University of Alberta

Investing in Nike: Discourse, Desire, and Difference in the Case of the Female Athlete

by

Michelle Terri Helstein

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Investing in Nike: Discourse, Desire, and Difference in the Case of the Female Athlete* submitted by Michelle Terri Helstein in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy*.

Dr. Toby Miller

Sept 22/03

To those I lost during the writing of this dissertation:

Grandma (Elsie Bennett)
Jack Bodwell
Frank Helstein
Shirley Helstein
Marie Rogerson

In your lives you inspired me
And in your deaths you put this dissertation in context
and reminded me of the importance of living.

I miss you.

Abstract

This dissertation research explores identification and its complex relationships with knowledge, desire, and belonging as they manifest within Nike's sport and leisure marketing directed to female consumers. The research is grounded within feminist, poststructural, and sociological theory and specifically relies upon discourse analysis, psychoanalysis of culture, and the deconstruction of community. First, it is argued that given the frequency of exposure to advertising, it is imperative that scholars, students, and consumers of sport acknowledge advertisements as rich and significant texts that can and need to be explored for their representational politics. Each paper thereafter is an exploration of a theme of identification through a reading of Nike advertising to female consumers. Through discourse analysis identification is explored in relation to how knowledge and power produce particular subject positions by which people come to read themselves. Psychoanalysis of culture is used to investigate how social beings, through the production and functioning of desire, fantasy, and misrecognition, come to identify with various subject positions. A deconstruction of the concept of community is used to explore the role of difference and belonging in relation to identification. The dissertation concludes with the articulation of these sometimes contradictory themes of identification. Rather than reading identification through purely discursive, or psychic, or communitarian accounts, it is proposed that reading them through various points of articulation is both necessary and productive.

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The writing of this dissertation (like any other) meant sitting in solitude at a computer for many long hours. However, already the memories of solitude are fading and the truly important and cherished memories of my dissertation are filled fondly with the group of amazing people who challenged, inspired, supported, and played with me. I hope that each of you know that you mean more to me than I can adequately convey here, but nonetheless I want to thank you publicly, if only briefly, in this space.

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INTRODUCTION

I have, at several points in my life, been unreservedly enticed and inspired by Nike and the discourse it proliferates about women in sport. I watched Nike commercials during sporting events on TV and declared out loud and often with enthusiasm my appreciation for their perceptiveness. I placed posters on my walls that featured Nike sponsored female athletes and the accompanying motivational remarks that many have come to expect from Nike. Along with my teammates, I repeatedly transferred these sayings, or others inspired by them, onto pieces of athletic tape to fix to the back of my shoes (you guessed it - Nike shoes). This, in hopes that, if at any time during a game or practice, I was tired or feeling unmotivated, I would see a teammate running by with the attached message on their shoe, thus, reminding me of what it means to be an athlete and a teammate, and inspiring me to continue on, pushing harder. As a team captain, I borrowed from Nike phrases in hopes of uniting and at times inspiring the team as a whole or a teammate whom was not performing well. I assumed that such messages could and should carry over into my life outside of athletics. In that spirit, I placed Nike sayings on or near my desk and scribbled them in notebooks.

When I wrote the paragraph above, in the earliest stages of this dissertation work, it was about Nike. As this project took form, and I read and reread this paragraph in the process of my writing, this paragraph and the dissertation that it begins took on a new focus. Within the above paragraph, I admit to being enticed, inspired and enthused by Nike advertising directed to women. I admit to recognizing myself (or recognizing my desire) in their print and commercial images. In acknowledging this recognition, the paragraph above becomes as much about identification as it is about Nike.

As I read and reread it, the question that continually engaged me was, how can we understand this propensity to see oneself, to recognize oneself, to identify? How and why is that one identifies and/or with what effects? Attempts to answer this question, have taken me through feminist, poststructural, and sociological theory and have specifically grounded this work within aspects of cultural studies, discourse analysis, psychoanalysis of culture, and deconstruction. This dissertation, "Investing in Nike: Discourse, desire and difference" is therefore an exploration of identification and its complex relationships with knowledge, desire, and belonging as they manifest within Nike's sport and leisure marketing directed to female consumers.

I have a chosen to write a paper format dissertation, which means that each paper stands alone as its own piece of work to be published. Unlike the chapters of a traditional format dissertation the papers are not meant to flow from or build upon the paper that precedes it. However, they are of course related. First and foremost they are related in that as I have already detailed above, they take as their object of investigation identification and Nike marketing. However, it is my intention to organize this introductory discussion of this dissertation and each of the papers that comprises it according to another relation that is, less explicitly, but unquestionably at work. That is the notion of investment[1].

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[1] I am indebted here to Dr. Doug Aoki who, during my candidacy examination, pointed out that although I had titled my dissertation "Investing in Nike" at no point did "investment, invest, or investing appear in [my] text". His questioning in this regard led me to more explicitly and productively think about how the concept of investment structures this project.

The opening paragraph of this dissertation is my attempt to share with the readers of this dissertation (and originally of my proposal) what brought me to this project. Its explicit purpose is to state my investment in this investigation. What it does (more convincingly I think) is implicitly illustrate how both psychoanalytic denotations of investment and other intriguing connotations of investment structure this project from beginning to end.

Perhaps the most obvious notion of investment in the opening paragraph is associated with investing money or capital. The shoes to which I attached Nike sayings and the posters that I tacked to my walls required that I invest my money in exchange for a product. It is in this context that most work on Nike takes up investment because it produces Nike as a global capitalist force.

There is substantial work that has and continues to investigate Nike as a transnational corporation and as such its labor relations in developing countries. This issue is addressed by both the popular press and by scholars. Newspapers, magazines, and web sites feature headlines such as: *Nike's workers in third world abused*, *Running down Nike*, *Nike shoe factory closed after 2nd protest in week*, *Nike to take a hit in labor report*, *The new free trade heel: Nike's profits jump on the backs of Asian workers*, and *Boycott Nike - Just Do It!* However, much scholarly work (Harvey, Rail, and Thibault, 1996; Harvey and Houle, 1994; Jarvie, G. and Maguire, J., 1994) has focused on the issue of Nike as a transnational corporation more generally, utilizing it as a primary example of an economic level or dimension in the broader discussion of processes of globalization.

Transnational corporations, like Nike, use "strategies such as acquisition, strategic alliances, and delocalization" (Harvey, Rail, and Thibault, 1996, p. 266) in an effort to allow flexible accumulation characterized by "the production of goods in smaller quantities in order to target smaller segments of a given market, to enable quick adaptation to changes in consumer demand" (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 363). Developing nations provide sites with low rent and inexpensive labor, allowing for the low-cost production necessary for the success of corporations like Nike in acting as "strategic brokers in linking overseas factories and traders with evolving product niches in their main consumer markets" (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 364).

The debate that emerges is one of the health and welfare of third world workers versus the necessity of delocalized production in coping with global competition. Supporters of the former, indicate that workers (mostly women) in Nike factories are subjected to poor working conditions, including physical and verbal abuse, and unfair pay. They argue that wages of $1.84 per day to individuals, who make shoes that sell for $100.00 or more, cannot be justified (Lin, 1998, p. F1). The latter insist that Nike pays more than the required minimum wage in foreign factories, "no worse but no better than those paid by other foreign shoemakers" and that without Nike (or foreign investors like them) many of the workers would be worse off, holding no jobs at all (Lin, 1998, p. F2).

While the issue of exploited workers is an important one, a focus on Nike as an oppressive global capitalist force exerting power over the oppressed work force of

developing nations has precluded investigations that move beyond one way power dynamics and which seek to understand the discourse of Nike as productive as well as limiting. When debates about Nike are only in reference to labor policies and practices, as critical sport sociologists we only come to consider the explicit effects of these actions (workers are abused, Nike makes larger profits, etc). Framing and limiting the discussion in this way may mask the more implicit dynamics, such as *how* Nike comes to produce and position itself and its consumers as it does, by naturalizing them (in effect making them invisible) as part of the more common debate.

There has been some limited attention to the less immediately visible and equally complex dynamics of Nike advertising, specifically in relation to race (Andrews, 1996; Cole, 1996; McKay, 1995; McDonald, 1996) and gender (Cole and Hribar, 1995; Lafrance 1998; Lucas, 2000). This work has acknowledged that critical readings of Nike cannot be limited to critiques of labor policies and practices alone because other crucial issues such as the functioning of power to render intelligible particular notions of race, class, gender, and sexuality (among others) have significant political and social effects.

Paper One, "'It's just advertising!': Nike and the unsaid" is a commentary that urges further work in this area through exploration of Nike advertising. The paper argues that advertising does not simply create nor co-opt the social, political, and economic conditions of its possibility, but rather becomes a vehicle for the concurrent proliferation and reification of those conditions. Therefore, it is imperative that scholars, students, and consumers of sport acknowledge advertisements as significant texts that need to be

explored. In doing so, within the context of a commentary on Nike advertising, it becomes apparent that what Nike does extremely well is connect with sport communities by appealing to the specific culture, concerns and related desires of that 'community' of athletes. In this way, Nike is read as authentic and becomes a trusted insider speaking to members of a select group. As a by-product, Nike itself becomes naturalized within the shared community. The result is that in the guise of an accepted and celebrated philosophy, Nike's corporate values and the politics behind them can and do remain unsaid. I therefore, suggest that analysis of Nike needs to move beyond this discussion of investment in terms of money or capital to take up what other 'meanings' of investment are implicated within identification and Nike marketing.

"The act of putting clothes or vestments on" ("Oxford English Dictionary", 2002) is a relevant invocation of investment within the opening paragraph. I was wearing the shoes (and probably the socks, t-shirts, and shorts) and I was wearing the text (and all that is implicated in it) on the back of my shoe, as were my teammates. Although, I don't state it in the paragraph, one of my teammates was even wearing the master signifier of Nike, the *Swoosh,* tattooed on her ankle.

This investment is related to yet another connotation invoked within the first paragraph. "The fact of being invested with an office, right or attribute" ("Oxford English Dictionary", 2002). I write about seeing a Nike phrase (the putting on of vestments in a sense) on the back of a teammate's shoe and being reminded of "what it means to be an

athlete and a teammate". I am invested with a 'right' to call myself, to associate myself with, those terms.

Each of these notions of investment is relevant to yet another connotation related to the conversion of capital into something from which a profit is expected ("Oxford English Dictionary", 2002). The capital is not product and the profit is not monetary. Instead displaying particular vestments or being invested with a particular 'right' "marks and reinforces kinds of relative advantage and disadvantage in society" (Brooker, 1999, p. 52). In other words, these investments are converted into a kind of cultural capital from which a profit can be gained. Being associated with Nike, through its (now) globally recognized logo and philosophy affords a particular cultural capital that can be invested to gain a profit. Perhaps most often in the case of Nike, this profit can be associated with a sense of authenticity so that "I [could] borrow from Nike phrases in hopes of uniting and at times inspiring the team as a whole or a teammate who was not performing well" because Nike 'knows' athletes and Nike 'knows' sport. Borrowing their phrases (and by extension the phrases of dominant sport discourse) gave me access to an advantageous position as an 'authentic' leader, leading my team in an 'authentic' direction.

Interestingly this position to which entry is gained through cultural capital is only an investment in the sense of an "outer covering; an envelope; a coating" ("Oxford English Dictionary", 2002). The predicates of that position (the female athlete, for example) only belong to a particular class of female athletes, but do not define essential attributes of that position. What the qualifications define is only a covering or a coating that comes to be

naturalized as the mold against which female athletes are measured.[2] When "I was tired or feeling unmotivated" but was then reminded "of what it means to be an athlete and a teammate", I would be "inspired to continue on, pushing harder".

Finally, a certain amount of psychical energy is attached to these objects (Nike *Swoosh* and the shoes, shirts, socks, etc that feature it) and ideas (rights, cultural capital, molds), invoking a sense of psychoanalytic investment or cathexis. I will return more extensively to this understanding of investment later.

I have proceeded thus far by providing a somewhat formulaic (encyclopedic even), but necessary, listing of notions of investment present within the first paragraph of this dissertation. Providing a blunt listing of these notions made it more clear to me that my project on identification is structured through my attempt to discuss each of these investments through explorations of discourse, desire, and difference.

My second paper uses discourse analysis to investigate how the Nike Swoosh, and the representational images that feature it are a text that continually produce and regulate the female athlete in particular ways. In examining the discourse of Nike, in how the discourse appears and with what regularity, it becomes apparent that there are limits to the statements that can be made. However, these normative constraints are productive in that the production of the 'female athlete' becomes the effect. A particular

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[2] I am not suggesting here that there is a depth or essence that can be found beneath the covering or coating.

conceptualization of the female athlete comes to be invested with that right or attribute and is simultaneously subjected to the relations of power dispersed within the functioning of that right. Only through this production and regulation is the subject legitimated as a speaker within discourse.

Specifically then, Paper Two, "'Knowing' the Hero: The Female Athlete and Myth at Work in Nike Advertising" takes up the discursive production of the female athlete of Nike in relation to the myth of the hero. Traditionally, myth is an explanatory narrative that describes how something came to be as it is. However, myth does not only explain. Rather, in the guise of explanation, myth reconciles, guides and legitimates actions, values, identities and cultures. The narrative of the hero is one of the most powerful and pervasive of myths and western sport media continues to use the heroic narrative in reference to athletic performance. Within this paper, we[3] examine a recent series of Nike advertisements directed to female consumers. Unlike many other heroic tales within Western culture whose protagonists are all powerful, single-minded, courageous, white, middle/upper class, heterosexual men, these advertisements take up mostly non-white female athletes as heroic. We examine Nike's use of the word 'hero' in this context, given that, as suggested above, myth (including that of the hero) is not only or simply explanatory but rather "representation at work" in producing or reproducing itself, its prevalence, and its significance.

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[3] This paper is co-written with a fellow graduate student and friend, Debra Capon. On the title page of this paper I clearly highlight which sections of the paper I wrote.

The third paper of this dissertation, "That's who I want to be: The politics and production of desire within Nike advertising to women" explores what psychic investment I (and others) have in being summoned, disciplined, produced and regulated (as in the discursive subject of papers number one and two). Specifically, through a critical examination of representational images produced by Nike and directed to female consumers, Paper Three makes visible the politics and production of desire within Nike advertising to women. It begins by highlighting how Nike, through its association of knowledge, power and truth, has and continues to publicize and authorize a particular notion of who or what counts as a female athlete. It proceeds by engaging in a careful psychoanalytic reading of Nike's ideal of excellence for serious female athletes and athletics in combination with themes of emancipation within the most recent advertising efforts directed to women. The paper illustrates that desire, for the non-referential and not attainable concepts of excellence and emancipation, is constructed through political and cultural conditions but it also invested with the power to authorize and normalize those conditions. Therefore, desire must be an object of analysis within critical readings of Nike.

Papers Two and Three speak to the psychical energy that is attached to the knowledge and desire of 'being' a 'female athlete'. How is this psychical energy related to identification? I examine this question here using Freud's notion of cathexis (besetzung). Cathexis is an economic concept in Freud's visioning of the psyche as a "kind of economics of nervous force" (Lechte, 1994, p. 21) that is regulated by a tendency toward stability or constancy within the two systems (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1974, p. 65). As

Appignanesi and Zarate (1979) indicate, the preconscious contains all thoughts and ideas that are capable of becoming conscious and is dominated by the secondary process or reality principle (p. 68). The unconscious contains impulses, wishes, and desires and is dominated by the primary process or the pleasure principle (p. 68). The preconscious and the unconscious are continually in a state of conflict and compromise (p. 69) in the simultaneous aim of a discharge of tension (p. 144). The pleasure principle is aimed at discharging tension and functions in impulsive, unorganized, and often irrational ways in an attempt to achieve immediate gratification of desire or wish fulfillment (p. 144). The reality principle is aimed at this same discharge of tension but allows for deferment of gratification in functioning according to logic and rationalization (p. 144). Thus, the "functioning of the unconscious system is subordinated to the principle of the discharge of quantities of excitation" while "the preconscious system attempts to inhibit this immediate discharge while simultaneously devoting a small amount of energy to the thought activity needed for exploration of the outside world" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1974, p. 63).

In reading Freud's notion of cathexis into Lacan's mirror stage,[4] a positive load or cathexis becomes attributed to the lost object or the lack that is the necessary result of the fable of misrecognition. The infant sees his/her image in a mirror and anticipates a wholeness or unity despite the physical limitations of the child's body. The stability this suggests is a misrecognition because this ideal of total unity is unattainable and is only ever an image of inversion of what is before the mirror (seeing the image as others would

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[4] The mirror stage is explained in detail in Paper Three and revisited in Paper five.

see it). Therefore, the subject of the mirror phase is not rational and pre-given but is instead "given-to-be" (Aoki, Soc. 537) in a manner that the mirror stage narrates. "The image is a form that in-forms the subjects [knowledge of itself] and makes possible the process of identification with it" (Muller and Richardson, 1982, p. 30). This narration suggests that the ideal ego is only ever constructed by the ways others see it and thus it cannot be autonomous. Any understanding it has of itself as coherent is only ever a necessary imaginary identification. Rather than disassociating from the lost object (wholeness, unity, totality), the subject of the mirror phase identifies with the lost object, an identification that can be termed a "fantasy of incorporation [of the lost object]" (Hall, 1996, p. 3).

This fantasy gives the coordinates of the subject's desire and specifies its object (Žižek, 1992, p. 6). Fantasy does not fulfill or satisfy this desire but rather stages a scene that suggests that this fulfillment does exist. In Lacanian terms, the object cause of desire that would make good the lack, but which can never be attained, because it does not exist in and of itself, but is posited by desire itself, is the *object petit a* (Žižek, 1992, p. 12). Regardless, the fantasy of incorporation insists that you must have that lost object, and thus the lost object, that which would fill the lack, becomes loaded with psychical energy. In the aim of discharging tension, the pleasure principle functions in an impulsive and unorganized way in an attempt to achieve immediate gratification of desire or wish fulfillment (p. 144). Thus, within this context, it is cathexis that brings desire, self-knowledge, and identification together.

According to Laplanche and Pontalis (1974), Freud abandoned a true neurological schemata that suggested that the term cathexis (Besetzung) denoted the loading of a neurone with energy and the quantity of energy with which it was loaded (p. 63). Instead cathexis became metaphorical, drawing an analogy only between psychological operations and physiological mechanisms (p. 64). However, Freud still indicated that "anyone who wished to take these ideas seriously would have to look for physical analogies for them and find a means of picturing the movements that accompany excitation of neurones" (p. 63). This distinction (between a metaphorical and physical existence of cathexis) is interesting in examining the connotation of investment as 'attire' within my project. Although, cathexis is most often read metaphorically, I think that Freud's warning can be read with a twist in my project.

For example, one (bad) critique of Judith Butler's (1990) "Gender Trouble" argues that if genders are performative, then one can simply wake in the morning and choose a gender that one will wear for the day. It is like the putting on of vestments and at the end of the day one could simply take them off. Butler rejected this critique suggesting that such an understanding would "restore a figure of a choosing subject – humanist – at the center of a project whose emphasis on construction seems to be quite opposed to such a notion" (Butler, 1993, p. *x*).

This does not mean however that investment, in the sense of putting on clothes, does not have some very interesting implications for the subject when thought in terms of cathexis, specifically within my project. The physical analogy may not take the form of

'innervation' energy, but perhaps the proof of cathectic existence can be read in the "act of putting [Nike] clothes or vestments on" ("Oxford English Dictionary", 2002) and in an extreme form, in the act of permanently fixing the overdetermined signifier (symptom) of Nike on the body (in the form of a tattoo). Can this be read as an incorporation of the lack? Can it be read as an attempt by the subject to embody the fantasy that constructs their desire and stages it as satisfied? The Swoosh and all that it has come to represent is overdetermined to the point of being ineffable in the same way that the *object petit a* is described. A positive load or psychical energy is attributed to the Swoosh, perhaps as the *object petit a*. Thus, the fantasy of incorporating that object onto (in the form of vestments), into (in the form or a tattoo) the body is necessarily linked to both desire and identification because in both cases that object does not exist.

This clothing and tattooing could also be read in a more literal sense, alongside the prescriptive, proscriptive and descriptive rules (and thus knowledge) of the discursive formation, as a covering, envelope or coating. As I indicated earlier, this covering, conceived of as a mold, carries a particular cultural capital. The cultural capital marks and reinforces a kind of relative advantage. In the context of the last paper in this dissertation, the profit of this currency is a reassertion or affirmation of legitimization within a Nike "community imagined through a spiritual sense of womanhood" (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 348).

The predicates of this community are only a covering or a coating that comes to be naturalized as the mold against which female athletes are measured. Therefore, the fourth

paper of my project, "Whatever female athlete: Nike, community and singularities" is an investigation of how it is that difference gets negated or, if tolerated, only so that it might be assimilated within the particular envelope of Nike. Specifically, Paper Four explores recent Nike advertising directed to female consumers in its use of discourse and desire to communicate a solidarity of female athletes around a primary identity (women) and collective values (winning, excellence, emancipation). Following the work of Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Giorgio Agamben the postulated Nike 'community' is complicated by suggesting a turn to singularities within communities of articulation as opposed to individuals within communities of identification. Opening up the thinking of 'community' to an articulation of what Agamben calls "whatever singularities" provides productive possibilities. Within the paper I, therefore, advocate for the emergence of the whatever female athlete within Nike advertising to women. Paper Four is perhaps most specifically about my own psychic investment in articulating an athletic community in a different way.

My investments in this project have therefore facilitated its development in a very particular way as a series of responses to a variety of investments. Each paper answers on its own, through its own theoretical devices, how or why one identifies and with what effects. Each paper (and manner of theorizing) is, on its own, significant and serves to provide a satisfactory answer to the question. I could have elaborated in each case and written an entire dissertation on identification and the role of advertising, or the discursive production of identification, or the psychic functioning of identification, or identification and the politics of belonging. However, my investments took me across

differing and complex theorizations that I found both necessary and productive. As such, this dissertation is set up so that "each theory in turn is the dominant but not exclusionary voice, [so] that I can [illustrate] both the insights and the limitations of each mode of thinking separately and together" (Flax, 1990, p. 15): separately, in that each paper stands alone in its strength and weakness; together in that, when reading the entire dissertation, it is possible to see where the papers (and the theorizations that support them) form both points of support and contention with each other.

Ironically, even though the explicit purpose of the first paragraph of this dissertation is to state my investment in the project very little cathexis can be read into my emotional intentions. As some of my committee has pointed out, my writing in that paragraph is painfully formal given its intentions, as if to deny the investments of which I am trying to write. Perhaps this could also be read as the form of my writing being tied up in the same investments I have described at work in the content of my writing. Even as I try (within the opening paragraph) to explicitly place my desire and identification as an athlete into the project, a different idea is cathected with energy. I am caught in the intentions of a 'student' trying to be invested with a particular 'right' and afforded a particular cultural capital. This, too, has had a significant impact on the writing of this dissertation.

First, it has meant that I have been concerned throughout the writing of this dissertation with the matter of publication and its various requirements. I have, therefore, tried to put all of my writing to 'good use'. By this I mean that rarely did I write something that I could not use later in some way with the eventual endpoint of publication. Members of

my committee will, therefore, likely recognize various pieces of this dissertation from work in their courses or candidacy examination responses. Furthermore, reviewers of submitted pieces requested certain context or explanation that had originally been left out in one place because it appeared elsewhere in another paper. I have, of course, complied. At times, this has resulted in small pieces of overlap and repetition within the papers.

Secondly, my investment in being a 'good' student has meant that I had to be concerned with issues of copyright. After trying to negotiate the expectations around "fair use" copyright laws, which are far too complicated and most of all vague, I determined that it would be in my best interest to get copyright approval for the images that I use. However, Nike refused copyright permission[5]. I argue within my dissertation that, given their power

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[5] Included below is the letter I received from Nike Canada on Monday April 14, 2003.

Hello:

While we appreciate your enthusiasm for our products, we are unable to grant permission for you to use any of our trademarks. It is a long-standing policy of NIKE not to grant permission to others to use our trademarks.

There are important considerations underlying this policy. For example, it is difficult to enforce a trademark against an infringer if the trademark owner previously has allowed others to use the same mark. As another example, use of trademarks by someone other than the owner suggests that the owner is sponsoring, endorsing or in some manner supporting the entity using the owner's mark.

As you might suppose, we receive many similar requests to use our trademarks. We simply are not able to grant such requests. We appreciate your interest in NIKE.

Thank you for contacting us at Nike Canada Limited.

Nike Canada Limited
260 Brimley Road
Scarborough, ON M1M 3H8
Phone: 1-888-681-2288 or 1-800-663-6453
Fax: 416-693-3309
E-mail: nike.canada@nike.com

to communicate, legitimate, and reify certain types of knowledge and identity, images are significant texts that need to be explored for their representational politics. Ironically then, the very reason that I want to include the images is likely the reason that Nike wants them excluded. I have left empty figure boxes in the place of images rather than completely remove them throughout my dissertation so that this paradox does not go unnoticed.

Finally, my investments as 'student' trying to be invested with a particular 'right' and afforded a particular cultural capital has meant that this dissertation needed a conclusion. This dissertation therefore includes a conclusion in the form of one last paper that explicitly attempts to read Nike and identification through the various theorizations that support this dissertation.

In Paper Five, "Seeing your sporting body: Subjectivities, misrecognition, and identification", I argue that there is a tendency to confine poststructural discussions of identification to either the discursive or the psychic. In large part, this limiting is a consequence of the differing theorizations of subject formation (and specifically power) advanced by Foucault and Lacan. I go on to suggest that the body is arguably a productive and necessary articulation in formulating a poststructural rendering of identification that draws from both the discursive and the psychic without being limited to either. In each of a recent series of Nike print advertisements an exercising woman misrecognizes her physical body in a reflected or mirror image (e.g., a woman hanging from a chin-up bar in the gym 'sees' herself hanging from a rock face) and in doing so

illustratively places the body materially and pervasively within poststructural theorizing about identification. Examining the gendered, sexed, and raced sporting body looking into the reflection requires engagement with the discursive production of these intersecting subjectivities. Concomitantly, examining the mirror image as a stable or unified (and thus misrecognized) body requires engagement with the psychic illusion of the embodiment of the desiring discursive subject. Through an analogy to the laws of reflection, this advertisement highlights (a) how the body necessarily implicates the discursive in the psychic and the psychic in the discursive to inform female sporting identity and (b) illustrates that the body is not negated (as some argue) within poststructuralism but is rather integral to such theorizing and its sporting manifestations.

Paper Five is a conclusion only insofar as it comes last. It is not an attempt to wrap things up, to tie things together, or to create some form of unified answer to the question of identification within Nike advertising to women. Rather, it is meant to illustrate that it is possible and productive to find points of articulation. It is meant to illustrate that it is not always necessary, possible, or desirable to choose between one investment or another or one theory or another. Paper Five offers one example of articulation, but only one among others and this is how I want this dissertation to end. Not by finding a unity or a closing or finality, but by finding an opening that invites other openings.

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PAPER #1

"It's just advertising!": Nike and the unsaid[1]

[1] A version of this chapter has been published. Helstein, M. (2002). *AVANTE: The journal of kinesiology, education, and culture*, 8(2), p. 37-43.

In the course of my research on Nike, I have had many discussions with students and colleagues about the role of advertising. Many are reticent to acknowledge advertising as anything more than a trivial and straightforward reflection of that which we already value. The common sentiment is that advertisers simply show 'us' what we want to see and therefore have few social effects. However, advertising does not simply create nor co-opt the social, political, and economic conditions of its possibility, but rather becomes a vehicle for the concurrent proliferation and reification of those conditions. Given the frequency of exposure to advertising, it is imperative that scholars, students, and consumers of sport acknowledge advertisements as rich and significant texts that can and need to be explored for their representational politics. This commentary on Nike attempts to illustrate that need. The paper highlights some of the historical shifts and strategies in Nike advertising in an attempt to make visible the explicit and implicit ways that Nike does more than simply reflect sport or the female athlete. Most importantly, this commentary challenges students and scholars within sport to extend this work to the advertising they watch, consume, and study.

"Just do it!" "Just do it!" "Just do it!" The repetition of this familiar Nike phrase is the voiceover to an intense workout by female triathlete Joanne Ernst. The emphasis on the power and athleticism of her movements is expected from the Nike advertisement. This is hard, serious work, true to Nike's philosophy of performance. As the workout and commercial come to an end, Nike adds a final tagline: "And it wouldn't hurt if you stopped eating like a pig" (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 360).

This marked Nike's first attempt at marketing to female consumers. Prior to this 1987 television commercial Nike had resisted entering the women's market. They worried that making that move might jeopardize their image as a company that was committed to serious athletes and serious athletics. Therefore, prior to 1987, female athletes were not visible or legitimate participants within Nike narratives. However, as the fiscal possibilities of the female market became evident, Nike was forced to reconsider. The result was the advertisement above.

Obviously, the ad was not well received. Nike's first attempt at appealing to the female market threatened to be their last. Of course, stories in the idealized world of sport generally, and Nike specifically, can never end in failure. Instead, the story must be spun so that the athlete, the team, or the company overcomes previous failure to win triumphantly in the end. For many this is how this episode in Nike history is read. The failed advertisement was not an ending, but a beginning. It was a beginning that would ensure that Nike took female athletes seriously. It was a beginning that prompted Nike to hire women to create future advertisements. The advertisements that resulted and their legacy, that is one of the most renowned advertising campaigns directed to the female athletic market, have come to be associated with progress and evolution. Nike's devotion to female athletes has become a story highlighting the path from failure to celebration.

Of course this path did not simply choose its trajectory. As Cheryl Cole and Amy Hribar (1995) suggest in "Celebrity Feminism: Nike Style", Nike's advertising directions formed and functioned as they did in response to and in combination with a number of

social, political and economic conditions. These included a "cultural preoccupation with the body" that linked "fitness, health, and hard bodies" with "success, ambition, discipline, will and effort" (p.354). According to this cultural logic, deviant or delinquent bodies, that is those not fitting the normalised ideal, could be attributed simply to individual inadequacies. Additionally, post-Fordism allowed Nike to move away from the mass production of a few athletic shoes to the flexible production of a large variety of shoes and apparel to fit the specific needs and desires of smaller market targets including women (p.363). Finally, a backlash against movement feminism, seen as "less compelling and outdated", was "instrumental in generating and circulating images of the 'new women'" that exemplified characteristics of "individuality, self-acceptance, choice and independence" (p.356). Consequently, these characteristics were the messages of the story in the early 1990's.

Chris Zimmerman, Nike's director of US advertising in 1998, stated in *Advertising Age* that Nike "doesn't research the 150 commercials it produces every year but relies more on gut instinct" to ensure that it does "not to stay in one place for too long" (Jensen and Cuneo, 1998, p. 24). According to Zimmerman, this movement is necessary in order to keep up with the quickly changing consumer. Thus, the personal growth, independence and self-acceptance of campaigns in the early 1990's have evolved or shifted to messages of excellence, heroism and serious female athletics within Nike's recent advertising efforts directed to women.

These representational shifts are significant because Nike, by virtue of its mastery in advertising and related corporate success, has gained primary positioning among sports manufacturers and has been posited as an expert of sport for female athletes. Thus, as Nike's popular knowledge of who or what the female athlete is continues to increase, so too, does their control over who or what can be constituted or legitimated as the female athlete. Nike's way of knowing and participating in sport is privileged. Interestingly, the one thing that has remained consistent within the shifting representational directions of Nike is that behind every Nike advertisement directed to the female market is the ideal of personal empowerment and emancipation.

This ideal does not remain unproblematized within critical debate. Many who take up this story want to make visible that Nike is a transnational corporation and that it has suspect labor relations involving both women and children in developing countries. The debate that has emerged over the health and welfare of third world workers (and their empowerment and emancipation) versus the necessity of delocalized production to cope with global competition has ignited various letter writing campaigns and persistent calls to boycott Nike products. However, Nike and its signature *swoosh* logo remain a globally recognizable and desired phenomena. This suggests that discussions and criticisms about Nike that only focus on labor policies and practices overlook crucial issues such as how desire functions within Nike advertising. It is important to ask questions about the popular desire for Nike products and the philosophy that they embody in combination with other attempts to effectively intervene to change the political and material conditions surrounding their production.

It is necessary to explore the production, function and manipulation of desire within Nike advertising. In doing so, one thing becomes quickly apparent. What Nike does extremely well is connect with apparent sport communities by appealing to the specific culture, concerns and related desires of that 'community' of athletes. In this way Nike is read as authentic and becomes a trusted insider speaking to members of a select group.

A current example of this advertising strategy is a series of commercials that aired during the Division I, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Championship tournament in March 2000. In United States college basketball circles the duration of this tournament has become known as *March Madness*. College basketball faithful throughout North America anticipate the tournament with excitement. The commercials take place in the fictional town of Bracketville, "where the sun shines a little brighter in the month of March". Each commercial begins with an aerial view of the town. From this view the town's streets resemble the brackets of the tournament that begins with sixty-four hopeful teams and ends with just two playing for the national championship. The single elimination format of the tournament is referenced by an invitation at the end of each commercial for visitors to Bracketville to "stay as long as you can".

In one particular Bracketville commercial the visitor is taken inside the local hardware store. As the camera view scans up and down the isles looking in on the happy townsfolk picking up necessary supplies, a basketball player or fan will notice that the shelves are stocked with familiar and important products. A thirty-second shot clock hangs on one

wall while another wall features X's and O's in all shapes and sizes. An assortment of ladders lean up against the wall and as any basketball insider knows one of these will be necessary for cutting down the mesh net after winning the big game. Of course this will also require a pair of scissors. These can be found, in a number of varieties, hanging in the aisle near the replacement nets.

The basketball literate will also notice that all the customer service representatives are Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) all-stars. Sheryl Swoopes will help you determine the proper bounce ratio of maple flooring. In the section of the store labeled work boots, Chamique Holdsclaw will help you pick out the best pair of Nike basketball shoes for your needs. Finally, you can join in on Cynthia Cooper teaching an older gentleman how to *raise the roof.* If you know basketball culture you know that this has nothing to do with building a house or a barn. It is a celebration technique perfected by Cynthia Cooper herself.

What the advertisements illustrate is that Nike 'knows' basketball. Their insider knowledge gives them an authenticity that allows them to speak not only to the group to whom they are attempting to appeal, but also as part of that group. This privileged place from which they speak allows Nike's desires and the consumer's desires to become one. Once this trust of authenticity is established Nike can more easily manipulate desire. Nike shoes, Nike apparels, or even Nike's philosophy become normalized and recognized as natural within that community. Nike products are not out of place and in fact seem to belong and even define Bracketville Hardware alongside the other necessities of the

game. In summary, this authenticity adds credibility not only to the products, but also to the knowledge and philosophy inscribed within Nike commercials.

What is important to the basketball player, the soccer player, the golfer, or the female athlete, for example, becomes what is important to Nike and in very explicit ways Nike works at becoming part of the group. Nike also works in more implicit ways in an attempt to appeal to that sense of authenticity. For example, Nike constructs the visual and textual production of its advertising in very particular ways. Perhaps the best example of this is the way in which Nike successfully inscribes gender into advertising texts in an attempt to appeal specifically to the female market.

John Fiske (1987) has outlined the ways in which gender can be inscribed into narrative forms. Much of his writing has focused on daytime soap operas as examples of feminine narrative form and action series such as the "A-Team" and "Miami Vice" as examples of masculine narrative form. Each of these forms deals differently with narrative closure, characters, plot, time, dialogue and setting.

Masculine narrative form favors a plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end that provides closure to the narrative. The emphasis is on the objective and the necessary action of achieving the objective or climatic ending. This coincides closely with the use of time. There is an effort to compress time so that all moments of the narrative are filled with performance. Often the moments of narrative closure are shot in slow motion in an attempt to maximize and extend the moment of climax. This performance is usually the

work of a single character or a tightly knit group of characters and the narrative of the performance is told from this singular point of view. Finally, the setting of the narrative is public, as the success of the climax is acknowledged or enhanced through visibility.

The feminine form resists this narrative closure in favor of an infinitely extended middle. The emphasis is on the process as opposed to the end product. The viewer is invited to take pleasure in the problem solving and small successes along the way. Consequently, the viewer gets the sense that time in the narrative is closely related to real time and that closure is not immediately available or even desired. Additionally, there are usually a number of characters and plots operating within the narrative. The story is told from the perspective of more than one character and thus multiple identifications are possible. Finally, the setting of this form is a private place or a place of community where the multiple characters come together to meet and talk.

Interestingly, even in thirty-second commercials, Nike has borrowed from these differences in construction. During televised games of women's collegiate basketball in 1998 and 1999 Nike aired a series of twelve commercials titled "The Championship Season" (see Appendix A for brief summary). At the same time Nike aired a number of commercials featuring Anfernee "Penny" Hardaway, a star player in the NBA, during televised collegiate men's games (see Appendix B for brief summary). The textual construction of these advertisements closely paralleled feminine and masculine narrative form respectively.

"The Championship Season" advertisements follow a fictional high school girl's basketball team from team tryouts through to the completion of their season with a state championship. Each commercial highlights a different event of the season and from the perspective of a different player. One of the commercials may end with Alicia making the team, Theresa receiving the jersey number she wanted, Kiesha scoring a school record forty-nine points, Felicia being recruited by Stanford, or the team bouncing back after a loss, but none of these outcomes serves as a final climatic closure. In fact rarely does the viewer see the outcome of the events of the commercial. Each commercial ends with a black and white still shot that leaves in doubt whether, for example, the ball went through the hoop or the diving player stopped the ball from going out of bounds. Each of these provisional endings is only a small success or part of the process of getting to the end result. The viewer takes pleasure in each event but is aware that there is more to come. The telling of these events by a different player in each commercial allows the viewer to identify not only with the team as a whole but with the varied and multiple perspectives of team members. Finally, the setting is often a solitary place (parked car or office) or place where the players have come together (bus, gym, locker room) to talk and establish relationships. Rarely are spectators seen in the commercials.

In contrast, a Penny Hardaway commercial serves as an excellent example of masculine narrative form. The commercial features Penny playing some pick up basketball on an outdoor court while "Lil'Penny" (his alter ego puppet friend) adds commentary. Within the first few seconds of the commercial Penny receives the ball about fifteen feet from the hoop. The remainder of the commercial is a series of slow motion shots as Penny

makes a strong move past his defender and takes the ball to the hoop. The stated objective of basketball is to put the ball in the hoop and the purpose of this commercial is to highlight the arguably most exciting and dramatic method of delivering this stated objective: the slam dunk. The entire commercial is filled with the performance of this objective, from beating the opponent, to elevating toward the hoop, to slamming the ball into it. The slow motion serves to extend this moment of climax and as if to mark the significance of the performance more dramatically, Lil'Penny shoots off a rocket, a notably phallic symbol, just prior to the climatic conclusion. Of course, all beings in the area serve as astonished witnesses to this entire sequence. A group of kids, a beautiful women, a dog and Lil'Penny all completely stop what they are doing and watch the action in awe.

Therefore, the action, climax, success, power and visibility that male audiences supposedly value in sport can be found within commercials that air during men's basketball games. The advertisements aired during women's games still feature the action, climax and success that are seen to be crucial to sport generally, but it is taken up differently. Friendship, teamwork, participation, and perseverance, celebrated as important to women's sport, are more readily found in advertisements that are marketed by Nike directly to women.

In relation to the female athlete then, Nike has again demonstrated an assumed insider knowledge. Nike 'knows' the female athlete, whether that female athlete is a basketball, soccer, volleyball or tennis player for example. This gives them an authenticity that

allows them to speak not only to female athletes, but also as part of that group and for that group. This distances Nike from the selling of shoes and apparel. As apparent advocates they are set apart from companies that may be seen by some as simply and transparently trying to 'connect' consumers to their product. Rarely today, do Nike commercials explicitly feature a product as the subject of their advertising. Instead the commercials feature narratives that reproduce Nike's philosophy and highlight the stereotypical concerns and desires of the sub-culture Nike is hailing. So that as copywriters at *Wieden and Kennedy*, a Nike advertising agency, suggest "the aim is to produce commercials that treat viewers with 'respect' as an 'intelligent peer'" (Goldman and Papson, 1998, p. 34). Nike no longer connects the consumer directly to its product but rather to its philosophy through a sense of authenticity and belonging on the part of both Nike and the consumer. As a by-product Nike shoes and apparel then become naturalized as part of this accepted, shared and celebrated philosophy.

Just as Nike homogenized the experience of playing basketball in the Bracketville commercials, they have attempted to homogenize the experience of female participation within the "Championship Season" commercials and other Nike advertising directed to women. The commercials implicitly suggest an alleged solidarity around a primary identity, that is women, and collective values such as excellence and emancipation. This is one such account of this postulated community.

> She told me that she now lived by *their* motto. What grew even more apparent was that by her view, we shared "Nike" - we were part of a community imagined through a spiritual sense of womanhood that had been cultivated and that was

> signified by Nike's now famous swoosh and directive (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 348).

Nike advertising and its inherent philosophy can be inspiring to women who feel as if finally someone supports their efforts, their concerns, and their desires. However, this advertising must also be explored for the way that it can manipulate desire because of its success.

Nike 'knows' the female athlete and thus has come to represent the ideal of what it is to be a female athlete. In speaking for the female athlete Nike is seen to be empowering or emancipatory. Yet it is necessary to ask what Nike is emancipating women from. Nike presents a very narrow definition of what it is to be a female athlete and within their commercials they continually publicise and authorise this ideal. So that, within the Bracketville commercials for example, viewers are exposed to a very elite conception of sport. The commercials feature division one teams and professional athletes. The commercials suggest that one should live their lives for sport alone, as evidenced by the community of Bracketville where anything and everything revolves around basketball played to the highest level. The same elite conception of sport is also apparent within the "Championship Season" advertisements. Sport for the female athlete becomes about making the team, not just participating. It becomes about scoring points, getting recruited, and hating to lose. In short, sport for the female athlete becomes about achieving excellence.

Of course, this ideal is not a level that many people can attain. This is where Nike's emphasis on empowerment and emancipation is significant. The ideal is deliberately out of reach so that one can aspire to it, so that one can be empowered to transcend their limitations. This transcendence is itself an inspiring ideal. Therefore, Nike attempts to sell the ideal, that is an image of who you want to be, an image of more than whatever you are right now. By extension, this suggests that whatever you are right now is not good enough. What Nike is, in effect, emancipating women from is their non-legitimated current self, that deviant or delinquent self that is attributed to individual inadequacies. Therefore, these emancipatory narratives may inspire women, but this might mean that they continually measure and police their progress toward an ideal that is defined precisely by its distance from whatever they are right now. Therefore, the ideal is never reached, because Nike's ethos is about always becoming more. Women may come to embody the pursuit so that it feels normal and natural and innocent to aspire to the prescriptions of Nike advertising. And they may come to believe that such achievement is completely within their control.

This naturalisation means that questions of who gets to be empowered and by what authority remain largely unexplored. There is little interrogation of what societal ideals support and underlie Nike's normalised definition of the female athlete and even less discussion about who is therefore excluded from Nike's postulated community of female athletes. This exclusion ignores many social, political, and economic realities that make it far easier for some to aspire to excellence and emancipation than others and supports a

neoconservative rhetoric that those who are not legitimated within Nike's community of female athletes have simply not tried hard enough.

As I stated earlier in the paper, advertising does not simply create nor does it simply co-opt the conditions of its possibility. However, it does become a vehicle for the concurrent proliferation and reification of those conditions. Nike does not simply create its own definitions of the female athlete, but it does publicise a very particular way of knowing the female athlete that continually gets reproduced and authorised within its advertising. The result is that in the guise of an accepted, celebrated and inclusive philosophy, Nike's corporate values and the social, political, and economic conditions supporting them can and do remain unsaid. And Nike learned long ago from the tagline, "and it wouldn't hurt if you stopped eating like a pig," that some things are best left unsaid. This commentary is an appeal to scholars, students and consumers of sport to recognise the role of sport advertising in uncritically authorising and reproducing social, political and economic ideals and a challenge to all to work at making visible, through speech and writing, that which is left unsaid.

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Appendix A
Summary of Championship Season Television Commercials

The left hand columns consist of anything written on the screen (bold) and any text that is spoken (in quotations) or thought. The right hand column is a brief description of the corresponding image or action that appears.

Appendix A1: A Championship Season - Part 1

A Championship Season – Part 1	Alicia is sitting in the passenger seat of a parked car, nervously spinning a basketball in her hands. She first glances over her shoulder and then stares straight ahead.
sometimes coaches don't notice	Alicia gets out of a car.
sometimes they hold grudges	She walks through the cold morning air toward a school.
they become infatuated with the new girl or the tall girl	Alicia approaches a door and looks at a white piece of paper posted on it. As she gets closer the title becomes visible, it reads: Cougars – Girls Varsity Basketball
That's why you have to look	Close-up of Alicia's face showing tension, followed by close-up of list where Alicia's name appears.
even though you knew all along	Back to close-up of Alicia's face.
"yes"	The close-up of her face reveals excitement.
The Charlestown Cougars 1997-98	Black and white still shot of a team photo (including a smiling Alicia) behind this newspaper caption and a red Nike Swoosh.

Appendix A2: A Championship Season - Part 2

A Championship Season – Part 2	A group of girls stand around a gym nervously anticipating what is to come. Close-ups show some of them chewing their fingernails, others staring straight ahead or looking at the floor.
"all right Tay"	Coach is standing at the front of the group of girls beside a box full of uniforms.
when coach hands you a uniform the first thing you think is, who else wears this number?	As Tay comes forward, there is a close-up of the #33 uniform. As the coach hands it to her, a grin comes over her face. Other players can be seen in the background waiting anxiously.
"Keisha"	Kiesha smells her uniform and grins.
"Shawna"	Shawna receives her uniform from the coach and her face shows her disappointment. Behind her two other players can be seen congratulating each other with high fives.
"Theresa"	Theresa walks forward and receives her uniform. As she grabs it she allows it to unfold in front of her revealing the #21.
some years you get lucky	Scene changes to an action sequence featuring women's basketball star Jenn Rizzoti (#21). She is making quick, hard, and difficult passes, playing tough defense, and hitting a jump shot. Scene switches back to Theresa looking at her uniform and running her hands across it appreciatively. Scene again moves to Rizzoti who is taking a charge. Scene switches back to an action shot of Theresa during a game. She is wearing her #21 jersey and diving for a loose ball.
Theresa (21) trades skin for win.	A black and white still shot of this action, stopped in mid-sequence, shows Theresa and the ball suspended in mid air. The still is accompanied by this newspaper caption and a red Nike Swoosh.

Appendix A3: A Championship Season - Part 3

A Championship Season – Part 3	The team jogs into gym prior to a game. They begin to warm up.
tonight,	A team member takes a short jump shot.
could be your night	Camera focuses on Kiesha who sits stretching out her hamstrings. She stares straight ahead with an intense look of concentration.
because of the three extra inches	A shot of Kiesha standing next to an opposing player. Kiesha has a distinct height advantage.
or because you scored 27 against her last year	Again see Kiesha stretching and focused, followed by an extreme close-up of her face.
it could be your night because you hit your first shot	A game sequence which shows Kiesha hitting an outside shot.
Because you switch to a 2-3 zone	Back to a shot of Kiesha stretching and another extreme close-up of her face, specifically the intensity in her eyes.
or just because you decided tonight is going to be your night	To a game sequence where Kiesha beats her opponent and goes to the hoop. Followed by another extreme close-up of her face.
Kiesha (49pts) sets school record	A black and white head and shoulders still shot of Kiesha laying the ball up to the hoop behind this newspaper caption and a red Nike Swoosh.

Appendix A4: A Championship Season - Part 4

A Championship Season – Part 4	Felicia sits backwards on a chair looking at a television in a team locker room.
Dear Felicia,	A close-up of a letter.
congratulations on your last game	An action shot of Felicia beating a defender followed by a close-up of her heavily bandaged knee.
the interest you have shown in our school signifies your ambition to become part of a rich history of education and a	A combination of quick changing shots including close-ups of her face, her

Appendix A5: A Championship Season - Part 5

A Championship Season – Part 5	Charlestown Cougars are filing onto a school bus after a game. There is cheering and clapping in addition to high fives and 'raising the roof' motions.
some nights it's the person you least expected, it's a 15 foot jumper, or a three point play, the one who makes the steal, draws the charge, or converts the one and one	Combination of close-ups of a number of individual players faces. Everyone is loose, smiling, happy, joking around and having fun. High fives and 'raise the roof' motions continue throughout the sequence.
some nights it's the person you least expected	One player dances in the middle of the bus isle as all the other players clap in unison.
some nights it's you	A close-up of Sara who sits with her arms and chin leaning on the seat in front of her. She looks proud and happy and conceals a small grin. The shot changes to Sara in uniform with arms raised and teammates gathered excitedly around her.
Sara's 3 saves the day!	A black and white still shot of an excited teammate hugging Sara behind this newspaper caption and a read Nike Swoosh.

Appendix B6: A Championship Season - Part 6

A Championship Season – Part 6

after a loss,
you swear it can't get any worse
then you go to practice the next day

"tough"
"what's wrong with you girls?"
"don't you want to practice?"

Cougars Sprint Back, 71-41.

A team running sprints in a gym.

Shots change quickly back and forth from the whole team running lines; to close-ups of players breathing hard and featuring pained expressions on their faces; to a coach who is visibly angry, stern, serious and demanding; to shoes as they touch the line and start back in the other direction; and to empty bleachers in the background.

Scene changes to a player in a game going to the hoop after beating a defender. A black and white still shot of the player suspended in the air with the ball about to be laid into the hoop is accompanied by this newspaper caption and a red Nike Swoosh.

Appendix B
Summary of Penny Hardaway Commercial

The left hand column is the spoken text of Lil' Penny (Penny Hardaway's alter ego puppet friend). The right hand column is a brief description of the corresponding image or action that appears.

"what are you doing?"	Six men are playing three on three on an outdoor court.
"hey, you know the only time you guys yell boxout is when you're out of donuts"	The shot pans Lil' Penny' starting at the cast on his foot and moving up to his head.
"you guys remind me of my shoe closet... one Penny and a bunch of loafers"	Back to a shot of the players, then to a woman sitting on a nearby bench who looks up from her book, and then to a little girl running to the fence to see the action.
	Penny receives the ball at the top of the key and from this point on a combination of short shots follow each other. Each shot is accompanied by music and appears in slow motion... • Penny beats his defender • Lil' Penny blows a bubble with his gum • the woman on the bench is making bubbles with a bubble maker • people are hanging on the fence watching, and a little boy's balloon pops • Lil' Penny's bubble bursts • a little girl who looks to be in awe looses the ice cream off her cone • Penny does a spin move to beat a second defender and we see a close-up of his Nike basketball shoe • a dog shakes the water off himself • Penny jumps, about to slam dunk the ball • Lil' Penny shoots off a rocket • Penny slam dunks the ball Screen turns black and a white Nike Swoosh appears.

PAPER #2

'Knowing' the Hero:

The Female Athlete and Myth at Work in Nike Advertising[1]

Co-authored with Debra A. Capon[2]

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[1] A version of this chapter has been accepted for publication. Capon, D. & Helstein, M. (2003). In, S. Jackson & D. Andrews (Eds.). *Sport, Culture and Advertising: Identities, Commodities & The Politics of Representation.* Greenwood Press/Praeger.

[2] For the purposes of this dissertation, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research guidelines require me to state explicitly which sections of this paper I wrote. The *Introduction* (p. 48-51) was co-authored, Debra Capon wrote the sections titled *The Myth of the Hero* (p. 51-58) and *Myth as Transmission and Explanation* (p. 58-59), and I wrote the sections titled *Myth as Representation at Work* (p. 59-64) and *Knowing the Hero within Nike Advertising* (p. 64-85). However, the conception and organization of this paper was a truly collaborative effort. There are thoughts and sentences within sections that are not specifically co-authored that are the intellectual work of both authors.

Introduction

The narrative of the hero is one of the most powerful and pervasive of myths and western sport media continually uses the heroic narrative in reference to athletic performance. The myth of the hero, as a prevailing trend within representations of sport, has inevitably made its way into the cultural politics of sport advertising. Such advertising does not contain itself within the specific spheres of sport, like all advertising its proliferation in contemporary culture is extensive.

> Buses and subways have long been prime advertising spaces...At least one airline now sells space on the outside of its planes...Television and radio have long been chock-full of ads...Ads surround sporting events, both on television and in sports arenas. They arrive in the mail and via fax. We wear advertising logos on our clothes and hum advertising jingles in the shower. In short, ads are so deeply embedded in our environment that we are likely to see [and] hear...them without thinking twice (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000, p. 182).

Given the frequency of this exposure to advertising, it is imperative that scholars, students, and consumers alike acknowledge advertisements as rich, interesting and significant texts that can and need to be explored for their representational politics. It is the intent of this chapter to illustrate the possibility, importance and potential of such work with respect to a series of Nike advertisements relying upon the pervasiveness of the myth of the hero and directed to female athletes.

To make explicit the politics of representation within this series of advertising, the chapter begins by offering a brief introduction to the characteristics and values associated with the traditional hero myth. Who is and can be defined as a hero within the ancient myth? This portion of the chapter details the significance and association of the hero to military and athletic contexts, to masculinity and males, and to femininity and females. These characteristics are acknowledged as influential because it is the remembrance or *knowledge* of the ancient hero myth that contemporary sport media and advertising rely upon.

The chapter then moves into a discussion of the form and function of myth. Traditionally, myth is understood as an explanatory narrative that describes how something came to be as it is. Theorizing myth in this way suggests that knowledge about 'the' hero already exists in the world and that this knowledge is simply reflected, explained and transmitted through myth. Joseph Campbell's (1993) common narrative of the hero quest is read according to this traditional understanding of myth to illustrate the effects of such a reading. We argue that in the guise of transmission and explanation, myth reconciles, guides and legitimates actions, values, identities and cultures.

The myth of the hero is not only and simply a case of transmission and explanation. Rather, we conceptualize the myth of the hero as "representation at work" (Nancy, 1991) within advertising and explore its functioning through a discursive approach to representation. We have chosen this approach, following the work of Michel Foucault, rather than a semiotic approach to representation (e.g., Barthes, 1972) because it is our

intention to investigate the production of knowledge through discourse rather than the production of meaning through language. In other words, we hope to examine and complicate what it is to 'know' the hero within Nike advertising directed to female consumers and how power and politics are implicated within that knowledge.

Therefore, the last portion of the chapter explicitly examines the series of Nike advertisements. Unlike many other heroic tales within Western culture whose protagonists are powerful, single-minded, courageous men, these advertisements take up female athletes as heroic. We examine the representational politics of Nike's use of the word 'hero' as opposed to 'heroine' within these advertisements given that myth (including that of the hero) is not only or simply explanatory but rather "representation at work" in producing or reproducing itself, its prevalence, and its significance.

Here it is necessary, interesting and significant to note that many consider advertisements to be the myths of contemporary culture (e.g., Leymore, 1975; Kellner, 1995; Twitchell, 1996). Varda Langholz Leymore (1975) argues that similarly to myth, advertising fortifies accepted modes of behavior and operates as an anxiety-reduction mechanism resolving contradictions in a complex and/or confusing society. Leymore (1975) remarks that "[t]o the constant nagging dilemmas of the human condition, advertising gives a simple solution ...[advertising] simultaneously provokes anxiety and resolves it" (p.156). Correspondingly, Douglas Kellner (1995) observes that like myths, advertisements attempt to "resolve social contradictions, provide models of identity, and celebrate the existing social order" (p. 247). Seemingly, advertisements today, like the myths of the

past act as a mechanism of socialization. James Twitchell (1996) considers the advertisement as the "Ur-myth" of American commercial culture, in that nothing unites us or the world like the experience of being told how this-or-that product can fulfill our dreams; it is precisely the unification and communion of 'us' as consumers that is of interest to the advertiser and their client.

This notion of advertisements as the myths of contemporary culture will be an important consideration throughout the reading of the chapter. It is not only the myth of the hero within the advertising that is attempting to reconcile, guide and legitimate a particular production of knowledge, but the advertisements themselves. As myths, they too are "representation at work" in the guise of explanation and transmission. Specifically, within this chapter they might be said to be the vehicles for the proliferation and reification of the myth of the hero.

The Myth of the Hero

Traditionally in the west, the story is an action-packed adventure. The villain(s) is (are) defeated. Good triumphs over evil and in resolution, order is established. The protagonist of the story is the hero, who is presented as an exceptional or superior individual or person. The hero, is strong, noble, active and courageous, and is typically a boy or man. *He* performs brave deeds that go beyond the call of duty. God-like, but not quite a god, the hero transcends the everyday. Kerenyi (1959) states: "What is it to be a hero? It is the glory of the divine...strangely combined with the shadow of mortality" (p. 3). This

transcendence is part and parcel of the moral intended within the hero story: *his* actions do not only make *his* life better, they make our own lives better and more meaningful. This formulaic narrative, which begins with 'once upon a time' and ends with 'happy ever after', is a familiar one. It is recounted not just in the ancient stories of Hercules, Odysseus, Jason and the Golden Fleece, and Saint George, but also in the stories of James Bond, Rambo, Rocky, Luke Skywalker, Indiana Jones, and the protagonist in the latest sci-fi film or computer game among others (Hourihan, 1997).

Heroism has predominantly been attached to a military and/or fighting context. This is most apparent within Ancient Greek art and literature. The archetypes of such a tradition are the heroes of Homer's epics, Achilles and Odysseus of the "Iliad" and "Odyssey" respectively. Homer was an oral poet and both epics are a product of many years of traditional, oral storytelling. Homeric warriors are consummate "agonal competitors" who are identifiable by an intense spirit of rivalry and competition, a strong sense of individualism, and a questing for fame, glory, honor and excellence (*aristeia*), and who attempted to be "the first amongst equals" (Slowikowski and Loy, 1993, p. 24).

Although both Odysseus and Achilles possess the similarities of aristocratic lineage and martial prowess, they are also frequently considered to be representatives of a classic brain versus brawn dichotomy. Homer constructed two of the great contrasting voices of literature echoing down the ages, "the fiercely uncompromising individual who will be himself whatever the consequences, and the quick-thinking, adaptable, realistic survivor"

(Jones, 1997, p. 18). This suggests some limited variability amongst the qualities associated with traditional heroism.

However, Margery Hourihan (1997) suggests, this narrow range of variability perpetuates heroic "superiority, dominance and success" as essentially a masculine domain (p. 1). Roger Horrocks (1995), in his book entitled "Male Myths and Icons", emphasizes that various gender myths have close resemblance to the hero myth. Horrocks defines the myths of masculinity as those narratives that assert toughness, stoicism, and courage. For Horrocks such masculine stereotypes permit the disassociation from 'soft' femininity that 'belongs' to women within the narrative. This sentiment is echoed in Mike Featherstone's (1992) article, "Heroic Life and Everyday Life", in which he juxtaposes the essentially masculine heroic life with everyday life. Featherstone suggests that everyday life is traditionally linked to women in that it is associated with the routine and mundane and is the sphere of reproduction and maintenance (p. 165). "The everyday world is the one which the hero departs from, leaving behind the sphere of care and maintenance (women, children and the old), only to return to its acclaim should his tasks be completed successfully" (Featherstone, 1992, p. 165).

Within the traditional story of the hero, the heroine is not then, the equivalent to the hero. Instead the heroine exists only by her supporting role to the hero. For example, within the Odyssey, Odysseus departs from his home and by his cunning defeats all foes. He returns home and reclaims his property and status, and in so doing he restores social order. Whereas, Odysseus' wife Penelope waits at home avoiding suitors, merely forestalling

disaster, until the triumphant return of her husband. Frequently women appear in the narrative as spectators, prizes or victims and serve only to confirm the heroic status of the protagonist. During the action or on resolution to the action, the hero gets or wins the girl. Indeed 'heroines' often have a secondary role; they are victims who need to be saved. This is exemplified by the stereotypical 'heroine' in silent black and white films who is tied to the train track and requires assistance from the male hero.

The 'Ancient' masculine ideal of the heroic was not only linked to warfare and defined in opposition to the feminine everyday, but significantly associated with athletics as well. This is illustrated by the inclusion of Patroclus' Funeral Games in Book XXIII of the Iliad. These games were organised by Achilles, who was considered the greatest Greek warrior/hero. The games, which included discus throwing, running and chariot racing, were representative of all the skills considered necessary to be a great warrior. What is important here is that this male warrior-athlete, this Greek/Classical/Ancient/Homeric hero is the uncomplicated model for subsequent ones in Western culture (Cohen, 1990).

According to Flowers (1988), Joseph Campbell laments that in the modern world the ancient heritage of myth is in rapid decay. The contemporary heroic deed for Campbell is at the very least to remember the hero myths of the past, as these stories seemingly serve to remind us of the 'lost world' of solidarity and community. With respect to advertising, Twitchell (1996) highlights the importance of drawing on the past: "There is cohesive power in the remembrance of things past. It does link us together" (p. 7). Indeed, Robert Goldman (1992) highlights that advertisers plunder from already present or remembered

meaning systems to get their point across. In so doing, rather than actually creating meaning, advertisements "draw on meaning systems that already have currency with an audience. Ads do not create meanings, but rather provide an arena in which to transfer and rearrange meanings" (Goldman, 1992, p. 38).

With respect to the hero, it is this remembrance or *knowledge* of things and meanings past that sport advertising is relying upon. Both Susan Josephson (1996) and Robert Goldman (1992) argue that advertising does not construct new heroes or even social values, but rather merely reinforces the ones that exist already. Advertising gives us the means to chase dreams that reflect our desires for such things as social acceptance, rather than creating something that does not already exist on some level (Josephson, 1996, p. 7). For example, advertising does not give us the desire to be heroic. Such a desire is already established by the society in which we live, and as such, Featherstone (1992) argues that that heroic life remains an important image (as demonstrated in the media, advertisements, literature and films) in Western culture:

> [A]s long as there still exists interpersonal violence and warfare between states [and arguably between and among sporting bodies] there is a firm basis for the preservation of this image, as the risking of life, self-sacrifice and commitment to a cause are still important themes sustained within male culture (p. 175).

The co-joining of warrior-athlete, at least in the sense of hero as ultimately a 'man of action', still has contemporary resonance.

Thus, male heroes, including those within sport literature and media, continue to be constructed, to some extent, according to the heroic model offered by mythical protagonists such as Hercules. For example, in "Death of a Salesman", Willy Loman, talking about his son, a high school football player, says:

> [L]ike a young god, Hercules – something like that … And the sun, the sun all around him. Remember how he waved to me? …and the cheers, when he came out – Loman! Loman! Loman! God almighty … A star like that, magnificent, can never really fade away. (Barlow, 1994, p. 32)

This speaks to Michael Oriad's (1982) assertion that sport is ideal for the manufacturing and representation of heroes. After all, commonsensically sport heroes survive/exist in that "apolitical, asocial, amoral, even timeless, placeless quality of the athletic contest, itself enabling the heroes of the contests to remain unchanged after decades" (p. 39). For Oriad, the athlete-hero of modern America is associated with the democratic ideal of the American Dream. This articulates America as the 'land of opportunity', possesses the rhetoric that "if you work hard you can be who you want to be" and is attached to the Enlightenment quest for perfection (p. 48-49). Oriad's 'self-made' and 'democratic man' is still arguably and ultimately one of athlete-warrior, who in seeking glory is aggressive, competitive, and individualistic. Hence, the supposed timeless, placeless quality of the athletic contest is reinforced by the apparently universal attributes of heroism.

Subsequently, within sport media, the archetypal male hero continues to have exposure and currency. Commentators, journalists and advertisers within North American sport

frequently cite (among others) the following as heroes: Jackie Robinson, Muhammad Ali, Bobby Orr, Arnold Palmer, Joe Montana, Wayne Gretzky, Sugar Ray Robinson, Michael Jordan, and Tiger Woods. It is not difficult to recognize that each male athlete on this list is stereotypically placed towards one or the other end of the brain/brawn dilemma articulated by the Homeric heroes Achilles and Odysseus. Whether the hero is the "fiercely uncompromising individual" or the "quick-thinking, adaptable, realistic survivor", the male athlete as hero is celebrated by sport media as a 'man of action' who does 'battle' in the sports arena. This notion is conformably apparent within some sports that rely heavily on the language of the military. Jansen and Sabo (1994) suggest the military metaphor is exemplified by football, which uses words like *attack, blitz, bombs, flanks, conflicts,* and *territory* within its everyday coaching parlance. In the tradition of the Homeric model, sport, battle and masculinity are once again aligned with the heroic.

In making such statements, we are not suggesting that the various ideals associated with heroism are always consistent or timeless, or that the warrior-athlete is an ideal model. Rather we argue that this dominant myth of the hero continues to be prevalent and pervasive within contemporary narratives, including those within sport and sport advertising. Additionally, both Ong (1981) and Strate (1994) suggest the advent of print medium changes the nature of the transmission of the hero story. Ong (1981) highlights that the Greek heroes Achilles and Odysseus are "culturally large" or "heavy figures" in that they transmitted dramatic messages containing important cultural information to "oral-aural" cultures. In contrast, written history means that the hero is "brought down to earth [because as] more information could be stored about any given individual, heroes

became individualised" (Strate, 1994, p. 18). In recent history, print media and mass communication more generally has enabled images to be projected to large numbers of people simultaneously, which in turn has arguably more readily enabled mass hero worship. With this pervasiveness and prevalence the myth of the hero has come to occupy a general cultural knowledge that must be interrogated for its politics.

The Form and Function of Myth

Myth as transmission and explanation

As suggested above, the hero exists as part of a narrative, which is myth. Myths are shared meanings, linking individual action into a story. The heroic adventure in which the protagonist encounters the supernatural or the mystical and 'good' triumphs over 'evil' is often considered the exemplary myth. Traditionally, myth is an anonymous tale that quests for truth, meaning, and significance; locates who 'we' are; and ultimately seeks to explain the world (Coupe, 1997). Myth seeks to communicate how the world or something came to be as it is, through a reflective or mimetic approach to representation. This means that myth is thought to "function like a mirror, to reflect the true meaning as it already exists in the world" (Hall, 1997, p. 24). In relating the story, myths function to authorise and perpetuate a community's collective values, beliefs and customs. Hence, in narrating/explaining how things have come to pass, myths also seem simply to be a reflection of the way things are. This communication and/or affirmation of social norms

provided by myths fundamentally contributes to a society's or a community's sense of solidarity (Campbell, 1993).

Campbell (1993) argues that the myth of the hero has *a* common narrative, that of "separation-initiation-return", which reflects the rites of passage and traverses different times and cultures (p. 30). Campbell (1993) conceives of this common universal narrative, the journey or quest of the hero, as the "nuclear unit" of the "monomyth" (p. 30). The hero's journey is an escape:

> [F]rom the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from [the] adventure with power to bestow boons on his fellow man (Campbell, 1993, p. 30).

Apparent here are two of the important functions and interrelated facets of myth, namely that of transcendence from mundane life and the hero's actions benefiting the community. In the words of Featherstone (1992), the leaving of the everyday, the sphere of women, for the destiny of the heroic. By living vicariously through the hero, all can share in this glory and transcendence through his return. Although the hero is frequently highlighted as a somewhat isolated individual, the hero, as Jean-Luc Nancy (1991) suggests, "makes the community commune - and ultimately he [the hero] always makes it commune in the communication that he himself effects between existence and meaning, between the individual and the people" (p. 51). Nancy continues on, citing Walter Benjamin to good effect, "the canonical form of mythic life is precisely that of the hero. In it the pragmatic is at the same time symbolic" (p. 51).

Myth as representation at work

In a traditional understanding of myth, knowledge about 'the' hero already exists in the world, outside of its explanation: and this knowledge is reflected or transmitted through myth. If this reflection is not transparent, it is at least a symbolic representation of something ('the' hero and the values he upholds) that is. The myth of the hero is understood as a symbolic representation of truth. However, these stories do not simply promote an understanding of the hero (who they are and where they came from). Rather, as Hourihan (1997) suggests, the story is a version imposed upon us, it describes, explains and naturalises our reality, thus in Western culture, "...the hero story has come to seem simply a reflection of the way things are" (p. 14). In the guise of this traditional understanding of myth, as transparent or symbolic explanation, myth is able to function in the service of normalization while the politics of its representation remain uncomplicated. This assertion requires exploring an alternative theorization of myth.

Here we have chosen to turn to Nancy (1991) who offers an interesting and significant account of the concept of myth. In a chapter titled "Myth Interrupted", Nancy (1991) suggests that "myth communicates itself, not something else. Communicating itself, it brings into being what it says, it founds its fiction" (p. 56). Within this constitutive approach to theorizing myth, 'the' hero does not exist outside of myth. The myth of the hero, as fictional narrative, founds what it is to be a hero. It is in being represented or communicated (in and through myth) that the hero comes to be and have meaning. "[Myth] does not communicate a knowledge [of the hero] that can be verified from

elsewhere: it is self-communicating" (Nancy, 1991, p. 50). The myth of the hero invents itself by uttering itself. In opposition to a traditional understanding of myth, Nancy (1991) suggests that "myth is not simply representation, it is *representation at work*, producing itself...as effect" (p. 56, italics added).

Thus, what needs to be addressed is not what myth is or means but rather, how "the invention of myth is bound up with the use of its power" (Nancy, 1991, p. 46). What is involved or invested in the myth of the hero as representation with the power to invent? Critical engagement with this question requires a more thorough examination of what is meant by "representation at work". Primarily this necessitates asking how representation is implicated in broader issues of knowledge and power. To do so, we turn to Michel Foucault and a discursive approach to representation.

Discourse as a system of representation can be defined as "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular moment in history" (Hall, 1997, p. 44). Although that object may be a material thing, it only becomes meaningful or an object of knowledge when it is taken up within the rules, procedures, or practices of discourse. Thus, discourse governs the production of what is to count as meaningful knowledge about a particular object. Or, as Foucault (1969/1972) suggested, discourse can be described as the "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (p. 49).

This implies a relation of power. What we 'know' cannot be viewed in isolation, it does not exist in a void separate from relations of power. Rather it must be acknowledged that discourse is both constitutive of and constituted by the multiplicity and diversity of power relations permeating through the social. The relation of power and knowledge is such that "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 27).

It is as a result of this relation that only certain statements can be made within a particular discourse. For knowledge to be recognized as true within the limits of a discourse they must speak to a specific object (as subject) and conceptualize that object in particular ways (Foucault, 1969/1972, p. 223). Additionally, those who utter the statements must be authorized and legitimated speakers within the discourse. Debra Shogan (1999) suggests that "when legitimate speakers of a discourse communicate their knowledge and this knowledge is taken seriously by participants in the discourse, what they say is also understood to be true. In producing knowledge power produces truth" (p. 12). Acknowledging these relations, Stuart Hall (1997) suggests that,

> The discursive approach is...concerned with the effect and consequences of representation – its 'politics'. It examines not only how language and representation produce meaning, but how the knowledge that a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practiced and studied. (p. 6)

The remainder of this paper will explore the ways in which the discursive practices and strategies of Nike (specifically in reference to the myth of the hero) are implicated, as "representation at work", in relations of power, knowledge and truth.

In a series of advertisements that appeared in a number of popular press magazines (Sports Illustrated for Women, Women's Sport and Fitness, Fitness, and Shape) throughout 1999, Nike explicitly takes up the myth of the hero in its marketing to female consumers. Within these advertisements (and in combination with Nike's overall marketing strategy currently directed to female consumers) Nike reproduces the subjects (as objects) it constructs/constitutes and makes them seem natural. By virtue of its corporate success Nike has arguably gained primary positioning among sports manufacturers and has been posited as an expert or 'knower' of sport and specifically within the focus of this project, the sport hero. As legitimate speakers their popular knowledge of what/who the 'hero' is continues to increase, so too, does their control of what/who can be constituted or intelligible as the 'hero', and vice versa. It is necessary to attempt to make visible Nike's practices and strategies in an effort to illustrate how the discursive formation of Nike constructs subjects ('female athlete', 'hero', etc) within the discourse and then subjects them to the power of the discursive formation, framing and delimiting their possibilities. Such work attempts to create an awareness that the statements (including those that support and draw upon the myth of the hero) within the discursive formation of Nike are, to quote Foucault (1969/1972),

> [N]ot like the air we breath, an infinite transparency; but things that are transmitted and preserved, that have value, and which one tries to appropriate;

> that are repeated, reproduced, and transformed…and to which a status is given in the institution (p. 120).

The myth of the hero and the statements and images that communicate and support it are "representation at work" in producing or reproducing itself, its prevalence, and its significance.

'Knowing' the Hero within Nike Advertising

'Knowing' the hero, within the discourse of Nike, is thus not a transparent task but rather one bound up with the politics of representation and thus in need of further exploration. To begin this process of exploration we provide a critical examination of three print advertisements that explicitly and implicitly take up the familiar and naturalized myth of the hero.

Each of these advertisements consists of a two-page glossy spread that is made to resemble a torn old scrapbook thrown open upon a table. The advertisements feature pieces of ragged looking paper whose phrases ask and speak to questions such as: "who are your heroes", "how do you know you are a hero", and "does a hero know she's a hero if no one tells her"? The text is accompanied by various images made to resemble photographs including: a child wearing a dress and sandals, Cynthia Cooper – a two time WNBA most valuable player, and a young women holding a baby in her arms. The scrap paper and photographs are arranged on the page as if they had been stapled, taped, tacked

or glued into place. The pages look worn, used, and aged, giving the supposed scrapbook an appearance of history and authenticity.

As already stated each of the advertisements takes up and relies upon the myth of the hero. Additionally, we suggest that read intertextually, the three advertisements parallel Campbell's (1993) rendering of the common universal narrative of the myth of the hero, that of separation, initiation, and return. Thus, we propose to look at each of these advertisements individually and intertextually, for the ways in which their use of the myth of the hero produces, publicizes, and authorizes particular ways of 'knowing' the hero and thus legitimates particular actions, values, identities and communities. This will require reading myth not as allegorical or a symbolic representation of truth, but rather as "representation at work" in both the form and function of these advertisements.

Separation

A young girl stands grinning on a path amongst overgrown brush. From behind, the sun shines down upon her lighting up her somewhat disheveled hair that looks to be tied back in a loose ponytail. She wears what could be a home sewn sundress, a loose and simple design with two pockets sewn on the thighs. Bare feet wouldn't look out of place in the overall image, but of course she wears Nike sandals instead. The scene is a child in the midst of nature. It is a scene that is simple, uncomplicated, and innocent. If a hero's journey begins by "venturing forth from the world of the common day" (Campbell, 1993,

p. 30), from "the sphere of...women and children" (Featherstone, 1992, p. 165), this image exemplifies the place from which that quest begins (see Figure 2-1).

If this is so, the question then becomes who ventures forth from this commonality? As the text on the opposing page of the image asks:

> Who are your heroes?
>
> Did you name an actor?
>
> Did you name an athlete?
>
> Did you name a woman?
>
> (Did you name any women?)
>
> Why don't we think of women as heroes?
>
> Maybe it's because no one ever shows them to us.
>
> We have to take the time to find them, celebrate them,
>
> and make sure these heroes are seen,
>
> so we can find the inspiration to achieve whatever we dream.
>
> Look around.
>
> We are surrounded by strong, courageous, accomplished women.
>
> Any one of them could be a hero.
>
> A hero could be you.

Arguably those who venture forth are those that are founded within the mythic fiction. Thus, "who are your heroes" might be restated as what or who is produced, normalized and naturalized as hero? What values are produced and reproduced in the statements and images of the advertisement(s)? "Did you name an athlete?" The answer is likely yes,

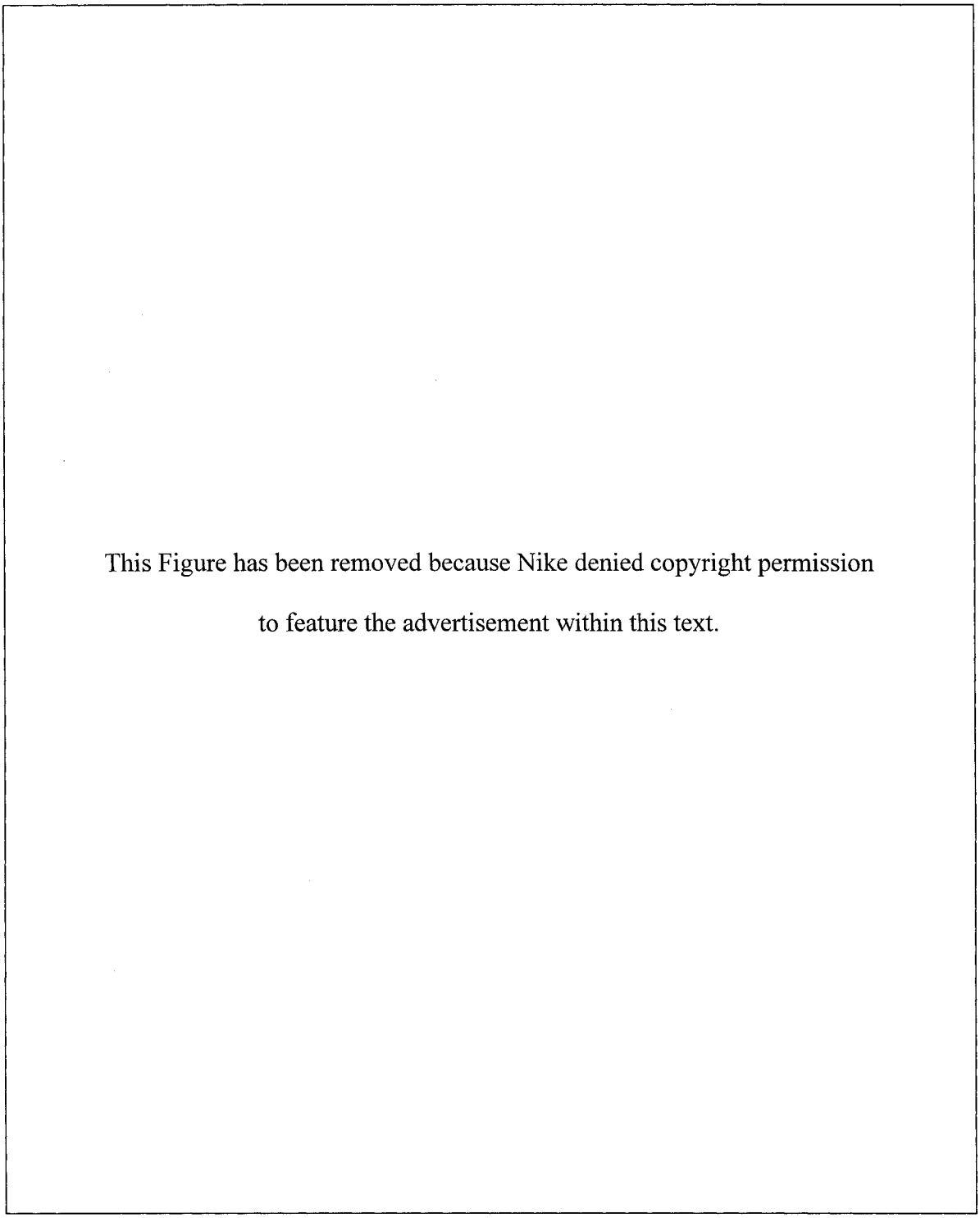

Figure 2-1. Nike advertisement, "Who are your heroes?", Sports Illustrated for Women, Spring 1999.

given that the myth of the hero has been normalized and naturalized within sport discourse and therefore highlighted within sport advertising. "Did you name a woman?" The ad suggests that you likely didn't. This is why the next question within the advertisement is posed. "Why don't we think of women as heroes?" Perhaps because within the hero quest the sphere of women is the place from which the male hero departs (Featherstone, 1992). Within the myth of the hero, neither women nor the values of conventional femininity have been represented as heroic. The same could be said about women and femininity in sport.

There are practices that are requirements for success within discourse and the performance of these practices are both enabling and limiting. Dominant sport discourse, for example, requires strong, aggressive, forceful, space-occupying movements. Adherence (through constraint) to these practices enables (through productive power) the successful 'athlete' that is both the subject and the object of the discourse. Dominant gender discourses function in similar ways. Dominant notions of femininity require cooperation and passivity, while dominant notions of masculinity require strength, aggression, and domination. Therefore, to practice dominant sport discourse and a dominant discourse of masculinity is to engage in the same movements and gestures. On the other hand, the practice of conventional femininity and sport is at odds. As Shogan (1999) suggests, "while there is nothing normal about an athletic body for either men or women, male athletic embodiment is an ideal of masculinity, and female athletic embodiment is a contradiction" (p. 55). Thus, a female successfully practicing sport is a female practicing conventional masculinity. Women who practice conventional

masculinity have not been celebrated as heroic, but rather and often as deviant through an assumed and vilified homosexuality (Cahn, 1994).

Traditionally, acknowledgement of this female embodiment of conventional masculinity has been resisted. This is most obvious, in the refusal of access to sport for women and more implicitly in the rendering of women who practiced sport successfully as abnormal or unnatural. In this second appropriation, it is thought that the female has to be reclaimed or recovered through attempts to illustrate hyperfemininity and heterosexuality.

The initial refusal of Nike to create and market a product directly to female athletes[3] was not unlike the initial hesitation to allow women to participate in sport. If women could compete in the demands of sport, and simultaneously the demands of conventional masculinity, then sport and masculinity would be trivialized in a sense. Consequently, introducing femininity into the Nike discourse would trivialize the "authentic and serious sport image" Nike valued (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 359).

The advertising text might suggest that Nike is now resistant to this traditional protection of masculinity and sport by encouraging consumers to find and celebrate *strong, courageous, accomplished women*. In many of Nike's most recent advertisements, including the hero series, the female who practices dominant sport discourse (and thus

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[3] Although Nike was advised of the potential of the women's market, there were no Nike advertisements marketed to women prior to 1987 (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 359).

conventional masculinity) is celebrated as inspirational and an indication of progress and evolution. In some respects, we would not disagree. We value sport in many of its manifestations and celebrate women's participation and achievement within it. Representing women as athletic and successful has some important resistive implications. Among others, when a female can perform the masculine skills of sport, questions should arise about the supposed 'naturalness' of the softness and passivity of the female body (Shogan, 1999, p. 61). Arguably this type of representation could begin to break down the rigid normalizing and policing of gender and sexuality within sport which connects female bodies to femininity and male bodies to masculinity exclusively. Horrocks (1995) makes a similar contention. When the female body is presented as honed and muscular, rather than "traditional frills and curves...the woman is able to occupy the place of the hero, rather than the heroine" (p. 174). He goes on to suggest that 'gender leakage' is taking place in popular culture, as "women can be given the role of doughty hero" (p. 174).

In a similar mode of thought, Featherstone (1992) suggests that such leakage is occurring between heroic life and everyday life. He refers to Madonna as potentially representative of a new breed of hero in that she is "attempting to redefine her performances as art rather than popular music" (p. 178). As artist she has the qualities of being heroic, in that artists are recognized within high culture and associated with masculine heroic life in contrast to the popular or common that is associated with the everyday and thus the sphere of women (Featherstone, 1992, p. 177-178). Might an advertisement that

represents the transgression of female athletes as heroes be a potential breeding ground for a similarly new heroic?

We return again to the necessity of investigating representation for its politics. Within this advertisement (and as alluded to above) it is difficult to ignore the significance of the word hero as opposed to heroine. The text of the advertisement seems to suggest that it is okay for women to aspire to the essential (masculine) qualities of the archetypal hero myth. This aspiration implies a desired emancipation from the status of non-hero or perhaps more tellingly from the status of heroine (as the necessary contradiction to the hero). The hierarchy between hero and heroine is reinforced. If traditionally, the myth of the hero emulates the masculine ideal of sport then this advertisement still seems to suggest that the female is at odds in sport. If sport is a universal, this universal is masculine.

Thus, it is fine for women to aspire to heroism (successful sport, masculinity) but it is still the domain of men and it will be protected. Although the text of the advertisement may connote and celebrate an emulation of the masculine (heroism), there is an implicit and intertextual defense of the boundaries of conventional femininity and masculinity that is staked out within and among these advertisements. Nike operates in subtle ways to reclaim masculinity from the female within Nike discourse (and alongside dominant sport discourse).

In the context of this series of advertisements this maintenance of gender boundaries is largely accomplished by the accompanying images. The females within the hero advertisements are featured in ways that suggest and promote conventional markers of femininity. In the first advertisement the child wears a dress and a downward camera angle makes her look small and passive. In another of the advertisements a young women gently and protectively holds a baby connoting a sense of motherhood and conventionally, heterosexuality. Even when an image of an athletic woman in uniform is presented there are no actions shots, no images of a woman actively engaged in sport and thus the skills of conventional masculinity.

These images are reinforced by a number of Nike advertisements that seems to suggest that men still hold the 'truth' of the skills of sport and masculinity; that although women are increasingly participating, they don't quite get it right. Perhaps the best example of this is a television commercial that features the Nike Fun Police. This police force is made up of various NBA (National Basketball Association) stars that travel around in groups wearing bright yellow coats. In this particular advertisement, a group of young girls playing basketball on an outdoor court are simply going through the motions with little emotion and no fun. The call comes in and the Fun Police, in this case Gary Payton and Moses Malone of the National Basketball Association (NBA), go out to see what can be done. What the Fun Police do is teach the girls to talk trash and play hard. Trained and supervised by the men in yellow coats the young girls are shown screaming in each other's face "come hard or don't come at all". The obvious sentiments of this statement could be said to equate the assumed sexual (or phallic) inability of females with the

inability to commensurate females with sport and masculinity. The commercial conveys the sense that successful sport belongs to men and masculinity and it can only be taken up correctly by girls and women with the instruction or perhaps permission of men, as is evidenced by the final scene of the commercial. As the Fun Police drive away, the young girls are shown again, this time playing with emotion and seemingly having fun.

The 'uncomplicated' warrior-athlete model of the hero is reproduced within Nike advertising and thus is reinforced as the normalized and naturalized heroic model. As such, the heroine is not rescued from being relegated to the train tracks. Thus, one can only be heroic within the discourse of Nike, and by extension, sport, if they embody or at least aspire to the aggressive, competitive, individualistic, and masculine ideal. This is illustrated perfectly in the closing line of the second advertisement, which states "*Man*, that's who I want to be". Within the heroic journey this suggests "venturing forth from the world of the common" (Campbell, 1993, p. 30) into "the terrors of the unknown" (Izod, 1996, p. 185). As the myth of the hero suggests, this separation requires an exceptional or superior individual.

Initiation

This exceptional or superior individual must then encounter and confront "fabulous forces" so that "a decisive victory is won" (Campbell, 1993, p. 30). This often implies danger, suffering and effort (Izod, 1996, p. 185). In the second advertisement, this exceptional person is represented by Cynthia Cooper, the two time MVP of the Women's

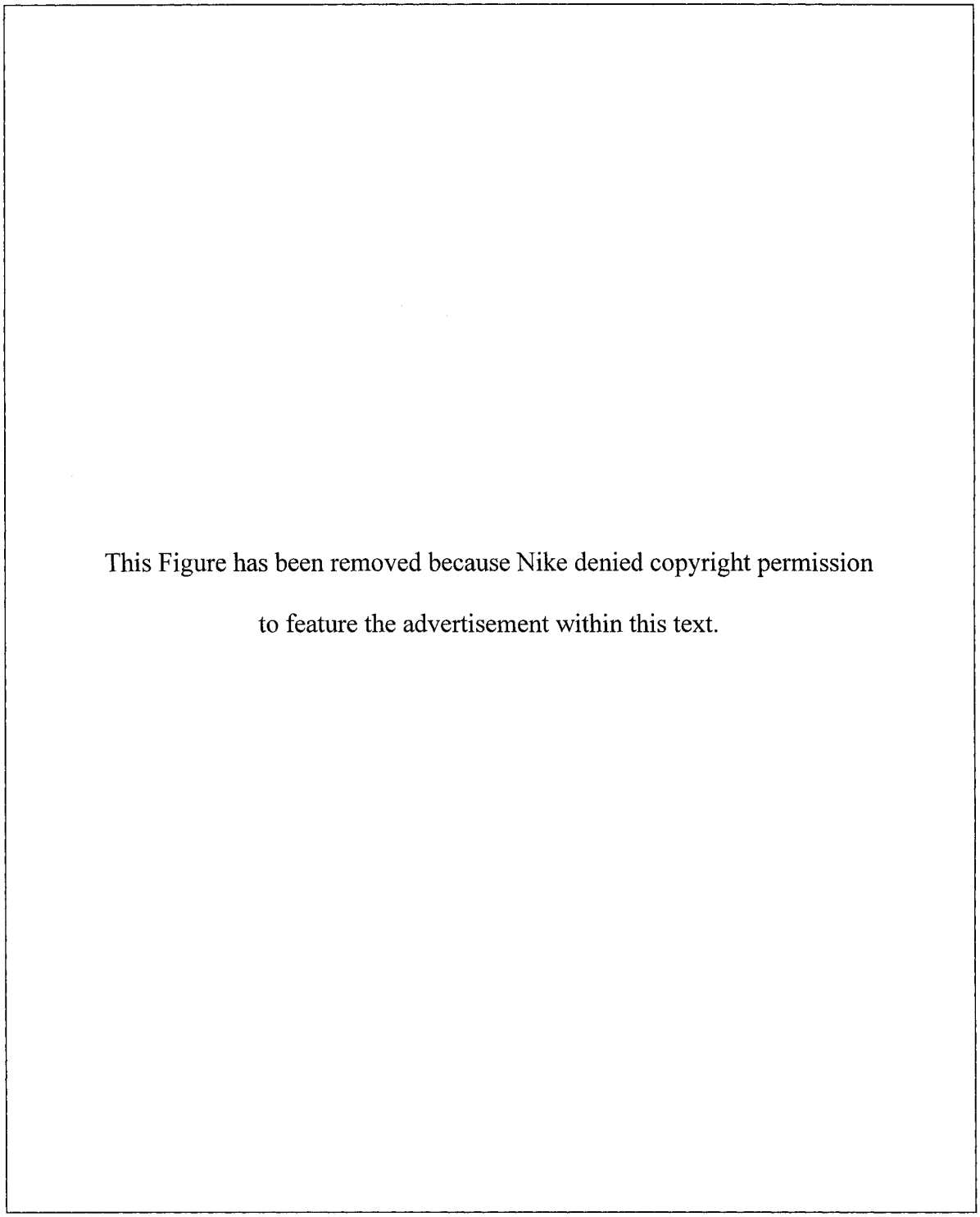

Figure 2-2. Nike advertisement, "How do you know you're a hero?". Women's Sports & Fitness, March/April 1999.

National Basketball Association (WNBA). In the advertisement (see Figure 2-2), the left-hand page of the scrapbook features a large color photo of Cynthia Cooper. She wears her team uniform and her smiling face glows from perspiration. Her hands are held above her shoulders as she performs the motion of her signature, in your face, celebratory gesture that has become known as 'raising the roof'. The close-up camera shot means that she fills out almost the entire frame of the picture. The limited background that is visible features the arena fans as a blur behind her. The top left-hand corner of the page contains a much smaller black and white photograph of a small girl wearing a Cynthia Cooper replica jersey over her t-shirt. She wears a hopeful grin and has a basketball tucked tightly under her arm. The right hand page contains the following text.

> Two years ago, even she didn't know she was a hero.
>
> How do you know you're a hero? Is there an exact moment –
>
> when a little girl walks up to you wearing a team jersey,
>
> and you realize it's yours?
>
> Is it the first time you hear the sound of a sold out arena?
>
> Or see your face on the front page of the sports section, instead of inside?
>
> Two years ago if you asked someone who Cynthia Cooper was,
>
> you might get a blank stare.
>
> But after two WNBA championships, two MVP awards, two sparkling seasons
>
> Full of enchanted, excited fans, when you ask, you'll hear:
>
> "Man, that's who I want to be."
>
> Just do it.

Given our discussion of the previous advertisement, it is significant that this advertisement implies that Cynthia Cooper embodies what it is to be hero. Perhaps this is because stereotypical or common sense perceptions of 'black' femininity are more aligned with the masculine heroic ideal of sport than are stereotypical or common sense understandings of 'white' femininity (or arguably conventional femininity). Thus, 'black' femininity is erased and replaced by Nike's "just do it" ideal of athletic femininity,[4] which as discussed previously, encourages an aspiration to a heroic ideal that in representation, is out of the grasp of the female athlete.

Why then, does Nike make this appeal to heroism when so few can be the exceptional or superior individual that "ventures forth from the common day" and encounters the "fabulous forces" of "supernatural wonder" (Campbell, 1993, p. 30). Perhaps because the popular allure of the sport hero is not so much that people can readily identify with such an individual, but because they *want* to identify with such an individual. It is the desire of the possibility that *a hero could be you.*

However, as the ad questions, "How do you know you're a hero? Is there an exact moment...?" In this advertisement the series of questions that might define heroism actually serve to make any attempt at a definition more ambiguous.

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[4] Nike's discursive practice of erasing race in this context is much more complicated and deserves much more space than we can give it within the context of this paper. It is something we hope to take up further, elsewhere.

How do you know you're a hero? Is there an exact moment –

when a little girl walks up to you wearing a team jersey,

and you realize it's yours?

Is it the first time you hear the sound of a sold out arena?

Or see your face on the front page of the sports section, instead of inside?

The closest thing to an answer that the ad provides is that you know you have made it when you hear "Man, that's who I want to be". What is significant is that w*ho I want to be* is a reiteration of norms that are founded by the myth of the hero. These norms may remain explicitly unstated so that heroism can seem to be all and none of these things. *What it is* requires no explanation because the norms, which precede, constrain, and exceed the viewer, are invoked as natural and normal (Butler, 1993). The way things are. Thus, Nike can invoke heroism within its representational images without naming a particular definition or meaning of heroism. This lack of a referent makes invisible (or at least slippery) questions of justice, ethics and values regarding what characterises a hero; who the judges are; and by what authority.

The advertisement, in combination with Campbell's journey of the hero, suggests that heroism is a teleological project. "Two years ago, even she didn't know she was a hero." Hero then comes to be defined by becoming more than whatever you are right now. In Campbell's formulation, this is undergoing the rite of passage from separation to initiation. Heroism, *who we want to be,* is defined ambiguously by its distance from whatever we are right now. Thus, Nike's answer to the characteristics of heroism is reference to the similarly non-defined subject of emancipation. Being a likeness of

Cynthia Cooper may serve as an example of *who I want to be* within this advertisement. However, as the advertisement states "Two years ago, even she didn't know she was a hero". This suggests that at this moment any one of us may unknowingly be a hero, but it also suggests that it is just as likely that we may have some significant work to do before we can hope to be a hero. Thus, even though the advertisement does not define the precise characteristics of a hero or specify an exact moment when one becomes a hero, we are free to aspire to the non-referential appeal just as we are to assume Cynthia Cooper did. Thus, even though particular values are apparent within representational images produced by Nike, this non-referential appeal means that the politics come to pass as progressive and empowering (encouraging women to aspire to heroism) and therefore, function uncontested.

An aspiration to heroism therefore requires that one tries to diminish the space between whatever you are right now and *who you want to be*. Those who embody the greatest contradiction to the norm (*who you want to be*), presumably have the most to gain from the emancipatory narrative. The most alienated have the most to gain from aspiring to be more than whatever they are right now. Whether that be the young athlete who skills are significantly removed from the skills of Cynthia Cooper, or the small child wearing a home made dress and, representationally at least, far removed from sport more generally. What is significant is that regardless of how far removed one is, they must be determined to diminish the gap. As Goldman and Papson (1998) suggest, "signifiers of alienation plus signifiers of determination equals transcendence" (p. 71). You must simply be determined because *a hero could be you.*

This logic suggests that any failure to become more than whatever one is at the moment can be attributed to other desires, interests or circumstances interfering. An individual must not allow prejudices (theirs or others) associated with circumstances of race, class, gender, or physical ability to bias their efforts (as if transcending these things is simply a matter of will and effort!). One must simply work harder to transcend all circumstance, to produce better knowledge or a better effort that will necessarily be purely emancipatory.

This aspiration to heroism and transcendence is what makes emancipation an instance of social control rather than an illustration of emancipation from social control. The relation of power, knowledge, and truth has produced a shared set of values and thus *who you want to be* is a reiteration of those values. Thus, whatever you are right now becomes the abnormal, the necessary contradiction to the heroic. Emancipation is necessary to make whatever you are right now (alienated identity) into *who you want to be* (celebrated norm). In effect, emancipation is necessary to make the abnormal, normal and following Nike and the myth of the hero, it is all a matter of determination and effort.

It could then be argued that in this context, women are encouraged to continually measure and police their progress toward becoming *who they want to be.* They come to embody the pursuit so that it feels normal, natural, and innocent to aspire to the prescriptions of Nike advertising. Therefore, the romanticized notion of emancipation becomes an instance of social control. Emancipation is not only enabling or subversive in this instance, but rather limiting and constraining. Thus, although Nike "positions the social as constraining" (Goldman and Papson, 1998, p. 162), Nike advertising is a

regulation and reification of the very types of constraint from which emancipation is sought.

A "decisive victory" over the "fabulous forces" does therefore require a great deal of effort and possibly even suffering. The exceptional individual may have ventured beyond the everyday. They may have transcended the status of non-hero or heroine, but they have not transcended the hierarchical regulation of the status of those terms and their place within sport. The effort and suffering within this heroic victory is in the service of conforming to ideals that link the hero, sport and masculinity.

Return

In the resolution of the heroic journey "the hero comes back from [the] adventure with power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (Campbell, 1993, p30). This final stage of the mythical journey is often associated with rebirth motifs, which is significant in light of the image that is featured within the final advertisement. A picture of a young woman gently and protectively holding a baby fills the entire right-hand page of the advertisement (see Figure 2-3). The young woman's face stares away from the camera with a look of solemnity. This may connote that the power of knowing and the possibility of rebirth within the hero quest are taken seriously.

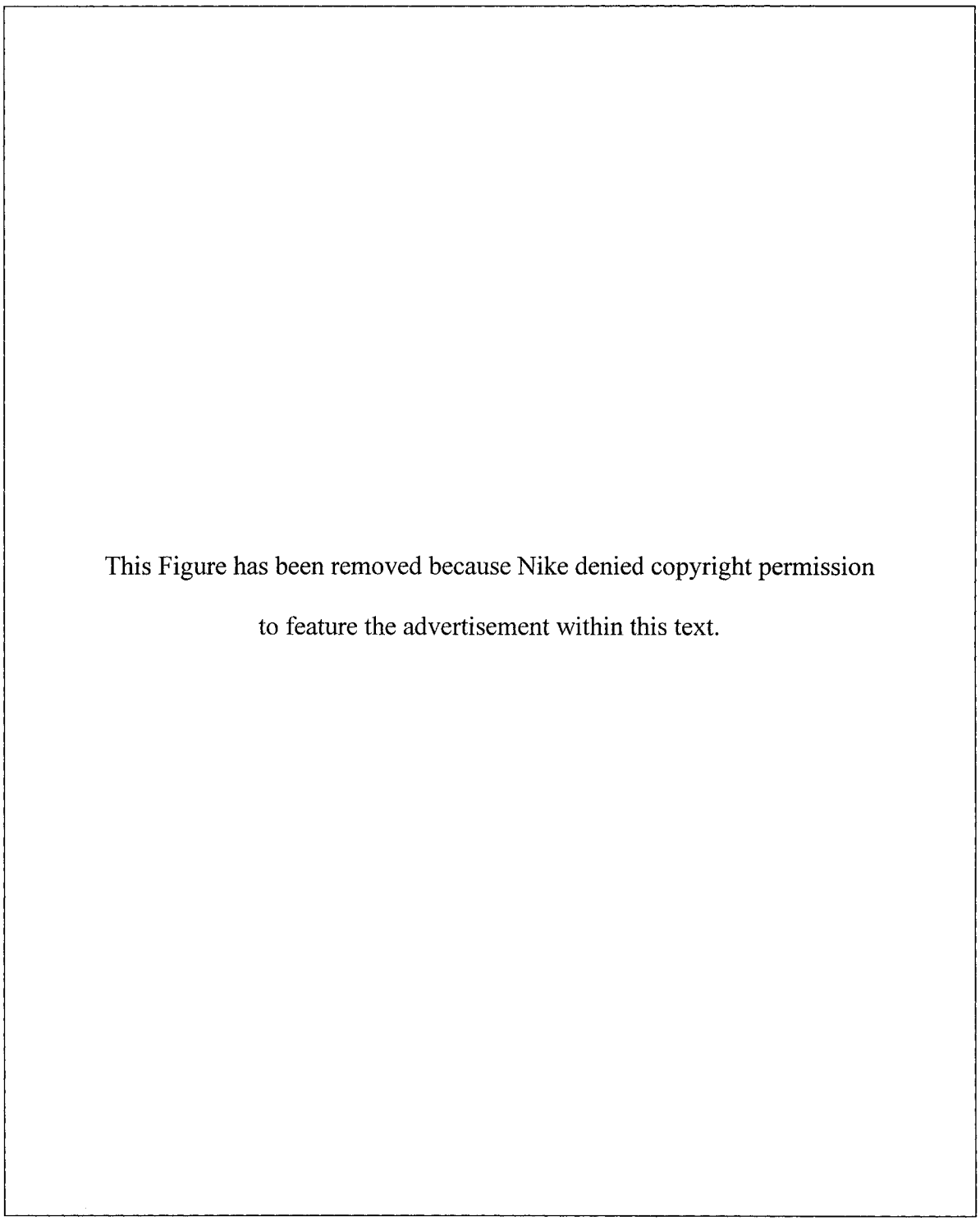

Figure 2-3. Nike advertisement, "Does a hero know she's a hero if no one tells her?", Fitness, February 1999.

In order for a hero to return to the familiar, bringing with them the 'knowledge' of their conquest, they must be recognized within the familiar as heroic. The text of the advertisement speaks to the necessity of this recognition:

> Does a hero know she's a hero if no one tells her?
>
> Do you know a hero no else knows? A hero doesn't have to
>
> save a busload of school kids from certain disaster.
>
> Or score the winning point in the big game.
>
> A hero can be anyone who inspires you, anyone you look up to,
>
> Anyone who cheers you on, makes you better than you were before –
>
> Just as they made themselves better
>
> than they were before.
>
> Do you know a hero?
>
> Tell her.
>
> Then tell everyone.
>
> Just do it.

Heroes only exist if they are identified as such and are represented accordingly. Heroes are not 'found' in sport or in the discourse of Nike. Rather it is in Nike's reiteration and celebration of particular values that heroes can be seen and will be seen, because they have been constituted there. Those who see them, who recognize them as such, will be the community in which the myth is communicated. "[The] hero makes the community commune – and ultimately he always makes it commune in the communication that he himself effects between existence and meaning" (Nancy, 1991, p. 51).

Therefore, the recounting of the myth builds the community. "Myth represents multiple existences as immanent to its own unique fiction, which gathers them together and gives them their common figure" (Nancy, 1991, p. 57). There is not an essence to be found or discovered before the hero story. Any number of ways of 'knowing' the hero could be suggested but once the myth is spoken only one way is intelligible to those who have communed in the communication of the myth. Myth functions to authorize and perpetuate a community's collective values, beliefs and customs in relation to naming the hero. "Does a hero know she's a hero if no one tells her?" Arguably no, because without the recitation, communication and/or affirmation of social norms produced and reproduced by the myth there is no commonality around which to commune.

Being recognized and identified as a hero requires that the individual produces, reinforces and authorizes that which is already enabled or founded by the recitation that has gathered the community together. The return of the hero and the subsequent bestowing of 'knowledge' is in fact a retelling of the myth. In retelling the story, constructed within the discourses that it supposedly informs, the values and identities of the myth are reified and reproduced. Myth, therefore, can be said to

> [N]aturalize speech, transmuting what is essentially cultural (historical, constructed, and motivated) into something which it materializes as natural (transhistorical, innocent, factual). Myth's duplicity is therefore located in its ability to 'naturalize' and make 'innocent' what is profoundly motivated (Hall, 1997, p. 182).

The imperative to tell within this advertisement assures the rebirth implied within the return of the hero quest. "Do you know a hero?" "Tell her." "Then tell everyone." This return or the legitimization of the return of the hero suggests closure. It authorizes, publicizes, and naturalizes the order of things. It confirms the way things should be and reproduces them affirming them as unmotivated, the common, the everyday.

Of course this imperative to tell is not open to all. The gift or simply the right to speak the story has implications for belonging and exclusion, for publicizing and authorizing what counts as knowledge and for vilifying all else. What can be 'known' and told, who tells, and by what authority is bound, as we have said throughout, to power and politics. For example within this last advertisement, what is 'known' about the hero is once again defined according to their distance from whatever they were before. There is a requirement that they have *made themselves better than they were before* or alternatively that they *make you better than you were before. Better*, normally implies morally better, or a movement closer to the accepted or legitimated ideal of the mythic hero. It is bound up in the combination of alienation, emancipation and transcendence as an instance of social control.

Myth "perhaps says nothing, but says that it says this: myth says that it says, and says that this is what it says (Nancy, 1991, p. 48). Myth understood as a mimetic reflection of truth suggests that it "says nothing" that is not already there. Myth asserts itself as explanation and in the guise of that explanation "organizes and distributes the world of humanity with its speech" (Nancy, 1991, p. 48).

Nike's authority to tell is historical and constructed but is often taken up as a gift or ability to communicate the authentic. By aligning themselves with dominant sport and dominant gender discourses, Nike is able to draw on a community that communes in the myth of the hero in similar and complementary ways. Thus, Nike, sport, and conventional masculinity are complementary and intelligible in defining what constitutes the hero. Reconciled by myth this construction is then materialized as natural.

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PAPER #3

That's who I want to be:

The politics and production of desire within Nike advertising to women[1]

[1] A version of this chapter has been accepted for publication. Helstein, M. (2003). *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 27(3), 276-293.

Introduction

The unparalleled success of Nike, one of the world's foremost sporting goods and apparel companies, is illustrated by the record fiscal growth of the company over the last twenty years and the pervasive presence and recognition of its *swoosh* logo around the world. Much of the critical work that has been done on Nike has investigated Nike as a transnational corporation and as such, its labor relations in developing countries (Stabile, 2000; Sage, 1999; Kahle, Boush, & Phelps, 2000; Enloe, 1997). The debate that has emerged over the health and welfare of third world workers versus the necessity of delocalized production to cope with global competition has ignited various letter writing campaigns, persistent calls to boycott Nike products, and significant scholarly attention.

Some of this attention has been focused on the less immediately visible and equally complex dynamics of Nike advertising, specifically in relation to race (Andrews, 1996; Cole, 1996; McKay, 1995; McDonald, 1996) and gender (Cole and Hribar, 1995; Lafrance 1998; Lucas, 2000). This work has acknowledged that critical readings of Nike cannot be limited to critiques of labor policies and practices because other crucial issues such as the functioning of power to render intelligible particular notions of race, class, gender, and sexuality (among others) have significant political and social effects. It is the intention of this paper to compliment this critical work. Specifically, the aim of this paper is to extend the work of Cole and Hribar (1995), Lafrance (1998) and Lucas (2000) in relation to Nike advertising and the female consumer.

Cole and Hribar (1995) state that " Nike became Nike through a complicated network of economic, cultural and psychic relations" (p. 349). Throughout their paper they provide a nuanced, insightful and compelling account of the economic, political and cultural conditions that have allowed for the success of Nike. Cole and Hribar's (1995) query "how are we to understand the success and appeal of the emancipatory narrative advanced under Nike's signature?" (p.349) is similar to my own questioning within this paper. Cole and Hribar's (1995) work, as well as that of Lafrance (1998) and Lucas (2000), is a crucial part of answering this question. However, an analysis of the psychic relations within the contemporary politics of Nike remains largely unexplored by these authors. Their work can and must be extended by placing their findings within a psychoanalytic framework.

Nike is embraced and perpetuated because it does something (psychically) for people. Desire is constructed through political, cultural and economic conditions but it is also invested with the power to authorize and normalize those conditions. Material and psychic operations do not function independently but rather in a continual rearticulation of each other. Therefore, it is not enough to say that psychic relations are at work, rather there must be an exploration of what psychic functions Nike performs and with what effects. Nike and its signature *swoosh* remain a globally recognizable and desired phenomena. It is necessary to investigate Nike through multiple lenses including critiques of transnational economic policies, material and cultural conditions, and psychic functioning in order to problematize the production and politics of Nike products and the

philosophy that they embody. This paper is an attempt to introduce this third component into the scholarly analysis of Nike.

Through a critical examination of representational images produced by Nike and directed to female consumers, this paper makes visible the politics and production of desire within Nike advertising to women. It begins by highlighting how Nike, through its association of knowledge, power and truth, has and continues to publicize and authorize a particular notion of who or what counts as a female athlete. This examination of the discursive is necessary because it speaks to the ways that the discursively produced subject of Nike is summoned, disciplined, produced, and regulated. More specifically, a discursive examination illustrates the ideal subject position by defining that which is rendered intelligible. This ideal has significant implications and effects when placed within psychoanalytic understandings of fantasy and desire.

In an attempt to illustrate this point, I engage in a careful psychoanalytic reading of Nike's ideal of excellence for serious female athletes and athletics in combination with themes of emancipation within the most recent advertising efforts directed to women. The success of this recent advertising illustrates that a psychic dimension is at work. I show that, while the pairing of excellence and emancipation isn't intelligible, the advertising 'works' because of its psychic functioning. This paper illustrates how within the discourse of Nike, these themes of excellence and emancipation have been vacated of substantive meaning. It also illustrates how the arguably illogical pairing of these two terms has successfully produced both excellence and emancipation as desirable and

possible, but in effect, unattainable. Most importantly, the politics of the production and necessary failure of this desire for both excellence and emancipation is examined in detail through reference to a recent Nike advertisement. This allows the implications of those politics to be made visible and thus contestable.

The Shifting Representations of Nike

Nike is a discourse with "its own set of rules or procedures that govern what is to count as a meaningful or truthful statement" (Flax, 1992, p. 452). In examining any discourse, in how it appears and with what regularity, it is apparent that only certain statements can be made within that discourse. For example, although many statements could be made about 'female athletes', for these statements to be recognized as true, within the limits of the discourse, they must fulfil particular conditions. They must speak to a specific object and conceptualize that object in particular ways (Foucault, 1969/1972). Thus, "it is always possible that one could speak the truth in a void; one could only be 'within the true', however, if one obeyed the rules of some discursive 'policy'" (Foucault, 1969/1972, p. 224).

Thus, in articulating Nike as a discourse, it is necessary to acknowledge representational images produced for television and print advertising as "statements that have chosen the subject of [the] discourse . . . as their 'object' and have undertaken to deploy it as their field of knowledge" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983, p. 61). In Nike's advertising campaigns directed to female consumers, the subject position that Nike hopes to 'fix' is

that of the 'female athlete'. This is attempted (although never fully accomplished due to the fragmented nature of the subject) by placing the 'female athlete' as the object of the discourse. The discourse of Nike can then be described as the "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1969/1972, p. 49). The Nike Swoosh, and the representational images which feature it, are a text which continually reproduce the object in particular ways . . . "framing the way we think about the object[s] it constructs" (Parker, 1992, p. 20).

Within the history of representational images produced by Nike, the 'female athlete' has been constituted over time in a variety of ways. Prior to 1987, there were no Nike advertisements directed to women because, as Cole and Hribar (1995) indicate, it was believed "it would compromise Nike's authentic and serious sport image" (p. 359). At this time, the 'female athlete' was not legitimated within the discourse and consequently did not exist as an object or was at the very least an object of suspicion.[2]

In 1987, Nike introduced its first advertisement directed to women. As Cole and Hribar (1995) describe it: "It featured triathlete Joanne Ernst moving through a grueling workout and a voiceover continuously repeating the "just do it" directive. The ad ended with what Nike intended to be a humorous tag line: "And it wouldn't hurt if you stopped eating like

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[2] An anonymous reviewer drew my attention to the point that perhaps the female athlete was legitimated at this time, but more so as an object of suspicion because advertisers had not yet found a way to heterosexualize muscled female bodies.

a pig" (p. 360). The advertisement failed miserably and prompted Nike to hire women, represented as having had the authentic women's experience of sport, to create future advertisements. However, more importantly, it more firmly established the 'female athlete' as an object within the discourse that could then be reproduced in particular ways.

The advertising strategy that developed as a result has become known as the "Empathy" or "Dialogue" campaign. Cole and Hribar (1995) deal extensively and skillfully with this grouping of advertisements in their article "Celebrity Feminism: Nike Style: Post-Fordism, Transcendence, and Consumer Power". As they indicate, in 1990, the first year of the campaign, the ads focused on the rejection of "lists of practices that dominated beauty culture" (p. 360), appealing to a more 'authentic' self that could be realized through exercise as opposed to 'unnatural' beauty culture practices (p.352). In the early 1990's, the ads featured "multiple pages of poetic verse and glossy images" (p. 360), which emphasized "working on the body [as] a means for taking control of, caring for, and displaying one's self" (p. 362) (see Figure 3-1 for example). Cole and Hribar (1995) suggest that "the ads are propaganda for the healthy self, a self achieved by eating good food, exercising, choosing the happiness one is free to choose" (p. 362). The Empathy/Dialogue campaign placed this 'self' as the object of the discourse of Nike and indicated that, by following the prescriptions of the discourse, the 'female athlete' would undergo self transformation and growth.

This Figure has been removed because Nike denied copyright permission to feature the advertisement within this text.

Figure 3-1. Nike advertisement, "Oh you are so emotional", Vogue, April 1992.

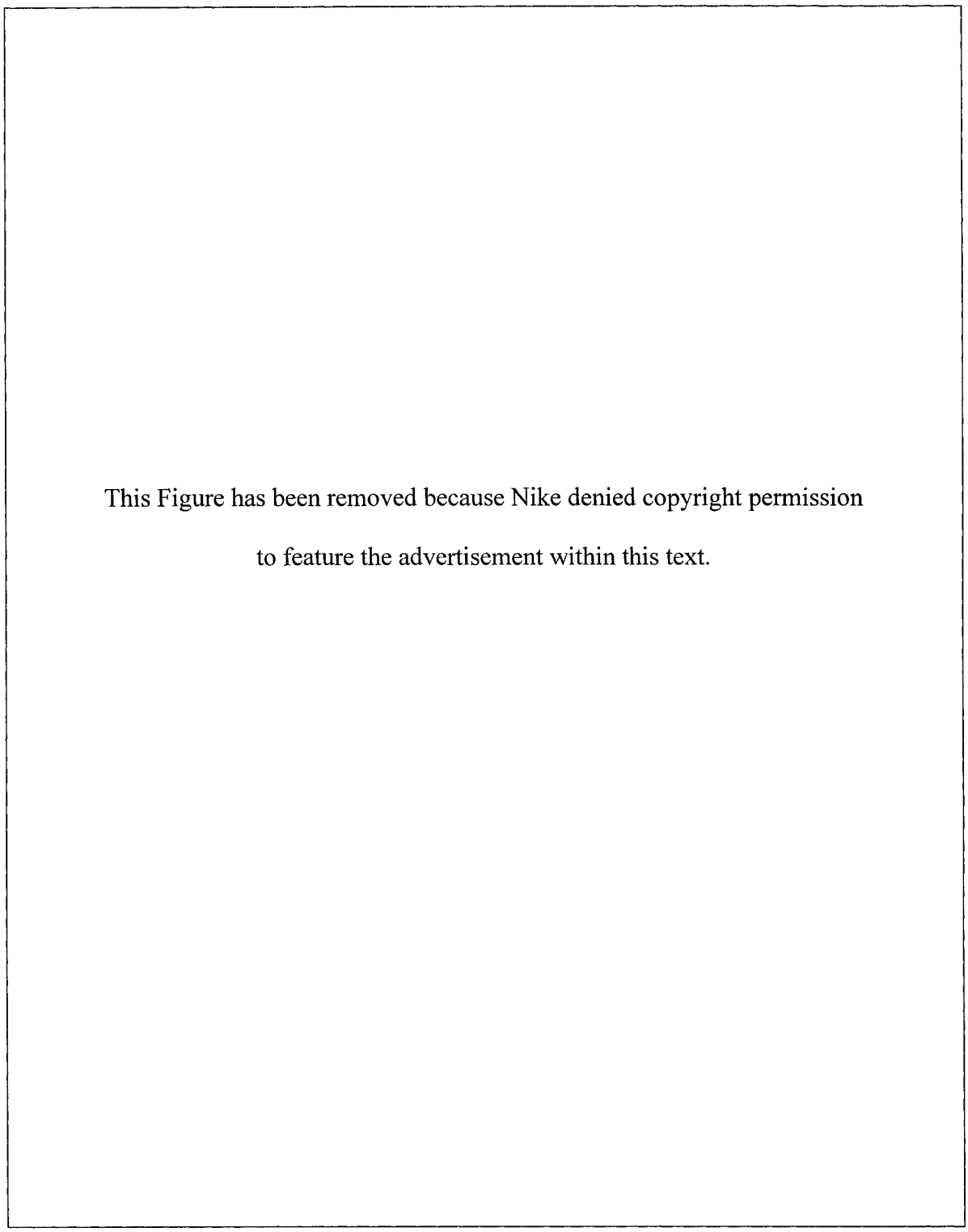

Figure 3-1, continued. Nike advertisement, "Oh you are so emotional", Vogue, April 1992.

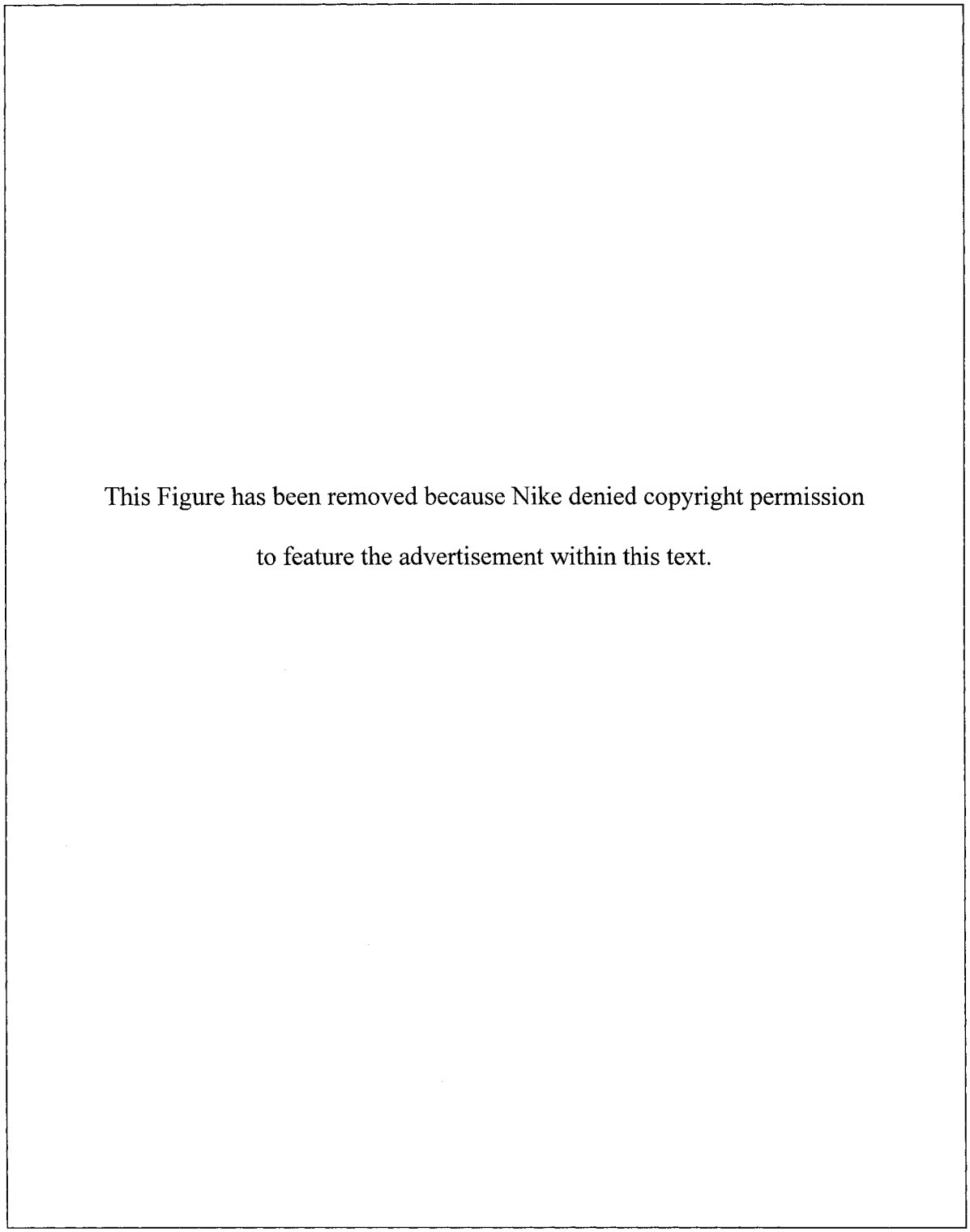

Figure 3-1, continued. Nike advertisement, "Oh you are so emotional", Vogue, April 1992.

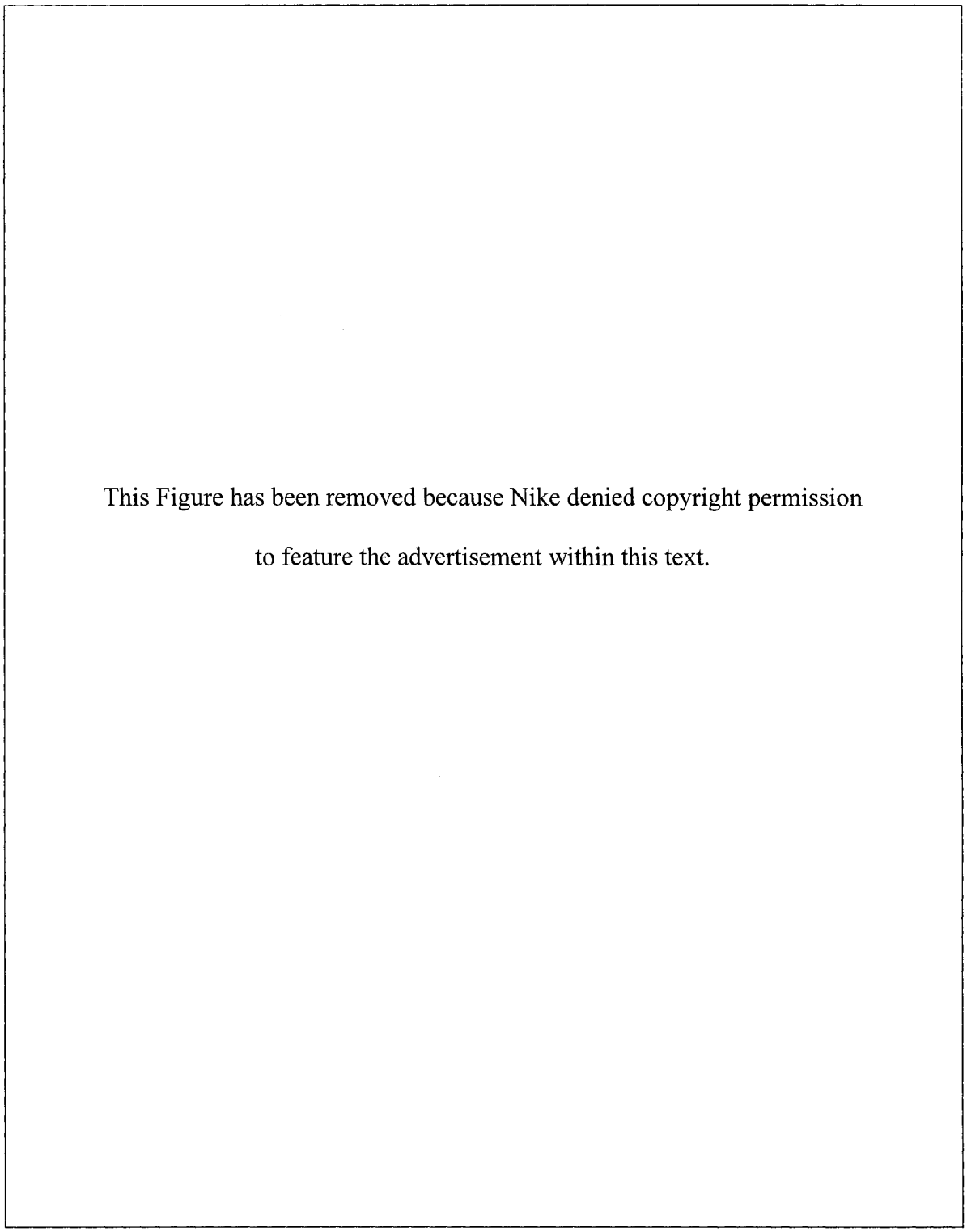

Figure 3-1, continued. Nike advertisement, "Oh you are so emotional", Vogue, April 1992.

The focus in this paper is on Nike's most recent advertising efforts directed to women. The newest generation of representational images, produced by Nike and directed at women, emphasize excellence for serious female athletes and athletics. A recent Nike internet site featured a new logo that incorporates the signature Swoosh and the title "Engineered for women athletes" (Nike, 1998). Images of female athletes appeared, seemingly engaged in their sport, and were accompanied by the following text:

> Athletes are driven by commitment, to their sport, to themselves, to excellence itself. Commitment fuels the extra mile, the final set, the last quarter, the sprint to the line, going on, when the body begs to stop. Nike is committed to helping all athletes bring out the best in themselves. Our commitment to women's athletic needs: products engineered specifically for women athletes (Nike, 1998).

These products are perhaps best characterized by the creation of the Air Swoopes, the first Nike shoes to be named after a female athlete: Cheryl Swoopes. The standout player from Texas Tech scored 47 points in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) women's final to lead her team to the national championship and break the record (previously held by Bill Walton) for the highest points total ever by a man or woman in an NCAA basketball title game (Jollimore, 1997, p. 259). Swoopes now plays with the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) Houston Comets and is considered one of the premier players in the WNBA. The excellence dialogue referred to on the web site and embodied by Swoopes and her shoe is also illustrated extensively throughout recent television and print images produced by Nike.

One example includes a series of commercials that aired during NCAA division one women's collegiate basketball in January to March of 1998 and 1999. The ten commercials follow a fictitious girl's high school basketball team from team tryouts through to the completion of their season with a state championship (Jensen, 1997, p. 1). Each advertisement begins with the title, "A Championship Season", imposed over the first scene and ends with a black and white still shot of a player(s) set behind a newspaper caption and the signature Nike Swoosh. Some of these captions include "Theresa (21) trades skin for win", "Kiesha (49 pts) sets school record", "Stanford Bound", "Sara's 3 saves the day", "Cougars sprint back, 71-41", and "State Champs!" The captions suggest that participation is about what you sacrifice, or how many points you score, or what records you set, or who wants you to play for them; that losing is okay as long as you hate it, you're willing to pay the price for it, and you win next time; and finally, in the end you should *simply* win it all.

The apparent authenticity of the commercials is attained through a low-budget look that features "timeless black-and-white imagery, the heroic slow motion at crucial points, [and] the unpolished voice-overs" (Frank, 1999, p. 79). This authenticity adds credibility to the ethos inscribed within the images and captions of the "Championship Season" commercials. This is an ethos that Nike is obviously invested in given that "although ad spending wasn't disclosed, a Nike spokeswoman said it will be on par with Nike's biggest ad efforts against its women's business" (Jensen, 1997, p. 6).

The excellence ethos is highlighted and complemented within a second set of Nike advertisements, four of which are described below to further underscore how the excellence logic appears. The commercials aired during WNBA telecasts during the summer of 1999 and featured a trio of young girls interacting with WNBA superstars Cynthia Cooper, Lisa Leslie, Sheryl Swoopes, and Tina Thompson. As fans who watch each WNBA game, the young girls are presented as confident and extremely competent experts of the women's game.

In each commercial, the threesome boldly approaches a WNBA superstar to share "a little friendly advice". They offer Lisa Leslie some offensive plays drawn out with crayon on scrap paper. They suggest that Leslie uses them or "New York is gonna shut [her] down". Approaching Lisa Leslie in a second commercial, the young girls chastise Leslie for buying high heel shoes that, in their opinion, are likely to "destroy her knees". "Pumps are for ex-players" they tell her. In a third commercial, the girls interrogate Cynthia Cooper as to why, during a recent game, she pulled up for a three rather than getting the ball to teammate Tina Thompson on the break. "Tina was open on the block, you know she's money down there...the way I see it you owe Tina an apology". Finally, the girls approach Sheryl Swoopes to offer advice on her jump shot. When Swoopes responds by asking the young girls where their mothers are, one of them replies "mama can't help your jump shot". The seriousness of purpose, the imperative to get it right, and/or to excel is once again inscribed within representational images produced by Nike.

With the latest production of Nike web sites, shoes named after elite women athletes, and numerous new advertisements, the 'female athlete' has again been produced within the discourse of Nike. Each of these representational images produced by Nike declares that mastery and excellence are the goals. And like the empathy campaign, this new direction is "represented as an indication of progress and evolution" (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 359).

In summary, prior to 1987 female athletes did not exist within the serious speech acts of the discourse of Nike and thus there was no possibility for them to be significantly legitimate participants within it. After 1987, the female athlete was included in serious speech acts within the discourse through television and print advertising. Thus, what is "within the true" of the discourse was established by constituting the object in particular ways. In other words, what or who is enabled or legitimated within the discourse was established, and conversely, what or who is limited or made illegitimate within the discourse was also established.

At the time of the Empathy/Dialogue campaign, exercise for self-transformation, growth, individuality, independence, and self-acceptance were "within the true" of the discourse of Nike. 'Female athletes' who participated and celebrated this way of being in sport were legitimated by and within the discourse. With the shifting representations within Nike advertisements, the 'female athlete' who competes hard and only accepts excellence is "within the true" and that way of being an athlete (or at least an aspiration to it) has become the legitimate choice. Therefore, the empowerment and self-acceptance that

could be achieved through exercise in the Empathy campaign is now achieved through working on the body in ways that produce excellence. This is the latest prescription for self-transformation within the discourse of Nike.

Excellence and Emancipation: The Rhetorical Value of the Pairing

Why does Nike make this appeal to excellence? Arguably, excellence is an elitist paradigm in which everybody but one person (or one team) is produced as a loser. It seems obvious that this would limit the number of women who would be "within the true" of the discourse, those who could or would be legitimate participants. How would this shift in representational images continue to make Nike popular?

Any attempt to answer this question must acknowledge that Nike does not exist in isolation. This is where my analysis must briefly draw upon the work of Cole and Hribar (1995), Lafrance (1998), and Lucas (2000) in providing context to Nike's success. As each of these scholarly works attest, Nike is only able to form and function within a range of conditions of possibility. For example, post-fordism, characterized as a shift away from "the mass production of standardized items" to a more "flexible accumulation characterized by agile relations among labor, products, and the market" (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 363), was a condition of possibility which allowed Nike to focus on smaller and more specific market targets including women.

For the purposes of this paper I am most interested in the conditions which lead to Nike's reliance upon an emancipatory narrative (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 362). One such condition was the "early feminist criticisms of images of women" which essentially "established feminism as a force which capitalism had to accommodate" (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 350). The necessity of this accommodation was particularly true with the passage of Title IX that resulted in an influx of girls and women into sport and therefore significantly increased the women's market in sport and fitness (Lucas, 2000, p. 151). Secondly, Reaganism (Cole and Hribar, 1995) or neo-conservatism (Lafrance, 1998) played a part in the positioning of the body by articulating "a logic that depends on free will and locates insufficient free will in the bodies of [unproductive and/or deviant] others" (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 355). This logic was created in part due to increased unemployment and poverty in 1980s America, which enabled the "Reagan administration [to] establish a national commonsense that transposed structural and social problems into individual inadequacies" (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 354). The logic suggested that anyone who did not succeed did not deserve to succeed. Thirdly, a neo-conservative attitude toward movement feminism introduced postfeminism as a significant condition of possibility for the discourse of Nike (Cole and Hribar, 1995 and Lafrance, 1998). A backlash against movement feminism which was denounced as "less compelling and outdated" was "instrumental in generating and circulating images of the 'new woman'", who exemplified "characteristics of the liberal subject: individuality, self-acceptance, choice, and independence" (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 357). This positing of the liberal subject is evidence of a fourth condition of possibility that Lafrance (2000) identifies as nostalgic liberalism. Liberal notions of freedom require that we have something to

reference our freedom against. The deviant or alienated bodies are necessary evidence that free will (or lack of it) can change our material realities.

Cole and Hribar (1995), Lafrance (1998), and Lucas (2000) have all identified and illustrated that emancipation or empowerment are always themes within Nike advertising to women because of and in response to the political, economic, and cultural conditions described above. Thus, although there have been shifts in the representational directions of Nike, the discursive strategies have remained the same in regards to constituting the 'female athlete'. Nike relies and has succeeded upon an emancipatory narrative "promoting a popular knowledge of empowerment embedded in bodily maintenance and the consumption of Nike products" (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 362). Although, in the Empathy/Dialogue campaign, bodily maintenance refers to exercise, this same empowering narrative accompanies the excellence oriented bodily maintenance sanctioned in Nike's most recent advertising.

It may at first appear illogical to suggest that excellence and emancipation can be so successfully paired. As indicated earlier, excellence is an elitist paradigm in which all but one person (or team) is produced as the loser. In opposition, emancipation is a democratic force in which all people (or teams) are free to achieve. This pairing works within the discourse of Nike because both excellence and emancipation are vacated of substantive meaning so that the rhetorical value of both overcomes the illogical nature of the pairing.

The following pages provide a psychoanalytic reading of this pairing in part through a current Nike advertisement that quite explicitly features this pairing. Nike again appeals to authenticity in a two-page glossy spread that is made to resemble an old torn scrapbook thrown open upon a table. The left-hand page of the scrapbook features a large color photo of Cynthia Cooper of the Women's National Basketball Association's Houston Comets. She proudly wears her team uniform and her smiling face glows from perspiration. Her hands are raised in anticipation of a high five with an approaching teammate. The arena fans are a blur behind her. The top left-hand corner of the page contains a much smaller black and white photograph of a small girl proudly wearing a Cynthia Cooper replica jersey over her white t-shirt. She wears a hopeful grin and has a basketball tucked tightly under her arm. The right hand page contains the following text.

TWO YEARS AGO, EVEN SHE DIDN'T KNOW SHE WAS A HERO.

How do you know you're a hero? Is there an exact moment –

when a little girl walks up to you wearing a team jersey,

and you realize it's yours?

Is it the first time you hear the sound of a sold out arena?

Or see your face on the front page of the sports section, instead of inside?

Two years ago if you asked someone who Cynthia Cooper was,

you might get a blank stare.

But after two WNBA championships, two MVP awards, two sparkling seasons

Full of enchanted, excited fans, when you ask, you'll hear:

"Man, that's who I want to be."

Just do it.

The advertisement (see Figure 3-2) is not only an example of the successful pairing of notions of excellence and emancipation, but also a tool for illustrating that the connection between them is not in the individual meaning of each term, but in the form of their combination.

Excellence

It is necessary to begin with a brief discussion of excellence to theorize this distinction. Nike's appeal to excellence works in part because as Readings (1996) indicates, "as an integrating principle, excellence has a singular advantage of being entirely meaningless, or to put it more precisely, non-referential" (p. 22). Thus, excellence can mean bringing out the best in yourself, going on when your body begs to stop, making the good pass, running the right plays, getting into Stanford, or winning a state championship. Or perhaps, as the *Hero* advertisement introduced above suggests, excellence can be equated to being a hero. However, as the ad questions, "How do you know you're a hero? Is there an exact moment...?" In other words, is excellence playing to a sold out arena, being on the front page of the sport section, or winning championships and MVP awards? What is significant is that it can be all and none of these things, *what it is* requires no explanation. Thus, Nike can invoke excellence within its representational images without naming a particular definition or meaning of excellence. On the web site, Nike can assert that "athletes are driven by commitment, to their sport, to themselves, to excellence itself", without committing, in a sense, to anything at all. This lack of a referent makes invisible, or at least slippery, questions of justice, ethics and values regarding what characterizes

This Figure has been removed because Nike denied copyright permission to feature the advertisement within this text.

Figure 3-2. Nike advertisement, "How do you know you're a hero?", Women's Sports & Fitness, March/April 1999.

excellence; who the judges are; and by what authority. Thus, even though particular values (what is "within the true") are apparent within representational images produced by Nike, the politics come to pass as excellence and function uncontested. "Excellence appears here as uncontestable ground, the rhetorical arm most likely to gain general assent" (Readings, 1996, p. 23).

Emancipation

This is particularly true when used in combination with themes of emancipation. To illustrate the significance of emancipation within this and other Nike advertisements, I will read emancipation according to two metaphors borrowed from Žižek (1992). First, emancipation can be viewed according to an Enlightenment understanding of reality. "The metaphor at work here is that of a glass surface sharpened, cut in a way that causes it to reflect a multitude of images" (Žižek, 1992, p. 11). If one looks at this piece of glass straight on it is possible to see clearly through it. This suggests that if we look at a thing objectively or straight on, we see it 'as it really is.' However, the view changes if one looks from an angle. Instead of the substantial 'reality' of the thing 'in itself', we see only its shadows if our view is distorted by failing to look straight on. This suggests that it is only when our gaze becomes distorted by our subjective views, interests and desires, that the thing becomes a blurred image. Utilizing this metaphor to view emancipation suggests that an objective view will produce truthful knowledge that will be utilized to assure progress and freedom. This metaphor is reminiscent of the neo-conservative, postfeminist and nostalgic liberal reasoning introduced earlier in the paper. The logic

suggests that everyone is free to succeed and that all it requires is a clear and focused commitment to the task at hand. Within Nike advertising, the claim is that if individuals, following the lead of Cynthia Cooper for example, view the task (excellence) objectively, refusing to let other desires and interests interfere, they will be emancipated. But emancipated from what?

From ourselves of course! Nike continually promises self-transformation through the various prescriptions of the discourse. Nike suggests that we can be freed from ourselves by offering us a vision of our 'true' self. Our 'true' self is defined precisely by its distance from whatever we are right now. It is, as the "Hero" advertisement suggests, "who [we] want to be". Read according to the first metaphor, it is that self that can be attained by participating in Cynthia Cooper's, and thus Nike's, clear vision of sport and refusing to concede to other desires or circumstances that may keep that self cast in shadows.

The second metaphor suggests a very different logic. The metaphor can be most clearly conceived of by way of a work of art, painted in 1533, by Hans Holbein and titled "Ambassadors" (Žižek, 1992, p. 90). The painting is of two cloaked European men, surrounded by the navigational devices of their time. When looking at the painting straight on a seemingly formless stain appears in the central bottom half of the work. However, when this stain is viewed from a lateral perspective it acquires the distinctive form of a skull. The image only appears intelligible when viewed from a particular location or perspective. The metaphor suggests that,

> [I]f we look at a thing straight on, i.e., matter-of-factly, disinterestedly, objectively, we see nothing but a formless spot; the object assumes clear and distinctive features only if we look at it 'at an angle,' i.e., with an 'interested' view, supported, permeated, and 'distorted' by *desire* (Žižek, 1992, p. 12, emphasis in original).

In the context of Nike, this metaphor suggests that it is only by looking at the "Hero" advertisement with a gaze distorted by a desire for emancipation (to become more than whatever we are right now), that this emancipation is intelligible or more specifically, thought to be a possibility. This gaze distorted by a desire for emancipation is the effect of neo-conservative, postfeminist, and nostalgic liberal rhetoric.

To assert the veracity of this last statement requires a more thorough psychoanalytic explanation. Such an explanation cannot proceed without reference to Jacques Lacan's three psychic orders: the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real. A Lacanian psychoanalytic understanding of the meanings of these terms is very different from the conventional definitions most often attributed to the terms symbolic, imaginary, and real.[3]

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[3] Lacan is often criticized for the obscurity of his psychoanalytic language. This obscurity has even been seen by some as "a deliberate attempt to ensure that Lacanian discourse remains the exclusive property of a small intellectual elite, and to protect it from external criticism" (Dylan, 1996, p. ix). I have therefore attempted to provide some explanation of what may be unfamiliar language to some so that any criticism of my ideas can be attributed to the ideas themselves and not to the language in which they are expressed (although the distinction between the ideas and the language is somewhat artificial).

Therefore, I have borrowed a short story from Saki to illustrate the psychoanalytic meaning of these Lacanian orders:

> [A] guest arrives at a country house and looks through the spacious French window at the field behind the house; the daughter of the family, the only one to receive him upon his arrival, tells him that all other members of the family had died recently in an accident; soon afterward, when the guest looks through the window again, he sees them approaching slowly across the field, returning from the hunt. Convinced that what he sees are ghosts of the deceased, he runs away in horror . . . (The daughter is of course a clever pathological liar. For her family, she quickly concocts another story to explain why the guest left the house in a panic) (Saki in Žižek, 1992, p. 171).

Within this story, it is possible to place the three orders of Lacan: the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real. The inside (the country house) can be equated, for the purpose of explanation, within the symbolic order. This order is that of language and it is at the level of the signifier. It is also the place of movement, slippage and difference. What is conventionally known as reality (the material, cultural and political conditions with which we live) is understood in a Lacanian or Zizekian sense to belong to this order.[4] In the story, it is the words of the young girl that create the material conditions or reality within the house.

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[4] It is important to note that the three psychic orders exist in a necessary relation to each other. Lacan often describes the orders as a Borromean knot or chain; if any of the rings of the knot is cut the entire chain falls apart (Dylan, 1996, p. 18). Therefore, it is somewhat simplistic to suggest that something exist squarely within only one psychic order.

The window can be equated with that of the imaginary order or fantasmatic screen, which exists at the level of the signified. This order exists in a necessary relation to the symbolic. The imaginary creates a unity to what is understood to be true within the symbolic. Within the story, what is understood in the symbolic is thus stabilized when the visitor looks out the window and sees (or misrecognizes) the young girl's family as ghosts. The sighting of ghosts confirms for the visitor that the family is dead. Thus, the imaginary operates within the symbolic to bring unity between the signifier and the signified and to cement that meaning to a referent.

Within the context of Nike, neo-conservatism, postfeminism, nostalgic liberalism and various discourses of excellence can be said to create some of the significant conditions within the symbolic. These conditions create the signifiers of freedom, success, and the female athlete among others. However, these signifiers are always slipping. The signifier 'female athlete' for example, can only ever be defined within language by more signifiers. However, within the imaginary, emancipation, excellence, and the female athlete are misrecognized as stable and unified concepts. The ideal of each term is understood to represent the term wholly. So that, for example, rather than defining the female athlete through language (and thus more signifiers), a concept or ideal of the female athlete is attached to the signifier and is understood as a stable relation.

Finally, the outside (the field) can be equated with the real psychic order, which exists beyond language and is in effect the ineffable. Within the story, who or what is coming in

from the field (hard working family or ghosts of a dead family) can only be spoken or known in reference to the symbolic and the imaginary. It is impossible to speak of what is 'really' there because the referent only exists in relation to the frame through which we see it. In the context of Nike, then, there is not an essence to a female athlete, or to freedom or success. There is not something that is really there, something that defines these terms in and of themselves. Instead we only know the female athlete, or emancipation, or excellence in reference to their relation within the symbolic and the imaginary.

Žižek (1992) indicates that in the story "a few words encircling the window with a new frame of reference suffice to transform it miraculously into a fantasy frame and to transubstantiate the muddy tenants into frightful ghostly apparitions" (p. 171). This means (within the context of this story) that the material conditions on the inside (symbolic) can serve to transform how the window (imaginary or fantasy screen) frames what appears outside (real).

Thus, by way of the first metaphor, emancipation is constituted as an appealing possibility in an Enlightenment understanding of reality. Consequently, emancipation is a significant material condition within the symbolic order that situates our 'eye' so that a particular imaginary is perceived.

> For there to be an illusion, for there to be a world constituted, in front of the eye looking, in which the imaginary can include the real and, by the same token,

> fashion it...one condition must be fulfilled--as I have said, the eye must be in a specific position . . . (Lacan, 1988, p. 80).

Within Nike's narratives, the theme of emancipation establishes a belief (fantasy) that progress, as a result of true and innocent knowledge and effort, will free us to become "who [we] want to be". This belief or position locates the 'eye' (as symbolic of the subject) so that we come to perceive of a particular imaginary. In this case a particular and unified idea or concept of "who [we] want to be". This is significant to the second metaphor because what we come to perceive in the imaginary will construct our desire. As Žižek (1992) suggests,

> desire is not something given in advance, but something that has to be constructed - and it is precisely the role of fantasy to give the coordinates of the subject's desire, to specify its object, to locate the position the subject assumes in it. It is only through fantasy that the subject is constituted as desiring: *through fantasy, we learn how to desire* (p. 6, emphasis in original).

Fantasy is not a scene in which our desire for emancipation is fully satisfied but instead it is a scene that stages the desire as such. It is a scene that stages our desire for emancipation as something that can be fully satisfied. We therefore only 'realize desire' by consistently postponing it, through fantasy that suggests that such fulfillment does exist.

Emancipation is so successful as a rhetorical device within Nike advertising because it functions according to the second metaphor but it is so easily disguised as functioning according to the first metaphor. When the emancipation promised by Nike is continually

postponed (as it must always be), it can be attributed to 'looking awry' with a gaze distorted by desire. This is the level of the first metaphor. Any failure to become more than whatever one is at the moment can be attributed to other desires, interests or circumstances interfering. The metaphor (echoing neo-conservative rhetoric) suggests that an individual must not allow prejudices (theirs or others) associated with circumstances of race, class, gender, sexuality or physical ability to bias their efforts (as if transcending these things is simply a matter of will and effort). One must simply work harder to transcend all circumstance, to produce better knowledge or a better effort that will necessarily be purely emancipatory.

On the level of the second metaphor however, this view distorted by desire is necessary to even perceive of emancipation. The gaze distorted by desire can perceive of emancipation because this emancipation is "posited by desire itself", and in fact does not exist for a gaze void of desire (Žižek, 1992, p. 12). Fantasy suggests that the freedom to become "who I want to be" is possible (through the first metaphor), and as such creates a desire for precisely that possibility. However, in functioning according to the second metaphor, emancipation is a reiterative performative failure. Regardless of who we become, we will always believe that we should be more because the idealization ("Who I want to be") of the discursively produced subject of Nike is the embodiment of desire constructed by fantasy at the level of the signified. "Who I want to be" is an idea or image that is a "reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer" (Butler, 1993, p. 234). However, the construction of this desire, to become "who I want to be", over and over again is what props up the mythic norm of the first metaphor,

producing emancipation as an apparently knowable, desirable and achievable condition within the discourse of Nike.

The non-referential appeal

It was indicated earlier in the paper that excellence within Nike advertising is non-referential. In the "Hero" advertisement, the series of questions that might define excellence actually serve to make any attempt at a definition more ambiguous.

> How do you know you're a hero? Is there an exact moment –
>
> when a little girl walks up to you wearing a team jersey,
>
> and you realize it's yours?
>
> Is it the first time you hear the sound of a sold out arena?
>
> Or see your face on the front page of the sports section, instead of inside?

The closest thing to an answer that the advertisement provides is that you know you have made it when you hear "Man, that's who I want to be". Thus, Nike's answer to the characteristics of excellence is reference to the similarly non-defined subject of emancipation. Being a likeness of Cynthia Cooper may serve as an example of "who I want to be" within this advertisement. However, as the advertisement states, "Two years ago, even she didn't know she was a hero". This statement suggests that at this moment any one of us may unknowingly be a hero, but it also suggests that it is just as likely that we may have some significant work to do before we can hope to be a hero. Thus, even though we cannot define the characteristics of a hero or specify an exact moment when

one becomes a hero, we are free to aspire to the non-referential appeal just as we are to assume Cynthia Cooper did.

Similarly to the functioning of excellence, the lack of a referent in relation to the emancipatory subject of the advertisement allows the politics of the production of that subject to pass simply as empowering narratives and to function uncontested. The justice, ethics and values surrounding the defining characteristics (what is "within the true") of what one should aspire to be are rendered invisible.

Within the discourse of Nike, one can never be satisfied with anything less than excellence and becoming "who they want to be", but since neither is defined nor fixed, one can never be satisfied. Thus, the connection between excellence and emancipation is not in the literal meanings of the terms but in the similar form that each takes. It is the necessary failure of each term that connects them in their rhetorical value. This reiterative performative failure continually sets both up as desirable possibilities.

Conclusions

Excellence and emancipation, through an interplay of the symbolic and imaginary, are produced as desirable and possible, but are in effect, not attainable. Nike, by virtue of its corporate success in advertising, has gained a primary position among sport manufacturers and as such has been posited as the (albeit contestable) expert in the domain of sport for female athletes. Thus, the reiterative performative failure of

excellence and emancipation results in female viewers continually measuring and policing their progress toward these non-referential goals. As indicated in the previous section, even though Nike may publicize and authorize particular values (that which is "within the true") they do not have to explicitly name those values. Thus, the politics inherent in the shifting representations, those that judge them, and by what authority, can and do remain unsaid. The result is that in the guise of democratic participation and personal empowerment, Nike's popular knowledge of what or who the female athlete *is* continues to increase, and so too does their control over what or who can be constituted as the female athlete, and vice versa. This means that, as women continually measure and police their progress toward excellence, they come to embody the pursuit so that it feels normal, natural, and innocent to aspire to the prescriptions of Nike advertising. The authority of Nike to provide prescriptions to excellence and emancipation, to define what is "within the true", is accepted while the politics behind the production of that truth remains unquestioned.

Even in and because of its non-referential state, excellence within Nike advertisements becomes associated with the normal or the natural. Excellence could be scoring 49 points, winning the championship, or becoming a hero. It could be none of those things. However, what it always is, is that thing that is dominant or "within the true" in the discourse of Nike; that thing to which it is normal and natural to aspire; that thing, that will allow you to become "what [you] want to be". Thus, what you are right now becomes the abnormal, the necessary contradiction to excellence. Excellence is connected to the normal and emancipation is necessary to make whatever you are right now into

"who [you] want to be". In effect, emancipation is necessary to make the abnormal, normal. Therefore, the romanticized notion of emancipation becomes an instance of social control. Emancipation is not enabling or subversive in this instance, but rather limiting. Emancipation has been recouped by a neo-conservative politic through the interaction of the symbolic and the imaginary. Thus, although Nike "positions the social as constraining" (Goldman and Papson, 1998, p. 162), Nike advertising is a regulation and reification of the very constraints from which emancipation is sought.

This is not to say that one should be opposed to the liberal practices suggested in many Nike advertisements. It does not mean that individuals should refuse to participate in Nike's vision of sport, or reject practices that may appear to be emancipatory. Rather, there must be awareness that liberal practices do not have guaranteed effects. It should be acknowledged that narratives like the ones produced by Nike are not necessarily a way to progress to a more true self, as the imaginary identification with them might suggest. They cannot and should not be celebrated as a path to a disavowal of material realities or guaranteed transcendence. Instead such narratives should be recognized as illustrative of what might be characterized as a desire and thus a need for progress, a felt necessity to imagine that we can become "who [we] want to be". The interplay of excellence and emancipation within the symbolic and imaginary psychic orders and the incorporation of a neo-conservative, postfeminist politics within that psyche have created this felt necessity. There is a need for further examination of the significance and implications of this felt necessity in situating our 'eye' within the symbolic. This location constructs particular desires within the imaginary, producing significant material and political

effects, such as the continued pervasiveness of the production and consumption of Nike products, which are substantiated in the symbolic.

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PAPER #4

Whatever female athlete: Nike, community and singularities

It's of me that I must speak, even if I have to do it with their language, it will be a start, a step towards silence and the end of madness, the madness of having to speak and not being able to, except of things that don't concern me, that don't count, that I don't believe, that they have crammed me full of to prevent me from saying who I am[1].

Samuel Beckett, The Unnamable, p. 324.

It's of [the female athlete] that I must speak,

> Words have meanings: some words, however, also have a 'feel'. The word 'community' is one of them. It feels good: whatever the word 'community' may mean, it is good 'to have a community', 'to be in a community'...Community, we feel, is always a good thing. (Bauman, 2001, p. 1).

Within sport, community often manifests itself in celebrations of team unity and sacrifice. If a group (or team) can come together, leaving individual desires and characteristics behind, the team as a unified and harmonious group is more likely to accomplish their goals. This is the logic behind common sport rhetoric such as, "there is no 'I' in team" or "more we, less me" and the impetus behind the prominent desire or demand that athletes be 'good' team players. This team dynamic seems particularly celebrated within women's

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[1] I thank Dr. Christopher Bracken for introducing me to this quotation.

sport because the necessary characteristics of care, interdependence, and compassion are exemplars of normative femininity, as opposed to the individualism and competitiveness attributed to masculinity and thus male sport.

In a similar logic, women have formed political groups and alliances to work against the alienation, individualism and oppression of capitalist patriarchal society. The work of feminism has made its way into many aspects of women's lives including sport and physical activity. Sport, historically regarded and understood as a male preserve (Cahn, 1994; Dunning, 1986; Nelson, 1991; Theberge, 1985; Whitson, 1990), has been a major site of contestation for increased opportunities and acceptance. When individuals are marginalized, as female athletes have historically been in sport, there is an understandable desire and necessity to come together with others to share in mutual identification and to pursue mutual rights and affirmations. Community, as representative of solidarity and unification, is understood to be productive. Community is, therefore, a powerful construct in the discourses of both feminism and sport and so it is not surprising that it is a preeminent virtue in attempts to speak about, to, or for, the female athlete.

Nike, and its advertising to female consumers, is a powerful contemporary example of a location where sport, feminism and community have come together within a popular imaginary. Nike marketing directed to female consumers rarely features product as the center of advertising. Instead narratives are presented in which the principal characters wear the products that feature the signature *swoosh* design. The pervasive presence and recognition of this logo mean that it alone can sell the Nike ethos, image and products.

The endeavor of the narratives within the advertisements is not to extol the virtues of Nike shoes, shirt, pants, or equipment (at least not explicitly). Instead the ads serve to create a solidarity of female athletes around a primary identity (women) and collective values (emancipation, empowerment, excellence).

In part, Nike advertising works because it denies itself as advertising and posits its advertisements (individually and collectively) as an expression of community. In their book "Nike Culture", Robert Goldman and Stephen Papson (1998) say,

> Nike ads create a community of athletes who share the Nike philosophy...viewers are positioned as part of this camaraderie. We are included in the playful exchanges. We are invited into the conversation, and into the community. (p. 65)

This is reiterated by Cole, in an anecdote about an airline stewardess, as a way of opening her and Amy Hribar's 1995 journal article on Nike marketing to women.

> She told me that she now lived by *their* motto. What grew even more apparent was that by her view, we shared 'Nike' – we were part of a community imagined through a spiritual sense of womanhood that had been cultivated and that was signified by Nike's now famous swoosh and directive (p. 348).

Cole (1995) goes on to say,

> ...I was discouraged that she credited her attitude and identity to a multinational corporation rather than what I perceived to be the more deserving feminist movement, perhaps I was mistaken to assume a distance between Nike and feminism (p. 348).

Perhaps what Nike and feminism do have in common in this situation is that both (for arguably starkly different reasons and intentions) are speaking to and for female athletes and do so through appeals to mutual identification and affirmation. However, where feminism becomes distinguishable is in manifestations of reflexivity related to expressions and celebrations of community. In part, this questioning of community came in response to calls to recognize difference within feminist movements that seemed to be predicated upon "common oppression" (hooks, 1995, p. 294).

> So, I began doing feminist theory challenging the prevailing construction of womanhood in the feminist movement. I wrote 'Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism', which initially met with tremendous resistance and hostility because it was going against the whole feminist idea that 'Women share a common plight.' I was saying that, in fact, women don't share a common plight solely because we're women – that our experiences are very, very different. (hooks, 1994, p. 231)

hooks (1994) goes on to say that people were "really pissed" that she would suggest that differences in relation to race, class, and sexuality could disrupt some sort of unified notion of woman and thus women's oppression (231). As Weedon (1997) has suggested, when faced with the dissolution of the unified concept of woman some wondered "how...could women organize together and develop new positive identities if there were no essence of womanhood on which women could come together in the spirit of sisterhood" (p. 170)?

As Iris Marion Young (1990) points out this has been the paradox for feminists.

> The commitments and concerns that motivate [the critique of community]... derive in large measure from my experience with feminist groups and discussions. On the one hand, feminists have been paradigm exponents of the ideal of community I criticize. On the other hand, feminist discussions of the importance of attending to differences among women are a primary political impetus for my seeking to criticize that ideal. (p. 300)

Attending to difference seems to impede the powerful 'feel' (Bauman, 2001, p. 1) of coming together. Paradoxically, if groups come together reflexively there is a necessity to attend to difference. The difficult question is, can community and difference coexist? Arguably, "a desire for community in feminist groups...helps reproduce their homogeneity" in that "those motivated by it will tend to suppress differences among themselves or implicitly to exclude from their political groups persons with whom they do not identify" (Young, 1990, p. 300-301). This may mean that a desire for mutual identification in even the best-intentioned, politicized individual "hampers the implementation of a principled call for heterogeneity" (Young, 1990, p. 312). This has meant that some "continually resist surrendering complexity to be accepted in groups where subjectivity is flattened out in the interest of harmony or a unitary political vision" (hooks, 1994, p. 208).

As this discussion illustrates, community, unity, solidarity, harmony and homogeneity often get set up in opposition to liberal individualism, difference, multiplicity, and heterogeneity. It becomes difficult if not impossible for some feminists to imagine how to

ethically proceed when two things they value (community and difference) are set up as oppositional politics. However, it is important to note that communitarians do not have sole possession of the denial or assimilation of difference.

> Each entails a denial of difference...liberal individualism denies difference by positing the self as a solid, self-sufficient unity, not defined by or in need of anything or anyone other than itself. Its formalistic ethic of rights denies difference by leveling all such separated individuals under a common measure of rights. Community, on the other hand, denies difference by positing fusion rather than separation as the social ideal. Community proponents conceive the social subject as a relation of unity composed by identification and symmetry among individuals within a totality. (Young, 2001, p. 307)

Individualism and community therefore are not necessarily alternatives to each other. Although they are set up as either/or categories each is always already implicated in the other. Derrida (1967/1974) says that this either/or logic is the way of conceptualizing the world in the tradition of western philosophical thought. Derrida urges us to resist the necessity to reduce things to either/or categories and instead to embrace neither, nor, and both. In short, he urges us to insist on undecidability and disrupt the comfort of order (Derrida, 1967/1974, 1978).

This is my task within this paper. As a self-identified feminist scholar who also happens to be passionate about participating in, reading about, and watching sport, I find myself implicated and complicit in discourses of community at its intersections with feminism and sport. I understand, participate in, and defend the impulse to speak to and on behalf

of the female athlete in attempts to increase rights, recognition and affirmation. However, I also recognize the violence I necessarily (even if not intentionally) invoke in speaking to and on behalf of the female athlete, when this necessitates naming to whom I speak and on whose behalf. I, therefore, acknowledge the apparently contradictory necessity of both speech and silence. I will embrace both speech and silence within this paper but to do so I will need to struggle against (as best I can) the either/or logic that would force me to choose one over the other and instead embrace the logic of neither, nor, and both.

Some may accuse me of simply playing a game of philosophical logic because much of what I have to say plays with alternative ways to think community whose explanations are at times confounding and whose applications are not always immediately apparent. I do not apologize for this because I think this is to be expected when working through ideas and applications that are at times counterintuitive to western philosophical thought. The struggle to think and articulate the world differently is its own political action. That said, I will also do my best to respond to such criticisms through an attempt to explicate these ideas in reference to Nike advertising to women, thereby providing some thoughts about how this thinking might work and be productive (outside of theory as its own form of practice). However, my applications can serve only as an example (and I ask that you keep this in mind until the significance of this statement is exposed later in this paper).

As I suggested earlier, Nike, within its very successful advertising campaigns to women, has embraced discourses of sport, feminism, and community. It is therefore a productive place to illustrate the imperative of community, the necessary failure of communities of

identification, and the possibilities of thinking community and its politics differently. Thus, I must (and will) speak of the female athlete, but I will speak of the female athlete differently.

When I speak of the 'female athlete', I speak of a "whatever singularity"; a whatever athlete (Agamben, 1990/1993, p. 1). I reclaim the "such and such being" from "its having this or that property [white, heterosexual, healthy, progressive, independent, intense, focused, competitive, etc.], which identifies it as belonging to this or that set, to this or that class [the female athlete]" (Agamben, 1990/1993, p. 1). I reclaim it, not for another class [the athlete, the women, the black female athlete, etc], nor for the simple absence of a class [not a white female athlete, etc], but for "its being-*such*, for belonging itself" (Agamben, 1990/1993, p. 2).[2]

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[2] I have borrowed here from Agamben's aphoristic style because at this point in the paper it is not my intention to provide a 'complete' expression of the whatever female athlete (in part because this is not possible or desirable). The intention of this paragraph is to offer an overview of a different way to speak about the female athlete which engages the logic of neither, nor, and both, while highlighting the perplexity and unfamiliarity of this way of thinking about the female athlete. The sections to follow will, in turn, take up and work through small pieces of this paragraph, providing further explanation, context, and examples. Each section will add something to the understanding of whatever female athlete, but no section will (or can) express it all.

even if I have to do it with their language,

I speak of and to the female athlete in this context in order to offer a deconstruction of community at its intersections with identification and belonging. Much has been mistakenly attributed to deconstruction including a kind of philosophical nihilism that assumes that deconstruction dismisses, negates, or destroys the subject of the analysis. According to Derrida (1967/1974), this appropriation is an impossibility.

> The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a certain way, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not know it. (p. 24)

There is no possibility of doing without the concepts of the structure in order to shake the structure. "[T]he concepts are indispensable for unsettling the heritage to which they belong" (Derrida, 1967/1974, p. 14). As Butler (1993) suggests,

> That the term is questionable does not mean that we ought not to use it, but neither does the necessity to use it mean that we ought not perpetually to interrogate the exclusions by which it proceeds, and to do this precisely in order to learn how to live the contingency of the political signifier in a culture of democratic contestation (p. 222).

Thus, my project is not to dismiss and negate the concept of community, but rather to question and interrogate community for the power and politics that govern our conceptions of it. I hope to expose openings and possibilities so that perhaps community can be thought in a different way.

And so, I return to the "whatever singularity" and *belonging itself.* This *belonging itself* is a *being-called,* or a *being in language.* The term or word 'female athlete' is signifying the female athlete or the female athlete in her being. However, the female athlete in her being must be differentiated from her *being-called* female athlete, or from her *being in language.*

By way of explanation, I turn to the somewhat less complicated and mundane example of a pen. As I write, I hold in my hand a pen that is black with a silver pocket clip, fourteen centimeters long, and two centimeters in circumference. The word 'pen' signifies this pen in its being. However, this pen in its being, must be differentiated from its *being-called* pen, its *being in language. Being-called* pen, that is the signifier 'pen', does not necessarily inform what is affirmed or denied about being a pen. Calling this pen, which I hold in my hand, a pen, does not affirm or deny what it means to *be* a pen. If calling this pen, that I hold, a pen, meant that all pens had to be black with a silver pocket clip, fourteen centimeters long, and two centimeters in circumference, then the pen that you hold (because it is blue or red or green or translucent, or because it doesn't have a pocket clip or it has a gold pocket clip, or because it is shorter or longer than fourteen centimeters) couldn't be a pen. But clearly, not all pens are black with a silver pocket clip, fourteen centimeters long, and two centimeters in circumference, yet they are still pens. This is the differentiation between my pen in its being, and it *being-called* pen.

Being-called female athlete does not form or inform what is affirmed or denied about *being* a female athlete. "*Being in language* is the non-predicative property par excellence

that belongs to each member of a class and at the same time makes its belonging an aporia" (Agamben, 1990/1993, p. 73). Thus, *being-called* female athlete assures a belonging but only to a "set [the female athlete] that is at the same time a singularity [*the* female athlete, *a* female athlete, *this* female athlete]" (Agamben, 1990/1993, p. 9). This results in a gap, a difficulty, because the comprehension of *the* female athlete, *a* female athlete, *this* female athlete is and can only be relational. That is, we only make sense of *the* female athlete, *a* female athlete, *this* female athlete, in relation to a category or class of female athletes (just as we only made sense of my black pen in relation to a class of pens, which can never be defined as a unitary essence – "a pen is…", "an athlete is…"). Whatever, as singularity, cannot be defined in its own positive terms. "Whatever singularity", whatever athlete as singularity, is only ever one in relation to a group of others, and this necessitates belonging (not a belonging *to*, but a belonging *itself*).

Elsewhere, sport scholars have highlighted the changing representations of the female athlete within Nike advertising to women: from no to little representation in the late 1980s (Cole and Hribar, 1995; Capon & Helstein, in press; Helstein, 2002; Helstein, in press; Lafrance, 1998), to the progressive, independent woman of the early to mid 1990s (Cole and Hribar, 1995; Helstein, 2002; Helstein, in press), and finally to the excellence oriented female athlete of current and recent Nike advertising to female consumers (Cole and Hribar, 1995; Capon & Helstein, in press; Helstein, 2002; Helstein, in press; Lafrance, 1998; Lucas, 2000). Whether one reads these changing representations as progressive or politically suspect is really beside the point here. The point is that replacing woman as suspect athlete (prior to 1987) with woman as serious female athlete

(present) still necessitates talking about the female athlete as belonging *to* some class with this or that property. The properties have changed, but the necessity to belong *to* has remained. Even if or when one tries to be extremely inclusive about what necessitates belonging *to*, exclusions are the result.

As stated on their website, Nike's mission is "to bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete* in the world" (Nike, 2003). Below this statement the asterisk is defined as "if you have a body, you are an athlete", a quote attributed to Bill Bowerman, the legendary track and field coach who was a co-founder of Nike (Nike, 2003). The quote is meant to assure us that Nike's philosophy of free will and transcendence is for everyone, because everyone has a body. This commonsense assumption is disrupted if one looks closely at what counts as a body within Nike advertising.

Perhaps the most salient recent example is an extreme sport advertisement (see Figure 4-1) that occurred in a number of outdoor magazines (such as Outside) late in the year 2000, but was quickly pulled by Nike after numerous complaints. The advertisement featured extensive black text framed on a solid bright red background. The paragraph that caused the controversy reads,

> Right about now you're probably asking yourself, 'How can a trail running shoe with an outer sole designed like a goat's hoof help me avoid compressing my spinal cord into a Slinky on the side of some unsuspecting conifer, thereby

This Figure has been removed because Nike denied copyright permission to feature the advertisement within this text.

Figure 4-1. Nike advertisement, "Extreme", Outside, 2000

> rendering me a drooling, misshapen non-extreme-trail-running husk of my former self, forced to roam the earth in a motorized wheelchair with my name, embossed on one of those cute little license plates you get at carnivals or state fairs, fastened to the back?'

This representation produces a particular knowledge about the 'disabled' body, and arguably and unfortunately that knowledge suggests that this body is a necessary contradiction to the athletic body. The 'disabled' body and the athletic body are here mutually exclusive. I mention this extreme sport advertisement, even though it is not directed specifically to female consumers, because it is a very explicit example of the ways in which only certain bodies are made to count within Nike advertising.

Less explicit, but equally significant examples exist within various explorations of Nike advertising. For example, Cole and Hribar (1995) and Cole (1998) speak at length to the productive bodies of Nike advertising as they are set up in complete opposition to "AIDS bodies, crack bodies, criminal bodies, [and] welfare bodies" (Cole and Hribar, 1995, p. 355). Capon and Helstein (in press) speak to ways in which strong and muscular female bodies are marked as hyperfeminine (and in conflation heterosexual, through reference to marriage and motherhood, etc.) or as black (arguably because through historical constructions of slavery, black femininity is more aligned with masculine qualities of sport, such as strength and power, than is conventional white femininity). The masculinized white female body, the soft and passive black body, and the explicitly homosexual body remain generally absent. Lafrance (1998) and Cole and Hribar (1995) speak to how the empowered white western female body of Nike advertising can only

exist at the expense and invisibility of the exploited and oppressed body of Third World women. So, the seemingly inclusive Bowerman statement, "if you have a body, you are an athlete" is accurate, if your body counts as a body.

The purpose of the critical commentaries on Nike advertising to women, described above, has been to make visible what is excluded and open up what counts within Nike and the popular imaginary. Critics (Capon , Cole, Helstein, Hribar, and Lafrance) have made attempts to open up the categories of empowered women and female athletes to be more inclusive, to acknowledge those women who are currently the invisible outside and to make them part of the discourse. This is extremely important work. However, within the context of this paper, I think it comes up short in that it falls into the logic of belonging *to*.

We need to move beyond only trying to say "a female athlete is..." or "an empowered female is or is not..." because it only ever returns us to a belonging *to* which necessarily excludes, even in its inability to be stated in its own positive (essentialized) terms. Alongside our current critiques we must recognize the place of *being-called* or *belonging itself.* Whatever properties the female athlete may or may not possess, or whomever the empowered woman of Nike might include or exclude, by virtue of *being- called* female and/or *being-called* athlete, female athletes are put into relation with other singularities. This relation or exposure takes place at the limit and thus always already implicates the inside and the outside as neither, nor, and both. I will get to that later.

it will be a start,

It is possible to think community while refusing identity politics based on an understanding of a whatever athlete. This singularity as opposed to an individual makes it possible and necessary to speak of a community of articulation rather than a community of identification.

Identity politics rely on a notion of self-presence, the ability of the individual to have a knowledge of "this is me". It requires the individual to define/name their essence and to base community on a solidarity, harmony or agreement around that essence. Again, let me turn to Nike as an instructive example, not only of a community of identification, but of how that community fails.

In 1999, as a lead in to the Women's World Cup of Soccer, Nike ran a series of commercials that featured the United States Women's National Soccer team, lead by their superstar Mia Hamm. One of the commercial begins with Hamm (who remains unnamed in the commercial) as she monologues the following oath.

> We are flesh and we are blood
>
> and we are bound together
>
> For better, or worse,
>
> In sickness and in health

Through thick and through thin

In good times and in bad

Until death or the world championship title, do us part.

"An ear-piercing scream calls the others to order" (Goldman and Papson, 1998, p. 130) and the vows are repeated by the entire team against a milieu of intense action images that include among others, aggressive goal scoring, determined defensive efforts, courageous headers and gritty down in the mud attempts to gain control of the ball.

The mimicking of traditional marriage vows is not easily overlooked. The words and the cadence are there purposefully to indicate what is at stake in this vow. They connote the intensity of the commitment and the harmony implicit in the vows (Goldman and Papson, 1998, p. 130). This citation of community is meant to suggest that the women share an unlimited immanence and intimacy that is both desirable and necessary for their success.

This immanence is articulated most clearly in the opening statement "we are flesh and we are blood and we are bound together". The etymological foundation of the word immanence, is the combination of the prefix 'in' and the French verb 'menare', which means "to dwell, remain" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2002). Immanence is thus an in-dwelling. In Derridean terms, we can read this as suggesting the negation of an outside. There is, only an inside, that is, there is no difference only sameness. The first line of the commercial, ("we are flesh and we are blood and we are bound together"), in combination with the last line ("until death...do us part") forewarns that each individual (flesh and blood) exists only in the other, they are an in-dwelling, an interiority, that only

death can disrupt. The advertisement posits each member of the team (and metaphorically then, all female athletes) as one, being and desiring the same.

Even something as simple as the multiple readings of this advertisement suggests that this 'sameness' is not possible. Goldman and Papson (1998) read this commercial as "turning the marriage vow on its head" in that "the meaning of team (female bonding) has taken on the supportive covenant of the marriage vow, while leaving behind those passages that deal with 'obeying' the patriarchal order" and thus symbolically leaving behind the oppression inherent within that patriarchal order (p. 129).

However, the advertisement can be read differently. As a student once pointed out to me, there are a handful of soccer players in the world, a couple of whom played for this same US team featured in the commercial, who are arguably as good a soccer player, if not better than Mia Hamm (Wahl, 2002). However, none of them were as characteristically and successfully feminine in the way that Mia Hamm is.[3] In choosing to highlight Mia

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[3] Tiffeny Milbrett is of particular interest here. She was (and is) a U.S. National Team player who has received significantly less marketing and media attention than her teammates Mia Hamm and Brandi Chastain even though she is by most accounts the best woman soccer player in the world. She has earned the nickname "No Tact Tiff" because she is an independent thinker who isn't afraid to speak her mind and in her own word is "appalled" by the idea of being a "cutesy showgirl" (Wahl, 2002, p. 75). As Wahl (2002) states, there is "a preference for women athletes who seem warm, nurturing and not especially threatening – who don't let the messy reality of intense competition get in the way of the idealized notion of sisterhood that is often projected onto women's sports" (p. 77).

Hamm (arguably because she represents the athletic but still feminine, and thus desirable, female athlete) the commercial doesn't leave behind the patriarchal order at all. Instead it reinforces that female athletes can only transgress gender boundaries if they can somehow over-correct, that is, show their femininity and therefore assumed heterosexuality in very explicit ways.

Furthermore, there is an obvious need to read the homoerotic sentiment implied in this advertisement.[4] It does after all, feature a group of women reciting marriage vows to each other, a conventionally illegitimate (and in some locations, even an illegal) action, and thus perhaps a subversive one in that it undermines assumed heterosexuality. As Toby Miller (2001) suggests, as queer magazines increasingly distribute and promote information to advertisers about the spending power of the gay and lesbian market there is increased niche marketing to this group (p. 54). However, this marketing is often "gay vague" in that "they are designed to make queers feel special for being 'in the know' while not offending straights who are unable to read the codes" (Miller, 2001, p. 54). Such is the case with this advertisement which, as I have illustrated, can be read through both heterosexual and homosexual assumptions.[5]

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[4] I acknowledge Dr. Debra Shogan who was the first to suggest this might be a productive read of this advertisement.

[5] I am not claiming that Nike intentionally designed the advertisement as "gay vague", but rather that it is able to function in that way regardless of Nike's intention.

These multiple readings have interesting implications for the imperative to community. As indicated in the opening to this paper, this imperative to community within sport is most often understood as an imperative to teamwork (of which this Nike advertisement is representative). The immanence or unity that is suggested within the advertisement is disrupted by the experiences and ways of knowing that viewers bring to its reading. Similarly, the imperative to teamwork is often disrupted by what teammates bring to their participation on a team. Specifically, an athlete is never solely an athlete. Athletes are necessarily hybrids of gender, sexuality, race, class and ability and those competing subjectivities disrupt the homogenizing impulse of the imperative to teamwork (Shogan, 1999). Furthermore, as Shogan (1999) suggests,

> ...the imperative to teamwork is ethically problematic when the effect is to overlook differences among athletes and coaches and, in particular, those differences that may constitute them as outsiders or deviants (p. 80).

Shogan's (1999) rare and important critique of the imperative to teamwork within sport, returns us to the critiques of community, by bell hooks (1994, 1995) and Iris Marion Young (1990), which opened this paper. Theorizing community as something that " is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation" (Hall, 1996, p. 2) is problematic. Not only is community, as predicated on stable and unified identity politics, disrupted (or perhaps interrupted) by multiple readings, subjectivities, or identifications, but also its assimilation of these disruptions is shown to be an ethical concern. It is for this reason

that I turn to thinkers of community, such as Jean-Luc Nancy (1986/1991) and Giorgio Agamben (1990/1993), who refuse community based on identity politics. They refuse to posit the individual who must exist behind such a politic and the resulting community.

In refusing the individual they are refusing the metaphysics of presence. As I stated earlier, self-presence is the notion that an individual has or can have a knowledge of "this is me". Derrida suggests that this is not possible because language is a system of differences without positive terms and thus no signifier can be determined in its presence. Meaning exists not in what it is, but in exposure to what it is not. Derrida calls this the trace. "The trace must be thought before the entity" because the entity only has meaning at this limit where it is exposed to the other (Derrida, 1974, p. 47). The trace, as a form of the limit, can be understood concomitantly as a hinge and/or space (Derrida, 1974, p. 66-69).

As a simplistic example of this logic we might think of a door and a doorframe. The hinge that attaches to both a door and a doorframe is a point of articulation which both joins the door and doorframe while at the same time serving to separate them from each other. In this example the hinge or articulation is a physical structure, but the logic works without the presence of anything physical. Here we might think of a sentence. The words in a sentence are separated by spacing (whether that is in the form of blank space on a written page or time in a spoken sentence). Each space separates the word that came before it from the word that comes after it, at the same time that it joins those two words together in the sentence. In its function as the trace, the space as articulation, is not a part

of the word that proceeds it, but it is not not a part of the word that proceeds it (in that, it marks its end/limit). At the same time, the space is not a part of the word that follows it, but it is not not a part of the word that follows it (in that, it marks its beginning/limit).

The trace that in difference defines the entity, is both a joining and a separating, it is an articulation. Articulation is an important concept because it suggests that the trace is an anti-totalitarian structure in that it does not allow for complete immanence and interiority. Articulation necessitates a relation (a relation between the word and the space that follows it, the space and the word that follows it, the word and the space that follows it, etc.). The articulation of the trace suggests that space is different from itself; language is different from itself; an athlete is different from itself; a community is different from itself (Derrida in Caputo, 1997, p.13). Community without the trace as articulation becomes totalitarian.

Nancy (1986/1991) makes a distinction between being-in-common and common being. Community exists in the space where singularities relate, join, and separate in articulation with each other. It is here that they share their being-in-common. Nancy suggests that traditional notions that insist that community be thought in terms of solidarity and fusion around an identity or essence actually describe a communion or a common being. Communion is the group as one, characterized as immanence and interiority. The text and image of the soccer advertisement suggest this type of communion. Nancy suggests this group as one is actually the death of community because there can be no articulation.

On this note, the invocation of death in this advertisement is fascinating. The text suggests that the community the women cite can only be disrupted by death. A very different relation to death is at work if we think community as Nancy thinks community.

> Collective enterprises dominated by a will to absolute immanence have as their truth the truth of death. Immanence, communal fusion, contains no other logic than that of the suicide of the community that is governed by it. (Nancy, 1986/1991, p. 12)

Thus, death is not a future disruptive possibility within this advertisement, but rather the death of community is already present in the group expressed as one, in the presence of immanence. There is no possibility for articulation because there is no difference.

In this way of thinking, the 'community' suggested through the advertisement is not constative. There is no 'community' there to be described. Rather it is performative. Just like the marriage vows the advertisement is meant to mimic, the promissory speech act of the advertisement knows nothing, because there is nothing that is. Rather the performative becomes what it says that it is. In Nancy's words, it is "a fiction that founds" (Nancy, 1986/1991, p. 56). It founds unity at the expense of difference.

In the uttering of this performative, by the American women's soccer team, a violence occurs. A second commercial that also aired in 1999 and featured members of this same U.S. Women's soccer team, is in some ways illustrative of this violence. The commercial shows Mia Hamm, Brianna Scurry, Tisha Venturini and Tiffeny Milbrett sitting in a waiting room. Brandi Chastain enters the waiting room along with a dentist. When asked

how it went, she replies, "He had to drill; I got two fillings". Mia Hamm stands up, and in a show of solidarity says, "Then I will have two fillings". The dentist says, "but Mia I just examined your teeth, they're perfect". Mia simple replies, "I will have two fillings". The other three members of the team stand and in succession each demands to have two fillings. Caught up in the solidarity, the receptionist then stands and also demands two fillings. "Then I will have two fillings" has the same performative force as "we are flesh and we are blood and we are bound together". The metaphorical violence of the fillings can be read as illustrative of the violence that occurs in the performative calls to unity (that is, in calls to community). Each of the individuals (and as the receptionist metaphorically illustrates this is not reserved to members of the U.S. team) that found themselves in the performative utterance is reduced to the same. The difference that necessarily exists (as is evidenced by the multiple readings of the first advertisement and Shogan's demonstration of hybridity within and between athletes) is assimilated to the totality that is communion. The group as one negates or assimilates difference.

This advertisement that is celebrated as progressive or empowering is more accurately an assimilationist project (as arguably are all communities based on identification/identity politics). Difference is tolerated, but only so that it may be reduced to the same that it is not. In this sense, pure unity is violent and if it could ever be achieved it would result, not in community, but rather in the death of community as it is understood by Nancy and Agamben.

Therefore, it might be productive to return our attention to Agamben's "whatever singularity", or in this case, the whatever female athlete. To reiterate, singularity reclaims the "such and such being" from "its having a this or that property [competitive, feminine, masculine, heterosexual, homosexual, etc.], which identifies it as belonging to this or that set, to this or that class [female athlete]" (Agamben, 1990/1993, p. 1). It is reclaimed not for another class [that is a different reading or definition of what it is to be a female athlete], or for the simple absence of a class, but for "its being *such*, for belonging itself" (Agamben, 1990/1993, p. 2).

This *belonging itself* is a *being-called*, or a *being in language*. The term or word 'female athlete' is signifying the athlete or the athlete in her being. However, as previously stated, the athlete in her being must be differentiated from her *being-called. Being-called* female athlete does not inform what is affirmed or denied about *being* an athlete in any ontological sense. But by virtue of *being-called* female athlete, beings are exposed to certain relations (around gender, sexuality, race, class, ability, passivity, aggressiveness, competitiveness, citizenship, etc.). None of these things can be defined in their own positive terms and are instead put into relation, exposed to each other through the trace as articulation.

These relations are significant given Agamben's use of the term Whatever. To quote Agamben (1990/1993), Whatever implies "such that it always matters". Such that all of these relations always matter, not as some definitive either/or categories to *belong to,* but as neither, nor, and both in the sense that it recognizes not only an inside (as in

immanence) but an outside. And more importantly, an inside and an outside that are always already implicated in each other and cannot be defined separately (as in the previous example of words and spaces in a sentence).

Whatever, as singularity, cannot be defined in its own positive terms, it is only ever one in relation to a group of others that necessitates *belonging itself* (as opposed to belonging *to*). By virtue of *being-called* female athlete there is a necessary relation and it is in this spacing, this limit where we are exposed to the other that community exists. Because it is here, at this limit, where difference and sameness come into relation and communication with each other, rather than negating difference at the expense of unity.

We must recognize that this limit is an empty space, a nothing that must remain nothing (cannot be defined in its own positive terms). Community is in this empty spacing between singularities, at the limit where the singularity is exposed to the other. The trace that joins or relates singularities is also the trace that separates them. This articulation means that in the context of a whatever athlete, the space is not the athlete and not the other, but it is not not the athlete and not not the other. A "whatever singularity" is not "tied by any common property, by any identity" (Agamben, 1990/1993, p. 10). "The being of community *is* the exposure of singularities" (Nancy, 1986/1991, p. 30).

a step towards silence and the end of madness,

Speaking about, for, or to the female athlete and rejecting a community of identification seem to make an uncomfortable pair. If I attempt to declare or proclaim that the "female athlete *is*", or even the "whatever athlete *is*", it can only be futile. I have already stated that *what it is* cannot be stated in positive terms. I cannot provide a statement of proof, a piece of evidence.

An attempt to do so would require a thorough thinking of the concept. As Agamben (1990/1993) instructs (quoting Frege), "the concept is not a concept" because in any attempt to grasp a concept (the idea of a class of objects) it is transformed into an object that can no longer be distinguished from the thing conceived (p. 73). The distinction between the concept of athlete and *an* athlete in her being is impossible to maintain. In the language of Saussure, the signified becomes conflated with the referent, in that the referent cannot be named and be meaningful without the signified, and the signified cannot be thought without recourse to the referent. This is the first problem.

Secondly, if I do make this attempt (at a thorough thinking of the concept) anyway, and do so by attempting to say what it is, by saying what it is not, or what it could be, or might be, or should be, I simply reclaim 'female athlete' for another class, suggest that it can or should belong *to*. I deny its *being in language*, its *being-called.*

Thus, although I have written about a whatever athlete, I prefer not to suggest that it is a declaration or proclamation, or that my writing is a proof or evidence, except as an example. "The example is characterized by the fact that it holds for all cases of the same type, and, at the same time, it is included among these" (Agamben, 1990/1993, p. 9-10). The example is neither particular nor universal at the same time that is both particular and universal (note the neither, nor, and both).

> It is one singularity among others, which, however, stands for each of them and serves for all. On one hand, every example is treated in effect as a real particular case; but on the other, it remains understood that it cannot serve in its particularity (Agamben, 1990/1993, p. 10).

The case of my pen might again be illustrative here. This pen I hold in my hand (the black one with a silver pocket clip, fourteen centimeters long, and two centimeters in circumference), is a pen. But it is only one among others. If I say to you that it is an example of a pen, it then stands in for each pen and is forced to serve for all pens (even the blue or red or green or translucent ones). It is a pen, but it cannot serve in its particularity. That is, it cannot be understood as the one and only pen. It is both particular and universal and it is neither. Thus, the example is a singularity that "*shows* its singularity" (p. 10). The example is not, and cannot be, defined by any property, except by *being in language*, by *being-called.*

Therefore, if this is to be read as a declaration or proclamation about the whatever female athlete, it can only be done so as an example of such. It is a declaration that attests to the

whatever female athlete, but it is only one among others that could be (or have been) written. For this paper, it is standing in for each of them and being forced to serve for all. It is a real and particular declaration that is being made, but it cannot (obviously) serve in its particularity, as the one. This declaration (as example) is particular and universal, and is neither. It is showing its singularity in the same way that it is attempting to show the whatever athlete in its singularity. If this piece of writing has a purpose it is to end the constant necessity to proclaim a belonging *to* and instead reclaim this declaration and the female athlete for *belonging itself.*

[the end of] the madness of having to speak and not being able to, except of things that don't concern me, that don't count, that I don't believe, that they have crammed me full of to prevent me from saying who I am.

I return to *being-called* or *being in language* to end the madness of having to speak.... "Whatever singularity", whatever athlete as singularity, cannot be assimilated. It is in the trace (as limit) where singularities are articulated that community exists.

> The communication that takes place on this limit, and that, in truth, constitutes it, demands that way of destining ourselves in common that we call a politics, that of opening community to itself, rather than to a destiny or to a future (Nancy, p. 80).

This space where each singularity is exposed to the other, where the communication/articulation occurs, can only serve the dual purpose of joining and separating. This dynamic relation means that singularities cannot be reduced to the same. Productively then, a community of singularities is fleeting, difficult to pin down. It has

the potential to be and to not be at the same time. It is this potentiality and possibility that provides a productive power.

A return to communities of identification can make the significance of potentiality more clear. If a community is formed around the solidarity of an essence, then each individual is this or that, and has this or that destiny in relation to the essence around which the community is structured. It is the individual's task to produce their essence as their work and call this essence community (Nancy, 1991, p. 2). However, once the group is named or identified around an essence, once it is pinned down or fixed, the community loses its potentiality and possibility.

In the context of Nike and the female athlete, this is quite apparent. I spoke earlier in this paper to the bodies that become excluded from Nike in response to the celebration of a *belonging to*. However, a violence is done by the logic of *belonging to*, even to those who might feel included within a community of female athletes as represented by Nike. I have written elsewhere about Nike's appeal to transcendence specifically in the context of imploring female consumers to become "what you want to be" (Helstein, in press). In current advertising, Nike names this ideal of "what you want to be" within the frame of non-referential and ever vacuous appeals to excellence. Excellence is that thing to which it is normal and natural to aspire; that thing that will allow you to become "what you want to be". "What you want to be" is the essence around which you have built a solidarity, a community. The female athlete, the empowered woman, must work at becoming "who she wants to be", at *belonging to*. It could then be argued that women

continually measure and police their progress toward becoming "who they want to be". They come to embody the pursuit so that it feels normal, natural, and innocent to aspire to the *belonging to* of Nike advertising and thus become judged by and complicit in the neoconservative rhetoric of Nike.

In a community of singularities there is a necessary impotence. Unlike in the Nike example above, there is and can be no work to be done in relation to being this or that around which solidarity is structured. A community of singularities is instead an unworking. A potential to not be. In this community of articulation there are no tasks to be done. There is "something that humans are and have to be, but this something is not an essence nor properly a thing: *It is the simple fact of one's own existence as possibility or potentiality*" (Agamben, 1990/1993, p. 43). The "whatever singularity" has the potential to not be and this unworking is significant and necessary to a community of articulation. Without work there is nothing to control, nothing to react to or against. The power of this community cannot be found and then eliminated, overcome, or coerced because it is a power that is unnamable and fleeting, yet always present in its potentiality.

Here I turn to the massive anti-war protests in response to the United States bombing of Iraq or "Gulf War II" , as perhaps the most recent and powerful examples of the logic of communities of articulation. On February 15, 2003,

> ...protests unfolded in more than 350 cities around the world,[6] some drawing hundreds of thousands...[and] unlike the stereotypically scruffy, pot-smoking, flag-burning anarchists...yesterday's protesters came from a wide range of the political spectrum: college students, middle-aged couples, families with small children, older people who had marched for civil rights, and groups representing labor, the environment and religious, business and civic organizations. (McFadden, February 16, 2003, p. 20)

Most accounts of the protests that I have read, most conversations about the protests I have been involved in, have reiterated the scope of this diversity within the large numbers of people who came out. At one point, in one of the rallies I attended, a self-identified group of anarchist anti-capitalists marched alongside a group holding a Quakers flag while in front of us a group of Pagan Witches performed a circle dance as a man holding a pro-Palestine placard walked by. This one memory captures only a very small piece of one moment of one march and in it I recognize no common being, no communion, no unified identity to belong *to*.

Although protests have not succeeded in stopping the United States war on Iraq they have arguably been productive in that the huge presence of these protests (in terms of both number and diversity) has sent a very clear message that there is resistance, that the "war is not in our name".[7] The interesting point for the purposes of this paper, is that the 'our'

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[6] Some put the numbers at more than 600 cities worldwide (Azulay & Dominick, 2003).

[7] A common protest chant and placard.

is necessarily unnamed because of the difference that is present in the group. The governments of the United States and Britain, along with supporters of the war have been unable to simply name the group and then summarily dismiss it. The resistance cannot be attributed to "those left wing nuts" and then rejected because that is just what those left-wingers do. This rhetoric is generally an appeal to right-wingers and a great many of them are marching in the crowd as well. The protest can't simply be attributed to the pacifists because as some of the protesters have shown they are willing to meet police violence with violence.

The articulation of these (sometimes oppositional) positions is not always easy. As I said to start this essay, the tradition of western philosophical thought has conditioned us to look for and desire the logic of either/or. This means that within the group of protesters there are some that want others to be more pro-Palestinian, or more anti-capitalist, or more spiritual, etc. It is the logic of communities of identification, "you either belong *to* my way of thinking or you don't". And while this logic might be productive and necessary at times, we need to remember the homogenization and assimilation that is most often the result. And more importantly, we need to recognize the power in taking up the logic of communities of articulation. "Whatever singularity, which wants to appropriate *belonging itself*, its own *being-in-language*, and thus rejects all identity and every condition of belonging, is the principle enemy" (Agamben, 1990/1993, p. 87) because it cannot be found, named and then eliminated, overcome, and/or coerced. As unnamable, it is always fleeting and this is its possibility and potentiality.

Thus, accepting and even celebrating the unnamable (the undecidable) in other contexts may also be productive in both small and big ways. As a few examples (and keep in mind here the neither, nor and both of the example), it might mean that we are more introspective about our complicity and ethics within imperatives to teamwork and that we can start to imagine what an imperative to articulation might look like on a team. It might mean that we don't decide in advance what feminist critique might look like. We allow for, recognize, and perhaps even cautiously accept contingent moments of resistance even if they come occasionally from corporations like Nike whose motives are capitalist and not necessarily political. But we also resist naming who or what belongs *to* the category of woman or the category of athlete and we recognize *belonging itself*, in hopes that in this resistance to naming, we make it harder for companies like Nike to find, name, co-opt and then sell, for the purposes of capitalist gain, our identities (I propose that marketing to singularities would be a much more complicated task). And finally, it might mean, that we embrace pieces of writing, like this one, that are counterintuitive to our current ways of thinking. We don't hold up expectations of them to belong *to* some already named idea of what critique should look like and accomplish. But rather, embrace them, as example, simply so that they might be put into relation and thus articulation in productive ways with other pieces of writing and acts of thinking.

And so it is, ironically, that the quote which structures this essay, by absurdist novelist Samuel Beckett (1955), becomes meaningful. It becomes meaningful, in that the absurdist style in which it is written is meant to celebrate the illogical or counterintuitive; in that the name of the novel (The Unnamable) seems to welcome undecidability and thus

potentiality; and in that, through it, I have been able to think community through the counterintuitive and undecidable in order to open it up to different potentialities and possibilities.

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'CONCLUSION' [1]

(PAPER #5)

Seeing your sporting body: Subjectivities, misrecognition, and identification

[1] As I say in my introduction to this dissertation, this is a conclusion only insofar as it comes last.

My upper body muscles flex and bulge as I pull myself up to the chin-up bar. I look into the wall length mirror in front of me and see the reflection of the loft-like workout room with windowed walls and hardwood floors. In the mirror image, I can see the sun shining through the windows. I can see the dumbbells lined up, each in their place, next to the radiator heating. I can see the weight bench, still set up from my last set, and the gym mats glistening in the sun. Most importantly, I can ***see myself****; a strong, black, athletic woman in a pink sports bra and black fitted tights. Only, in my mirror image, I am no longer hanging from a chin-up bar, but instead I suspend myself from a rocky overhang. In my mirror image, I* ***see myself*** *rock climbing.*

This is how the woman in a recent Nike print advertisement would likely describe her situation. The advertisement is a two-page glossy spread that features an athletic woman looking into a mirrored wall as she performs a chin-up (see Figure 5-1). In her mirror image she *sees herself* suspended from a rocky overhang rather than a chin-up bar. This advertisement is only one in a series of similar advertisements. In a second advertisement, a woman is out for a solitary jog. However, in her image as it is reflected in the mirrored windows of the building she runs alongside of, she *sees herself* running a race as is indicated by the presence of a race number bib (see 5- 2). In a third advertisement, a lone swimmer standing on a pool deck peers into the water and in her reflected image *sees herself* amongst a group of other female competitors, presumably waiting to start a triathlon (see Figure 5-3). The caption that accompanies each

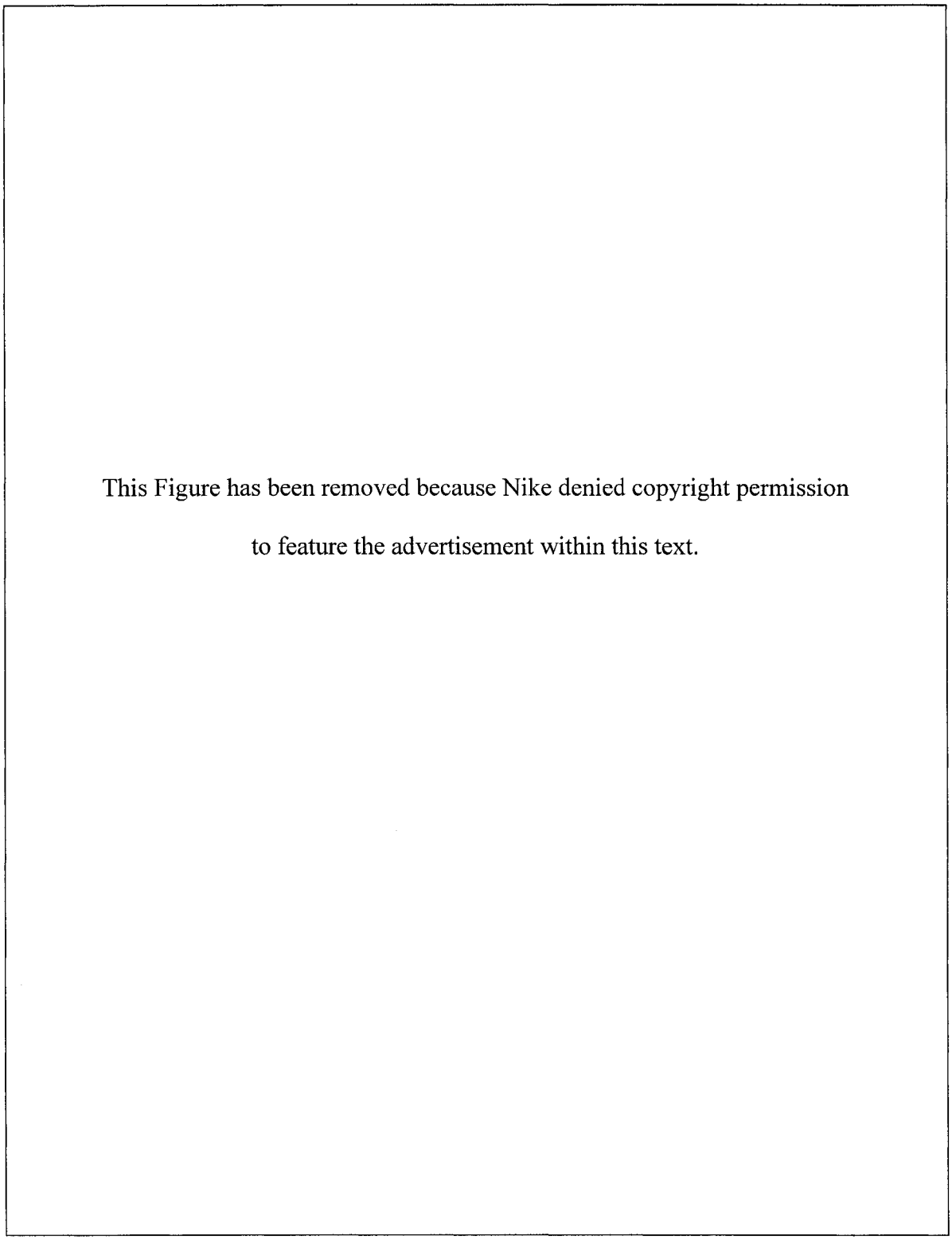

Figure 5-1. Nike advertisement, "Mirror Image Climber", Chatelaine, 2001

This Figure has been removed because Nike denied copyright permission to feature the advertisement within this text.

Figure 5-2. Nike advertisement, "Mirror Image Racer", Chatelaine, 2001

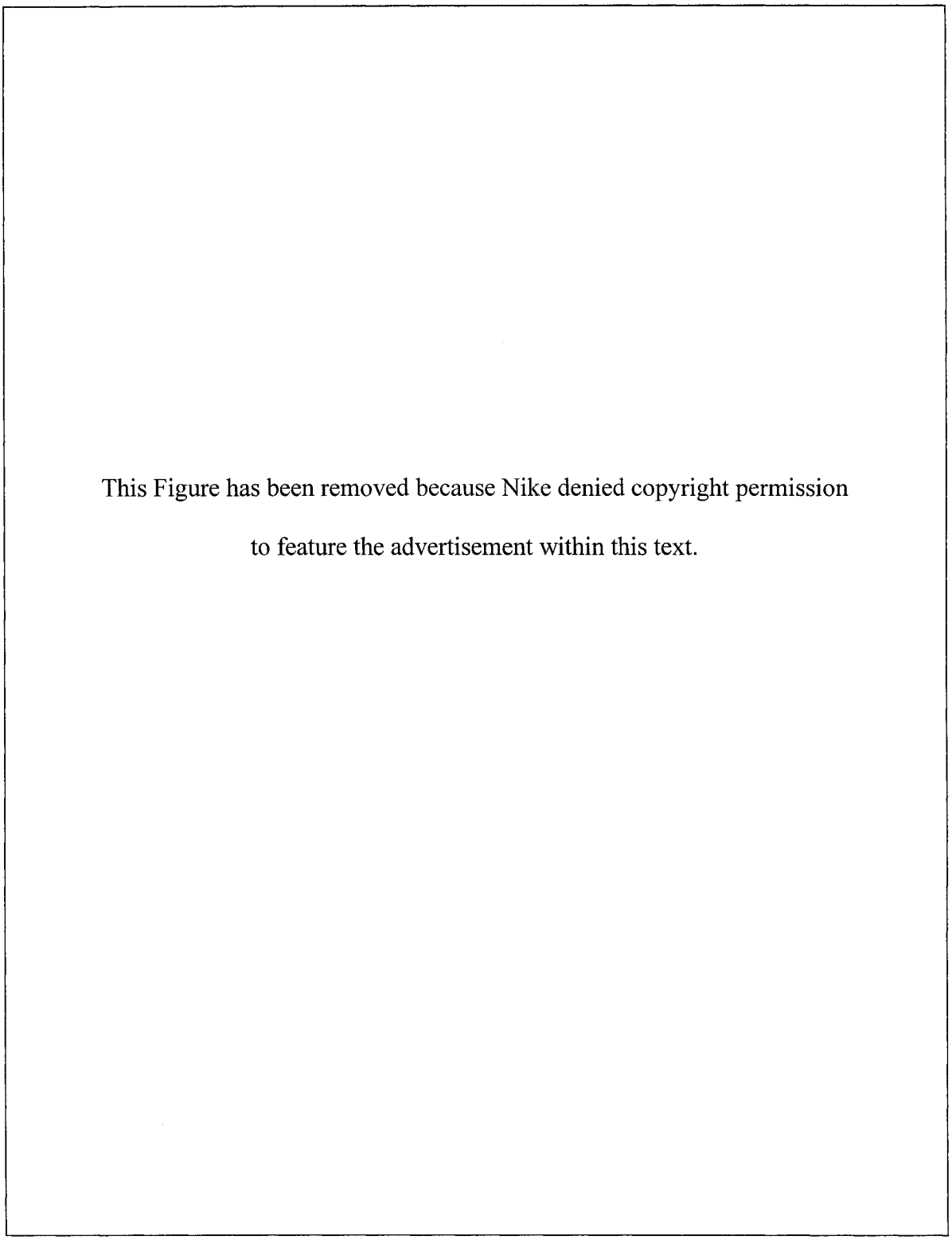

Figure 5-3. Nike advertisement, "Mirror Image Triathlete", Chatelaine, 2001

advertisement, "there's nothing you can't see yourself doing" is indicative of each woman's apparent ability to *see herself.*

How can this propensity and necessity to *see oneself,* to recognize oneself, to identify, be understood? In attempting to answer this question, I struggle with the ambivalent relation between Foucaultian discourse theory and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Those critiquing poststructuralism often conflate the works of Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan in their criticisms, caricaturing both theorists as relativists who deny all materiality by reducing everything (including the body) to text and illusion. However, social theorists working within poststructural paradigms emphasize the diverse methodologies, opposing assumptions, and differing goals advanced by Foucault and Lacan. These differences are emphasized to the point that many Foucaultian theorists reject Lacanian psychoanalysis and many Lacanian theorist disavow Foucaultian discourse analysis, emphasizing that, given the significant differences in their thought, the two cannot be conflated. There is thus a tendency to limit poststructural discussions of identification to either the discursive or to the psychic[2], and this is particularly true within the field of sport sociology.[3]

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[2] Judith Butler (1990, 1993, and 1997) is a notable exception here.

[3] None of the very limited psychoanalytic work being done in sport studies utilizes discourse theory and I can find no examples within sport studies literature where a discourse theorist utilizes psychoanalysis. Furthermore, when I presented a section of this paper at the annual meeting of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport in 2002, it became apparent to me that prominent Foucaultian sport scholars in attendance were reluctant to recognize a need for Lacan and/or psychoanalysis.

It is my contention that discursive theorizing of identification is, on its own, a significant and necessary manner of analysis when one's purpose is to explore the role of knowledge in constituting and legitimating sporting subjectivities, just as psychoanalytic theorizing of identification is, on its own, a significant and necessary manner of analysis when ones purpose is to explore the role of fantasy and desire in producing and assuming sporting subjectivities. However, I believe that within a discussion of female sporting identification it is possible, productive, and even necessary, to draw from both the discursive and the psychic without being limited to either. To do so, it is necessary to find a point of articulation between the often seemingly contradictory theories of subject formation advanced by Foucault and Lacan. Arguably, the body is one such productive and necessary link.

As a point of reference, I return to the Nike advertisements, particularly the first one which will serve as my example throughout the remainder of the paper. What is it that one sees, when one *sees oneself*? One might see a climber, a runner, a woman, a lesbian, an athlete, a mother, a student, a professor, or any number of things. However, one necessarily sees these things only as they appear on, in, or through the body. This is not to say that the body has an essence that when looked upon shows itself as sexed, gendered, raced, classed, or abled, for example, but rather that we see and perform these subject positions by the way that they are marked or recognized on bodies. In order to *see oneself*, one must recognize something in, on, or through their body and this recognition might more appropriately be called identification.

It seems convenient then, that Nike produced this series of advertisements. For they seem to pictorially dramatize that which this paper attempts to theorize: a female athlete looking into a mirror and *seeing herself.* This paper is a reading of this identification through the productive exploration of the woman on both sides of the mirror. Examining the gendered, raced, sporting body looking into the reflection requires engagement with the discursive production of these intersecting subjectivities. Concomitantly, examining the mirror image as a stable or unified (and thus misrecognized) body requires engagement with the psychic illusion of the embodiment of the desiring discursive subject.

Narrations of *Seeing Oneself*

Foucault

In speaking to a notion of identification Foucault (1975/1995) advanced a theory of subjectivation which implies both the "becoming of the subject and the process of subjection" (Butler, 1997, p. 83). Subjectivation then is both subjectification (constitution of/identifying as subject) and subjection (being subjected to the discursive formations of which the subject is the object). We are contemporaneously constituted as subjects of discourse and subjected to the power of discourse[4]. A closer examination of these

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[4] Of course the relations between subjectivation, subjectification, and subjection are not as distinct or simply as I have made them sound here. Much of Butler's work (most explicitly in "Psychic Life of

processes in which individuals constitute and recognize themselves as subjects requires consideration of the interrelated Foucaultian concepts of discourse, knowledge, disciplinary power and the body.

Borrowing from Stuart Hall (1997), discourse can be defined as speech, writing, and images "which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular moment in history" (p. 44). So, for example, discourses of conventional femininity produce a way of talking about and representing the knowledge about what it is to be 'feminine' at this particular moment in history. Within this discourse only certain statements are recognized as intelligible because they fulfill particular conditions. That is, a) "they speak to a specific object", in this case the feminine; and b) "they conceptualize that object in particular ways", that is, as passive, gentle, pretty, white[5], etc (Foucault, 1969/1972, p. 223). Thus, discourse produces 'femininity' in particular ways by "framing the way we think about the object it constructs" (Parker, 1992, p. 20).

Power") explores the complexity of these terms. Specifically, she questions what comes first or is assumed to come first. The question is significant given that subjectification requires the subject position produced through subjection and subjection seems to presuppose the subject that it is subjecting. This is why the performative becomes so important in Butler's work in that allows for the assertion that "power not only acts on a subject, but in a transitive sense, enacts the subject into being" (Butler, 1997, p.13).

[5] Arguably, conventional femininity is at odds with black femininity. I speak more specifically to this later in the paper.

We look at passive, gentle, pretty, white women and say, "she is feminine" and think or 'know' that we are making a legitimate statement. However, if we look at a very strong, muscular, female body builder, for example, and say, "she is feminine", the statement does not make sense. It is unintelligible to say that such a woman is feminine because a discourse of conventional femininity (like all discourse) is "a particular vocabulary and grammar that permits the making of choices only within its own rules. It decides what can and cannot be said, done, or represented" (Miller, 1993, p. xiv).

Of course, it is still possible to make such a statement. There is nothing to stop a person from saying, "that hypermuscular woman is feminine"; it just isn't understood as 'true'. The statement, "she is feminine" only becomes meaningful or intelligible when it is taken up within the rules or practices of conventional gender discourse. Therefore, discourse governs the production of what is to count as meaningful knowledge about a particular object. By extension this implies that the subject (as object of the discourse) who embodies that knowledge is also produced through discourse.

This production necessarily implies a relation of power and thus leads us to Foucault's notion of disciplinary power. It is very important to acknowledge that for Foucault power is never simply negative or repressive, but is rather both limiting and productive and is most apparent in the disciplinary technologies that govern the body (1975/1995, 1977/1980). Disciplinary power involves the "organization and regulation of time, space, and movement [to] train, shape, and impress bodies with the habituated gestures, procedures, and values" of a discourse (Shogan, 1999, p. 9), so that, "for Foucault, [the]

process of subjectivation takes place centrally through the body" (Butler, 1997, p. 83). For example, discourses of gender produce knowledge about the 'feminine' and through constraint produce the subject who controls and shapes one's body in an effort to conform to these homogenous standards. As Young (1980) suggests, "the girl learns actively to hamper her movements...In assuming [or *seeing*] herself as a girl, she takes herself up as fragile...stiff, [and] closed" (p. 153).

Subjection to discourse, therefore, has productive (or constitutive) effects.

> The body is not a site on which a construction takes place; it is a destruction on the occasion of which a subject is formed. The formation of this subject is at once the framing, subordination, and regulation of the body, and the mode in which that destruction is preserved (in the sense of sustained and embalmed) in normalization (Butler, 1997, p. 92).

Returning to the example of femininity, disciplinary power is productive because it enables the successful performance of femininity and in doing so constitutes the feminine subject. The subject is only produced as subject through discourse.

The woman within the Nike advertisement is therefore produced through subjection to a number of other intersecting and embodied discourses. It is important to note that these multiple subject positions are not simply a list that can be "easily extracted and unproblematically distinguished from each other" (Fuss, 1989, p. 34). Foucaultian subjects are continually negotiating between various competing subjectivities.

In the context of this advertisement, where the woman sees herself as 'black, female, athlete', these competing subjectivities might include the discursive rules or standards of femininity in relation to those of high performance sport and/or race. Given that sex (female) is often read on and through the body according to gender (femininity), the discourse of conventional femininity is significant to reading the advertisement. Earlier in this section of the paper, the discursive production of conventional femininity was highlighted as passive, gentle, pretty, and white. Dominant sport discourse, on the other hand, requires strong, aggressive, forceful, space-occupying movements (Shogan, 1999, Whitson, 1990). Adherence (through constraint) to these practices enables or produces (through power) the successful 'athlete'. Therefore, the practice of dominant sport discourse is at odds with the practice of conventional femininity. However, dominant notions of masculinity require strength, aggression, and domination and so to practice dominant sport discourse and a dominant discourse of masculinity is to engage in the same movements and gestures.

Similarly, a raced body (specifically in this case a 'black' body) is constructed according to particular rules or standards of how that body will be impressed. Discourses of race produce the gestures and comportment of the black body as strong and potent (Shogan, 1999, p. 64). For the black female body this is specifically linked to "African American women's work history as slaves, [and] their supposedly 'natural' brute strength and endurance inherited from their African origins" (Vertinsky and Captain, 1998, p. 541). Black women were "required by the masters' demands to be as 'masculine' in the performance of their work as their men" (Davis, 1983, p. 11) and so both the black

female and black male body have come to be produced in racist discourse as masculine. "Dark skin is stereotypically coded...as masculine. Hence...a female's dark looks diminish her femininity" (hooks, 1994, p. 180). Like the practice of dominant sport discourse, the practice of racial discourse (specifically blackness) is at odds with the practice of conventional femininity.

This brief introduction to the embodied discursive practices that are engaged by the 'black, female, athlete' looking into the mirror is not meant to be exhaustive of the discourses that produce this subject. Rather, the introduction is meant to highlight that "we are continually caught within and between at least two constantly shifting subject positions and these subject positions may stand in complete contradiction to each other" (Fuss, 1989, p. 33). Therefore, it is not sufficient to talk only or in isolation about being female, or being black, or being an athlete. The discursive subject must be acknowledged "as a complicated field of multiple subjectivities and competing identities (Fuss, 1989, p. 33) that are in constant and contingent negotiation.

Discourses of gender and sexuality produce the feminine female and masculine male, discourses of high performance sport produce the athlete, discourses of ability produce the disabled, discourses of race produce blackness and whiteness, etc. Hence, within the Nike advertisement, the being/body looking into the mirror is only produced as a 'black female athlete', for example, through subjection to a number of intersecting and embodied discourses including gender, race, and sport. Subjectivation then, "consists

precisely in the fundamental dependency on discourse[s] we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiate and sustain our [identity]" (Butler, 1997, p. 2).

Lacan

Lacan's theory of subject formation is primarily a theory of the unconscious and can, in part, be exemplified through his formulation of the mirror stage. Lacan's appropriation of the mirror stage is potentially helpful in many regards. Of significance for the purposes of this paper, is the emphasis on self-recognition or to return to the language I used earlier in this paper, one's ability to *see oneself.*

> The child sees itself as a unified totality, a *gestalt* in the mirror: it experiences itself in a schism, as a site of fragmentation. The child's identification with its specular image impels it nostalgically to seek out a past symbiotic completeness, even if such a state never existed and is retrospectively imposed on the pre-mirror phase; and to seek an anticipatory or desired (ideal or future) identity in the coherence of the totalized specular image. (Grosz, 1990, p. 39)

Lacan (1977) indicates that the mirror stage should be understood "as an identification" and that this identification serves as the transformation that takes place in the subject at the moment in an infant's life when that infant sees their image reflected in a mirror and anticipates a wholeness or unity by "assum[ing] an image" of itself (p.2). "To 'assume' an image is to recognize oneself in the image, and to appropriate the image as oneself" (Evans, 1996, p. 81).

This image of the self deceives because the child assumes that the image stands in as a unified representation of a pre-existing self and therefore does not acknowledge that there is a split or alienation between the physical body (as subject) and the image in the mirror (as object). The recognition is therefore also a misrecognition[6]. The image both is and is not an image of itself (Grosz, 1990, p. 40). The child identifies with an image of itself that is always an image of self from the place of the other (that is, the image/I is always inverted).

To understand the significance of the inverted image, it might be helpful to try and imagine something different. What if one was to look in the mirror and see the back of one's head. This would undoubtedly seem quite strange. Simplistically, this is because this is not how we understand mirrors to work. But metaphorically, and more importantly, it would be shocking because we wouldn't have the same relation to the image if it weren't looking back at us (as if it was the other).

> The image of the other's form is assumed by the subject. Thanks to this surface, situated within the subject, what is introduced into human psychology is this relation between the outside and the inside whereby the subject knows himself, gets acquainted with himself as body. (Lacan, 1975/1988, p. 170)

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[6] Lacan uses the French term *méconnaissance*, which is generally translated as 'misunderstanding' or 'misrecognition'. It is important to take note of the close relation between *méconnaissance* and *connaissance* (knowledge) in understanding that for Lacan, "self-knowledge (*me-connaissance*) is synonymous with misunderstanding (*méconnaissance*)" (Evans, 1996, p. 109).

Identification with the image looking back initiates in the subject a split (body as both subject and object/other) that means that the self can never be whole, transparent or coherent. Therefore, this identification with the image looking back is what constitutes the self as a subject in the Lacanian sense. "The subject, to be a subject at all, internalizes otherness as its condition of possibility. It is thus radically split, unconscious of the processes of its own production, divided by lack and rupture" (Grosz, 1990, p. 43).

The self before the mirror is introduced to desire. The desire to be the stable, unified image/form/body, as constitutive of the subject, which it sees in the mirror but that it cannot be. The mirror stage is

> the original adventure through which man, for the first time, has the experience of seeing himself, of reflecting on himself and conceiving of himself as other than he is – an essential dimension of the human, which entirely structures his fantasy life. (Lacan, 1975/1988, p. 79).

The subject is, therefore, introduced to a lack that it cannot fulfill but that it continually tries to fulfil through Imaginary identifications.

When the 'black female athlete' of the Nike advertisement looks into the mirror and sees herself in the form of her physical body, the same process is at work. She recognizes the image as herself because "feeling[s] of fragmentation fuel the identification with the specular image" (Evans, 1996, p. 67), but this (mis)recognition is only an illusion at work to hide the lack. However, she cannot not *see herself* because without the identification of 'that is me', there would be no 'I' to refuse the identification (because the 'I' is

constituted through the (mis)recognition). In speaking to the question of why one identifies, an answer is that, as we are constituted as subjects in the Lacanian sense, we are necessarily constituted as desiring subjects, and the fundamental desire, is the desire to be. "Subjection exploits the desire for existence, where existence is always conferred from elsewhere; it marks a primary vulnerability to the Other in order to be" (Butler, 1997, p. 20).

Some Lacanian theorists critique a Foucaultian conceptualization of subjectivation because they are not convinced that it is enough for discourse to "summon, discipline, produce and regulate" the subject, there must also be, as Stuart Hall (1996) suggests, "the corresponding production of a response" (p. 12). There is a necessity to question why one identifies as the embodiment of the discursive subject.

Arguably Lacan's theory of the unconscious within subject formation, as exemplified in the mirror phase, helps to account for this response. Foucaultian theorists often dismiss this Lacanian formulation of subject formation as too universalizing, transhistorical, and developmental in nature. Foucaultian theorists see the need to

> move beyond the self/other, 'I'/'not-I' binarism central to Lacan's understanding of subject constitution and instead [substitute] a notion of the 'I' as a complicated field of multiple subjectivities and competing identities (Fuss, 1989, p. 33).

These competing criticisms of Foucault and Lacan will not (cannot) be resolved here because it is not my intention to espouse one at the expense of the other. I introduce these

criticisms only to highlight (at this point) that Foucault's and Lacan's accounts of subject formation are often read against each other in poststructural discussions of identification. What is apparent in my summaries of these two competing theories of subject formation is the pervasiveness and significance of the body in both accounts. This pervasiveness of the body is notable because it highlights the possibilities of the body as a point of articulation between discursive and psychic accounts of identification.

Sighting the Body

I cannot urge you too strongly to a meditation on optics...up to now it doesn't seem as though optics has been exploited as much as it could have been.

(Lacan, 1975/1988, p. 76).

As I tried to work through how to demonstrate the body as a point of articulation between the discursive and the psychic, all the thinking about mirrors, reflections, and seeing oneself made me think back to my days in high school physics where we learned about the scientific laws of reflection. In a perhaps perilous analogy[7], I use this scientific understanding of reflection to illustrate that the body necessarily implicates the discursive

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[7] I am both reluctant and enthusiastic to use this analogy. It is dangerous to suggest that the relations I describe are as fixed, clear and objective as a scientific model might imply. However, it also seems fun and I think productive, to use the objective, innocent, and assured knowledge that a scientific account is *assumed* to guarantee to illustrate that our self-knowledge is anything but objective, innocent, and/or assured.

in the psychic and the psychic in the discursive to inform female sporting identity. Concomitantly, mapping identification onto this physics example illustrates that the body is not simply reduced to text or illusion and thus negated within poststructuralism but is rather integral to such theorizing and its sporting manifestations. So, to begin, a brief summary of a high school physics lesson regarding the laws of reflection.

The laws of reflection

Both luminous and illuminated objects reflect rays of light at every angle. "In order to view an object, you must sight along a line at that object; and when you do light will come from that object to your eye along the line of sight" (The Physics Classroom, 2003, Line of Site section, ¶ 3). By sighting along a line toward the object, your eye sees the particular ray of light that is coming towards it, allowing you to see the object (see Figure 5-4). If your eye is located along a different line of sight you see a different ray of light but the same object (see Figure 5-5).

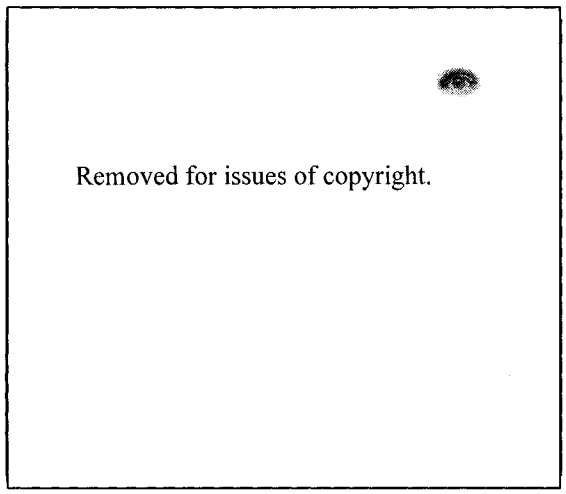

Figure 5-4. Line of Sight (adapted from The Physics Classroom, 2003).

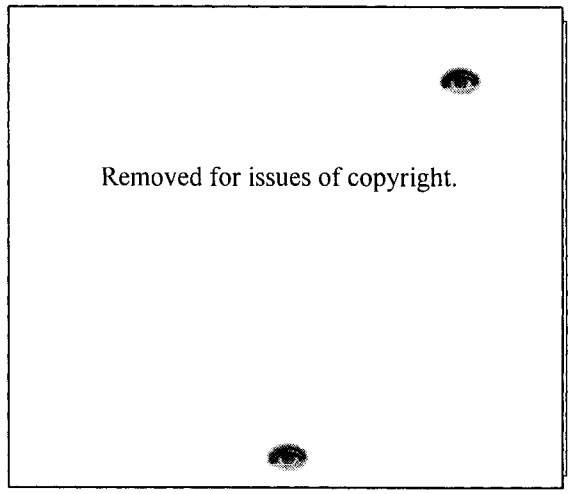

Figure 5-5. Line of Sight 2 (adapted from The Physics Classroom, 2003).

When viewing an image of an object in a flat mirror, countless rays of light originate from the object and some move along a line toward the mirror. As represented in Figure 5-6, one of these rays of light (represented by the dotted line) will intersect with the mirror at the same location where your line of sight (represented by the solid line) intersects with the mirror. The light then reflects off the mirror and travels to your eye along your line of sight, allowing you to see the image of the object in the mirror. (The Physics Classroom, 2003, Line of Site section, ¶ 7-9)

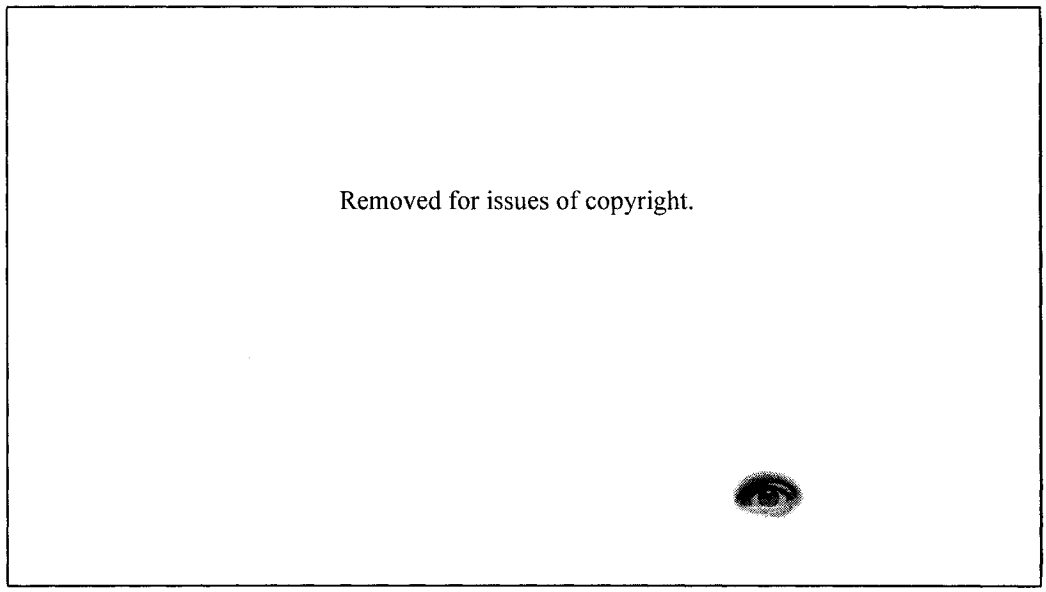

Figure 5-6. Viewing the image of an object in a plane mirror (adapted from The Physics Classroom, 2003).

In order to see an object in a mirror, one must sight at the image, not at the object. When each line of sight is extended backwards, they converge at the same point. The image location is thus "the location behind the mirror where all light appears to converge from" (see Figure 5-7) (The Physics Classroom, 2003, Why is an Image Formed section, ¶ 5).

In a flat mirror, the distance from the image location to the mirror is always equal to the distance from the object location to the mirror (The Physics Classroom, 2003, Why is an Image Formed section, ¶ 8). Any number of individuals can look at the image of

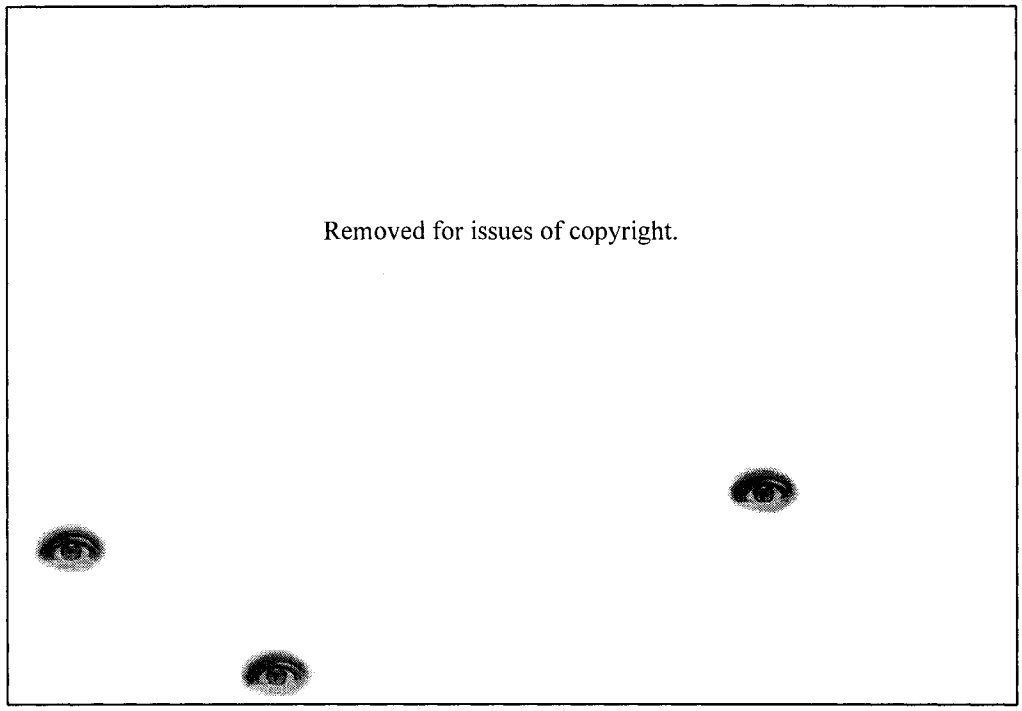

Figure 5-7. Image location when viewing the image of an object in a plane mirror (adapted from The Physics Classroom, 2003).

the object along different lines of sight and each person will see the image due to the reflection of light off the mirror at a point that converges with their particular line of sight. However, not everyone in proximity of the mirror will necessarily be able to view the object in the mirror, that is, see the image (see Figure 5-8).

> It is possible that certain individuals will be unable to view the image of an object in a mirror. Because of the person's position relative to the image position and the extremities of the mirror, the person is unable to detect a ray of light reflecting to their eye as they sight at the image location. (The Physics Classroom, 2003, Why is an Image Formed section, ¶ 9)

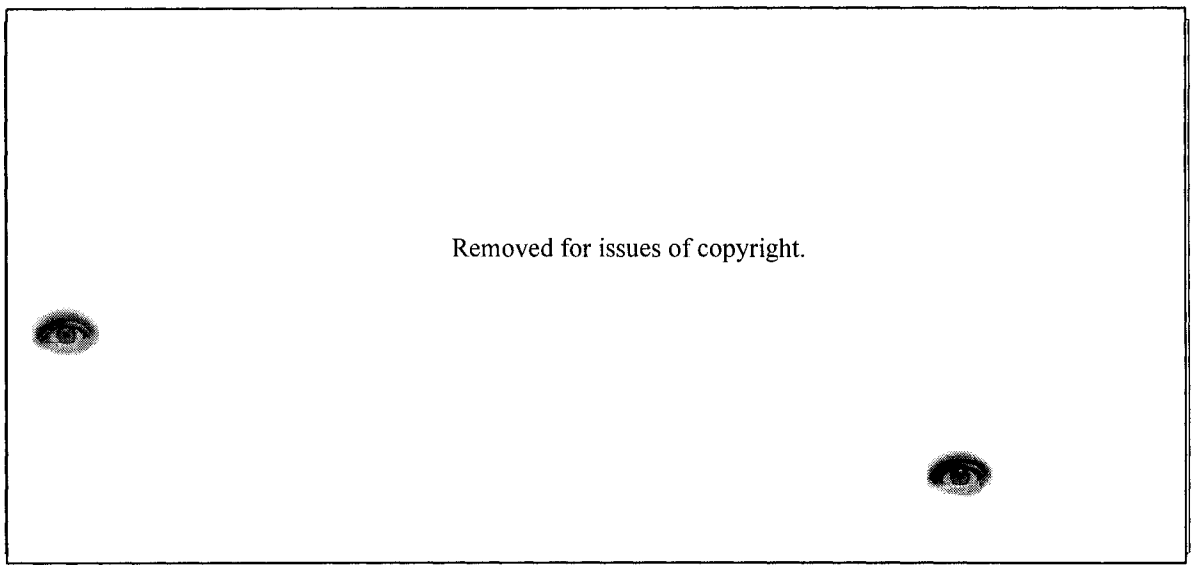

Figure 5-8. Inability to view image of an object in a plane mirror (adapted from The Physics Classroom, 2003).

These basic laws of reflection explain how it is that an image comes to be *seen* (or as in Figure 5-8, not seen). What can this example of the laws of reflection offer us with respect to the body as an articulation between discursive and psychic accounts of *seeing oneself*? Answering this question requires a rereading of the previous physics lesson on reflection according to the discursive and psychic theories[8] of subjection I described in the first portion of this paper.

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[8] Lacan adapted a classical physics experiment called "The experiment of the inverted bouquet" which features a concave mirror and bouquet of flowers to illustrate the functioning of the psychic economy (Lacan, 1998). Although my example and reading of an optical phenomena is different from Lacan's, I am following Lacan (and thus acknowledge his work) in turning to optics as a productive illustration of the role of the image in psychic processes.

Rereading the laws of reflection

First, there is a necessity to restate the "Eye" of the physics lesson as "Eye/'I'" (see Figure 5-9). This position therefore takes on the dual condition of being the place from which one attempts to view the image of the object (Eye) and the place of the constituted subject ('I'). "The eye is here, as so often, Symbolic of the subject" (Lacan, 1975/1988, p. 80). This position is significant in that our location (or site) frames our view (or line of sight) in seeing the image and thus the object. I suggest rereading this position through a Foucaultian account; as the place of discourse, knowledge production, and disciplinary

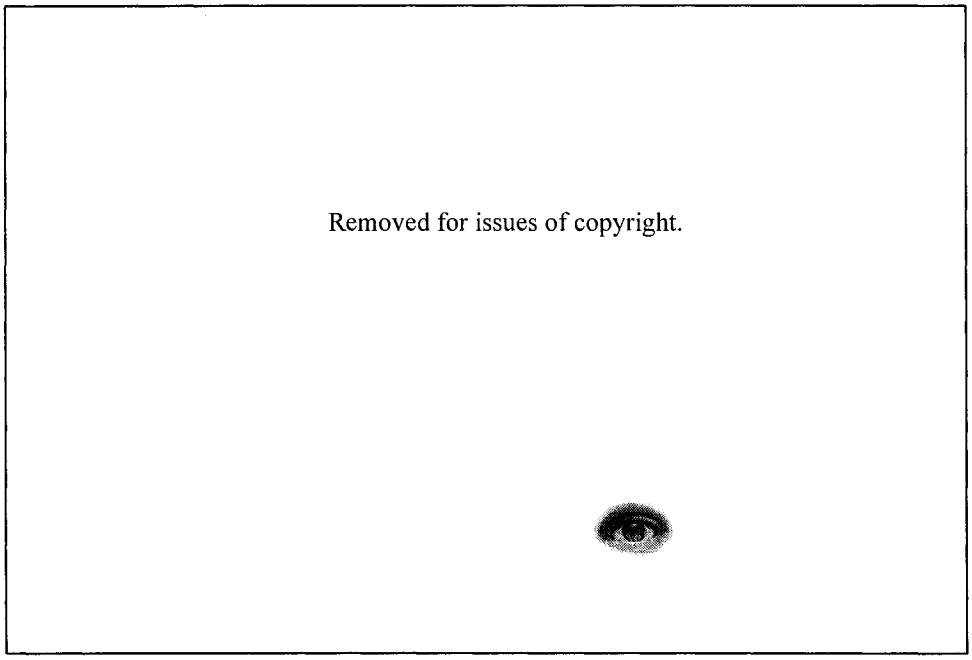

Figure 5-9. Rereading the laws of reflection A (adapted from The Physics Classroom, 2003).

power. Our location (or site) within particular discursive formations frames our view (or line of sight) about particular objects at particular moments in history. So, for example, what we view as athletic, feminine, black, or white, is framed by our location within conventional discourses of sport, gender, and race among others.

Secondly, "Image" in the physics example is the point within the mirror (but optically appearing to be behind and outside of the mirror) from which all light appears to converge. It is the point that is not in real space, but in the imagined space of the mirror. In the rereading, image is restated as the point from which all recognition appears to converge, a misrecognized representation of a pre-existing bodily self, or an "Imag(in)ed Body" (see Figure 5-10). It is the place of 'that is me'. It is the place of anticipation of

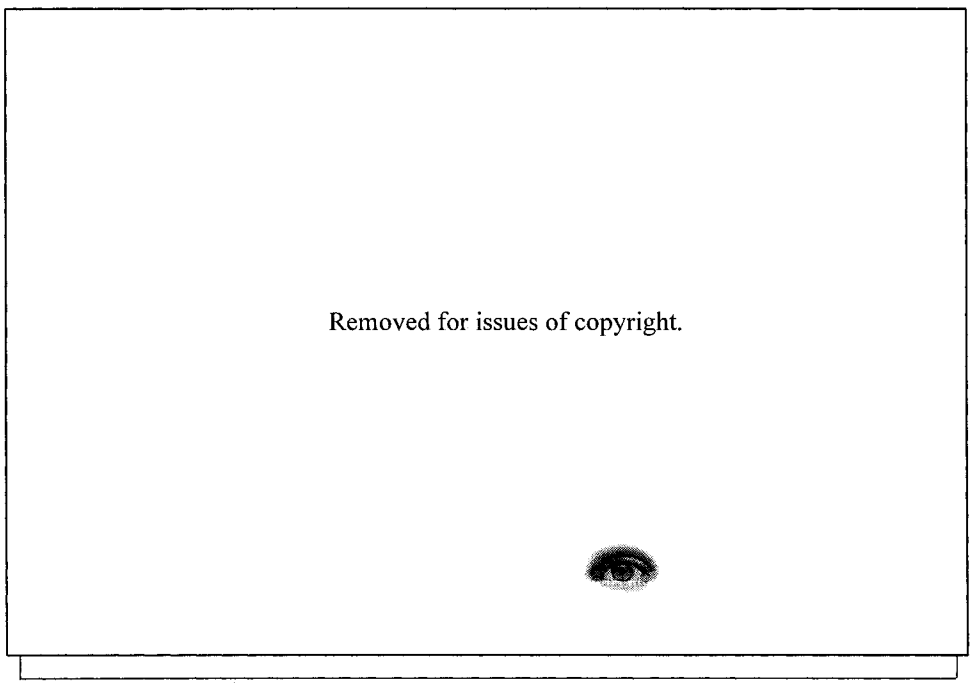

Figure 5-10. Rereading the laws of reflection B (adapted from The Physics Classroom, 2003).

wholeness and coherence. It is a unified misrecognition of 'I'. The position of image then, is where Lacan's mirror phase and his understanding of the Imaginary order map into this diagram. Image or Imag(in)ed Body is a necessary, but illusionary point as seen by the subject (Eye/'I').

Throughout this rereading thus far, a particular Lacanian logic has been maintained. That is:

> In the relation of the Imaginary...and in the constitution of the world such as results from it, everything depends on the position of the subject. And the position of the subject...is essentially characterized by its place in the Symbolic world, in other words in the world of speech. (Lacan, 1975/1988, p. 80).

However, in a sense, a Foucaultian discursive account has been transposed into the place of the Lacanian Symbolic order. Substituting a Foucaultian discursive account in the place of the Lacanian Symbolic, complicates the place of the Eye/'I' as a complex field of multiple and competing subjectivities (as opposed to the universal and transhistorical character the Eye/'I' takes on in a purely Lacanian account). However, by leaving the discursive Eye/'I' within a Lacanian logic (of the Symbolic framing what we see in the Imaginary and thus constituting our desire), it is acknowledged that there is more at work in identification than discourse simply disciplining, producing and regulating subjectivities. The necessity of theorizing why one identifies as the embodiment of the discursive subject is recognized and adopted. The rereading, thus far, has maintained the logic of the functioning and significance of the Imaginary (Image/Imaginary Body) in the

process of identification (via Lacan), while complicating the position of the subject (Eye/'I') in that same process (via Foucault).

For this reading to be at all convincing, it is necessary to address what is the most significant point of contention at stake in making this pairing of the discursive and the psychic work. That is, the competing conceptualizations of power at play in Foucaultian and Lacanian theorizing about subject formation.

For Lacan, there is a basic and necessary assumption that "*there is the Other* that is 'always already' there, and this is what can account for the mechanisms of power" (Dolar, 1998, p. 86). This Other is present (as representative of the Symbolic order) within the mirror stage, when after the infant has assumed her image as herself she turns to look at the adult who holds or supports her, "as if to call on [the adult] to ratify this image" (Evans, 1996, p. 116)[9]. Based on the supposition that "there is sense to be made,

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[9] The Lacanian mirror stage is most often associated with the Imaginary order and is considered to be the place of primary identification. Primary identification is built upon the dyad of self and other (mirror image or primary care giver as mirror image). The Symbolic dimension of the mirror stage, as it is described here in the form of the Other who ratifies the image, adds to this dyadic relationship a third member who represents law, order and authority (Grosz, 1990, p. 68). This third (Other) is read most specifically through the Oedipus Complex (as the Law of Father). Given the arguments of this paper, it is not necessary to speak in detail to the dynamics of the Oedipus Complex---particularly since there are various and competing readings of it that I do not have the space to detail here. Rather, for the purposes of this paper, it is only necessary to understand that the introduction of this third to the dyadic structure of primary (imaginary) identification "represents the completion of the subject's passage into the Symbolic

that there is knowledge, that there is an enjoyment for which [something] possesses the key", the Other becomes that "hypothetical authority that upholds the structure", "the third in any dialogue" (Dolar, 1998, p. 87; see also Žižek, 1992, p. 71-73). The Other is the fundamental organizing structure of the Symbolic order. The subject must believe that life 'makes sense', that there is something (the Other) that possesses the key to knowledge ("this is me") and enjoyment ("this will make me complete"). Power works only if we assume the Other as both necessary and consistent in our desire to be.

However, there is a paradoxical nature to this Other, the necessary dictum "the Other lacks" (Dolar, 1998, p. 79). Subjects cannot discover a knowledge of 'this is me'; they cannot find that which would 'complete' them. The Other (as law) suggests that such an object exists and in so doing constitutes the desire for this object. The Other does not possess the object that would fill the subjects lack (*objet petit a*), as introduced in the mirror stage, because this object does not exist in and of itself; it is an object posited by desire. The Other, therefore, "hasn't got the final answer" (Žižek, 1989, p. 122). The Other is always lacking.

It is this lack that motivates the subject to identify (through misrecognition as in the prototype of the mirror stage). Fantasy is the "response to that lack in the Other coextensive with the emergence of the subject" (Dolar, 1998, p. 90). Fantasy functions to

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order" (Evans, 1996, p. 81). This passage is representative of the necessary submission to language, order, and the law in the process of subject formation.

stage a scene, not in which the desire to fill the lack is fully satisfied, but which stages the desire as such (Žižek, 1989, p. 6). Fantasy is what sustains the Other, and thus the desiring subject.

Foucault on the other hand, rejects this psychoanalytic conception of power that he calls juridico-discursive. This "common conception of power", according to Foucault, allows for nothing but "limit and lack" in the process of uniformly laying down the rule of law (Foucault, 1976/1990, p. 83). According to this formulation "power, ultimately, is repression; repression, ultimately, is the imposition of the law; the law, ultimately, demands submission" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983, p. 130).

In rejecting power as uniform or monolithic; as reducible to coercion, or simple repression; as fundamental or foundational; or as totalizing, Foucault rejects the Lacanian Other. As described previously, the Other is always already uniformly present in the child's entry into the symbol; the presence of the Other is the fundamental organizing structure of the Symbolic; the entry into the Symbolic through submission to the Other is foundational to subject formation; and the Other's lack must be repressed through fantasy to constitute the desiring subject. The Other, therefore, represents precisely the conceptualization of power that Foucault rejects.

By examining these instances of what power is not (the Other), it is possible to more easily articulate the form that power does take for Foucault. If power cannot be reduced to an origin, if there is no depth, no essence, no hidden structure of intelligibility, if

power, "in a substantive sense, does not exist" (Foucault, 1977/1980, p. 198), then it is not productive to ask, "What is power?" but rather "How does power function?" How are the sites, coercions, and foundations not starting points, but rather mechanisms that are incorporated into a multiplicity and diversity of power relations? Modern power according to Foucault is "productive, a proliferation, an inducement, an enhancement" (Dolar, 1998, p.84). Modern power is not in the hidden rules of structure, order and law, but in how things appear and with what regularity.

Given these competing conceptualizations of power, it is potentially suspect to suggest that it is possible to substitute a Foucaultian discursive account in place of the Lacanian Symbolic, being that the Other that Foucault explicitly rejects is representative of that Symbolic. Furthermore, the Lacanian functioning of the Imaginary is predicated upon a particular understanding and necessity of the Symbolic as the place of the Other (power).[10] Arguably, it is not possible to both reject Lacan's conceptualization of power in favor of Foucault's analytics of power, while still accepting a Lacanian logic of the functioning of the Imaginary which is predicated upon a Lacanian conceptualization of power.

I use the words "potentially suspect" and "arguably not possible" (above) because I think this problematic of power only exists if we insist on choosing *either* a Foucaultian

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[10] Specifically, I am referring here to the necessity of the dyadic relationship of the Imaginary being ratified by the Other in the mirror stage.

conceptualization of power *or* a Lacanian conceptualization of power. Within a logic of either/or, the pairing is at best "suspect" and at worst "not possible". However, if we resist the urge to reduce our thinking to either/or categories and instead embrace the logic of neither, nor, and both we are not at the impasse that the competing conceptualizations of power appear to place us. Instead of being in the quagmire of choosing between the binary of Foucault and Lacan we can look for points of articulation and embrace the productive potential of undecidability (Derrida, 1967/1974, 1978).

It may seem too imaginative to suggest that Foucault and Lacan (or discursive and psychic) can be taken up as a binary. However, within poststructural discussions of identification Foucault and Lacan often function in the same way that we understand nature/culture or inside/outside to function, as a pair of contrasted or oppositional terms. Derrida (1978) argues there is always an uncertain space that belongs neither to one oppositional term nor the other, and simultaneously belongs to both (p. 283). This uncertain space may be called an articulation, in that it is a limit position that both joins and separates the terms of the either/or category. Articulations are thus, "the point at which this difference [between terms]...assumed to be self-evident, finds itself erased or questioned" (Derrida, 1978, p. 283).

Finding an articulation, and concomitantly the productive potential of undecidability, within the Foucault/Lacan binary necessitates a return to the rereading of the laws of reflection. The "Object" is reread as the "Physical Body" (see Figure 5-11). According to the laws of reflection, the reflection of light off the mirror at a point that converges with

the particular line of sight of the Eye (as it sights at the Image) allows the Eye to see the Object. The Object is not *seen* without the relation of all three points (Object, Image, and Eye). Following this logic, the Physical Body in the rereading is absolutely necessary as a point of articulation between the discursive (Eye/'I') and the psychic (Imag(in)ed Body) as they are mapped onto this diagram because the subject does not *see* the physical body without the relation of all three points (Physical Body, Imag(in)ed Body, Eye/'I').

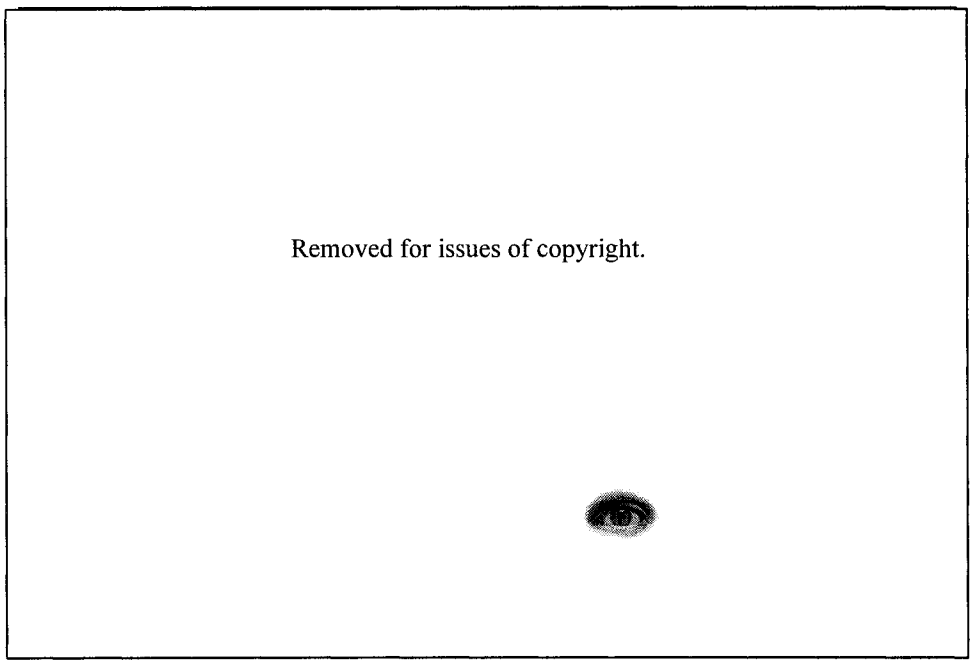

Figure 5-11. Rereading the laws of reflection C (adapted from The Physics Classroom, 2003).

To make this more apparent there is a need to adjust the diagram (see Figure 5-12). The Eye/'I' must be laid on top of the Object or Physical Body. It was productive to conceive of them as separate earlier in the rereading in order to highlight their functioning and distinct significance. However, it is here necessary to acknowledge that if the object that

one wants to view is oneself, then the Eye/'I' and the Physical Body emanate from the same location. That is, the Eye/'I' and the Physical Body are the place from which the subject looks into the mirror and *sees oneself.* The line of sight or location of the Eye (and now the place of the discursively shaped or impressed body), still situates the subject so that one perceives of the Image or one's Imag(in)ed Body in a very particular way (that is through the discourses to which one is subjected and subjects one's body). However, it is not enough for the subject to perceive of a particular Imaginary. The subject must misrecognize (that is, see/identify) one's Imag(in)ed Body as one's Physical Body. The 'I' is only constituted as subject when it (mis)recognizes its image as itself (Physical Body).

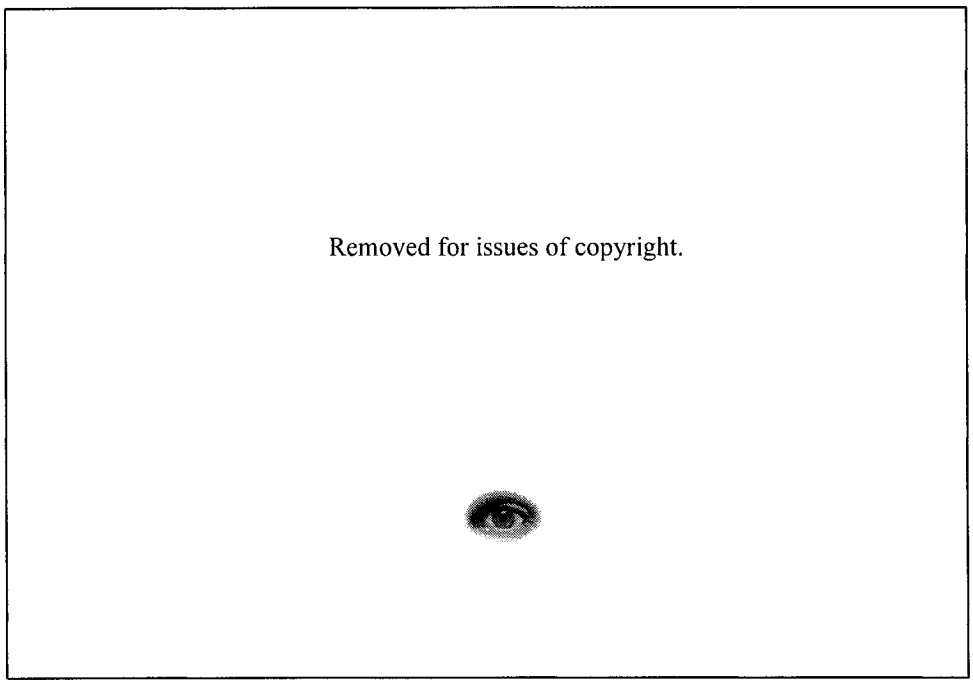

Figure 5-12. Eye/'I'/Object/Physical Body (adapted from The Physics Classroom, 2003).

Note how in the above reading, the Physical Body seems to simultaneously belong to both the discursive and the psychic and therefore properly belongs to neither the discursive nor the psychic. The body acts in this context as an articulation; a limit position that both joins and separates Foucault/Lacan or discursive/psychic. The body joins the terms in that it belongs to both terms. But, paradoxically, because it belongs to both terms it also separates them. In belonging to the discursive in its relation with the Eye/'I', it can never wholly belong to the psychic and in belonging to the psychic in its relation to the Imag(in)ed Body, it can never wholly belong to the discursive.

The same is true in mapping the Nike advertisement onto Figure 5-12. On one side of the mirror, in the place of Eye/'I' and Physical Body, there is the woman hanging from the chin-up bar. On the other side of the mirror (or more specifically within the imagined space of the mirror), in the place of the Imag(in)ed Body, there is the woman hanging from the rock face.

The 'black, female, athlete' looking into the mirror is produced through subjection to a number of intersecting and embodied discourses including gender, race, and sport. Examining the Eye/'I' through a Foucaultian discursive account, allows for "the specific social and historical analysis that is required, [to not] conflate into 'one' law the effect of a convergence of many" (Butler, 1993, p. 206). 'Black, female, athlete' is therefore marked on the Physical Body in multiple, contingent, and contesting ways. If the Eye/'I' is subjected to other discourses the subject negotiates other subject positions, but it would/could never take up these positions wholly. The discursive subject/Physical Body

will always be fragmented, but "feeling[s] of fragmentation fuel the identification with the specular image" (Evans, 1996, p. 67).

One identifies as the summoned, produced, and regulated embodied discursive subject because that subject is constituted as desiring, and that desire is the desire to be. Therefore, in spite of and because of the fragmented body (lack), the woman hanging in the place of the Eye/'I' is able to misrecognize her Physical Body as her Imag(in)ed Body. She does not see the contestation, she only *sees herself.* And in *seeing herself,* in (mis)recognizing the contested Physical Body as a unified 'I', she constitutes that 'I' in the place of the Physical Body. She cannot not *see herself* because without the identification of 'that is me', there would be no 'I' to refuse the identification.

By sighting (from the site of the eye) the Imag(in)ed Body, her Physical Body, as 'I', is subjected into being. As Lacan (1975/1988) said, "for there to be an illusion, for there to be a world constituted, in front of the eye looking ...one condition must be fulfilled - as I have said, the eye must be in a specific position" (p. 80). Just as in the physics story, the Object or Physical Body, as articulation, is always there before the mirror, but if or how we see it depends on the situatedness of our Eye/'I'.

With this in mind, one final point should be made about the body through the example of the laws of reflection. If the Eye/'I' is positioned to the far left, it is possible for that Eye/'I' to sight in the direction of the Image (see Figure 5-13). However, because the line of sight does not intersect with the mirror, the Object cannot be seen.

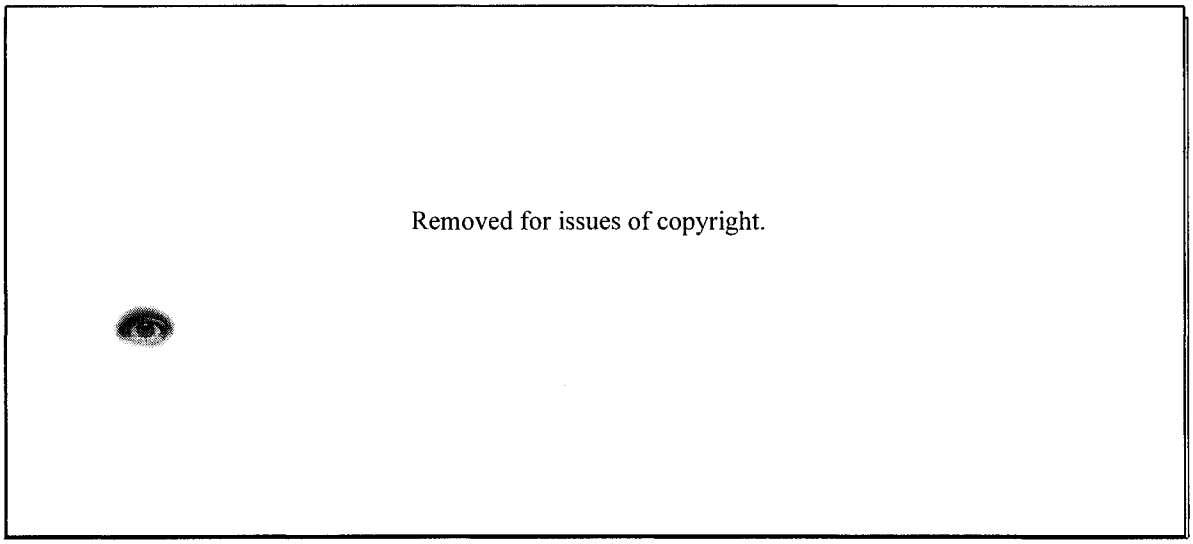

Figure 5-13. Failure to see Object/Physical Body (adapted from The Physics Classroom, 2003).

Of course, given the epistemological and ontological assumptions of positivist physics, very few people would argue that, within the physics example, the object is not there simply because it cannot be seen. However, within critiques of poststructuralism, theorists such as Foucault and Lacan are accused of negating the body because they assert that the subject cannot *see* (that is know or make sense of their body) outside of discourse and psychic illusion. Foucaultian and Lacanian theorizing about subject formation no more denies the body than does the law of reflection deny the object. And here the laws of reflection and the theorizations of sporting identification come together in one last moment of emphasis, to stress the necessary relation of all three points in any discussion of *seeing*...

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