how an adherence to an ascetic form of Protestantism led people

towards a particular way of thinking about work, social values and social action (Share, Tovey, & Corcoran, 2007).

The distinctive Contribution made by these two sociologists, moving beyond the common sense understanding of religion as dealing with mystery and the supernatural, but instead to emphasise the social nature of religion has been the foundation on which the premise for this research study has been formed.

The three dominant (monotheistic) religions in the western world, Christianity, Judaism and Islam include a belief in a supernatural deity. This would mean and form of sport cannot be considered religious. However this belief in a deity is not universal, as some forms of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, for example, are not theistic. In fact, numerous definitions of religion do not include reference to a supernatural being.

Typically, religious adherents use spiritual, mental and physical disciplines, often quite austere ones at that, to grow closer to the divine and to follow a path of true religious devotion. Asceticism is defined as a “severe self-discipline and avoidance of indulgence.” Whatever form asceticism takes it always involves discipline for the sake of advancement. To outside observers some of these grave disciplines seem strange, however for habitual long distance runners, self-imposed discipline, and mastery of the mind, body and soul is a way of life which leads them along their spiritual path.

The aim of this research project is to explore whether participation in long distance running can provide some of the functions for society such as the disciplinary, cohesive, vitalizing, and euphoric social forces as set out by Emile Durkheim. In doing this, the study will examine the experiences of long distance runners and will try to understand if long distance running can be classified as a form or religion.

Methodology

The researcher's main aim in conducting this study was to gain an in-depth insight into the relationship between religion and sports and to explore the possibility that running could be viewed as a form of religion. A qualitative research method was implemented for this study as it was considered the most appropriate method for rich data collection. Denzin and Lincoln (as cited in Ritchie & Lewis 2003) offered the following working definition of qualitative research:

“Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices... turn the world into a series of representations including interviews, conversations, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense to, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them.”

While quantitative research methods would deliver a larger sample size, this method relies on statistics formulated through numerical data and would fail to provide any insight or meaning to the data collected. The researcher chose to conduct in depth semi-structured interviews with the purpose of gaining a greater understanding of the experiences of long distance runners. This approach provided the participants with an opportunity to discuss their opinions, share their views, and experiences in detail without being restricted by the limitations of formatted questionnaires.

Research Design

A qualitative research method was adopted for this study as it was considered the most suitable technique of data collection. The method of conducting this qualitative study included one round of six open ended, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. According to Hammersley & Atkinson (1995) the expressive power of language provides the most important resource for accounts. A crucial feature of language is its capacity to present

descriptions, explanations and evaluations of almost infinite variety about any aspect of the world, including itself.

An interview schedule (*see appendix 1*) was designed by the researcher deriving from previous literature, the aims of this study and with the intention of gathering rich data. One pilot interview was conducted to test the validity of the interview questions. The six in depth semi-structured Interviews were conducted which allowed the participant's time and space to discuss their running experiences in a relaxed manner. The researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim and thematic analysis was applied to analyse the data gathered from the interviews.

Participants and Sampling

The six participants who took part in the semi structured interviews were selected by means of criterion based sampling. With criterion based samples, the sample are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central theme or puzzles which the researcher wishes to explore (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 78). For the purpose of this study the participants were deliberately selected by the researcher due to their regular participation in long distance running.

The standard definition for long distance running is anything past the marathon, or 42km. However, the shortest standard distance that is considered an ultra-marathon is the 50 kilometer distance. Other standard distances are the 50 mile, 100 mile, 100 km, and a series of events that last for specified time periods such as 6 hour, 12 hour, 24 hour, 48 hour, and 6 days.

Each person was contacted by telephone in the first instance. Once further contact details were received, each participant received an email with a detailed letter of consent (*see appendix 2*). The letter of consent further explained the aims of the study that participation

was confidential and that following the interview, the participants could choose to have their interview removed from the study prior to submission. Each participant took part in the study of their own will and none received compensation in any manner for their time and cooperation.

The participants who took part in this study were both males and females who engage regularly in long distance running. The sample consisted of four men and two women.

Materials/apparatus

The interview schedule contained 16 semi structured questions with scope to elaborate into other areas. The questions used in the interview schedule were grouped into four sections. These sections were used to (1) explore the participants level of commitment and discipline, (2) understand how running influenced the social, community and family aspects of their lives, (3) gain an insight into the emotive and psychological effect of long distance running, and (4) if any rituals or objects were used, and why. A HTC ONE mobile phone was used to record each interview, and then uploaded to a password protected USB key via a Packard bell laptop before being transcribed verbatim excluding any identifying material using the Express Scribe software. The software used for the thematic analysis of the data was the QSR Nvivo 10 with all the interviews and participant information being safely stored on the password protected USB key.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher was provided with a consent form from the college which participants were obliged to sign prior to commencing the interviews. The consent form explained who the researcher was, the purpose of the study and a guarantee of confidentiality. Each participant was assigned a fictional name to support anonymity. Each participant was afforded the right to withdraw at any stage of the process up to the date of submission. The

participants were presented with the opportunity to ask any questions before and after the interview. The interviewer received the signed consent form before commencing each interview. The researcher was very aware that any discussion around people's life experiences, motivations to run and psychology when engaged in the activity could arouse a strong emotional response through the interview. This was explained to each participant prior to commencing and each were reminded that at any stage they were free to pause, stop or withdraw from the interview. During one of the interviews a participant spoke of family members who had passed away, while the interviewer was attentive and sensitive to the conversation, recording was paused to offer the participant time to reflect further on the memories of their loved ones in the absence of a recording device.

Analysis

Thematic analysis was the method chosen for this research. Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The process for this research began with the transcription and reading of the data, with note taking on initial ideas. The researcher used the QSR Nvivo 10 package to generate initial codes, which are the interesting features of the data across the entire data set and then collated data relevant to each code. The researcher began searching for emerging themes in a manner similar to coding, by collating codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. Continuation entailed reviewing themes and creating a thematic 'map' of the analysis and defining and naming the themes. Continued analysis of

the data provided the researcher with rich extracts to take from the themes to explore the relevance to the study being conducted and were then used to write up the report.

Procedure

Each interview took place in the participants homes at a time which best suited the participants. The interviews ranged between 25 to 55 minutes in duration and each interview was audio recorded. Prior to each interview the researcher and participant conversed helping to create a more relaxed atmosphere. During the first interview the researcher found that by trying to following the prescribed interview schedule that it led the conversation becoming disjointed, moving back and forth between themes as when the participant engaged in conversation his natural flow of dialogue lead into the different themes in an ad-hoc manner. Following this, the interviewer made every effort to be flexible during the interview and in the second interview found that by being able to ask questions from the schedule in response to the direction of the conversation created a more fluid flow of conversation throughout the interview. This approach was taken for the remaining interviews. Throughout the process the researcher felt that some of the introductory questions were redundant due to the fact that they formed the basis of the conversation which took place prior to commencing each interview, these questions were removed from the interview schedule. The researcher uploaded each interview to a laptop and used a software tool to assist in transcribing the audio recordings. Once transcribed each interview was analysed using the QSR Nvivo 10 software, with the researcher reading each interview extensively and creating codes as themes emerged from the data. This process allowed for the researcher to build on the themes which arose from the data and facilitated storing segments from each interview together as they related to the key themes.

Findings

The main goal of this research project was to gain an in-depth insight into the relationship between religion and sports and to explore the possibility that running could be viewed as a form of religion. The method of conducting this qualitative study included one round of six open ended, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. For the purpose of this study the participants were deliberately selected by the researcher due to their regular participation in long distance running.

Participant one is a 32 year old male, working in the mining industry who has engaged in running throughout his life with his involvement in other sports. His interest in running longer distances developed in 2008 and he has engaged in the sport of long distance running regularly since. Participant one runs on average four times per week.

Participant two is a 50 year old male working in the public sector and has been running as his main sport since he was 15 years old. Long distance running was a constant throughout the years for participant two and he runs approximately six times per week.

Participant three a 34 year old male working in the postal service who initially engaged in running for health reasons in 2007 and has been an active long distance runner since. Participant three runs on average 5 times per week.

Participant four is 35 year old female working as a solicitor, for whom running has always formed part of her day to day life. In her teens running became more structured and participant four completed her first marathon in 2003. Participant four engages in a variety of sports and using running as a training method most days but would also focus her attention on long distance running at various stages throughout each year.

Participant five is a 31 year old male working in the private sector who began running in 2010 and struggled to complete a single mile in the beginning. Participant five now runs long distances most weeks and engages in running nearly every day.

Participant six is a 46 year old female who works in the fitness industry who began running in 2008 following a dare to complete an event. Participant six has completed a variety of multi-sport events in which long distance running was a feature including a double Ironman. Participant six incorporates running into her training on a weekly basis which can vary between 2 to 5 times depending on the event. Each participant has their name changed to provide anonymity.

The following main research questions guided data collection in the study being conducted:

- 1) What do you feel is the most rewarding thing about long distance running?
- 2) How do you think your involvement in running has influenced you?
- 3)) In what way do you feel part of a larger community?
- 4) Could you describe a time to me when you were running and the experience was outside of your expectations?

Thematic analysis was the method chosen for this research with the following themes emerging from the data

Discipline, work ethic and the every day

The first theme to emerge from the data was what the participants felt was the most rewarding aspect of being a long distance runner and how it influenced them. What arose

from the data pertaining to this theme related to their discipline, influence on their work ethic and their approach to dealing with the obstacles of day to day living!

Mike (50)

certainly the values from the point of view that the ability to hurt, the ability to push on, the ability to say I can get to the end of this, I think that's something, that's your true running, especially the long distance stuff, that's something that can certainly assist you. Even the likes of the third level stuff when it just seems like it's all coming in around you, you know, you know I can get through this, I can get to the other end of this, I can finish this, I know I can finish this.

The above response came when Mike was asked if being a long distance runner has changed any of his beliefs. Mike is suggesting here that what he has learned from the discipline he applies to his long distance running is the ability to overcome adversity and succeed in other aspects of his life. In this extract, Paul's reference to "third level stuff" was in relation to the research project being under taken by the researcher and Paul used this example to illustrate how the belief in oneself, gained through ascetic means, in this case through running, is applicable to how one can manage challenging circumstances.

Mary (35), when asked what she found to be most rewarding aspect of running long distances stated

...Testing my mental and emotional limits. By gaining a self-belief and strength that's transferrable into everyday life. Long distance running reminds me to trust my ability even when I doubt myself. It also teaches me more about how I respond under tension and pressure.

Mary continued to explain how she felt that running was an introspective activity which provided her with a space where she could take stock of how she was living her life. When out running Mary would ask herself a variety of questions such as "am I succeeding in my ambitions?" "Am I treating family and friends as best as I can...?"

Paul (32) explains

I'm not going to say that I enjoy it, I enjoy it up to the point of the pain, and I love the part after the pain. And I suppose knowing what's after the pain is a massive factor for continuing through it all, I might be thinking, we are not built for this, I'm not built for it, but completion is the success for me, regardless of whether I won the race or not, I'm never going to win the race, that's not the point, it is a success when you do something like this, it's an achievement. Its lessons learned, my body was crying to stop, but I knew I would be better for it once I completed it.

Here Paul is reconciling not only the corporeal pain that he endured throughout an ultra-marathon event, but even when he begun to question if he, or anybody in this instance was actually equipped to tolerate such hurt Paul strove to complete the event. Winning in the sporting sense was not a factor for Paul, but in what he learned about himself. When asked during the interview, what the lessons learned were, Paul was unable to give a response as to what he felt was a direct lesson learned, but did feel that “...in every aspect of my life I know I can deal with whatever life throws at me, I can achieve it if I work hard for it...”

As discussed earlier in the first chapter of this study, Max Weber argued that as societies modernised and changed so did religion and for Weber, the emphasis was not on secularisation but on religious rationalization In his publication *The Protestant Ethic* (1905) Weber claimed that Protestantism is the most rational religion. One meaning of rationalization for Weber is a more efficient means to a given end (Goldstein, 2009).

With Weber, this process of rationalization occurs in the transition from mysticism to asceticism. Where Mysticism was passive and sought absolution from God, asceticism was directed toward participation in the world rather than limited to the sacred confines of the church (Strehle, 2008). Asceticism is defined as “severe self-discipline and avoidance of indulgence” (Chitwood, 2012). Asceticism always involves discipline for the sake of advancement. Typically, religious adherents use spiritual and physical disciplines, often quite

austere ones at that, to grow closer to the divine and to follow a path of true religious devotion. (Chitwood, 2012)

For Weber, religion provided a framework which shaped the way in which individuals live their lives. A set of beliefs about the world was linked to specific sorts of individual and group behaviour which underpinned the development of the Western European capitalist economic system, that is, adherence to a particular form of religion led people towards a particular way of thinking about their work, their values and their actions. (Share, Tovey, & Corcoran, 2007)

When questioned about whether he regarded himself as being religious, Mike found it difficult to categorise himself as to having any particular faith or religious beliefs. Initially Mike labelled himself as an atheist but withdrew that

I think that if people regard you as being an atheist they think that you have no values or belief in anything, you can't be a nice person if you are an atheist!

Mike was asked by the interviewer where he felt he got his values and beliefs from and responded with

... I do believe in a sense that you get when you run in the woods, when you run between the trees, when you run in the grass, when you run in the muck as well, there is a sense of I'm part of this and as a human, I'm part of that... . I don't believe there's any linkage between that and religion

When asked if there was any linkage to his sport Mike felt that it was very definitely linked

How does it influence me? Influence the way I think? To me it brings an honesty to the way that you feel about life and how you want to live that life, and the way that you feel about other people, you know, being honest with yourself, being honest with other people about how you deal with them

and you can say, I never tried anything underhand to that person, never tried to pull a stroke.

In the above segment Mike makes reference to an ‘influence’, this influence as suggested in the text preceding this passage by Mike was running. Mike felt that running helped form his work ethic and that it brought a degree of honesty to how he applied himself in his profession, and that it was something which develops his values and beliefs.

According to Catherine L. Albanese (as cited in Jeroh (2012) religion can be defined as a system of symbols (creed, code, cultus) by means of which people (a community) orient themselves in the world with reference to both ordinary and extraordinary powers, meanings, and values. According to Jeroh (2012) ‘*creed*’ is an authoritative statement of belief made by a group, used to invoke the conviction that success is earned by hard work, dedication and perseverance in their actions.

Paul (32)

They are all normal people,its brilliant, these guys pass you, doing the same as you, they are at their limit, you are at yours, you are done and dusted, but when they pass everyone says “keep it going” “you’re doing great”... you are encouraging them, they are encouraging you... They are so approachable too, normal, but still on a different level, but you know they are doing the same work as you, and they tell you too, “keep putting in the work, keep pushing yourself, you will get there”

Here Paul was discussing his involvement in an ultra-marathon and being in the presence of runners out on the course and elite athletes after the event. While it can be acknowledged that there is an absence of a particularly defined authoritative statement, this passage illustrates the use of explicit words, short sentences which encourage persistence, promote hard work and dedication, which this quote suggests is reverberated throughout the group

The analysis in this study found that each participant identified an association between their values and beliefs with their involvement with long distance running. With regard to how this association manifests itself through their beliefs and values, it would seem that the respondents have recognized that the activity of long distance running, the regular testing of mental and emotional limits, the disciplined approach to training, the forbearance for pain, and the belief in their ability to overcoming the challenges of the sport are represented in their approach to how they conduct themselves, in their private, social, and professional lives.

Max Weber's theory of religion did not posit a simplistic link between religion and economic activity; rather he wanted to show that religious ideas were not mechanically linked to the economic structure but actively shaped how individuals lived their lives (Share, Tovey, & Corcoran, 2007). This piece of research suggests that long distance running provides those who engage with it habitually with a way of living their day to day lives which is synonymous with Weber's hypothesise in *The Protestant Ethic*.

Rituals, symbols and ceremony strengthens group solidarity

The second theme that emerged from the data was to what degree of influence the use of rituals, symbols, and ceremonies have on individuals and on promoting group solidarity. The basis for studying religion used by Jeroh (2012) who studied religion through the four C's, the first of which is 'creed' has already been discussed in the preceding theme, and for the purpose of documenting the findings within this second theme, the researcher has employed the remaining three C's 'code, cultus and community', to create a framework in which to explore the principles of long distance running. The rationale behind this action is to examine where similarities if any exist between religion and long distance running in relation to rituals, symbols and ceremony.

When the question of whether an adherence to the codes of conduct in which the participants observed through their involvement in endurance running has or had not had an influence on their daily conduct was put to the participants, in a direct response to the question Pete (31) explained the following

Over the years, I have learned so much about how I conduct myself, that I am a role model for the kids and for the beginners in our club. They will always ask me for advice. I'm now coaching kids, and with that come responsibilities. I am teaching them how to behave, to be better people; I always look after myself, if it's working for me they will follow. This also applies to my work colleagues and friends.

What is interesting here is that Pete, through reflection on how he himself lived his life, acknowledges how the sport of running has had a positive impact, and has developed a way of living which is not solely applicable to the sport of running. Moreover Pete felt that how he now lived his life, with the direction of the codes of conduct pertaining to sports, he now sees himself to be a positive role model to not only the younger or new members of the running community but to those in his professional and private life.

Mike (50)

...when you go to a race and you put a number on, everything that you've been training for, is on that day. The great thing to me about running is, running hasn't changed since Achilles ran to Greece, whenever it was X amount of hundred years ago, thousands of years ago... The foot race is the oldest race in the world and it's the most honest race in the world and has been from the beginning of time... running to me creates an honesty about yourself and an honesty about how you deal with people and that honesty, I think, the majority of people that are friends of mine, understand that...

Mike (50) explains his take on a characteristic that has been instilled in him through a respect for the code of conduct pertaining to his involvement in running and typifies the sentiment throughout the interviews that honesty is first and foremost on the lives of the runners being interviewed.

In a discussion around her experience of being part of a running community and interactions with both new and familiar people

Mary (35)

I prefer to meet new people in social sporting settings. The juxtapose of meeting people through sport instead of other social gatherings is that you get to see a deeper, genuine side of their character exposed. My experience is that it's a more wholesome environment to gauge people and make friends. It's one of the few social environments where alcohol is not in the foreground and I value that. In terms of "going out", most of my mates are athletes, so we all share the same attitude to partying I notice conversation amongst athletes is typically enthusiastic, affirmative and forward thinking.

Mary gives an insight into how she recognises particular traits which would suggest that affability and friendliness is a dominate characteristic of the running community

And Pete (31) stated

I'm a completely different person that I was before I begun running from the way I walk, talk, eat and sleep, I've changed a lot!"

'Religious codes', like sporting codes, express the modus of behaviour of the group. Durkheim pioneered the functionalist analysis of religion and for him, the functions of religion included social cohesion, and to provide meaning through shared participation (Share, Tovey, & Corcoran, 2007). As a social institution, religion functions to preserve and communicate beliefs. Religion provides codes, or rules for moral conduct and prescribes practices deemed to be in harmony with the needs of society. This implies that religious codes of belief constrain behaviour of the community of believers to keep them in line with the norms beliefs and values of the society. (Jeroh, 2012)

What has been extrapolated from the data through the various passages in this instance is a set of characteristics, behaviours, and manners that the members of the running

community identify with, which works to promote social cohesion, a shared set of beliefs, good moral conduct and positive social action.

Jeroh (2012) defined *Religious Cultus* as being an aggregate of the ritual forms in a religious setting. For Emile Durkheim in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915), People often use religious beliefs and rituals to provide them with psychological support in the face of uncertainty. Religions provide systems of meanings that can be used to make sense out of one's life. For Durkheim (1915) rituals are necessary to bind members of a religious group together, and to allow individuals to escape from the mundane aspects of daily life into a higher realm of experience.

For Mike (50) during an ultra-Marathon event

There are certain things that happen, you know, there's a realization of where you happen to be at that particular time, where you are in relation to the world and where you are in relation to nature and to those around you, We came up onto the old Fire Road, through the woods, after we got off the heavy coarse stone on the Wicklow Way. The sun was shining down through the trees, there was a light bit of snow falling and there was snow on the ground, everybody running along in relative silence... I can't explain what that feeling felt like. I looked up and saw that and thought... Life doesn't get much better than that. It just doesn't get much better than that.

This segment of the interview with Mike exemplifies Durkheim's position that performing ceremonial rituals bind together the members of a group. In this instance it is the running event (ceremony) that Mike attends, during which, the passage would suggest that being in that particular place, its relativity with nature and being around other people who were also participating in the event, Mike had an experience which transcended the routine aspects of day-to-day life. While Mike wittingly attended the event, Mike did not draw any correlation during the interview between attending any of the events throughout the year with forming ritualistic behaviours.

Moreover when each of the six participants in this study had been asked directly if they felt if they had any rituals that they related to their involvement in long distance running all six of the respondents stated that they did not have any rituals. While this does not support the argument for ritualism in running the data would suggest, that each person engages with ritualistic behaviours unintentionally, and regularly. The response to the question pertaining to the participants having rituals is misrepresentative in the absence of a clear definition of the term ritual.

Paul (32)

...a guy who was with him was wearing a pair of socks, and the socks had RAAM , race across America, they were the branded socks, because I had the same pair of socks and I looked and I said, “ you done RAAM” and me and this guy we spoke for must be forty minutes it was brilliant. I hadn't spoken to anybody for so long about that, probably never really like that, it was brilliant, and then it ended up with a group of people listen in! This was our connection this was, we were the only two in this whole field of two and a half thousand athletes that done this you know and I suppose that's kind of like You know that's where I saw it from, it was cool it was really cool...

Symbols provide a key to the development of religion and to an understanding of what it might mean. They carry an emotional charge that arise from a feeling of belonging- the excitement and fulfilment that comes from being part of a crowd or of an intimate group (Share, Tovey, & Corcoran, 2007). For Paul, his experience above epitomised the emotional charge, that feeling of belonging, and the excitement and fulfilment that comes from being part of a crowd or of an intimate group.

According to Durkheim, a common feature for all religious systems is that they divide the symbolic world into the sacred and the profane. The profane being, the everyday matter of fact, an example being the bread and wine which we may consume at the dinner table, whereas the sacred, the bread and wine that is served at a Christian communion embodies Christian meanings.

The fourth C from Jerohs (2012) study of religion, *Religious Community* when used a marker of similarities between religion and running provided the researcher with a plethora of opinions on the running community.

Each of the respondents felt part of a larger community of runners, which crossed all borders, geographical and social.

Mary (35)

Absolutely, yes! I seldom pass a runner, in any country in the world, who will not nod or gesture an acknowledgement. I feel there is a deep camaraderie between runners; perhaps it is a messianic camaraderie, who knows?

Pete (31)

Absolutely – The running community is world-wide and I now have friends from all over the world.

Ann (46)

Ahh yeah, even though I'm a member of a running club, it's not about that, anybody who runs is a runner and we are all the same.

For the purpose of this study, and with the determination of presenting the findings in a manner which provided a least biased perspective, the researcher adopted a method used by Jeroh (2012) when examining religion, through a basis of four key principles, creed (as was discussed in the previous theme), code, cultus and community. The data gathered and reported in this section provide enough evidence to suggest that involvement in running develops and promotes a prescribed set of shared beliefs, and of group solidarity.

With regard to rituals, Durkheim argued that rituals are necessary to bind us together and allows us to escape the mundane. While the study recognises that none of the participants indicated that they actively sought out either personal or ceremonial ritual activity, this may

have been a result of the absence of a clear definition of what a ritual is. The data from the interviews would indicate that each participant engaged in ritualistic behaviours, from the frequency of their running, ranging from daily (3 participants) and between 3 to 4 times per week (3 participants), and to the regular attendance of running events which they each take part in through out the year.

In discussing the use of symbols , there was a degree of generalisation used to apply the broad meaning of what is ‘sacred’ however, in most modern cultures, people still view sacred objects with a sense of awe even when they do not believe that the objects have any distinctive influence .

Spirituality and the use of Prayer

One of the aims of the interview process was to explore the spiritual dimensions of long distance running and to gain a representation of the spiritual meanings of endurance running. Each of the participants who took part in the study spoke about how they had experienced altered states in performance at some stage of their lives.

Mary (35)

One session comes to mind; running by the sea in a build up to a marathon. It was a unique run because I felt no fatigue throughout, even though it was longer than 3hours. I felt completely connected to my surroundings. It was euphoric. I wish every run was like that!!!

Ann (46)

... It just felt, it was so tough but it was easy if that makes sense. Because I was in the right head space, I was in the right head space...

Pete (31)

When I run on my own I get a clearer picture of what I am supposed to do, I don't even realise I'm running, if I have a certain topic on my mind, like I

did 50km run last week which was a pleasure, and answered all my questions, I didn't feel like I ran 50km, I could have ran forever...

Mike (50)

...one of my favourite runs is the Old Green Road below in Fenore, and you're looking right out at the Aran Islands. Now you get that on a good day, it just doesn't get better, it just doesn't get better. The physical feeling is still tiredness, the physical feeling is, I've ran to this point and it's a tough climb up to it, but the elation and it's not even that's it's an elation, I think it's an awareness of, Jesus this is just class. It doesn't get better than that...

Each of the participants above have indicated that at certain times, running became more than just bodily movement, became less about tiring muscles, fatigue, or the application of ascetic principles in the pursuit of betterment. It had not been about the successful races, but the very ordinary runs in the forests or by the beach when what were perceived to be mundane everyday activities were unpredictably transformed into encounters with their strongest sensations of running.

The concept of spirituality has been traditionally linked to religion and the Christian church. As a theological concept, spirituality is understood as a relation to the transcendent whereas from psychological and humanistic perspectives, spirituality is usually defined as a broader concept, where spirituality includes both religious and humanistic worldviews (Ronkainen, 2011). While each of the participants in this study described what they believed to be moments of spiritual experience when out running, none of the participants felt that they held any religious beliefs. This would suggest that perception of spirituality is subjective and is open to the interpretation and the meanings that the individual place on their own 'spirituality'. Religious, humanistic, existential, and nature mystic spirituality are some of the examples of the variation in forms of spirituality.

This would support Helminiak 2008 (as cited in Ronkainen, 2011) who posits that the spirit refers to the meaning and values by which a person lives, and the deliberate concern and engagement with these is the spirituality.

The participants in this study all indicated feeling a heightened sense of awareness through running, and with the meanings and values that they placed on it, felt that these experiences were spiritual in their nature. All of the participants included the heightened awareness of their environment as part of their sensation. However Sachs (1984), (as cited in Ronkainen, 2011) suggests that the runner-specific sensation, 'runner's high', is a confusing concept for both academics and runners themselves, this 'euphoric sensation experienced during running, usually unexpected, in which the runner feels a heightened sense of wellbeing, enhanced appreciation of nature and transcendence of barriers of time and space'. This suggestion by Sachs (1984) (as cited in Ronkainen, 2011) characterises the experiences voiced by the participants in this research project.

All of the participants in this study were asked if they used prayer at any time during daily routine living or otherwise, Five respondents stated that they do not pray, with only one participant suggesting that they are thankful for their health.

Tom (34)

Id be thankful for, im always thankful for my health, and id always say thank god for my health, God, I do think about him, just I wouldn't be a practicing catholic, I wouldn't say I have a feeling or anything

The use of prayer in sports is one area of research which has been receiving particular attention, and a number of investigations (Czech & Burke, in press; Czech, Wrisberg, Fisher, Thompson, & Hayes, 2004; Park, 2000; Vernacchia, McGuire, Reardon, & Templin, 2000) as cited in (Watson & Czech, 2005) have shown that the use of prayer by athletes before,

during, an after competition to be a common and valuable practice. Spirituality is often interpreted by religious believers through the practice of prayer outside of a church environment. There are several kinds of prayer that adherents to the three monotheistic religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) practice, some examples of prayer being confession of sins, petition for needs and thanksgiving for benefits (Watson & Czech, 2005).

Psychological Health

Another theme that emerged from the data was the psychological benefits reported by all the participants during the study.

Pete (31)

Absolutely – Huge benefits. I only really found myself when I started running. Mentally you become a different person (whether you realise it or not) and I have so much respect for life and the outdoors. You appreciate the smaller things in life

Paul (32)

So I do think there's way more to it than physical fitness and appearance. I think mentally it keeps people, kind of, happy and stable

Tom (34)

Oh yeah, I could be annoyed leaving the house, thinking it's a big issue, but you run, and you calm down, I worry about the bills a lot, when they come in. but you seem more relaxed, at ease, when you come in from a run.

Mary (35)

Yes. Running is cathartic for me, It alleviates tension from my body, clearing my mind to think more objectively and lucidly, I often use running for problem solving

Mike (50)

I haven't had to deal with too many difficult situations family wise. I suppose the most difficult thing we've ever had, we lost a child many, many years ago and that was very difficult to deal with, And that (running) was a huge stepping stone for me, mentally, to be able to box things off or put things away

Each of the participants here promoting the benefits of running for their mental health. As discussed in the first chapter of this study, Psychology literature has highlighted the importance of spirituality and prayer to psychological health and the literature suggests that the engagement with prayer provides an opportunity to reflect on earlier success, failures, struggles and disappointments (Watson & Czech, 2005). From the data used here it would suggest that what prayer provides to its advocates in terms of alleviating stress in times of adversity and uncertainty, running too provides a place for psychological and spiritual renewal.

Throughout the study there had been an element of overlap between themes due to the nature of the research being carried out. In discussing the ascetic principles of long distance running, the participants are represented as being strong in both mind and body, focused, determined and resolute in their actions. These characteristics gained from being dedicated distance runners balance well with Max Weber's theory of how a religion can provide a moral framework of which the adherence to guides people towards a certain way of thinking about their work, values and actions.

With the discussion around rituals, symbol and ceremony each of the participants have displayed common sets of values, meanings, morals and an engagement with a community of runners of which the data would suggest is devoid of any social stratification. Durkheim postulated that rituals are a necessary tool that binds members of a society

together, while this study has noted that none of the participants felt that they engaged in any form of ritual behaviour, this was in the absence of a clear definition of the term ritual behaviour, and their actions that are represented in this study show patterns of ritualistic behaviour.

The participants in this study did not include the use of prayer in any aspect of their lives. Each of the participants advocated the benefits of running for managing episodes of adversity. From the data used for this research project it would suggest that running affords its advocates the security and support in times of difficulty in a similar manner that praying provides, with regards to relieving tension or stress in times of hardship and uncertainty,

This study was conducted as an exploration into the possibility that long distance running could be viewed as a form of religion. What became apparent through the interviews was that each of the participants felt that they did not possess any religious faith, nor did they ascribe their beliefs, morals or awareness of their spirituality to any religious doctrine. This may have created a challenge for the participants when asked to reflect on where they felt they gained their beliefs or morals from, which may result in them accrediting their involvement in running as a source given the nature of this study.

Limitations

Although this exploratory study offers an insight into the similarities between religion and running, its limitations should be noted. The structured format of this research project and the limited space provided, restricted the quantity of information that could be published. Also the researcher found that there were a limited number of publications in certain areas regarding the themes. The most obvious and significant limitation is the small size of the project. Due to time constraints it was not possible to access a larger sample to participate in this study.

Further recommendations for future research carried out in this area would be to employ a larger sample size, ensuring that a wide range of participants were used. This would provide a more indepth view of the experiences through running from a broader demographic of people. In conducting research fo this study it would appear that while there is plenty of research done both on the relationship between religion and sports, and the use of religion in sports, there would appear to be a lack of research exploring the social and moral attributes of long distance running.

Conclusion

The aim of this research project was to explore whether participation in long distance running could provide some of the functions that religion provides for society. The study also examined the experiences of long distance runners tried to understand if long distance running can be classified as a form or religion.

Throughout the study, the research has provided a number of examples where long distance running has replicated the functions of religion. Long distance running, like religion strengthens unity, promotes self discipline, and character moulding to cope with lifes

uncertainties. Sociologist Emile Durkheim theorised that the functions of religion included social cohesion, social control and provides meaning and purpose to individuals. Long distance running has also provided those who habitually engage with it, with the rituals, symbols and ceremony that are found through religious doctrine, and ceremony, which work to promote social solidarity. This study has explored the concept of spirituality and the data suggests that the concept of spirituality is subjective, that it is the meanings and values by which each individual ascribes to their spirit, and how they engage with it, that will define whether it becomes a religious, humanistic or existential experience. Socialisation through childhood would have been influenced by religion.

The research suggests that long distance running has helped those who participated in this study to reach clarity with their thoughts during times of duress, it has assisted them in putting life into perspective, and has provided them with a place of solitude and sanctity when time for reflection was needed.

The participants who took part in this study were chosen based on their levels of commitment to long distance running, their religious status was not relevant to the project. However with the consideration that only one of the six people who were invited to take part in the research project felt that he was religious, there is an indication that religion is becoming less of a central agent of socialisation in modern societies. For some, running is just running, for others it's a way of life, The question of whether long distance running could be a form of religion needs further exploration.

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Appendix 1

Interview Schedule

Introduction

Can you tell me a bit about yourself with regard to your sporting life?

How many times a week do you run?

How many hours a week do you spend running?

Do you have a favourite brand of sporting clothes or runners?

How much time do you invest in eating healthily, eating timely, hydrating before and after a run?

Would it be fair to say that, throughout the course of the day, most of how you go about your day is influenced by training?

Growing up in X, were you involved in any other sports? Could you describe in what way if any you think they differ from running?

Spiritual

Do you feel there are other benefits of running other than the physical “fitness”?

Have you ever gone for a run, with something on your mind that has been troubling you,(possibly for a number of days) and have you felt that while out running, or following the run, that you have gained a better understanding, or an alternative perspective to the issue on your mind?

It what way does it serve to help you

Social/community

Would you run regularly with fellow runners?

How is the experience different than running alone?

How has being a runner and running the x amount of time you have mentioned affected your social life?

Would you say that it has enhanced it, or has it inhibited your social life?

Would you say that you enjoy the solitude of being a runner?

Would you regard them as close friends, or running buddies, or how would you classify them?

Could you describe a time that you were out running and you experienced a runners high?

If you are at a social event in the company of other people who do not consider themselves runners, and if the conversation is directed at you and your level of commitment to running is brought into question, how do you react?

Do you feel you need to justify yourself to non-runners?

Do you feel the need to clarify benefits of running?

Family

How has been a runner again running the x amount of time you have mentioned, along with the time spent on prep, and cost of your gear, affected your family life?

Have you ever found yourself using running as a release from everyday stresses of work, family life? Can you tell me a bit about that?

Has running introduced a healthier life diet into your life, How has it influenced your family.

Commitment

Do you find it difficult balancing work, family a social life with your running?

Do you feel that there has been a cross over between your interest in, and doing of running with how you are as a father/husband/wife etc.?

Do you feel that there has been a cross over between your interest in, and doing of running with how you are as a friend?

Rituals

Could you describe how you feel if you miss a training session?

Could you describe how you feel if you miss perhaps over a week of training?

Do you have any sporting heroes? Could you tell me a bit about them, what makes them important to you, what you value in them?

You said earlier that you run x amount of times per week, how many events (if any) do you enter in a year?

How do you approach competition differently with regard to preparation the day of and the week leading up to it?

How do you feel when you enter a race and some of the top athletes in the world, possibly one of your heroes are also in the event?

Do you have any rituals that you perform before going out running or before any events?

Other

Are you aware of or seen or heard of a report highlighting “sweatshop” working conditions in the production of these brands, how does it make you feel?

Appendix 2



Cossacks, holy bread, running shorts and energy gels, the race for religion in modern societies

My name is Keith Lane and I am conducting research that explores the relationship between religion and sports.

You are invited to take part in this study and participation involves an interview that will take roughly 40 minutes.

Participation is completely voluntary and so you are not obliged to take part. If you do take part and any of the questions do raise difficult feelings, you do not have to answer that question, and/or continue with the interview.

Participation is confidential. If, after the interview has been completed, you wish to have your interview removed from the study this can be accommodated up until the research study is published.

The interview, and all associated documentation, will be securely stored and stored on a password protected computer.

It is important that you understand that by completing and submitting the interview that you are consenting to participate in the study.

Should you require any further information about the research, please contact Vanessa Long (Supervisor) on vanessa.long@dbs.ie

Thank you for participating in this study.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____