“Should I keep running if nobody sees me as a runner?”:

How runners with diverse body sizes perceive

Runner’s World’s lack of inclusive representation

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Master of Arts

by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

“Should I keep running if nobody sees me as a runner?”:

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To my research participants, thank you for being open, vulnerable, and willing to share your story with me. I enjoyed every conversation we had, and I hope to stay in touch with all of you.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all runners who have thought, “I run, but I’m not a *runner*.” Running is an action, not an aesthetic. If you run, you are a runner.

I would also like to dedicate this to my mom, my dad, and my brother. Thank you, Mom, for reading my middle and high school essays and helping me edit them, which fostered my own passion for writing, editing, and journalism. Thank you, Dad, for driving and flying to my races throughout the past 10 years; it makes me so happy to see you on the sidelines. Thank you, Kyle, for always being a supportive, creative, and brilliant brother; you have shown me how to be my most authentic self.

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ABSTRACT

Runner’s World is the ultimate guide to running. The magazine offers training tips, dietician-recommended recipes, gear guides, profiles on recreational and elite runners, and more. By design, *Runner’s World* is meant to serve all runners, but by execution, the magazine fails to represent a broad range of body sizes. In fact, because of the magazine’s prominence within the running community, it can even shape what runners looks like, and it has reinforced the idea that they are thin, muscular, and lanky. This study asks how *Runner’s World’s* editorial decisions affect these runners’ connections to the magazine and identities as members of the running community. With a sample of 15 runners with diverse body sizes, this study uses semi-structured interviews to give these runners the platform that *Runner’s World* does not. Data from these interviews suggest that *Runner’s World* stories about weight loss or runners with diverse body sizes have a fatphobic tone to them. The lack of holistic representation reinforces the idea that smaller runners are faster, healthier, and more serious athletes. Runners with diverse body sizes then have to create their own networks to share the training tips, recipes, gear recommendations, and personal stories that *Runner’s World* promises to publish. Because these runners don’t see multifaceted representation of themselves in the magazine, they are hesitant to read it or sometimes even participate in the sport at all. This study encourages *Runner’s World* to make running more inclusive by showing that all bodies are runner’s bodies.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The rules for running are simple. You put one foot in front of another. And do it again. And again. And again. However, when you look at a running magazine, the rules get much more specific. Suddenly, you must have long limbs supported by svelte muscles and six-pack abs.

I have been a runner for over a decade, so I have raced hundreds of miles in hundreds of competitions across the country. I have raced against BIPOC runners, transgender runners, runners with diverse body sizes, blind runners, and more. The runners I see on the glossy pages of my favorite magazines rarely represent the runners I see around me.

Before I introduce *Runner's World* magazine, I want to note the privilege I hold as a white, cisgender woman who is not living with a disability. I can buy running clothes and equipment at common stores and likely find my size. I am generally represented in *Runner's World*. However, on my cross country and track teams in high school and college, eating disorders plagued many runners because there was an expectation that thin bodies were fast bodies. I was a victim of this, too. Our image of the perfect runner came from the running media we consumed, such as *Runner's World*. For a period of time, I was focused on running faster and faster, and because I thought the fastest runners were the thinnest runners, I became hyperfocused on what I ate. I wanted to get to the point of long limbs, svelte muscles, and six-pack abs. As a result, I wasn't nourishing my body enough, and I was missing my period for nearly two years. This, unfortunately, is very common; many runners sacrifice long-term health for the shallow image of the best athlete (Ackerman & Nazem, 2012).

Runner's World is a global monthly magazine “where runners connect, grow, shop, share, smile, [and] sweat” (2020 Media Kit: *Runner's World*). The magazine’s media kit says *Runner's World* is the “largest and most influential media brand in running and the essential guide for everyone who runs.” Based on these statements, the magazine serves all runners, not just a specific speed, distance, or level of intensity. With this, *Runner's World* has a mission to represent all races, genders, body sizes — all runners.

Although the magazine outlines that its stories are for all runners, there is a lack of diverse body-size representation. An entire section on the *Runner's World* website is dedicated to nutrition and weight loss. There are some articles that offer beneficial nutritional advice for runners, such as “How proper carb-loading can help you crush your next race” (McDowell, 2019). However, *Runner's World* also publishes weight-loss tips, stories of inspirational weight loss, and articles that reinforce the idea that runners are either thin or in the process of getting thinner. For example, the magazine published “This mother of eight ran off 100 pounds and qualified for the Boston Marathon,” which perpetuates the idea that people who don’t have the stereotypical runner’s body should “run off” the weight (Dawson, 2020). The article would be just as impressive if it said “This mother of eight qualified for the Boston Marathon.” As an institution, the media can alter the way people perceive their own communities and societies (Hjarvard, 2008). This focus on weight loss — and also the emphasis that she “ran off” the pounds — reinforces the idealized body size in the running community. The lack of diverse body-size representation in *Runner's World* has been on my mind since I realized I was trying to attain that “runner’s body” a few years ago.

The Internet and social media have become platforms of self-representation for those whom *Runner's World* neglects. Too Fat To Run? is an online running group that makes sure nobody is excluded because of “their size, their health, their age, their background, their sexuality, [or] their personal circumstances” (Creffield, n.d.). Also, @ihavearunnersbody is an Instagram account that reinforces the idea that anybody can run, and those who run have runner’s bodies: “If YOU run, YOU have a runner’s body” (I Have a Runner’s Body, n.d.). It also uplifts people who are not seen as the typical runner because of their race, sexuality, ability, speed, and more.

Runner's World has been criticized for its monolithic view of a runner in the past. Criticisms focused on the lack of racial diversity in *Runner's World*. In the past decade, less than 15% of runners on *Runner's World* cover were Black, Indigenous, or people of color (Blades, 2020). In the past year, however, *Runner's World* has written more about racial injustice and discrimination in the running community. This inclusivity is limited, though. When the magazine features nonwhite runners, they still generally fit the mold of the stereotypical runner’s body. The purpose of this research is to show that the running community is more diverse than what is represented in *Runner's World*. This study uses semi-structured interviews to answer two research questions:

RQ 1: How do *Runner's World* readers with different body sizes experience the magazine’s representation of runners?

RQ 2: How do these readers perceive the magazine’s impact on their running experience?

Because the media can change the way a society thinks, if *Runner's World* embraces the entire running community, then the stereotypical image of a runner can

change, too (Hjarvard, 2008). *Runner's World* has already been the object of investigation for years, and this thesis contributes to previous research by addressing similar issues, such as the lack of well-rounded representation. But, this thesis prioritizes the participants' experiences and individual points of view. One previous study on *Runner's World* focused on gender representation through a feminist perspective, but it was outdated because it relied on the gender binary (Dodd & Hardin, 2006). Other studies also included surveys, questionnaires, and text analyses, which reduce entire experiences to sliding-scale responses or rely on collective generalizations (Bluder, 2014; McMahon et al., 2019). By showing how *Runner's World* readers themselves perceive the magazine's editorial decisions, this study dives deeper than previous research. It will hopefully inspire *Runner's World*, and other publications that misrepresent their audiences, to reflect on previous editorial decisions and address how to make future decisions more inclusive.

My two previously stated research questions make sure the participants' perspectives lead the data. The notion of what makes up a traditional runner gets dismantled each time you embrace the nontraditional runners in the community. Eventually, people might see a nontraditional runner and not notice a difference. Research that addresses these topics can deconstruct the public perception of who a runner is. This thesis contains a literature review that offers a summary of cultural studies and intersectionality, which act as the theoretical foundation for this research. In addition, this literature review will go into detail about both the cultural and personal implications of fatphobia, how the media have historically misrepresented larger people, and how

Runner's World has helped define a hegemonic body size for running and promoted svelte, lean, toned bodies.

This thesis adopts qualitative methodology to answer the research questions. In particular, semi-structured interviews will show how runners with diverse body sizes perceive the editorial decisions in *Runner's World*. The interview methodology will offer *Runner's World* direct perspectives from the runners it excludes or marginalizes. Participants from this study have questioned their ability to identify as a runner because they do not see themselves represented in the magazine that serves as the “essential guide for everyone who runs” (“2021 Media Kit: *Runner's World*”).

The data results in four main themes: (1) runners with diverse body sizes do not associate themselves with the stereotypical “runner’s body,” (2) these runners are insulted and frustrated by *Runner's World's* attempts at representation, (3) articles that represent them focus on weight loss or weight-related conflicts, and (4) these runners have to look elsewhere for community and representation. Participants’ opinions on the quality of *Runner's World* as a whole varied and relied heavily on whether they saw themselves appreciated and celebrated in it. They felt more connected to the community they created online because that is where they felt seen, heard, and represented. These findings show how *Runner's World* has both implicitly and explicitly advocated for weight loss and a monolithic “runner’s body.” This kind of coverage reduces the experiences of those who choose not to conform to this standard. These findings also contribute to previous research by offering another example of how the media can affect an individual’s body image, how running is associated with weight loss, and how *Runner's World* significantly influences the running community.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Culture, a shared system of meaning that establishes and reflects a common belief or action, has the power to shape the identities of those who live within it (Arora et al., 2017; Hjarvard, 2008). It can be broad, such as the nationwide American culture, or it can be narrow, such as the shared values among those who live in a town of 1,000. It can also be based on a particular sport, such as the running culture, or it can be based on a particular social movement, such as the culture of body positivity. Culture is an “experience lived, experience interpreted, experience defined,” so members of each socially constructed culture have shared lived, interpreted, and defined experiences (Hall, 2016). Cultural studies addresses these commonalities in an attempt to dismantle what has become the norm.

Cultural studies are interdisciplinary, which means that at one time, they can adopt several branches of focus, such as history, sociology, psychology, and anthropology (Barker, 2000; Lee, 2001). Cultural studies encourage evaluating individual experiences through intersectional approaches. Intersectionality is the consideration of how social categorizations — such as race, class, and gender — can overlap and intersect to inform a person’s experience (Pattynama & Phoenix, 2006). Black women, particularly Kimberlé Crenshaw, brought intersectionality to the forefront of cultural studies in order to highlight the multidimensional experiences of marginalized communities. This study relies on Crenshaw’s definition and application of intersectionality because it affects how different people experience the same social institutions, such as the media. This study relies on intersectionality to inform the multiple ways a singular activity, running, is experienced. This literature review begins by defining cultural studies and explaining the

role intersectionality plays within it. It goes on to describe how the media have created a culture of thinness and normalized fatphobia, which have more intersectional implications than previous researchers have acknowledged. It will provide a history of *Runner's World* and discuss how it contributed to the evolution of the standard "runner's body." Finally, it will introduce the idea that runners with diverse body sizes experience the sport in a different way. They face discrimination not only on the run, but also in *Runner's World*, on the clothing racks, and more.

Shaped by culture and contextualized by intersectionality

A person's culture is largely shaped by their social environment, religious background, geographic location, and more. Culture is the foundation of one's "whole way of life," so research with a cultural analysis approach focuses on how it can shape and define a person (Hall, 2016). This style of research also provides focus on how people learn their role in the social world (Baran & Davis, 2020). Studies with this approach interact with the meanings others have about society, which are informed by their social and historical perspectives (Creswell, 2014, pp. 7-8).

Barker (2000, pp. xiii) likens cultural studies to "being a bit like anthropology but in industrialized cultures ... or the more familiar sociology, but with a stress on culture." Contextualized by cultural studies, this thesis recognizes that several aspects of identity can overlap and form the different ways people experience a common culture. This is called intersectionality. Civil rights advocate and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw came up with this term in 1989, but the idea had already been in practice for over a century (Crenshaw, 1989, pp. 57). Black women, such as Sarah and Angelia Grimke in the 1830s, were early intersectional activists. They explained that they

experienced slavery differently because they were women, and they also experienced feminism differently because they were Black (Davis, 1981, pp. 40-45). The Grimkes fought for two causes: abolition and the inclusion of women's rights in abolitionism (Davis, 1981, pp. 44). They used intersectionality to describe Black women's relationship with oppression in the 1800s. Socially constructed institutions, such as white supremacy or the patriarchy, can affect how different individuals experience a common activity (Crenshaw, 1989, pp. 58; Lerner, 2001). Crenshaw (1989, pp. 57; 2016) has noted that categorizing people on a single axis, such as race or gender, disadvantages those who experience discrimination on multiple fronts, such as Black women.

Black feminism exists because Black women are multiply burdened by society; they do not get to receive the privileges that others in their racial and gender categories receive (Crenshaw, 1989, pp. 57). Focusing on the most privileged group, such as white women and Black men, obscures and delegitimizes Black women's experiences (Crenshaw, 1989, pp. 57). In her 2016 Ted Talk, Crenshaw said that intersectionality contextualizes racism and sexism by showing how they overlap and create additional, often overlooked, layers of injustice:

Without frames that allow us to see how social problems impact all the members of a targeted group, many will fall through the cracks of our movements, left to suffer in virtual isolation.

This study involves Black women, Native women, Mexican women, women who identify as LGBTQ+, runners who live all across the United States and Canada, and more.

Although they all have body sizes that are underrepresented in the running community, they experience the sport and its culture in different ways because of their different racial backgrounds, sexualities, geographic locations, and more. Crenshaw (1989, pp. 58) said

that when discussing discrimination, a multidimensional, intersectional experience is more comprehensive than each isolated characteristic, so a cultural analysis that includes intersectionality is the most thorough kind.

Today, intersectionality is the primary tool of analysis among feminist and anti-racist scholars (Nash, 2008). An individual's experience reflects a society or institution more than that individual (Lerner, 2001). Cultural studies theorists review how social constructions — such as race, class, gender, ability, sexuality, ethnicity, and body size — intersect and affect how different individuals experience that same society (Lerner, 2001). For example, a white female runner has a different running experience than a Native female runner; a runner in a well-funded neighborhood has a different running experience than a runner in a poorly funded neighborhood; and a plus-sized runner has a different running experience than a runner with a XS waistband. Research based on cultural studies and intersectionality addresses how a common culture or experience (running) has forced the one definition of a runner's body. Those who fall outside of that mold because of their race, body size, gender expression, ability, or any other overlapping factor are unable to participate in the full running culture.

This standard runner's body is perpetuated through two institutions: the running culture and the media. Just as the general media influence the general society, a special-interest publication such as *Runner's World* influences its designated audience. This study with a cultural studies approach critiques the way that *Runner's World* molds the standard runner into a fixed, hard-to-attain body. By examining how cultures interact with powerful institutions, political figures, and their own members, cultural studies theorists try to enact change through their research (Baker, 2000, pp. xviii). As Crenshaw

said, “If we can’t see a problem, we can’t fix a problem” (2016). The data from this thesis highlight the problem, and it is up to all of us, including the *Runner’s World* editorial board, to fix it.

This thesis expands beyond previous research because it considers the intersection of multiple identities within the running experience. Previous studies about representation in the running community or in *Runner’s World* have a shallow approach. They shared critiques of gender representation but failed to include other identities, such as race, among their participants (Dodd & Hardin, 2006; Greer & Jones, 2011). It is important to understand how these intersecting characteristics inform both a person’s perception and the way they are perceived by other people or institutions. Intersectionality and cultural studies work together to understand how people experience the same cultural context in different ways (Barker, 2000, pp. 88; Hjarvard, 2008).

Shallow media representation

If there’s a common thread among advertisements, magazines, television shows, movies, and more, it is fatphobia. Fatphobia is the pathological fear of fatness, which can manifest as an obsession with thinness, weight loss, and Western beauty standards (Bacon et al., 1993; Ashbach, 2019). Its symptomatic fear of weight gain was particularly rampant as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded and sent everybody to social distance indoors. In a April 2020 study with 900 participants between 18 and 34 years old, 40% of women and 46% of men said they would prefer to contract COVID-19 than gain 25 pounds (Center for Body Image Research & Policy, 2020). In 2003, HIV-positive women refused to take their medication because they feared the weight-gain side effect (Sofia,

2020). We have largely accepted a culture of fatphobia because the media teaches us to accept it (Hjarvard, 2008).

We see it in advertisements, such as when PETA launched a campaign that associated vegetarianism with fat loss. On the billboard, a large, bikini-clad cartoon woman posed next to copy that reads: “Save the Whales: Lose the blubber. Go vegetarian” (Hills, 2015). We see it in magazines with cover lines that tell us how to “drop pounds, lose inches” and promise effective ways to train certain body parts: “Sexy arms. Flat abs. 15 minutes.” (Wong, 2015). We see it in television shows and movies when weight is used for comic relief. For example, in *Friends*, Monica Geller (or Fat Monica) cheerfully danced with a donut, and in *Pitch Perfect*, Fat Amy performed “horizontal running” as her slender peers ran laps up and down the stairs (Gullage, 2012; Moore, 2012; Himes & Thompson, 2012).

This thesis is heavily informed by critical scholar Laurie Cooper Stoll’s article “Fat is a Social Justice Issue, Too” (2019). As a self-described “fat person who first started learning to hate my body at the tender age of nine,” Stoll realized her career devoted to studying oppressive systems failed to address the “salience of fat as a social justice issue” (2019). Fatphobia exists at work, in the classroom, in the media, in politics, and in health care (Stoll, 2019). The media can set the tone for society to accept different body sizes, but instead it normalizes exclusion. There is little positive representation of fat women in the media, and the few portrayals are closer to caricatures (Stoll, 2019; Brownell et al., 2003). That is how we get advertisements telling us to “lose the blubber,” the magazines telling us to trim fat in order to be sexy, and characters such as Fat Monica

or Fat Amy normalizing fatphobia through comedy (Hills, 2015; Wong, 2015; Gullage, 2012; Moore, 2012).

The media have also become platforms for the medical and weight-loss industries to define the “healthy” thin body and ostracize those without it (Brownell et al., 2003; Browning et al., 2016). In a study of social inclusion within the online fat acceptance community “Fatosphere,” Browning et al. (2016) found that members of this community felt the media never attempted to “understand” or “consider” life in a larger body, and the media made them feel like “it’s not okay to be fat.” It is actually counterintuitive for the media to celebrate thin bodies through fatphobia and normalized body shame. Weight stigma actually lowers the motivation to exercise, triggers a response to eat more (and develop disordered eating tendencies), and ultimately leads to weight gain (Shaprow & Vartanian, 2008; Brownell et al., 2011; Beeken et al., 2014). Our society promotes weight loss and demonizes anything that falls outside of its own construction of thinness. The media is a “particularly pronounced” institution that reinforces this weight bias (Brownell et al., 2011). If the media represented larger bodies in the same way as it represented smaller bodies and gave these people narratives beyond their weight, then our society would start to accept more than just being thin.

The media commodifies thinness and normalizes fatphobia (Stoll, 2019). It has correlated body size with health so strongly that we are either so terrified of gaining weight or look down on those who aren’t thin. There is a sense of superiority associated with thinness; small bodies represent restraint, discipline, and purity, and larger bodies represent overindulgence, slovenliness, and dishevelment. This is all socially constructed;

body size is not directly related to any of these things (Abbas, 2004; Stoll, 2019; Brewis et al., 2018).

Body-size activism is an intersectional social justice issue because it has gendered, racial, and economic implications (Stoll, 2019). Because of the patriarchal objectification and commodification of the female body, larger women receive more social stigma than fat men (Stoll, 2019). Also, because fatphobia has roots in whiteness, doctors feel like they can make discriminatory and otherwise racist remarks to fat women of color in order to encourage “health” (Stoll, 2019). Also, doctors are less likely to provide the same health care for a fat patient than a thin one; some prescribe weight loss as blanket treatments for fat patients, which leaves some illnesses ignored and mistreated (Stoll, 2019). Women and children are targeted the most in the war on “obesity;” mothers are often blamed when a child is overweight — and especially if the mother is Black, Hispanic, poor or working class (Stoll, 2019). Fatphobia also is inherently connected with racism, which connects as far back to the 19th century, when there was a common American sentiment to “fear” Black people and “supposedly ‘part-Black’ Europeans” who were all identifiable by both their weight and skin color (Ashbach, 2019).

Fatphobia also impoverishes those who don’t fit society’s idealized body size; they receive weight-based stigma in education, at work, and in relationships (Stoll, 2019). Companies are more likely to hire thin applicants than fat applicants, and when the fat applicants are hired, they receive less pay and face more workplace harassment than thin employees. Fat women are less likely to marry, and when they do, they often marry someone in a lower socioeconomic status (Stoll, 2019). Fatphobia thrives on sexism, racism, and classism. Ignoring these systems of oppression in conversations about

fatphobia ignores how multidimensional aspects of discrimination compound onto an individual.

Weight stigma is easily discovered but often overlooked in the media. It is a system of oppression that deserves more attention in academia, especially in health-conscious spaces, such as *Runner's World*, where weight loss can be coded as the only way to be healthy. In order to understand how *Runner's World* can influence the running community, it is important to know the history of the magazine, previous research conducted about it, and its role as “the essential guide for everyone who runs” (“2021 Media Kit: *Runner's World*”).

History and critiques of *Runner's World*

The magazine started as a mimeographed newsletter in 1966 called *Distance Running News*. It evolved through the 1970s and collected 100,000 subscribers by 1977 (Brant, 2006). The median age of the print audience is 42, and the median household income is just under \$113,000 (2021 Media Kit: *Runner's World*). The digital audience skews a little younger and less wealthy with a median age of 41 and median household income of just over \$105,000. The print audience is 50% male and 50% female, and the digital audience is just a little different at 51% male and 49% female (2021 Media Kit: *Runner's World*).

As the magazine gained more prominence in the 1970s, the slender, muscular body became more popular and more desirable (Abbas, 2004; “Women’s body image and BMI,” n.d.). Abbas (2004) argued that the magazine reinforced the connection between fitness and physique because it told its readers that running leads to desirable health and aesthetic benefits. Monolithic media representations of runners throughout the 1970s,

'80s, and '90s have also made the rest of society believe what a runner looked like (Bordo, 1990). During this era, *Runner's World* covers featured runners who were svelte, white, long-limbed, and had six-pack abs, which helped solidify the body-size standard the magazine was concurrently constructing (Abbas, 2004; Nietz, 2016; Bordo, 1990; Richardson et al., 2012). This mediatizes the running community because runners now are not separate from the media; everything they do, wear, think, and more is defined and published by *Runner's World* (Hjarvard, 2008). As a result of decades of this, runners who aren't svelte, white, long-limbed, or have six-pack abs are excluded and sometimes not even considered a runner. This kind of exclusion in the media is common, unfortunately (Stoll, 2019). Some runners who are frequently underrepresented now do not even expect representation at all (Westfall, 2012). There needs to be authentic media representation of runners with diverse body sizes in order to expand the definition of what a runner looks like. This lack of representation is a failure to execute what is outlined in its 2021 media kit:

Runner's World is the largest and most influential media brand in running and the essential guide for everyone who runs. As the authority in run, we understand runners like no other. We speak their language — we know what interests them, engages them and what motivates them.

Previous studies about the representation in *Runner's World* adopt a sociological lens or a feminist perspective. Dodd and Hardin (2006) argued that *Runner's World's* May 2002 removal of its "Women's Running" column — a regular essay on the role that running had in women's lives — removed significant content written for a growing demographic in the running community. This removal reinforced the male hegemony in the sport (Dodd & Hardin, 2006). Chance et al. (2005) reviewed editorial photo images in the magazine during 1992, 1993, 1996, and 2001 to determine whether the photos promoted

male hegemony or provided equal coverage of women. This study relied on the gender binary and only focused on differences between two genders, and it did not address the intersection between race and gender in *Runner's World* coverage. It also used a feminist perspective to conclude that photos in *Runner's World* reinforce the male hegemony by presenting women as less active or less competitive (Dodd & Hardin, 2006). This study was more of a passive examination of the magazine because the researchers only conducted a content analysis. In this style of analysis, Dodd and Hardin (2006) interpret the magazine through the lens of their own bias. In order to truly evaluate *Runner's World*, the readers affected by unequal coverage need a voice as well.

Although these studies are significant, they fail to address the role that intersectionality plays in the magazine's previous editorial decisions. They ignore how unequal coverage shapes people beyond their gender identity and expression. For example, there might be more representation of white male runners than Black female runners or more representation of rich male runners than poor female runners. Inclusion of intersectional perspectives provides a fuller understanding of the different identities within one culture (Crenshaw, 1989, pp. 58). The studies conducted by Chance et al. (2005) and Dodd and Hardin (2006) also fail to address how *Runner's World* can create body-size hegemonies in the running community. This thesis extends beyond previous research and reinforces that all bodies in motion deserve to be represented in the magazine. There have been decades of exclusionary or reductionist stories about runners of different body sizes. Contrary to cultural values that idolize thinness and equate it with health, coverage of runners of all body sizes will benefit the entire running community (Allward et al., 1993; Stoll, 2019; Browning et al., 2016).

Not “thin enough” to run

Our society has falsely assigned a superiority to being thin, and because of this, those who don't have the “good” body are blocked from experiencing the full extent of their potential (Stoll, 2019). In general, they are afraid of putting themselves in situations in which they could be ridiculed, discriminated against, or harassed (Stoll, 2019; Sniezek, 2019). This kind of hostile environment exists for runners who don't have the stereotypical runner's body size, and especially if these runners are also people of color (Westfall, 2012; Stoll, 2019). A fast runner “is often visually linked to a lean body,” which creates a dangerous cycle of a normative running body that has lasted through several editorial cycles and generations of runners (Johns & Johns, 2000). When people who don't have this “lean body” go for a run, they are actively challenging these definitions, but they have to surpass socially constructed obstacles on the run, too. Larger runners are expected to be actively attempting to become smaller to eliminate the visual dissonance (Johns & Johns, 2000; Sniezek, 2019). If runners without the stereotypical body size choose not to conform and lose weight, then they are seen as morally inferior or as less serious runners.

Runner's World is so influential that it has changed the way runners relate to their bodies and the sport (Abbas, 2004). The magazine also helped shift the cultural definition of womanhood and femininity in terms of body size from the postwar period's favored hourglass figures to the 1970s' favored toned figures (Abbas, 2004). Through time, having fat on the body — no matter the gender — has become correlated with being slovenly, morally weak, and unhealthy (Abbas, 2004). Today, *Runner's World* promotes the idea that people should use running as the means to attain thinness. That's what

runners look like, after all. A 2015 photo essay called “A Runner’s Body” shows that a runner has “skinny legs,” a chiseled back, visible ab muscles, and a defined bicep flex (Young, 2015). Its subheading reinforces the myth that running is legitimized through one specific body size: “We come in all shapes and sizes, but run long enough and the sport shapes us” (Young, 2015). Although the runners featured in this photo essay have racial and age diversity, they all have thin privilege and occupy what is seen as the stereotypical runner’s body size. Screenshots from this photo essay are available in this thesis’ Appendix B. This perpetuates the false narrative that larger bodies cannot be runner’s bodies.

This is not an isolated problem; *Runner’s World* has an entire department online dedicated to weight-loss tips called Nutrition & Weight Loss. Articles such as “7 science-backed tips to help you start running for weight loss” establish clear goals and methods of achievement (Carter et al., 2020). Members of the running community read these articles, pick up on the homogenizing cues, internalize the fatphobic themes, and then apply them back into the running community.

Also, The *Runner’s World* website has a section called Runner’s Stories, which is dedicated to personal stories of both ordinary and elite runners. Runner’s Stories has a subsection called How Running Changed Me, which is entirely composed of weight-loss success stories. It is flooded with headlines such as “After Overcoming Drug and Alcohol Addiction, He Ran Off 216 Pounds in Two Years” and “How I Lost 98 Pounds in 17 Months Through WW and Running” (Vaughn Eckert, 2020; Turner, 2020). This subsection implies that larger runners exercise to change — not to change their headspace or mindset, but to change their physical appearance. The Runner’s Stories section does

include articles not relating to weight too, but those articles feature runners with the stereotypical body size.

These weight-related articles do serve a purpose, though, because the promise of toned muscles initially attracts many to running (Abbas, 2004; Williams, 2013). During its boom in the 1970s, it mainly attracted women and older people because of the claims that participants would improve health and fitness by reducing body fat, as if that were the only reason to engage in physical activity (Abbas, 2004). Six participants of this study mentioned they started running to lose weight, so the articles such as “7 science-backed tips to help you start running for weight loss” do provide information for a willing audience (Carter et al., 2020). However, constant repetition of an idealized runner’s body devalues those without it and contributes to body dysmorphia among all types of runners, even those with the stereotypical body size (Abbas, 2004; Anderson et al., 2016; Beeken et al., 2014; Brewis et al., 2018).

In general, studies have shown that women feel worse about their own bodies after seeing thinner women for long periods of time (Allward et al. 2018; Burke & Rains, 2018; Chojnacki et al., n.d.). Chojnacki et al. (n.d.) found that health and fitness magazines increased the “fear of being fat” among college-aged women. This kind of fatphobia extends beyond the four years of undergraduate school, unfortunately, as the Center for Body Image Research and Policy found in its 2020 survey of 18- to 34-year-olds. As stated previously, people would rather contract COVID-19 than gain 25 pounds (Center for Body Image Research & Policy, 2020). Instead of perpetuating fatphobia, *Runner’s World* should embrace all runners, regardless of their weight. They are runners, no matter what, and the 2021 media kit promises to serve as a resource for all runners.

Increased representation of different body types improves the amount of participation in running, which in turn provides opportunities for more diverse representation in the future (Funk et al., 2016).

A society's perception of beauty can have a significant impact on one's social life, quality of life, and physical and mental health (Bluder, 2014). Thin idealization, which is reinforced in *Runner's World*, is correlated with increased instances of eating disorders and body dysmorphia among female athletes (Anderson et al., 2016). Runners in particular are at a heightened risk for eating disorders as they try to achieve a particular somatotype, the term for the classifications of different body shapes (Eston & Legaz, 2005; Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2004). Runners claim that an ectomorph somatotype is best because of its characteristic low body fat percentage and small structural frame (Anderson et al., 2016). These sport-specific ideals, however, are destructive because they tie runners' body shapes to their own potential performance levels, and they also increase the amount of weight concerns in all runners. Runners can have all types of somatotypes; body size does not determine your worth as an athlete. This study shows that the running community has a much broader range of body sizes than what *Runner's World* shows. Because there is already a problem of eating disorders and body dissatisfaction in the running community, *Runner's World* has a responsibility of representing a diverse range of all body sizes, for all runners' sake.

Internalization of the thin body ideal, which the media reinforce, leads to high body dissatisfaction among many athletes but particularly runners (Abbas, 2004; Steadman et al., 2009). Steadman et al. (2009) found that track athletes internalized the most athletic media messaging and reported the highest body dissatisfaction scores

compared to athletes in other sports. Running is a sport that promotes thinness and leanness, so when the media promote that, too, it harms the participants' physical and mental health while perpetuating the body-size standard (Carter et al., 2020; Steadman et al., 2009).

However, previous research fails to address other effects of the media ignoring the diverse range of body types and sizes in the sports. Abbas (2007) did not interview *Runner's World* readers. Steadman et al. (2009) showed track athletes pictures of real women and had them rate their attractiveness on a 9-point scale (with 1 being "Not at all physically attractive" and 9 being "Extremely physically attractive"). The sliding-scale rating places boundaries on the participant's individual experience and does not ask for an explanation of their feelings. Sundgot-Borgen and Torstveit (2004) conducted clinical interviews of elite athletes of leanness-dependent sports — such as gymnastics, figure skating, dancing, running, and diving — to determine how body satisfaction rates among athletes compare to the broader society. These studies all examine how runners feel about physical appearance, but they don't show how the runners feel about the lack of diverse media representation. Stories, responses, and experiences guide this research and provide insight on the effects of misrepresentation in *Runner's World*.

Existing studies fail to address media influence or how the media cover the different body sizes. Coverage of runners who fall outside the stereotypical runner's body — such as Mirna Valerio, a Black trail runner and body-positive activist, or Latoya Shauntay Snell, a queer Black chef, runner, and body-positive activist — tends to be about their ability to, despite it all, overcome and embrace the size of their body. This

reduces their entire identity to just their weight. Thin runners can be more than their size in *Runner's World*.

Summary

Research on *Runner's World* and body-size representation in the media is important because the magazine has helped normalize what a runner looks like (Westfall, 2012). As activists push our society toward one that embraces inclusive body positivity, it is important to apply the same pressure to other powerful institutions, such as the media. This study is unique in its direct inclusion of *Runner's World* readers with diverse body sizes; others rely on content analyses, surveys, questionnaires, and other methods that limit the full extent of the experiences and allow the researcher's bias to permeate through the data.

Research using the cultural studies approach calls for a reformation of the systems that perpetuate widespread social injustice. This study evaluates how socially constructed inequalities and institutions of oppression influence how *Runner's World* readers perceive the magazine's content. This research uses the cultural studies approach to study the running culture, and it also considers the intersectional aspects of identity as well. How runners identify within their body influences how they feel about themselves, how they think they fit within the running community, and how they think they fit within the broader community.

Some people might not know that they can run because they don't see themselves represented in the running media. To quote children's rights activist Marian Wright Edelman: "It's hard to be what you can't see" (2015). However, running is open to everybody. It does not require expensive memberships, a lot of equipment, or any special

diets. The very definition of running is even adaptable to include those who have difficulty physically running on two legs. Running can include people who use wheelchairs, prefer the Galloway run-walk-run method, have artificial limbs, and more. The sport spans all genders, races, incomes, sexualities, ages, socioeconomic statuses, abilities, and body sizes.

Guided by two research questions — How do *Runner's World* readers with different body sizes experience the magazine's representation of runners? How do these readers perceive the magazine's impact on their running experience? — this study explains why *Runner's World's* editorial decisions, in terms of body size, have to be more inclusive and thoughtful. In semi-structured interviews, 15 runners with self-described non-hegemonic body sizes shared how *Runner's World* articles, covers, and advertisements altered their relationship with their bodies and the running community. Addressing these topics will hopefully show the *Runner's World* staff how its editorial decisions directly influence the community it serves. Sharing the opinions of the marginalized populations in *Runner's World* can lead to more authentic representation and help dismantle the reductionist, stereotypical idea of a runner's body.

Chapter 3: Methods

Previous research on the representation of diversity in sports media fails to include how the reader perceives the media itself. What sets this research apart is the inclusion of individual experiences. When people see a lack of representation of themselves in running magazines, it affects them on a personal level. These previous studies include content analyses and questionnaires, and for this particular topic, data does not reveal much about the personal effects of *Runner's World's* editorial decisions (Dodd & Hardin, 2006; Anderson et al., 2016). The studies fail to address the participants' direct experiences or how the lack of media representation alters their own identities as runners.

Experiences and emotions drive this research topic, so this study uses semi-structured interviews to explore how runners who don't identify with the stereotypical runner's body read and relate to *Runner's World* magazine. Although previous research articles simply point out the problem, this study goes further by giving the directly affected population a chance to share how the magazine's editorial decisions have personally affected them. It also offers ways to make the magazine more inclusive. Interviews and experiences are essential for enacting change, after all (Jamshed, 2014). Interviews are the most common form of data collection in qualitative research (Jamshed, 2014). There are three types of interviews that have varying degrees of flexibility: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interviews. Interviews with individual participants commonly have the semi-structured format, and this particular study uses semi-structured interviews. (Jamshed, 2014). Structured interviews have a rigid set of questions to which the interview must adhere (Creswell, 2015, pp. 189). That doesn't

allow for the necessary side tangents that offer deeper, more profound reflection.

Unstructured interviews are too free-flowing that they might focus on the general running experience — in terms of races, running clothes, and fueling strategies — instead of specifically how *Runner's World* affects them (Jamshed, 2014). The flexibility of a semi-structured interview benefits me, the interviewer, because I can organize and plan which questions to ask within my cultural studies approach (Creswell, 2015, p. 189). This flexibility also benefits the research participant because the responses and specific experiences can lead to a deeper conversation about the media's pervasive influence on identity or what we can all do to reject fatphobia.

Interviews will give this study a more long-lasting effect than the existing research that relies on content analysis and questionnaires. Anecdotes and testimonials of specific struggles — as opposed to general statements of inequality — are much more effective at triggering an emotional response or enacting change (Moen, 2006). Moen (2006) also reflected on the significance of the narrative as a unit of analysis and said stories are “rooted in society and ... experienced and performed by individuals in cultural settings.” Participants in this study live within a particular cultural setting, the running community, which shapes both how they view themselves and how they view the world. Their experience in the running community is informed and intersected with their race, gender, age, geography, nationality, ability, sexuality, body size, and more. Data from these interviews answered my two research questions:

RQ 1: How do *Runner's World* readers with different body sizes experience the magazine's representation of runners?

RQ 2: How do these readers perceive the magazine's impact on their running experience?

Sample qualifications

This research has a sample of 15 participants; all of whom are women. One participant is from my own running community, and I found the remaining 14 on Instagram. Runners have embraced Instagram; it is common to create a separate, running-focused Instagram account solely to document progress along training cycles (Lauretta, 2017). The social media platform has become much more than a running scrapbook. It is a place to connect with runners around the world and create a community through shared identities or experiences (Lauretta, 2017). I found participants by messaging Instagram users who posted with the following hashtags: #fatrunner, #plussizerunner, #runningwhilefat, #fatrunners, and #fatrunning. I also searched for participants through #anysizeathlete and #runningbody, but Instagram users on those pages either did not respond to interview requests or did not fit the qualifications explained in the next paragraph. Just like how individuals create Instagram accounts to post about their own running experience, there are entire Instagram accounts dedicated to uplifting runners who are not traditionally represented as one, such as @diversewerun and @ihavearunnersbody (Diverse We Run, n.d.; I Have a Runner's Body, n.d.). These accounts share posts from runners who are not seen in the running community because of their sexuality, race, ability, body size, and more. I messaged runners who were featured on these accounts because of their posts about encountering fatphobia in the running community, feeling excluded from the sport because of body size, and developing eating disorders to fit what they thought was the traditional runner's body.

The runners in my study also had to satisfy a second qualification: They had to be current *Runner's World* subscribers or regular readers. Upon initial invitation to participate in this research, many respondents noted that they no longer read *Runner's World* because they “don’t identify with any of their cover models” and because the magazine “has serious issues surrounding inclusion.” One said she doesn’t read the magazine because it “focuses on weight loss for those who are in larger bodies.” Another even called it “the National Enquirer of running mags.” Many of those who stated they don’t read *Runner's World* still offered themselves as backup participants because they still relate to the research topic in general and feel very passionate about it.

According to the *Runner's World* 2021 American media kit, the print audience includes 2,013,000 readers per month. There are also 5.9 million monthly page views on the magazine’s website and 3.4 million unique visitors every month. The magazine has a monthly circulation of 616,806 readers, and that circulation is 98.4% subscription-driven and 1.6% newsstand-driven. It is clear that the magazine has a loyal following of subscribers and few casual newsstand readers.

Runner's World has 14 international editions printed in 14 countries and 13 websites, but I limited my research to North American runners who read the United States edition (“2021 Media Kit: *Runner's World*”). Beauty standards vary in the other countries where *Runner's World* is published, so the typical runner’s body presented in the American issues might differ from the runners’ bodies in China, Hungary, South Africa, and Australia. Also, the general demographics of runners in each area might differ from the general demographics of American runners. For this thesis, it is best to focus the data and only interview North American runners who read the United States issues.

Runner's World+

I started running in middle school and reading *Runner's World* in high school, which is also around the same time that I started getting interested in journalism. My already-existing knowledge of *Runner's World* helped me start my research.

I have been a subscriber for four years, and I also have dozens of issues saved from before I started subscribing. I am also a Runner's World+ member. With this membership, I have close access to a network of 18,000 other Runner's World+ members, who are all, by default, magazine subscribers (Barber, 2020). Runner's World+ members have unlimited access to training plans, an annual subscription to the magazine, unlimited access to the website, a subscription to a members-only weekly newsletter, expert advice from *Runner's World* coaches and editors, deals from running brands, and the opportunity to be featured in the magazine.

Interview strategies

Given the health and safety limitations of COVID-19, I conducted interviews on Zoom. I also used Zoom because it opened up my research to a geographically diverse range of people (Cook et al., 2020). While remaining in Missouri, I spoke to *Runner's World* readers from British Columbia, Canada; Fresno, California; Boston, Massachusetts; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and more. Also, nearly a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, most people with computers and phones were likely familiar with Zoom; it has become almost a universal technology and necessary platform for socially distanced connection (Cook et al., 2020). By conducting the interviews on Zoom, participants could connect to the call with ease, instead of stressing about navigating a complicated, new platform. Video communication, as opposed to audio-only

communication, is necessary for an in-depth interview. It is important to note that by using Zoom, this thesis relied on a sample that has access to Internet and a laptop or smartphone. By default, the sample was financially secure enough to afford these things. Researchers Cook, Gray, Rempel, and Wong-Wylie (2020) wrote an academic report that promoted Zoom as the future of qualitative data collection. Through the Zoom format of video interviewing, a researcher can pick up on the participant's nonverbal communication in a convenient, secure format (Cook et al., 2020). Also, on Zoom, the participant receives a notification when the interview recording begins, which prevents any miscommunications about recording for the data-collection process (Cook et al., 2020). Zoom recordings can either be saved in the software's cloud storage or the host's computer; both are convenient, but saving the data onto the host's computer preserves the participant's confidentiality and protects the data from cloud hackers (Cook et al., 2020). In this thesis, participants verbally consented to a recorded interview, and I downloaded the recordings and kept them in a secure folder on my laptop.

Interview process

Depending on how conversational the interviews became, the Zoom calls lasted between 30 minutes and 2 hours long. I conducted 15 interviews from January 2021 to April 2021. These participants have been running for a range of almost two years to almost two decades. Upon the initial direct message on Instagram, many participants expressed frustration with *Runner's World's* lack of diverse body-size representation and were eager to talk about how it affected them.

Participant demographics:

- P1: white, woman, she/her, 24 years old, heterosexual

- P2: Native (Navajo nation), woman, she/her, 46 years old, heterosexual
- P3: white, woman, she/her, 46 years old, heterosexual
- P4: Black, woman, she/her, 31 years old, heterosexual
- P5: Black (Afro Caribbean), woman, she/her, 37 years old, heterosexual
- P6: Black, woman, she/her, 51 years old, LGBTQ+
- P7: white/Middle Eastern/Jewish, woman, she/her, 35 years old, heterosexual
- P8: white, woman, she/her, 37 years old, heterosexual
- P9: white, woman, she/her, 43 years old, heterosexual
- P10: Black, woman, she/her, 29 years old, heterosexual
- P11: white, woman, she/her, 33 years old, heterosexual
- P12: white, woman, she/her, 29 years old, LGBTQ+
- P13: white, woman, she/her, 35 years old, LGBTQ+
- P14: Mexican, Native, and Polish, woman, she/her, 44 years old, heterosexual
- P15: white, woman, she/her, 36 years old, heterosexual

The following interview questions addressed how these communities perceive themselves and their role in the running community.

Q1: What is your racial and gender identity? What pronouns do you use?

Q2: How long have you been running? Why did you start?

Q3: How long have you been a *Runner's World* subscriber or reader?

Q4: Do you run with people who look like you? If so, was this a deliberate effort?

If not, how does this make you feel?

- Q5:** What kind of stories do you read about the running community?
- Q6:** What kind of stories would you like to read about the running community?
- Q7:** When you think of a runner, what do you think of? Do the people you run with fit this mold?
- Q8:** How has running changed the way you think about yourself?
- Q9:** Do you see yourself represented in *Runner's World*? How does this make you feel?
- Q10:** How has your identity informed your experience as a runner? Has it affected where you run, who you run with, how often you run, what you wear, what you race, etc.?
- Q11:** How does the language used in *Runner's World* articles about body size affect how you feel about your own identity? What about your identity as a runner?
- Q12:** If you could change anything about the coverage in *Runner's World*, what would you change?

Experiences and points of view drive this research. Open-ended but previously established questions can lead to a variety of responses that rely on the lived experiences of the participant. Predetermined questions optimize interview time and allow participants to expand on their specific perspectives while keeping their responses close to the researcher's goals (Jamshed, 2014). These questions addressed how people who are frequently not represented in *Runner's World*, or even seen as equal forces in the running community, feel about these editorial decisions. Responses to these questions yielded powerful thoughts on identity and representation in the media.

Creswell (2015, pp. 96) said the researcher has to be sensitive to the participant's cultures. This kind of sensitivity is important to consider with research that deals with identity, as well. This thesis acknowledges that body size is just one of many characteristics within a person, and one's race, class, gender, ability, and more all inform how each person experiences life.

During these interviews, I asked for each participant's pronouns and racial and gender identity. Three participants identified with the LGBTQ+ community, and their sexuality also informed their relationship with their body and their experience with inequality. Because many of the interview questions touched on identity, responses also included how the participant's race, age, gender, occupation, and geographic location intersect with their body size and running experience. Also, throughout the conversations, these participants used different terms to describe body size. The most common terms were "fat," "plus-sized," and "curvy."

Data collection strategies

After conducting these interviews, I uploaded the recording into otter.ai, an artificial intelligence website that creates speech-to-text transcriptions. I downloaded those automated transcriptions and listened through all the interviews once to verify the transcription's accuracy. After listening through the interviews, I conducted another close reading to highlight four emerging themes, which are outlined in Chapter 4. This theme-collection process is called coding, and themes are called codes. Qualitative research frequently relies on coding data because it gives the results some focus and organization (Creswell, 2015, pp. 189). I included the participant's direct quotes because I did not want to project the lens of my own bias onto the participants' lived experiences. Their

stories were profound enough on their own, and I wanted to preserve their experiences and ideas as they were stated. Their responses served two purposes: highlighting their own strengths and explaining how *Runner's World* affects how they perceive themselves.

Qualitative documents, such as specific articles and advertisements that the participants referenced in the interviews, also complement the data from the interviews with qualitative documents (Creswell, 2015, pp. 189) In these interviews, many participants referenced specific *Runner's World* articles and advertisements. Some of these articles and advertisements are in this thesis' appendix section.

Reviewing the viewpoints

My cultural studies approach and intersectional framework both support the research questions because the responses lead to larger conversations about the social dynamics of body size. Cultural studies research can lead to social change, and the responses to these questions can show how diverse the running community truly is and inspire greater media representation.

A goal in cultural studies is to advocate for a more inclusive, equal society while challenging the institutions that cause or allow inequality (Barker, 2000). Cultural studies rely on people's experiences, and intersectionality recognizes that common experiences are shaped by several overlapping aspects of identity. This study's results derive from cultural studies and intersectionality because the interview responses directly address how a hegemonic society influences those whom it excludes. Also, intersectionality is the only way to make sure research using cultural studies is well-rounded, and this study acknowledges the many characteristics that can make up a person's identity (Crenshaw, 1989, pp.73). In order to heal a society of intersecting institutions of oppression,

Crenshaw said we must adopt a “top-down” approach to discrimination (1989, pp. 73). Change is the most salient when it comes from a culture’s most powerful forces, such as *Runner’s World* in the running community. *Runner’s World* needs to make more steps toward complete inclusivity to improve the way some runners experience the sport.

Data will drive editorial change

Ultimately, by revealing the lack of body-size diversity in *Runner’s World*, my research will show that people of all sizes run and are also affected by the magazine’s editorial decisions. As stated previously, semi-structured interviews give participants the freedom to voice frustrations with *Runner’s World* and share anecdotes about their running experience while still keeping the conversations close to the research goal (Jamshed, 2014). For this research topic, qualitative research methods used in previous studies do not provide the profound responses that interviews do. There are already some *Runner’s World* textual and content analysis studies, and interviews in this thesis would provide deeper conclusions than what those studies establish. Also, questionnaires cannot uplift participants’ individual experiences because they limit their experiences to a sliding scale that simplifies nuanced, complicated sentiments.

For my particular goal — to show how diverse the running community is and highlight that *Runner’s World* doesn’t represent the complete diversity of the sport — interviews allow everyone to share their experiences without any restricting boundaries.

Data goals

The results answer my research questions because they go beyond the understanding that *Runner’s World* primarily publishes a monolithic runner instead of runners with multifaceted, intersecting identities. My data explain how the magazine’s

editorial decisions exclude runners with diverse body sizes. The individual experiences of the participant guide the interview within the focus of the established interview questions.

If *Runner's World* embraced the entire running community, then the standard image of a runner could adapt, too. This study is important to people in journalism and mass communications because the media can change the way a society thinks (Hjarvard, 2008). Also, this study contributes to previous research because it addresses similar issues, such as the lack of diverse media representation. Previous studies focused on gender representation through a feminist perspective, and several were outdated because they relied on the gender binary (Dodd & Hardin, 2006). Other studies also included surveys, quick questionnaires, text analyses, which do not make room for in-depth anecdotes or complicated experiences (Bluder, 2014; McMahon et al., 2019). By showing how *Runner's World* readers perceive the magazine's editorial decisions, this study goes deeper into the themes addressed in previous research. It will hopefully inspire *Runner's World*, and other publications that misrepresent their audiences, to reflect on previous editorial decisions and address how future decisions could be more inclusive.

My two research questions provide a foundation for this study, and interviews make sure the participants' perspectives lead the way. The notion of what makes up a traditional runner gets dismantled a little bit more when you embrace the nontraditional runners in the community. Eventually, people might see a nontraditional runner and not notice a difference. Research that addresses these topics, such as this thesis, can dismantle public perception of who a runner is.

Chapter 4: Analysis

When you're overweight, your body becomes a matter of record in many respects. Your body is constantly and prominently on display. People project assumed narratives onto your body and are not at all interested in the truth of your body, whatever that truth may be. [...] Your body is subject to commentary when you gain weight, lose weight, or maintain your unacceptable weight. People are quick to offer you statistics and information about the dangers of obesity, as if you are not only fat but also incredibly stupid, unaware, delusional about the realities of your body and a world that is vigorously inhospitable to that body. This commentary is often couched as concern, as if people only have your best interests at heart. They forget that you are person. You are your body, nothing more, and your body should damn well become less.

From *Hunger*, by Roxanne Gay

Although bound by 12 standardized questions and two research questions, these interviews became conversations about the running experience, times participants have been personally slighted by *Runner's World*, and instances in which they questioned their identity as a runner because of the lack of representation in the media. Four main themes emerged from these conversations: (1) runners with diverse body sizes do not associate themselves with the stereotypical "runner's body," (2) these runners are insulted and frustrated by *Runner's World's* attempts at representation, (3) articles that represent them focus on weight loss or weight-related conflicts, and (4) these runners have to look elsewhere for community and representation. These interviews also revealed how different sections of identity, such as race, location, and gender, can intersect with body size and inform the running experience as a whole.

Defining the "runner's body"

The first common theme in the data came as participants described what a stereotypical runner looks like. This description and definition was nearly unanimous across these interviews. These responses came without hesitation, as if it is something these participants have already been thinking about. Participants included characteristics

in ways that often juxtaposed with their own, such as race, body size, comfort levels with revealing attire, and speed. The most common characteristic included in these descriptions was related to body size: P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, P12, P13, P14, and P15 all mentioned that this runner is thin. In particular, they used language such as “flat abs, and no boobs, and wearing a sports bra,” a “clear thigh gap,” a “skinny blonde woman with a swingy ponytail,” and “long, lean legs; thin, six-pack, flat tummy.” Some participants mentioned they have experienced fatphobia because they run. P13 said she encounters fatphobia both online and in person:

I can’t tell you how many times I get DMs or messages like “Well, if you were really a runner, you wouldn’t be fat.” ... One time, I was running with my friend, and a guy on the street right next to me was like, “Yeah, you better run, fat bitch.”

In terms of other descriptors, P1, P2, P6, P7, P10, P12, P13, and P14 all mentioned that this runner is white. Nonwhite participants were more likely to mention race than white participants. Also, the participants who mentioned this runner is young were over age 40. Several mentioned that this runner wears just a sports bra (or goes shirtless if male) and tiny shorts. The final common descriptor was speed: Two participants mentioned the typical runner has raced the Boston Marathon (one of the Abbott World Marathon Majors, which is a race series comprising the six largest and most distinguished marathons around the world) (“Abbott World Marathon Majors,” n.d.). After describing the common runner, many participants connected it to the lack of diversity in *Runner’s World*. P2 put it best when she said:

Runner’s World is for beautiful people — like very fit, very well-trained. You have to be flawless. Even now they’re trying to push for more people of color, BIPOC people, but you see the same thing. They choose those beautiful people.

This finding of what defines a stereotypical runner corroborates with previous research that has touched on the sport's fatphobic obsession with thinness (Anderson et al., 2016; Sniezek, 2019; Chojnacki et al., n.d.; Carter et al., 2020; Steadman, 2009; Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2004). Many participants noted that the standard runner's body size is not their reality, which frustrates them and makes them dissatisfied with their body. After describing what a runner looks like, the participants noted what separates themselves from that and what separates themselves from what a "runner" looks like. Some voiced frustration with this juxtaposition, and others mentioned that it has taken a lot of work to learn to love their bodies and to stop comparing themselves to others. Comparing their own body sizes to what is shown in *Runner's World* and to their own idea of what a runner looks like has made them feel like inadequate runners. P1 discussed how this kind of comparison has questioned her worth as a runner:

I struggle with how I look. It's because of this deep, ingrained idea that this is what I'm supposed to look like because it is what I saw on the [magazine] cover. Or, when I open up Instagram, it's not their fault, but I only see stick-thin runners. And I think that if I want to be fast or if I want to make it up those hills in my neighborhood, I need to lose some weight. And I know that's wrong. I know that I'm healthy. But, I have a little bulge in my stomach; I have stomach fat. I [tell myself] that it's inhibiting me from being the best runner I can be. And I can't get it out of my head no matter what.

Many participants mentioned that this stereotypical runner differs not only from what they look like, but also what their local running community looks like. Geography and locality affected the demographics of these groups, and some participants mentioned that their own running groups influenced their perspective on what a typical runner looks like. Before COVID-19, P4 used to train with the New York Road Runners and Jack Rabbit Running Club. Because of the racial diversity in New York City, P4 ran among many fellow Black runners, but she noticed that she did not see much diversity in terms of body

size. P3, who lives in Kelowna, Canada, mentioned she runs alone about 80% of the time, but she sometimes attends her local running store's Tuesday night track workouts. She mentioned that about 75% of the other attendees do not look like her; they fit the mold of the stereotypical runner's body. P13 works at her local running store in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and said that every day she sees a range of runners in terms that extends beyond what is seen in *Runner's World*. She said when she meets customers who want to start running to lose weight, she tries to reframe running in their mind to something enjoyable. Existing research concurs with P13's goal. People who exercise for enjoyment feel a sense of fulfillment and autonomy that promotes longevity, which is much more stable and healthy than the sporadic, fast-burning flame of exercising solely to lose weight (Richardson et al., 2012). The participants who initially felt self-conscious about attending a group run described how the other runners all embraced them. When P12 started running, she said she wore dark, baggy clothes to avoid drawing attention to her body. But, because of her body-positive running community, she said she now wears bright colors. Running creates a very uniting culture, and more people could join if they saw themselves represented in the sport (Westfall, 2012).

Some participants also mentioned they started running as a means to lose weight after finishing college, leaving a toxic relationship, or giving birth. Running is associated with a cheap and easy way to lose weight, as previous studies discovered and these participants echoed (Abbas, 2004; Richardson et al., 2012; Westfall, 2012). P5 mentioned that although she started running for weight loss, she quickly fell in love with the sport, the running culture, and the overall community that comes with it:

I was on a weight-loss journey. And my friend, she's also heavyset, introduced me to a women-only run group that had a certified coach. She had a whole layout,

and after the 12-week session, we ended with the 5K, which was my very first 5K. I was glad that it rained [during the 5K] because I was crying. I was like, ‘Oh, this is absolutely amazing.’ Throughout the years, I’ve gone from 5K to 10K, 15K, and half marathon.

Not every participant was a member of a running club; many ran alone. This was due to several factors, such as work or parenting schedules, but the most pervasive one was self-consciousness. Some runners who ran alone voiced that they were more comfortable doing that because then they would not feel judged because of their speed or their body. P2, a member of the Navajo Nation, described that she runs alone because she is insecure and also because she needs to process the trauma she experiences as a Native woman:

I think part of the reason I like running alone is because I have no one with me to compare myself to. When I do run with people, it’s different because they accept you for who you are, but I’m always making sure everything fits right. It’s that mentality of ‘Do I still look like I’m almost 200 pounds?’ ... In the Native culture, a lot of our running is for healing. I have had lot of trauma and a lot of loss. So oftentimes, [I am running and] crying or thinking of the people who we have lost. That’s kind of been part of our culture. We run because we’re healing from trauma.

If *Runner’s World* framed running as a way to increase general well-being, as opposed to a way to lose weight, then the participants who feel self-conscious about their figures would have more positive relationships with their bodies (Richardson et al., 2012; Shaprow & Vartanian, 2008; Brownell et al., 2011; Beeken et al., 2014). Although many of the participants in this study mentioned that they initially had a weight-loss goal, they currently run for enjoyment, general health, and community. As a result, running gives these women a sense of empowerment, newfound confidence, and a “zest for life,” as P6 said. After a heart attack, P6 had to choose between a shunt in her heart, open-heart surgery, or exercise. She started running and is thankful for this journey because she feels

“more confident than I have ever been.” Other participants echoed this in their discussion of how running has changed how they think about themselves:

P11: I [found] online communities such as the #SportsBraSquad, [and] I, all of a sudden, found myself going out in just a sports bra and buying two-piece bathing suits because of this newfound confidence and knowing that there were other athletes out there just like me.

P8: I am much more confident than I was. I had kids back-to-back, and I gained a ton of weight. I just felt really crappy about myself. Initially, I took up running to lose weight. It kind of helped a little, but mostly running changes the way you think about yourself. You just feel so much more confident and strong.

Existing research concurs with these increased levels of confidence and self-esteem (Westfall, 2012). Running improves both physical and mental health (Westfall, 2012). These participants all have valid runner’s bodies that deserve to be celebrated just as much as the stereotypical ones shown frequently in *Runner’s World*. Even though many runners opt to run alone, they are still influenced by the running community through the media. *Runner’s World* helps build and reinforce the social constructions of what a runner looks like, and it has the responsibility to amend this false construction and finally include all the runners it has historically left behind.

Not all runners look like that

Running makes these participants feel empowered and confident, but P6 said stories about weight loss in *Runner’s World* make her feel “like I don’t even belong” and “like I don’t matter.” These participants generally do not think *Runner’s World* represents them, which makes them feel frustrated and devalued. Previous research says that society benefits from accurate portrayals of itself in the media (Hjarvard, 2008). When describing the typical runner, participants listed features that differed from their own because *Runner’s World* has informed the way they perceive the running community (Hjarvard,

2008). P1, a journalist who also studied psychology in college, noted that even though she is aware of the pervasive effects of the media, she still finds herself being affected by the media she consumes: “I know the logic behind it. I know the psychology behind it. And yet, here I am being influenced by it. It’s very powerful.” She also noted her body image is directly correlated to if she ran that day. If she doesn’t run, she doesn’t think she deserves a treat or dessert that evening. Other participants echoed this mindset and mentioned they are aware it is unhealthy and harmful, but they have trouble breaking out of it. The participants are not to blame; they are fighting against an institution that has the power to alter their own beliefs and perspectives, as previous studies have already discovered (Hjarvard, 2008; Allward et al., 2018). If runners mainly see images of thin athletes in the media, then they associate it with the default body size and attach their own self-worth to it (Allward et al., 2018). This explains how participants in this research, even though they all varied in other characteristics, described a very similar typical running body.

When discussing how she sees fatphobia reinforced on the pages of *Runner’s World*, P12 mentioned that she has turned to body-positive resources, such as Health at Every Size®, to improve her own body image. Previous research suggests that fatphobic societies should enlighten themselves with this mindset (Brewis et al., 2018; Stoll, 2019). Other participants also mentioned the problems of about correlating thinness with health. P8 said: “The whole thing with people assuming that bigger people are unhealthier is ridiculous. It’s crap. A thin person can also be incredibly unhealthy.” This is true; as previously stated, previous studies have found that running is associated with thinness, and thinness is associated with health (Westfall, 2019; Stoll, 2019; Greer & Jones, 2011).

Runner's World fails to support the Health At Every Size® concept or other body-positive movements throughout the magazine. Many participants mentioned that *Runner's World* only includes runners with diverse body sizes in weight-loss success stories, in which the featured runner eventually develops the stereotypical runner's body. P13 said that "you're still considered a failure if you're plus-sized." *Runner's World* not only continues to serve a falsely defined standard body size, but it also fails to include BIPOC runners with diverse body sizes, said P14, who identifies primarily as Mexican and also as Native and Polish. She mentioned that the magazine's representation of Mirna Valerio feels convenient, "like killing two birds with one stone," because she is a Black, plus-sized runner, but that's where the magazine's intersectional representation ends in regards to body size.

As a whole, participants agreed that *Runner's World* does not serve all runners because they find themselves unrepresented and underappreciated. When asked what a typical *Runner's World* story looks like, the answer among the participants was nearly unanimous. The magazine is known for its service journalism, which is one of two sub-themes that emerged from the discussions about typical *Runner's World* stories. These sub-themes are: (1) *Runner's World* stories don't provide the full service and (2) shifting toward diversity, but not complete diversity.

Runner's World stories don't provide the full service

After being asked to describe a regular *Runner's World* story, common answers included training tips, the best shoes to wear, the most supportive sports bra to wear, how to eat healthy food/lose weight, and how to qualify for the Boston Marathon. These types of stories fall under the definition of service journalism: a style of journalism that offers

expert- or science-backed tips on how to live a more productive life, reach a particular goal, eat a healthier diet, and more (Lockhart, 2008). *Runner's World's* department dedicated to weight loss relies on service journalism with headlines such as “7 science-backed tips to help you start running for weight loss” (Carter et al., 2020). *Runner's World* is known for this type of journalism. Its 2020 media kit notes that its “powerful service journalism propels runners across the finish line with insightful content on everything from nutrition and injury prevention to cross-training and travel tips.” With this, *Runner's World* offers many stories — and sometimes entire issues — that provide a service to its readers. In fact, the cover story for *Runner's World's* 2021 Issue 2 is the “Two Thousand Twenty-one Shoe Awards.” The cover reads: “We thrashed 100 shoes with 300 wear-testers, our experts on staff, and our lab’s torture machines (including our band saw!). Here are the 25 best.” This is not surprising because *Runner's World* has been publishing stories and issues like this for decades (Nietz, 2016). That is why these participants generally were able to associate *Runner's World* with stories about equipment recommendations, training tips, and fueling strategies.

Generally, magazine readers and subscribers are drawn to service journalism; readers are more likely to buy a magazine with informational service stories than buy one without (Lockhart, 2008). This correlates to the participants of this research but with some slight reservations. The information provided in *Runner's World* service journalism articles are primarily written for runners with stereotypical body sizes. P7 noted that she has trouble finding information on fueling, attire, and training that serves her as a plus-sized runner, and “when it is hard to find information, it is discouraging.”

In addition, P9 said that larger runners have to buy shoes more frequently (because the cushion wears out) and also purchase shoes with a wider sole, and *Runner's World* stories about the best shoes do not mention these modifications and tips. Other participants noted that compression clothes fit each body differently, and in larger bodies, the compression stretches out quicker. Or, sports bras recommended by *Runner's World* do not accommodate larger runners with larger breasts, and some participants noted that they struggle to find comfortable, supportive sports bras both from common running brands and niche running boutiques. After talking about the struggles of finding supportive sports bras, P4 noted, "How am I supposed to run if I physically cannot run?" She continued to discuss that though this problem also comes from clothing brands, *Runner's World* perpetuates the idea that runners are flat-chested and thin:

If *Runner's World* does an article about the best sports bras, there are never sports bras for large busts. They're usually those very sleek, no underwire support, pull-over-your-head bras. That's not going to work for me. [If there's a D cup option,] then it's like a 36D. What about the girls who need a 40 or a 42 band? What about the girls who need like an E and a G? Like come on, guys. Even after being in the running community for so long, I still struggle to this day with finding a sports bra that accommodates not only my band size as a plus-sized woman, but also my larger breasts.

Previous studies have not examined how *Runner's World's* service journalism has excluded runners with diverse body types, but this has been a problem for quite a while, according to a *Grandstand Central* article called "What's up with the lack of body diversity in women's activewear?" (Knight, 2019). Since that article's publication, there has been some small progress toward inclusivity. Even though the national average women's pants size is 16, prominent activewear brand Lululemon only started making clothes sized above 14 in September 2020 (Tschinkel, 2020). It now produces bottoms up to size 20. Participants in this study want brands to offer a broad range of sizes in order to

make exercise more accessible for all body sizes. Increasing the sizing range stands behind the idea that all body sizes deserve to be comfortably in motion, as P4 said. Existing literature concurs; Greenleaf et al. (2019) found that women are generally frustrated with the functionality of their clothes, and exclusion of larger excludes larger people and reinforces the stereotype that smaller sizes are fitter people.

In fact, in 2013, when Lululemon founder Chip Wilson was asked about how his company's tights form pills under friction, such as thighs rubbing together, he said "some women's bodies just don't work for it" (Memmott, 2013). P7 said this kind of thinking is "rooted in fatphobia." She said there is the social assumption that larger people don't run, so they don't need adequate athletic attire. Several participants mentioned they have to purchase athletic tights more frequently because holes form in the inner thigh, and they generally avoid shorts because they ride up and lead to painful chafing. P3 mentioned she cannot go to *Runner's World* for shorts recommendations. Participants who expressed frustration about poorly fitting exercise clothes also offered which brands have worked for them: Day/Won, Lola Getts, Fabletics, Athleta, and Shefit.

Participants mentioned that they wished *Runner's World* promoted clothes brands that offer not only larger sizes but also just as many colors and patterns for each size. Oftentimes, a clothes company will offer plus sizes but limit the options to classics, such as basic black tights (Nittle, 2018; Tschinkel, 2019). Standard sizes get the freedom to select experimental colors and patterns, but many clothes companies aren't providing equal access to fashion (Nittle, 2018). This neglects a prominent section of the population; the national average pants size for women is larger than what some athleisure companies produce (Tschinkel, 2019).

Because the clothes companies are not very size-inclusive, the models who represent the sports bras, compression tights, and shoes in *Runner's World* are not, either (Greenleaf et al., 2019). P4 expressed frustration that the models do not look like her because the clothes that *Runner's World* promotes in the magazine are not designed to accommodate larger sizes. Even running-centered publications, clothing brands, and organizations that focus on inclusivity still exclude diverse body sizes. P7 agrees with P4's earlier statement and said the exclusivity in the athletic fashion industry "makes zero sense because bodies come in all different shapes and sizes." This is just another barrier to complete body diversity representation; not only are the stories in *Runner's World* rarely about these runners, but also the models do not represent them as well.

In terms of stories that the participants would like to read, several noted they wanted to read tips about running in a larger body. They also mentioned they would like to read stories about runners with diverse body sizes. But, they do not want to read stories that are only about these runners' body sizes — just like how runners with stereotypical body sizes can share their non-weight-related journeys, too. P7 and P5 offered suggestions for inclusive, body-positive stories that they want to read.

P7: I want to read stories about what it means to run in a fat body. What are some things I need to be considering about my knees or my hips? But also [write it in a way that is] not explicitly for fat people. Like, if you're somebody who has pressure on these parts of your body. And what I really want to [read] about is why there are no good running tights or leggings for big women.

P5: I would definitely like to see more indigenous runners. I would like to see more Black runners and, of course, plus-sized runners. More mom runners, too. There have to be transgender runners, but I've never read a story [about them]. I don't know how comfortable transgender runners are in the running community. I noticed for me, it's hard. I don't know how a transgender person would feel in the running community because all of the statistics are male or female.

Existing research reinforces the socially constructed barrier to adequate running and exercise clothes that these runners expressed. Greenleaf et al. (2019) concluded we need to push for more activism in the fashion industry. This kind of activism can come from *Runner's World*, and because the magazine holds such a high status in the running community, its advocacy has more social impact.

Shifting toward diversity, but not complete diversity

When describing *Runner's World's* record of diversity, participants either recalled a recent inclusion of racially diverse runners or the historical lack of racial diversity within the pages of the magazine or on the website. In the last decade, less than 15% of runners on the magazine cover were Black, Indigenous, or people of color (Blades, 2020). Ever since the social movements in 2020 and 2021 that called for racial equality, *Runner's World* has focused on including nonwhite runners on its covers and website homepage. P2 and P14 acknowledged that this editorial change was necessary, but P2 thought that *Runner's World* “got on the bandwagon” when it was convenient. Although this coverage has more racial diversity, it does not also include much body-size diversity.

This kind of single-axis inclusivity actually contributes to the marginalization of those who face discrimination on several axes, such as BIPOC runners with diverse body sizes (Crenshaw, 1989, pp. 58). This is something that P2 personally experienced with *Runner's World*. She is a member of the Navajo Nation, and when she reached out to *Runner's World* with a story, she said she thinks the magazine decided to go with a younger, more “cute and beautiful” Native runner. She noted that although this younger runner offers racial diversity, she still has a traditional runners body:

I have a personal coach who wrote a story on me for *Women's Running Magazine*. Actually, we tried to do it with *Runner's World*, and they said, “No,

we already have someone.” They ended up writing about another [Native] runner. This writer was like, “Let’s see [if they’ll accept the story]; they might reject us.” But that’s just how *Runner’s World* is. Really it’s because [the Native runner whom *Runner’s World* featured] is cute and beautiful. When you compare her, young and beautiful, to me, even though we’re doing the same kind of work, that’s who they’re going to choose. I have seen this pattern in the past couple of years. And with the work that I’m doing, it’s sometimes frustrating. When [*Runner’s World*] is like, “We just want this runner, and we’re fine with it. We’re not going to even seek anybody else,” it’s like, come on. Hopefully the whole media will change in a way where they see acceptance of all body types.

It is important to note the lack of complete diversity because, as P7 noted, fatphobia and racism are closely linked. Stoll (2019) and Ashbach (2019) elaborate on this; fatphobia has not only been associated with racism, but also with sexism and classism. Prominent American figures at the turn of the 20th century created social hierarchies based on race and body size; larger bodies were associated with immigrants and people of color and cast off to the bottom of this hierarchy (Stoll, 2019). Thinness became associated with whiteness and American citizenship. Fatphobia exists within many systems of oppression, and previous research fails to address its true extent in society.

Runner’s World is currently on the precipice of editorial change. After a tumultuous 2020 where activists worked to dismantle the systems of oppression that have created hegemonic groups and discriminated against others, *Runner’s World* has focused more on stories about inequality and justice. Stories in the Runner’s Alliance — a safety-awareness partnership among *Women’s Health Magazine*, *Runner’s World*, and Hoka, a running shoe company — shifted to address the intersection of racial or gender inequality and safety on the run. In June 2019, the Runner’s Alliance section had stories such as “I Teach Self-Defense to Runners. Here Are the 4 Things You Need to Know” (Camelio, 2019). In June 2020, the section included stories such as “Black women deserve to run free,” and in April 2021, there was “As an Asian American, I cannot outrun racism”

(Johnson, 2020; Liu Tervalon, 2021). These new stories were in response to the violence against Black and Asian Americans through 2020 and 2021.

Just like how the 2020 and 2021 articles have BIPOC writers to ensure the article's authenticity and accuracy, stories about runners with diverse body sizes should follow suit. Because *Runner's World* does not cover the depth of inequality that plus-sized runners face, it is ignoring a section of its audience. Plus-sized writers should be the authors of stories about Mirna Valerio, Latoya Shauntay Snell, and any other future body-size activist the magazine features in the future. These writers could understand that there are more, often intersecting, aspects to identity, as P15 stated: "It's hard to be only seen by one dimension. I think that that's what happens often; you can only be viewed through this lens when there's so much more going on."

A thin Runner's World

When asked what *Runner's World* should write more about, participants said they want to see stories about regular, everyday runners, particularly plus-sized runners, stories that "celebrate the back of the pack," and stories of people who run despite family troubles, work stress, their own body image issues, and the fact that they feel like they might not fit in the running community. P3 mentioned she finds more inspiration in the runners around her than in the elite runners regularly featured in *Runner's World*:

If you look at a traditional runner or somebody who's thinner, they can finish a marathon most likely under four hours. Do you know how long it takes me to finish a marathon? Six hours. So when you think about a plus-sized runner, who is doing six hours of pounding on the pavement, versus an elite runner, who does it in two hours and 20 minutes? I have to pack a fucking suitcase on my back because I need two liters of water. My hat's off to elite runners, but the people who have to do it twice as long, sometimes three times as long, are my motivation. Those are the people who have such grit.

Runners with the stereotypical body size can be multifaceted, but according to P4, P10, P12, P13, and P15, *Runner's World* makes it seem like plus-sized runners exist to lose weight. When they lose enough weight, they will finally be seen as runners, not just plus-sized runners. Stories that promote weight loss discredit runners like the participants in this study and reinforce the false connotation that runners are thin, as P4 mentioned:

Why are we promoting these ideas of fatphobia? There shouldn't only be stories celebrating someone who decided to start running because they felt their body was not desirable. There are people who consider themselves fat runners. There are fat people who just enjoy running. I'm a plus-sized woman. And I actually am much smaller than I was when I started running. But, I think that's just by sheer coincidence. You just don't really see us unless [*Runner's World* does a] feel-good story to check off a box. It's very frustrating.

If I'm scrolling through social media, I can probably outrun 75% of my timeline. I have endurance and speed. But, people don't consider me an innately athletic person. If people were just scrolling down my timeline, I think that they would underestimate a lot of my physical abilities just based on the way that I look or the body type that I have.

P3 mentioned that though she is not affected by the stories that promote thinness, she notices the discrepancy and wants *Runner's World* to feature ordinary runners who do not have weight-loss goals:

I don't look at *Runner's World* with a negative connotation. I do wish they had more women like me in more of the articles instead of a feature at the end like, "Now you're a success because you lost all this weight." It's definitely a shame that they don't have a regular article about "Everyday Jane" and not have it be tied to weight loss.

Runner's World might be incorporating more diversity within the magazine, but it is already showing signs of exclusion. As the next theme shows, stories about runners with diverse body sizes are either focused on their weight or written to encourage weight loss. Fatphobia is so pervasive that it makes the tarnishes the place where all runners are meant to feel seen and heard.

Lose weight, run fast? Not quite.

Participants commonly felt frustrated with *Runner's World's* inconsistent coverage of runners with diverse body sizes. The magazine publishes weight-loss tips, stories of inspirational weight loss, and articles that are shrouded in fatphobia. This normalizes the false assumption that runners are thin, and non-thin runners should lose weight in order to validate their presence in the sport. Articles that promote this stereotypical body size make some participants hesitant to read the magazine.

P7 noted that even though she is a regular *Runner's World* reader, she doesn't read as much of it as she would like because "I don't often feel like anything's geared toward me." P11 concurred and said that weight-loss stories are "a terrible representation of plus-sized running. For so many of us, being a runner isn't about losing weight. It is about finding our purpose. It is our therapy. It is what makes us our best." P4 mentioned that she has been a runner for so long that if she cared to run to change her body, then she "should be a twig by now. It frustrates me when people hear that I run and they automatically think I'm doing it for weight loss." Existing studies affirm that running magazines have historically published cover lines and articles that guarantee quick weight loss through running (Abbas, 2004; Westfall, 2012; Brownell et al., 2003; Browning et al., 2016). As P15 mentioned, *Runner's World* is nearly dividing its audience through articles that prioritize certain body types over others.

It's like there are two kinds of runners. There's a thin runner who's a competitive, amazing runner. Then there's a fat runner who's just trying to become that other person. It's like, no, I'm just out there running and enjoying it.

It's exhausting to always have to hear about [weight loss], especially when I know how much healthier I am now than I was when I was thinner. My body wasn't meant to be there, and it was in a constant state of trauma trying to stay there.

Seeing that the only way you can be good is by always being on some kind of weight-loss program or diet is exhausting.

Some participants have learned to be savvy and avoid fatphobic articles altogether. They mentioned that they have their “blinders up” to the topic, they are “used to not being represented,” and they are “so inundated with weight loss crap that [they] don’t even notice it anymore.” P10 mentioned that even though she chooses not to pay attention to these stories, she still recognizes the problem:

There’s a lot of language that I think people don’t realize is fatphobic until someone who is fat is like, “That’s fatphobic.” Just be healthy. Don’t gaslight me; a lot of that language is immediately incendiary. I think so much of it is “This is the better way,” or “Look at how great her life is now because she’s lost 20 pounds.” I would love to see more things that celebrate balance. [*Runner’s World* publishes stories like:] “If you eat these supplements, it’s going to turbo-kick your weight loss.” That doesn’t work for everybody.

Participants shared a sentiment of emotional exhaustion and frustration when discussing this phenomenon. These feelings are expected after viewing fatphobic media (Allward et al., 2018). A higher representation of women with healthy BMIs improves the viewer’s own body satisfaction and reduces the risk of developing eating disorders (Allward et al., 2018).

Discussions about weight-loss coverage in *Runner’s World* were both broad and specific. When talking about *Runner’s World*’s fatphobic lens in its health and wellness coverage, P8 and P9 specifically brought up an advertisement that is featured in every print issue. This became one sub-theme in conversations about fatphobic coverage in *Runner’s World*.

INVIGOR8ing hypocrisy

This advertisement is for INVIGOR8, a weight-loss supplement beverage and meal-replacement drink. P8 noted that if *Runner’s World* is starting to write about body-

positive runners, such as Latoya Shauntay Snell, then this advertisement presents a double standard: “They’re being supportive of her as an athlete, but also saying that to be your best athletic self, you need to lose weight.”

These advertisements are formatted to manipulate the reader into thinking they are *Runner’s World* articles. They are written to look like articles with headlines and bylines, and they have similar fonts, layouts, and photo styles as what *Runner’s World* typically uses. The only thing separating it from the editorial content is a tiny note that is often camouflaged within a photo: “ADVERTISEMENT.”

These articles also have the similar tone of service journalism that is frequently seen throughout *Runner’s World*. P8 noted that she was disappointed that *Runner’s World* was accepting money from INVIGOR8. P9 said that by publishing this advertisement, *Runner’s World* supports the idea that runners should be thin or actively trying to achieve thinness. Existing research shares a common sentiment that runners are either naturally or forcefully thin (Westfall, 2012).

One INVIGOR8 advertisement in 2021’s Issue 2 has the headline “Want to be lighter on your feet? Lose that extra weight” (Appendix B). In this advertisement’s pseudo-article, a triathlon winner with a “record of whipping the ‘who’s who’ into shape in record time” recommended the author tried the INVIGOR8 meal replacement shake, and it helped her “stay fit and toned.” That exact headline was replicated in 2019’s Issue 2 (INVIGOR8, 2019, pp. 31).

Another advertisement in 2021’s Issue 1 has the headline “Shake it up: Lose that weight by shaking things up” (Appendix B). The advertisement in 2020’s Issue 4 says “Lose weight with a shake” (INVIGOR8, 2020, pp. 15). The June 2018 issue (from when

Runner's World was still labeling issues by month instead of number) has the advertisement headline “Lose weight, feel great! Break through your weight loss plateau” (INVIGOR8, 2018, pp. 33). Throughout the years, the advertisement has run the same story about the triathlon winner recommending the INVIGOR8 shake. At the end of the story, INVIGOR8 offers a special discount just for *Runner's World* readers. Copies of these advertisements are available in this study's appendix.

This magazine and advertisement set up such a strong juxtaposition that both cannot exist at the same time; either body positivity belongs in the magazine or the advertisement belongs. P8 says:

I think [the advertisement] does a disservice to all of us who have normal bodies or bigger bodies. You're telling me that I need to lose weight to be a runner. I'm already a runner. I firmly believe that your body just kind of looks how your body looks. If you are trying to fight it, that is just going to be a constant miserable battle.

The participants of this study mentioned they are less enthusiastic to support a magazine that doesn't seem to support them as much as other magazines do. In fact, even the participants who did not bring up the INVIGOR8 advertisement mentioned that they are actively insulted when *Runner's World* suggests that they should be in the pursuit of losing weight or changing their body. It makes them feel like they do not belong in the running community, so they form their own. Lack of mainstream inclusion is actually the impetus for many of the specialized running groups around the country (Funk et al., 2016). Participants elaborated more on this in the fourth theme that emerged.

Finding community

Seven participants mentioned they found inspiration and community through runners who are also body-positive activists, such as Mirna Valerio, Latoya Shauntay

Snell, and Martinus Evans. Valerio's influence was the most prominent among the participants. She is an ultramarathoner who started as a blogger under "Fat Girl Running" and has since written a memoir based on her experiences as a Black plus-sized runner: *A Beautiful Work In Progress*. Valerio has over 132,000 Instagram followers and uses her account (@mirnavator) to encourage her followers to explore nature and run freely.

Valerio was not a part of any interview questions, and questions were not written to guide participants to talk about her. However, five participants organically offered stories of how she changed their own relationship with their body and made them feel celebrated and seen. Valerio is so busy inspiring runners of all body sizes that when I sent her an email in early March asking her to participate in this research, her business manager responded and said she is booked solid through July.

P3 started running after listening to a podcast interview with Valerio. P13 and P8 mentioned that they follow her social media. P5 read her June 2018 *Runner's World* profile, and P6 used this profile as a reason to read *Runner's World*. She said:

I look for articles that have people who look like me. I saw Mirna Valerio and Latoya Shauntay Snell, and those are two women that I really follow a lot. And it's sad, but if I don't see people who look like me, I just kind of tune it out.

Even though this *Runner's World* profile is written to welcome the diversity of the sport, it has a fatphobic lens. The article includes Valerio's exact weight and uses it to describe Valerio as an "inspiring example" for runners (Brant, 2018). It is one thing to highlight her role as a prominent plus-sized running figure, especially because her blog is called "Fat Girl Running," but it is another thing to reduce her worth to a numerical value.

Knowing her weight could be triggering for readers who struggle with body image issues

themselves. Comparing your own looks and characteristics to others can decrease your perceived social support, well-being, and self-worth (Burke & Rains, 2018).

Also, the story includes some fatphobic jargon, such as calling her “fat and fit” as if they cannot regularly coexist, which is a common weight-based trope in the media (Burke & Rains, 2018; Himes & Thompson, 2012). The subheading of this article also sets up juxtapositions that reveal our society’s idea that fitness and happiness come from thinness: “Is it possible to be fat and fit? Healthy and happy as well as heavy? At 250 pounds, distance runner Mirna Valerio provides an inspiring example” (Brant, 2018). Language in stories like this make it “abundantly clear” that “there’s one type of runner’s body that [*Runner’s World*] is talking about,” as P7 noted.

Most participants expressed frustration about fatphobia in stories about plus-sized runners, but P5 said these stories made her feel celebrated and recognized: “It really empowers you when you see someone who looks like you. To see other women who are plus-sized and doing it, it is so empowering. It is encouraging, and it makes you just want to keep going.” This reinforces a statement addressed in this thesis’ literature review: “It’s hard to be what you can’t see” (Edelman, 2015). When P5, a Black plus-sized woman, sees Valerio and other Black plus-sized women represented in running, she sees her potential grow.

This was not a common response among the participants; feelings of exclusion and frustration appeared more frequently. They shared that they wanted to become sources of authentic inclusivity for those who also feel misrepresented in *Runner’s World*. They want to stop the cycle of weight stigma, body dissatisfaction, and fatphobia once and for all.

Creating their own representation

Just as runners look to Valerio for body-positive inspiration, most participants noted that they themselves wanted to model healthy relationships with their bodies for their daughters, teenage sisters, and friends. Those who cannot change the way they look to get the “runner’s body” — or do simply not want to — look to online groups for community and representation (Funk et al., 2016). Thirteen participants have an Instagram account devoted to running or exercise, and several already follow each other. They post captions about loving their body, recommendations for quality running clothes, and post-race selfies with shiny medals. Nine participants express a specific goal of normalizing body-positive exercise on Instagram:

P6: My true, sincere hope is that I give another plus-sized person the power to go: “OK, I’m going to run regardless of what anybody has to say. I’m going to do it. Because I’m worth it.”

P10: I think that there has to be a me in every town. I put my story out there, and that’s one of the reasons my Instagram is even public. I didn’t see — at least on the Explore page when I first started — Black women working out, and let alone plus-sized Black women. If I make it to the Explore page, somebody might see this and be like, “Maybe me too.”

These Instagram pages and communities provide accountability and relatability when *Runner’s World* doesn’t satisfy them. During the interviews, these participants also recommended that I reached out to other runners in their Instagram community. P2, P5, and P10 recalled reading so many *Runner’s World* stories and Instagram posts about the same type of runner that they decided to create their own accounts to create their own representation. P2 operates the Instagram account @nativewomenrunning and created it after not seeing enough representation of Native women in the media:

It seems like *Runner’s World* and a lot of other companies and organizations don’t want to seek out runners, especially BIPOC runners. They see the popular

one and go for it. [@nativewomenrunning] has become a place of representation and visibility for Native women runners. We have this community where we show our women in a positive way because our women are very sacred. I get messages from women who say, “Thank you for creating this because I feel a sense of belonging here.” After seeing this community and seeing these things in running, I was like, “Why aren’t [*Runner’s World* and other running magazines] showing more of us?”

P5 operates the Instagram account @curvyrunnergirl and uses her platform to represent curvy athletic girls:

I can’t be the only person out here. It started off as me showing my journey, but I was like, “There have to be more curvy girls and women, right?” Girls around the world need to know we exist.

By now, it is clear that *Runner’s World* has a lot more work to do to fulfill the task outlined in its media kit: to serve as an “essential guide for everyone who runs” (“2021 Media Kit: *Runner’s World*”). Because the media have the ability to define a society or community, and *Runner’s World* is the “largest and most influential media brand in running,” the magazine has a large responsibility of ensuring all types of runners are represented and included (Hjarvard, 2008; “2021 Media Kit: *Runner’s World*”). The magazine can define who a runner is, what characteristics this runner presents, and what priorities this runner has. It has done this in the past, and that has shaped today’s idea of a thin, lanky, muscular runner (Abbas, 2004; Johns & Johns, 2000).

When *Runner’s World* publishes stories that glorify weight loss or exclude the perspectives of runners with diverse body sizes, the whole running community suffers (Richardson et al., 2012). As P8 noted, plus-sized runners are the sport’s “bread and butter;” they are a key demographic that is often overlooked. When institutions such as *Runner’s World* recognize and normalize the plus-sized running population, these runners are more likely to stick to the sport and continue supporting the magazine. It could also

reduce the amount of social stigma and fatphobic harassment these runners encounter while running by normalizing that all runners have runner's bodies.

P1 summed it all up best when she said: "You are a runner, despite what the media might have to say about that. And I have to tell myself that too."

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The running culture, along with the mainstream culture, has a layered relationship with fatphobia and body-size acceptance. Thinness is prioritized, and people who aren't thin are encouraged to change their body until they fit the mold. This kind of mindset normalizes eating disorders among young runners with developing bodies. It also normalizes ostracizing runners with diverse body sizes. Running, in particular, is a sport that associates itself with being lean and losing weight, but that does not mean all runners should share the same goals. In this study, fifteen runners with diverse body sizes discussed how *Runner's World* prioritizes weight loss and thinness in its stories, which falsely perpetuates the stereotype of a thin runner. They brought vulnerability and honesty to these interviews. Their responses and emotions made it clear that they were passionate about this research topic.

The interviews illustrated that the participants are frustrated with the hegemonic body size in the running community, and *Runner's World's* reinforcement of this runner's body exacerbate these frustrations. Ultimately, these participants hope for a more inclusive *Runner's World* in the future, but until then, they will turn to their Instagram-created communities for representation. I found 14 of them on Instagram because they had posts with hashtags such as #fatrunner or #fatrunning, which is also how these participants find and connect with each other.

Although this sample was not an indication of the entire community, there were enough common themes and immediate responses to questions that show how pervasive the lack of representation in *Runner's World* can be. This research supported the existing idea that running has promoted a culture of thinness (Westfall, 2012; Abbas, 2004). It

extends beyond these studies to mention how *Runner's World* has not only supported fatphobia in the running community, but it has also enforced it. This research also includes the direct perspectives of the runners who are often stigmatized by these editorial decisions. Although they varied in many aspects of identity, they shared common experiences as runners in a fatphobic culture.

This study explored how *Runner's World* readers with diverse body sizes experienced the magazine's representation of runners and how this representation impacts their running experience. Interviews yielded common answers that also described how *Runner's World* directly influences runners' identities. These participating runners have diverse body sizes and do not associate themselves with the stereotypical runner's body, which *Runner's World* helps cultivate. The magazine attempts to represent all runners, as outlined in its media kit, but these attempts fall short with fatphobic and reductive articles about larger runners. These runners feel frustrated and invalidated because those articles either suggest they lose weight or imply they only deserve weight-related narratives. So, these runners turn to Instagram to find the community and representation that *Runner's World* fails to provide.

Some participants expressed a frustration in being viewed only through one lens of experience: their weight. They were also mothers, teachers, students, journalists, members of the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities, running coaches, yoga instructors, Americans, Canadians, and more. They all had several intersecting dimensions of identity that offered more to their running experience than just their weight. This research's focus on intersectionality allowed the participants the chance to discuss these other aspects to their lives. Many were content with their body size and not looking to lose weight,

anyway. All runners are multifaceted and have more to share than what is on the scale, even when *Runner's World* fixates on it. Participants of this research all shared non-weight related stories that deserve to be represented in *Runner's World*, such as what it is like to work in a local running store, what it is like to pick up running again during a pandemic, and how to maintain a run streak while supporting a chronically ill child in the hospital.

This does not mean to disregard and ignore stories about weight. In fact, body size should be considered in articles about the best shoes or running clothes. But, when *Runner's World* writes about runners with different body sizes, the articles themselves should be about more than just their weight. The magazine features runners who have several-year-long run streaks and use running to cope with mental health (Shilton, 2020; Pollock, 2021). Plus-sized runners do this too, but these *Runner's World* stories generally feature runners with the stereotypical body shape. By including more articles about plus-sized runners and normalizing their existence within the running community, *Runner's World* will stand behind the message that all bodies are runner's bodies.

This lack of representation gives these participants a hesitation to align with the mainstream running community. They represent a subgroup because the running culture hesitates to accept diverse body sizes. They are #fatrunners, not just #runners. The participants have developed a community of likeminded runners around the world to whom they feel a closer kinship than the runners who live in their own hometowns. They have to put the effort in to find their own running community because, as several participants noted, they cannot relate to most of what *Runner's World* publishes. This is the crux of the data.

This research reinforces that runners with diverse body sizes thrive when they see representations of themselves in the media (Stoll, 2019; Abbas, 2004; Hjarvard, 2008; Bacon et al., 1993). In order to truly accept all runners, *Runner's World* writers and editors need to represent all runners in the magazine. *Runner's World* has the ability to shape the culture for the running community, and throughout its seven decades of publication, it has defined what it takes to be a runner (Abbas, 2004; Dodd & Hardin, 2006; Chance et al., 2005). With this, the magazine needs to adopt a more holistic approach at representing runners with diverse body sizes. This change is most effective when it comes from the top, the editorial staff, as Crenshaw noted (1989, pp. 73). As *Runner's World* pushes to create a more diverse newsroom, it needs to hire plus-sized writers, too. These writers will understand not only the physical implications of running in a larger body, but the cultural implications of weight stigmatization and body shame.

Including intersectional perspectives also shows the diversity within one common running experience. This challenges two beliefs: that there is a monolithic runner and that the only problem *Runner's World* needs to fix is its lack of racial diversity. Revealing the layers of oppression that exist within a cultural experience helps challenge those who think their one experience is universal. Running is experienced differently because runners are each seen and judged differently based on how closely they adhere to the socially constructed definition of a runner.

This study shows that *Runner's World* still has a way to go in terms of inclusivity in its articles, covers, advertisements, and overall tone. Based on the findings in the literature review, it is clear that there is a history of fatphobia in the media because it has glorified thinness and used body size as a punchline. Also, if *Runner's World* writes

about size-inclusive brands, it will improve the conditions for plus-sized runners twofold: by diversifying the models in the magazines and reducing the stigma that plus-sized people only wear athleisure to lie around (Tschinkel, 2019). In March 2021, *Runner's World* published "Best Workout Clothes for Plus-Size Women" (Giddings, 2021). This is a good start for the magazine, but in order to achieve complete acceptance of the plus-sized community, *Runner's World* needs to combine this list with the standard "Best Workout Clothes for Women" list. Runners who wear running clothes or sports bras that are larger than what *Runner's World* advertises are left to fend for themselves to find comfortable and supportive shoes, shorts, running tights, sports bras, and more. They turn to their own network as a resource. Similarly, stories about body positivity should include runners who are larger than the national average. By doing this, *Runner's World* is standing behind the idea that everybody can be active and be comfortable in their body.

Generally, these participating *Runner's World* readers wish to see more acceptance of all body sizes in motion. They also have been excluded from the pages of the magazine for so long that, to this study's participants, it felt normal not to be represented. This concurs with previous research that found that some members of underrepresented communities do not even expect visibility in the mainstream media at all (Westfall, 2012).

This research notes that stories about runners with diverse body sizes should have writers with diverse body sizes. A limitation to this research is that this finding does not apply here. As I stated in my introduction, I do not have the svelte, lanky body that I see in *Runner's World*, but I do have thin privilege. Mainstream retailers offer my size, and when I share that I run, people do not assume I am doing it to lose weight.

I used to think that I did not have a runner's body. Of course I have a runner's body. All of the participants have one, too. During some interviews, however, I felt that this research would be enhanced if it were conducted by a runner who personally experienced some of what the participants shared. They deserve a researcher who fully understands the scope of their stories. But, I am very passionate about body politics and weight-related stigma. Even if I did not directly relate to some of the participants' struggles or insights, I am well aware of the institutions that create and perpetuate fatphobia. There is, however, a difference between studying a phenomenon and experiencing it. In instances in which I did not relate to the participant, I had to confront my own privilege and recognize that there are levels of inequality that extend beyond what I experience myself. This occurred several times throughout the interview, coding, organization, analysis, and writing process.

As this research was inspired by previous studies on body image, *Runner's World* coverage, and inequality, hopefully it inspires future researchers to consider a related lens of research. There are many more ways to examine how identity intersects with *Runner's World* coverage. By revealing how some *Runner's World* readers are personally affected by the editorial decisions, this study could be used as a jumping-off point for magazine journalists to make sure they have inclusive stories, models, covers, and language.

There are several possible directions for future research. Unfortunately, for how simple it can be to start running, there are barriers that prevent many from participating in the sport. Races still rely on the gender binary with male and female categories, which excludes those who don't identify with either. How do nonbinary or transgender runners compete in races that affirm and celebrate their gender? Runners need safe, well-lit areas

to run, which can exclude those who don't live in areas that are well-funded. How do runners in underfunded neighborhoods make sure they are safe and comfortable running outdoors? Also, running is associated with its economic accessibility, but the costs of shoes, clothes, and race fees can add up quickly. How does a runner's economic class affect the ability to participate in the sport?

In terms of the media and running, there are also plenty of topics to research in the future. Many of this research's participants were disappointed with the decision to regularly run the fatphobic INVIGOR8 advertisement and place it in a deceiving place within the magazine. To what extent does the editorial staff control the advertisements, and how do magazines mitigate conflicting messages between the two? Do male runners with diverse body sizes perceive these INVIGOR8 advertisements in different ways than female runners with diverse body sizes do? Also, participants mentioned they were more likely to read *Women's Running* because it started promoting all runner body types even as early as 2015. What are the benefits of supporting a magazine that is more mainstream but fails to include your specific interests?

As this current research is interview-based and experience-driven, future research could perform a textual analysis of *Runner's World* and explore the specific language used in stories about weight loss or body size. Or, researchers could interview *Runner's World* contributors and editors to explore how the magazine has shifted to include more racial diversity and address inequality within the running community. This magazine has a long history of providing an educational and motivational service to its readers. Since Kathrine Switzer became the first woman to officially run the Boston Marathon in 1967, the recreational running community has expanded to include more than just white men,

and its time *Runner's World* reflects that. The magazine that labels itself as the ultimate guide for runners should include all runners, not just the most convenient ones.

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Appendix A

Issue 1 in 2020

Issue 4 in 2020

Issue 5 in 2020

Mirna Valerio's profile story (Brant, 2018)

≡ RUNNER'S WORLD

SUBSCRIBE

ACCOUNT

Ultra: Mirna Valerio

Is it possible to be fat and fit? Healthy and happy as well as heavy? At 250 pounds, distance runner Mirna Valerio provides an inspiring example.

BY JOHN BRANT JUN 20, 2018

Mirna Valerio in Black Rock Mountain State Park in Mountain City, Georgia, for an early morning trail run.

Appendix B

INVIGOR8 Advertisements: Issue 1 2021 and Issue 2 2021

My Running Life

EXPERT HACKS, GEAR HOCS & RUN-TESTED WISDOM FROM RW

HAIJUN STAMATIS RAMOUNDOUS, 25
VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

MY SOUL ROUTE
— Prospect Park's loop in Brooklyn, NY. The feeling of home cannot be understated—it eliminates a lot of anxiety that comes from running in unfamiliar environments. I feel connected with the area, the place I grew up in.

START OR FINISH?
There's nothing better than finishing a race and reuniting with family and friends to celebrate. My favorite is the walk out of the finisher chute. There, I can reflect on my accomplishment and see the genuine emotions from the other runners around me. Having a stranger's normally not acceptable, but at that moment we all feel connected, having endured the same ordeal.

COMPETITIVE, INTUITIVE, EXPRESSIVE.
My Running Style in Three Words

CURRENTLY RUNNING IN
I have incredibly flat feet, so I wear my own orthotics, which require a neutral shoe with plenty of cushioning. The answer: Brooks. From my very first Ghost 10s to my current 15s, they have been with me in all my races and training runs. I love them immensely.

DREAM GEAR
The NormalFree compression boots or the LightSpeed Lift body-weight support system. I put a lot of value in recovery and rehab so I can continue running at a high level.

HOW RUNNING CHANGED ME
It's led to greater happiness. As someone who struggled in adolescence with size and athleticism in team sports, running has given me an avenue to excel, regardless of my physical predisposition. It's brought me a social life filled with wonderful people who I wouldn't have necessarily met otherwise. By the same token, it's allowed me to remain competitive but in a healthy way, competing with yesterday's self rather than against others.

MY 2021 RESOLUTION
My dream of completing the 42.195 World Marathon mile. The setback that we didn't have the Berlin Marathon on our calendar was a disappointment. I want to "right the ship" by running a marathon in 2021 to make up for the disappointment.

WEIGHT LOSS
I've lost 100 pounds since I started running. I'm a marathon runner and a triathlete. I've lost 100 pounds since I started running. I'm a marathon runner and a triathlete. I've lost 100 pounds since I started running. I'm a marathon runner and a triathlete.

SHAKE IT UP

LOSE THAT EXTRA WEIGHT BY SHAKING THINGS UP

Being a health and nutrition correspondent means that companies frequently send me their products, and ask for my stamp of approval. Most of the time I dive into research, give the product a try, and send the company honest feedback about what they need to change before I'll recommend it. Plus my hectic job and my determination to stay fit means I'm always hunting for a quick and nutritious way to fill up on nutrients my body needs. So I can confidently say, "I've tried it all!"

Last Tuesday was especially hectic, but I booked with my \$300 an hour personal trainer, Tony, a triathlete winning, organic to the bone fitness guy with a ten mile long track record of whipping the "who who" into shape in record time, so I had to go. He noticed that my set count was down and playfully asked, "Feeling a little tired today?" as he handed me a bottle from his gym bag. After one sip I figured that there was no way this could be healthy because the creamy chocolate flavor was just too delicious. Still, he'd never risk his reputation.

With more than a healthy dose of skepticism I decided to investigate this shake he'd called INVIGOR8.

Turns out, it's a full meal replacement shake, which stunned me because virtually every other shake I'd researched had tasted chalky, clumpy and packed with hidden "no-no" like cheap proteins, tons of artificial ingredients, not to mention harmful synthetic dyes, additives, sugars, preservatives, and hormones. And even though INVIGOR8's full meal replacement shake cost more than many of the shakes I've tried, it was about half the price of my favorite solid, and the nutrition profile looked second to none.

Wanting to know more, I reached out to a few of the people who were talking about it on trustworthy fitness forums. By the next morning three people got back to me saying:

"As a trainer I love INVIGOR8. It's definitely helped me to have more all-day energy, plus build the kind of lean sculpted muscle that burns more fat."

"Yes, I'll recommend it, it tastes great, and I really like how it keeps me feeling full for hours."

"I'm a marathon runner and a triathlete. I've lost 100 pounds since I started running. I'm a marathon runner and a triathlete. I've lost 100 pounds since I started running. I'm a marathon runner and a triathlete."

As a whole foods nutritionist with a thriving practice I understand the importance of filling my body with the best Mother Nature has to offer. I have always been reluctant to try new products because I was never sure of the impact they would have on my energy, and weight. INVIGOR8 is different, not only because it's delicious, but because it helps me to maintain the energy I need to run my busy practice, while helping me to stay fit and toned. Considering all of the shakes I've tried, I can honestly say that the results I've experienced from INVIGOR8 are nothing short of amazing.

A company spokesperson confirmed an exclusive offer for Runner's World's readers: if you order this month, you'll receive \$10 off your first order by using promo code "RWBP" at checkout. You can order INVIGOR8 today at www.invigor8.com or by calling 1-800-598-3382.

ONE MONTH TO RUN WITH PURPOSE

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8	WEEK 9	WEEK 10	
MONDAY	10-40 minutes 8-10 400m runs with 30-second recovery 20-minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown
TUESDAY	10-40 minutes 8-10 400m runs with 30-second recovery 20-minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown
WEDNESDAY	10-40 minutes 8-10 400m runs with 30-second recovery 20-minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown
THURSDAY	10-40 minutes 8-10 400m runs with 30-second recovery 20-minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown
FRIDAY	10-40 minutes 8-10 400m runs with 30-second recovery 20-minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown
SATURDAY	10-40 minutes 8-10 400m runs with 30-second recovery 20-minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown
SUNDAY	10-40 minutes 8-10 400m runs with 30-second recovery 20-minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown	10-40 minutes 10-15 minute warmup, 10-15 minute interval with 2-minute recovery, 10-15 minute cooldown

should leave you feeling fresh, relaxed, and ready for more intense training ahead.

— **The Tempo Run** / This is a faster and sustained effort over a set period of time. The goal here is to push the upper limit of your aerobic system without crossing your anaerobic threshold, where you start building up lactic acid faster than you can clear it. This is typically between your 10K and half-marathon race pace, or about 40 seconds per mile slower than your 5K race pace. These runs are not as conversational as an easy, aerobic run, but they're not a max-out effort, either. Mixing in a 20- to 45-minute run at threshold pace once a week is a staple of any good training plan. These efforts can be intimidating, mentally daunting, and easy to skip. I encourage you to embrace them. Even with no race on the calendar, they help you mentally no-fear tough workouts.

— **Intervals** / Essential to developing speed, intervals come in all shapes and sizes on hills, on a track, or out on the road or trails. They are typically 100 to 3,000 minutes long and range from 90 to 99 percent of your max heart rate. That can be equivalent to your 5K pace or even faster. If you can hold a conversation while running intervals, you're not going hard enough. Intervals are crucial in every training plan for which the goal is to build speed, whether you're training for a mile or a marathon. Make sure you warm up well before any interval workout and do a proper cooldown afterward.

— **The Long Run** / My personal favorite, the long run should be done at the low intensity as your easy run (conversational, 70 percent of your maximum heart rate) but, you pressed in longer to an effective long run should be at least 60 minutes and up to three hours if you're training for a marathon or you are deeper into your training plan. The 90-minute mark is vital because that's roughly the point where your body uses for energy, and you must take in fuel or shift to burning fat. Training your body in that zone is the only way to improve your body's lipid metabolism, meaning you'll become a

efficient at burning fat over time. This is an essential tool for any distance runner to have in their arsenal, since a marathon and half marathon for most of us take longer than 90 minutes to complete.

You have the ingredients. Now, let's mix them up. You'll find the bones of two basic one-month plans above, aimed at the goals you picked. Each follows a simple schedule. To run faster, each week performs three easy runs, one interval workout, one tempo, one long run, and one rest day. To run longer, each week performs three easy runs, two long runs, and two rest

days. Increase your mileage by no more than 10 percent week to week.

The plans above are designed for runners comfortable completing a 10K or longer and running for at least 30 minutes at a time. If you are just starting out, free to cut back the running time and interval workouts by up to 10 minutes, and find a fantastic Run-Run-Skip training plan by joining Runner's World at runnerworld.com/plans.

Races are coming! We must be prepared. Now, let's hope you do decide to find purpose in each and every run.

WANT TO BE LIGHTER ON YOUR FEET?

LOSE THAT EXTRA WEIGHT

By Amber Ross

Being a health and nutrition correspondent means that companies frequently send me their products, and ask for my stamp of approval. Most of the time I dive into research, give the product a try, and send the company honest feedback about what they need to change before I'll recommend it. Plus my hectic job and my determination to stay fit means I'm always hunting for a quick and nutritious way to fill up on nutrients my body needs. So I can confidently say, "I've tried it all!"

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“A Runner’s Body” Photo Essay (Young, 2015).

1

A Runner's Body

Rae Baymiller

Age: 71
Years Running: 21
Average Weekly Mileage: 30
Mile PR: 5:20
10K PR: 37:12
Half Marathon PR: 1:18
Marathon PR: 2:52
Favorite Distance: Marathon
Favorite Workout: Hills
Strength: Endurance

RAE YOUNG

2

A Runner's Skinny Legs

Rich Nelson

Age: 44
Years Running: 6
Average Weekly Mileage: 40
Mile PR: 4:54
5K PR: 17:10
10K PR: 35:25
Half Marathon PR: 1:18:23
Marathon PR: 2:47:16
Favorite Distance: Marathon
Favorite Workout: 12 x 400m at 5K
race pace with 200m recovery
Strength: Endless energy

RAE YOUNG

3

A Runner's Arms

RAE YOUNG

4

A Runner's Back

Rolanda Bell

Age: 26
Years Running: 18
Average Weekly Mileage: 65
Mile PR: 4:43
5K PR: 16:24.75
10K PR: 36:27
Half Marathon PR: 1:20:48
Favorite Distance: 3,000m
steeplechase
Favorite Workout: Steeplechase
hurdle intervals
Strength: Athleticism

RAE YOUNG

5

A Runner's Quads and Legs

Julius Mutekanga

Age: 26
Years Running: 8
Average Weekly Mileage: 35
400m PR: 46
800m PR: 1:46
Favorite Distance: 500m
Favorite Workout: 200m, 600m,
400m, 200m
Strength: Speed

RAE YOUNG

6

A Runner's Jump

Harrison Hunter

Age: 20
Years Running: 7
Average Weekly Mileage: 50
400m PR: 48.1
800m PR: 1:51.64
Favorite Distance: 800m
Favorite Workout: 4 x 200m at 95
percent effort with 3 minutes rest
Strength: Kick

RAE YOUNG

7

A Runner's Abs

RAE YOUNG

8

A Runner's Back Side

RAE YOUNG