

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: FITTING IN: (RADICALLY)
CONTEXTUALIZING THE CROSSFIT
PHENOMENON

Shaun Eugene Edmonds, Doctor of Philosophy,
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Dissertation directed by: Professor, David L. Andrews, Kinesiology

CrossFit is a global fitness and cultural phenomenon whose ascendance over the past two decades has made it a dominant physical cultural practice, and a powerful influence within contemporary society. Through a multi-site and multi-method contextualization of CrossFit, this dissertation aims to critically explicate the power and power relations operating in, and through, the institutional, discursive, subcultural, and experiential dimensions of the CrossFit assemblage. This dissertation is presented through a collection of four academic journal articles prepared for publication in specific refereed journals. Chapter 1 uses the theory/method of articulation to radically contextualize CrossFit in, and through, the contemporary

moment. Chapter 2 performs a critical discourse analysis on three key themes within CrossFit to explore how, and in what ways, biopower is operationalized and CrossFit subjectivities are created in and through CrossFit's intertextual assemblage. Chapter 3 uses spatial analysis, participant interviews, and narrative vignettes to elucidate the ways in which a nostalgic reimagining of place influences the development of community, lifestyle, and personal health within a CrossFit Box. Chapter 4 provides a Deleuzian autoethnographic narrative that explores the process by which I move from insider to outsider status within CrossFit, and how that experience is co-constituted with other members of the CrossFit Box. While each chapter takes different theoretical, methodological, and empirical emphases, by taking a holistic approach to the CrossFit phenomenon this dissertation develops a nuanced and grounded explication of the CrossFit brand, and its entanglement with broader political, social, cultural, and economic forces and relations which constitute the contemporary moment.

FITTING IN: (RADICALLY) CONTEXTUALIZING THE CROSSFIT
PHENOMENON

by

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Introduction

Overall, the aim of CrossFit is to forge a broad, general and inclusive fitness supported by measurable, observable and repeatable results. The program prepares trainees for any physical contingency – not only for the unknown but for the unknowable, too. Our specialty is not specializing. While CrossFit challenges the world's fittest, the program is designed for universal scalability, making it the perfect application for any committed individual, regardless of experience. We scale load and intensity; we don't change the program. The needs of Olympic athletes and our grandparents differ by degree, not kind.

Find a Crossfit Affiliate, link in bio. #crossfit

(Instagram post by CrossFit – July 28, 2016.)

CrossFit is a worldwide fitness and cultural phenomenon that has, over the past two decades, moved from being a little known emergent form of physical cultural practice to one presently dominating the fitness industry (Price, 2015; Williams, 1977). Since its branded online debut in 2001, CrossFit has provided a compelling counter-narrative to the hegemonic and entrenched power within the fitness industry while simultaneously proving to be a pop culture sensation: spawning books, documentaries, online blogs, and its own athletic spectacle, among others (Bowles, 2015; CBS, 2015; Fainaru-Wada, 2014; "Latest CrossFit Market Research Data," 2014; Morais & Todd, 2014; Ozanian, 2015). CrossFit's position as a self-proclaimed rebel in the fitness industry, combined with its highly unorthodox training methods, has made it a highly contested cultural practice; with arguments between CrossFit's adherents and detractors becoming increasingly bitter and polarizing. It is from within this contentious maelstrom of cultural, social, and political articulations that this project has been developed. **This dissertation aims to develop a multi-site and multi-method contextualization of CrossFit whose primary purpose is to**

critically explicate the power and power relations operating in, and through, the institutional, discursive, subcultural, and experiential dimensions of the CrossFit assemblage. While generating discrete analysis within each of the individual chapters, the overall goal of the project is to forge a holistic and fully contextualized understanding of CrossFit that articulates its dialectical relations to the forces and contingencies that shape the contemporary moment.

In the context of the contemporary moment, the physical culture of CrossFit provides an entry point to understanding and grappling with the systems of ideological power and power relations that infiltrate and direct our daily lives. CrossFit's notoriety amongst strength and conditioning professionals (Gregory, 2014; Mullins, 2015; Petersen, Pinske, & Greener, 2014), continued growth as a brand (Fainaru-Wada, 2014; Ozanian, 2015; Rishe, 2011), and role as a reinventive institution (Achauer, 2014; Cooper, 2013, 2014; Dawson, 2015) are not only indicative of CrossFit's growing influence within the fitness industry, but also its role as an influential socio-cultural formation. CrossFit posits itself as a solution to the ills of modern society; imbricating CrossFit within and through wider ideologies of health, nationalism, community, and neoliberal individualized transcendence among others. While some may argue that the subjectivities created by the CrossFit practice simply reinforce and replicate the CrossFit brand (Powers & Greenwell, 2016), CrossFit's deeper relationship with contemporary ideological and discursive formations makes it a key site for understanding the workings of power and power relations within the contemporary moment.

Finally, although CrossFit appears as an ostensibly coherent system of practices, rituals, and other texts, a more in-depth look at the CrossFit culture reveals a number of paradoxes and inconsistencies. Within the CrossFit subculture there are innumerable social, ideological, and paradigmatic differences that indicate that CrossFit is very much a non-coherent system (Law et al., 2014). It is in these paradoxes and inconsistencies that the friction of ideological discourses can be illuminated. In examining CrossFit from ideological, discursive, ethnographic, and autoethnographic levels, the dissertation as a whole seeks to complicate the view of CrossFit as a monolithic entity, and thereby reveal the ways in which power and power relations shape and are shaped by the CrossFit formation.

Project Rationale

From a Physical Cultural Studies perspective (Andrews, 2008; Giardina & Newman, 2011), the impact of CrossFit on the cultural landscape of physical activity and sport has made it unavoidable in discussions ranging from personal training to physical education, sport spectacle to non-elite physical activity. Due to its use as a strength and conditioning modality for sport and the military (Bergeron et al., 2011; Glassman, 2002c), a re-envisioning of non-elite physical activity space (Knapp, 2015b), and its emergence as a new sport formation (Ozanian, 2015), nearly every space of physical culture has been invaded by CrossFit and its ideologies. CrossFit's power within and through physical culture continues to grow as it adapts to new spaces and inducts more adherents to its ideology. CrossFit's heady mix of neoliberal, populist, and libertarian ideology speak to and through the current challenges of the political and economic moment within the United States. Therefore, it is imperative

that we illuminate the ways in which CrossFit exerts power in and through its intertextual media, its ideological indoctrination, and through its adherents and their bodies. By taking a multi-level approach to the CrossFit phenomenon, this project works to understand the phenomenon through a diverse variety of empirical, methodological, and theoretical dimensions.

One of the key aspects of a multi-level approach is the use of multiple methods to understand and interrogate each of the avenues of research. At the macro level, the project approaches the CrossFit assemblage through two key spaces: the cultural contexts through and within which it emerges and the discourses that are produced through its intertextual formation. In forging articulations between the development of CrossFit and wider social, cultural, economic, and political conjunctures, this piece maps out the landscape of CrossFit situated within the fitness industry in a time of growing precarity and populism (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2007; Berlant, 2011; Inglehart & Norris, 2016). The production of the CrossFit assemblage is analyzed through a critical discourse analysis of key themes within the CrossFit discourse, and serves to examine the subjectivities and ideologies promulgated in and through CrossFit. At the Box, or meso level, the use of participant observation and participant interviews develops how the Box functions, how it reproduces or resists the CrossFit discourse, and how it creates subjectivities in the day to day rituals of the gym. Finally, at the micro level, autoethnographic research is used to understand the embodied experience of the CrossFit techniques, while also considering the ways in which a CrossFit subjectivity is developed.

Although these methods approach CrossFit at different levels of methodological and empirical inquiry, the project goal is to ultimately elucidate the flattened and dispersed nature of CrossFit. In many ways, the methodological and empirical distinctions provided are artificially divided. The interviews informed my understanding of CrossFit's connections to broader social forces, and the critical discourse analysis made me consider the ways in which I understood my embodied participation within the CrossFit Box. This cross-pollination of method and empirical sites allowed for a more cohesive and coherent understanding of CrossFit as a whole. In developing this approach, I have been able to generate a holistic view of the CrossFit phenomenon that articulates and triangulates the contours and relationships within the intertextual assemblage of CrossFit, and subsequently connected these articulations to wider power structures.

The project as a whole provides a multivalent extension of the fitness industry literature, specifically through the use of novel theoretical frameworks. In particular, much of the theoretical work on the fitness industry uses Foucault and Bourdieu as tools for analysis (ex: Maguire, 2007b; Pronger, 2002; Sassatelli, 2010). This project builds on this literature by incorporating the cultural studies theory/method of articulation in Chapter 1 to explore the context within and through which CrossFit emerges as a physical culture, and how it articulates with other ideological movements in the contemporary context (Slack, 1996). Chapter 2 builds on the extant literature that uses critical discourse analysis to interrogate media texts (Fairclough, 1995; Washington & Economides, 2015). Additionally, Chapter 3 provides a novel use of Massey's relational and temporal dimensions to spatial analysis to extend both

the health geographies literature as well as build on the spatial turn in the sociology of sport (Andrews, Sudwell, & Sparkes, 2005; Massey, 2001; van Ingen, 2003). Finally, Chapter 4 develops the Deleuzian theory of “becoming” through an empirical autoethnography (Braidotti, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1983; Grossberg, 2014). Together, the project extends several theoretical frameworks to the space of non-elite physical activity, as well as developing and translating theoretical concepts for use in Physical Cultural Studies. Additional research that serves to locate CrossFit within the academic literature can be found in the literature review.

This examination of the CrossFit phenomenon also has political implications for the fitness industry, the current political moment, and for the CrossFit community themselves. Within the fitness industry, there has been a continuous struggle for professional validity and the establishment of industry norms designed to protect consumers and practitioners (Malek, Nalbone, Berger, & Coburn, 2002). The emergence of CrossFit challenges the strides made by other organizations to self-regulate the industry, particularly due to its anti-academic stance and media association with injury (Fainaru-Wada, 2014; Robertson, 2013; Shugart, 2008; Webster, 2009). Additionally, CrossFit’s arguably populist stance aligns it with current political movements within the United States and elsewhere, signaling perhaps a shift in ideology to a more populist neoliberalism. As a key site for the negotiation of this new form of populist neoliberalism, combined with its heavy intertextual influence, CrossFit is situated as both product and producer of this burgeoning political moment. CrossFit is therefore a key site for understanding both the current political moment in the United States as well as the state of the fitness

industry. That being said, this work also serves the CrossFit community by providing a counter-narrative to CrossFit's branded rhetoric and revealing the ways in which CrossFit exerts power and influences participants. This is particularly important in the wake of fallout from key professionals formerly associated with CrossFit (Rippetoe, 2012; Wolf, 2009) and vocal pushback from affiliates (McCarty, 2013a, 2013b; Perez, 2016). As more individuals find themselves enmeshed deeper into the CrossFit lifestyle, this work seeks to provide a critical view of the CrossFit subculture and its organizational branding.

Literature Review

The following papers seek to extend and build upon the small body of work on CrossFit from a sociological perspective, and thereby further the Physical Cultural Studies project into spaces of non-elite physical culture. As the CrossFit Box is an extension of, and rejection of, the fitness industry and the classic gym, I look to the literature on the fitness industry to situate and locate the basis of the project. What follows is a review of the relevant literatures that inform and shape the project as a whole.

CrossFit

While it is clear from the many dissertations and thesis projects produced over the past several years that there will soon be many studies on CrossFit, only a handful have made it to publication. An overwhelming majority of the current literature on CrossFit is focused on exercise physiology, its use as a health intervention, and

discussions of injury. However, several papers speak specifically to the social and cultural aspects of CrossFit. These particular studies can be divided into three major areas: CrossFit and gender; CrossFit as an organization; and several additional articles.

Arguably, gender analysis of CrossFit is the most prevalent approach in the academic literature. Knapp's (2015a, 2015b) work focuses on the (re)presentations and performances of gender within the Crossfit realm. While Knapp finds that typical feminine gender representations and performances are resisted both in the Box itself and in the Crossfit media, she finds that some are reinforced. In her ethnographic work, Knapp (2015b) finds that the system of prescribed weights by gender (Rx) serves to reinforce normalized gender hierarchies and the naturalization of difference, yet the shift from objective to instrumental goals, changes in understanding the muscular body, and the competition between men and women produces a much more progressive and equitable gender understanding than traditional fitness spaces. Similarly, through an analysis of *The CrossFit Journal*, Knapp (2015a) found that women's bodies were portrayed in ways that both reinforced hyper feminine and infantilizing gender norms, while also being portrayed as strong and lifting weights. Knapp argues that in both spaces there is some conformity to gender norms and some moments of progressive transgression. Washington and Economides (2015) performed a similar discursive analysis on CrossFit's social media. They found that the overwhelming amount of media not only favored White, hegemonically attractive women, but that the images served to reinforce neoliberal postfeminist ideology of individuality and personal choice. (Washington & Economides, 2015). Finally,

Gleaves and Lehrbach (2016) are critical of the exclusion of transgender athlete Chloe Jonsson from the CrossFit games as part of a wider piece on transgender and intersex inclusion in sport.

A second area of literature is CrossFit as an organization or entity. Powers and Greenwell (2016) explore CrossFit as a branded organization, focusing primarily on the concept that CrossFit brands and is branded through the bodies of its participants. “Fitness can act as a marker of status, a form of social capital, and a way to invest (and communicate investment) in one’s well-being. It is, in short, an element of one’s personal brand, and also a brand itself” (Powers & Greenwell, 2016, p. 5). This is also discussed briefly in *Sweat Equity* (Kelly, 2016). Conversely, Dawson (2015) argues that CrossFit is more akin to a “reinventive institution”; a space where people hope to create a new version of themselves. “Mutual connection and identification derived from shared (sometimes grueling) experience, as well as being motivated by guilt and piety, are recurrent themes in Crossfit, religion, and military” (Dawson, 2015, p. 6). Dawson is critical of CrossFit, arguing that the institution of CrossFit has too strong an influence on the daily lives of the participants. Similarly, Heywood (2015b) is critical of the way that CrossFit has power over the individual in the current moment of perpetual crisis (Berlant, 2011; Heywood, 2015b). Heywood argues that, “[t]he neuroception of precarity sets off a cascade of responses that make us particularly susceptible to neoliberal ideologies of self-determination and survival independent of outside help” (Heywood, 2015b, p. 37). Taken together, these articles speak to the potential power that CrossFit exudes in and through bodies, lifestyles, and ideologies.

The two remaining major articles are both by Heywood but they follow radically different trajectories. One piece looks at the affective appeal of the televisual media assemblage that constitutes the CrossFit “sensorium” (Heywood, 2015a), while the other examines the unique flattened hierarchy between coach and athlete in the CrossFit space (Heywood, 2016). Although very different articles, they both speak to CrossFit’s unique approach to fitness that pushes back against tradition while engaging new technologies.

This collection of articles forms the basis of the academic CrossFit literature. In addition to these academic works, there are four books that are written for a non-academic audience that explore the subculture of CrossFit. Herz (2014) provides a narrative history of CrossFit, detailing key moments in its formation and using the stories of real people to push the narrative from point to point. Belger (2012) takes a different route, focusing her work primarily on the community aspects of CrossFit through a case study of her own Box. I would argue that Belger and Herz are primary texts for understanding CrossFit as a whole. In addition to Belger and Herz, there are two supplementary texts that use a more personal narrative and are less comprehensive in scope than Belger and Herz (Madden, 2014; Murphy, 2012). I did not focus on those two for this dissertation. Instead, I looked to popular press articles, blog posts, and other social media to create a more robust understanding of the CrossFit phenomenon.

Currently, the academic literature on CrossFit is still lacking significant investigation theoretically, methodologically, and empirically. Although there has been a start to understanding this physical culture phenomenon, current research is

lacking on many elements of the social, cultural, political, and technological aspects of CrossFit. This dissertation, then, provides a significant extension of the current literature on CrossFit by extending the analysis of CrossFit through new theoretical, methodological, and empirical spaces.

Making the Modern Fitness Industry

There are several key texts that form the basis of my understanding of the historical foundations of the modern fitness industry. Whorton's (2014) focus is on early United States social and political reformers and their engagement with understandings of the body and physical activity. These movements are contextualized through the time period and its overlap with the burgeoning field of psychology and the modern development of the city brought about through and following the industrial revolution. (Whorton, 2014). Following Whorton, McKenzie (2013) and Black (2013) continue the historical narrative. On the one hand, McKenzie (2013) traces the modern fitness industry from the post World War II period and focuses on major contexts that changed the way the body and physical activity were considered. On the other hand, Black (2013) instead begins with the original physical culture spectacles/activists at the turn of the 20th century such as Benarr Macfadden and Eugen Sandow, and follows fitness personalities that shaped the industry. Taken together, these three texts provide political, historical, social, and cultural context for the modern fitness industry. However, these texts only continue until the 1990's, so there is a near three decade gap between the historical literature and the modern moment.

Some of this gap is filled with contemporary analysis of the fitness industry. This research can be divided into four major categories: theories of how people understand their bodies through fitness; commercialization of the fitness industry; examination of the bodybuilding subculture; and the role of gender in fitness spaces. This set of literatures provides a very specific understanding of the fitness industry that does not center the role of sport preparation spaces (such as Wacquant's (2004) analysis of the Gleason gym among others). Instead, the literatures selected center on non-elite fitness spaces wherein participants engage in regular physical cultural practices.

A primary way of understanding the fitness industry is through the use of Foucault, and to a lesser degree Deleuze and Guattari, to understand the way in which the body is disciplined through the use of fitness spaces. Pronger (2002) uses a Foucaultian discursive analysis of health and fitness literature to investigate the modern fitness industry as a site for disciplining the body. Hoverd (2004) builds on this analysis focusing on the role of religion in the development of fitness culture, and its inculcation in modern discourses of fitness. Similarly, others use Bourdieu's concepts of social capital and habitus to explain the development of bodywork projects within fitness spaces (Crossley, 2004, 2008; Hutson, 2013; Stewart, Smith, & Moroney, 2013). These pieces work to understand the reasons that people use fitness spaces for various bodywork projects (Brace-Govan, 2002). The current project seeks to build on this work through examining the development of bodywork projects in CrossFit and explicating CrossFit as a biopower disciplining institution.

Both Foucault and Bourdieu are also used to explore the commercialization of the fitness industry. Maguire (2001; 2007a; 2007b; 2008a; 2008b; 2012) approaches consumption in the fitness industry using a Bourdieusian theoretical framework to articulate how body capital becomes a point of commercialization through fitness trainers and gym spaces. Conversely, Sassatelli (2010) takes a more Foucaultian approach to commercialization arguing that it is the technologies of the body and the production of subjectivity that drive fitness consumerism. While these two works were the primary basis for understanding the business of the fitness industry, there are several other important pieces that contributed to the concept of commercialization. There is a growing body of literature on the McDonaldization and globalization of fitness culture that speaks to a neoliberal efficiency in replicating the same physical activity experience (Andreasson & Johansson, 2014a, 2014b, 2015; Andreasson, Johansson, & Palgrave, 2014; Johansson & Andreasson, 2014; O'Toole, 2008). As CrossFit attempts to heavily glocalize and personalize the experience at each CrossFit Box, these additional literatures were somewhat less impactful on the overall project. Chapters 2 and 3 seek to extend this literature by looking at the subjectivities produced in and through CrossFit that drive motivation to become a part of the CrossFit community.

The third key way that the modern fitness industry is examined is through the bodybuilding subculture whose home is within the modern gym. Arguably, the seminal text for the bodybuilding subculture is Klein's (1993) *Little Big Men*, although there is a large literature on masculinity in bodybuilding (Bridges, 2009; Denham, 2008), gay masculinity and bodybuilding (Benzie, 2000), bodybuilding and

health (Andreasson, 2015; Andrews, et al., 2005), and an impressive literature focused on women in bodybuilding (ex: Heywood, 1998; McGrath & Chananie-Hill, 2009; Miller & Penz, 1991; Roussel, Monaghan, Javerlhiac, & Le Yondre, 2010; Wesley, 2001; Worthen & Baker, 2016). Additionally, Andrews, Sudwell, and Sparkes (2005) argue the necessity of extending the health geographies field through the understanding of non-elite space, and it is through the examination of a bodybuilding-focused gym that they attempt this extension. The focus on the bodybuilding subculture and the bodywork projects that are involved were essential to understanding CrossFit as a subcultural formation within the fitness industry. Chapter 4 seeks to build on this literature by explicating the ways through which membership within the subculture of CrossFit is negotiated, while Chapter 3 maps the contours of the CrossFit subculture to understand its implications for lifestyle and health.

Finally, gender-based analysis is the final major way that non-elite gyms have been examined. This literature explores how self-image is developed through interaction with the fitness industry (Brown & Graham, 2008; Halliwell, Dittmar, & Orsborn, 2007; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015) and the ways in which the physical gym space is gendered (Andreasson, et al., 2014; Bloom, 2010; Craig & Liberti, 2007; Dworkin, 2003). There are already several works on CrossFit that use this type of analysis, so while it was something that I touched upon, it was not a central theme of the project. While the project does not specifically focus on gender, Chapter 4 builds on the literature on gendered self-image through the move from aesthetic bodywork projects to instrumental bodywork projects. Additionally, Chapter 1

radically contextualizes the ways in and through which CrossFit's more gender-equitable model of fitness emerged.

The remainder of this introductory chapter provides information and context for CrossFit that is helpful for understanding the project as a whole. This context is followed by a brief overview of the individual chapters. Finally, I discuss the methodological approach of the project. Although the methods and theoretical tools vary from chapter to chapter, this section details how the project itself was approached.

To preserve anonymity, pseudonyms have been used throughout. The CrossFit Box within which I conducted my research has been given the name CrossFit East.

Introduction to CrossFit

I died harder than I've ever died before. My husband never really exercised... and we were doing sprints and he wound up hurling outside and the coach comes over and goes "Yeah! Good for you!"

(Theresa, personal community, August 12, 2016)

As the quote from Theresa intimates, CrossFit is a method of high intensity physical activity that focuses on pushing the body to, and sometimes beyond, the limits. CrossFit is a dominant branded fitness phenomena whose punishingly brutal Workout of the Day (WOD), impassioned community, and antagonism towards traditional training methods has made it a powerful force within the fitness industry and contemporary physical culture (Powers & Greenwell, 2016). Initially developed

by Greg Glassman in 1996, CrossFit's rising popularity over the past two decades – from just 13 affiliate gyms in 2005 to over 10,000 gyms in 2014 – has influenced many individuals' perceptions and subjectivities around what the body should do and how it should perform (Cej, 2009; "Latest CrossFit Market Research Data," 2014). With the development of the CrossFit Games in 2007 and strategic economic partnerships with Reebok, Rogue, and others (Cej, 2009; Ozanian, 2015; Rishe, 2011), coupled with its use as both a workplace and public school intervention (Eather, Morgan, & Lubans, 2016; En Vick, 2012; Sibley, 2012), the CrossFit brand continues to expand in both power and scope. CrossFit's powerfully disruptive presence in the fitness industry makes it a unique point of entry into understanding both the contemporary fitness industry and the current cultural context of fitness and health in the United States.

The Fitness Industry

As a self-proclaimed rebel in the fitness industry (Glassman, 2002b, 2002c; Gregory, 2014), CrossFit's philosophy of fitness and unorthodox training methods put it at odds with other organizations in the fitness industry. Glassman's development of CrossFit is in direct response to his belief that the fitness industry had become too corporate and overbearing, and that their business model reduced competition and therefore ingenuity (Herz, 2014). Additionally, Glassman was, and remains, skeptical of the academic field of exercise physiology; arguing that they are ineffective, corrupt, and beholden to corporate interests (Glassman, 2016; Kilgore, 2006; Kilgore & Rippetoe, 2007). The science of CrossFit is instead driven by a black box model, wherein the CrossFit coach is focused more on the inputs and outputs of a given

WOD then on the processes and efficiency of the WOD (Glassman, 2002c, 2006, 2007). In light of these philosophical differences, competitors such as the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) and the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) have criticized CrossFit for its lack of training specificity, heightened risk of injury, and underwhelming scientific rigor (Bergeron, et al., 2011; Cooperman, 2005; Fainaru-Wada, 2014; Mullins, 2015; Petersen, et al., 2014; Shugart, 2008).

A key source of contention between CrossFit and the rest of the fitness industry is the safety of the CrossFit practice. The fitness industry has been wary of the potential ramifications of injury within fitness practices since the fitness boom of the 1980s (Carter, 2001; Malek, et al., 2002). Their general concern is that an increase in client injury due to negligence or lack of education in strength and conditioning professionals could lead to governmental regulation and intervention (Malek, et al., 2002). As such, prominent organizations such as the NSCA and ACSM have advocated for increased education requirements and higher levels of regulation for strength and conditioning certification (Jost, 2014; Kilgore, 2015a, 2015b, 2016; Malek, et al., 2002). CrossFit has been particularly critical of the NSCA and ACSM's emphasis on higher education and what they perceive as overly cautious safety protocols (Glassman, 2002c; Greeley, 2014; Gregory, 2014; Kilgore, 2015a, 2015b, 2016; Kilgore & Rippetoe, 2007). Similarly, the ACSM and NSCA attacked CrossFit for what they perceived to be CrossFit's potential for physical harm through its workout protocols (Bergeron, et al., 2011; Petersen, et al., 2014). This conflict worsened when some members of the NSCA editorial board pressured researchers of

CrossFit to include falsified statements about CrossFit's safety in a journal article (Berger, 2013; Smith, Sommer, Starkoff, & Devor, 2013). After a lengthy litigious battle, the article was eventually rescinded.

That being said, subsequent research on CrossFit has showcased its efficacy and low injury prevalence. While some of the initial research on CrossFit was focused on the potential for developing rhabdomyolysis (Rathi, 2014), subsequent research has found positive acute physiological changes through the CrossFit practice (de Sousa et al., 2016; Drum, Bellovary, Jensen, Moore, & Donath, 2016; Fernández, Solana, Moya, Marin, & Ramón, 2015; Kliszciewicz, Snarr, & Esco, 2014; Murawska-Cialowicz, Wojna, & Zuwała-Jagiello, 2015; Poston et al., 2016). Similarly, while some research on CrossFit focused on injury-based outcomes of the CrossFit practice (Joondeph & Joondeph, 2013; Summitt, Cotton, Kays, & Slaven, 2016), an overwhelming amount of research finds that CrossFit has an incredibly low injury rate when compared with other sports (Chachula, Cameron, & Svoboda, 2016; Hak, Hodzovic, & Hickey, 2013; Sprey et al., 2016; Weisenthal, Beck, Maloney, DeHaven, & Giordano, 2014). Although there is still debate on the long-term physiological effects of CrossFit (Rippetoe, 2012), current research pushes back on the moral panic around injury that has dominated conversations of CrossFit (Fainaru-Wada, 2014; Greeley, 2014; Gregory, 2014; Robertson, 2013; Shugart, 2008).

While CrossFit positions itself in contrast with the wider fitness industry, its certification methods have slowly become more in line with fitness industry standards. The CrossFit brand offers a wide variety of fitness certifications that mirror the certification style of other fitness organization competitors such as the NSCA and

ACSM. The core CrossFit education pathway goes from Level 1 to Level 4, and there are specializations in everything from power lifting to pregnancy. CrossFit's Level 1 certification, a weekend-long course in basic techniques and training philosophy, has been questioned by critics who feel that it is insufficient in scope, depth, and rigor (Petersen, et al., 2014; Webster, 2009). In response, CrossFit has continued to refine and develop its certification programs, even as it protests these critiques (Carroll, 2014, 2015; Kilgore, 2015a, 2015b; WAMU, 2015). Despite these criticisms, CrossFit's Level 1 certification is held by 21% of current active credential holders in the United States, making it one of the most popular certifications in the country (Kilgore, 2015a).

The Spread of CrossFit

While CrossFit started as simply Glassman's personal gym in Santa Cruz, California, in the intervening two decades it has grown exponentially. CrossFit's initial growth can be attributed to its online presence starting in 2001. The CrossFit website hosts YouTube videos, a discussion board, and numerous articles written in plain language that explain CrossFit's methods and philosophies. Additionally, every day a new WOD is posted, and CrossFitters are encouraged to post their scores online. Through the use of the daily WOD and the discussion forums, the CrossFit website created a virtual space for community building as increasingly more people obtained internet access. To this day, CrossFit's use of the website and social media has been a driving factor in its success.

In the post 9/11 moment, the accessibility of the daily WOD and the virtual community proved a boon to military soldiers deployed abroad during the Iraq War

and thereafter. Underprepared both physically and equipment-wise for the guerrilla tactics used by insurgents, and living in makeshift barracks, CrossFit provided an adaptable and powerful training tool for U.S. soldiers (Herz, 2014). As WODs could be adapted to use improvised materials, and many of the WODs could be done through bodyweight training, they were particularly effective for deployed soldiers without consistent access to strength training facilities. CrossFit's strong military following, especially throughout post 9/11 deployments in the Middle East, has raised questions amongst military-affiliated strength and conditioning specialists who fear that CrossFit's techniques may destabilize military readiness by increasing rates of injury (Bergeron, et al., 2011; Knapik, 2015). In spite of these concerns, CrossFit continues to develop a strong relationship with military personnel through outreach, discounts, and media publications.

More recently, the development of the CrossFit Games in 2007, and their subsequent corporate relationship with Reebok, has served to propel the CrossFit brand over the past decade (Rishe, 2011). The CrossFit Games, televised on ESPN, are a series of WOD-like challenges performed over several days. The male and female winners of the event are crowned "Fittest on Earth". Through the years, the games have become deeply enmeshed into the CrossFit affiliate system, with some Boxes self-designating as "Games" Boxes meant to prepare individuals to compete in the Games. In addition, the Games have become the culmination of a multi-week qualifying challenge, wherein specific WODs are released online, and participants attempt the WOD at their home Box. The WOD score is compared locally, regionally, and nationally, and those who are above a certain percentage qualify to move on to

the next round. In this manner, the eventual Games competitors are pulled from a wide pool of potential athletes. The Games also have the concomitant effect of reinforcing the idea that those who practice CrossFit are not merely clients paying for a service, they are instead athletes in training.

The Affiliate System

At this time, many people practice CrossFit training through hour-long classes at a CrossFit affiliate gym. Participants pay a monthly fee and are taught by a CrossFit “coach”. The CrossFit affiliate gym is called a “Box” due to the minimalist use of space and the fact that many CrossFit Boxes are fashioned from repurposed industrial and commercial spaces. CrossFit uses a branded affiliate system for its Boxes instead of the corporate controlled franchising system that is typically seen in fitness chains such as Gold’s Gym. Corporate CrossFit does not intervene at the affiliate level, believing that the competition between affiliates for CrossFit customers will result in stronger Boxes (McCarty, 2013b; Ozanian, 2015). Glassman, an avowed libertarian, argues that, “Franchises lack a diversity of approach, and if I try to get everyone moving in lockstep, I get everyone moving towards mediocrity” (Cej, 2009, p. 9). The affiliate model is driven by a laissez-faire free market approach that ostensibly embraces ingenuity and entrepreneurship. This non-traditional model of branded fitness has proven incredibly lucrative for the CrossFit brand; CrossFit earns income through yearly affiliate fees and certifications.

However, this model is not without its drawbacks. To be considered a CrossFit affiliate, one must simply have a Level 1 CrossFit certification, a website, and pay a yearly affiliate fee (“CrossFit.com”). Corporate CrossFit is inherently

divorced from the day to day operations of affiliates (Ozanian, 2015). This has been a point of contention within the CrossFit affiliate community who believe the corporate office should intervene for both the safety of the participants and to oust those whose practices tarnish the CrossFit name (Fainaru-Wada, 2014; McCarty, 2013b; Wolf, 2009). Lauren Jenai, ex-wife of Glassman, puts it succinctly, “I think that's the biggest complaint... [is]that there's no territory, that you could have some a--h--- who just got his Level 1, has no certified trainers and no extra credentials offering their training super cheap, when you have a legitimate gym 400 meters away” (Fainaru-Wada, 2014). Besides the lack of oversight of individual Boxes from a centralized corporate office, there is also a secondary side effect of this model: no demographic information is collected from the affiliates. With no direct connection to the affiliate network besides each individual Box’s website, the full scope of CrossFit’s size and population remains unknown.

The Workout of the Day (WOD)

At the heart of Glassman’s CrossFit philosophy is the idea that CrossFit is the “sport of fitness”; combining the competitive and communal aspects of sport with the strength and conditioning methods of the contemporary fitness industry. The typical CrossFit WOD, the centerpiece of the CrossFit training regimen, combines elements of power lifting, aerobics, gymnastics, plyometrics, and functional training in order to push the body to its physical and mental limits through high intensity training (Drum, et al., 2016; Glassman, 2002c, 2007). Each daily WOD is a unique combination of these elements scored using a numeric metric, thereby driving competition between participants. Whether the score is for time, number of reps, or others, the effect is a

highly competitive environment wherein each individual is fighting for their best score.

The WOD itself is constructed with two key components: variability and scalability. The goal behind the WOD is to increase performance across ten domains of fitness: “cardiorespiratory endurance, stamina, strength, flexibility, power, coordination, agility, balance, and accuracy” (Glassman, 2002c, p. 2). Since it is impossible to include all of these components daily, each WOD consists of some combination of these domains. WODs vary significantly from day to day: a key component of CrossFit’s philosophy to prepare you for the “unknown and unknowable” (Glassman, 2007). Another key component is the “scalability” of workouts. In a CrossFit WOD, everyone should be performing similar exercise movements, but scaled to their individual ability and skill level. The combination of variety and scalability make CrossFit a highly adaptable training philosophy that can be performed in a variety of locations from a simple home garage to military deployments abroad (Herz, 2014).

Chapters

The dissertation employs an adapted “3 papers” format that is quite distinct from the traditional dissertation format. In a “3 papers” format, the dissertation takes the form of three near-publication journal articles bracketed by a short introduction and conclusion. The purpose of such a dissertation is to more readily translate academic work to publication: a key marker of productivity in academia. We have adapted this format by significantly expanding the introduction and developing four near-

publication journal articles. Given the breadth of the project, the four publication approach provided a structure within which to focus the research into manageable and productive chapters. Additionally, the expanded introduction provided an opportunity to balance the qualities found in a traditional dissertation with this experimental format.

The following four papers take a cultural dialectical approach that understands CrossFit as a multi-faceted phenomenon that is both product and producer of key forces and relations that combine to constitute contemporary society. As a popular physical cultural phenomenon, CrossFit provides a window into the political, social, cultural, and economic articulations of the current conjuncture. Through these works, I explore CrossFit's emergence and popularity through post 9/11 anxieties, rising populism, and economic precarity that define the current socio-political milieu, and how this conjuncture provides fertile ground for the development and proliferation of the CrossFit brand. Additionally, CrossFit's method and ideology is imbricated in new forms of bodywork projects that seek to develop a strong and fit body, producing embodied subjectivities that articulate new forms of classed physical, social, and cultural capital. Finally, CrossFit's development as an alternative athletic community resonates with a desire for new forms of community, a quest for excitement, and new forms of athleticism. This dissertation seeks to investigate CrossFit at multiple empirical points in order to explicate CrossFit as a physical cultural project and locate it within broader articulations of the contemporary conjuncture. Through the use of radical contextualization, discourse analysis, spatial ethnography, and

autoethnography, this work seeks to explicate the power, and power relations mobilized within, and through, the CrossFit phenomenon.

Although at one time the fitness industry labeled CrossFit as a passing fad, the CrossFit brand has continued to grow in size and influence. Its contentious relationship with the fitness industry and the military, as well as Glassman's at-times abrasive personality, has served to reinforce a "rebel narrative" that CrossFit uses to differentiate itself from other fitness formations. Additionally, its method of training continues to be debated by exercise physiologists and lay people alike. In the following papers, I approach the CrossFit phenomenon from several different perspectives: a Physical Cultural Studies radical contextualization of CrossFit in the contemporary moment; a critical discourse analysis of three CrossFit themes; a spatial analysis of the CrossFit Box; and a Deleuzian autoethnographic narrative of becoming-CrossFitter. Through these four papers, I intend to explicate the CrossFit phenomenon at multiple empirical levels to untangle the subjectivities and asymmetrical power relations inherent in this physical culture.

Chapter 1:

Making America Fit Again: Radically Contextualizing the CrossFit Phenomenon

Intended Journal: Sociology of Sport Journal

CrossFit is a dominant physical cultural phenomenon whose ascendant popularity has made it a source of contention and conflict. This work seeks to radically contextualize the CrossFit phenomenon and articulate it within wider social, cultural, economic,

and political conjunctures of the contemporary moment. While much of the fitness industry can be examined as a neoliberal project of capitalized individualization and competitive individualism, CrossFit's populist ideology differentiates it from other physical cultures. In forging articulations of CrossFit with contemporary contexts of healthism, survivalism, militarism, and subsequently the burgeoning populist movement, this work seeks to illuminate the contingent and complex network of ideological contexts in and through which power and power relations operate in and through the CrossFit brand.

Chapter 2:

Creating the CrossFit Athlete: A Critical Discourse Analysis of CrossFit's

Intertextual Assemblage

Intended Journal: Journal of Sport and Social Issues

The brand of CrossFit is composed of an intertextual assemblage of visual, narrative, and ritualized texts that produce specific ways of understanding the body and developing individual subjectivities. Through critical discourse analysis on thematically prescient texts, this research illuminates the ways in which CrossFit acts as a biopolitical project. The analysis builds from theme to theme: moving from the articulation of the CrossFit participant as an athlete, through the culture of pushing and its concomitant lifestyle, and finally the use of CrossFit to prepare for "the unknown and unknowable". In moving through these themes, I explore how the CrossFit subjectivity is created, how it effects social relations, and finally how it speaks to the anxieties of the contemporary moment.

Chapter 3:

Geographies of (Cross)Fitness: An Ethnographic Case Study of a CrossFit Box

Intended Journal: Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health

In responding to Andrews, Sudwell, and Sparkes (2005) call for further research on local spatial geographies of everyday fitness, this work uses Massey's (2001) concept of nostalgia, as well as her emphasis on both the spatial and temporal relativity of place, to explore the CrossFit Box. As an increasingly popular form of physical culture, CrossFit is an ideal site for the investigation of health geographies of non-elite physical activity. Through a spatial analysis of a CrossFit Box located in the Mid-Atlantic, coupled with participant observation and individual interviews, I analyze the ways in which the CrossFit Box is a site for the development of cultural and social subjectivities. Through the use of narrative vignettes and participant interviews, I demonstrate that the CrossFit Box is a place in which concepts of community, a lifestyle of pushing the body's limits, and hierarchies of membership are built on and through a nostalgic reimagining of place.

Chapter 4:

"Have You Met Fran?": On Becoming a Member of a CrossFit Box

Intended Journal: Qualitative Inquiry

In recent years, the subculture of Crossfit has become an increasingly popular, yet contentious, mode of physical activity within the United States fitness industry. As part of a larger study on the Crossfit subculture, this autoethnographic narrative uses

the Deleuzian concept of “becoming” to illuminate the co-constructed nature of the CrossFit identity, and to explore the experiential physical and social process through which I became acculturated into a CrossFit “Box”. Through reflexive narrative vignettes, I explore the way in which my body becomes a central space for initiation into the practices, values, and identities of the CrossFit subculture. In my developing identity of “becoming-CrossFitter,” I find that crossing the threshold into insider status is ever-deferred and contingent due to the co-constructed nature of subcultural identity.

Method

The study began by utilizing a grounded theory approach wherein data are analyzed through constant comparison, and themes emerge from this practice (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). During data collection, as well as periodically throughout the project, detailed memos were created that serve to grapple with emergent thoughts, themes, and ideas. These memos were used to ask further questions and to drive the discovery process (Stern, 1980). Through this iterative method, I was able to get a wide base of knowledge through exploring the intertextual assemblage that constitutes the CrossFit brand, and then using that knowledge to revisit old notes or as impetus for further research.

Since its inception, grounded theory has gone through several incarnations and extensions. For this particular project I looked to Charmaz’ (2009) constructivist variation of grounded theory that “[a]ccept[s] the notions of a multiplicity of

perspectives and multiple realities (and) forces us to construct layered analyses and to attend to varied ways both we and our participants construct meaning” (p. 146). This theoretical strand of grounded theory informed my use of multiple entry points for data collection. Building on grounded theory through the postmodern turn, Clarke has developed a particular strand of grounded theory methodology known as Situational Analysis. This approach advocates for the creation of situational maps “that lay out the major human, nonhuman, discursive, and other elements in the research situation of concern and provoke analyses of relations among them” (Clarke, 2003, p. 554). Through repeatedly (re)creating these maps and considering the relations between and amongst the various actants, Clarke has developed a potent methodology that provides a guide for interrogating a given conjuncture. This approach is a slightly more prescriptive methodology for the theory/method of articulation that seeks to “...reconstruct() a cultural practice’s conjunctural relations, identity, and effects to produce a contextually specific map of the social formation” (Andrews & Giardina, 2008, p. 12). Additionally, this approach explicitly takes into account feminist standpoint theory (Haraway, 1988; Weedon, 1997) through its acknowledgement of multiple epistemological realities. The combination of Charmaz’ ontological constructivist grounded theory with Clarke’s epistemological situational analysis provided the framework for my methodological approach.

With this in mind, grounded theory served as a generative approach to data collection and understanding the broad picture of CrossFit. Throughout the project I put large canvas-size post-it notes on the walls of my apartment to take notes and ask questions. As the year progressed, my walls became covered with ideas, concepts,

and quotes as I attempted to understand the CrossFit assemblage and the various strands of texts and contexts in and through which it was constituted. For me, grounded theory worked as a method for understanding the broad scope of CrossFit. From my participant observation and field notes I would ask questions of myself and my experiences, constantly comparing them with what I saw in online news articles and interviews. The use of situational analysis enabled me to make sense of a diverse set of texts and experiences.

Data Collection

I joined CrossFit East as a member in January of 2016, and continued to be a member through January of 2017. During my time with CrossFit East, I attended the daily WOD on a regular basis with the exception of several out of town trips. I would typically arrive thirty minutes before class began and stay for an additional thirty minutes after the class ended. This gave me a chance to talk with other participants and the coaches in a casual and relaxed atmosphere before and after the WOD. I also attended several of the monthly social events and volunteered during their local CrossFit competition. Throughout this time, I kept notes on the interactions, observations, and discussions had, as well as my embodied and personal notes on the experience of the workout. While some of these notes are very detailed, later notes on CrossFit East were less detailed as I had reached a high level of saturation. These notes make up the bulk of my ethnographic and autoethnographic data.

Through a combination of snowball sampling, announcements posted in CrossFit East, and inclusion in CrossFit East's newsletter, I was able to obtain 19 one

on one interviews. These interviews began in August 2016 and ended in December of 2016. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes and two hours. Interviews took place in a variety of venues dependent on the convenience of the participant. This included coffee shops, the back room of CrossFit East, and in some cases participants' homes. The interview guide was created based on my research questions and my experiences within CrossFit East. Interviews were transcribed through a combination of my own transcription and purchased transcription services through the iScribed company. The interview transcripts have remained on a password protected computer and have only been accessible to me throughout the process. Only 16 of the 19 transcripts have been transcribed due to technical problems (2) and muffled audio (1).

In addition to these specific methods for data collection, I also spent time immersing myself in the online culture of CrossFit. Given its size and breadth, it would be impractical to attempt to systematically approach the online culture of CrossFit. Instead, I subscribed to their social media arm, read debates on their forums, and set up media alerts that mentioned CrossFit. In reading through the provided materials for obtaining a Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 certification, I was directed to specific texts that CrossFit as an organization found important to understanding the CrossFit ideology. I also read many articles published by *The CrossFit Journal*, in particular the foundational pieces written by Glassman. Through this exploratory process, I immersed myself in the CrossFit culture as a participant.

Internal Review Board approval for the project was obtained on December 9th, 2015 and renewed on November 11th, 2016.

Refining the Project

The initial scope of the project outlined in the proposal defense was incredibly open ended, allowing me to take the project organically in the direction that the data proposed. This was in line with the grounded theory approach, which is often far less prescriptive in direction than some other research approaches. While this did give me quite a bit of freedom to pursue avenues of inquiry and engage things in complex ways, by the time I was ready to write I realized that I had too much data. The initial project was, to some degree, too open-ended. Although my primary focus was on a single Box, the scope of CrossFit as an organization was far more complex than I initially thought.

While grounded theory was incredibly useful in developing themes and making sense of the collected data, it was in some ways too narrow for the theoretical needs of the project. A limitation of grounded theory is its specificity to the data collected. Given the diversity of Boxes out there, and the need to connect the ethnographic work to larger cultural formations, grounded theory was insufficient a theoretical model for the type of project I was trying to accomplish. Instead, the project morphed over time to incorporate a more visible Marxist dialectical ontology and a more pronounced incorporation of post-structural theorists.

Therefore, the form of the project was changed to four discrete chapters prepared as if for publication. In creating these discrete chapters, I could apply more effective theoretical frameworks that more closely matched the data I had collected and the narratives I wished to tell. Additionally, each chapter provided a narrower

focus that allowed me to more effectively approach the project. Finally, in creating these chapters as “near publications”, I will be prepared to publish them as a step towards future employment opportunities.

Chapter 1: Make America Fit Again: Radically

Contextualizing the CrossFit Phenomenon

CrossFit is an emergent fitness phenomenon and site of physical culture that positions itself in contentious opposition to the contemporary fitness industry. CrossFit's meteoric rise in popularity over the past two decades has been both antagonistic and unprecedented (Bowles, 2015; Fainaru-Wada, 2014; Gregory, 2014; Herz, 2014; Murphy, 2012; Webster, 2009). Developing from a single gym in 2000 to over 10,000 networked affiliates in 2014, CrossFit is the fastest growing branded fitness space in recent times; significantly rivaling other dominant fitness brands such as Golds Gym and L.A. Fitness ("Latest CrossFit Market Research Data", 2014; Ozanian, 2015). Through its corporate branding, certification programs, and affiliation network, it is estimated that CrossFit accumulates an annual revenue of over \$4 billion, with roughly \$100 million going directly to CrossFit, Inc. (Ozanian, 2015). Additionally, in developing relationships with Reebok and the Spartan Race organizations, CrossFit has used its brand to expand into clothing and sport tourism industries (Powers & Greenwell, 2016; Rishe, 2011). CrossFit's ubiquitous presence in the fitness industry and its sprawling empire of CrossFit adherents has made it not only a dominating force within the fitness industry, but also a key site for studying non-elite physical culture.

As a key site for studying non-elite physical culture, CrossFit provides an avenue for developing a more nuanced understanding of the ideological and discursive formations that comprise the contemporary moment. Through a radical

contextualization of CrossFit, this paper seeks to explore the mutually constitutive forces and relations in and through which CrossFit has emerged as a powerful social and cultural phenomenon. Through this exploration of the CrossFit phenomenon, I identify the ways in which CrossFit reinforces, reproduces, and resists dominant ideological discourses in the contemporary context. In articulating CrossFit with wider ideological discourses of healthism, survivalism, militarism, and populism, I make legible the workings of power and power relations in and through the CrossFit formation.

Background and Literature Review

Founded in 2000 by Greg and Laura Glassman, CrossFit has been described as a technique of physical fitness (Glassman, 2007), a physical culture (Belger, 2012; Dawson, 2015; Herz, 2014), a competitive sport (Heywood, 2015a; Heywood, 2016), and a lifestyle brand (Powers & Greenwell, 2016). CrossFit labels itself the “sport of fitness,” amalgamating the competitive and quantitative components of sport with the techniques and methods found in strength and conditioning programs (Glassman, 2007). As a physical culture, CrossFit has been lauded for its creation of community (Belger, 2012) through the CrossFit Box; a non-traditional gym space that eschews weight training machines and treadmills in favor of powerlifting bars and plyometric boxes (Herz, 2014; Madden, 2014). Within the CrossFit Box, CrossFit participants engage in the Workout of the Day (WOD), an incredibly variable high intensity workout performed in competition with other participants. Founded in 2007, the Reebok CrossFit Games brings that competition to the global stage, unapologetically claiming to crown the “Fittest on Earth” (Herz, 2014). Through its corporate branding

around the televised CrossFit Games and its prolific social media presence, CrossFit encourages proselytization of CrossFit's methodology as well as the conspicuous consumption of CrossFit branded products (Herz, 2014; Powers & Greenwell, 2016). The multivalent nature of the CrossFit formation has allowed CrossFit to permeate many aspects of physical culture.

Over time, the CrossFit brand has grown through the enigmatic and controversial leadership of Greg Glassman. Glassman's early experiences as a strength and conditioning professional, coupled with his ostensibly libertarian sensibilities, are at the heart of the CrossFit philosophy and approach (Herz, 2014). Although individual Boxes do not necessarily adhere to all of Glassman's teachings, the main organization is very much a reflection of Glassman himself (CBS, 2015; Herz, 2014; Shugart, 2008). Additionally, Glassman has often used the brand of CrossFit as a way to publicly attack, or resist criticism within, the larger fitness industry (Helm, 2013; Kilgore, 2006, 2016; Kilgore & Rippetoe, 2007; Webster, 2009; Wolf, 2009). Subsequently, when talking about the branded organization of CrossFit and the philosophies of Greg Glassman, they are arguably synonymous. Consequentially, Glassman's ideological beliefs are infused within the CrossFit brand, and those beliefs become articulated with the identity work projects of individuals seeking identity reinvention through CrossFit participation.

Although CrossFit is often labeled a cult by adherents and detractors alike, Dawson (2015) argues that CrossFit functions more as a reinventive institution; a space wherein individuals voluntarily pursue self-improvement projects through and with others in the CrossFit program towards a new and arguably better personal

identity. Key to the CrossFit reinventive practice is making significant social, economic, and cultural investment in the CrossFit way of being (Dawson, 2015; Herz, 2014; Heywood, 2015b; Madden, 2014). Heywood (2016) argues that as part of the reinvention process, “CrossFit is expected to take over their life on every level” (p. 127). As a space for personal transformation, CrossFitters are particularly susceptible to the inculcation of ideologies that comprise the formation out of which their new identity and subjectivity is formed. Nash (2017) states that CrossFit, “advances a mandate for participants to commit to the [CrossFit] philosophy which emphasizes neoliberal physical and psychological self-improvement as a pathway to ‘health’ and ‘fitness’” (p. 17). Heywood (2015b) contends that in the current climate of ever-present feelings of risk, “the neuroception of precarity sets off a cascade of responses that make us particularly susceptible to neoliberal ideologies of self-determination and survival independent of outside help” (p. 37). Similarly, Dawson (2015) posits that the somatic physicality of the WOD facilitates ideological indoctrination. Therefore, CrossFit can be seen as a powerful and influential formation in the development of subjectivities that reinforce inequitable neoliberal ideology.

The reinforcement of neoliberal ideology is particularly apparent in the valuation of suffering within the CrossFit community. Key to CrossFit’s development as a localized and extended community is the shared psychological and physiological intensity inherent in the CrossFit WOD (Belger, 2012; Herz, 2014). As a manifestation of what Atkinson (2008) describes as a “pain community,” CrossFit participants bond through the shared suffering through pain experienced as part of the CrossFit practice. In pain communities, “the ability to withstand and enjoy suffering

is a form of ‘bonding social capital’ that members values as a marker of their collective identity” (Atkinson, 2008, pp. 165-166). The reinvented identity that CrossFit offers requires that participants undergo a form of secular sanctification of the body that promises absolution, even as it reproduces and reinforces neoliberal ideals. “In [CrossFit], pain is discursively constructed through neoliberal ideologies whereby individuals became more responsible, productive citizens by suffering collectively... Ultimately, it is up to the individual to take control of and manage their pain and make productive use of it, invoking the neoliberal tenets of self-sufficiency and responsibility” (Nash, 2017, p. 17). As a result, the cultural bonding through collective suffering is imbricated in neoliberal ideas of health and fitness that position the ideal neoliberal subject as one that eagerly suffers through the WOD.

While many voluntarily embark on reinventive identity development through the CrossFit practice, CrossFit’s wild popularity, adaptable WOD structure, and low equipment costs have made it an alluring choice for corporate and public health interventions that seek to efficiently improve wellness. CrossFit’s exercise and diet program have been piloted as a workplace wellness intervention that sought to improve employee productivity (Envick, 2012). Additionally, CrossFit has been used as an intervention in the public school system (Eather, et al., 2016) and for after-school programs (Gipson, Moore, Burdette, & Wilson, 2016; Kozub, 2013). The use of CrossFit as an intervention injects CrossFit’s reinventive neoliberal health subjectivity (Andrews, et al., 2005) into spaces that may not desire nor need indoctrination into such a totalizing institution. Through its use as an intervention, CrossFit’s fitness practice, entwined with its ideological physical culture, extends

CrossFit's reach beyond the walls of the Box and into the workplace and the community.

CrossFit's relatively recent popularity has made it a novel site for examining physical culture. As a space of physical culture, CrossFit offers a complicated and often contradictory space for new forms of female empowerment by developing alternative bodywork projects that valorize a more muscular feminine form, even as CrossFit's social media reproduces the objectification of certain types of women (BAŞTUĞ, ÖZCAN, GÜLTEKİN, & GÜNAY, 2016; Crockett & Butryn, 2017; Heywood, 2015b; Knapp, 2015a, 2015b; McCarty, 2013a; Washington & Economides, 2015). Additionally, CrossFit reinforces modern neoliberal discourses of individual self improvement and social stratification even as it offers a more egalitarian and communal physical culture through both its online network and the space of its localized affiliate Box (Belger, 2012; Crockett & Butryn, 2017; Heywood, 2015a; Heywood, 2016; Knapp, 2015b). Although there is a growing body of literature on the CrossFit phenomenon, there are still many aspects of the CrossFit formation that are underexplored.

Building on this burgeoning CrossFit research, I seek to explore the ways in which CrossFit articulates with wider discourses of individual health, the modern survivalist movement, increased militarism, and ultimately the contemporary populist movement. By forging articulations and illuminating linkages that connect CrossFit's philosophies and success to wider ideological and socio-political discourses found in the contemporary context, this paper explores the operation of power and power relations in and through the techniques of bodily self-regulation and the development

of subjectivities present in the CrossFit formation. Through the use of a radical contextualism theory/method framework, this research further extends the Physical Cultural Studies project of investigating the articulation of physical culture, and the embodied physically active body, with larger socio-political discourses.

Theoretical Approach

As the CrossFit phenomenon overlaps, intersects, informs, and is informed by broader contemporary ideologies and discourses, I use a radically contextual framework to best analyze the working of power and power relations in and through CrossFit. Radical contextualism is an anti-reductive framework developed through the field of cultural studies that uses a Marxist dialectical approach to illuminate and trace the entangled meanings that constitute a given context or conjuncture (Grossberg, 1986). As Andrews (2002) contends, any given “...cultural practice ... [is] produced from specific social and historical contexts, [and] also actively engaged in the ongoing constitution of the conditions out of which they emerge” (p. 115). The meanings articulated within a given context provide individuals a way to make sense of their lived experience (Grossberg, 1986). Therefore, these discourses are incredibly powerful tools in the meaning making process for individuals. In this case, the CrossFit phenomenon has developed a set of shared values and discourses that are inextricably imbricated in modern discourses of healthist individual responsibility, survivalist apocalyptic preparedness, military valorization, and populist political ideology.

From a Marxist framework, ideology is the way in which the dominant cultural and material formations of a given society work to reproduce the dominant

cultural and material order. According to Hall (1985), “Ideologies are the frameworks of thinking and calculation about the world – the ‘ideas’ which people use to figure out how the social world works, what their place is in it and what they *ought* to do” (p. 99). Ideology operates through the development and proliferation of social and cultural practices that compel individuals to perceive the world through the dominant order. That being said, this ordering of practices is socially constructed in order to retain material and political power in the hands of those who benefit from the dominant order. As Grossberg (2009) argues, “...power is understood not necessarily in the form of domination, but always as an unequal relation of forces, in the interests of particular fractions of the population” (p. 248). In the case of ideology, power operates through the control of social and cultural practices and the reproduction of unequal relations that favor certain interests or groups.

One particular way in which ideologies exert power and power relations is through discourse. As Hall (1985) argues, “Ideologies do not operate through single ideas; they operate, in discursive chains, in clusters, in semantic fields, and discursive formations” (p. 104). Discourse is the practice of making meaning through the use of language in social practices. It is through the knowledges produced through discourses, and the contingent constellation of semiotic meanings attached in and through language, that ideological formations transmit values. Althusser argues that it is through inculcation in the values of the dominant ideology that individuals develop, or are interpellated into, subjectivities that reproduce dominant ideology (Hall, 1985). Discourse is one pathway through which dominant ideological values are transformed into individual subjectivities (Hall, 1996). Therefore, discourses can reinforce and

facilitate power and power relations that function to reproduce dominant ideological formations.

Taken together, ideologies and discourses are powerful forces in the development of individual subjectivities. As these subjectivities shape the ways in which individuals make meaning of the world around them, understand their lived experience, and locate themselves in the social order, ideologies and discourses exert tremendous power and influence in the (re)creation of hierarchies of dominance (Hall, 1985). The development of these subjectivities exerts power over individuals by limiting their individual agency and reproducing often oppressive hierarchies and practices. Given the taken for granted nature of many ideologies and discourses, and their pervasive influence through social and cultural practices, their ability to insidiously exert power over individual subjectivities requires that we, "...analyze or deconstruct language and behavior in order to decipher the patterns of ideological thinking which are inscribed in them" (Hall, 1985, p. 100). In examining the imbrications of ideology in the CrossFit phenomenon, and its connection with wider ideological discourses, we can begin to unpack the workings of power and power relations in the development of individual subjectivities.

In order to radically contextualize the formations of power and power relations within a given context, radical contextualism relies on the hybrid theory/method of articulation (Grossberg, 2009). Articulation is an active theoretical and methodological process that seeks to create and understand the contingent relationships of a given moment in a given context or conjuncture. The concept of articulation is based in its dual linguistic meaning. First, the verb "articulate" means

to speak. Second, the noun “articulate” means to bring together two different things. As Hall (Grossberg, 1986) articulates, “An articulation is thus the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time” (p.53). Through articulation, a given phenomenon takes on new meaning and value that is contingent and contextual. As the linkages in and through which a context derives and creates meaning are not always readily apparent, the linkages must be actively recreated in order to radically contextualize a given phenomenon. As King (2005) elucidates, “...in order to ‘do’ articulation, it is necessary to reconstruct or fabricate the network of social, political, economic, and cultural articulations, or linkages, that produce any particular cultural phenomenon and trace, in turn, how the phenomenon (re)shapes the formation of which it is a part” (p. 27). Consequently, articulation can be considered a practice of recreating the context in and through which a phenomenon emerges, and concomitantly analyzes the strength and magnitude of these relationships (Grossberg, 1986). In forging articulations between and amongst discourses in a constellation of potential connections, power and power relations can be meaningfully engaged.

Unlike some forms of research, through the process of radical contextualism the author maintains an explicitly active and agentic role in the forging of connections in and through the web of contexts with which a given phenomenon is dialectically entangled (Slack, 1996). In grappling with the formation of a given context, the process of articulation requires the active linking of practices, forces, institutions, processes, and discourses that make the formation legible. The researcher is tasked

with, "...reconstructing a context within which an instance of the physical becomes understandable" (Silk & Andrews, 2011, p. 15). Therefore the use of a radical contextualism paradigm is inherently a political and biased approach that deliberately and actively develops articulations in order to understand the relations of power within a given context or conjuncture. Only in understanding the articulations that make legible a given phenomenon, and the contexts within which it is co-constituted, can we hope to craft interventions that lead to more equitable distribution and use of power.

As a social justice project, the cultural studies approach of radical contextualism seeks to intervene in inequitable power relations by revealing the non-necessary nature of articulations and re-articulating power and discourse toward more equitable ends. Through the critical reflexive work required for the process of articulation, we can develop, "...other ways of theorizing the elements of a social formation and the relations that constitute unities that instantiate relations of dominance and subordination" (Slack, 1996, p. 118). In illuminating particular articulations, we open space for those articulates to then be altered. Hall argues in interviews with Grossberg (1986) that, "Since those articulations are not inevitable, not necessary, they can potentially be transformed" (p. 54). In other words, since articulations that produce and are produced by a particular context or conjuncture are not necessary, other potential articulations are always already possible. As long as the possibility for re-articulation exists, there is the possibility to intervene in the workings of power. Once these relations of power are illuminated, only then can we

seek to de-articulate and then re-articulate these connections in order to move towards more equitable cultural practices (Silk & Andrews, 2011).

However, in forging articulations between CrossFit and wider discourses, there are some limitations. As CrossFit's articulation with wider discourses of power and power relations is otherwise contingent until the last instance (Hall, 1996), in order to examine the contemporary organization of CrossFit in relation to the fitness industry and wider social and political discourses, this work creates a "momentary crystalline" (Richardson, 1994) of the CrossFit phenomenon. While such a boundary project is inherently limited by its contingent, porous, and arbitrary nature, it is necessary in order to trace the movement of power in and through CrossFit.

Finally, this investigation of the CrossFit phenomenon draws upon the legacy of physical cultural studies (PCS) in its political approach and analysis. The PCS project centers the physically active body in the study of power and power relations in order to interrogate the ways in which physical activity practices "...contribute[] to the formation of individual subjectivities" (Silk & Andrews, 2011, p. 15). Through the development of subjectivities, non-necessary epistemological and ontological ideology becomes articulated with, and subsequently normalized in and through, the embodied practice of physical activity. According to Silk and Andrews (2011), "PCS seeks to 'construct a political history of the (physical cultural) present' (Grossberg, 2006, p2), through which it becomes possible to construct politically expedient physical cultural possibilities out of the historical circumstances it confronts"(p10). Therefore, the PCS project is an inherently emancipatory project that challenges us to consider how different ways of knowing could potentially be articulated in and

through physical activity. In articulating CrossFit with various contemporary ideological formations, I build on the growing body of CrossFit literature while extending the PCS project's political mission to, "...illuminate, and intervene into, sites of physical cultural injustice and inequity" (Andrews, 2008, p. 54).

Healthist Discourse and The Obesity Risk

In the current neoliberal moment, the cultural shift from governmental and social responsibility to individual responsibility (Blackman, 2008; Harvey, 2005) has similarly shifted the focus of power and power relations from an explicit external control of the body (through law or policy) to an implicit self-regulated control of the individual body (through cultural and social coercion) (Brown & Baker, 2012; Rose, 2001). Part of that neoliberalizing process has been the advent of healthism; a belief that, "... health can be managed and regulated through the decisions and choices one makes," and therefore, "...places the burden of health management firmly within the hands of the individual" (Blackman, 2008, p. 99). These discourses place the onus for health-seeking behavior, and thereby proving good citizenship to the state, on the bodily decisions of the individual (Ayo, 2012; Lupton, 1997).

Through the transition from health as a societal concern to health as a personal concern (Blackman, 2008), the body has become a site for an array of social, cultural, and moral signification that serves to differentiate "morally good" health-seeking citizens and "morally repugnant" unhealthy citizens (Crawford, 2006). In recent years, the increased focus on bodywork projects (Brace-Govan, 2002) that seek to develop specific aesthetic body types can be attributed to the ubiquitous neoliberal healthist discourses that individualize health. In modern healthist culture, "...people

come to define themselves in part by how well they succeed or fail in adopting healthy practices and by the qualities of character or personality believed to support healthy behaviors. They assess others by the same criteria” (Crawford, 2006, p. 402). Therefore, healthist discourse becomes an embodied ideology that creates a power differential between those who seek “health-affirming” behaviors and those who appear to not do so.

As part of the stratification of bodies and behaviors, the use of various risk discourses acts as a powerful form of control over people’s decision making (Berlant, 2011; Rose, 2001). Rose argues that the use of healthist discourse around biological risk acts as a form of biopolitical power over populations. According to Rose (2001), “Risk here denotes a family of ways of thinking and acting, involving calculations about probable futures in the present followed by interventions into the present in order to control that potential future” (p. 7). Through the use of scientific experts, the notion of “risk thinking” has become a powerful apparatus for coercing and controlling the population by developing tools (such as Body Mass Index) that quickly and efficiently differentiate a “good” body from a “risky” body (Rose, 2001). Through the use of techniques of responsabilization, the state seeks to encourage the individual to begin or change individual behaviors (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). As future risks of biological catastrophe are articulated as the accumulation of actions performed today, these risks are considered imminently preventable through present action. “Healthism, in this context, could be viewed as a subtle and systemic form of management and regulation where individuals are required to take on such unpredictable risks through becoming more self-managing and self-disciplining”

(Blackman, 2008, p. 99). As such, healthist discourse serves as an apparatus of control that exerts power over the individual in their day to day actions and decisions.

Since its inception, the modern fitness industry has been a site for individuals to perform healthist bodywork projects, particularly in response to contemporary moral panics around obesity. Through the obesity panic (Gard, 2011; Gard & Wright, 2005), the body, and particularly the obese body, has been articulated as a locus of biological and national catastrophe. The obese body is articulated as a morally inferior body (Murray, 2008; Zanker & Gard, 2008) that is socially and culturally devalued (Cramer & Steinwert, 1998; Monaghan, 2008; Murray, 2008; Rothblum & Solovay, 2009). Within the context of the obesity discourse, and in particular the biological catastrophization of obesity, the shift in responsibility to the individual allows for the stigmatizing and socio-political coercion of individual subjects (Puhl & Brownell, 2001; Puhl & Heuer, 2009, 2010; Rail, Holmes, & Murray, 2010). As the obese body increasingly becomes a symbolic marker of the failed neoliberal citizen (ex. King-White, Newman, & Giardina, 2013; Monaghan, 2008; Murray, 2008), a body that has low body fat composition also becomes increasingly a signifier of the successful neoliberal citizen (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009; Hutson, 2013; Maguire, 2007b; Wright, O'Flynn, & Macdonald, 2006; Zanker & Gard, 2008). Therefore, there is a dialectical and essential relationship that exists between discourses of the obesity panic and modern conceptualizations of the *aesthetically* fit body as a signifier of social and cultural status.

In seeking to avoid the negative and social repercussions of the non-fit body, the contemporary fitness industry becomes a key site for the practice of a physical

culture predicated on achieving the morally virtuous fit body prescribed by healthist cultural imperatives. The fitness industry capitalizes on this dialectical relationship between obese and fit, offering services and products designed to reduce visible body fat and therefore create more desirable bodies (Maguire, 2007b; McKenzie, 2013; Pronger, 2002; Sassatelli, 1999, 2010). Personal trainers in particular are quite aware that one of the key services they provide is the production of bodies that hold symbolic capital in spaces other than the gyms within which they train (Maguire, 2001, 2008b). Through the use of fitness spaces, “Fitness can act as a marker of status, a form of social capital, and a way to invest (and communicate investment) in one’s well being” (Powers & Greenwell, 2016, p. 14). Therefore, it can be argued that the modern fitness industry is designed to increase the social and cultural value of individuals by providing services that support aesthetic bodywork projects that adhere to contemporary healthist discourses.

CrossFit and the Aesthetic Body

While much of the fitness industry focuses on the development of aesthetic bodywork projects as an answer to healthist discourse, CrossFit differentiates itself from other organizations within the fitness industry by instead focusing on an instrumental and athletic understanding of health (Glassman, 2002c, 2007). As opposed to an aesthetic view of fitness focused on low body fat, Glassman (2002a) argues that, “the CrossFit view is that fitness and health are the same thing”(p. 3). CrossFit elaborates on its own definition of fitness by providing metrics of fitness based on standards of physical skills, athletic tasks, and effective use of the three metabolic energy systems (Glassman, 2002c). In contrast with the fitness industry’s

capitalization on techniques that valorize an aesthetically fit body (Pronger, 2002), CrossFit discursively centers its body valuation on the instrumental ability of the body to perform functional tasks such as squatting and lifting objects overhead (Glassman, 2002c, 2007).

Indeed, CrossFit's focus on rearticulating fitness as an instrumental measurement designed to achieve high performance in the WOD moves away from engaging directly with the moral panic of the obesity epidemic. In Glassman's (2002c) attempt to operationalize the CrossFit definition of fitness, body fat reduction is mentioned once, and only then to showcase that fat loss is one of many benefits associated with anaerobic physical activity. In reviewing the hundreds of videos and articles on the CrossFit Journal website, only a handful of content is directly focused on weight loss. Of the entries that do mention weight loss, they are inevitably about the terrible side effects of fad diets and the desire to move away from fat loss goals and towards physical performance goals. As CrossFit Games qualifier Jamie Hagiya states on Instagram, "My body does not look like all the other @crossfitgames female athletes with crazy ripped abs and zero body fat on their stomachs. I wish I could look like that, but I've come to the realization that this is my body. ... But the bottom line is I need to eat to perform. I can't worry about trying to look like a (Games) athlete because having a six pack doesn't always make for the best athlete." (Achauer, 2016). In these and other stories, body image is consistently downplayed in favor of performance. That being said, as alluded to in Hagiya's post, many enter CrossFit precisely because of the physical images of athletic and toned bodies. It is important to note that many "discovered" CrossFit due to its connections with the Jim Jones

gym: the fitness trainers responsible for the highly athletic and aesthetically objectified bodies present in the film *300* (Divine, 2011).

Although it is likely that many individuals first chose to engage in CrossFit to create aesthetic bodywork projects to resemble the fit and athletic bodies popularized through CrossFit's media (Knapp, 2015b), CrossFit as an organization focuses on the transformation of performance and well-being over the aesthetic. Given that performance of the WOD ritual is such a key component of the CrossFit subculture (Herz, 2014; Madden, 2014), and the aesthetic values of the modern gym often described in terms of an evil "Other" (Glassman, 2002b), the discursive formation of CrossFit doesn't condone the valorization of the aesthetically fit body outside of its connection with the instrumentally performative body. In fact, in promoted stories that describe a weight loss experience, they are inevitable accompanied by a discussion of improved performance. For example, in recounting the dramatic weight loss of Laura Lesinski, the article ends by stating, "After reaching her weight-loss goals, Lesinski has some new targets on the horizon. She's up to 50 unbroken double-unders, and she'd like to get to 100. She wants to run a sub-8-minute mile, get a muscle-up and do a strict pull-up." (Achauer, 2011). Even when weight loss is arguably the main theme of a given narrative, it is always articulated with the performative instrumental body. Similarly, in remembering a discussion with a fellow CrossFitter, Madden (2014) recounts the impassioned CrossFitter proclaiming, "'I've lost fifteen fucking pounds!' he crowed. 'My shirts don't fit me anymore. I'm crushing my pickup basketball game'" (p. 78). In this case and others, weight loss is paired with an instrumental effect of the bodily transformation. CrossFit practitioners

may have initially joined in order to perform bodywork projects intended to build aesthetic symbolic power, but many who stay in CrossFit shift their focus and goals to more closely align with CrossFit's rearticulation of fitness as an instrumental project (Achauer, 2016; Belger, 2012; Herz, 2014). CrossFit's de-emphasis on body composition and emphasis on the potential to transform the function of the body is a consistent theme throughout the organization.

Unfortunately, even though CrossFit as an organization advocates for the rearticulation of fitness to performance based goals, the branding of CrossFit still relies on the valorization of aesthetically fit bodies to showcase its efficacy as a program. Washington and Economides' (2015) analysis of images of women on CrossFit's YouTube channel found that "CrossFit's discourse on its ideal participant interpellates very specific kinds of women. These women are not too old, already or formerly very active, overwhelmingly White, and have access to the resources needed to be successful, especially money, time, and energy" (p. 13). Similarly, Knapp's (2015a) media analysis of *The CrossFit Journal* found that many images of men reinforced norms of hegemonic masculinity. Even as CrossFit advocates for a rearticulation of fitness and the fit body with instrumental measures, it reproduces the valorization of aesthetic bodies that hold value in contemporary healthist discourse. Washington and Economides (2015) point to this paradox when examining the video profile of a popular CrossFit athlete that, "demonstrates the tension that underlies how (CrossFit) markets itself, relying on ... the 'pornification of fitness,' while castigating other fitness trends for doing the same. Here CrossFit emphasizes the appeal, particularly the sexual appeal of a fit body, rather than its function" (p. 8).

While both studies found resistance to dominant depictions of masculinity and femininity within CrossFit, CrossFit is still complicit with the aesthetically-driven obesity discourse even as it resists typical representations of the body. In reinforcing the aesthetically driven healthist body discourse while adding the instrumental body discourse, CrossFit encourages the development of a subjectivity that believes the aesthetic body can be developed through the unproblematic adherence to the CrossFit practice.

CrossFit and the Fit Body

Even in the move from perception of the body to performance of the body, CrossFit retains elements of the neoliberal healthist narrative; particularly the idea that good health can be accomplished unproblematically by making good (aka morally responsible) choices and exercising individual responsibility. In what perhaps can be conceptualized as an inversion of the obesity panic, which requires the avoidance of body fat as a marker of virtuous health behavior (Hovard, 2004), CrossFit instead articulates health behavior as the continuous pursuit of CrossFit's particular version of fitness. Similar to the prevention of the obese body, the pursuit of the fit CrossFit body requires the constant management and maintenance of the body in order to be perceived as morally virtuous. Although CrossFit doesn't use the fat body in obesity discourse as a differentiator of moral value, it still retains the valuation of individuals based on their health-seeking behaviors; in particular the engagement with the CrossFit practice. CrossFit's use of fitness narratives that explicate the health benefits of the CrossFit practice, combined with the CrossFit

principle of scalability, form a powerful discourse in which individuals are compelled to adopt the CrossFit practice in order to signify moral worth.

In articulating CrossFit with discourses of health and fitness, CrossFit presents itself as a health-seeking behavior that has curative properties. Throughout the CrossFit Journal, the CrossFit practice has been situated as a palliative to everything from diabetes and high blood pressure (Cecil, 2016e) to mental health conditions such as anxiety and autism (Cecil, 2016e; Cooper, 2014). In particular, the “fitness” derived from the CrossFit practice is continuously recounted as the reason for overcoming significant physical ailments. Timmon Lund points to the practice of CrossFit, as well as the support of his CrossFit coach, in successfully overcoming Hodgkin’s lymphoma. “In hindsight—I’m not saying that CrossFit cured my cancer or anything like that—but I know in my heart that it kept me healthy enough to keep me alive to get that medicine” (Cecil, 2016d). Stephen Walker’s recovery following a near-death brain infection was described similarly; “‘There’s no question in my mind,’ Petruska said, that Walker survived the near-death experience because of his fitness. And, Petruska added, because of St. Mary’s medical care.” (Cecil, 2016c). In these and other narratives, the CrossFit practice is central to the ability of individuals to overcome personal health issues. Although different narratives are more or less cautious in directly and explicitly connecting the CrossFit practice to the recovery and survival of these individuals, the relationship is implicitly evident: the type of fitness developed through the CrossFit practice is articulated as a way in which individuals have successfully managed their individual health in order to survive potentially fatal **physical disease risks.**

In addition to the narratives that focus on survival through a singular traumatic experience, the CrossFit practice is also imbricated in stories of recovery and rehabilitation. For example, the narrative of Michael Gonzales tells the story of a former prison inmate and drug addict who has found recovery and rehabilitation through, in part, the intense exercise routine of CrossFit. “‘CrossFit gives me an outlet,’ Gonzales said. ‘It means the world to me. Without it, I would be using and back in jail’” (Achauer, 2014, p. 3). While the article is quick to point out that CrossFit is but one of many things that Gonzales does to remain off drugs and out of jail, the words attributed to Gonzales point directly to the CrossFit practice as the crux of his recovery. Gonzales’ narrative centers the CrossFit practice in the transformation of Gonzales’ from a non-productive addict to a successful productive citizen. In contrast, CrossFit is also presented as a way for returning military soldiers to combat their PTSD (Cooper, 2015). In describing CrossFit’s profound effect on dealing with his PTSD, Vietnam veteran David Lochelt recounts how CrossFit helped him in ways that other solutions did not. “‘I’m not going to mess with it. I just know it works. It’s not a cure, but it’s amazing what it does for me,’ Lochelt said. ‘They (the VA) put lots of people on antidepressants, but I’m going to CrossFit. That’s what I say.’” (Cooper, 2015, p. 6). Again, while these narratives are quick to mention that the CrossFit practice was but one part of a larger network of rehabilitative and recovery services, the quotes used within the articles point more directly towards the centrality of the CrossFit practice in the success of the individual. Taken together, these narratives of recovery and perseverance through the use of the CrossFit practice

situate CrossFit as an ideal self-managed health-seeking behavior that signifies moral virtue.

Within the context of the CrossFit practice, performance of the WOD acts as an indicator of moral virtuosity and the performance of ideal health-seeking behavior. In the same way that regular participation in physical activity acts as a social and cultural marker of desire to pursue the healthist imperative of individualized health seeking behavior (Powers & Greenwell, 2016), participation in the WOD is similarly articulated as a desire to pursue health seeking behavior. Part of the core principles that inform the CrossFit practice is the belief that the WOD can be scaled to the ability of the individual; indicating that participation in fitness, like participation in fat loss, can be unproblematically achieved regardless of the context of the individual. Glassman contends that in CrossFit, “We scale load and intensity; we don’t change the program. The needs of Olympic athletes and our grandparents differ by degree, not kind” (www.crossfit.com). Since WODs can arguably be scaled to the performance ability of the individual, the act of not becoming fit is perceived as an individual choice to flagrantly ignore individual personal development. Therefore, those who do not participate in the performance of the WOD are interpellated as individuals who do not care about their personal health. As Crawford (1980) asserts when discussing healthism, “...as health becomes a super-value, those who fail to seek it become near pariahs” (p. 379). CrossFit’s differentiation of health seeking behavior based on fitness (instead of fatness) raises the social and cultural expectations for a performative form of healthism; creating hierarchies between those who value and practice CrossFit’s specific brand of fitness and those who do not.

This raised expectation of performative fitness prescribed by CrossFit is most evident in the case of what CrossFit calls “adaptive athletes”. Adaptive athletes are individuals who participate in CrossFit but have significant physical or mental impairments that impede their ability to perform the WOD as prescribed. Like the narratives of overcoming and rehabilitation that are written to inspire individuals to pursue CrossFit fitness as a palliative to social, psychological, and physical challenges, narratives of adaptive athletes showcase how CrossFit allows those who are impaired to achieve fitness through hard work and dedication. CrossFit Coach Dave Wallach argues that CrossFit’s adaptive athletes truly emulate the scalability of the WOD, stating that, “It’s their capacity to adapt and overcome far greater than any of what we would call able-bodied athletes that puts them above and beyond any of the commitment, any of the focus and any of the achievement that I’ve ever seen done by an athlete that has all their limbs” (Roberts, 2013). Such valorization of the disabled body acts as a form of “inspiration porn” to drive able-bodied individuals to perform harder in the WOD (Grue, 2016). This is most clearly articulated in a CrossFit Journal column on avoiding excuses to perform the WOD, with the author arguing that, “Adaptive athletes are proof that limitations are self-imposed only” (Warkentin, 2016). **In using the** disabled body as “inspiration” for the able bodied, the CrossFit discourse further implies that there should be no barriers to participation in the WOD. The implication is that any body, regardless of circumstance, can and should pursue the CrossFit form of performative fitness.

Instead of biopolitical control through the obesity discourse of catastrophic biological risk, CrossFit’s version of fitness is imbricated in healthist ideology that

presents good health as a personal choice that should be unburdened by social, cultural, economic, or physical “excuses”. It follows then that if CrossFit is scalable to any ability, and it has such profound effects on the body, that those who do not participate in CrossFit are *actively choosing* to have ill health. In arguing the need to create a home gym, Glassman (2002b) polemically asserts that fitness should be economically prioritized, stating that, “If your living room, bedrooms, kitchen, or dining room are well appointed there’s no substance to the argument that you cannot afford your own gym, unless your health and fitness are lesser priorities than your leisure and entertainment” (p.10). In prioritizing fitness and articulating it as an individual responsibility, Glassman’s arguments reinforce the responsabilization of the individual prescribed under neoliberal regimes, and operationalized through healthist discourse. While CrossFit’s shift from aesthetic to instrumental bodywork projects resists some elements of dominant healthist ideology, in many ways it sets a higher threshold for health-seeking performance.

This variation of healthist ideology driven through CrossFit discourse is articulated with discourses of fitness that are historically linked with national virility and military force. While CrossFit defines fitness in contrast with aesthetic and visible bodily markers, Glassman’s definition of fitness harkens back to Darwinian and eugenic definitions of fitness prominent at the turn of the 19th century. From the concept of fitness in social and cultural campaigns of eugenically informed nationalism (Pernick, 1997) to Woodrow Wilson’s physical activity reforms that sought to improve national (military) health (Swanson & Spears, 1995), the definitions of fitness were firmly rooted in the Darwinian theories of population

survival. Whether it was articulated as the healthy body which would economically and socially advance the survival of the nation, or the militarized healthy body that would defend and protect the nation, the fit body was articulated as what the body could do in service of the nation (McKenzie, 2013). Therefore, even as Glassman's redefinition of fitness centers the body as a place for physical performance over aesthetic worth, the context out of which CrossFit's survival of the fittest mentality arises is similarly articulated with the health of the nation. CrossFit's valorization of physical fitness over aesthetic "fitness" serves as yet another method for proving citizenship and national worth. Through CrossFit, individuals are able to perform good citizenship through the disciplining of their bodies, albeit under the influence of a new formation of healthist discourse.

Survivalism

In rearticulating healthist discourse of the fit and morally virtuous body with the eugenic legacy of Darwinian "survival of the fittest", CrossFit also articulates with key elements of the survivalist movement. In particular, CrossFit's emphasis on individual preparation for an uncertain future articulates with the survivalist neoliberal project of apocalypse preparation. Additionally, CrossFit's concept of "primal fitness" and antagonistic resistance to authority articulate with the anti-technology and anti-government stances found in the survivalist community. In many ways, the CrossFit subculture taps into the burgeoning survivalist subculture, as both present solutions to the growing sense of anxiety felt in an ever more precarious geopolitical climate.

Developing out of Cold War tensions and strengthened by the threat of technopolitical disaster in the wake of the Y2K panic (Kabel & Chmidling, 2014; Lamy, 1996), the survivalist movement has grown in the face of increased precarity and the omnipresent threat of geopolitical catastrophe. From political anxieties related to the ongoing war on terror and the high visibility of mass shootings, to economic anxieties brought about from the great recession in the late 2000s, many in the United States and elsewhere have grown increasingly anxious about the future. Berlant (2011) argues that, "...the present moment increasingly imposes itself on consciousness as a moment in extended crisis, with one happening piling on another... an intensified situation in which extensive threats to survival are said to dominate the reproduction of life" (p. 7). These anxieties of the future are often articulated and compounded by politically and commercially driven media discourses that dramatize a precarious future. As Stallings (1990) argues, "News organizations bring us into contact with people who, in telling us about an event, invite us to see greater risks than we thought we knew, a world less safe than we assumed" (p. 91). It is out of the anxieties of a potentially disastrous geopolitical catastrophe that the survivalist subculture has emerged and grown.

Like healthist ideology, the survivalist movement is inextricably linked to neoliberal discourses of individualized responsibility. According to Lamy (1996), the apocalyptic future envisioned by survivalists is a secular appropriation of salvation-based religious reckonings. Instead of an omnipresent religious entity separating the righteous from the corrupt, those who survive are, "...individuals and groups who have honed the 'survival-of-the-fittest' instinct and ideology" (Lamy, 1996, p. 89).

This ideological shift from theological doom to Darwinian fight for survival informs the survivalist's moral imperative to develop, "...individual responsibility to provide for oneself and one's family in the event of a disaster..." (Kabel & Chmidling, 2014, p. 259). In preparing to survive the apocalypse, the neoliberal individual becomes responsible for their own health, and ultimately their own salvation. As Preston (2010) finds, "...there has been a shift from a collective approach to disaster education (using community learning and family activities) towards a more individuated and privatized approach" (p. 337). As part of the transition from religious to secular apocalypse responses, disaster preparedness and survivalism have slowly become privatized, individualized, and capitalized through neoliberal ideologies of individual responsibility.

CrossFit and the Uncertain Future

While CrossFit is arguably not a survivalist organization in a traditional sense, it does use and embrace some aspects of a survivalist philosophy as part of its own branded ethos. CrossFitter's are encouraged to prepare for the future not by stockpiling weapons or hoarding food supplies, but instead by performing bodywork projects that develop an instrumentally performative body that can handle the psychological and physiological stresses of an uncertain future. It is in articulation with growing risk discourses, and the associated affective feelings of precarity, which CrossFit seeks to prepare its constituents.

CrossFit positions itself as a way of mitigating future threats by preparing participants for the "unknown and unknowable" (Glassman, 2007). For Glassman, the unknown and unknowable are the potential risks of the future for which we can never

truly be prepared. Through the constant variation found in the CrossFit WOD, CrossFit practitioners “overcome” new challenges and steel their bodies in preparation for these future unknown and unknowable moments. CrossFit WODs are philosophically designed to incorporate constant variation in order to develop, “...the broadest scope of athletic ability that one might need to tap into when it’s a matter of life and death” (Murphy, 2012, p. 33). By participating in the CrossFit WOD, CrossFit offers a way to “control” the body and prepare for the (inevitable) risks of the future, from mundane to apocalyptic. Heywood (2015b) argues that, “...CrossFit culture takes itself very seriously, seeing itself as doing nothing less than facilitating its participants’ survival, training them to be ever-vigilant, engaged in constant self-improvement in terms of that survivability” (p. 33). In preparing participants for the unknown and unknowable, CrossFit functions as more than just a site for physically addressing the potential risks of the unhealthy body: it is also a site for symbolically and physically preparing for future geopolitical and environmental risks.

A key site in which survival narratives are utilized and reinforced is The CrossFit Journal. Through the series of articles known as “Lifeguards,” The CrossFit Journal recounts instances wherein training with CrossFit helped individuals survive potentially deadly circumstances. For example, the narrative of marine CrossFitter Anthony Kemp details how Kemp was bit by a venomous snake during a hiking expedition. Several miles into the mountains, Kemp had to walk back to emergency services as he became slowly paralyzed by the snake venom. Kemp argues that it was only through his training in CrossFit, and by envisioning the trek out of the mountains as a particularly difficult WOD, that he was able to reach paramedics. Although

Kemp required a leg amputation and nearly died from the venom, he returned to his CrossFit practice several months later (Cecil, 2016a). In narratives such as Kemp's, CrossFit is articulated as method for preparing for and facing the psychological and physiological potential risks of the "unknown and unknowable". CrossFit's use of the survival narrative throughout The CrossFit Journal serves to reinforce the idea that survival within the CrossFit WOD is indeed a matter of life and death.

The theme of survivalism in CrossFit is centered on the idea that the fit body, as prescribed by CrossFit dogma, will prepare individuals for not only personal resilience but also for survivalists' envisioned dire and apocalyptic risk discourses. As an example, CrossFit invokes the concept of the zombie apocalypse as an illustration of such doomsday scenarios. In a humorous article in The CrossFit Journal, author Andréa Maria Cecil warns of the looming Zombie Apocalypse. As she assembles her Zombie Apocalypse team, it consists predominantly of well-known CrossFit athletes and CrossFit Games competitors. She concludes the article by stating, "nonetheless, I continue to accept applications for Zombie Apocalypse Team members. *The non-fit need not apply* [emphasis added]" (Cecil, 2011, p. 5). Cecil articulates the fit body as the successful body in the context of an apocalyptic future, and through the narrative articulates the CrossFit body as the body of superior fitness. The theme of zombies continues in the CrossFit Kids Gauntlet of 2012 which used zombies as a motivation for children to compete (Edelman, 2012). Additionally, the CrossFit Journal posted zombie WOD guidelines for CrossFit Kids classes that advertised, "by imitating and escaping the undead, your kids will avoid becoming unfit" (Martin, 2014). Again, the language of fitness is articulated as the ability to overcome imagined doomsday

scenarios, and the CrossFit “fit” body as the optimal solution for survival. Through the use of the zombie apocalypse, CrossFit furthers a narrative of survivalism that positions the fit CrossFitter as capable of handling potential geopolitical disasters.

In providing a method (the CrossFit WOD) to prepare for the “unknown and unknowable,” CrossFit provides a tangible physical cultural practice that fulfills the needs of the survivalist subculture. Within The CrossFit Journal, “Lifeguards” narratives are meant to be inspiring, encouraging individuals to work harder and train better in case they find themselves in unfortunate conditions. Additionally, through the articulation of the “fit” CrossFit body with the “fitness” to survive an apocalypse, CrossFit raises the stakes on the symbolic morality associated with healthist bodywork. By placing the onus on the individual to fortify the body and mind against the potential apocalyptic dangers, the CrossFit narrative of the “unknown and unknowable” serves to reinforce neoliberal and healthist ideology in ways that are congruent with values found in the survivalist subculture (Kabel & Chmidling, 2014).

CrossFit and Anti-Technology

A second way in which CrossFit articulates with the survivalist subculture is in its resistance to technology. Within the survivalist subculture, part of the preparation for a post-apocalyptic world is anticipating a life without modern technology (Kabel & Chmidling, 2014; Lamy, 1996). Indeed, Tapia (2003) claims that, “...for the survivalist, technology dulled one’s survivalist skills and lulled one into complacency” (p. 496). Similarly, CrossFit sees the machines found in the modern gym as obstacles to effective physical performance (Glassman, 2002b). That being said, in preparing for the coming breakdown of society, and the concomitant

loss of resources, the survivalist movement remains entangled with healthist discourses that demand a focus on physical health. As Kabel and Chmidling (2014) argue, “the present day [survivalist] movement extends and expands Y2K anxiety over societal shutdown and distrust of government as it responds to the moral imperative for health seeking and cultural framing of health as an achievement” (p. 259). These health seeking behaviors involve preparing the body for an ever-precarious future, when there will be no government or technology to support the populace. CrossFit provides a physical cultural space whereby individuals can practice bodily self-management through the use of “primal” fitness in a space that relies on minimalist and often improvised equipment. Through the CrossFit practice, and the space of the Box, CrossFit participants are directed to “return to” a “primal” past where technology is absent.

The driving force behind CrossFit’s approach to physical activity is a concept described as “primal fitness”. Glassman (2009) explains that, “‘Primal fitness’ is about accomplishing tasks in life. If you can’t move your body in a functional way, you aren’t going to be very good at life—or CrossFit.” (p1). In Glassman’s view, the fit and healthy body is one that can accomplish tasks of daily living. By focusing on “functional” fitness, the body created in and through CrossFit is one that is instrumentally more proficient; a body that is valorized within the survivalist community. Additionally, the way in which Glassman articulates primal fitness as a way to make the body “good at life” is rooted in naturalistic assumptions around the body and what the body can do. These naturalistic assumptions nostalgically speak to an original body that exists outside of (and before) modernity (Blackman, 2008). In

defining CrossFit's fitness philosophy as "primal", Glassman provides a vision of fitness that is important to the survivalist community, particularly as it calls upon naturalistic assumptions of the body that are rooted in Darwinian notions of survival of the fittest, and consequently the survival of the population.

Glassman's vision of primal fitness is in many ways embodied through the construction of space within the CrossFit Box. Boxes are designed in reaction to the hyper-technological spaces of the contemporary gym, and participants eschew the use of technology even as they valorize the "traditional" and "improvised" equipment that populates a typical Box (Herz, 2014). The CrossFit Box is considered a no-frills space, where typical commercial gym amenities such as televisions, exercise machines, and shower facilities are frequently absent. In "stripping down" the Box to the most basic elements necessary for exercise performance, the CrossFit Box reinforces a minimalist and "primal" idea of what is necessary for performance. Glassman's (2002b) recommendations for the creation of a Box involves the incorporation of improvised, recycled, and non-traditional physical activity implements – similar to the way in which survivalists develop skills intended to re-appropriate spaces and equipment in the event of a catastrophe (Kabel & Chmidling, 2014). In a post-apocalyptic future, Glassman's recommendation for a garage gym could easily form the basis of a survivalist fitness facility.

CrossFit and Anti-Authority

A final way that CrossFit articulates with the values found in the survivalist subculture is its decidedly anti-authority stance. While CrossFit's branding of "primal fitness" articulates with discourses of population survival and anti-technology, it is

perhaps CrossFit's articulation with survivalism's anti-authority stance that is most controversial. Tapia (2003) argues that, "...survivalists... possess a deep mistrust of government officials, an obsessive hatred of federal authority, a belief in far reaching conspiracy theories..." (p. 490). Similarly, CrossFit's ostensibly libertarian philosophy is both anti-authority and explicitly distrustful of contemporary knowledge. Although CrossFit's public spats with contemporary fitness authorities such as the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) could be seen as merely pushing back against their competitors (Berger, 2013, 2016b; Helm, 2013; Kilgore, 2016; Webster, 2009), as an organization CrossFit has exhibited a pattern of lashing out at authority and fostering doubt in the validity of governmental, academic, and fitness institutions.

The populist conspiracy speculations and distrust of authority that underpin the survivalist movement are particularly evident in Glassman's campaign against "big soda" and subsequent attacks on academic research. In 2015, Glassman began polemically attacking soda-producing corporations through CrossFit's social media outlets, arguing that soda is a "toxin" killing the populace (Leonard, 2016). A particularly controversial tweet from the CrossFit Twitter account showed an image of a Coca Cola bottle with the caption "Open Diabetes," and the text of the tweet stating, "Make sure you pour some out for your dead homies" (Wilson, 2016). Although the CrossFit lifestyle eschews consuming simple sugars such as those found in soda, the vitriolic attack on "big soda" was particularly sensational. While the initial attacks on "big soda" by an organization devoted to improving human fitness is

not particularly strange, the subsequent use of soda as a tactic to undermine the work of health researchers was unusual.

As part of Glassman's attack on "big soda", Glassman began a campaign to bring attention toward the funding of physical health research in academia by soda corporations such as Coke and Pepsi. Glassman argues that research that has been in any way supported by "big soda" should not be trusted, and that misinformation from these studies has duped the general populace (Leonard, 2016; Wilson, 2016). As part of the campaign, Glassman held public forums with elected officials and sent letters to academic researchers imploring them to reject funding from "big soda" (Campbell, 2016; Leonard, 2016; Wilson, 2016). Glassman also advanced his agenda by visiting CrossFit Boxes: "We're in a holy war with Big Soda," Glassman told a crowd at a gym in California earlier this year. "It's killing this country's health" (Wilson, 2016). In creating a moral panic around soda, Glassman galvanized the CrossFit population to turn a distrustful gaze towards academic research.

Glassman's controversial stance borders on conspiracy theory, arguing that, "A big part of the problem [with big soda] has been the corruption of the health sciences ... that corruption has public health consequences" (Wilson, 2016). In stating that public health and the health sciences have become corrupt, Glassman calls into question contemporary knowledge of physical fitness and health and situates himself, and by proxy CrossFit, as a more reliable arbiter of health and fitness knowledge. While some argue that the attack on "big soda" is a thinly veiled attack on competing fitness certification organizations such as the ACSM and NSCA (McCarty, 2016), the discourses being deployed to rally the CrossFit population rely

on the use of conspiracy theories that are designed to undermine the authority of the ACSM and NSCA, as well as to undermine research in exercise physiology. In this instance, there is a clear articulation of an anti-authority conspiracy theory that parallels the ideological beliefs of the survivalist movement.

Although CrossFit may not be considered explicitly part of the survivalist movement, CrossFit's use of survivalist narratives, its functional and minimalist view of fitness, and its anti-authority politics articulate with several fundamental tenants of the survivalist subculture. Like the survivalist movement, CrossFit provides a space for individuals to cultivate a sense of agency and control in response to anxieties about the "unknown and unknowable" future. While both movements developed in the context of growing anxieties about the future, CrossFit presents an alternative, perhaps a more mainstream alternative, to the survivalist subculture's more pronounced and radical responses to uncertainty. That being said, CrossFit's articulation with the survivalist subculture develops a subjectivity that extends and reinforces neoliberal individualism. In eschewing technological and governmental networks that support long term population survival, the CrossFit-survival articulation places the onus for individual (and by proxy national) survival on the responsabilization of the individual.

Military Entanglements

Since its inception, CrossFit has been used as a method for training what has recently been described as "tactical athletes", "...personnel in special weapons and tactics (SWAT), special operations forces, conventional military forces, law

enforcement, and fire and rescue response” (Alvar, Sell, Deuster, National, & Conditioning, 2017, p. 2). The combination of exciting functional movements and the promise to prepare for the “unknown and unknowable” make CrossFit particularly appealing to the tactical athlete. Arguably, those in the most consistently dangerous and life-threatening conditions are military forces. CrossFit as an organization has historically established strong ties with military personnel through its consistent outreach and valorization of military soldiers. In exploring the articulations between CrossFit and the military, I look specifically at the historical contexts and motivations out of which CrossFit is formed, the military and nationalist legacies that inform the production of the WOD, and the valorization of military personnel through the Hero WODs.

CrossFit’s branded website launched in the spring of 2001, several months before the devastating terrorist attacks of September 11th (Glassman, 2005b). The start of the Iraq War saw ground troops travelling to the Middle East with woefully insufficient training and equipment, fighting guerrilla insurgents in oppressively hot temperatures (Leung, 2004). A number of deployed soldiers, unable to find traditional training equipment, and facing the “unknown and unknowable” in the form of roadside bombs and terror attacks, turned to CrossFit as a supplement and alternative to the typical military training (Herz, 2014; Vieth, 2008). Through the use of CrossFit programming, military personnel developed resilience to the unknown and unknowable in actual instances of survival in the battlefield. While the CrossFit “fit” body is seen as a site for developing methods of survival within the culture of CrossFit, the discourse of survivalism extends beyond individuals to encompass the

survival of the nation; particularly evident through CrossFit's articulation with the United States military and law enforcement communities.

From CrossFit's origins as a single Box owned by the Glassman's in the late 1990's, CrossFit has always been heavily connected with the military and law enforcement communities (Belger, 2012; Herz, 2014; Murphy, 2012). As Belger (2012) recounts, "One of the initial aims of CrossFit founder, Greg Glassman, was to utilize his program to raise the fitness levels of our country's defenders" (p. 117). CrossFit's aggressive and physically taxing practice was born out of Glassman's work with the Santa Cruz Police Department, and developed through his work with military, para-military, and elite athletes (Herz, 2014). To further reinforce CrossFit's articulation with the military, CrossFit often provides free training, certification, and sometimes equipment to military personnel who wish to train in, and affiliate with, CrossFit (Belger, 2012; Herz, 2014).

Though it may appear contradictory at first, CrossFit as an organization valorizes military personnel even as it retains a distrustful anti-authority stance towards the military as an institution. While Glassman is a vocal supporter of the military troops, he is often critical of the military as an organization (Herz, 2014). In the case of the military, CrossFit presents itself as a superior alternative to combat survival when compared with traditional military training (Herz, 2014). Glassman advocated for the use of CrossFit amongst military personnel, much to the consternation of military officers who feared that CrossFit would increase rates of injury in already taxed soldiers (Bergeron, et al., 2011; Herz, 2014). In a joint statement produced by the ACSM and military officers, it was argued that CrossFit's

methods were untested and that, "... a measurable and costly increase in injury risk could arise when ECPs are performed inappropriately, with an anticipated consequent reduction in individual and unit operational and combat readiness when one or more injuries are sustained" (Bergeron, et al., 2011, p. 388). Deflecting the criticism as junk science (Glassman, 2012), Glassman and CrossFit continue to proselytize CrossFit's virtues with the military and veteran communities through consistent outreach and military valorization.

That being said, it is not simply CrossFit's political and economic outreach to the military community that forges such strong articulations between CrossFit and military soldiers and veterans. CrossFit's emulation of boot camp style workouts, originally grounded in national physical education initiatives following World War II, form the basis of the CrossFit WOD. Further, the memorializations of fallen military soldiers through the Hero WODs serve to further solidify the articulations of CrossFit with military formations.

Legacy of the Boot Camp

CrossFit's signature practice, the WOD, owes much of its form and structure to legacies of physical culture that historically entangled military preparedness with primary education in the post World War II period. Following World War II, public fears around the "fitness" of the military (Rice, Hutchinson, & Lee, 1969; Swanson & Spears, 1995) led to changes in physical education programs in primary schools. Through initiatives such as Eisenhower and Kennedy's work in the President's Council on Youth Fitness, physical education programs were revamped to become primarily group callisthenic programs designed to develop children into potentially fit

future soldiers. In the context of the Cold War, "...the public correlated the fitness of the country's children with the nation's survival..." (McKenzie, 2013, p. 25).

Children were taught that it was their civic duty as future parents (and potentially defenders of the nation) to invest in their own individual fitness, and thereby invest in the fitness of their capitalist nation (McKenzie, 2013). These physical activity initiatives articulated the fitness of children with contemporary notions of American global superiority, particularly in contrast with communist nations. In addition to driving healthist narratives that articulated the fit body with civic duty and American exceptionalism, these initiatives served to, "...transform[] the social space of the classroom into a citizen-producing machine where fitness and discipline become synonymous with health and bravery" (Oca, 2005, p. 158). The intense investment of national ideology in the physical culture of physical education was an important conjuncture in the development of modern physical activity, and its legacy is evident in contemporary healthist discourses surrounding personal fitness. It is precisely the articulation of civilian fitness with military preparedness found in post war physical education that is emulated in the contemporary boot camp.

It is out of this legacy of physical education preparedness, based in preparing children for military service, that the modern physical fitness practice of the civilian boot camp was developed. The traditional military boot camp was used to indoctrinate new soldiers into military conditioning, or rehabilitate military soldiers for criminal behavior (Marshall, 2012). Although the concept of the boot camp was used in some civilian communities as a rehabilitative program, it wasn't until the late 1990's that the modern concept of the civilian fitness boot camp was popularized

(Marshall, 2012). The modern boutique boot camp is predominantly a callisthenic activity that takes place in an outdoor setting such as a local park or other green space. Marshall argues that these, “civilian boot camp workouts can be considered throw backs to 1950s military-style exercise.” (Marshall, 2012). Often developed by former military, civilian boot camps apply basic military fitness training techniques to civilian populations. These, “...outdoor programs led by drill sergeant-inspired instructors...” seek to use the glamour of the traditional military boot camp as a way to differentiate from other forms of non-elite physical activity (Krucoff, 1998). In more expressly articulating the group callisthenic programming from post World War II physical education programs with the trappings of military disciplining authority, the modern civilian boot camp forms the basis of the WOD as performed in a CrossFit Box.

The CrossFit program was developed in and through the context of the burgeoning boot camp fitness boom, and its WOD structure and philosophy bears many similarities to the civilian boot camp fitness model. Each is led by an instructor or coach who frames the daily physical activity as a challenge and encourages participants throughout the activity. Prior to the development and the growth of the CrossFit affiliate Box system, many people would perform CrossFit developed WODS in non-traditional outdoor spaces such as parks and abandoned industrial areas (Herz, 2014). However, while the callisthenic movements such as plyometrics and gymnastic movements found in boot camps are still prominent in CrossFit programming, the CrossFit WOD incorporates several equipment related movements, such as Olympic Power movements, into its programming. CrossFit’s program design

is in many ways an extension of the civilian boot camp that itself builds on the legacy of physical education reforms during the Cold War.

While the fitness programming prescribed by CrossFit and the modern boot camp share similarities, it is their complex and undeniable articulations with the romanticized idea of war and military camaraderie through pain that differentiate them from other forms of non-elite physical culture. CrossFit is but one in a growing number of “pain communities” that center their membership and affiliation on the valorization of pain brought about through intense physical experiences (Atkinson, 2008; Weedon, 2015). As Dawson (2015) argues, “Mutual connection and identification derived from shared (sometimes grueling) experience ... are recurrent themes in CrossFit, religion, and military” (p. 6). In the following quote, we see the entanglement of pain, camaraderie, boot camps, and the military powerfully articulated together in the embodied experience of a CrossFitter.

There’s a militaristic strain to each WOD, a boot-camp quality that makes each rep feel as if something’s at stake besides hip fat or glute strength. The coach is always circling, yelling, commanding you to *never drop that bar*. Burpees are compared to the movements you might make in combat before you engage the enemy and sprint 30 yards to save your wounded friend... It’s this militarization, this puke-inducing exertion, that keeps me coming back- and that occasionally startles me with its politics. (Percy, 2013, p. 7)

The high intensity of the CrossFit WOD mimics the pressures of war-time combat, and participants are able to envision themselves as fulfilling the nationalist imperative to be prepared for war. The way in which the WOD is framed and executed, with a coach pushing their “team” to succeed in each workout, mirrors the camaraderie through pain perceived and enacted through military training. It also creates an embodied experience that simulates an apocalyptic scenario, and provides a military solution to overcoming that scenario. Imbricated within the CrossFit WOD are

historical legacies of physical education and the boot camp that serve to strengthen articulations of militarism and nationalism within the CrossFit practice.

Hero WODs

Perhaps the most visible articulation of the CrossFit practice with forms of militaristic patriotism is the Hero WOD. The Hero WOD is a specific workout of the day designed to memorialize a military soldier (or soldiers) who died in battle. The development of the Hero WODs appear early in CrossFit's history and are entangled with CrossFit's adoption by military soldiers stationed abroad during the Iraq War (Vieth, 2008). With minimal equipment and space for training, some soldiers would adopt CrossFit WODs using improvised equipment and local surroundings. When a companion CrossFitter fell in battle, their death would (sometimes) be commemorated through a CrossFit workout (Herz, 2014).

Although there are over 300 Hero WODs posted on the CrossFit website, the most famous is the Murph. The first Hero WOD, the Murph, was an attempt by a military CrossFit group to remember CrossFitter Michael Murphy. CrossFit heard the story of Murphy and posted it as their workout of the day, along with the following text:

In memory of Navy Lieutenant Michael Murphy, 29, of Patchogue, N.Y., who was killed in Afghanistan June 28th, 2005. This workout was one of Mike's favorites and he'd named it "Body Armor". From here on it will be referred to as "Murph" in honor of the focused warrior and great American who wanted nothing more in life than to serve this great country and the beautiful people who make it what it is. (www.CrossFit.com).

In describing the motivation for memorializing Murphy, emphasis is placed on not only Murphy's qualities as a "focused warrior" and a "great American," but also on the "beautiful people" he sought to protect through his service. This serves to

interpellate the average CrossFitter performing the Murph as one of the constituents Murph sought to protect – creating a bond between the CrossFit participant and the story of Michael Murphy. The Murph has appeared several times in the CrossFit Games, and is the favored WOD in many Boxes for Veteran’s Day.

However, it is not just in the naming of the WOD that the military hero is memorialized, but it is also in the ritual of performing the WOD itself. As some of the most challenging CrossFit workouts, the Hero WODs are designed to push the boundaries of individual performance *in the pursuit of valorizing military soldiers*. It is in the embodied “doing” of the WOD that the soldier’s sacrifice is commemorated and ideologically inculcated through the participant’s labor.

Hero WODs are ten times harder than regular CrossFit workouts. They’re fallen soldiers’ favorite workouts, a sacrifice of human energy to the glorious fallen dead. What some battle-trained soldier did, to get tougher, to test himself, is re-enacted push-up by push-up, power clean by power clean, sprint by sprint. What a fallen warrior did, at the peak of his physical powers, regular people do, or struggle to do, in his memory. Hero WODs are meant to take an athlete outside himself. They’re supposed to put you in the Hurt Locker. They put you on the ground. You feel like you’re about to die. Then you get up, and remember some incredibly strong, brave young guy who didn’t. (Herz, 2014, p. 111)

Through the ritual of the Hero WOD, CrossFit participants memorialize the military dead through a symbolic re-creation of battle. In “getting up” from the Hero WOD, CrossFitter’s metaphorically evoke a powerful form of remembrance wherein they are the Hero for the duration of the workout. This articulates the actions, and the body itself, of the CrossFit participant with a mythical deceased soldier. In performing the Hero WOD, the CrossFit participant temporarily crosses from civilian to soldier, and in effect develops the identity of a citizen-soldier.

The ritual doesn't stop at simply memorializing the dead and developing the citizen-soldier; it also serves to reinforce the articulations of good citizenship with the ideology of military nationalism. The CrossFitter is duty-bound to perform their best because, it is argued, the military Hero can no longer perform their duties. As Berger (2010) recounts, "When keeping the stories behind the real-life heroes in mind, slowing down during a Hero workout becomes harder to justify. When the pain of pushing harder becomes too great, I am reminded of the sacrifice these men made for my freedom, and my struggle becomes laughable. And when I compare my temporary suffering to the lifelong sorrow felt by the grieving families of these men, *dropping the bar becomes an embarrassment to my country* (emphasis mine)" (p. 5). The Hero WOD turns the citizen CrossFitter into a soldier who, in that moment at least, becomes responsible for carrying on a militaristic and nationalistic agenda through their embodied practice. Through the practice of the Hero WOD, they are called into service to the country, albeit in the relative safety and security of a CrossFit Box.

That being said, the CrossFit soldier also uses the Hero WOD as a way to connect with the civilian population. Although there has been no definitive study, some argue that military personnel who practiced CrossFit during their deployment would frequently continue their CrossFit practice as civilians: often founding their own Box or providing coaching (Belger, 2012; Herz, 2014). The Hero WOD then becomes a means for re-connecting with military memories and sharing that experience with (predominantly) non-military civilians (Percy, 2013). Therefore, these Hero WODs are not only a powerful military articulation through the embodied recreation of battle and the experiential nationalism of the ritual, but it also serves as a

bridging and community building venue for former and current military in the civilian sphere.

While in certain ways CrossFit's articulation with the military-industrial complex are strikingly obvious, there is a nuanced complexity that can be easy to overlook. CrossFit's articulation with the military through overt interaction and ritual practice clearly capitalizes on post 9/11 consumptive discourses that blur the line between military and civilian life (Martin & Steuter, 2010). As Giroux (2006) argues, "...militarization deforms our language, debases democratic values, celebrates fascist modes of control, defines citizens as soldiers, and diminishes our ability as a nation to uphold international law and support a democratic global public sphere"(p. 135).. The training of civilians as "tactical athletes" destroys the already slim barrier between civilian and military identities, and the further inculcation of military memorialization as a method for personal growth redefines the citizen as soldier. Although CrossFit taps into, and capitalizes on, the current cultural power of military-centered nationalism, its rebuke of the military as an institution articulates a military without bodies and soldiers without leaders. Even as CrossFit reinforces the normalization of military ideology within and through the CrossFit brand, it paradoxically creates a space of egalitarian community and de-emphasizes military authority (Belger, 2012; Heywood, 2016). In this way, CrossFit offers a form of alternative nationalism that reinforces neoliberal individualism and valorizes the military, even as it dearticulates from national institutional power.

Populism

CrossFit's articulations with healthism, survivalism, and militarism speak to a larger shift in the relationship between the individual and the state in the context of growing sociocultural anxieties and the ongoing processes of neoliberal individualization. Some argue that it is within the context of anxiety about the future that the current populist movement, including factions such as the Tea Party movement and the rise of Donald Trump, has developed into a powerful force in U.S. politics (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). The rise of populist leaders in the form of Donald Trump and the Tea Party on the Right, and Bernie Sanders on the Left, can be traced back to economic, social, and cultural inequalities stemming from the neoliberal policies of the 1980's and beyond (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Inglehart and Norris (2016) link, "...mass support for populism, which is understood to reflect divisions between the winners and losers from global markets, and thus whether lives are economically secure or insecure" (p. 12) to the current political moment. Growing political and economic insecurity then can be seen as a hallmark of populism's rise in the United States, and the increase in certain forms of healthism, survivalism, and militarism are in many ways responses to this threat of insecurity.

It is within the context of political and economic insecurity that individuals are tasked with making decisions about their future physical health. Through the process of neoliberal individualization, and the accompanying governmental retrenchment in public services, individuals are placed in a double bind, particularly on issues of personal health and wellbeing. In the current healthist paradigm, the individual is mandated to make "responsible" choices that implicate them in a

constellation of signifiers that articulate them as good citizens. As Ayo (2012) argues, “... when exercising one’s autonomy and freedom, it is expected that the responsible citizen will allow his or her lifestyle to be guided under the auspices of knowledgeable experts and normative prescriptions of what it means to be healthy. This requires attending to one’s own health in ways which have been socially approved and politically sanctioned” (p. 104). Formations such as the state and the medical industrial complex would use their biopolitical power (McKenzie, 2013; Rose, 2001) to articulate the signifiers required for validation as a good citizen through the proliferation of subject experts.

However, as conflicting and competing ideas of the healthy body enter the largely deregulated marketplace (Terris, 1999), and governmentally defunded academic institutions are thought to be potentially compromised through public-private partnerships (Andrews, Silk, Francombe, & Bush, 2013; Leonard, 2016; McCarty, 2016), individuals are tasked with becoming their own “knowledgeable experts”. In other words, within an ever-widening and ever-conflicted marketplace of ideas on what constitutes health and the healthy body, particularly including the method and process of achieving that healthy body, individuals must stitch together their own subjectivities of health based upon market-driven (as opposed to science-driven) products and services. Although state driven products of health knowledge retain some of their power in articulating the signifiers of good citizenship, the increasing glut of health experts and health providers has somewhat de-centered the government’s authority in health making decisions. As individuals look to experts in

helping them parse the variety of health-related information available, the responsibility of becoming the expert they seek falls upon the individual.

In considering the double bind of contemporary neoliberal healthist discourse, CrossFit offers a simplified and tightly packaged collection of practices that clearly define health, knowledge, and social and embodied markers of good citizenship. Individuals are empowered to become their own health expert, heavily influenced by CrossFit's marketing and ideological philosophies, and proselytize CrossFit's variation of health to others (Belger, 2012; Herz, 2014). In turn, a key component of the CrossFit package requires buying in to the ideology that CrossFit does, in fact, provide a better solution to the anxieties of the current moment than any other institution; including (but not limited to) medical, governmental, and academic institutions. This creates a dichotomous and antagonistic relationship between the knowledge of CrossFit "experts" and the wider medical, governmental, and academic "experts". In developing citizen-experts that seek to escape the double-bind created by neoliberal individualization and retrenchment, CrossFit advances a populist project that helps CrossFit participants make sense of their current context.

CrossFit's polarizing advancement and valorization of certain types of knowledge, particularly in responses to changing and uncertain meanings of health and the healthy body, articulate CrossFit as a populist project. Albertazzi and McDonnell (2007) define populism as "an ideology which pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elite and dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice" (p. 3). CrossFit adherents are similarly

articulated as virtuous individuals who are “reclaiming” the “primal fitness” (Glassman, 2009; Herz, 2014) stolen from them through corporate capitalization (Glassman, 2002b, 2002c, 2007; Wiest, Andrews, & Giardina, 2015) and corrupt elites (Berger, 2016a, 2016b; Bowles, 2015; Glassman, 2016; Helm, 2013; Kilgore, 2006, 2016). From the inception of the CrossFit brand, Glassman and the CrossFit organization have criticized fitness industry institutions such as the NSCA and ACSM for being ineffective (Kilgore, 2006; Webster, 2009) and inherently corrupt (Leonard, 2016; Wilson, 2016), placing CrossFit in an adversarial relationship with the broader exercise physiology and sport science community (Webster, 2009). This populist polarization between entrenched exercise science organizations and the rebellious CrossFit paradigm creates a volatile situation in which “expert” research is routinely dismissed in favor of populist practices.

Taken together, even as CrossFit’s populist narrative positions itself as a positive solution to modern social, cultural, and economic anxiety, it simultaneously demonizes many traditional formations of biopolitical and state authority. While CrossFit’s physical cultural practices reinforce ideas of neoliberal individualization and militarism, CrossFit’s populist discourses undermine and contest power and power relations between the state and the individual. In positioning itself as a rebellious underdog in the fitness industry, and articulating with discourses of healthism, survivalism, and militarism, CrossFit’s anti-authority populist politics become woven in and through the bodies and subjectivities of its adherents.

CrossFit versus the State

Although CrossFit's polemic attacks on other fitness organizations display a populist ideology, the depth of their populist ideology is revealed through their frictionative interactions with the legal system. When confronted by legislation of legal action, CrossFit articulates itself, and therefore its participants, as righteous defenders of the CrossFit practice. Concomitantly, the government is articulated as tyrannical, greedy, and ignorant. Through the use of narratives in *The CrossFit Journal* and public responses to legislation, CrossFit positions itself and its adherents as heroic victims of governmental oppression, tasked with fighting for their ontological and epistemological way of life. These narratives reinforce a populist worldview in which CrossFit is besieged by vindictive elites poised to destroy the common citizen.

One way in which the use of populist narratives are reinforced in and through the CrossFit formation is CrossFit's engagement with litigation around injury. Although recent research has indicated that CrossFit is a relatively safe practice (Babiash, Porcari, Steffen, Doberstein, & Foster, 2013; Chachula, et al., 2016; Fernández, et al., 2015; Hak, et al., 2013; Sprey, et al., 2016; Weisenthal, et al., 2014), CrossFit has long been associated with potential exertional rhabdomyolysis; a condition in which the body's metabolic pathways begin to shut down following acute physical overexertion (Allen, 2005; Glassman, 2005a; Rathi, 2014; Ray & Su, 2008; Robertson, 2013; Shugart, 2008). In 2016, *The CrossFit Journal* published an article detailing the circumstances and outcome of a court case in which the defendant argued that a local CrossFit Box had caused him to develop exertional rhabdomyolysis (Ray & Su, 2008) due to the negligence of Coach John McPherson

(Berger, 2016a). In the context of the article, the defendant and the defendant's lawyers are portrayed as opportunistic vultures that are all too eager to strip Coach McPherson of his (rightfully earned) CrossFit Box.

McPherson, a former Army Special Forces soldier, was medically discharged after a parachute accident broke bones in both feet and one ankle. As a civilian, McPherson began his career as a CrossFit affiliate owner in 2007, pursuing education and improving the excellence of his services with the same focus that led to his becoming an elite soldier... What [the defendant]'s lawyers wanted from McPherson was an illiterate ex-military grunt with little regard for his trainees' health and safety. What they got instead was one of the most qualified, organized and prepared trainers in the world." (Berger, 2016a, p. 2)

Here, the perception of the former military soldier is articulated as an "illiterate" and otherwise uneducated individual by the "elite" lawyers. Through the use of this discourse, the lawyers and by proxy the legal system is associated with elitist attitudes towards military personnel, even as the narrative positions McPherson as, "...one of the most qualified, organized and prepared trainers in the world" (Berger, 2016a, p. 2). As a citizen-soldier, reinforced through the comparison of personal education to military service, McPherson engages in battle with the fiendish lawyers and eventually emerges victorious and exonerated. Through these and like narratives, the CrossFit citizen-soldier protects and defends their territory, and the CrossFit brand, from outside invaders.

While the heroic narratives of individual legal battles serve to reinforce the othering of elites, it is perhaps CrossFit's legislative battles that have most served to indoctrinate CrossFit participants into CrossFit's populist ideology. CrossFit's populist rearticulation of power has been most prominent in its vocal resistance to legislation that would seek to regulate personal trainers, including trainers certified through CrossFit. Although the fitness industry has struggled to self-regulate

following the fitness boom of the 1980's, they have consistently been under threat of regulation from legislation (Lloyd, 2005; Malek, et al., 2002). Arguably, in the context of ongoing fears of legislation, the high profile and overly sensationalized reports of CrossFit's potential for injury was the source of much of the initial antagonism towards the CrossFit brand (Berger, 2013; Greeley, 2014; Gregory, 2014; Mullins, 2015; Petersen, et al., 2014).

However, in light of the development of the ACSM's Exercise as Medicine initiative, the fitness industry at large has become more cognizant towards the potential benefits that governmental regulation could confer – particularly in regards to gaining access to medical insurance funding (Davis, 2015a, 2015b). While Glassman argues that this is merely an attempt by the ACSM to regain market share it has lost to CrossFit (WAMU, 2015), other arguments from The CrossFit Journal are more concerned with the effect of legislation tying medical practice to certain forms of exercise knowledge (Kilgore, 2015a, 2015b, 2016). The overarching fear is that a non-CrossFit model of exercise science would be codified into law, forcing CrossFit to follow different guidelines for physical activity (Kilgore, 2015b). Kilgore (2015b) argues that, "Licensure would threaten the livelihoods of a huge percentage of current practitioners, and the economic effects would be farreaching. These practitioners need only unite in voice and put forth cohesive arguments that overwhelm those of the minority who would prefer licensure" (p. 6). Kilgore advances a populist narrative within which the minority, in this case the ACSM and NSCA, are threatening the existence and identity of the common majority (CrossFitters).

CrossFit's populist narrative against legislation is most evident in their local campaigns against personal trainer regulation. In their vocal response to threats of legislation in Washington, DC, CrossFit put forward a campaign that uses explicitly populist language in order to protest the legislation:

The DC Government is moving to impose new licensing requirements on DC fitness trainers that will dictate what a workout should look like, and will make fitness more expensive and less accessible.

This arbitrary, under-baked legislation is a terrible solution in search of a made up problem, driven by self-interested organizations who want to shut CrossFit down and profit from new government licensing fees.

The DC government has declared war on our definition of fitness – and is threatening who we are.

We don't take orders from our competitors. Our trainers don't adhere to others' mediocre standards. And none of us should have to pay for a view of fitness we don't share. We know what we do and we do it well. Let's keep it that way.

(dc.webuiltthisbox.com)

Within the text of this flier, CrossFit situates itself in opposition to legislation that “has declared war on our definition of fitness”. It is not simply that the CrossFit approach is the best approach to fitness; it is that the CrossFit approach is articulated as a right of the people that is being forcibly taken from them. Similarly, in declaring that, “We know what we do and we do it well,” CrossFit creates a boundary project within which the CrossFit brand is untouchable and exempt from criticism. This serves to homogenize the CrossFit experience, even though the experience in each Box can be vastly different. In creating a normalized and homogenous CrossFit identity, this populist narrative brings together CrossFit participants and flattens their experience in order to weaponize them against the “self-interested organizations” who

want to profit on licensing fees. This absolves CrossFit of its existence as a commercial entity and articulates it as an egalitarian movement – for the people, by the people. In buying in to the CrossFit brand, CrossFit adherents are therefore obligated to take a political stance based on populist rhetoric.

CrossFit’s use of polemic language and caricature in *The CrossFit Journal* and in anti-legislation campaigns reinforce a populist project that portrays the CrossFit community as a “virtuous and homogenous people” (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2007, p. 3) who are constantly under attack for their beliefs. This narrative underscores, intersects, and reinforces CrossFit’s articulations with healthism, survivalism, and militarism, even as it produces new ways of confronting growing feelings of precarity and cultural anxiety. The use of this narrative serves to unite the CrossFit population and mobilize them to action; providing a new form of biopolitical manipulation adjacent to national biopolitical movements.

Conclusion

As both a product and producer of the contemporary moment, an explication of the CrossFit phenomenon provides insight into the underlying ideology that is imbricated in daily practices of physical activity. In radically contextualizing the CrossFit phenomenon, the ideologies that co-constitute the contemporary context are made legible. CrossFit’s articulation with modern healthist discourses, the burgeoning survivalist movement, the increased valorization of the military, and the rising ideology of populism create a space where individuals feel connected and empowered as individuals (Belger, 2012; Herz, 2014; Madden, 2014). While CrossFit may

articulate with other ideological and discursive formations, these particular articulations help individuals make sense of, and in some ways prepare for, the growing sense of anxiety in the contemporary milieu. As uncertainty about the future continues through increased globalization and pervasive economic, social, cultural, and political moral panics, CrossFit provides a sense of empowerment to a disenchanted and ever-distrustful populace. This empowerment and self-direction felt by CrossFitter's is rightfully intoxicating, and contributes to CrossFit's cult-like adherence (Dawson, 2015; Herz, 2014). CrossFit perpetuates a promise of transformation and survival in an increasingly precarious society, and in many ways it delivers.

As a key part of the CrossFit reinventive institution, the fit body becomes a site of signification for a constellation of values that are interconnected in and through a number of discourses. CrossFit differentiates from contemporary healthist discourse by centering the instrumental body as a signifying marker of morally correct health seeking behavior. However, CrossFit's focus on fitness requires increased self-management in order to achieve corporeal signification of good citizenship. In placing the fit body at the center of its practice, CrossFit articulates with both survivalist discourse that seeks to prepare for apocalyptic geopolitical catastrophe and the legacy of military nationalism developed in and through physical education initiatives. The instrumentally fit body of the CrossFit practitioner is a perceived embodiment of superior fitness knowledge, and that body is weaponized against CrossFit's detractors. The "CrossFit body" then is a site in and through which power and power relations are wielded in the CrossFit phenomenon.

Even though CrossFit resists some dominant discourses around health and the body, particularly in its move from aesthetic valuation to instrumental valuation, in many ways it reproduces inequitable power structures through the reinscription of neoliberal and populist ideologies. As CrossFit functions as a space for individual transformation, the neoliberal ideologies of self-preservation and responsabilization, alongside populist ideology of self-determination and reduced governmental interference, are reinscribed in and through the CrossFit practice. As part of the required investment in the CrossFit lifestyle, participants are subtly indoctrinated into neoliberal and populist ideologies that, in many ways, accentuate the sense of anxiety and precarity of the contemporary context.

Further, in developing CrossFit as a space for preparing for “unknown and unknowable,” CrossFit creates a healthist hierarchy between the “fit” and the “unfit”; effectively instilling neoliberal ideologies of those who are worthy of national citizenship and those who are unworthy. The worthy are positioned as the CrossFit practitioners, who are recast as more knowledgeable about health and fitness than medical and fitness professionals. The CrossFit practitioner is articulated as a hero in the perceived war on fitness knowledge, and trained for combat through the creation of citizen-soldiers during the WOD. When Glassman states that CrossFit is in a “holy war” with big soda, the CrossFit adherent becomes a warrior in Glassman’s army. In using populist ideology in their narratives, CrossFit and CrossFitters are positioned paradoxically as both rebels against the elite ruling populace of the nation, and as revolutionaries for the building of a stronger nation.

Finally, in creating hierarchies of fitness and positioning CrossFit as a besieged space of enlightenment, CrossFit isolates its adherents from broader social and cultural networks. While these ideologies help to secure a strong CrossFit-based community, and offer CrossFit-centered solutions to individual and national problems, they also stifle the potential for mutually beneficial collaboration amongst fitness professionals and encourage privatized solutions to social problems. Such antagonism towards society and institutions of knowledge may be individually empowering, but it does little to combat inequitable structures of power.

Chapter 2: Creating the CrossFit Athlete: A Critical Discourse

Analysis of CrossFit's Intertextual Assemblage

CrossFit is a growing physical culture phenomenon within the United States and abroad, with over 10,000 affiliate “Boxes” worldwide (Cej, 2009; "Latest CrossFit Market Data Research", 2014; Price, 2015). CrossFit's meteoric rise in popularity over the past decade (Fainaru-Wada, 2014; Ozanian, 2015; Price, 2015), along with its contentious relationship with other fitness industry leaders (Webster, 2009), has destabilized many taken for granted elements of fitness culture. Given CrossFit's pervasive popularity and its growing brand strength (Ozanian, 2015), it holds significant power to influence the development of subjectivities related to health and physical activity. The branded CrossFit practice, and its method of lifestyle management, is an intertextual discursive formation composed of televisual, narrative, and ritual texts that articulate specific ways of knowing the body and interacting with the world. These various discursive texts direct and informs the bodywork projects (Brace-Govan, 2002) of millions of people, acting as a form of biopolitical power (Rose, 2001). Through the use of Fairclough's (1995) method of critical discourse analysis (CDA) on three major themes within the CrossFit discursive formation, this work hopes to illuminate the methods by and through which CrossFit subjectivities are formed.

CrossFit as Discursive Formation

CrossFit is a branded fitness phenomenon (Powers & Greenwell, 2016) that positions itself as a “rebel” in the fitness industry – often bucking commonly accepted

methods and techniques for strength and conditioning (Mullins, 2015; Petersen, et al., 2014). CrossFit is the brainchild of Greg Glassman, and the central ritual of the CrossFit method is the workout of the day (WOD); a high intensity workout that changes daily and incorporates a diverse selection of exercises drawn from powerlifting, gymnastics, functional training, and others (Glassman, 2002a, 2003, 2007). CrossFit prides itself on its lack of programming specialization and specificity; a stance which places it in direct opposition to most strength and conditioning professionals (ex. Rippetoe, 2012). In not specializing in one form of exercise, CrossFit argues that it prepares participants for the “unknown and unknowable”: the unforeseen challenges of everyday life (Glassman, 2007). While CrossFit as a brand began as an online resource for individuals wishing to make their own gym space (Glassman, 2002b, 2005b), currently most CrossFitters practice the “sport of fitness” in an affiliate Box; a no-frills gym space affiliated with, but not franchised to, the CrossFit brand. CrossFit’s content is driven through its online presence in the form of an information website, an online journal, and a vast social media presence.

Key to CrossFit’s success is the power of its intertextual discourse and the diversity of texts in and through which it shapes its brand. Fairclough (1995) argues that, “Texts in their ideational functioning constitute systems of knowledge and belief..., and in their interpersonal functioning they constitute social objects ... and social relations between ... subjects” (p. 6). Subjects develop their subjectivity through interaction with various texts, and so these texts act as conversations between the individual and the ideology. Texts can be extremely powerful in their persuasive power, particularly if they are pervasive and resonate with other adopted ideological subjectivities.

For the CrossFit brand, these texts exist across several diverse platforms. The major space that drives the CrossFit discourse is the CrossFit branded website. The website

contains an online journal, links to YouTube videos and the daily “workout out of the day,” and an online forum. External to the website, CrossFit produces the entertainment spectacle of the Reebok CrossFit Games; a yearly competition broadcast on ESPN that seeks to crown the “Fittest” man and woman in the world. Additionally, CrossFit has a branded certification system that involves hands-on conferences and exams to operationalize and test knowledge of the CrossFit philosophy. At a more peripheral and less moderated layer, each individual Box has its own website and social media presence, and many have started online blogs. Finally, there have been several popular press books and documentaries on the CrossFit brand and the spectacle of the CrossFit Games (ex: Herz, 2014; Madden, 2014). Although this list is not exhaustive, and it is always open to contradiction through other texts, it does provide the general contours of the complexity and depth of the intertextual assemblage that constitutes the CrossFit brand. Taken collectively, these texts produce ways of knowing CrossFit and provide a point of entry into understanding the subjectivities that CrossFit’s ideology creates.

Biopolitics and the Development of Subjectivity

Foucault’s concept of biopolitics is central to the discussion of CrossFit’s ability to influence the development of individual subjectivities through intertextual discourse. For Foucault (2003), “Biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as a power’s problem” (p. 245). Biopolitics then, is the technique by which cultural and political formations regulate the bodies of a population. Through techniques of biopolitics, “...cultural norms become turned on the self creating forms of self-surveillance and self-practice” (Blackman, 2008, p. 75). Through the use of discursive practices such as norms,

rituals, and media texts, the technique of biopolitics inculcates certain ways of knowing the world. Foucault's desire was to understand the articulations between power, subjectivity, and knowledge, and how those elements interact to produce ways of knowing the body and its social location (Andrews, 1993). Individuals interact with these texts and adjust behavior according to their compliance with, or rejection of, these ways of knowing.

Through the neoliberal turn, in which the government has shifted responsibility for health and well-being to individual decision making, the biopolitics of the current conjuncture produces individuals who must perform their own bodywork projects lest they lose political, social, and cultural power. As Rose (2001) argues, "Every citizen must now become an active partner in the drive for health, accepting their responsibility for securing their own well-being" (p. 6). Therefore, the present neoliberal moment encourages the performance of bodywork projects that express the responsibilization of the individual in the care of the self.

Rose (2001) contends that in the current moment, "contemporary biopolitics is *risk politics*" (p. 1). In the contemporary moment, the fear of potential risk dominates the development of individual subjectivities. While Beck (1999) articulates these risks as globally apocalyptic, such as in the case of environmental disaster, Rose articulates the risk management of bodies as a strategy of governance. For Rose (2001), "[r]isk here denotes a family of ways of thinking and acting, involving calculations about probable futures in the present followed by interventions into the present in order to control that potential future" (p. 7). Although the risky body has been historically articulated in many ways, in the current context the prevalent discourse identifies the inactive and obese body as a risky and irresponsible body. The obese body, then, has become laden with cultural and social values, with significant physical, psychological, and economic implications (Gard, 2011; Gard &

Wright, 2001, 2005; Puhl & Brownell, 2003; Puhl & Heuer, 2009, 2010; Puhl & Wharton, 2007). Therefore, the act of pursuing contemporary bodywork projects is imbricated in developing a body that displays a “responsible” individualism that is in keeping with neoliberal ideology. In many ways, the modern fitness industry arises as a market-driven response to ever-changing notions of the risky body (Maguire, 2007b).

These biopolitically driven discourses have the effect of developing specific subjectivities that influence the choices that individuals make. Subjectivity “...is used to refer to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself, and her ways of understanding her relation to the world” (Weedon, 1997, p. 32). In the naming of a subjectivity, the subjectivity comes into being with a host of values and ideology attached to its meaning. The differentiation of subjectivities create asymmetrical power relations as, in naming the subjectivity, a hierarchy amongst subjects is created (Foucault, 1990). Althusser argues that every ideological formation interpellates individuals as subjects as part of its hierarchy, and this interpellation attaches subjectivities to an individual (Hall, 1985). Particularly within the domain of physical culture, these discourses are creating embodied subjectivities that serve to influence the way that individuals understand and use their bodies. In other words, the body has become a site for somatic knowledge and expression; wherein individuals make decisions about risk and performance, and perform bodywork in order to showcase their adherence to, or resistance to, dominant discourses.

That being said, Foucault’s understanding of the working of power and power relations only partially serves to illuminate the workings of biopolitical power developed in and through the CrossFit practice. Foucault’s understanding of power and power relations is predicated on exploring the workings of power in and through larger societal and

governmental forces, and tracing the origins of dominant contemporary discursive formations (Andrews, 1993; Markula-Denison & Pringle, 2007). Although this proves an exceptionally valuable method of analysis when looking at wider socio-political movements, CrossFit as an ideologically informed lifestyle and fitness practice advocates an alternative subjectivity that ostensibly stands in contrast with these wider discourses.

While CrossFit participants are undoubtedly still beholden to the workings of power through dominant discourses, CrossFit adherents ascribe to, and are influenced by, biopolitical discourses specific to the CrossFit practice. These CrossFit discourses compel participants to practice specific embodied and social performances in order to mitigate the “risky subject” found in neoliberal healthist discourse. Similar to the workings of dominant forms of biopolitical power, CrossFit deploys a number of populist health “experts” who are tasked with shaping the subjectivities of CrossFit participants through expert guidance. However, the emergent body of exercise and lifestyle knowledge produced through CrossFit’s experts often contests dominant discourses of health and physical activity (Mullins, 2015; Petersen, et al., 2014; Webster, 2009). These alternative health knowledges are imbricated in ideologies that, while in dialogue with dominant discourses, are not necessarily dominant discourses themselves. Therefore, in order to better understand the ideological meanings found in CrossFit’s biopolitical discourses, and therefore analyze the subjectivities that are formed through the CrossFit practice, I merge Foucault’s concept of biopolitical power with Fairclough’s method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Method

This paper uses Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze specific ideologies that are produced in and through the intertextual narrative of the CrossFit discursive

formation. In examining key texts in the CrossFit discursive formation and placing them within the context of broader ideological narratives, we can more clearly understand both the subjectivities produced and the hierarchical power relations reinforced by these texts. Markula and Silk (2011) argue that the purpose of CDA is, “to understand the intersection of language use and social and political structure, particularly how language use, or discourse, functions ideologically to contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations” (p. 119). Within the CrossFit discursive formation, these texts serve to constrain, direct, and model intended behaviors and attitudes, thereby exerting power over the individual and propagating hierarchical relations. Through the use of Fairclough’s method of CDA, we can illuminate the workings of power in and through CrossFit’s discursive texts.

Through immersion in the web of intertextual discourses, importantly including the embodied physical CrossFit practice itself, CrossFit adherents learn not only how to read and interpret the discursive texts within the context of the CrossFit formation, they also develop forms of embodied knowledge about their own subjective experience as a CrossFit practitioner. Fairclough (1995) argues that texts are “...social spaces in which two fundamental social processes simultaneously occur: cognition and representation of the world, and social interaction” (p.6). Therefore, texts must be articulated within the contexts in and through which they are created, and the dialectical relationship they develop with social practices (Fairclough, 2005). The “reading of” the text is a co-constituted process wherein the individual interacts with the text in a social exchange; their subjectivity informs the decoding and assimilation of the text with which they interact, and in turn, the text prescribes the practice of certain subjectivities and social practices over others. In “reading” these texts, the ideological formations that undergird their creation can be unearthed, and their connections to power charted.

Given the intertextual nature of the CrossFit formation, I approach each theme as follows. First, I situate the theme within broader discourses, both within the context of the CrossFit and contemporary ideological contexts. This serves to contextualize the text for analysis. Next, I focus on a single text that is present within CrossFit as an exemplar of this theme. In locating this text within its form of origin, I frame the norms of the genre from which it is taken. Finally, I explore the subjectivities that this theme creates and privileges to illuminate the ways in which the text promotes, resists, or reinforces asymmetries of power (Fairclough, 1995). In performing these three stages, I follow the methodology prescribed by Fairclough (1995), and elaborated on by Markula and Silk (2011), in analyzing the text.

CrossFit and the Neo-Athlete

CrossFit athletes assume the risk of injury in the context of sport, rather than the context of what mainstream exercisers consider to be fitness activity. This explains why gym-oriented fitness experts and CrossFit defenders talk past each other about injury and flame each other online. One group views CrossFit through the lens of Pilates and Zumba and bicep curls, and the other views CrossFit through the lens of gymnastics and basketball and NASCAR. CrossFit calls itself ‘the sport of fitness.’ It really matters which of these words come first. (Herz, 2014, p. 127)

One of the cornerstones of the CrossFit subjectivity is the belief that those who practice in CrossFit are not merely participants or clients, they are instead athletes. Although there is debate over whether CrossFit is a sport or whether it is a fitness program (Glassman, 2007; Herz, 2014; Rippetoe, 2012), from the CrossFit perspective it is the “sport of fitness” (Glassman, 2007). In rearticulating the subjectivity from the realm of fitness to the realm of sport, the subjectivity of a CrossFitter undergoes a dynamic change. In particular, the CrossFit athletic subjectivity encourages changes in lifestyle, social networks, and understandings of the body.

At its base, the move from client to athlete subjectivity changes the power relationship inherent in most fitness industry spaces wherein the trainer acts as a cultural intermediary to guide someone into and through the world of fitness (Maguire, 2008b). The archetypal fitness professional and client relationship is one wherein the professional is responsible for educating the client and directing them through a workout that seeks to avoid risk of injury (Bushman & Battista, 2013; Coburn & Malek, 2012). By changing this relationship from Trainer-Client to Coach-Athlete, CrossFit intimates a subjectivity that fundamentally alters the expectations of both individuals in the relationship. As discussed by Heywood, the clearly demarcated boundaries typically seen between a trainer and a client blur with the CrossFit Coach-Athlete connection (Heywood, 2016). Between the articulation of the client as athlete, and the blurring of boundaries between trainers and clients, CrossFit develops a type of relationship between trainer and client that hybridizes sport and fitness cultures.

Additionally, the term Coach is semiotically laden with a very different power dynamic, and this change elicits different performances from participants. As many scholars have discussed, there is a level of personal power that is relinquished to a coach by athletes (ex: Gearity & Mills, 2012), and this relinquishing of power creates a buy-in to the CrossFit ethos. This relinquished power may reduce the potential for a CrossFit athlete to be critical of their coaches and, to an extent, the CrossFit brand. Dawson (2015) is critical of this changed power dynamic in CrossFit, arguing that, “Crossfitters tend to be extremely loyal and reverent to their coaches and are often willing to go to extremes and do things they would not ordinarily do to achieve a

particular end”(p. 15). In sum, people are willing to push themselves harder, and with less resistance to authority, if they are cast in the Coach-Athlete relationship.

There are numerous ways that the athlete subjectivity is reinforced through the CrossFit discursive assemblage. Much of the literature on the CrossFit website and from *The CrossFit Journal* directly names participants as athletes. These texts directly interpellate the CrossFit individual as an athletic subject. In some cases the connection is less overt. A prominent slogan that is used to discuss the adaptability of the WOD states, “[t]he needs of Olympic athletes and our grandparents differ by degree, not kind” (CrossFit.com). In entangling the idea of “Olympic athletes” and “grandparents”, the performance of an athletic identity is predicated more on adherence to the daily WOD than to a specific performative ability. Through these tactics, the arguably non-elite individual is interpellated as an athlete within the CrossFit community.

The text to be analyzed is a quote from Greg Glassman during an interview in 2005. At the time, CrossFit was still a relatively small phenomenon, and there were few active affiliate Boxes. CrossFit had slowly been gaining in popularity due to its use by deployed military and its online presence. In one of the earliest articles on CrossFit, The New York Times was quite critical of CrossFit for its extreme training methods that have left people injured and hospitalized. Glassman is quoted as saying:

“If you find the notion of falling off the rings and breaking your neck so foreign to you, then we don't want you in our ranks” (Cooperman, 2005).

Since its first publication, the text itself has reappeared multiple times to discuss Glassman's rough language and personality (ex: Bowles, 2015; Shugart, 2008). It is often interpreted as a reflection of Glassman's cavalier approach to training that does not value the body. However, another way to read this quote is in its articulation of the CrossFit participant as Athlete. This quote speaks to the production of the CrossFit athlete subjectivity through three specific ways.

First, Glassman's depiction of (potential) injury by describing, "falling off the rings and breaking your neck," articulates the potential for injury as a norm within CrossFit. As an "athlete," CrossFit participants are expected to physically perform at a higher level than their client counterparts. With the trappings of semiotic meanings associated with the athlete subjectivity newly minted on a CrossFit participant, they become a different type of consumer and conceptualize their relationship with their body in new ways. Instead of buying the services of a trainer, they are instead joining a community. A minor sprain or injury is par for the course for athletes, though it would be litigious for a client. In viewing Crossfit participants as athletes, as opposed to fitness industry clients, the way in which individuals conceptualize their relationship to injury fundamentally shifts. Treated as a sport, the injury rates for Crossfit are incredibly low and within normal statistical ranges when compared to other similar sports (Chachula, et al., 2016; Hak, et al., 2013; Sprey, et al., 2016; Weisenthal, et al., 2014). Through this discursive shift, the relationship of a CrossFit participant to injury changes, as well as the ways in which they conceptualize the parameters of their subjective embodied experience. Injury moves from something to avoid (as a client), to a risk that one takes (as an athlete).

Second, and building off the first, Glassman's use of the risk inherent in sport-related activities acts as a marker of differentiation between the common fitness participant and a CrossFit athlete. In stating, "...we don't want you in our ranks," Glassman is drawing a hard line between a CrossFitter as one who is willing to accept risk, and others who are not welcome in CrossFit because they are not willing to accept risk. Hughes and Coakley (1991) argue that the presence of risk in sport is a source of bonding and differentiation for athletes:

To the extent that (the creation of bonds between athletes) occurs, these bonds not only reaffirm their unqualified acceptance of and commitment to the sport ethic on a day-to-day basis but also generate special feelings of fraternity, especially in groups of athletes in the same sports, and especially in sport wherein athletes are perceived to be unique because they endure extreme challenges and risks. These special feelings separate athletes from other people when it comes to what athletes see as a true understanding of the sport experience. Most athletes do not think outsiders know what it is really like to be an athlete; nonathletes just do not understand (Hughes & Coakley, 1991, p. 313)

As a form of differentiation, the risky challenge inherent in CrossFit serves not only as a differentiation from others, it also serves to create a shared bond among its members. As CrossFit is more frequently compared to other fitness spaces, as opposed to sporting spaces, the "extreme challenge" of the WOD sets CrossFit athletes in a separate realm from typical fitness consumers. This shared experience of endurance through hardship inculcates CrossFit ideology through a communal embodied experience.

Finally, and building off the first two, the desire to fulfill the athletic subjectivity put forth by Glassman drives lifestyle changes that are similar to the lifestyle sacrifices seen by athletes. The change from client to athlete creates a new subjectivity that necessitates a social transformation. The lifestyle changes that

Dawson finds indicative of a “greedy institution” are incredibly similar to the changes made by those who are participating as an athlete in a sport. Constraints on diet, friend circles that are predominantly within the sport itself, and frequent training are labeled “arguably excessive” by Dawson (2015, pp. 13-15). However, within a sporting context these are normative behaviors and expectations. Athletes build their lifestyle around their exercise routines and their desired performance goals and, “... many athletes do not see their overconformity to the sport ethic as deviant; they see it as confirming and reconfirming their identity as athlete and as members of select sport groups” (Hughes & Coakley, 1991, p. 311). This lifestyle over-conformity is evident in other areas of fitness as well, and it is seen as a marker of dedication to their specific bodywork projects. Neville, Gorman, Flanagan, and Dimanche (2015) argue that, “...a ‘very fit person’ is one who has constructed his/her world in such a way that the going to the gym and working out stands out as being figural and act as a locus of control around which other daily activities are organized” (p. 299). For Neville et al (2015), fitness is not merely consumed but an, “...individual’s on-going identification with some social-material activity-environment” (p. 306). Therefore, the process of self-disciplining the body to conform to the aspired CrossFit athletic subjectivity involves often radical changes to lifestyle and social networks, and these changes are necessary for identification as a CrossFit athlete within CrossFit spaces.

Glassman’s quote, while perhaps an offhanded comment picked up by a reporter, speaks to not only the branded differentiation between a CrossFit athlete and others, it also brings into being a subjectivity that drives lifestyle change. The athletic subjectivity produced in and through the CrossFit discursive assemblage

fundamentally changes the way that many see their bodies, particularly in the ways in which they understand injury. The use of risk as a method of creating difference can be read as emboldening and empowering CrossFitters to push their boundaries and develop tenacity. However, when considered in conjunction with the power asymmetry created through the use of the title Coach, there is an implicit belief that the CrossFit coach is willing and capable of managing this risk for participants. This can lead to a culture of pushing limits.

CrossFit and the Culture of Pushing

As a technique for crossing the boundary between fitness consumer and CrossFit athlete, CrossFit as an organization encourages a culture of “pushing”. As a biopolitical tactic, this discourse encourages the production of certain embodied subjectivities, and it articulates a notion of “perseverance through hardship” to the CrossFit subjectivity. Through the daily ritual of the WOD and the anthropomorphized Pukie the Clown, CrossFit as an assemblage encourages participants to push their bodies to their limits.

The CrossFit WOD is designed to push the body, both mentally and physically, through high intensity physical activity. A key component to increasing the intensity of the workout is the use of competitive scoring. Each WOD is given a score, either in time completed, repetitions completed, rounds completed, or some amalgamation of the three. These scores are visibly posted on a whiteboard situated at the front of the room. The use of the whiteboard is a form of biopolitics that seeks to influence the performance of CrossFit bodies through making visible the performance

of these bodies and publicly stratifying them. In so doing, the whiteboard serves as a disciplining device that demands performance through competition amongst other CrossFit athletes.

The discursive texts that are used during and around CrossFit WODs mirror the neoliberal rhetoric of military and elite athleticism: push your body to the breaking point, don't give up, give your all, and leave nothing behind. In this way, CrossFit embraces the potentially overexerting body. "CrossFit, at its core, is about the hard truths of life. Good things take effort. Results don't come easy. Sometimes, to get to a really good place, you have to go through a really bad time. Heavy things are hard to pick up. Strength takes guts. And, if you're a cheater, you're an asshole. These are essential truths" (Darsh, 2013). In tackling difficult tasks, CrossFit promises the pain is worth it.

The pain of a CrossFit workout is both physical and psychological. As the body reaches the edge of exertion, it enters a physiological state where form breaks down and musculoskeletal injury is more likely to occur due to increased fatigue (Bergeron, et al., 2011). To retain form during these moments of physiological breakdown requires psychological willpower and perseverance. Rose (2001) argues that in the contemporary moment, "...we see an increasing stress on personal reconstruction through acting on the body in the name of fitness that is simultaneously corporal and psychological"(p. 18). As mentioned previously, this shared endurance through hardship serves as a form of communal bonding with, and differentiation from, others. It is in pushing through those moments of high fatigue

and mental anguish that CrossFitter's argue they feel the true power of Crossfit – the experience of persevering through pain (e.g. Cecil, 2016a; Herz, 2014). In challenging participants to push through and past their body's physical and mental limits, CrossFit erases the line between average participant and athlete, and in so doing creates a culture of "pushing" limits.

There are many potential ways that overexertion in the pursuit of pushing limits can be expressed, but during the high intensity workouts of CrossFit, this exertion is sometimes expressed through vomiting. Vomiting during a WOD in CrossFit is somewhat common, particularly for new participants who may be undertrained. Vomiting is such an ubiquitous element of the culture that the unofficial mascot of CrossFit is "Pukie the Clown".

You puke during a CrossFit workout, you get an "I met Pukey" T-shirt featuring a clown losing his lunch. "Our goal isn't to make you throw up, of course," said Dodson, the Plano CrossFit coach, "but it happens sometimes. The clown T-shirt is just to lighten things up and let the person know they've pushed themselves hard." (Shugart, 2008)

Pukie the Clown is depicted differently in various texts throughout CrossFit discourse. Its initial incarnation is the image of a clown on hands and knees, dressed in a tank top and compression shorts, vomiting on a floor. Pukie is obviously disoriented, with unfocused eyes and stars forming a halo around his head. In the background are a weighted barbell on lifts, potentially for squats, and two gymnastics rings hanging from the ceiling. This particular image of Pukie is the most prevalent version in the CrossFit discursive formation. Other incarnations of Pukie can be seen in the life-size statue of Pukie at CrossFit headquarters (CBS, 2015) and various

homemade YouTube videos that depict men wearing Pukie-inspired outfits performing the daily WOD. Other incarnations of Pukie are more masculinized and see him far more muscular, carrying around a bucket of vomit.

Pukie represents a tongue-in-cheek acknowledgement of the realities of heavy exertion advocated by CrossFit programming. This particular focus on vomit harkens back to high school sport bootcamps that would see de-conditioned players vomiting during the first few practices (Kreider, Fry, & O'Toole, 1998). The appearance of Pukie and the underlying nostalgic connection to athleticism not only normalizes the overexertion that leads to vomiting, but presents it as a positive: either one has crossed a cultural threshold that interpellates them as an athlete or they have engaged in the reproduction of the culture of pushing that re-inscribes them as one who does CrossFit. Pushing one's limits and potentially overexerting are normalized and expected of CrossFit participants, so a "visit" from Pukie the Clown is seen as a positive within CrossFit culture. In other areas of the fitness industry where avoidance of risk is a goal, it would be perceived as a failure to properly program exercise to the appropriate level of the client for the average personal trainer.

The normalization of overexertion that is represented in and through the image of Pukie the Clown serves to develop a subjectivity that sees overexertion as a normal potential outcome of the CrossFit experience. This serves to develop embodied subjectivities that are willing to push themselves to the point of vomiting, as this act is seen as a positive marker of in group status. While vomiting is far from the only visibly performative effect of overexertion, its visceral and spectacular nature make it a powerful discourse within the CrossFit intertextual assemblage.

CrossFit and the Need to Prepare

The third and final theme that appears in the CrossFit discourse is the concept of CrossFit as a technique to prepare for, and eventually overcome, the perils of the modern world. As with any intertextual discursive formation, the semiotic ideology present in various texts repeats, overlaps, and reinforces through multiple textual incarnations. The narrative *CrossFit Lifeguard: Anthony Kemp* (Cecil, 2016a) brings together the ideas of athleticism and the culture of pushing with the final thematic: the use of CrossFit as preparation for, “The Unknown and The Unknowable”.

The following mantra appears repeatedly throughout the CrossFit discursive formation: “The program prepares trainees for any physical contingency – not only for the unknown but for the unknowable, too” (CrossFit.com). Glassman (CBS, 2015) further defines this phrase by stating that CrossFit is preparation for “...getting ready for war, getting ready for earthquakes, getting ready for mugging, getting ready for the horrible news that you have leukemia. What awaits us all is challenge for sure”. In articulating this apocalyptic potential future, Glassman plays on the idea of precarity – the concept that we are always already on the verge of losing everything. Berlant (2011) argues that “...the present moment increasingly imposes itself on consciousness as a moment in extended crisis, with one happening piling on another... an intensified situation in which extensive threats to survival are said to dominate the reproduction of life” (p.7). The state of forever-crisis is a form of biopolitics that serves to drive consumers to invest in preparatory products in order to

mitigate future anxieties. CrossFit as a brand positions itself as a panacea to these anxieties of the future.

Throughout CrossFit's discursive formation, there are many diverse narrative texts created that showcase the power of CrossFit to overcome. Within these narratives, CrossFit helps to overcome past trauma or addiction (Achauer, 2014; Beers, 2011; Cooper, 2015), heal after injury and disease (Cecil, 2016e), and prevent death (Cecil, 2016b). In particular, *The CrossFit Journal* delivers these short narratives on a fairly regular basis to the CrossFit community through the CrossFit website. These narratives are often only a few pages long. Each tells a tale of heroic survival through the use of CrossFit.

CrossFit Lifeguard tells the tale of Anthony Kemp, a 23 year old marine who went hiking with his marine friends in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Several miles into the hike, while taking a photograph of his friends, Kemp is bitten by a Western diamondback rattlesnake. He is immediately poisoned by the bite, and his leg starts to swell. Miles away from medical attention, with the snakes venom slowly paralyzing him, Kemp must walk back to his car to meet paramedics before the venom kills him.

Kemp would have to traverse hills, rocks, steep inclines and even the top of a dam to get back to where they had started. In that moment, he remembered one of the coaches at Radd CrossFit in New York.

"We used to joke all the time, ... 'Hey man, don't be a pussy,'" Kemp said. "For whatever reason, I heard his voice in my head. I got up, I started taking steps."

It would take roughly 20 minutes to get back to the car, he figured. "As dumb as this sounds, I kind of related it back to a 20-minute AMRAP."

In this narrative, Kemp is positioned as having to overcome a physical challenge, the hike itself, while fighting off the effects of the venomous snakebite. During the return to his car, Kemp focuses on the words of his CrossFit coach, and re-envision the challenge as a daily WOD. As he continues his “20-minute AMRAP (As Many Rounds as Possible)” walk home, he slowly loses functionality in his leg. The return trip took 45 minutes to complete.

The narrative of this text forges an articulation that blends the challenge and structure of a WOD with the challenges of survival. In entangling the ritual of the WOD with the narrative of survival, the two become semiotically linked. The act of walking back to civilization, step by step, is compared with the rounds of a CrossFit WOD. Performance of the WOD becomes akin to surviving in dire consequences. As Kemp’s body begins to fail him, it is his mental fortitude that allows him to persevere. What was once a casual hike is now a reproduction of the psychological and physical endurance of a WOD. Notably absent from this piece of the narrative is the marine friends he went on the hike with. This serves to resonate with the ideology of neoliberal individualism, making his individual story of overcoming more powerful.

Kemp makes it back to his car and is airlifted to the hospital. He nearly dies several times due to the effects of the venom, but attributes his survival to his great physical condition. Although he is a marine, it is intimated that the reason for his strong constitution is his CrossFit practice. The narrative concludes with his swift return to CrossFit after a life-saving leg amputation.

Kemp ended up undergoing three amputations, the last one making him an above-the-knee amputee. By April 1 he was back to doing CrossFit, which he had started in 2012.

“No one really knows to this day why I survived. From my understanding, at least what they told me, no one’s survived that much venom.”

There are two key messages in this text. The first is that, even after losing a limb, Kemp quickly returned to CrossFit. This follows a story arc reminiscent of Campbell’s monomyth (Campbell, 2008), a narrative device that tells of a typical hero’s journey. This journey requires that a hero leave home, encounters an obstacle, is helped by an adviser figure, and returns home a changed person. Kemp leaves to the Refuge, is bitten by a snake, remembers the words of his coach, and survives in order to return to his home Box. Although the character of Kemp may be read as heroic due to his role as a marine, or for his reinforcement of the independent neoliberal individual, the use of the hero myth further cements his cultural location as a hero figure. The second key message is that CrossFit was integral to Kemp’s survival. Although the quote states that “no one really knows” why he survived, the implied meaning is clear through the constant references back to CrossFit, to the ritual of the WOD, and to his triumphant return to CrossFit. Taken together, CrossFit prepared Kemp to deal with adversity, it was through his training that he survived the whims of fate, and it is in his triumphant return home that, even with his amputation, he is complete.

While this is but one of many texts in which CrossFit is articulated as the method by which someone mitigates or overcomes a disastrous scenario, it is one of

the more blatant. The Kemp narrative is written in an incredibly formulaic way and follows the traditional narrative arc of the hero's journey. In remembering the words of his coach and re-imagining his survival as a WOD, Kemp showcases the way in which the tools learned through CrossFit can be applied to real world survivability scenarios. Through juxtaposing CrossFit with a tale of survival, Kems' tale and others like it serves to reinforce the ideology that CrossFit is the solution for overcoming the unknown and the unknowable.

Conclusion

CrossFit as a discursive intertextual assemblage brings into being an athletic CrossFit subjectivity. This subjectivity is constructed through the articulation of CrossFit participants with the athletic community, the development of a culture of pushing, and the promise of mitigating future disasters. Through a variety of instructional "texts," CrossFit develops a subjectivity that has the potential to greatly impact the lifestyle and social relations of its subjects as they seek to perform at their limits for both the cultural capital within the CrossFit milieu and the belief that the CrossFit practice is a path to combating past, present, and future anxieties.

This analysis points to the powerful allure of CrossFit and the messages with which it uses to attract and retain members. The interpellation of CrossFit bodies as athletic bodies raises the specter of whether CrossFit coaches are adequately prepared to meet the proffered promises delivered through this intertextual medium. As individuals develop bodywork projects in and through the CrossFit practice, the degree to which they are shaped by the Coach-Athlete relationship and remain

uncritical of the practice may depend on their response to the interpellation of their bodies within the broader CrossFit discourse. As power in these relations is asymmetrically in favor of the coaches, if only for the semiotic meanings attached to the Coach-Athlete relationship, the quality and ability of the Coach is a key factor in the success of the CrossFit participant.

Although three themes within the CrossFit discourse have been discussed, individual CrossFitters do not necessarily incorporate all three into their own subjectivity. However, when they are interpellated by others, texts such as these inform the social interactions and unspoken assumptions of an individual's subjectivity. In discussing the CrossFit Level 1 certification, Herz points directly to these assumptions in stating:

As a credential, the CrossFit Level 1 is also a kind of secret Cross-Fit handshake. It goes on the bottom of people's resumes. To non-CrossFitters in HR, this just looks like another hobby. But if the person handling that resume happens to be a CrossFitter, the applicant will probably get an interview. A candidate with a CrossFit coaching credential won't get hired, necessarily. But the badge carries more weight than a school tie, because it reliably indicates that someone is able to work outside their comfort zone. There's a whole set of assumptions you can make about certified CrossFit trainers: They know how to buckle down and focus on results. They're not allergic to accountability. And they're extremely unlikely to harbor any kind of chronic disease (Herz, 2014, p. 232)

As each individual subjectivity is differently developed through a combination of personal embodied experience and interaction with diverse CrossFit texts, while there is an idealized CrossFit subjectivity associated with the CrossFit discursive assemblage, there is no guarantee that it is uniform across all participants.

Finally, the articulation of CrossFit participant as Athlete is key to understanding the CrossFit phenomenon and its seemingly fanatical adherents.

CrossFit does not simply label its participants athletes. Through the ritual of the WOD, narratives of overcoming trials, and the constant demand to push harder and farther, CrossFit emulates the realm of sport. In tapping in to the intertextual assemblage of sport, CrossFit has developed a space of shared values by invoking the ideologies of teamwork and shared experience, even as many CrossFit WODs are based around individual performance. To consider a CrossFit Athlete within the context of the fitness industry is to ignore the subjectivity created through CrossFit's intertextual discourses.

Chapter 3: Geographies of (Cross)Fitness: An Ethnographic Case Study of a CrossFit Box

Introduction

Although Andrews, Sudwell, and Sparkes (2005) sounded a call for further research on local spatial geographies of everyday physical fitness over a decade ago, the response has been tepid at best. At the time, they suggested that, ‘...health geography has yet to engage critically with the consequences of the all-encompassing and totalizing meaning of health in society... It is about [individuals] maintaining their mental and physical well being, and about feeling and looking good’ (Andrews, et al., 2005, p. 878). While western neoliberal ideas of the productive healthy body dominate discussions of personal health (Ayo, 2012; Bunton, Burrows, & Nettleton, 2003; King-White, et al., 2013), the concept of health and the healthy body remains a contested terrain (Gesler & Kearns, 2005; Godlee, 2011). Unfortunately, Andrews et. al. (2005) argue, the spaces of everyday physical activity have been widely ignored by cultural geographers and sport sociologists in favor of examining spaces of elite athletic performance. In their theoretical paradigm, it is within these spaces of everyday physical activity that subjectivities of health and fitness are co-created. To better understand the role of spatial location in the production of health subjectivities, the following project seeks to illuminate the cultural and social imbrications of place through the case study of a CrossFit Box.

On the one hand, while Andrews et. al. speak to an increasing interdisciplinarity between cultural geographers and sport sociologists (2005), few

scholars are progressing that route of inquiry. Since publication, their research has primarily been advanced by health geography scholars researching the therapeutic landscapes (Gesler, 1992) of spaces such as yoga (Hoyez, 2007) and camping programs (Dunkley, 2009) in order to craft better public health interventions. These studies are based on short-term, intervention programs and not necessarily more consistent forms of physical activity. Other research, such as on the McDonaldization (Ritzer, 2004) of local fitness spaces (Andreasson & Johansson, 2014a, 2014b, 2015; Andreasson, et al., 2014; Johansson & Andreasson, 2014) serves the more radical political project of exploring the disenchantment of fitness spaces through globalization and branded fitness programs. While these speak to therapy and globalization respectively, this research continues to sidestep the everyday lived experience of the fitness consumer.

On the other hand, van Ingen (2003) contends that there is a spatial turn occurring in the field of sports sociology, and that such a turn is necessary for clearly understanding the dialectical relationships between identities and spaces. Indeed, critical physical cultural scholars have continued to expand this spatial turn, particularly through the use of French spatial theorist Lefebvre (Friedman, 2010; Friedman & van Ingen, 2011; Fusco, 2006; van Ingen, 2003, 2004). However, much of the research in sport sociology continues to focus on elite sporting spaces (Friedman, 2010; Friedman & Silk, 2005; Lambert, 2009; van Campenhout & van Hoven, 2014) with few notable exceptions (Fusco, 2006; Nash, 2012). Therefore, an exploration of the role of space and place in the physical activities performed by the general populace remains underdeveloped. Additionally, while Lefebvre is an

excellent entry point into conducting spatial analysis, a number of feminist and queer scholars have advanced the field of cultural geography in important and interesting ways beyond Lefebvre's work (Anzaldúa, 1987; Bailey, 2013; Browne, Lim, & Brown, 2009; McDowell, 1999; Puwar, 2004; Soja, 2010). In particular, the work of feminist Marxist Doreen Massey (2001) extends Lefebvre's work through three key areas: a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the local and the global; an exploration of the contingent and processual nature of places; and the effect of an imagined nostalgia in the creation of place.

First, Massey (2001) contends that to understand what is within the boundaries of a given place, one must acknowledge other places with which the original space is inextricably linked; '...the understanding of any locality must precisely draw on the links beyond its boundaries' (p. 120). A given place is therefore, in part, defined by the places it is not. This conceptual framework is inherently anti-reductionist and relational in that the creation of temporal boundaries to define a place always already entangles that place with what is outside of those boundaries. In defining what constitutes the inside of a boundary, we inherently also define what is outside of the boundary – there cannot be one without the other.

A second argument of Massey that builds on the relational nature of boundaries is that there is a temporal component to a place. This means that a given place is always in the process of becoming something else; '...the identity of place... is always and continuously produced' (Massey, 2001, p. 171) and therefore '...places can be conceptualised as processes, too...' (Massey, 2001, p. 137). Instead of seeing place to be just a product of processes, Massey argues that places are continually co-

produced through the various actants that constitute the place. By extension, spaces and places that are entangled with, but outside of, a given place have a role in the co-production of the place. In conceptualizing place as a process that must be continually produced, Massey speaks to the consistent energy and investment required to maintain the character and form of a place.

Finally, Massey (2001) uses the concept of nostalgia to name the process by which individuals, often unsuccessfully, attempt to recreate an imagined ‘longed for and romanticized’ place (p. 10). Massey argues that such nostalgic places are not faithful reproductions of an historically accurate place. Instead, nostalgic places are a fusion of a place cleaved from its historical context with an imagined affective illusion. Therefore, ‘...instead of looking back with nostalgia to some identity of place which it is assumed already exists, the past has to be constructed’ (Massey, 2001, p. 171). In positioning nostalgia as a process of the present, Massey articulates nostalgic places as those that must be actively constructed from the desires of the present.

Therefore, places can be conceptualized as always already in the process of being co-produced through social relations and having inherently contingent, porous, temporal, and relational boundaries. Massey’s extension of Lefebvre’s work adds new dimensions to spatial studies through the incorporation of time and the emphasis on the relational quality of one place to another. Andrews et. al. (2005) argued that further research should, ‘...investigate how certain fitness places are contested through time and how, as a result, in terms of character, they may essentially be different places at different times’ (p. 889). Through the use of Massey’s theoretical

framework, we can theorize along both a temporal and relational axis. By incorporating Massey's theoretical extension of Lefebvre's work, this research seeks to build upon Andrews et. al's analysis of micro-level physical activity geographies through the case study of a CrossFit box.

CrossFit as Case Study

CrossFit is an emergent fitness trend that incorporates a variety of traditional physical activity skills including gymnastics, power-lifting, and functional training as part of a high-intensity exercise routine. CrossFit is typically performed in a "box", a stripped down no frills gym often found in a repurposed industrial or commercial space. Despite critiques of CrossFit due to a perception that its techniques present an increased risk for injury (Babiash, et al., 2013; Bergeron, et al., 2011; Greeley, 2014; Hak, et al., 2013; Petersen, et al., 2014) and concerns about under-qualified fitness instructors (Fainaru-Wada, 2014; Mullins, 2015; Rippetoe, 2012; Shugart, 2008), CrossFit continues to grow in popularity and participation (Fainaru-Wada, 2014; "The Latest CrossFit Market Research Data", 2014). Founded by Greg Glassman in 2001, CrossFit positions itself as a response to, and a rejection of, an over-commercialised and coddled fitness industry (Glassman, 2002b; Herz, 2014; Kilgore & Rippetoe, 2007).

In many ways, CrossFit's ethos of self-improvement and individual responsibility are aligned with the dominant neoliberal values espoused by modern western healthcare and fitness professionals (Brown & Baker, 2012; Wiest, et al., 2015). As a location where those neoliberal subjectivities are formed, Dawson (2015)

theorizes that the CrossFit Box serves as a re-inventive institution, not unlike the military, that provides a transformative space wherein people reinvent their identities and rearticulate their understanding of their own bodies (2015). ‘This is perhaps one reason why people outside the CrossFit movement often refer to it as a “cult” – CrossFit sees itself as doing nothing less than facilitating its participants’ survival, training them to be always self-sufficient and engaged in constant self-improvement’ (Heywood, 2016, p. 120). In this way, CrossFit spaces are transformative spaces that empower individuals to agentially perform bodywork projects (Brace-Govan, 2002; MacNevin, 2003) towards ostensibly healthist goals. Similar to Andrews et. al’s (2005) exploration of Roy’s Gym, spatial analysis can provide insight into the role of location in the formation of fitness communities and the development of health subjectivities.

However, there is a tension that exists between an active desire to empower the body through instrumental training, and a passive compliance to a healthist discourse that prescribes the types of bodies that can and should exist. CrossFit as an organization attempts to redefine health and fitness under their own contingent understanding of bodily performance that is encased in an athletic strength and conditioning mentality (Glassman, 2002a, 2002c, 2007; Kilgore & Rippetoe, 2007). Instead of health being defined as wellness or absence of disease, it is defined as a form of functional fitness, ‘...that would best prepare trainees for any physical contingency—prepare them not only for the unknown but for the unknowable’ (Glassman, 2007, p. 1). While arguably a neoliberal project of individual empowerment, CrossFit’s role as a transformative space in individual perceptions of

health and fitness, as well as its continued growth as a transformative institution, makes it a key site for understanding the production of emergent health subjectivities (Weedon, 1997).

Subjects and Methods

This ethnographic case study focused on a relatively new CrossFit Box (gym) to the mid-Atlantic area “CrossFit East”. The primary investigator (Shaun Edmonds) utilized three methods to explore the research question and collect data; overt participant observation (Markula & Silk, 2011) autoethnography (Denzin, 2014; Ellis & Adams, 2014), and semi-structured interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). While participant observation and semi-structured interviews provide insight into how others view and are viewed within a given space, Ellis and Adams argue that the use of autoethnography is a commitment to the process of understanding daily life (Ellis & Adams, 2014). In combining ethnographic participant observation and participant interviews with journaled autoethnographic critical reflection, Shaun situated his own body and experience within the research setting. Nineteen (19) semi-structured interviews were performed, and they ranged in length from thirty to one hundred twenty minutes. Pseudonyms have been used throughout to de-identify participants and locations.

CrossFit East is located in a major city in the mid-Atlantic region. A majority of the CrossFit coaches at CrossFit East hold multiple fitness certifications from diverse certifying organizations above and beyond the Level 1 CrossFit certificate required to open a CrossFit box. Shaun was made aware of CrossFit East from a

friend who was a member of CrossFit East. Before beginning the study, Shaun contacted one of the owners, Diana, and explained the nature and breadth of the study. Diana gave permission to perform the research, and actively assisted in recruiting participants for the semi-structured interviews.

In his role as participant-observer, Shaun participated in CrossFit classes an average of three times per week over the course of a year. Beyond participating in the classes themselves, Shaun attended a number of the monthly CrossFit East community events, and supported CrossFit East members who were competing at local CrossFit competitions. Before and after CrossFit classes, Shaun would spend time in the mobility and stretching area speaking with other CrossFit participants. In this way, Shaun actively engaged with the community of CrossFit East.

Field notes were taken shortly after leaving the CrossFit East facility. The notes detailed what was observed and discussed within the facility. After the field notes were written, Shaun transitioned to journaling the experience by writing down impressions and affective responses to the events within the class. This process of note-taking and reflection were key to accurately and reflexively approaching the affective dimension of the physical activity. As an addendum to the field notes and journaling, Shaun catalogued the workout of the day and each participant's individual score. This created an empirical basis for differentiating performance amongst participants.

Interviews occurred after Shaun had spent over eight months as part of CrossFit East. This allowed him to collect sufficient data to construct effective semi-structured interviews and afforded him a level of insider status within the group.

Interview participants were acquired through a combination of monthly announcements from CrossFit East, signs placed within the CrossFit East facility, and snowball sampling. In attempting to engage a diverse collection of experiences, interview participants not only included long time members and coaches, but also newer participants to CrossFit.

Findings

CrossFit East: Entering the Box

As CrossFit Boxes tend to utilize repurposed industrial and commercial spaces, each CrossFit Box is uniquely designed and adapted to the space within which it is housed. These spaces tend to be fairly unconventional in design, and they may appear oddly disorienting for those who are not used to their aesthetic. Therefore, the following description from Shaun's field notes should help to set the scene for CrossFit East and the interactions that follow.

The entrance to the Box is hidden around the corner from the main road – a single light shining above a relatively nondescript door with a small “CrossFit East” sign tacked at eye level. The door opens into a short hallway, and from its construction it feels like more like a backdoor emergency exit than an entryway. The entryway opens into a sparse sitting area; sometimes four chairs, an Ikea table, and shelves filled with pairs of shoes. To the left is the men's changing room and to the right the women's. The adjacent wall is painted with dry erase paint, and various announcements for the month are written down its length. Next to an announcement for Shaun's study is a congratulatory message to Betty who just got into graduate

school, as well as the time and date for a clothing drive for a local shelter. Dividing this area from the stretching area is a large white board that poses the current question of the month, “What is your fondest memory (so far) at CrossFit East?” Members have used the supplied markers to respond with answers such as “working out with my husband,” “not barfing after class,” and “when Warren threw a wallball at my face”. A small computer sits off to the side for members to check-in.

The stretching area is formed by Ikea book shelves built into a rough square shape around some matted flooring. A nearby shelf holds various instruments for myofascial release – the more heavily advocated pre and post-workout regimen that CrossFit aficionados ascribe to – including foam rollers and lacrosse balls. To the side there is a single rack of merchandise that holds CrossFit East t-shirts and Paleo-diet-approved shakes and protein bars. To the left of the rack is the coaches’ office: two desks with laptops surrounded by random exercise clothing and paperwork. To the right is a small storage room that houses extra merchandise and supplies for the monthly get-togethers.

The main area, accessed through either the sitting area or the stretching area, is a large matted rectangle that is perhaps the size of a basketball court but likely only about 12 feet high. To the right are large Rogue™ produced cages that are designed as an amalgamation of traditional squat racks and a more playful jungle gym. Neatly stacked beside the cages are wooden boxes of various heights for box jumps and step-ups. The wall is painted white with one thick band of purple paint that starts at 9 feet and ends at 10 feet. To the left are trees of metal barbells and stacks of Olympic-style weight plates. Running parallel to the matted area is a long strip of green astro-turf.

While primarily used to push a weighted sled along the length of the building, the strip also houses eight Concept 2 rowers, eight standard exercise bikes, a shelf of kettlebells, and a separate shelf of weighted balls. While this may seem like quite a bit of equipment for such a small space, the equipment is stored in such a way as to maximize open floor space. Four large windows let in light from the parking lot and their industrial architecture speak to the box's previous life as, perhaps, a several car garage. Noticeably absent from the main areas are any type of mirrors – a common feature found in traditional gyms. Without mirrors, the focus shifts away from the aesthetic self-gaze found in other physical activity class spaces (Prichard & Tiggemann, 2010).

At the front of the main area is another white board. Written on the left hand side of the board is the Workout Of the Day; commonly called the “WOD”. At this particular CrossFit box, the WOD almost always consists of three phases; a coach-led group stretch, either a strength or technique based exercise, and finally the metabolic conditioning or “metcon”. The metcon typically lists an “Rx”, or prescribed, recommendation for both men and women. The Rx can refer to a specific weight, a specific technique, or a combination of the two. While metcons are generally scaled to the capabilities of the individual participant, the Rx provides a marker of what a fit person “should” be capable of (Herz, 2014; Knapp, 2015b). On the right hand side of the board are the class start times, the names of those who attended each class, and their individual scores from the metcon. If the person was able to meet the Rx weight or technique, there is an Rx written next to their name. As the day progresses, the right side of the board gradually becomes filled with names and numbers.

Typically there are five to seven hour-long classes per day during the week, and two on Saturday. On Sunday there is a yoga class in the space. Classes hold up to sixteen participants. Different memberships allow for either twelve or unlimited classes per month, as well as the option to come in during non-class hours and train using the equipment. Generally people stick to certain times during the week, so that each “hour” has a somewhat regular communal character. Whenever someone new comes to class, introductions are made so everyone gets to know everyone else. The 6 am class tends to be the most competitive and has a continual waitlist, while the 7:30pm class tends to post less competitive WOD scores and average around five regular participants. That being said, the goal of a typical CrossFit workout is to challenge the participants by scaling the workout such that, by the end of the workout, they are left flat on their backs, sweaty, gasping for air (Herz, 2014; Murphy, 2012).

Defining CrossFit: (Re)Creating a Nostalgic Present

CrossFit positions itself within the fitness industry as a rebuttal of the modern commercial gym. The design of a typical CrossFit Box is a reproduced homage to the image of the garage gym advocated by Glassman in the early days of CrossFit (Glassman, 2002b). This ad-hoc and minimalist gym evokes images of black and white photos of classic gymnastic gymnasiums popularized through the late 1800s. From the powerlifting equipment and kettlebells to the gymnastic style rings hanging from the ceiling, a CrossFit Box is a modestly updated recreation of a classic gymnastics gym, translated through a do it yourself home gym, and ultimately produced as a commercial facility. The ideological legacy that informs the

commercial CrossFit Box is very much one of organic growth, group ownership, and the nostalgic re-creation of gymnasiums of the past.

In some ways, the nostalgic throwback to a classic gym setting is invoked when Joe (37, Male), a veteran, begins to talk about CrossFit East. ‘It’s clean, it’s nice. I’ve been to a few boxes where I was going to get tetanus, I needed my tetanus shot on the rig because it was all rusty and things were nasty and just, you know, stunk’ (Joe, personal communication, September 20, 2016). For many of the people interviewed for the study, the first response to questions about CrossFit East is to mention its cleanliness. The vision of the dirty garage gym and the turn of the century industrial space permeate the vision of what a Box *should* be, and they are surprised at how clean the space turns out to be.

CrossFit East is also one of the few CrossFit Boxes that boasts air-conditioning. Given the humid and muggy swampland that stiflingly bakes communities over the summer months, air-conditioning is nearly mandatory for any home or business. Doug (30, Male), a graduate student and CrossFitter for over five years, started his CrossFit practice in a different Box in the Midwest. ‘Most boxes are converted garages, right? And so they’re not air conditioned, right? CrossFit gyms are supposed to be hot sweaty places and have fans and open doors and stuff like that. I actually walk into our gym its cold and I go eww... I want my body to be warm. I don’t mind sweating’ (Doug, personal communication, August 17, 2016). While many people seem happy about the installed air-conditioning system, there is often grumbling before the WOD about the “unnatural-ness” of the cooled air. It doesn’t

help that many WODs require participants to run 200 or 400 meters around the block, bringing them out into the hot air anyhow.

In early August, CrossFit East attempted to install a heart rate monitoring system whereby people could view their performance during the WOD on a large television monitor in the corner of the main area. Although this was tried out in several classes, by October the televisions remained dark. While this type of technology is often used to track performance in athletes, and it dovetails well with the increase in FitBits and other personal monitoring devices over the past few years, there was a reticence by both participants and coaches to use the technology in the classes.

The rejection of technology and the desire for a nostalgic view of fitness is imbricated in the ethos and marketing of CrossFit. CrossFit's branding as a 'primal' form of fitness (Herz, 2014) advocates for more visceral, engaged, and sweaty physical activity. This is coupled with endorsement of a diet free of processed foods and added sugar; most notably being the Paleo diet ("The CrossFit Journal,"). CrossFit's marketing pushes back against the modern lifestyle, and modernity in general, arguing that CrossFit is the antidote to the ills of poor health and sedentary behavior found in modern society (Herz, 2014).

Furthermore, many of the athletes of CrossFit East spoke about the CrossFit Box in relation to what they term a "globo" gym; a pop culture reference that describes the typical aesthetically-driven franchised commercial fitness facility. When asked about their decision to join CrossFit, nearly everyone had a story associated with a globo gym. For men, they felt locked in to a mundane and heartless

system that sought to take your money for nothing in return. Many women pointed to a lack of physical education and a hostile attitude toward women within the weight room. The construction of the place within CrossFit was almost always illustrated in opposition to the bland, crass, and commercialized globo gym.

For example, Theresa (29, Female), a young professional advocate, is wary of new members, particularly younger guys who may not buy into the CrossFit ethos. ‘Usually guys who like the big weight and like want to come in and bro out. You know whatever. Go back to Gold’s gym and figure out where to flex but like this is not it’ (Theresa, personal communication, August 12, 2016). Theresa associates a constellation of attitudes, behaviors, and subjectivities with the commercial gym experience, and directly situates that in contrast with the expected experience of a CrossFit Box. It is the negative experiences of the globo gym and the promise of what a CrossFit Box *should* be that informs how individuals understand the place of the CrossFit Box.

Additionally, while everyone that attends CrossFit East pays a fairly high monthly membership fee, often triple what one would pay for a globo gym, there is a decidedly different mentality around the commercialization that appears in CrossFit and the commercialization found in a globo gym. The difference appears to lie in the belief that CrossFit values their participants more, and therefore the higher price is worth it. Theresa points out that, ‘it really does feel like we’re there as athletes and as members of the community and not just a dollar’ (Theresa, personal communication, August 12, 2016). Similarly, Hank (30, Male), a young school teacher, argues that CrossFit Boxes that are unfriendly do not really engage in the CrossFit spirit.

Other places that I've been they weren't as engaging, ya know. One place I went to where they didn't even ask my name. They just started the class. So I didn't introduce myself. Didn't say hello to other members. Other places it's been they've introduced me, welcome, have a good workout. It's as if I'm a member. Some places just take your money and run and other places they treat you well. (Hank, personal communication, August 11, 2016).

In discussing what constitutes a good CrossFit Box, the understated assumption is that the expense of a CrossFit membership is more than just the coaching and the use of space; it is the expectation of community building, social acceptance, and individualized care. The implication is that a typical commercial gym does not care about their clients, and therefore is exploiting their client base as a villainous corporate monolith. As the literature supports this assumption that global gyms are more concerned with capitalization than customer care (Andreasson & Johansson, 2014a; Wiest, et al., 2015), many CrossFitters feel it is their duty to proselytize to their friends and family to join a CrossFit box; a place where they will find community and people who genuinely care about their well-being.

The nostalgic view of what a CrossFit Box *should* be, often informed by experiences in a global gym, define the expectations placed on the physical, social, and economic qualities of CrossFit East. The subjectivities produced by this desire for a place that has never existed, and in relational contrast with the experiences of the global gym, serve to inform the social policing of behaviors and attitudes within the CrossFit Box. The explicit and implicit expectations that Hank, Theresa, Joe, and Doug bring to CrossFit East, along with their embodied performance of those expectations, co-construct a place that is far different from the community and expectations found in a typical gym setting.

Building Community: Creating Space Through Social Interaction

Welcome to our amazing fitness community and your neighborhood gym. At CrossFit East, we focus on having fun while making you a stronger, leaner, and healthier version of yourself. Start your fitness journey in a friendly and welcoming place where you will see and feel the difference as soon as you walk through our door. (CrossFit East website)

People start to amble in to the stretching area about fifteen minutes before class starts, grabbing their workout shoes from the wall before settling in to foam roll their sore spots. There's some light catching up, perhaps a discussion about the upcoming WOD. Many people either live or work nearby, and they stop by the CrossFit Box for the daily WOD either on their way to or from their job. Looking around the space, there are no physical permanent markers that point to a legacy or history of community. Instead, there are transient spaces, such as the whiteboard, where community is enacted and re-enacted on a consistent basis. These locations serve as focal points for community engagement. The building of community is performed through repetition of ritual.

Doug moved to the area about a year ago and chose a place to live based on its proximity to CrossFit East. He and his wife moved cross country while she was several months pregnant in order for him to complete his PhD. Through CrossFit, they found an instant friend group and community that might have otherwise taken months to find and build. Doug points to the recurrent events and the community building around WOD classes as a space where he builds connection with other members.

They have the bring a friend day, consistently like once a month and there's a BBQ and everybody gets together and hangs out and... you know on Saturdays sometimes I'll come and I'll bring my kid and I'll pass him around

and everyone wants to hold him and I can do my thing while he gets passed from person to person. (Doug, personal communication, August 17, 2016). The repetition of these events serves to continually re-constitute the community

aspect of the CrossFit Box. In other words, the continuance of community is contingent on the repetition of events and the making of spaces for community to be produced. Between the BBQs, the events, and an active blog that spotlights the membership, the community of CrossFit East is in a perpetual state of (re)production through the concerted effort of the CrossFit East staff.

However, community arises from the participants as well. Diana (34, Female) talks about the concern and care she feels from fellow members who seem genuinely interested in her and are concerned about her training.

...in every gym that I've been, you know I'd be, "Hey we haven't seen you for a couple of days, where are you? What's going on? What's happening?" So there's extra care about where you are and what's happening to you and then also a great support system while you're actually there with them. (Diana, personal communication, September 22, 2016). The expectations of the place, its character, and the types of interactions, are the cumulative effects of both a top down and a bottom up approach to building community. The space of the Box becomes a nexus whereby community is enacted through the performance of participant recognition and valuation.

Community in Action: Collapsing Spatial Boundaries

Towards the end of summer, CrossFit East hosted a day-long CrossFit competition. The competition is an event designed in the same manner as other athletic competitions. Outside of the Box, vendors sell t-shirts with CrossFit style

slogans alongside beer and food vendors. There is a row of portable toilets lining the back of the parking lot, and a small changing area for contestants has been cordoned off. As part of the volunteer group, I arrived several hours before the event to help move equipment and furniture to set up for the day's events. The first group of contestants arrives over an hour early, taking over the stretching area to foam roll and warm up. In an effort to give back to the local community, a clothing drive for a local homeless shelter was tied to the event. There were several boxes filled with clothes within the first few hours of the event.

The day begins at 9am with a young girl, perhaps 10 years old, singing the national anthem to the packed Box. She is the daughter of a friend of the owners, and she receives a bombastic round of applause following her rendition. The microphone is passed off to a master of ceremonies who details the progression of events. In keeping with the CrossFit philosophy of preparing for the 'unknown and the unknowable,' the composition of the WODs had been kept secret until the night before the event. The first three WODs are qualifying rounds. The top 3 men and women in each division who receive the highest cumulative score from all three WODs progress to the finals – a WOD that will only be revealed immediately before it is performed. After the announcements, including a further reminder about the clothing drive, a local DJ sets up the music for the event. The DJ is the brother of one of the regulars at CrossFit East.

It is important to note that outside of a few of the competitors, everyone who takes part in the construction of the event are locals or related to locals. These events are moments for people from other nearby Boxes to mingle, particularly as people

tend to choose Boxes that are closer to their home. When they move, they retain their CrossFit friendships, even as they develop new ones at their new Box. The success of the event itself is due in part to the network of relational relationships between, within, and amongst the Boxes that form the greater local community.

As part of my volunteer duties for the event, I work the electronic scoreboard. Each competitor has an individual judge who evaluates their performance in the WOD, writes down their score, and passes it to me. I enter it into the computer, and a nearby screen updates with an ongoing leaderboard. With nearly 70 people competing, the whiteboard just isn't large enough to handle them all. However, the whiteboard remains in use listing out the order of competitors, and providing information about each WOD.

Sam is a regular who attends the same CrossFit classes that I do. He had signed up to compete in the master's division; a competition range for those over 35. Between the heats, he comes back to the table where I am collecting scores to ask me how he's doing in comparison to others, to fret over his upcoming performance, and to hold his young daughter who has come to watch her dad compete. He leans over my shoulder as I'm putting in scores. 'I just want to compete. I don't care if I win. But I wanted to do it. To put myself out there' (Sam, personal communication, February 25, 2016). While he puts in a good show, he winds up in 8th place. He's not at all daunted though. He had previously been a member of another CrossFit Box in the area, and one of his old friends was competing. When he's not hanging around my table, he's off cheering him on.

There's a break between each heat of WODs for people to reset the main area with the new equipment required for each WOD. Several young military guys, perhaps 21 or 22 years old, have come in to compete and they are sweeping each heat. They've brought members from their Box to come to the competition and cheer them on. One of the supporters is in his mid-forties and travels the country doing leadership training. We start talking and he brings up the fact that when he travels he drops in to whatever local CrossFit Box is nearby for the daily WOD. As soon as he identifies as a CrossFitter, the people of the Box tell him the best places nearby to eat and drink, things to do, and provide other forms of local advice. He laughs and mentions that this is similar to when he was active duty and would travel around the world. As soon as he told them he was military, doors would open and information would be provided about the local scene. Buying into CrossFit and identifying as a CrossFitter was a form of cultural capital that granted him social capital as he travelled (Bourdieu, 1984).

The event finally ends around 5pm and the volunteer crew is beat. Only one of our guys makes it to the final round. The military group has swept most of the top spots but almost everyone has stuck around to see how the competition played out. Everyone who qualified for the final round received some form of award. Our guy comes in third. As we begin to clean up, removing tape from the floor and moving equipment back into place, a small contingent of volunteers take the shoe racks outside to wash it down. Though it wasn't on the list of things to do, they felt that it was too dirty and we should clean it now. For them, CrossFit East is not simply a place owned by the coaches, it is a place owned by the participants. They were

cleaning the shoe rack because it was *their* shoe rack. We head out for beers nearly two hours later; the first round is on the owners.

Through the experience of the event, CrossFit East's relational to the local physical community as well as the greater CrossFit community is made apparent. Although the boundaries of the CrossFit Box ostensibly dictate the boundaries of the community, the interlocation of other forms of community is always already present in the production of the place. The use of social networks to find and provide entertainment during the event in the form of the anthem singer and the DJ was a mirror of the volunteerism from within the Box in setting up and hosting the event. Additionally, the networked nature of the CrossFit affiliate program creates a macro-level web of connections whereby the community boundary can also be defined through subcultural, as opposed to physical, affiliation. The difference between Home Box and Other Boxes fell along one boundary, while the line between CrossFit and CrossFit supporter within the physical lived community fell along a second boundary. The boundaries of the CrossFit East space were defined both in relation to the physical surrounding community and the greater CrossFit affiliation network.

Through the signification of the CrossFit Box as "home" and the inclusion of non-CrossFit participants in the competition, the event collapsed boundaries between and amongst differentiated groups. The CrossFit East Box, although defined as a business, is designated as a 'home' Box for current members, and this designation held multiple meanings. In cleaning out and wiping down the shoe racks, the volunteers performed extra activities beyond what was needed to host the event. The signification of "home" attached to the CrossFit East Box created a sense that the

volunteers were cleaning their own house. Great care was taken during the clean-up of the main mats as this is their CrossFit home with which they would return to for their own classes. The equipment, the space, and the participants were treated with the care one normally affords to a family – not to a business to which a monthly fee is paid. Finally, in soliciting friends, relatives, and clients to volunteer for the CrossFit competition collapsed the boundaries between social relations and business endeavor. In resisting the typical demarcations of customer and non-customer, and rearticulating these relationships as a collaborative familial relationship, CrossFit East produces a form of community.

The Competitive Spirit: The Hierarchy of “Pushing”

Crossfit workouts aren’t easy. They’re meant to be hard. They’re meant to be grueling. You’re meant to flop on the ground in a sweaty pile at the end right that’s the idea. And if you don’t have a strong desire to improve physically why would you put yourself through that? (Doug, personal communication, August 17, 2016).

The whiteboard sits at the front of the room, an innocuous piece of furniture that acts as the focal point of CrossFit’s competitive drive. It functions as a leaderboard of scores that puts a pressure on participants, names them, makes them visible as part of the group. As scores will be announced and discussed, there is always an omnipresent drive to compete, to push oneself to the limits. In some Boxes, scores are uploaded to an app or posted online, but for CrossFit East we stick with a basic physical board.

In most of my interviews, the idea of a competitive rival comes up. Caleb, a local schoolteacher, was my competition. Although not everyone vocalized who they were competing against publically, in private everyone had someone who they considered a source of competitive inspiration. As CrossFit has so many different dimensions of physical performance, and so many types of exercise, often certain people are better at certain movements than others. For me, handstand push-ups and box jumps were my area of expertise. For Caleb, it was the powerlifts such as the clean and snatch. Doug mentioned his first rival, a fellow graduate student.

Yes, that's something that I am competitive with and my friend was very competitive as well and what was great about that relationship was that his strengths were my weaknesses and ... my strengths were his weaknesses. And so you know like he hated handstand pushups, I was great at 'em so I would help him out with that. I hated pull-ups, um, and you know. So I improved in a lot of ways as a result of having him there pushing. (Doug, personal communication, August 17, 2016).

The presence of a competitive force has the resultant effect of pushing the individual to go harder, faster, or otherwise beyond their perceived physical limits (Triplett, 1898). For Doug and I, the diverse toolbox from which CrossFit's WODs emerge allows for competition between and amongst a variety of skill levels and proficiencies.

That being said, competition in CrossFit is not constrained just to the class within which people are participating. With the whiteboard's names and numbers prominently in the front, there is also a sense of competition against other classes that day. Kathy (49, Female), a business manager who took the noon CrossFit class during her lunch break, saw the morning classes as her competition.

There's a bit of a mentality that we're all going to do this AMRAP (As Many Rounds As Possible). We're gonna try to beat the class at 9 o'clock. You know, you see where you are and we all go really hardcore. I don't know...

like all out. Especially if the coach writes your name on the board. (Kathy, personal communication, August 9, 2016). Although Caleb and I were primarily in the 4:30pm class, sometimes one of us would be running late and would wind up taking the 5:30 class. On one of the more particularly challenging days, Caleb had come in during one of the earlier classes and his name and score were on the board. Standing in the front of the class as we talked about the forthcoming workout, I keyed in on his score and it motivated me to try and beat his time. While he may not have been physically present, his time on the board was a stronger motivator for my performance than others within the current class.

Conversely, a lack of competition can detract from the CrossFit experience. Kurt (30, Male) discussed how he avoided the later classes if possible because of their lackluster character.

The 7:30pm classes are a little sparse. There's only like a handful of people. That's not the place's fault. It just feels like... it feels like you know the last hour of a diner before they close off, it's a bit depressing sometimes. (Kurt, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

Therefore, the temporal location of the class, as well as the undercurrent of rivalries and competitive spirit, all effect the production of the individual physical activity. From another perspective, the performance of my body within the CrossFit space, my numbers on the board, serve to motivate and drive others, even when we are not in the same class. The construction of CrossFit as a competitive space is driven by the perception of the space, the bodies within the space, and the material indicator of the whiteboard.

The inherent competition created by the white board, the competitive nature of fighting for a qualitative number during the metcon, and the internal competition

created by establishing a competitive rival produces a culture that values the “performance of pushing”. Doug defined a CrossFitter as one who embraces this performance of pushing.

Ya know I see some of the people that come and they’re not really pushing themselves, and they’re doing the movements but they could be moving faster or going heavier and that person isn’t a CrossFitter. I mean, they’re showing up and they’re going through the motions, yes. They’re in a CrossFit gym, yes. But the mentality, right, is that I’m going to push myself. I’m going to work harder and get better. And if that isn’t your mentality I don’t feel like you’ve really caught the spirit of what it’s about. (Doug, personal communication, August 17, 2016).

The competitive potential, a key component of the CrossFit identity, is co-constituted by both the physical bodies present and the imagined presence of bodies that are temporally dislocated from the present. As one of CrossFit’s main driving forces is inter/intra class competition, in order to create a more level playing field every workout can and is adapted to the participants’ level. In this way, the performance of pushing can be enacted regardless of fitness level.

The “performance of pushing” creates one of the few tangible hierarchies within a CrossFit Box. If someone is perceived as not pushing, then they are not perceived as properly performing the CrossFit style of workout. Several people mentioned that if a coach thought you were continually not pushing yourself, they would stop spending as much time with you during the class. The lack of pushing was also articulated in describing nearby Boxes that were slowly going out of business. In describing other Boxes, one of the signs mentioned of a dying Box was that it stops pushing people. The perception of pushing has social benefits in the form of in-group status and increased positive attention from coaches. Conversely, the absence of “pushing” is considered the sign of a failing Box. Therefore, this performance of

pushing is integral to the stratification of individuals and of places within the CrossFit hierarchy.

Performing Better: Fitness and the Desire to Perform

The desire to perform at a higher level and engage in the competitive spirit of CrossFit drives changes to other aspects of participant's lives. Although CrossFit has been likened to a cult for its fervent adherence by those who embrace CrossFit's programming, the lifestyle changes seen are not that strange when taken from another perspective. Entering into a new community means the creation of new social networks and potentially the development of new values and beliefs. The most prominent lifestyle change discussed was a reconsideration of diet. Many of those who join CrossFit will try out CrossFit's officially sponsored diet program, The Zone Diet, or the more popular Paleo Diet. Both diets advocate a whole food, less refined sugar approach to eating that stands in contrast to the typical American diet. For many, the nutritional component ties directly into their perception of their ability to perform well in the WOD. Theresa spoke at length about her dietary changes.

If you're eating shit, if you're eating poorly, then that'll affect your performance. It'll leave you sluggish... it's gonna make you sluggish going into the workout. So you're not going to perform better. And it's going to prevent you from getting the higher lift. Eating better, I have more energy when I go to CrossFit, and eating better makes me get to certain lifts and weights that I want to get. (Theresa, personal communication, August 12, 2016).

For Theresa, the change in diet is directly linked to her performance in the Box. As drinking and eating out are key places for socialization, many people at CrossFit East articulated their social life in relation to CrossFit. They talked about not wanting to go out and drink alcohol because it would affect their performance in the Box. In this

way, the drive for performance within the Box affected the type of social relations and social situations that participants desired to engage in.

In addition to social and lifestyle changes, participants spoke about a new relationship with their body. Without the walls of mirrors typical in a gym space, and with the inclusion of the white board's visual metric, the view of the body shifts from the aesthetic view advocated by many globo gyms to a more instrumental view of the body as a conduit for performance. Diana was open about her shifting understanding of her body.

Like when I started I had the very naïve dreams of maybe someday looking like a Victoria Secret model. Well, I clearly realized very quickly that was never going to happen. The thing that helped me sort of realize that or maybe not care so much about it was seeing how much stronger and fitter I was getting. Once that started happening, and it happens, I was... as much as I thought I was in shape, I was definitely not in shape at all. Like I lost a little bit of weight, but I was getting massively stronger and in a very short amount of time. And that happens for most newbies. As I was getting stronger I stopped caring so much about what I actually looked like and focused more on what I could do. (Diana, personal communication, September 22, 2016).

For Diana and many of the participants in CrossFit East, there was a gradual shift in perceptions about how the body should be understood. The drive for performance in the daily WODs lead to a changing health subjectivity that centers bodily performance above aesthetic presentation.

While changes to diet and body image appeared to be generally positive, the desire to attain higher levels of performance and the cultural pressure to push can have negative effects on the body. Lorna (41, Female), a nurse at the local hospital, sometimes chooses not to go to CrossFit at all some days because she knows she is expected to push.

I feel like I can tell when something is not right, like when I don't want to go. It's the whole classic symptoms of overtraining. CrossFit doesn't give you

that ability to be like, “I’m going to have a light day.” You don’t put enough weight and they’re like, “No, put more and more.” Yeah. I could feel my heart rate elevated during the day. I’m not sleeping properly, not even getting enough water in. (Lorna, personal communication, September 16, 2016). The culture of pushing demanded by CrossFit can have deleterious effects if the individual does not have sufficient self-awareness to acknowledge when their body needs more recovery, or if they push too far beyond their limits. Many participants recounted stories of struggling to negotiate their developing understanding of their instrumental body’s limits and the desire to perform the daily WOD. The presence of the whiteboards prescriptive and visual display of performance, coupled with the pressure to perform athletic nostalgia as a good citizen of the CrossFit community, demands certain forms of participation that can be counterproductive to individual well-being.

The negative effects of the culture of pushing are humorously embedded in the CrossFit culture. The symptoms of overtraining have been anthropomorphized in the forms of Pukie the Clown and Uncle Rhabdo; cartoon mascots that are representative manifestations of overexertion and the potentially deadly metabolic condition of rhabdomyolysis. In creating Pukie and Uncle Rhabdo, CrossFit acknowledge the potential harms of pushing and to some degree makes light of them. From one perspective this makes known the potential harms and acknowledges them, developing a nomenclature that allows one to talk about harm in a disarming way (CBS, 2015; Glassman, 2005a). From another perspective, it could appear that CrossFit is shrugging off the potential harms by not taking them seriously (Bergeron, et al., 2011; Shugart, 2008).

Given the culture of pushing and the brutal WOD structures, the portrayal of harms is a finely walked line. If too much weight is given to the potential overexertion, participants may scale back. This would diminish the production of the culture of pushing, potentially removing the centerpiece of what makes CrossFit so alluring. By making the harms a visible part of the culture, CrossFit in some ways reinforces its differentiation from other forms of non-elite physical activity by emphasizing the evocative riskiness of the activity and valorizing the performance of pushing.

Discussion: Spatial Geographies of Every Day Life

In answering the call by Andrews et. al, this work seeks to extend health and sport geographies through the use of Massey's spatial theories and an empirical case study of a CrossFit Box. In so doing, this project brings to the fore issues of temporal, relational, and nostalgic subjectivities that inform and constitute the co-production of place. Additionally, in exploring the day to day fitness of the average person, different subjectivities around health, fitness, performance, and community begin to emerge. The CrossFit Box exists at the nexus of fitness and community; providing a local place to build close relationships and develop fitness subjectivities, as well as a global network of extended social relations.

CrossFit East proved to be a place where new subjectivities around the body, health, and fitness are developed. The co-creation of the Box through both the expectations of the human participants and the nostalgic aesthetic produces a fitness space distinct from other spaces of commercialized fitness. Always developed in

opposition to the image of the commercialized and impersonal global gym, the nostalgic idea of what the CrossFit Box *should* be permeates the material design of the Box and its web of social relations. Within the Box, the material and social construction of place creates hierarchies through a politics of performance, whereby those who are perceived to push their physical limits are privileged above other members. The place of the Box affects decisions made outside the Box in that individuals make diet, social, and lifestyle choices due to their desire to ultimately achieve higher scores during the WOD. Therefore, the CrossFit Box is transformative in its development of new forms of health subjectivities that focus on the instrumental body and the concomitant lifestyle changes made to perform at a higher level, but that transformation comes with its own package of potential risks in the form of overtraining.

CrossFit East is but one of over 10,000 Boxes operating worldwide (Fainaru-Wada, 2014). Each Box has its own individual character that is co-created from and with the local community. The degree to which perceptions of performance, individual health, and community inform the hierarchies within a given Box is dependent on the co-produced place of each Box. However, the branding of CrossFit as an organization forms an ideological foundation upon which CrossFit Boxes are built. Therefore, although each Box has developed its own unique globalized twist on the CrossFit style of training, the key elements of community, competition, and an antagonism toward contemporary commercial gyms undergird the motivations of those who would build or join a CrossFit Box.

As more and more people are encouraged to take charge of their health through healthist discourses on personal responsibility and increased surveillance of the body, further research is necessary to understand the subjectivities produced in relation to these dominant discourses. The emergence of CrossFit is but one response by non-elite individuals to develop a new way of understanding fitness and the healthy body within the context of these discourses. With places such as CrossFit becoming key central locations for the development of social networks as well as for the production of instrumentally performative bodies, the spatial locations of everyday fitness require increased critical attention.

Chapter 4: “Have You Met Fran?”: On Becoming a Member of a CrossFit Box

Through a narrative approach to autoethnography, this work explores the process by which one moves from outsider to insider within the CrossFit subculture. As an emergent form of physical culture that combines elements of amateur sport with commercialized fitness (Heywood, 2016; Powers & Greenwell, 2016), CrossFit positions itself as a new form of community that stands in opposition to dominant discourses around physical health and fitness (Belger, 2012; Herz, 2014). CrossFit’s rebellious stance is polarizing within the fitness community (Webster, 2009), and therefore acculturation into the CrossFit community requires a paradigmatic shift in ontological understandings of the body and physical performance. Given the growing popularity of CrossFit as both a popular physical activity (Fainaru-Wada, 2014; Ozanian, 2015; Price, 2015) and a potential exercise intervention (Eather, et al., 2016; Gipson, et al., 2016; Poston, et al., 2016), exploring the ways in which one moves from outsider to insider status provides insight into potential barriers to participation in the CrossFit subculture.

While much of the previous work on sporting subcultures looks to Bourdieu to understand the process by which an individual moves from etic to emic status within a sporting community (ex. Atkinson & Wilson, 2002; Wheaton, 2000; Wheaton, 2007), this authoethnographic narrative seeks to extend the literature on physical activity subcultures by using the Deleuzian framework of “becoming” in the empirical site of a CrossFit Box. Through the use of a Deleuzian approach to a site of

physical culture, this work seeks to illuminate the uneven process of moving from outsider to insider within this community and highlight the contingent and ever-differed nature of such a process. In narrating the moments of arbitrary closure (Slack, 1996) that brought me deeper into the CrossFit identity of my local Box, I seek to reveal the key role of both the embodied experience and the co-produced nature of subcultural involvement.

The Subculture of CrossFit

Originally founded in 2001 by Greg Glassman, CrossFit's popularity has grown rapidly over the past decade, with over 10,000 CrossFit Affiliate gyms, or "Boxes", operating in 2014 ("Latest CrossFit Market Research Data", Cej, 2009; 2014; Ozanian, 2015). Its rise in popularity has been disconcerting to other competitors in the fitness industry, citing high potential for physical risk (Bergeron, et al., 2011; Fainaru-Wada, 2014; Greeley, 2014; Gregory, 2014; Rathi, 2014; Robertson, 2013; Shugart, 2008) and lack of empirical research to support its training protocols (Mullins, 2015; Petersen, et al., 2014; Rippetoe, 2012). However, other research points to its role in community building (Belger, 2012; Dawson, 2015; Herz, 2014; Heywood, 2016; Whiteman-Sandland, Hawkins, & Clayton, 2016), creating progressive spaces for women (Knapp, 2015a, 2015b; Markula, 2015; Washington & Economides, 2015), and positive physiological effects (de Sousa, et al., 2016; Drum, et al., 2016; Eather, et al., 2016; Fernández, et al., 2015; Kliszczewicz, et al., 2014; Murawska-Cialowicz, et al., 2015; Smith, et al., 2013). The rising popularity of

CrossFit coupled with its potential for positive transformation makes the CrossFit subculture a key location for exploring contemporary physical culture.

A typical CrossFit Box is housed in a repurposed commercial or industrial space, and employs a minimalist aesthetic reminiscent of a garage-style gym. At the heart of the CrossFit program is the Workout of the Day, or WOD. WODs incorporate elements of powerlifting, gymnastics, and calisthenics into high intensity workouts designed to push the body to its limits. CrossFit increases intensity further by introducing a time component whereby participants are asked to either complete the workout as fast as possible or complete as many circuits of the workout as possible in a given time. This style of competitive physical activity can be measured as a metric which not only drives competition amongst participants but also produces an objective score by which people can compare performance. Some WODs are referred to as benchmark WODs, and they are used as a means to assess progress within the CrossFit practice. Benchmark WODs are often some of the most challenging workouts in CrossFit, and participants across different CrossFit Boxes will often compare scores and experiences with these particular WODs.

Within the CrossFit subculture there are three dimensions that must be touched upon to provide context for the following narrative. First, CrossFit distinguishes itself from other physical fitness spaces through its emphasis on community and community building (Belger, 2012). Second, a major component of the CrossFit community building experience is the shared participation in the often grueling and painful WOD (Madden, 2014). Finally, the desire to be competitive in the WOD leads to new forms of bodywork projects in which the instrumental body is

privileged over the aesthetic body (Knapp, 2015b). These dimensions stand in contrast with the often impersonal (Wiest, et al., 2015), repetitively routine (Andreasson & Johansson, 2014a), and overwhelmingly aesthetically driven (Maguire, 2008b) gym experience.

Community

Although there has been a recent trend toward performing sports and physical activity in isolation (Putnam, 2001), CrossFit's popularity speaks to a desire for new forms of community based around physical activity. Belger (2012) defines community as, "...groups of people with enhanced social connections mutually engaged in an activity or common interest or pursuit" (p. 33). Those who practice CrossFit describe the sense of community as a key component of their CrossFit experience (Belger, 2012; Heinrich, Patel, O'Neal, & Heinrich, 2014; Herz, 2014; Whiteman-Sandland, et al., 2016). CrossFit's community is multilayered in its composition: it exists at the local level in the form of the CrossFit Box, at the global level through its branded website, and dispersed through a network of virtual spaces such as message boards, blogs, and video collections. CrossFit's expansive social network, including their branded website and social media presence, as well as their televised yearly CrossFit competition the Reebok CrossFit Games, help to create a global network within which CrossFitters develop a connection to something greater than their local affiliate Box.

That being said, the CrossFit community can be implicitly exclusionary. The high monthly cost of joining a CrossFit Box (Dawson, 2015) combined with insensitive corporate social media decisions regarding female bodies (McCarty,

2013a, 2013b) and non-White bodies (Perez, 2016) has created classed, gendered, and racial barriers to participation. While Knapp argues that these spaces are becoming more progressive for women, particularly in presenting alternate body subjectivities, the discourses from the corporate level of CrossFit (Knapp, 2015a) and the Box level of CrossFit (Knapp, 2015b) create conflicted messages that complicate the space of women in the CrossFit community. Therefore, it could be argued that CrossFit is predominantly a middle class White physical activity space that has the potential to be progressive towards women.

Agony

The act of communally persevering through the agony of a challenging WOD is a key component to the bonding experience within the CrossFit Box. Similar to sporting pain communities (Atkinson, 2008), CrossFit's adherents revel in the physical and mental agony of the daily WOD (Herz, 2014). The time-constrained and competitive nature of the WOD simulates a sporting context, and Atkinson (2008) argues that, "[p]art of the excitement in sport is, then, the experience of contexts of uncertainty and anxiety in conjunction with the physiological experience of being physically and emotionally 'drained'" (p. 177). Putnam states, as quoted in Atkinson (2008), that, "...the ability to withstand and enjoy suffering is a form of 'bonding social capital' that members value as a marker of their collective identity" (p. 165-6). For CrossFitters, the shared daily experience of pushing the body's limits builds bonds amongst the members. Many argue that it is the act of tenaciously pushing through a painful and difficult WOD that is at the heart of CrossFit's power as a transformative space (Cecil, 2016a, 2016b; Dawson, 2015; Herz, 2014). It is through

the ritual of these WODs, and the subcultural values attached to their performance, that community is forged (Belger, 2012; Herz, 2014).

Body

While CrossFit displays a wide variety of bodies through its social media presence, the dominant body subjectivity is that of the “shredded” yet “strong” CrossFit body (Knapp, 2015b; Markula, 2015; Washington & Economides, 2015). CrossFit’s dominant body subjectivity is the product of its historical focus on athletic performance that privileged a body that could move quickly, efficiently, and powerfully (Herz, 2014). This simultaneously strong and productive body articulates a new form of bodywork project (Brace-Govan, 2002), one that arguably creates new avenues of gender performance as well as new templates for body image and other forms of embodied identity (Knapp, 2015a, 2015b). This articulation of the fit body is one that is instrumental in high levels of performance, and it stands in contrast to the aesthetic body that is developed for the consumptive gaze.

Within a CrossFit Box, the transition to a performance-based embodied subjectivity is imbricated in the material and cultural formation of the space. CrossFit Boxes are purposefully built without the mirrored walls ubiquitous in traditional fitness centers (Glassman, 2002b). In addition, the high intensity of the workout, the close proximity of participants, and the lack of amenities such as air conditioning frequently leads to copious levels of sweating. While a traditional fitness center may discourage taking off shirts during a workout, due to the physical exertion during a WOD the removal of the shirt during CrossFit happens frequently. Knapp (2015b) notes that the removal of the shirt during workouts is coded both as a desire to

increase functionality and as a source of empowerment. Although there is the ever present gaze of fellow participants, the lack of mirrors and a culture of shirt removal to increase performance inform the production of an instrumental subjectivity.

Theory: Becoming-CrossFitter

Although a number of scholars have examined sporting subcultures through various theoretical frameworks (Atkinson & Wilson, 2002; Klein, 1993; Wheaton, 2000, 2007), this paper approaches sporting subculture through a Deleuzian framework. A Deleuzian ontology resists the concept of dichotomous and linear relationships, instead focusing on the rhizomatic messy entanglement of inter/intra-actions (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In a rhizomatic approach, there is a multiplicity of ways in which subcultural identity, and indeed the subculture itself, intersects, interacts, and reveals itself. Through the use of this ontological approach, this work challenges the often dichotomous theorizing of in-group / out-group status in sporting subcultures, and instead focuses on the moments and intersections from which a sporting subcultural identity emerges.

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "becoming" is central to the theoretical analysis of this work. Within a Deleuzian framework, concepts or ideas that appear relatively stable and coherent are described as Molar. In contrast, the process of becoming is a state of transition between and amongst Molar objects. Massumi (1992) describes the process of becoming as, "...a tension between modes of desire plotting a vector of transformation between two molar coordinates" (p94). The condition of becoming is a process of movement in relation to, but not directly from

or to, Molar references. Therefore the process of becoming is a relational ontology, wherein transformation occurs in reference to, but not from or into, these Molar coordinates. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), “A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between, the border or line of flight or descent running perpendicular to both” (p293). Therefore, in the process of becoming, one moves perpendicular to these Molar ideas, becoming something different then, but referential to, these Molar coordinates. For the purposes of this paper, I am centering the analysis on the individual in the process of becoming, though the concept itself can be applied to human and non-human actors.

To differentiate something that is Molar from something that is in the process of becoming, Deleuze and Guattari use a system of hyphenation. From a Deleuzian ontology, CrossFit as an assemblage of meanings is a Molar structure, and the subjective standpoint epistemology of the individual is similarly Molar. These points of Molar reference exist on the horizon of the rhizome, and are ultimately unreachable (Grossberg, 2014). This syntax serves the dual function of naming the Molar points of reference in the becoming, and visually depicting the ever-deferred context of a thing in the process of becoming. As I move through my own becoming in relation to my original subjective standpoint (which is lost immediately upon deciding to join CrossFit) and the assemblage of meanings that constitute the CrossFit sporting subculture, I am becoming-CrossFitter.

The final key component of the process of becoming is the concept that not only is the individual in the process of becoming something different in reference to these Molar points, but also the individual is undergoing a multiplicity of

transformations concurrently. Braidotti (2013) argues that, “Processes of becoming, in other words, are not predicated on a stable, centralized Self who supervises their unfolding. They rest rather on a non-unitary, multi-layered, dynamic subject” (p118). In other words, while the self presents as a coherent assemblage, it is instead an assemblage of non-coherent subjectivities that are all in various states and stages of becoming. The “coherent” individual subjectivity, and the boundaries that contour the process of becoming, are always already contested until the last instance.

A Deleuzian ontology inherently complicates the traditional dichotomous approach to in-group / out-group status by challenging the stability and linearity of individual and group formations. Within the CrossFit Box, if everyone is assumed to be negotiating these subjectivities through their own standpoint epistemology, then everyone is producing unique becoming-CrossFitter subjectivities that are always contingent and in transition. Instead of each individual taking a linear path from outsider to insider, there is a complex negotiation of in-process becomings inter/intra-acting in relation to the unreachable Molar concept of ideal CrossFitter. It is from the moments that these in-process becomings inter/intra-act that the becoming-CrossFitter subjectivity is produced. The entanglements of subjectivities in the process of becoming are both producer of, and produced by, the inter/intra-action of bodies within the CrossFit subculture.

Method: Autoethnographic Narrative

In order to capture the subjective experience of becoming-CrossFitter, this paper uses an autoethnographic narrative approach that explores the instances of

momentary crystallization (Richardson, 1994), or plateaus (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), in which I felt that I was moving ever closer to becoming a CrossFitter within the Box. In stepping through these narrative vignettes, I connect the embodied affective experience of CrossFit with the community inter/intra-actions that inform my becoming-CrossFitter. While these are moments of arbitrary closure (Slack, 1996), they serve the purpose of delineating discrete moments of time in order to develop a coherent narrative; understanding that these boundaries are both artificial and necessary for meaning making (Haraway, 1988).

The use of autoethnography provides an avenue for reflexively considering the subjective experiences that occur during the process of moving from outsider to insider within a community. In revisiting experiences in one's past, and (re)collecting them through a critical perspective, autoethnographic research helps us to better understand the process of becoming within which subjectivities begin to take shape (Adams & Jones, 2011). Ellis and Adams (2014) argue that in autoethnography, "... researchers use personal experience to study cultural identities or experiences that have affected them" (p. 262). As the experience of becoming is a personal and complex process, the use of autoethnographic research is particularly suited to the exploration of the development of in-process subjectivities such as the becoming-CrossFitter.

While data was collected through field notes and journaling, they are presented as narrative vignettes. Carless (2012) posits that the use of personal narratives facilitates "emotional connection" and moves the conversation "towards the kinds of knowledge that inhabits visceral, embodied experience" (p. 610). Due to

the inherently embodied experience of physical activity, and the importance of agony within the CrossFit community, the use of narrative draws the reader into spaces and moments to better understand the lived experience in the CrossFit Box. Additionally, as a gay man in his late 30's, I grew up during a time period when hypermasculine homophobia provided a significant barrier to participation in many forms of sport and physical activity (Anderson, 2005). This being the case, I do not have a history of active membership and participation in team sports or competitive physical activity. While arguably the world of sport and physical activity has become more accepting of non-heterosexual participants (Anderson, Magrath, & Bullingham, 2016; McCormack & Anderson, 2010), my own inexperience in team sport and my lingering trepidation around certain sporting spaces were influential factors in my process of becoming-CrossFitter. Therefore, these moments of autoethnographic narrative provide a space to reflexively explore particular moments of meaning-making that, while trivial for some, significantly informed my process of becoming.

Prior to the start of this study, I requested and received permission from the owners of a local CrossFit Box to do my study within their space. During my year-long participant-observation within the Box, I attended CrossFit WODs an average of three times a week. Following each WOD, I would take in-depth field notes, writing down the things I saw, heard, and did. Later that day, I would reflexively journal about both the embodied experience of the exercise itself and the interactions with other participants. In keeping with Clarke's (2003) method of situational analysis and constant comparison, these notes would be revisited periodically and compared to see how my understanding of CrossFit and my own CrossFit subjectivity had changed.

This autoethnographic piece has been developed as part of a larger project looking at the subculture of CrossFit. All names have been changed to pseudonyms to de-identify individuals within the Box.

The Box

The Crossfit workout space is named a “Box”, so called because of its stripped down, no frills use of space. Resembling perhaps the nostalgic images of gymnasiums in time gone by, the construction of the Box argues for a simpler and more functional approach to physical performance. Boxes are often found in renovated warehouses or housed in desolate strip malls; repurposing unused space left bereft of its original function. The makeshift utilization of space within each Box brings with it a unique and organic character.

My Box is one of the larger ones in the area: roughly the size of a standard college basketball court. Along the right side of the Box is a set of square metallic structures that resemble a playground jungle gym. Like a playground, they are used for pull ups and other bodyweight and gymnastic style movements. Tucked beside the cages are a collection of wooden boxes, each marked with their height in inches. They are used for box jumps and step ups. Alongside the boxes stands a cart of grey and black soft weighted balls that are used for carrying, throwing, and lifting. There is a thick purple line painted on the wall, measured to demarcate 9 feet and 10 feet. These are typical wall ball heights prescribed by some of the benchmark WODs.

To the left there are trees of weightlifting barbells and stands of weighted plates. They are used in a majority of the WODs for power movements such as the clean and jerk. Just opposite the pillar they occupy is a long row of rowing machines and exercise bikes. These machines can be conveniently moved to the side when the weighted sleds are brought out, and the WOD calls for us to drag the sleds across the length of the box. Under the large garage-style windows there are several rows of

kettlebells in various weights. Natural light spills in thick golden beams across the side of the Box during the afternoon classes. The Box has the faint smell of rubber and metal.

For all this equipment, the space is incredibly organized and clean. Weights are stacked purposefully and efficiently, and the layout provides plenty of space for two full classes of sixteen people. Every piece of equipment has its place; an exemplar of order that is broken and reformed during the chaos of an hour long workout. In my Box there are wet-nap stations conveniently located throughout the space as, by the end of a WOD, the floor and equipment is covered in puddles of sweat. It is expected that we will clean off our equipment and the space we've used before the next class comes in. In this manner we become caretakers of the space, and the space becomes our responsibility.

Centered at the front of the room is a whiteboard. The whiteboard details the workout of the day, the progression of activities, prescribed weights, and any daily announcements. The prescribed weights are gender-specific, and they set a standard that even the most athletic and proficient struggle to achieve. The whiteboard is a game plan of action around which participants huddle to find out what method of pain they will experience. Tucked in the corner of our whiteboard is a small laminated sign that says "no whining". That does not stop the small groans that accompany each announced workout. We know it will be painful, but in many ways that's the point.

As we begin to warm up, the "coach" writes our names on the board next to the start time for each class. When I first began CrossFit, coaches made a concerted effort to learn my name. They would repeat it to memory. After the first few weeks,

even though there are six different coaches, they would write my name without asking. These names stay on the board for the entire day, with the score for each WOD listed next to each name. The process of writing on the board the names and scores of the participants renders visible the bodies that co-constitute the space, and opens them up for scrutiny and comparison. In essence, this creates an ongoing leader board of accomplishments that is seen by each successive class.

The general organization of the Box and the prominence of the whiteboard create a sense of transience, wherein the Box and the people who constitute the Box co-create the process by which the Box operates. The constant re-imagining of the space to create new performances of physical activity is at the heart of CrossFit's programming. Glassman (2007) states that CrossFit is designed to "... best prepare trainees for any physical contingency – prepare them not only for the unknown but for the unknowable" (p. 1) . Washed away at the end of the night, our WOD scores are but temporary markers of performance, reminders that each day will bring a new challenge.

Ryan

It was just a few weeks in to my time at CrossFit that I met Ryan; a young man in his late 20's, married, who works for the local school district. He tries to participate in CrossFit at least three times a week, and joins in the local competitions when they occur. Although I had never seen him have the highest score in the WODs, he often placed in the upper half of the class. Given his level of physical performance, I tagged him as someone who was slightly above my level in strength when it came to

CrossFit workouts. Since each class has a wide variety of skill and ability levels, with individuals scaling their workout to push their own limits, it was important for me to find someone who was similar in performance level so that I could make comparisons between my own performance and others. Designating someone to emulate who is at or slightly above your performance level is common in CrossFit classes.

Ryan was in class during my first benchmark workout. Fran, a grueling workout consisting of alternating thrusters and pull ups for time, is one of the more common and popular benchmark WODs. It consists of three rounds of alternating thrusters and pull-ups, 21 reps the first round, 15 the second, and 9 in the final round. Since this particular workout is considered a benchmark workout, many of the long time CrossFitters could recite their last time from memory. As I and the other participants started warming up before the class, everyone told stories of their Fran experiences, commenting on how challenging it was, who had performed well, and emphasizing an eagerness to see if they had improved from last time. Ryan mentioned seeing a YouTube video of Jason Kaplan, a CrossFit Games athlete, completing Fran in less than 2 minutes.

It was the first time for me to attempt one of the benchmark workouts, and I was incredibly nervous. Several thoughts plagued me. Would I be competitive? Would I be able to perform to the level of Ryan? Would I fail miserably and be looked down on by the other participants? I knew I was physically strong, but Fran's power lies in its metabolically punishing movement: the thruster. With 95 lbs on the bar and starting from a deep squat, the whole body extends upwards to push the weight overhead. Like any full body movement, these are incredibly taxing. I was

eager to test myself against this benchmark, so I went with the recommended weight of 95lbs. Ryan was doing it, so I should do it too.

The workout was just as grueling as people discussed. By only the 10th thruster in the first round I was gassed. My body felt like I was moving through molasses and I could not seem to catch my breath. I stopped every few seconds to lean forward, sucking in as much air as I could. For every time I put the bar down, I would have to re-lift it from the ground to my chest before I could begin again. My body just did not want to do the work, and my form on the thrusters quickly fell apart. Looking around, everyone else was struggling too. Ryan had taken his shirt off in the second round, and other guys had followed suit. Out of the corner of my eye I saw someone run to the restroom, presumably to throw up. I wanted to give up, but it was frankly not an option. Everyone else was fighting through the WOD, grappling with Fran, and I would not be the one to walk away. With sweat running rivulets down my face and a discernible lack of oxygen, my vision kept going blurry. I just tried to focus on one repetition at a time. I wound up at the bottom of the score at 10 minutes. Ryan had finished a full 90 seconds earlier.

As Ryan and I lay on the floor, exhausted in a mass of sweat, trying to catch our breath, I could feel the fire in my lungs. Even after the bar was down and the time up, I still could not control my breathing. Ryan began to put away his equipment, but I was still struggling to sit up. I got one arm under me to try to push off the ground, but between the thrusters and the pull ups my shoulders and back were still not functioning yet. That's when Ryan leaned over and started to unclip the weight on my bars and put my weight away. The unexpected aid as I lay beaten down by Fran felt

like an emotional weight being lifted from me. It was in that moment that Ryan went from being a competitive marker to being a friend. My mental and physical perseverance through Fran, coupled with Ryan's act of kindness, made me feel that I had crossed some threshold, reached some plateau, in my development as a becoming-CrossFitter. Although a small gesture, and one I would see repeated multiple times during my CrossFit experience, Ryan's assistance in that crucial moment was the first acknowledgement of my membership in the group.

Cindy

Cindy is much more physically fit than Ryan and I, and she frequently outperforms most of the class in nearly every style of WOD. Like Ryan she is in her late twenties and a teacher for the local school district, often coming in with stories about her students and their accomplishments. Although statistically there is a more equitable distribution between men and women in an average CrossFit Box, the afternoon class tends to have a high number of men, and Cindy is sometimes the only woman. Undaunted, Cindy faces each WOD with determination and an upbeat attitude. On days where we are slacking as a group, she is an energizing force for the class.

Before class, Cindy relayed a story about how one of her elementary school students had come to her for sympathy after they had fallen down and gotten a bruise. She had told him that he needed to get stronger, and explained that she got bruises all the time from doing CrossFit. Cindy often wears a sports bra and short exercise shorts in order to be un-encumbered during the WOD, and the bruises from the workouts

can be seen prominently on her athletic body. Although Cindy presents as feminine through hair, make-up, and clothing choices, she wears her bruises as badges of honor.

Several weeks after Fran, we spent the class working on technique for two exercises; the double-under and the snatch. A double-under is a jump rope technique where the rope goes under the body twice during each jump. This movement was paired with the Olympic weightlifting movement called the snatch, where the barbell is quickly lifted from the floor to overhead in one smooth movement. Both exercises require specific techniques and rhythms of movement in order to be successfully executed. When WODs call for these exercises, the level of expertise in performing the technique can easily shave minutes or rounds off of a WOD score. Instead of a typical WOD for time, this class was spent focusing on building technique in these two movement patterns.

The coach who ran this particular WOD can often be a bit lackadaisical in putting our names on the board in a timely fashion. As there were no scores to be reported, he had forgotten to write the names on the board at the start of the workout. Cindy grabbed a marker mid-workout, as the coach was going over the next phase of the WOD, and she began writing out the names of those who were there. Like the coaches, Cindy had memorized nearly everyone's name. However, I was still relatively new to CrossFit and Cindy struggled to remember my name. She tried to quietly get my attention as the coach spoke, but I purposefully pretended not to notice, just to see what would happen. Scott, another frequent CrossFitter during this

time slot, mouthed my name to Cindy, being sure to get the spelling right. Cindy wrote my name on the white board and we moved on to the next phase of the WOD.

Cindy's exceptional performance, both in the daily WODs and in the performance of her bruised body, marks her as an exemplar within the CrossFit space. Although she was too advanced to make her a competitive partner like Ryan, she modeled a performance with which I could aspire. In contrast with the CrossFit coaches, who are paid to recall my name, Cindy's actions were not a paid product or service. Given my previous history of exclusion from sporting spaces, the action of having a role model acknowledge me as part of the group was momentous. My name has an uncommon spelling, and the care put in by Cindy and Scott in writing my name on the board and getting the spelling correct showed a desire to make me feel part of the group. The moment stands out as an active decision by Cindy to be inclusive, and the active interaction of Scott and Cindy to make me legible as a CrossFitter. Through the action of learning and communicating my name, Cindy's inclusive decision was a threshold in my in-process becoming-CrossFitter subjectivity.

Murph

It was teacher appreciation week and Cindy and Ryan spent the warm up talking about the perfunctory appreciation they received from their schools: free coffee and some baked goods at the morning teacher meeting. Cindy couldn't eat the baked goods as she was trying to keep to the Paleo Diet, a common diet practiced by CrossFitters. Ryan's knee had been feeling off and he worried about the day's

workout. The WOD was 6 minutes long, and consisted of 10 heavy deadlifts, a 500 meter row on the rowing machine, and then as many wall balls as you could do in the remaining time. The score for the WOD was the number of wall balls performed. With the amount of knee flexion he would go through, Ryan would have to adjust the workout to accommodate his nagging injury. He planned to replace the row with time on the exercise bike, but he was unsure how he would modify the wall balls. We talked for a bit about foam rolling and other techniques for helping to rehabilitate his leg. Although Cindy and Ryan had continued to participate in the co-creation of my becoming-CrossFitter subjectivity through their inclusive interactions, there were others in the class who continued to demonstrate that I was an outsider.

Murph is the embodiment of a stereotypical hyper-masculine old-school CrossFitter. He dresses in big CrossFit socks that go past the calves and his clothing is a mix of Reebok branded CrossFit clothing and old t-shirts from CrossFit competitions. Murph follows the CrossFit Games and its athletes religiously, and regales the group with stories of his CrossFit accomplishments. In his mid-thirties, he stands a full foot taller than me, and likely weighs 50 lbs more – mostly muscle. During a typical WOD, his shirt is the first to come off showcasing a thick upper body and hairy chest. The other CrossFitter's have nicknamed him "Big Murph". His investment in the competitive elements of CrossFit is unquestioned, and when he is in class he often scores in the top three of every WOD. His wife, nine months pregnant, still comes to the Box to work out beside him, albeit in a much reduced capacity. Murph only talks with a few people in the group, the people he considers to be committed and capable. He often bucks the big group introductions at the beginning

of a workout, only introducing himself to those he already knows or those who are visibly large and athletic. To be honest, he's intimidating.

Murph's attitude within the Box was everything I had learned to fear from sporting spaces. From the off-color jokes about women to the masculine posturing, when Murph was in the class I always felt on edge. Although most of the people in the class seemed to ignore him or roll their eyes when he spoke, the more fit guys in the class, many of whom were ex-athletes or former military, gravitated towards him. At times I was jealous of a connection of belonging that I was not part of, and had never been part of. At other times I was anxious that those mildly misogynistic statements would quickly turn blatantly homophobic, and I would have to choose to stand up for myself or suffer in silence. I was often torn between the desire to belong and the desire to not be a target.

It was four months into my training at the Box when Murph first spoke to me. We had started off the class by practicing deadlift form in anticipation of the WOD. The class was packed that day and the coach was having a hard time getting to everyone to help them with their form. I was practicing on the left side of the room when Murph approached me from across the room. By this time in my CrossFit training I had become fairly proficient in the deadlift and I had started to lift a heavier weight. Murph came up to me and tried to help with my form. He gave me a tip for increasing speed for when the WOD started: use the bounce from dropping the bar at the top of the deadlift to get a rhythm going with the movement. I had been performing the deadlift and then re-setting my position after each one. Murph then walked back to the other side of the box and continued his own deadlift practice.

Attempting to lift heavier weight, closer to the prescribed weight for men, was part of my performance as a becoming-CrossFitter. I was recognized by Murph for my burgeoning becoming-CrossFitter performance, and he chose to contribute to the co-creation of my subjectivity. It was the first time he had directly talked to me.

As Murph returned to his side of the room, I was guiltily elated. I had crossed some threshold whereby I was legible to Murph, whose hypermasculine performance continued to be a source of pervasive power within the room. There was a breaking sense of relief, even as I became angry with myself for letting Murph hold such power over my experience in the Box. Every gym class and sport had had a Murph that spoiled my experience in those spaces, driving me from them. The acknowledgement from Murph brought with it a flurry of contradictory emotions. In my becoming-CrossFitter, and my entanglement with Murph, I questioned what this transformation meant: was I becoming more comfortable with my physical performance or was I conforming to some hypermasculine ideal? In other words, how had I transformed in my becoming-CrossFitter that finally made me legible to such a person as Murph?

True to form, Murph's shirt came off before the WOD even began. Ryan joined him seconds in to the deadlifts, and Cindy took off her outer shirt by the time we got to rows. Although I was sweating quite a bit as well, the act of taking off my shirt in a gym still didn't feel quite right. Even though I had just been acknowledged as a becoming-CrossFitter, or perhaps because of it, I was apprehensive about what the act of taking off my shirt and revealing my body would do to my status within the

group. How would the physical manifestation of my becoming-CrossFitter material body be perceived in relation to my becoming-CrossFitter subjectivity? Revealing my body held metaphoric significance as well. After just being acknowledged by the hypermasculine Murph, baring my body felt like I was bearing my vulnerabilities. As my becoming-CrossFitter subjectivity was partially contingent on, and developed through, my interactions with other members, the apprehension I felt was formed from the belief that these relationships could become differently articulated through the reveal of my body.

My shirt stayed on.

Ricky

Eva is another benchmark workout, consisting of five rounds of an 800 meter run, thirty kettlebell swings, and thirty pull ups. For time. It being Labor Day in the mid-Atlantic, the summer heat still lingered like a baked swamp. Each round of this particular WOD required us to run through the summer heat on the sidewalk around the Box then return to the Box for the kettlebell swings and pull ups. With the garage-sized doors wide open, the humid heat permeated the Box. As we stretched and warmed up, we saw the group who went before us were drenched from the sweat and humidity of the WOD.

Ricky is a high level executive who travels the world for months at a time. His husband is also a member of the Box, but comes in early in the morning. Although we come from different backgrounds and are at different stages in our careers, within the Box we are fairly similar. Ricky is roughly my same height and age, although he is

leaner and more muscular. We had become fast friends over lewd jokes in the back of the CrossFit classes. On the day of Eva, we were both daunted in different ways.

While I am usually stronger, he is usually faster and has more endurance. As we were warming up, he mentioned that he was worried about all of the pull ups. I replied that I was more concerned with all the running. As we continued to joke back and forth, I mentioned that with the heat we should take our shirts off for the workout. Ricky smiled and said he had already planned to do so after the second round. Although the comment was made in jest, I now felt locked in to actually taking my shirt off. This would be the first time I had done so.

After the first round of Eva I was in agony. I was breathing in the thick summer heat and humidity. I looked over to see Ricky fighting his way through the kettlebell swings, and I knew I had to keep up. Sweat covered my face and ran down my arms, making kettlebell swings even more difficult as I tried to blink out the sweat and retain my hold on the kettlebell. As I moved on to pull ups, I chalked up my hands to try to decrease the slipperiness of my grip on the long iron bars. The shirt had become an impediment; increasing my body heat and sweat production, and catching on my arms and back as I tried to pull my body up to the bar. As Ricky walked up to start his pull ups, he took off his drenched shirt and tossed it to the side of the room.

I hesitated. What would the reveal of my not so lean body do to his perception of me? How would his gaze change once I revealed myself? How would I be judged for not having a “lean” CrossFitter body, the one advertised on Instagram and at the CrossFit Games? Would the goodwill I had made towards becoming part of the Box,

becoming-CrossFitter, becoming-Box, give way once it was revealed that, nine months in, I was not the ideal CrossFit body type?

As I lifted up my shirt to wipe my forehead, as I rested between pull-ups, as my shirt clung to my body, I realized that everyone knew what I looked like. What was important to Ricky, and what had been important to Ryan, Cindy, and Murph, was the increased ability to perform the WOD that removing their shirt provided. While my body may not be aesthetically the idealized CrossFit body, in removing my shirt I was pulled towards the valued instrumental body of CrossFit. In taking off my shirt, I performed an act that brought me deeper into the process of becoming-CrossFitter. I took my shirt off and dropped it next to my water bottle.

The remainder of the workout exists in the hazy nightmare that is a CrossFit benchmark WOD – pain, sweat, and gasping for air. It is the hallmark of a CrossFit workout that you should wind up exhausted on the floor when you're finished. As I lay shirtless on the matted floor, covered in sweat and gasping for air, Ricky reached down and gave me a tap on the shoulder. "Good job, man." As a gay competitive partner, Ricky's performance of his becoming-CrossFitter subjectivity became a model for my becoming-CrossFitter. It was through seeing him reveal himself that I felt that I could reveal myself. Although this interaction was a personal entanglement of our experiences, it also served to draw me deeper into the shirt-removing culture of the Box.

Conclusion

In the early Fall, Caleb's wife took a job out west. It was fairly sudden and the two moved within a few weeks. The coaches organized an impromptu party after classes were done at the Box one Thursday night. Cindy started working longer hours at the school and began attending the early morning classes to keep up her CrossFit practice. I saw her occasionally at some of the CrossFit social gatherings. The birth of Murph's daughter was far more life altering than he anticipated, and he and his wife found themselves unable to keep up their regular CrossFit routine. Last I heard, he had built his own garage gym at home and was training there as he watched the kids. Ricky wound up on a business trip to Asia that lasted five months, and since his return he has been more focused on re-acclimating to the United States than keeping up with CrossFit. The class I attend remains consistently full, even though these key members have moved on.

As my becoming-CrossFitter subjectivity was linked to my experiences with, and relationship to, each of these people, as they disappeared so too did my points of reference to, and entanglement within, CrossFit. While there was a certain level of in-group status afforded to me for my length of experience and my performance in the WOD, with Ryan, Cindy, Murph, and Ricky gone, things were never quite the same. The other becoming-CrossFitters with which my subjectivity of becoming-CrossFitter had been entangled were absent. My way of becoming-CrossFitter had gone through several iterations with and through my interactions with these other becoming-CrossFitters who had served as models for performance within the CrossFit space. I had changed in relation to, and concurrently with, the group. It was in the sedimented

remembrance of their actions, the consistency of the coaching staff, and through the daily rituals of CrossFit that I continued to become-CrossFitter. Suffice to say, these were far less effective.

Now, I have put forth a largely coherent narrative of my integration into the experiential identity of CrossFit. However, such a narrative is inherently partial and incomplete – developed through my own subjective experience. Did these moments have the same resonance with Ryan, Cindy, Murph, and Ricky that they had on me? Were these moments experienced the same way? Given the same level of importance? Or were they forgettable – throwaway actions or words that were quickly forgotten? As a researcher in this space, how have I constructed a coherent narrative from non-coherent events, creating connections where there is potentially none? How have my experiences throughout life impacted the way in which I've reconstructed events – the way in which I've seen my subjective identity as a CrossFitter emerge?

In performing autoethnographic research, in searching for moments of becoming-CrossFitter, I have made what Barad (2003) would call agential cuts. My history, my story, and my experience becomes the apparatus through which I cut apart/together the phenomena of these moments; creating a narrative that makes sense to me and progresses my understanding of the iteratively produced moments of my becoming-CrossFit subjectivity. Dialectically, my performance and inter/intra-action with others should also co-constitute their development as becoming-CrossFitter. My CrossFit subjectivity is, to some degree, predicated on the performed and perceived subjectivity of those with whom I practice CrossFit.

My experiences in the Crossfit box, the ones I recall most clearly, are about the moments of human interaction. The moments of becoming-Crossfitter are less about the style of the workout or any specialized clothing involved. While CrossFit as an organization or as a movement has certain values and language, it is the local community that defines the norms. CrossFit's center is in its community - the participants cheer each other on, help move equipment, and share their stories. The experience I'm paying for is not the Box itself; the Box is merely a shell within and with which the experience is created. I am truly paying for the ability to experience pushing the limits of my body, and enduring through pain, with other participants. I am both a producer and a consumer of this experience simultaneously – without the other participants present, this is no longer a “CrossFit workout” as I have come to understand it. The experience is a presumptive (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010) moment wherein we, as an entangled group, are integral to the production of the moment. In short, CrossFit works best when it is performed with others.

In my experience training in a CrossFit box, the basis for my movement from etic to emic status within the CrossFit Box was predicated on my interactions with, and acceptance by, members of the CrossFit Box. Each moment acted as a threshold that, when passed, brought me deeper into the group and developed my identity as a CrossFitter. Unlike other spaces where having a certain look or being able to perform with a certain level of skill is a primary determinant of insider status (Wheaton, 2000), CrossFit's insider status is obtained primarily through building community by developing social connections, and through the psychological transition from an understanding of the body as object to the body as a site for performance. In other

words, the becoming-CrossFitter moves along social, cultural, physical, and psychological dimensions that are contingent on the dominant values found in the localized Box.

Coda

After a year at the CrossFit Box, I was still not the idealized CrossFitter. They were people who were faster, stronger, had greater endurance, and more abs. There were those who followed the CrossFit ethos, eagerly awaited the daily WOD, and followed the Games religiously. There were those who went five times a week and even some who went six. And there were those who went to physical therapy to get better at the Games, who took classes above and beyond the daily WODs, and those who sought out personal training to further their skill. Were they CrossFitters? Or were they, like me, becoming-CrossFitters? Becoming what we thought someone who does CrossFit should be, or could be. As I looked to them to help build my CrossFit subjectivity, in what ways did they turn to me to develop their own subjectivity either in congruence with, or in opposition to, my performance in the Box?

The CrossFit subjectivity is developed through the entangled becoming of bodies and subjectivities into which we are attempting to attain membership. My subjective identity development was undeniably dependent on the culture and people of the Box with which I was a part. The dynamics of group membership are always already fraught with the subjective becomings of the group's constituent members. Becoming an "insider" member of a group of people is far more complex than simply paying dues or conforming to the dominant cultural ideas about what CrossFit is or

should be. It's a co-produced negotiation between and amongst ever in-process subjectivities and ever-developing shared values. It is through this negotiation that multiple becoming subjectivities seemingly suture into an ostensibly coherent group.

Conclusion

The preceding chapters have provided a holistic, multi-level view of the CrossFit phenomenon. Each chapter develops a window into the CrossFit phenomenon and connects that to larger social, cultural, and/or political processes. Together, these papers provide a robust understanding of CrossFit's articulations with and within the current conjuncture. While each chapter provided its own conclusion, this space will be used to provide a conclusion to the dissertation as a whole. Additionally, I will look at the changing roles and function of the CrossFit Box and the CrossFit brand, and contemplated what the future of CrossFit may look like.

CrossFit's amalgamation of, and resistance to, dominant discourses makes it a productive space for exploring the workings of power and power relations in the contemporary moment. Arguably, CrossFit's powerful influence as a reinventive practice is due to in part to its imbrications in, and dialectical relationship with, larger social forces. CrossFit emerges in and through a contextual moment in US history wherein rising economic inequality, exceptional valorization of military troops, deep seated trepidation at rising technological interdependency (inclusive of the ever-shrinking effects of globalization), and anti-intellectual sentiment have given power to a rising populist movement. CrossFit engages in and reifies elements of the populist movement through its continued emphasis on communal knowledge over academic knowledge, and its ostensibly free market approach to the affiliate Box program that values popularity as a key metric of success. Through exploring the working of power and power relations at multiple points of entry in the CrossFit formation, this dissertation has sought to illuminate the paradoxes and lines of

tendential force that shape the CrossFit phenomenon, and in so doing, develop a more nuanced understanding of the flow of power and power relations that shape our society.

Whenever I tell people that I study CrossFit, they are immediately intrigued. Each person carries with them an often polarized set of strongly held assumptions about CrossFit's validity, its status as a fitness cult, and the unabashed exhibitionism of the shirtless CrossFitter. They want me, desperately at times, to take a side in the ongoing debate within the fitness industry and amongst fitness professionals as to whether CrossFit is "good" or "bad." Inherent in the plea for a simple answer to a complex question is the need to make meaning of a contemporary cultural phenomenon that titillates people with its promise of community support, visible compliance with healthist bodywork ideals, and ultimately personal reinvention. At a time of ongoing economic, social, cultural, technological, and political precarity, CrossFit offers a pathway, method, and ritual to managing the instability of the contemporary moment. CrossFit's core values and expansive social network provide a virtual, and to some degree local, community that can bridge people of different backgrounds and cultures. In this way, for some, CrossFit plays a generally positive role in their personal development.

However, in other ways CrossFit can exert significant power over individual identity formation and curtail some forms of decision making. CrossFit's focus on constantly trying to mitigate the "unknown and unknowable" tends to reify neoliberal individualism by centering the locus of control on the individual, even for things well outside of their power to influence. Additionally, CrossFit's culture of pushing raises

the required bar for virtuous healthist bodily performance; a state of performance that greedily demands constant attention and lifestyle modification. The neoliberal individualism and demands of the CrossFit lifestyle can create strong bonds amongst CrossFit practitioners, but in so doing, participation in CrossFit can potentially isolate individuals from other forms of social and support networks. Investment in the CrossFit identity then can significantly impact the personal decisions and scope of interactions of individuals who participate.

That being said, the CrossFit formation is a key site that grapples with changing notions of gender and sexuality, and particularly how these changes are redefining what it means to be tough and resilient. The middle class appeal to liberal inclusivity comingles with the militaristic legacy of the boot camp, creating multiple paradoxes from the top of the brand in corporate CrossFit down to the intimate interactions within individual Boxes. These paradoxes go largely unresolved, both contingent and contentious, as the hypermasculinity of the sporting strength and conditioning world rubs against the commercialized White middle-class sensibilities of the fitness industry. It is the productive friction between these two worlds that produces the progressive bodywork projects of strong female athletes, and concurrently allows for their routine objectification and sexualization in CrossFit's media. CrossFit's appeal to a nostalgic primal fitness exacerbates these tensions by simultaneously encouraging new forms of rugged self-sufficient femininity while reinforcing the patriarchal valorization of certain forms of physical strength and aggression.

Taken together, the CrossFit formation presents moments of resistance to, as well as instances of reification in, inequitable structures of power and power relations developed in and through dominant ideologies and discourses. As a non-coherent system, the workings of power and power relations within any given Box are contextually contingent, though they are obviously influenced by the core ideologies behind Glassman's CrossFit brand as well as an imagined sense of what a CrossFit community should be. This non-coherent contingent relationship between the individual Boxes and the CrossFit brand opens space for some Boxes to develop more equitable and progressive methods and rituals for performing the CrossFit identity. As CrossFit continues to grow and expand, there exists the potential for progressive permutations of the CrossFit identity that further challenge inequitable systems of power and power relations.

The CrossFit Box

I quit CrossFit in January of 2017. In the following months, many of my key contacts and interview participants also left. Diana, one of the co-owners and the first person I met at CrossFit, moved to Florida with her husband. Her personality was one of the key reasons that people had joined that particular CrossFit Box, and with her gone they were less likely to stay. Following Diana's departure, I witnessed a flurry of Instagram posts and Facebook statuses that told of the departure of quite a few people. Many of these CrossFit participants were at the heart of my CrossFit experience and key components of the study. Were I to return today, CrossFit East would be a radically different space than during the time I was there.

The shedding of members after the departure of Diana speaks to the spatially contingent nature of the CrossFit community. While CrossFit East is located in a fairly transient city, with people frequently moving in and out of the city for work, the temporal and contingent nature of a given CrossFit Box is not uncommon. Although there is inarguably a connection to community that develops through the CrossFit practice with a larger CrossFit identity, allegiance to a given Box, at least for the non-elite CrossFit participant, is not a guarantee. Many from CrossFit East moved on to other Boxes within the area, while others opened Boxes of their own. Even though it's a transient city, many that left were not people who have moved away from the city; they were people who have chosen a new spatial community within which to practice CrossFit.

Unfortunately, the degree to which Boxes survive and fail is woefully understudied, in part due to the historical legacy of the affiliate program. The affiliate system started within the CrossFit community as a way to self-brand spaces as CrossFit spaces. Considering the lack of support to individual Boxes from corporate CrossFit, Boxes are essentially buying the rights to use the brand name. Glassman's hands off approach to the affiliate system means that many markers of CrossFit's success are estimated off of certifications, licenses, and personal anecdotes. As a branded form of physical fitness that prides itself on its community, the lack of data on these communities is shocking. Instead statistical primacy is given solely to the number of CrossFit Box affiliate licenses that are currently in operation. CrossFit is seen as a booming industry, but only along one very fine metric.

The inherent problem with the affiliate system is that it offers an ostensibly easy opportunity for self-employment that belies the actual challenges of running a small business. Arguably, many people choose to open a CrossFit Box because of the low financial barrier to entry; CrossFit equipment and space is relatively cheap compared to a standard franchised gym (Fainaru-Wada, 2014; Herz, 2014). There are many stories, mirroring those of Glassman's early years, wherein personal trainers have become dissatisfied with their working conditions in a common franchised gym, and are using the CrossFit brand as a pathway for lower-risk entrepreneurialism. However, many who open a CrossFit Box are unaware of the challenges of building a business, rather mind creating local community. While opening a CrossFit Box is relatively easy, maintaining a client base and adequately staffing a facility are far greater challenges. In discussing the market for CrossFit coaches with the staff of CrossFit East, they often mentioned the increasing number of Boxes who are trying to hire coaches at just above minimum wage. There is a sense that community and love of CrossFit will run the business, which is a naively optimistic approach to small business development. While some may have the acumen to build and sustain their business, there is no training or direction provided by corporate CrossFit, and so the longevity of a given Box is always suspect.

While one would think that Glassman would invest more in the affiliate system from an entrepreneurial business standpoint, his hands off approach is somewhat unsurprising. The hands off approach allows for the globalization (Robertson, 1995) of individual Boxes, allowing for Boxes to nimbly adapt to the local fitness market. The CrossFit Boxes are risk-free capital ventures for Glassman;

CrossFit HQ makes no investment in the individual Boxes and in return the Boxes provide an annual affiliate fee and concurrently stimulates an ongoing supply of would-be coaches to the expensive CrossFit certification retreats. In some ways, the CrossFit model of decentralized branding resembles the decentralized branding found in companies such as Uber, AirBnB, and Lyft who use a “sharing” business model. In these business models, participants pay a surcharge to participate in a larger program, whose branding and online services facilitate the commercial success of individual participants. The low cost investment by the company allows for significant profit with minimal risk.

However, outside of his ostensibly libertarian rhetoric of the free market, there is also Glassman’s disinterest in the affiliate system outside of its role as a source of easy revenue. As quoted in Herz (2014), “‘I have always done things for athletes,’ Glassman says, ‘on the backs of software people, orthodontists, and real estate agents’” (p. 27). Glassman’s valorization of elite and tactical athletes is evidenced by how and where he devotes corporate resources; namely the CrossFit Games and military Boxes. Although it could be argued that CrossFit’s legal endeavors to protect Boxes who have been subject to lawsuits or attempts at legislation (ex. Berger, 2016a; Helm, 2013; Wilson, 2016) could be seen as an investment in the affiliate community, I would argue that it is merely a way to protect the **brand** of CrossFit.

Without sufficient support for the affiliate community, and without metrics to measure success, CrossFit’s long term viability is questionable. The departures at CrossFit East are indicative of a disconnect between the lived reality of the Box and the public perception of the CrossFit brand. From the outside, the affiliate system has

been lauded by entrepreneurs who point to the freedom and low fiscal entry cost inherent in such a program (Ozanian, 2015). However, the lack of oversight from corporate HQ, in particular the lack of sustainability initiatives, limits CrossFit's ability to sustain its brand in the long run.

The Changing Nature of CrossFit

The significance of the CrossFit Box in building the CrossFit brand is evidenced in the changing nature of the CrossFit subculture. CrossFit has changed significantly over the breadth of its 16 years, particularly as more people begin to understand CrossFit through the practice in their local Box. Instead of being indoctrinated through reading the core Glassman texts at the heart of CrossFit, or engaging with CrossFit's many online resources, many are learning about CrossFit solely in the space of the Box. Given the perfuse permutations of Boxes in personality, programming, and professional certifications, the CrossFit practice is becoming ever more dispersed. As CrossFit has continued to grow, it has shed much of its centralized identity in and through the move away from CrossFit's online presence.

My experience in CrossFit East hints at a move away from Glassman's direct teachings and towards an approach to fitness that is much more reconciled with the norms found in the larger strength and conditioning industry. During my time at CrossFit East, there was little mention of Glassman except when solicited during the interview process. Additionally, a majority of the coaches held multiple certifications from a number of different strength and conditioning certifying organizations, and

yoga classes were offered on a regular basis. Even now, many Boxes I've looked into are diversifying their physical activity services to include yoga, heavily modified CrossFit, and bootcamp workouts as well as other physical fitness services.

According to recent research (Waryasz, Suric, Daniels, Gil, & Eberson, 2016), this trend is not uncommon. While CrossFit may be the central draw to these spaces, the diversification of services points to a waning in CrossFit's popularity and viability as an all-encompassing lifestyle practice.

Perhaps in line with the de-centering of CrossFit in CrossFit Boxes, there have also been changes to the power and prevalence of a dominant CrossFitter ideal. In addition to diversification in services, there is also a shift in what constitutes a CrossFitter. That being said, those who discovered CrossFit early on were very specific in defining an ideal CrossFitter subjectivity. However, those who had joined in the past few years were more interested in defining the diversity of people who could be part of CrossFit.

At CrossFit East, the rejection of Murph's traditional CrossFit identity was suggestive of a new way of being CrossFitter. Although the coaches continued to wear the knee high socks and CrossFit t-shirts that Murph wore, a scant few of the class participants dressed in CrossFit gear. Murph's over the top bravado and shirtless chest-beating may have resembled many of the CrossFit videos and marketing materials, but this performance was only tolerated in CrossFit East. The rejection of Murph's performance of the CrossFit ideal was looked down upon as abrasive within CrossFit East. In some ways, Murph was caught in the transition between the more

coarse and irreverent earlier version of CrossFit and the more commercially friendly recent incarnation.

As CrossFit continues to adapt to new spaces, and engage with wider audiences in order to remain profitable, it's stability as a reinventive institution becomes less clear. The innate qualities of the original CrossFit method, based in pushing the body's physiological and psychological limits, are not as appealing to mainstream audiences who are content with performing virtuous healthism with far less risk or investment. When a subculture no longer holds the same values, can it continue on as a strong source of community? When it is driven by commercial interests, when does it turn from subculture to mainstream, allowing a new form of antagonistic physical culture to emerge?

Limitations

There were several limitations of this project.

First, the journal article style of dissertation provides a strong focus for each chapter, but it also necessarily excludes some of the deeper discussions that could arise in a traditional dissertation. With the narrower focus found in each chapter, there are many areas of the CrossFit assemblage, and the CrossFit experience, that did not make it to paper. However, the data collected could easily provide the grounding for several more papers beyond the ones presented in this dissertation. Additionally, while each of these chapters could go deeper, the limited space afforded a journal article forced me to write more succinctly and to prioritize information. Moving forward, these skills will be invaluable for future projects.

Additionally, as the CrossFit academic literature is fairly sparse, it was decided early on in the project to take a holistic approach to the CrossFit phenomenon instead of focusing specifically on one area. By making this choice, I was able to incorporate a wide variety of theoretical, empirical, and methodological approaches in my investigation of CrossFit. This facilitated my understanding of how power operates within and through CrossFit's multiplicity of intertextually linked spaces, people, and ideologies. However, by attempting to create a broader understanding of CrossFit, I did not have the ability to go as deeply. We felt that in choosing a trans/inter-disciplinary and multi-method approach to this complex phenomenon, I would be better able to articulate the contours and dimensions of CrossFit as a formation.

A third limitation of the study was that I spent a majority of my time performing participant observation and ethnographic research in a single CrossFit Box. As evidenced by the discussion of the CrossFit affiliate system, each CrossFit Box is, in many ways, its own cultural space. While each Box derives much of its ideology and aesthetic from the CrossFit ethos, each Box is glocalized to meet the needs, desires, and skill sets of the local population. Therefore, any analysis of CrossFit at the Box level is inherently partial and incomplete in the context of the diverse affiliate network. That being said, because there is a shared set of values that are inculcated through the CrossFit brand, the analysis of a single Box provides insight into the ways in which Boxes can potentially be formed in a dialectical relationship with the larger CrossFit community and intertextual assemblage. As an additional note, while the CrossFit Box is currently the space in which CrossFit

ideology is negotiated through cultural intermediaries such as the CrossFit coach, the milieu of CrossFit cannot be limited to the affiliate system. CrossFit historically originates through a dispersed model of individual home gyms and other improvised physical activity spaces that were used by individuals and small groups. Therefore, a further limitation of the current project is that it does not include practitioners of CrossFit who have adopted CrossFit's techniques outside of the Box. Given CrossFit's initial history before the explosion of affiliate Boxes in 2005, it can be assumed that there are still a number of practitioners of CrossFit who use traditional gyms, home gyms, and improvised equipment to perform the CrossFit practice. Future research on CrossFit should not only consider other Boxes, but should also seek to understand and incorporate the voices of CrossFit participants who do not regularly attend CrossFit classes at an affiliate Box.

A final limitation of the project lies in the theoretical approach taken. Through nearly every chapter, I attempted to merge multiple literatures in ways that, to me, felt appropriate. However, the limitation of doing this is two-fold. First, had I used a single theory and method for the whole project, it would have allowed me to go more in-depth with explicating the theoretical paradigm and leveraging a larger constellation of allied literatures. While I don't think this choice has directly harmed the project, particularly as it is following a journal article structure, I feel that a single theory/method would have showcased my understanding of the material differently. Second, the merging of multiple literatures meant that I was grappling with theory for every single chapter. As such, there are moments and spaces where the theory may have been weaker than I'd hoped. That being said, I feel like the project would not

have been able to do what I wanted it to had I not grappled with theory to the last instance.

Further Research

Although this project was largely successful in adding to the literature on physical culture and CrossFit, there is still much work that needs to be done on this phenomenon.

First, a number of the CrossFitters at CrossFit East were upper middle class, and their careers had them travelling frequently for conferences and off-site work. For these CrossFitters, while they had a “home” Box they also developed a travelling CrossFit sensibility. As CrossFit Boxes tends to be different from one to the next, further research could look at the creation of a “travelling” CrossFit identity, and explore how that identity helps to articulate the globalizing effects of modern careers. Additionally, investigation into the perceived universality of CrossFit that permits movement amongst different glocalised Boxes would illuminate how subcultural capital is negotiated in wildly different fields.

A second avenue of research is the ongoing development of CrossFit as a rehabilitative institution. Akin to the Midnight Basketball leagues of the 1980s (Coakley, 2011; Hartmann, 2016), CrossFit is increasingly being used as a sport for social change (Belger, 2012; Eather, et al., 2016; Gipson, et al., 2016). How then does the CrossFit brand and youth development intersect, particularly within the school system? Additionally, *The CrossFit Journal* puts forth several narratives about the rehabilitation of previously incarcerated individuals through CrossFit (Achauer,

2014). Given the intertwining histories of the prison and school systems, particularly in the case of disadvantaged youth, the use of CrossFit as a tool for rehabilitation needs further exploration.

A third study needs to look towards the role of race and ethnicity within CrossFit. The majority of bodies showcased in and through the CrossFit site appears to be White bodies, and the upper echelon of CrossFit's management does not appear to have any people of color. Furthermore, the CrossFit management's insensitivity to the racialized shootings in the summer of 2016 bring to the fore questions about CrossFit's engagement with racially diverse individuals (Perez, 2016). While CrossFit East was an ethnically and racially diverse space, several of the non-White participants made off-handed remarks about the overwhelming Whiteness found in many CrossFit Boxes. An interrogation of the way race and CrossFit intersect could be fruitful for interrogating the racial and cultural politics of the current conjuncture.

A fourth study that should be undertaken is an investigation into the role of sexuality in CrossFit. CrossFit's imagery is plastered with very fit and sometimes hypersexualized bodies,(McCarty, 2013a) and the bodies revealed during a CrossFit WOD have some effects of the sexual gaze (Knapp, 2015b). Some members of CrossFit East mentioned that some CrossFit Boxes had a strong "hook up" culture. In exploring the role of sexuality within the CrossFit space, issues of power and physical capital may be revealed.

Finally, interdisciplinary work is necessary for truly getting to the heart of CrossFit's potential as a transformative site. Tapping in to CrossFit's successful social network development and team building strategies could prove useful in a

number of fields: from public health interventions to increasing retention in high school sport. CrossFit's non-traditional approach to community and inclusion (potentially) make it a site for reinvigorating other physical cultures.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Basic Info Questions

- 1) How far do you live from your Box? (Where do you live?)
- 2) What is your age?
- 3) What is your profession?
- 4) How long have you been involved with Crossfit?
- 5) What Crossfit activities do you participate in, and how frequently?

Open Questions

- 1) Tell me about your experiences with physical activity prior to Crossfit.
- 2) What were your motivations for joining Crossfit?
- 3) What do you think about Crossfit?
 - Why have you stayed with Crossfit?
 - What do you like about Crossfit?
 - What do you dislike about Crossfit?
 - What do you feel makes Crossfit unique?
- 7) Tell me about changes you've made in your life related to joining in Crossfit
- 8) How has your relationship with your body changed since joining Crossfit?
- 9) What do you think about Crossfit as an organization?

Crossfit Box Questions

- 1) What do you think about your specific Box?
- 2) How is this Box different or similar to other Boxes?
- 3) What do you think makes someone a member of Crossfit?
- 4) How would you describe the typical Crossfit member?
- 5) What is the most important part of being a Crossfit member? Why?
- 6) At what point does someone transition from a participant to a Crossfitter? Why?

Appendix B: Interview Consent Forms

Project Title	Fitting In: Policy, Politics, and the Subculture of Crossfit
Purpose of the Study	<p>This research is being conducted by Dr. David Andrews and Shaun Edmonds at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you regularly participate in the Crossfit subculture as either a participant or an instructor. The purpose of this research project is to understand the Crossfit subculture and its connection with the larger fitness industry.</p>
Procedures	<p>You will be asked to talk about your experiences with the Crossfit subculture. This interview will be audio recorded. Questions will focus on participation in Crossfit classes as well as your engagement with the Crossfit community. The questions are open ended to allow you to direct the conversation. Participation in the interview will take around 1 hour.</p>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	<p>There may be some risks from participating in this research study.</p> <p>The primary risk is a potential loss of confidentiality for the data collected. However, interview data will be de-identified during the transcription process, and I will make every effort to minimize the potential risk to participants.</p>
Potential Benefits	<p>While there are no direct benefits to you, the understanding of physical activity subcultures will be beneficial in constructing public policy in order to provide more equitable and innovative services.</p>

Confidentiality	<p>Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by removing personal information from the data, and storing the data to a password protected computer. Your de-identified responses will be retained indefinitely. Only Dr. David Andrews, Shaun Edmonds, and the dissertation committee will have access to your responses.</p> <p>If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p>
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, please contact the investigator:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dr. David Andrews 2359 School of Public Health, (301) 405-2474, dla@umd.edu</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Shaun Edmonds 1225 School of Public Health, 301-405-0448, seedmond@umd.edu</p>
Participant Rights	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p>

	<p align="center">University of Maryland College Park</p> <p align="center">Institutional Review Board Office</p> <p align="center">1204 Marie Mount Hall</p> <p align="center">College Park, Maryland, 20742</p> <p align="center">E-mail: irb@umd.edu</p> <p align="center">Telephone: 301-405-0678</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>	
Statement of Consent	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</p>	
Signature and Date	NAME OF PARTICIPANT [Please Print]	
	SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT	
	DATE	

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