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USING TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AS A FRAMEWORK TO EXPLORE

WOMEN AND RUNNING

A Dissertation in

Adult Education

by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative narrative inquiry explored women's self-perceptions changed through regular participation in running. Transformative learning theory was considered as a possible explanation for the learning and changes adult women experienced. In-depth interviews of 11 adult women who have been running between 1 to 4 years were conducted. Based on the interviews, a unique narrative was created for each participant. Using the lens of transformative learning, transcripts of the interviews were analyzed individually to see if the subject had a deep paradigm shift in self-perception based on the description of their running experience.

The research focused on the participants' self-reports of how they have changed, specifically their self-perception since beginning running, and the role running played in this change. Each narrative supplies rich descriptive data.

Findings indicated that all of the subjects did have a change in self-perspective that they contributed to running. Self-reflection was key to the process of change for most of the subjects while a few used the process of discernment. Additionally, some of the women reported the influence of being part of a supportive group, while only one woman engaged in rational dialogue. The rational aspect, although central, was only one part of the process.

Implications for health educators include infusing opportunities for self reflection in behavior change models to perhaps increase success rates. The study contributes to the field of adult education by demonstrating the importance of the individual's experiences to the process of transformative learning.

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DEDICATION

This process and product is dedicated to my family.

To my Mom and Dad, both deceased, who valued education beyond their own high school diplomas and proudly supported my educational decisions even when they did not understand why I wanted to pursue higher degrees.

To my children, Colleen, Hannah, and Nathan who never complained (out loud) about the time, the energy, and the endless meals of cereal or scrambled eggs it took to get me to this point.

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Yes, I am blessed. And, I am grateful for a life filled with blessings.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of a narrative inquiry research study that used a transformational learning lens to describe the experiences some woman may have had as a result of regular participation in a running program. The chapter includes the background to the problem, a purpose statement, guiding research questions, an overview of the theoretical framework supporting the study, an overview of the research methodology, the significance of the study, and an explanation of the assumptions and limitations associated with the study. Last, it includes a section defining terms commonly used throughout this study.

General Background

As part of a course requirement for an undergraduate elective activity class called "Jog, Run, Race" at a mid-sized university, a female adult learner wrote:

> The best part of the race would be how I felt when I finished. Kicking it in for the last 100 meters and finally crossing that finish line made me feel a sense of accomplishment. Tears were welling in my eyes as I crossed the finish line because I accomplished something I never thought I would be able to achieve and I exceeded the expectations I had for myself for how well I would do during the course. I am so glad I did that, because now I know I have the mental ability to push myself through anything in my life now. In conclusion, I feel this race was not only a grade for a class, but it was also a character builder. I completed something I never thought I would ever be able to accomplish and it felt so good

that my family was also there to share that moment with me …. Again, what I am taking from this course is that running is not just strictly physical, it is over half mental and if you believe in yourself and talk yourself through difficult situations you can achieve almost anything!

This was a woman who came to the class, not as a competitive athlete, but as a person who felt she needed to be challenged to "drop a few pounds." As the instructor reading this assignment, I was struck by several things. First, this was not the first time I heard the story of a female student recognizing a change in her self- perception as a result of participating in running. Typically, it was the women who remarked on this "change" while male students have more commonly referred to the way they felt in a more physical sense. For example, a male student recently wrote, "I got hot very quickly … My chest and sides were hurting … I was determined to run the entire length of the race and I did … The best part of the race was crossing the finish line and the relief that came with it" (male student, fall 2009). Of particular note is that the women who comment on this change in self-perception seem to be the ones who did not identify themselves as particularly athletic. Additionally, the woman whose story began this chapter, like others before her, never mentioned if she fulfilled her original goal of dropping a few pounds. These anecdotal experiences had me questioning what it is about running that might trigger such a deep paradigm shift in women. I was also interested in understanding what this deep paradigm shift means to women, not in a physical sense, but what it means in their daily lives when they are no longer wearing their running shoes.

Woman and Cardiovascular Exercise

Exercise has been shown to have many positive health benefits (Brown, Burton, & Rowan, 2007; CDC, 2007; USDHHS, 1996). Specifically, the components of physical fitness include cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, and flexibility. Comparing the possible health benefit outcomes, the dimension of physical fitness that offers the most abundant health benefits is regular participation in cardiovascular endurance exercise (Corbin, Welk, Corbin, & Welk, 2008; Fahey, Insel, & Roth, 2010; Powers & Dodd, 2008). Women who regularly participate in moderate cardiovascular (CV) exercise are likely to reap a multitude of physical benefits. These benefits include, but are not limited to, decreased risk of heart disease, improved CV function, reduction in incidence and severity of diabetes, increased rate of metabolism, improved respiratory capacity, improved energy production of muscles and the extraction of oxygen by muscle cells, improved muscle endurance and coordination, increased bone density, increased levels of HDL (good cholesterol), and reduction in the incidence of most types of cancers (Brown, Burton, & Rowan, 2007; USDHHS, 1996). Many of the physical benefits are easily measured by comparing participation in CV exercise with empirical numbers of Body Mass Index (BMI), cholesterol levels, or the incidence of a disease. Additionally, the psychological benefits of exercise are also well established in the literature. Examples include, but are not limited to, alleviation of depression, reduction in anxiety, stress management, improvement in self-esteem, self-confidence and empowerment (Bond & Batey, 2005; Huberty,Sidman, Meendering, Blissmer, Schulte, Flohr, & Ransdell, 2008; Leedy, 2009; Savage, Long, Hall & Martin, 2009; Segar, Eccles, & Richardson, 2008; USDHHS, 1996).

Healthy People 2010, a government document published every ten years, recommends, among other things, increasing physical activity "to help individuals of all ages increase life expectancy *and* improve their quality of life and to eliminate health disparities among different segments of the population" (para 1).

Additionally, exercise is advocated as a direct route to empowerment since a stronger body contributes to a sense of independence, well-being, and self-efficacy both in the exercise world as well as in one's personal world and has been the focus of much research (Blinde, Taub, & Han, 1994; Chrisler & Lamont, 2002; Grant and O'Brian Cousins, 2001; Hardcastle & Taylor, 2005; Leedy, 2009; Whaley & Ebbeck, 2002). Although it is evident from these studies that women are more confident in their ability to follow through with an exercise plan, the studies reveal a lack of connection to how the exercise impacts other areas of their lives. This impact on other areas of life can be seen as empowerment, which is described as believing in one's ability to author one's own life (Eskes, Carisle, & Miller, 1998) or more simply "to give power or make able" (Cranton, 1994, pp. 72 -73). Empowerment as it applies to transformative learning is "both a goal of and a condition for transformative learning" (p.73). There is a dearth of concrete examples of what empowerment created as the result of exercising actually means to women. According to the study by Chrisler and Lamont, empowerment was used to describe women who participated in their study who found, "That they can do more for themselves … such as opening tight jars" (p. 10) as well as those who made "unimagined changed in their life" (p.10). Unlike the physical example of "opening tight jars" this still leaves open the question of what "unimagined changes" might be and if and how empowerment translates to the actions of every day life.

Women and Running

Much of the running-specific research involving women focuses on elite competitive runners (Kordell, 2006; Pate & O'Neil, 2007; Thompson, Smith, & DiGioacchino, 2004) and the physiological changes for women who participate in running which include a focus on injuries (Robertson, 2008; Thompson, Smith, & DiGioacchino, 2004). Additionally, there are many gender-combined studies which focus on motivation to run, especially the motivation for participating in marathon running. However, most of the mixed-gender studies which report gender-specific results (Cullen, 1983; Okwumabus, Meyers, & Santille, 1987; Summers, Sargent, Levey, & Murray, 1982) had many fewer female participants then males which makes the validity of those assumptions for females questionable. One of the few studies with only women participants include Titze, Stronegger and Owens (2005) which reported the most common responses of more than 500 women as to their motivation to begin running. Motivating factors included enjoyment, improved performance, and weight control. Another study looked at how age influenced motivation to run. As women aged they were most likely to choose enjoyment as a motivation to begin running whereas younger women chose physical benefits (Thogerson-Ntoumani, Biscomb, Lane, Lane & Jarrett, 2007). These studies, similar to other studies that focused on exercise in general, were quantitative studies, thus they did not include descriptive data such as what "enjoyment" means to the women. In contrast to this research, other sources such as internet blogs also provide excellent descriptive data about why women begin running. For example,

one 51-year-old woman said, "The guy I was dating ran and encouraged me to run with him" (Corpus Roadrunner Newsletter, 2009, p. 2). Another woman stated, "I was tired of feeling tired all the time, had zero energy, wanted to lose post-baby fat, wanted to look and feel better" (coolrunning, 2007, p.2. Post 10) and yet another said, "because my cholesterol level was high" (post 18).

While this provides descriptions of why women start running, it does not dig deeper into what happens to women and their views of self as a result of running. These discussions are occurring in informal venues. For example, in a local newspaper, a woman runner stated:

> Five years ago I made changes in my life, because I did not like who I was and the way I felt. I started by changing my diet and then I slowly started to jog. I was amazed how much better I felt about myself. I had confidence to go to college. My state of mind really changed. I did not feel afraid to live my life anymore. I started to stand up for myself. Exercising has had a major impact on my life. I like the way my body looks, but I love more so the way it makes me feel. Unstoppable! (The Workout Winner, p.3).

Unlike the reflections of the first student used in the introduction, this woman runner articulated why she started running and the changes in her life which she attributes to running.

Problem Statement

Women come to running for a variety of reasons, mainly to improve their physical health. Adhering to a regular running program does result in an improvement in physical health. The literature referencing the quantitative physical and psychological

improvements that result from participating in a regular running program is abundant. However, for some women, running ends up being more than the means to improve their physical health although that may have been the initial motivator. Much of the literature refers to improvement of self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence, and feeling of empowerment. Other than quantitative studies that use psychology tools/surveys pre-and-post participation, little research explains what this deep shift means to the participants. Nor does the literature address the process of how this deep shift in self-perception occurs and if this shift in perspective can be explained through the theoretical lens of transformative learning. This study followed the meaning making process associated with beginning and sticking with a running program. The women were asked to articulate if they felt they saw themselves differently and if they did, not only what those deep shifts in perspectives were, but what these deep-shifts in perception mean to them. The bottom-line is, somewhere along the way of regular participation in running, the woman begins a process of greater reflection which might be identified as the beginning of the process of perspective transformation. A perspective transformation is a change in how one sees oneself or a change in one's world view resulting in thinking and/or acting in new ways (Mezirow, 2000) in which the process can be explained as transformative learning.

Research Questions

1. How do women perceive themselves and their lives, as a result of making running a regular part of their lifestyle?

2. What is it about running that influences some women to have a deep paradigm shift in their self perceptions?

3. For those women who experienced transformative learning, how do they describe the process?

Purpose of the Study

In response to these questions, the purpose of this study is twofold: a) to explore the impact of regular participation in running on women's self-perception; and b) to use the lens of transformative learning as a way of understanding the deep-perspective shifts adult women may experience from regular participation in running.

Theoretical Framework

The overall theoretical framework for this study is transformational learning (TL). Transformational learning is one of the few learning theories specific to adult learners. Mezirow (1991) draws on the work of Jurgen Habermas as a foundation for the theory of transformational learning to "explain how adult learners make sense of the meaning of their experiences, the nature of the structures that influence the way they construe experience, the dynamics involved in modifying meaning, and the way the structures of meaning themselves undergo changes …." (p. xii). Mezirow defines transformative learning theory specifically as "an adult learning theory that focuses on the frame of reference of the individual; explaining how one construes meaning from experience expressed in expectations, habits, and premises and how the reinterpretation of meanings of experience act as guides to decisions and action" (Mezirow, 1993, p. 17).

At its core, transformative learning is learning which leads to a fundamental change in a person's orientation. To be transformational, Mezirow (1994) outlined a multi-phase approach to learning which begins with the hallmark "disorienting dilemma:

which serves as a trigger for reflection" (p.223). The disorienting dilemma is a life experience that cannot be resolved cognitively, requiring greater reflection to integrate and/or build new meaning leading to a shift in one's understanding of self or the understanding of one's world views. Eventually, this reflection may lead to a perspective transformation. Mezirow (1991) posits that perspective transformation is critical to understanding how adults learn, make meaning, and develop following a disorienting dilemma, and the results forever change the person. Perspective transformation is a process whereby the adult's knowledge and orientation (or meaning making) about the self or one's experiences result in a significant change. Additionally, critical reflection is central in Mezirow's model as a way of "meaning making". Critical reflection is the process of taking one's prior assumptions and questioning these taken-for-granted assumptions as a way of making sense of oneself and one's world (Mezirow, 1990). This study will explore if women who adopt running and have a deep-perspective change engage in critical reflection as part of the transformational learning process.

However, Mezirow is not without criticism. One overriding critique is that Mezirow's theory is too rational (Hart, 1990), since for Mezirow the cognitive function of critical reflection is the primary mechanism underlying transformative learning. This perspective, heavily dependent on individual rationality, is called the psycho-critical perspective. Clark and Wilson (1991) and Taylor (1993) fault Mezirow for his emphasis on rationality, his lack of attention to the social constructs that influence learning, and his hegemonic ideals of valuing autonomy and rationality.

Building on the limitations of Mezirow's conception of transformative learning, Taylor(1993) questions this emphasis on the cognitive as being somewhat elitist since the

ability to engage in transformational learning "makes reference to the essentiality of critical reflection in transformative learning, implying it as a 'higher' form of learning not found in all individuals and cultures" (p. 59). Where Mezirow focuses on the rational process of transformational learning, everything else about the person including the physical, the spiritual, and the senses is given less attention.

In response to this oversight, the extra-rational approach to transformative learning expands to include the whole person, specifically the process of individuation, the use of imagination, and the emotions. Individuation is a process of where individuals differentiate themselves from others by recognizing how they are unique and at the same time different from others (Cranton, 2006; Jung, 1971). It is a process of which the individual may or may not be aware. The extra-rational view of transformational learning, although recognizing the rational (ego) or thinking part, expands to include the whole person and the role of the unconscious in learning in the individuals' journey towards greater authenticity (Boyd & Myers, 1988; Cranton & Caruseta, 2004; Dirkx, 1997, Kegan, 2000). Discernment is key to this perspective, which is a process of the learner listening to and engaging the Self (Boyd & Myers, 1988). The process of differentiating one's Self is based on individuation which has is rooted in Jungian psychology and includes transformative learning theorists Boyd and Myers, Cranton, and Dirkx. Ultimately, it is a process of moving towards authenticity, or as Parker Palmer (2001) states, a process of becoming "the person one has always been" (para.1) resulting in a truer self. This journey toward authenticity begins with introspection, or looking inward to examine ones thoughts and feelings and ends with being more authentic, or having a better sense of who one is, deep inside.

Although Taylor (2008) identifies five other lenses through which to view transformative learning based upon divergent constructs of transformational learning other than the individual, this study is focused upon the individual woman. Cranton (2006) does not believe in positing one perspective over another and suggests that different perspectives share common characteristics and can inform each other. Therefore, this study looked at the narratives of individual women to see which, if any, perspective of transformative learning, or combination of perspectives of transformative learning best applied to each individual. Additionally, action, according to Mezirow (1990) is the final phase of transformative learning. The women had the opportunity to voice how this deep perspective change has influenced action in other areas of their lives. Finally, the extra-rational perspective of transformative learning, which incorporates the whole person as well as the brain, may be the most appropriate. It is important to note that fundamental to all transformative learning perspectives is that transformative learning is a process and there is a deep change in the learner. Transformational learning theory "leads us to view learning as a process of becoming aware of one's assumptions and revising these assumptions" (Cranton, 1994, p. 73).

Change is not unique to transformative learning. As a health educator, behavior change is an integral medium to reach one's health potential. Discarding unhealthy behaviors and adopting more healthy behaviors is a lifelong process. There are many behavior change models that look at behavior change from a mechanistic process including the Health Belief Model (HBM), Transtheoretical Model (TTM), Relapse Prevention Model, Social Support Model, ecological perspective, self-determination theory, Health Promotion Model, protection motivation theory, self-efficacy theory and

the role of social cognitive theory. These models are all looking specifically at how interventions to change a health behavior are best accomplished. Successful behavior change models drive the behavior while transformative learning changes the individual in the way she sees herself which also may result in a new behavior. Therefore this study also looked at any overlap in how transformative learning and behavior change models, specifically the Transtheoretical Model, and how one might inform the other.

To explore how transformation may be the result of adopting a running program and how it has deeply changed who the woman is, each woman's personal story of her journey was collected using the qualitative research method of narrative inquiry.   To understand how transformative learning is a theory which "shapes people, they are different afterwards in ways both they and others can recognize" (Clark, 1993, p.47), narrative inquiry provided the details to illuminate the process of deep-perspective change. This next section will provide an overview of narrative inquiry.

Overview of Methodology

To explore this study's research questions, I used utilize narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry falls under the umbrella of qualitative research. Narrative inquiry is the collection and analysis of stories, situated in the experiences of the participants and told in the first person (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Merriam 2002). The reason for using narrative inquiry as a method design is directly related to the purpose of this study. In examining the twofold purpose of this study, an in-depth meaningful exploration of the participant's story is necessary. It is the participant who tells her story, and if and how running has influenced or changed her life in any meaningful ways. Additionally, effectively gathering narratives encourage self-reflection which in turn can lead to self-

discovery (Lyons & Kubler-LaBosky, 2002), which informed the transformational framework of this study.

To get the rich descriptive data central to this study, it was imperative to obtain a purposeful sample of six to twelve women. A purposeful sample is deliberately choosing participants "from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2002, p.12). To be considered for the study, participants had to be women, over the age of 25, who have incorporated running as apart of their lifestyle for a minimum of one year, but will not include women who have been running continuously for more than four years. The reason for this parameter on the woman's involvement in running is to engage the stories of women who are past the "honeymoon" period of a new activity, yet have not been running so long as to have forgotten what their lives were like before running. The honeymoon phase is seen as an early phase of the behavior change process when participants are hyper-aware of everything good about a new activity (Curtis, 2009; Hewett, 2009) and usually subsides well within the first year of the new activity.

The primary data collection method for this research study was two separate in-depth, face-to- face, semi-structured interviews each lasting approximately 1.5 hours. A semi-structured interview approach has a base of questions to ask the participants. However, the interview was not so scripted that the researcher did not ask for clarifying questions, ask for more details, or ask for examples. The semi-structured interview allowed for some freedom, yet assured that all participants answer a core of similar questions. These interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed and the researcher also took field notes.

Before the data was analyzed, I reviewed the verbatim transcripts and constructed a final story. This final story was not based upon an objective, factual description of life events, but rather the social content of the lived experience. This type of narrative construction falls under the "Social Field" as described by Zilber, Tuval-Maschiach and Lieblich, (2008). Just as the participant could choose which part of the experience to tell, the researcher was also a privileged co-creator of the narrative by choosing what would be included in the final narrative, what would be excluded in the final narrative and how the narrative would be interpreted.

After the final narrative was constructed, the narrative was analyzed for meanings and themes which are a central aspect of narrative research (McAdams, 1987, Plummer, 2001) which may actually change as the story is retold and reinvented by the participants as their lives are lived, experience is gained, and the story is reworked. In other words, the story of the participant may actually change over time if the same participant is re-interviewed. Therefore, the focus is on the analysis of the self-identified change, not the event or experience. The experiences of the women runners are as unique as their individual perspectives and can only be appreciated through their individual stories. The goal of narrative inquiry is to understand. This understanding includes understanding the experience from the participant's perspective and understanding the impact of the process on the individual.

Significance

This study has potential significance in a number of different areas. Much of the traditional adult education research literature using transformational learning theory emphasizes cognitive learning. Cognitive learning theories emphasize higher order

thinking. Knowing and learning in cognitive learning theories are processes based in the rational or thinking part of the brain. This research adds to adult learning theory, specifically transformative learning theory, by exploring how running, an extra-rational way of knowing, is linked to the highly cognitive process of transformational learning. Extra-rational transformative learning emphasizes the whole person, not just a part of the person. When addressing transformative learning, Fisher-Yoshida (2009) mentions "we are more than just our minds and have human processes that are more than just cognitive" (p. 287). Furthermore, this study may validate that rational and extra-rational are closely integrated. If traditional rational approaches to meaning making focus primarily on engaging the brain as is the case with Mezirow's perspective on transformational learning, this research has the potential to bring the whole person back into the process, not as a separate way of making meaning, but as an extra-rational path, not separate from, but in tandem with, the rational. This research adds to the body of literature that posits extra-rational ways of knowing can enhance the rational ways of knowing.

Second, this research is important to adult education because women who improve their self-perception may be more likely to venture out of their comfort zone into areas previously unexplored, opening the door to lifelong learning which may result in improved physical, emotional, spiritual, and vocational health. This, in turn, has the potential to enhance the process of authenticity in not a linear path, but by empowering women to author their own lives, wherever those paths may lead.

Third, knowing the benefits of cardiovascular exercise on the health of women, and recognizing the low-retention rates of females who engage in cardiovascular exercise on a regular basis, this study has the potential to add a lens to health behavior change

models to make them more successful. Currently, behavior change models are very behaviorist-oriented with the participants following very mechanistic steps on the path to success. Participants in health behavior change projects are encouraged to "develop a plan for gradual modification that allows you time to unlearn negative patterns and substitute positive ones" (Donetelle, 2005, p. 16). Perhaps by adding a critical reflection piece, compliance with a health behavior change such as running will increase if participants not only see themselves as successful in the behavior change (self-efficacy), but identify themselves as more authentic because of the behavior change. This study provides a connection between the running experience and adult learning principles such as how women make meaning during a physical experience and will aid educators, specifically health and physical educators, in the development of pedagogy to enhance transformative learning.

Next, these women did not have a professional interventionist guiding their learning through their running experiences. This study examined how these women came to understand changes in themselves. This study reveals what self-directed critical reflection looks like and the ingredients necessary for it to occur. Additionally, in the realm of health and physical education, when behavior change is often a goal but the failure rate is often high, the introduction of pedagogy to increase the possibility of critical thinking may have as the ultimate result a more successful outcome for health behavior change.

Finally, this study has particular personal significance. Having been a recreational runner my entire adult life, I have had many occasions to build relationships with other female runners at the same time talking informally about what running has

done for us on a very personal level. Additionally, I have developed an undergraduate activity class called "Jog, Run, Race". Anecdotally I have observed great changes in women who stick with running. Running is an integral part of who I am. I believe that through this research I am better able to better identity the learning that occurs as women undertake running and may be better able to foster the type of learning which women claim improves their self-schemata, and ultimately makes them more authentic.

Assumptions

1. Women come to running for a variety of reasons, mainly to improve their physical health.

2. Learning is often unrecognized by participants, particularly in informal settings.

3. Running is potentially a vehicle to foster transformational learning

4. Although participating in the same experience of running, each woman who experiences a deep-perspective change may do so differently.

5. Participants will be honest and accurate in sharing their stories.

Limitations

Like all research, there are limitations to this research. Following are some of the more obvious:

1. This study is dependent upon voluntary participation by women runners who are at a particular point in their running careers. By limiting those who are brand new to running, I will not be able to capture the learning as it occurs.

2. To include participants who potentially have had a deep-perspective change, participants will be asked if they feel they are different since they began running.

Participants may not interpret this question in a way that reflects transformative learning.

3. Those who chose to participate may want to please the researcher by focusing on what they think the researcher wants to hear and thereby leaving out important details.

4. My experience as a runner might cause me to have assumptions in that I miss asking certain questions that would be potentially useful.

5. The findings are limited to the researcher's and participant's ability to make meaning from their individual stories.

6. This is the first time I am engaging in qualitative research. This neophyte research level may be considered a limitation

Definitions of Terms

To more clearly understand the terms presented in this study, the following definitions are offered to provide clarity:

1. Authenticity: the journey an individual makes in becoming whole.

2. Critical reflection: a process of consciously thinking about one's beliefs and assumptions, discarding what does not make sense, and redefining one's beliefs and assumptions. (Mezirow, 1998)

3. Disorienting Dilemma: an experience "which serves as a trigger for reflection" (Mezirow, p.223).

4. Empowerment: believing in one's ability to author one's own life. (Eskes, Carlisle, Miller, 1998)

5. Extra-rational: a holistic way to make meaning, to include the physical, the spiritual, the senses, and the aesthetic. (Cranton, 2010,

6. Narrative: a told story with a beginning, middle and end. (Riessman, 1993)

7. Narrative Inquiry: a method to analysis stories. (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000)

8. Perspective Transformation: the end product of a process of changing the way we define ourselves, or our world views. (Mezirow, 1998)

9. Running Program: a commitment to running a minimum of 30 minutes, three to five times per week, in most weeks over the course of years.

10. Self-Perspective: "perception of oneself; especially*:* self-concept" (Webster, 2010).

11. Transformative Learning**:** is the "process by which people examine problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (Cranton, 2006, p. 36).

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides an overview of this research on running, women, and transformative learning, and will explore if this deep-perspective change in the woman runner can be described as transformational. This will add to the literature on the holistic perspective of transformational learning. Running provides a holistic approach to transformational learning. It may be that the act of running, together with the cognitive which provides a space for the rational part of transformational learning to occur. Recognizing the holistic aspect of this research, this study seems to be a better fit with another transformational learning perspective such as the extra-rational as described by Boyd and Myers, Cranton, Dirkx, and Scott which focuses on a "more holistic nature of learning in adulthood, its mystery and messiness" (Dirkx, 1997, p.81).

This study focused not on what happens to women runners in a physical or health behavior change/modification dimension (i.e. weight loss, improved cholesterol levels, lowered blood pressure) or in the general psychological dimension (i.e. I feel better about myself, I feel more confident) but on the deep-perspective shifts about oneself as a result of participation in a regular exercise program. This study investigated if the women can articulate this change and what it means to the women. And in addition, were the women able to translate their personal changes into actions of everyday life? Also, using the transformative learning framework, this study provides the opportunity to better understand how running could be a vehicle to foster transformative learning among women.

The following chapter, Chapter Two, will provide a more detailed review of the main conceptual and empirical bodies of literature used in this study. Chapter Three will then provide a detailed description of the research methodology and design of this study. This will be followed by Chapter Four which will present the study's findings. Finally, Chapter Five will provide an overall summary of this research including the study's findings as well as a discussion of the implications of these findings

CHAPTER TWO

AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this research study is twofold: a) to explore the impact of regular participation in running on a woman's self-perception; and b) to explore transformative learning as a possible explanation for the learning and changes adult women experience from regular participation in running. This literature review informs this narrative inquiry research by providing a better understanding of the bodies of research germane to the theoretical perspectives of transformative learning which frame this study. This chapter is organized in seven sections of related literature beginning with the conceptual literature concerning transformative learning theory, different perspectives of transformative learning theory, health behavior change (specifically the Transtheoretical Model), and self- perception. This is followed by the empirical research about the benefits of cardiovascular fitness, and in particular women, running, and deep-perspective shifts in the women as a result of participating in a regular running program.

These main sections were chosen to provide insights into the multiple bodies of research that meet at the intersection of theory, psychological benefits of cardiovascular fitness, women, running, and deep-perspective change about the self. More specifically, this literature review provides an opportunity to explore the literature to see what this deep change in self-perception looks like to the individual woman. I am focusing not on what happens to the women in the physical sense, but how running may be a vehicle for transformational learning.

Theoretical Framework: Transformative Learning Theory

Transformational learning, also called transformative learning, is about change: change in the way people think about themselves and/or change in how a person sees the world. Originally, Jack Mezirow (1978) introduced his theory of transformative learning more than 30 years ago based upon his landmark study about women returning to higher education. Over the years, other theorists have added to, critiqued, and modified Mezirow's original assumptions. Not only have these other theorists developed different perspectives on transformational learning, Mezirow himself has worked to refine his original theory, so much so that he calls transformative learning "a theory in progress" (2001). Adults, building upon life experiences, are continually adding new experiences, questioning old assumptions, and reformulating their personal or world views. This process is not a result of just having new experiences, but it is by identifying and reflecting on one's assumptions about the experience or things triggered by the experience which keeps the learning process in motion. Mezirow defines learning as "the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action" (Mezirow, 1990, p.1). He further suggests that this theory of transformational learning focuses on the individual, the experiences and assumptions of the individual, critically reflecting on these experiences and assumptions, and reflective discourse with others about these experiences and assumptions, resulting in an immediate or delayed action (Mezirow, 1994, 2000).

Taylor (2008) identifies seven lenses through which to view transformative learning based upon divergent constructs of transformational learning. These

perspectives include psycho-analytic, psycho-developmental, and psycho-critical which focus on the individual learning, and social-emancipatory, cultural-spiritual, race-centric and planetary themes which focus on sociocultural learning. Some of these perspectives are referred to by other labels or are grouped differently as well. Regardless of the label, each perspective is differentiated based upon the locus of control, the meaning of the transformation, and the assumptions or role of the teacher and the student. However, fundamental to all perspectives is that transformative learning is a process and there is a deep shift in perspective in the learner. Each of the perspectives on transformative learning theory "leads us to view learning as a process of becoming aware of one's assumptions and revising these assumptions" (Cranton, 1994, p. 73) which ultimately reveals new ways of thinking. I explore a variety of transformational learning perspectives that may apply to the experience of women and the deep-perspective change they experience as a result of participating in a regular running program. The focus is not on physical changes, but on changes to the self as identified by the individual woman. I begin with an overview of Mezirow's theory of transformational learning, which falls under Taylor's (2008) psycho-critical theoretical view.

Psycho-Critical Theoretical Perspective

The psycho-critical view of transformative learning is heavily dependent on the rational or thinking process of individuals. Mezirow's (1994, 2000) theory of transformational learning focuses on the individual, his or her experiences and assumptions, critical reflection on these experiences and assumptions, reflective discourse with others about these experiences and assumptions, and a deep shift in perspective resulting in immediate or delayed action. Specifically, Mezirow (2000)

defines transformational learning "as the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action" (p. 7). In other words, people make meaning of their experiences by using individual past experiences or frames of reference.

Frames of reference are composed of one's habit of mind and one's point of view (Mezirow, 2000). This results in a set of beliefs, which defines each person's world view. Mezirow (2000) further defines habit of mind as a set of broad, generalized assumptions which act as filters to interpret the meaning of experiences, expressed "as a point of view" (p. 18). A point of view is made up of meaning schemes. Meaning schemes result in thoughts that we have and actions that we just do without much thought or reflection. According to Mezirow (2000), meaning schemes can change if we critically reflect upon them, which may result in transformative learning. Critical reflection is the process of questioning the validity of one's deeply held assumptions (Mezirow, 1998).

For learning to be transformational, Mezirow (1994) outlined a multi-phase approach to learning which begins with the hallmark "disorienting dilemma which serves as a trigger for reflection" (p. 223). These trigger events can be major life events such as "death, illness, …divorce…failing an important exam" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 168). But, these trigger events can also be day-to-day events such as "an eye opening discussion, book, poem or painting…" (Mezirow, 1990, p.14). What these trigger events have in common is that one's old ways of thinking are not compatible with the new information. Additionally, these triggers may cause a change which is incremental or slowly unfolding over time, or epochal, which is sudden and dramatic.

These triggers are what have the potential to begin a process of learning. This learning process occurs not as a result of having had an experience, but it is by identifying and reflecting on one's assumptions about the experience or things triggered by the experience which begin and then keep the process of transformative learning in motion. This reflection, termed critical reflection by Mezirow (1990) or "reflections of presuppositions" (p.6) is a cognitive process which implies more than just thinking about the experience or solving a problem based upon the experience but upon premise reflection. Premise reflection is central to critical reflection as it is about "our becoming aware of why we perceive, think, feel, or act as we do" (Mezirow, 1990, p.108). Mezirow (1985) argues that it is the responsibility of the adult educator to "help learners make explicit, elaborate, and act upon assumptions and premises…upon which their performance, achievement, and productivity are based" (p. 148). A critique of Mezirow is that his theory is too rational (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Hart, 1990) since his focus is mainly on the psycho-critical or thinking part of learning.

The final element of Mezirow's transformative learning theory is action. The term "action" has been hotly contested. Mezirow (2000) seems to cover all his bases when he states that the learner might take "immediate action, delayed action or reasoned reaffirmation of an existing pattern of action" (p. 24). Examples of action could then range from changing the way you think about yourself with no change of action, understanding why you have particular assumptions (the assumptions do not change, but being able to identify your assumptions and why you have them changed), and/or taking social action. Mezirow offers a three-step process to action from becoming aware of the need to change as a result of critically reflecting on one's assumptions, finding others of a

like mind, and deciding on appropriate actions. Additionally, a perspective transformation that may occur might also be categorized as emancipatory learning if the person is somehow freed from self-imposed restrictions. Emancipatory learning is defined as "a process of freeing ourselves from forces that limit our options and our control over our lives, forces that have been taken for granted or seen as beyond our control" (Cranton, 1994, p.16). Emancipation of some type is often a goal of adult education. And, according to Mezirow (1991), "emancipatory learning often is transformational" (p. 88).

There are several critiques of Mezirow's theory. For example, Clark and Wilson (1991) fault Mezirow for his emphasis on rationality and his lack of attention to the social constructs that influence learning. The theory is seen as very rational, emphasizing rational discourse requiring learners (to at least attempt) "to set aside preconceptions and biases in favor of objective analysis (to the extent that this is possible) and to attempt to responsibly weigh the evidence, fairly assess the arguments, and critically examine the assumptions behind them" (Mezirow, 1991, p.188). Additionally, Mezirow has been criticized for ignoring the cultural context of learning (Clark & Wilson, 1991). He responds, "It is precisely our cultural frames of references and how we learn to change them that transformation theory addresses" (p.190). Another concern with Mezirow's original theory is that it does appear to have autonomy as a goal, which is a reflection of the Western dominant culture or hegemonic values. Other critics (Hart, 1990; Collard & Law, 1989) have argued that Mezirow's theory of transformational learning is not so much a theory but fragments of a theory or "a set of prescriptions for good practice on the part of professional adult educators who are committed to facilitating self-directed adult

learning" (Griffin, 1987, p. 183).   Merriam (2004) posits that the skills needed for

transformative learning according to Mezirow theory are critical thinking and rational

discourse which are higher level thinking skills. She believes that most adults do not

possess that level of thinking, and suggests research look at if critical thinking and

rational thinking are really necessary for transformational learning to occur. It is

important to consider these critiques for my research as it may be more meaningful to

construct meaning, not based solely on cognitive dissonance, but rather on constructing

meaning based upon one's involvement, experiences, and interactions with the world

(Cranton, 2006).

This expansion of looking at transformative learning from a more inclusive lens is

the focus of theorists such as Boyd and Myers, Dirkx, Cranton and others who expand on

transformational learning to include not just the rational, but to include the whole person.

A fundamental critique of Mezirow is that his perspective is not only too rational, but

also too linear, which end up devaluing a process which may include the emotional, the

affective, the aesthetic or the intuitive. The next section of transformational learning

explores transformational learning to include the "more holistic nature of learning in

adulthood, its mystery and messiness" (Dirkx, 1997, p.81).

Beyond the Rational

Where Mezirow focuses on the conscious, cognitive, problem-solving aspects of

transformative learning, others, while still recognizing the rational (ego) or thinking part

of learning, expand the perspective to include the whole learner, the role of personal

relationships, personal influences, and the role of the unconscious in learning (Boyd &

Myers, 1998; Cranton, 2004; Dirkx, 1997), labeled as extra-rational. Other terms used to

describe this extra-rational perspective are: holistic or integral transformation (Lennox, 2005), integral transformation (O'Sullivan, Morrell, & O'Connor, 2002), and integrative transformation (Nagata, 2009). Regardless of the label, the extra-rational seeks to engage the rational with the rest of the person. For this research, the perspective of Boyd and Myers lends itself to having the potential to be most relevant. Boyd and Myers (1988) make a distinction between Mezirow's perspective transformation and a model of transformative education. The focus for Boyd and Myers is on a positive transformation resulting in "an expansion and integration of an individual's personality" (p. 262). They posit that this personal transformation is an inner journey that may occur unconsciously, based upon Jung (1921/1971) and his work with individuation. This perspective looks at how the individual moves "to psychic integration and active realization of their true being" (Boyd & Myers, 1988, p. 263). In other words, this point of view of transformation focuses on the process of becoming more authentic using the whole person. It is not so much a perspective transformation, but rather becoming, as Parker Palmer (2001) says, "The person one has always been" (para. 1). An assumption of this perspective is that as we age, we can access that part of us that has been hidden or unacknowledged and develop into a more integrated self through introspection. Introspection is looking inward, examining one's thoughts and feelings. This journey toward authenticity proceeds not through a Mezirow-like ten-phase approach, but through discernment which necessitates grief work. Discernment is a process to discover the hidden parts of who we are.

Discernment according to Boyd and Myers (1988) is a four-phase process of receptivity, recognition, grieving and reintegration in order to have a deeper meaning of

who we are as individuals. Discernment begins with receptivity which requires the learner to listen and engage with the Self. For this to happen the "ego needs to be quieted" (Scott,1997, p. 46) or as Dirkx (1997) argues, there needs to be open space "to meander and wander … through our individual and collective lives" (p. 85). This space can be referred to as liminal space which is "where there is a certain freedom to juggle with the factors of existence" (Sydnor, 2005, p. 35). This liminal space is also referred to as a time when one is able to listen to and speak from the heart (Nelson, 2009). For this space to be created, the ego or thinking part of the brain needs to be quieted.

The second part of discernment is recognition or understanding that there are parts of us that need to be brought to the surface, or recognizing parts of ourselves in others. This would necessitate a choice for the learner. The learner could choose to ignore these new-found thoughts or the learner could choose to make meaning and understanding about what part is a reflection of her true self. The third part of discernment is grieving. This grieving happens as the inner dialogue occurs and there is "an involuntary disruption of order" (Boyd & Myers. 1988, p. 278) which questions old ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. It is through grieving that transformation is possible. Finally, for transformation to occur, new ways of thinking, feeling, or acting are incorporated into the persona. This is not a linear process as there is continued back and forth between the past and the present until the old ways no longer make sense. Thus, moving "to another state that is deeper, wiser, and more in tune with matter, the body and soul" (Scott, 1997, p.45). This again refers to authenticity, or having a sense of who one is, deep inside.

This process towards authenticity includes differentiation or "cutting through to what is important to preserve and what is important to negate" (Scott, 1997, p.47). Not

all introspection will lead toward making changes in how one thinks, feels or acts. Depth theorists argue that differentiation is a solitary, meditative process. A process which requires a dialogue with the self, and a process which would include a dialogue with the unconscious dimensions of self. Scott (1997) and Dirkx (1997) call the reintegration of the body, spirit, emotion and mind "soul work" and point out that whenever a person transcends rational thinking, one enters into the realm of the spiritual. Ruth Simmons, President of Brown University in an interview with Morley Safer in 2001, stated that "education is about transforming your soul" (in Moore, 2005, p.89). "Soul" is used to describe an essence, or the core of one's being.

This inclusion of the soul defined by Dirkx (1997) as "Experiences of mystery – birth and death, incomprehensible tragedies, love, and separation – open up a realm of being that is barely visible to our waking ego consciousness. It is this realm of being that is expressed in learning through soul" (p. 82). This again extends transformative learning beyond the cognitive, but at the same time does not dismiss the cognitive. It is a search for meaning with a focus on the person, her experiences and her world. It is in the integration of the rational with the rest of the person, or the whole person, which leads to transformative learning (Cranton, 2006). This holistic approach does not privilege the rational part of a person, nor does it exclude it. Rather, this perspective, termed extra-rational, includes the rational as just one part of the whole person. Looking at women and running through the extra-rational lens can provide an opportunity to see how women runners engage the rational aspects but also the extra-rational aspects in the creation of meaning. However, this extra-rational approach is not without critique either.

Critiques of the extra-rational perspective of transformational learning include the over-emphasis of the individual which can result in ignoring the individual's relationship with culture and context (Taylor, 2007). Where Mezirow has been criticized for focusing on the rational, critical reflection, and the goal of autonomy, Boyd and Myers are criticized for focusing heavily on intuition, emotion, and the development of the individual. Although Mezirow and Boyd and Myers have distinct constructs to transformative learning, there are some commonalities as well. They both engage the rational to reach their respective goals.

Another holistic view of transformative learning draws upon adult development as viewed by Tennant. This constructivist- developmental model is labeled as psycho-developmental by Taylor (2008). Tennant (1993) sees transformation as change due to normal life transitions yet he does make the case that although perspective transformation "implies development, the converse is not true" (Tennant, p.41). For these normal life transitions to be considered transformational, old ways of thinking need to be challenged, reflected upon, and a new world view must emerge and not be confused with normal developmental progress. An example of this would be if a woman begins to run because she believes it will make her loss weight after the birth of a baby and she does lose weight, no perspective change has occurred. However, if this new runner begins to feel guilty about being away from her baby while she is running and begins to reflect upon why she feels guilty and challenges her beliefs and why she has them, then critical reflection has begun and a perspective transformation may occur if the new runner then changes those beliefs. Critical self-reflection is an integral part of the adult development explanation of transformation which is a trait or skill developed in adulthood.

Tennant debates with Mezirow's view of the disorienting dilemma, or the trigger for perspective transformation. Tennant (1993) argues that what Mezirow claims to be disorienting dilemmas (marriage, divorce, diagnoses of illness) are really normative life events, or phases of a typical life. Although not everyone marries, has children, or is diagnosed with illness, these are considered normal events which come from living life and should be understood as normative interaction between the person and society, and it is the integration of life experiences which corresponds to perspective transformation. As mentioned previously, both Tennant (1993) and Mezirow (2000) posit that this potential growth is dependent on one's ability to test one's assumptions which is possible by engaging the rational through critical thinking. Therefore, even in normative development, perspective transformation will only result after a deep shift in thinking occurs. Transformational learning does not just happen because of an experience. Nor is transformative learning the only way to view deep-perspective change in the adult. Therefore, it is possible to look at deep-perspective change through other lenses such as adult education. Additionally, pertinent to this study, health behavior change models will be addressed, specifically the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) of behavior change. This next section will look both at adult education as well as health behavior change models.

Adult Education, Health Behavior Change Models and Change

Although this study was informed by transformative learning as the theoretical framework, it is recognized that other bodies of literature also focus on changes which occur in adulthood. For example, adult education theorists, adult development theorists and health behavior change theorists all posit assumptions which focus on adults and perspective change. If "transformed perspectives are developmental in the lives of adults"

(Taylor, Marienco, & Fiddler, 2000, p.22) then all adults will naturally have deep-perspective changes just by experiencing normal adult life events such as marriage, parenthood, or the death of a loved one. This next section begins by speaking to these very distinct, yet overlapping theories, which are a call for the "need to collaborate across disciplines, theories, and paradigms to build a comprehensive theory of adult learning to guide educators of adults" (Wiessner &Mezirow, 2000, p. 356).

Adult learning is the goal of adult education. In the field of adult education, learning is seen as a process resulting in change. At the heart of adult education is the cognitive growth of the adult. This is also central to the adult development literature. Adult learning is fundamentally defined as how thinking patterns change over time (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999). Learning is an individual process which can be heavily influenced by context as well as socially constructed building upon one's experiences. For learning to occur, adults need to be developmentally ready to learn which is most likely to occur if a series of tasks have been conquered (Knowles, 1990). Each stage of development has a list of life tasks to be accomplished before moving on to the next stage. The development of consciousness and the resulting action is seen as critical in the role of adult education which has a link between personal and social change (Friere, 1970). And of course, Mezirow (1991) describes education as the process of learning to transform meaning based upon experiences. The commonality of all of these perspectives of adult education is a change of thinking. The next section will explore change though the lens of Health Behavior Change Models.

Health Behavior Change Models

As a health educator, I have spent countless hours investigating health behavior change from a behaviorist view. My primary interest has been what model helps an individual become motivated and adhere to change, and overcome barriers of adhering to behavior change whether it be increasing cardiovascular exercise, quitting smoking, or developing good study skills, to name a few. There are many different behavior change models including the Health Belief Model (HBM), Transtheoretical Model (TTM), Relapse Prevention Model, Social Support Model, ecological perspective, self-determination theory, Health Promotion Model, protection motivation theory, self-efficacy theory and the role of social cognitive theory. These models are all looking specifically at how interventions to change a health behavior are best accomplished. Behavior change models in general are very behaviorally driven. However, as I learned more about transformative learning, I began to see overlaps between transformative learning and the behavior change model called the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) which is also called *stages of change model*. Commonalities of the TTM of health behavior change theorists and transformational learning theorists include: (a) building upon personal experiences; (b) looking at different ways to make sense out of experiences; (c) using discourse with self and others; (d) looking at potential possibilities of new perspectives through a critical lens; (e) moving toward a more complex way of viewing oneself; (f) potential leading to action; and (g) change does not happen all at once. However, the differences are striking, particularly from the viewpoint of success. This next section explores TTL in greater detail.

Transtheoretical theory was developed in the late 1970s, early 1980s to describe intentional health behavior change (Prochaska & Di Clemente, 1983, 1985; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Although originally developed to describe movement through a temporal series of linear stages for intervention for addictive behaviors, over the years it has expanded to include interventions for other health behavior changes. The linear movement through the stages has been modified to be more cyclical in name, but still in a linear progression. In other words, following this model, the individual is likely to proceed two steps forward, and one back. This model proposes constructs to influence movement though six stages beginning with the *precontemplation* stage through to the *termination* stage. The first three stages, *precontemplation*, *contemplation* and *preparatio*n, focus on the barriers and benefits to changing a particular behavior for a particular individual, while the last three stages, *action, maintenance, and termination* focus on self-efficacy.

The *precontemplation* stage covers the time when the individual has no intention of changing either because she is unaware of the benefits of changing, she does not want to change, or she does not think she can change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983, 1985; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). *Contemplation* is the stage when a person considers changing, but sees the cons to change as more than or equal to the pros of changing. There is no set amount of time a person spends at each stage, although typically the person in the contemplation stage is thinking about changing in the next six months. However, some individuals become chronic contemplators when all they do is think about changing, but never progress to the next stage. During the *preparation* stage, the individual focuses on developing a plan of action, including how to overcome potential

barriers. Change at this stage is predicted to occur in the next 30 days (Prochaska &

DiClemente, 1983, 1985; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997).

The *action* phase lasts from when one first adopts the behavior change and

continues over the next six months. The individual is actively engaged in the new

behavior, although significant effort is required to motivate and overcome barriers

(Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983, 1985; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). The *maintenance*

stage occurs when the individual has adhered to the change for at least six months. The

individual is sustaining the new behavior over time, and works hard not to relapse. The

last stage, the *termination* stage, is a point that some individuals never reach. It is when

there are no temptations to return to the old behavior. To clarify, the behaviors may not

be any different for those at the maintenance and termination stage, but the internal

struggles to adhere to the new behavior will be quite different for the individual

(Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983, 1985; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997).

The TTM proposes constructs to influence movement through the stages. These

constructs include self-efficacy, decisional balance, and the process of change. Self-

efficacy is "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required for the

outcome" (Bandura, 1977, p. 193) and is a predictor in most models as to how successful

a person will be in a chosen behavior change. Higher adherence to exercise programs is

directly correlated with a positive self-efficacy (McAuley, 1993; McAuley, Lox, Duncan,

1993) and self-efficacy increases linearly across the stages of change (Marshall & Biddle,

2001). But, what is not known is if those who already posses self- efficacy are the ones

who make it farther along in the stages, or if self-efficacy improves as one reaches the

next stage. Within TTM, and the other models of behavior change, the focus is on self-

efficacy from a social cognitive perspective. Social cognitive theory posits "that self-efficacy expectancy (perceived confidence that one can perform a specific behavior) and outcome expectancy (anticipated consequences of behavior) strongly influence behavior change" (Conn, Minor, Burke, Rantz, & Pomeroy, 2003, p. 1160). The adult learning theory of social cognition is based upon Bandura's work (1986) which states "the social portion of the terminology acknowledges the social origins of much human thought and action; the cognitive portion recognizes the influential casual contribution of thought processes to human motivation, affect, and action" (p. xii). The emphasis is not just on the learner but includes the learner's environment as well. Outcome expectancy is a central assumption of most of the behavior change models including TTM. Outcome expectancy or what the learner expects will happen when engaged in a behavior change, such as physical activity, is a predictor of behavior change. TTM, like other behavior change models, is based on a cognitive-behavioral perspective in that there is a logical, well thought out plan to try to make change successful and that the change is reinforced in some positive way until the change is incorporated into one's lifestyle. The success of the use of these models is easily measured in that either the behavior change occurred or it did not. Unfortunately, health belief models do little more than educate and increase awareness about a behavior change and "have been largely unsuccessful" (Williams, Anderson, & Winett, 2005, p. 76). A critique of studying self-efficacy when it comes to any behavior change model is that self-efficacy only applies to the behavior being changed. What is not studied is if an increase in self-efficacy leads to an increase in self-efficacy in other areas of one's life which may lead to deep-perspective changes in one's everyday life (Paxton, Nigg, Motl, 2008).

What is missing from these models is a way to view or describe the change and what it means to participants. Additionally, health behavior change theories are more focused on whether a model worked or did not work, not on what it was about the model which influenced the successful behavior change. Is the success due to the model or are those who are successful, successful because of another reason such as a perspective transformation? Nor do behavior change models address any deep significant changes. Although this study is not about health behavior change, it may be an outcome noted by the participants. Since this research is based upon women and running, there may be potential to look at how transformative learning theory could inform health behavior change models. Theoretically, the goal of health behavior change models is to identify targets for change and the methods for accomplishing change. Initial success of health behavior change measured at one month from initiation of the new behavior is often very high. Long-term success or adherence, although a goal of behavior change, is nowhere near as successful as initial success. For example, a recent comparison of a variety smoking-cessation programs report long-term success dependent on age and aid used to help stop smoking (Messer, Trinidad, Al-Delaimy, & Pierce, 2008). Long-term success was defined as six months abstinence from smoking and ranged from a low of 5.2% success rate to a high of 9.3% success rate. Research on transformational learning posits that the perspective change occurring through the transformational learning process is a permanent change (Baumgartner, 2002).

In summary, all of the aforementioned adult education theorists, health behavior change theorists, specifically TTM, as well as transformative learning theorists, see learning as a process. Like transformative learning these additional ways of looking at

learning in adulthood have as a commonality the idea that learning is a process. This learning process moves the individual in the direction of developing a truer self with the ultimate aim of action to support one's learning. Moore (2005) suggests the consolidation of "the existing literature to identify new directions for future research linking all theories of learning and change that might eventually produce a holistic theory of transformational change" (p.410).

The reason to look at the multiple ways of learning is not to try to use all theories, but to acknowledge that there may be other ways for other researchers to explain learning, specifically learning which leads to perspective changes of self or one's world view. Therefore, the next section reviews the concept of perspective, specifically, self-perspective.

<div align="center">**Self-Perspective**</div>

The core of transformative learning is a deep-perspective shift in how one sees oneself or one's world view. Perspective, according to Mezirow (2005), includes how a person identifies oneself and acts on these points of views. This research focuses on the deep-perspective change in the self or, in other words, how the woman has changed how she sees herself and actions which have resulted because of this deep shift. Perspective transformation focuses on deconstructing a view of oneself or one's world, and reconstructing a new view of oneself or one's world. The terms self-perspective, self-perception, self-concept, self-identity, and self-image (among others) are broad terms that are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature to describe how a person defines themselves. Specifically, Webster's dictionary (2010) defines self-perception as "perception of oneself; especially: self-concept". This is not to be confused with body

image which is particular to how one sees one's body. However, body image can be considered a part of one's overall self-perception (Frey, 2006, p. 142). In the broader sense, self-concept is defined as how a person sees "his or her physical, mental, interpersonal, spiritual characteristics and abilities" (Frey, 2006, p. 142). Self-concept is defined as "the beliefs that people have about themselves, including such characteristics as like, dislikes, values, appearance, and competencies." (Carstensen & Hartel, 2006, p. 24). It is similarly defined as "a set of core beliefs and values that you feel describes yourself" (Sparling, & Redican, 2009, .pp. 242 -243). Self-esteem, according to McAuley, Mihalko and Bane (1997), is broadly defined as "encompassing the favorable views one holds regarding oneself" (p. 68). Markus (1977) used the term self-schema to refer to any cognitive generalizations one makes about the self which are based upon past experiences. Tennant (2005) explores the difference in the terms self and identity, and suggests there is a difference in the relationship between the society and the individual but concludes "there is no consensus on this matter … it is best to live with ambiguity and to consider them as similar … embraced by the single concept of the person" (p.103). What these different concepts have in common is that how you define yourself, all of the ingredients in defining yourself, and how you see yourself, all can be combined under the umbrella of self-perspective. Anything which has the potential to change how you define yourself can be tied back to a fundamental tenant of transformative learning, a change in perspective about oneself which can then lead to a change in one's world view and how one thinks and acts in her everyday life.

With so many different definitions of perspective of self, it is important to use a common definition of perspective when referring to the transformation of perspective

about the self, specifically self-perspective. Using the above terms focusing on perspective and self, in this research I will use the term self-perspective as the term to mean the beliefs a woman runner has about who she is.

Many things have the potential to cause a change in perspective. Trigger events can be the result of specific life events (divorce, death, illness) or incremental changes can happen over time. The literature on exercise often promotes exercise as a way to improve one's self-concept. Life changes are easier when new activities and new relationships create a new sense of identity (Baumeister, 1991). This supports Mezirow's work to include more than critical reflection as an influence on changing one's self-perception. These new activities are seen by Baumeister to be helpful in adult development by providing a place to assume one's new identity. This research is based upon women and their participation in exercise, specifically running, which may be the catalyst for self-perspective change. Therefore, the next section articulates what is meant by exercise, specifically cardiovascular exercise, since this is a main focus of my research. This is then followed by the empirical research on women and cardiovascular exercise, specifically running.

Exercise

Exercise, in general, has been shown to have many positive health benefits. If exercise could be bottled and taken in pill form, it could be called *The Fountain of Youth* and pass F.D.A. guidelines for medicinal claims on the label. Specifically, the components of physical fitness include cardio-respiratory endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, and flexibility. Physical activity is a broad term which includes any level and degree of physical fitness activity that results in bodily movement by the

skeletal muscles that produces an increase in energy expenditure (calories used).

Therefore, any movement, including wiggling your toes for example, would count as

physical activity. However, physical activity may or may not result in physical fitness.

Physical fitness is a "set of attributes that people have or achieve that relates to the ability

to perform physical activity" (Hahn, Payne, & Lucas, 2007, p. 80). Physical fitness can

be further divided into two categories: lifestyle physical activity and exercise, and both

have the potential to positively influence health. Lifestyle physical activity is associated

with being active in daily life, such as taking out the garbage, walking up the stairs, or

washing your car. Exercise is a subcategory of physical fitness. Exercise is a planned and

somewhat structured physical activity done with the intention of improving or

maintaining ones health. In other words, it is movement for the health of it. Health is no

longer defined as the lack of illness (reduced morbidity) or measured in length of years

(reduced mortality) but as a dynamic process of adding life to one's years by developing

one's body, mind, and spirit.

Participating in regular exercise is shown empirically to improve a multitude of

physiological, metabolic, and psychological aspects of health. Although regular

participation in any of the dimensions of fitness contributes to positive health gains,

participating in regular, moderately intense, cardiovascular exercise provides the most

numerous benefits (Corbin, Weld, Corbin, & Welk, 2008; Fahey, Insel, & Roth, 2010,

Powers & Dodd, 2008). The guidelines for what counts as moderate-intense

cardiovascular activity have been tweaked over the years. According to guidelines issued

jointly by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and the American Heart

Association (AHA) in 2007, positive physical results are most likely to occur when the

participant engages in "moderate intense cardio 30 minutes per day, five days per week" (para. 1). Moderate activity is defined as activity which is intense enough "to raise your heart rate and break a sweat, yet still be able to carry on a conversation" (para. 2).

In 1996 the first United States Surgeon General Report on Physical Activity and Health was released by the USDHHS. The landmark report is considered the first comprehensive review of hundreds of articles and includes 116 quantitative studies from 1953 to 1996 which focused on the effect of physical activity on one's health. Partnered with the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the final report resulted in two strong messages: (1) physical activity is a means to a healthier life, and (2) quality of life and health can be improved with physical activity by preventing and controlling disease, injury, and disability. The evidence gathered in this report was staggering as to the health benefits that can result from regular physical activity. Regardless of age, gender, and race, research upon research confirmed the positive health benefits that result from participation in regular cardiovascular exercise. Although there is data linking all types of exercise to an improvement in health, this report specifically targets the benefits of cardiovascular fitness. Cardiovascular exercise is also referred to as cardio-respiratory and aerobic exercise/conditioning.

According to a comprehensive review issued by the Surgeon General (USDHHS, 1996) and more recently Brown, Burton, and Rowan (2007), the health benefits of regular cardio vascular exercise are numerous. These benefits include a decreased risk of heart disease, strengthening the heart, increased volume of blood pumped to the body, lowered resting heart rate, reduced risk of type 2 diabetes, increased rate of metabolism, decreased risk of certain cancers including breast and colon, improved respiratory capacity,

improved ability of lungs to extract oxygen from the air, improved energy production of muscles and extraction of oxygen by muscle cells, improved muscle endurance and coordination, increase bone density, increased bone strength, decreased risk of osteoporosis, increased range of motion, increased levels of HDL (good cholesterol), decreased resting blood pressure, decreased risk of atherosclerosis, and improved circulation. The benefits are not just in the physical dimension. The Surgeon General Report also lists the following non-physical benefits of regular exercise: reduced stress and improved mood, decreased anxiety, improved concentration, increased oxygen and nutrients to the brain, and an improved self-esteem and body image. Regardless of age, gender, and race, research upon research found positive physical and psychological health benefits resulting from participation in cardiovascular exercise. This next section explores the empirical literature concerning women and cardiovascular exercise.

Women and Cardiovascular Exercise

With so many benefits, it is no wonder why increasing physical activity is a goal of Healthy People 2010 (USDHHS, 2007). According to a report by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS, 2007), 66% of women and 57% of men never engage in leisure time periods of vigorous physical activity lasting 10 minutes or more per week. This does not even come close to the recommendations for the health benefits that the ACSM recommends as cited earlier. These numbers are staggering for either gender, but in study after study, the participatory rate for females is lower (Bloom, R. 2008; United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Historically, low participation rates for females is nothing new, and the statement, "Something is drastically wrong when exercise is said to be associated with so many health benefits, yet only a small

portion of the female population exercises sufficiently to accrue these benefits"
(Vertinsky, 1994, p. 61) still holds true. According to studies reviewed, women often do
not participate at the level of men because they are often the caregivers (Cassetta,
BodenBoden-Albala, Sciacca, & Giardina, 2007; Huberty et al. 2008), living in crime
areas (Cassetta et al.), lacking social support (Huberty et al., 2008; Kirchoff Elliott,
Schlichting & Chin, 2008), and/or lacking motivation/goals (Huberty et al., 2008;
Kirchoff et al., 2008, Nadasen, 2007; Segar et al., 2008). However, the bottomline is that
regular, moderately, intense activity is beneficial in reducing risk factors for serious
diseases and increasing quality of life. Although the research indicates that level of
education is directly correlated to an increase in physical activity (Cassetta et al., 2007;
King et al., 2007), only 34% of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher engaged in
vigorous, leisure time, physical activity three or more times a week" (NCHS, 2007, p.
10). It can be assumed that the women participating is less than 34% at this somewhat
privileged level since the research indicates that men's levels of physical activity are
greater than women's at any age, income, educational, and ethnic category, and only
widens as each group ages (Bassey, 2000; Hays, 1999; USDHHS, 1996). Regular
participation in moderate amounts of cardiovascular exercise is not just adding years to
one's life, but adding life to one's years. The psychological benefits are as numerous as
the physical benefits. This next section explores the empirical literature on the
psychological benefits of cardiovascular exercise.

Psychological Benefits

The benefits of cardiovascular exercise are not just in the physical dimension. As
early as 1984, Hughes estimated that more than 1,000 research studies were done

comparing the positive relationship between physical fitness and mental health. The number of articles has grown to staggering numbers. The Surgeon General Report (1996) USDHHS (2000) and others (Berger & Motl, 2005; Bloom, R. 2008; Blumenthal et al., 1999; Chrisler & Lamont, 2002; Hayes, 1999; Lavie, Milani, Cassidy. & Gilliland, 1999; Vasquez, 2002) list the following non-physical benefits of regular exercise: decrease in depression, reduced stress, improved mood, decreased anxiety, improved concentration, increased oxygen and nutrients to the brain, empowerment, and an improved self-esteem and body image. Specifically, participation in regular cardiovascular exercise had the potential "to 'burn off' the chemical by-products of the stress response and increase endorphins" (Donetelle, 2009, p.325), giving the participant a natural mood enhancer.

The use of cardiovascular exercise as a treatment for depression has a positive outcome in a number of studies (Blumenthal, et al, 1999; Hays, 1999, Klein, Greist, Gurmam, Neimeyer, Lesser, Bushnell, & Smith, 1985, Lutz, Lochbaum, Carson, Greenwood, Jackson & Byars, 2008). Blumenthal et al. found specifically that regular participation in cardiovascular exercise worked better at decreasing symptoms than those who took antidepressants or those who combined ant depressive medication with exercise. The improvement of psychological well being, self-efficacy and self-concept is related to an increase in regular cardiovascular exercise in many studies (Alfermann & Stoll, 2000; Fox, 2000; McAuley, 1994, McAuley & Rudolph, 1995).

Fox and Corbin (1989) developed a survey called the Physical Self-Perception Profile (PSPP) which measures a person's overall self-esteem self-perception as they relates to physical self-worth. The assumption is that when a subject has an increase in self worth as a result of participation in physical activity, this will transfer to a more

global or general increase in self-esteem. Much research has been done (Marsh and

Sonstroem, 1995; Sonstroem, Speliotis, & Fava, 1992; Sonstroem, Harlow & Joseph,

1994) to prove the validity of the PSPP scale. McAuley, Mihalko, and Bane (1997) find a

positive correlation for middle-aged adult women between exercise and self-worth and

recommend that more research be done to examine the multidimensional effects

including other psychosocial outcomes and the behavioral outcomes of an increase in

physical activity. Even with the inventories validated, the multidimensional effects are

left undescribed abate those studies which have pre-determined categories for participants

to check off. This research describes how this new outlook appears to the individual

woman. This rich descriptive data is lacking in the exercise-related literature.

Feminist psychotherapy advocates empowering women. Much research (Carlson,

2008; Lapchick, Richards, 2008; Lapchick & Little, 2008; Sabo & Veliz, 2008 ; Sabo,

Melnick & Vanfossen, 1989; NCAA News, 2008) has been done on the correlation

between high school and college athletes and success out of the sport. Higher grades and

higher graduation rates between female athletes and female non-athletes are outcomes

noted in several studies (Carlson, 2008; Lapchick & Richards; 2008; NCCA News,

2008). The positive benefits for females who participate in sports begin early.

Elementary-aged girls who participate in sports report higher satisfaction with their

family and social life, and the ability to achieve their goals off the playing field using the

same hard work and dedication they use on the field (Blinde, Taub & Han, 2001; Sabo &

Veliz, 2008). Regardless of when the girls begin to participate, the benefits off the field

have the potential to have significant impact on the girls' lives. High school and

traditional aged college women who participate in sports are more likely to volunteer,

vote, be comfortable with public speaking, follow the news, and be involved in civil action such as boycotts than those who do not participate (Lopez & Moore,2006). Looking specifically at empowerment, the research reports girls and women being empowered as a result of participation in sports and emphasizes the role of individual self- empowerment as a result of improved self-esteem (Cooky, 2006; Cookey and McDonald 2005; MacNeill, 1999). Some research suggests empowerment is not an automatic result for girls and women who participate in sports (Eitle & Eitle, 2002; Stoelting, 2004). However, many studies which claim empowerment for the individual woman do not expand upon what this empowerment means to the individual, other than empowerment in the sports arena.   Exercise as a direct route to empower is suggested in a few studies (Blinde, Taub, & Han, 1994; Chrisler & Lamont, 2002). These studies advocate exercise as a direct route to empowerment under the premise that a stronger body contributes to a sense of independence, well being, and self-efficacy both in the exercise world as well as one's personal world. These non–sport specific skills include: a "strong sense of self" (Blinde, Taub, & Han, p. 163), a sense of "self-actualization" (p. 164) and a "proactive approach to life" (p.164). Also reported is that participation in Division 1 athletics (which would be elite-level athletes) personally empowers women in other areas of their lives. The authors suggest that "future research should examine the dynamics of the empowerment process in greater detail" (p. 167). An update of a previous study suggests more research focus on the lived experiences of woman athletes (Blinde, Taub and Han, 2002).

There is a plethora of literature (Huberty et al., 2008; Savage et al. 2009; Segar et al., 2008; USDHHS, 2006; Women's Sports Foundation, 2009) that reports self-efficacy,

self-confidence, and self-worth do increase after participating in an exercise program. However, Berger (1997) notes that although there are hundreds of inventories to quantitatively assess one's change of self as it relates to physical activity and quality of life in adult women, there is scant research which explains the application of this change of self to one's everyday life. My research explored this very concept by first identifying whether women runners have a deep-perspective change, and if they do, how this translates into action in their everyday lives. This next section explores the empirical literature detailing why women choose and adhere to cardiovascular exercise programs.

Why Women Come to Cardiovascular Exercise

A considerable amount of research explores why adult women come to participate, adhere, and drop out of cardiovascular exercise programs. Level of education and adherence were positively linked in the research conducted by Cassetta, et al (2007) and King et al (2007). Much research (Huberty et al., 2008; Kirchhoff, et al., 2008; Nadasen, 2007) used grounded theory to explore why some female participants adhered to exercise programs while others did not, even knowing all the positive benefits. Those women who adhered to the exercise program indicated higher levels of self-worth and ability to set goals (Huberty, et al, 2008) while non-adherence was "more likely to be filled with self doubt, insecurities, negative self talk and fear of failure" (p. 377).

Research on adult women (Segar, et al, 2008; Thogerson-Ntoumani, et al, 2007) found differences in adherence to exercise based upon age of participants and their goals when beginning an exercise program. Goals change as women age, as well as their reasons for adhering to exercise. As women get older and stay with a program, they are more likely to choose "enjoyment" as their No. 1 motivation (Thogerson-Ntoumani, et

al). Looking to see if exercise goals would predict adherence to exercise programs (Segar, et al) found that women who had goals of reducing weight or reducing physical risk factors for disease were not as compliant as those whose goals were stress reduction or a sense of well being. This is counter-intuitive to most behavior change models that spend time on the value of risk reduction and physical benefits of exercise. This might even suggest that the previous studies that focus on barriers and teach of the health benefits of exercise need to look at whether or not what they are advocating really makes a difference in adherence. Looking for unique ways to create the motivation to adhere to an exercise program, researchers found that creating an exercise program using a book club to enhance social support resulted in an increase of self-worth for those who stayed in the study (Huberty et al., 2008). This particular research may be highlighting the importance of relationships in adherence to exercise, which this research addresses as well. What was more germane to my research was why women choose running as their preferred mode of cardiovascular exercise and how adherence influences women to change in their everyday lives. My research explored specifically women and running, therefore this next section looks at the empirical literature pertaining to why women chose running as their preferred method of cardiovascular exercise.

Why Women Come to Running

Anecdotally, there is much in the popular press about why women come to running. Books such as <u>Sole Sisters</u> and <u>Women Who Run</u> offer stories about women and their running, why they start and what they "get out of running," mainly in the competitive arena of running. The internet provides many examples of why women begin running. One 51-year-old woman said, "The guy I was dating ran and encouraged me to

run with him" (Corpus Roadrunner Newsletter, 2009, p. 2). Another woman stated, "I was tired of feeling tired all the time, had zero energy, wanted to lose post-baby fat, wanted to look and feel better" (coolrunning, 2007, p.2, post 10) and yet another said "Because my cholesterol level was high" (post 18).

Much of the running-specific literature mirrors the results of these studies and research on motivation and adherence to exercise in general, Woman runners do choose to start running for a variety of reasons and many times the motivation to continue is not the same as what motivated them to start (Lendvoy, 1986; Masters & Ogles, 1995; Newcomer, 2008). The "factors which motivate someone to initiate an activity are often different from the factors which motivate the individuals to maintain or continue to engage in the behavior" (Masters and Ogles, p. 69). Enjoyment was the No. 1 motivator to begin running (Titze, Stronegger, & Owens, 2005) as well the quality most likely to have the greatest psychological impact (Berger & Motl, 2001). These quantitative studies do not expand on what "enjoyment" means. What is missing from these studies is rich, descriptive data to give meaning and examples to words such as "enjoyment". Similar to the anecdotal reason to begin running found in the popular press, it is no surprise that weigh control (Titze, Stronegger & Owens) is also a motivator. Women come to running for a variety of reasons and what they get out of running is as individual as each woman, as is usual for any physical activity. Over and over again the limitation on the quantitative studies dealing with these themes is "that most studies compare post-exercise affect to pre-exercise affect rather than daily affect" (Lutz, et al, 2008, p. 167).

The research on the motivation to run has a rich history of being quantified in the literature. Specifically, the research literature on the motivation to run is often focused on

motivation to run a marathon. Unfortunately, much of the research includes both male and female participants although the results often do not report gender differences, rather results of male and females are lumped together and other things such as age and experience are the delineating factors for marathon motivation (Barrell, Chamberlain, Evans, Hold & Mackean, 1988; Breheny, 2002; Carmach & Maten, 1979; Curtis & McTeer, 1981; Martin & Ecklund, 1994; Summers, et al, 1982). Additionally, marathon running is sometimes grouped with motivation to run shorter distances. Those who choose to run marathons might have different motivating factors based upon the concept of marathon running being seen as an opportunity to be in an adventure with oneself, discovering one's limitations, struggling for self-discovery (Lebow & Averbuch, 1992) or even a chance to transcend everyday life (Cooper, 1998). Some studies which did look at gender differences (Cullen, 1983, Okwumabus, Meyers & Santille, 1987; Summers, Machin & Sargent, 1993) found little difference in the original motivators to run. However, it must be noted that in these studies there is a large disparity in the numbers of males vsersus females in each study. For example, Okwumabus, Meyers & Santille (1987) has 213 males participate versus 66 females, Cullen (1983) has 348 males and 96 females, and Summers, et al (1982) had 345 males and 18 females. Therefore, the number of females in these studies might not have translated into robust statistics for the females.

However, there are a few studies where there were a significant number of women. In particular, one dissertation (Newcomer, 2008)   did look at gender-related motives of marathon running involving 120 female participants (58%) and found significant differences between motives for male and female participants. Females were motivated by physical health (in terms of general health including weight concerns) and

psychological health (in terms of psychological coping, life meaning and self-esteem). Males were more motivated by achievement (in terms of competition and goal achievement). This study was different from earlier studies which concluded gender had little difference on motivation to compete in marathons. This may be due to this last study finally having a significant amount of females or it was a more recent study relative to the earlier studies and motivation for females may have changed over time.

Over the years, there have been several psychometrically valid survey tools developed to measure motivation to run (Carmack & Marens, 1979; Johnsgard, 1985; Ogles & Master, 2003). For example, Carmack and Marens (1979) surveyed 250 male and 65 female non-marathon runners about why they ran and found that serious or long term runners tended to de-emphasize physical health and emphasize psychological health as the reason to maintain participation. Although they did not differentiate between genders, this was the basis for developing the Commitment to Running (CR) scale which addresses the concept of positive addiction to running. Similarly, Johnsgard (1985) used the Test of Endurance Athlete Motives (TEAM) to develop an inventory called the Runner Motivation Test (RTM). This research was an attempt to quantify not only why runners begin running but why they continue. In the original study, results were divided by gender, although there were 149 male and only 31 females. Both genders noted they began running for the physical benefits. However, reasons for adhering to running changed as women did score slightly higher on afterglow and centering than the males, who scored higher on fitness and competition as motivators for continuing. Afterglow was defined as "the elevated mood and reduced tension which follow endurance training" (p. 140) and centering is defined as "space to be alone, to clear my head, and to simply

experience myself and the world around me (p. 140). What was clear for either gender was that those who continue to run believe running enhances the "quality and quantity of life" (p. 143) although how each defined quality of life was missing. Ogles and Masters (2003) created a Motivations of Marathoners Scale (MOMS) to determine reasons marathoners participated in running. Females in this quantitative study were more likely to fall into what was labeled "lifestyle managers". This group was more likely to run alone, run slower, run less intensively and had as their motivating factors health orientation, self-esteem, weight control, psychological coping, personal-goal achievement and life meaning.

The MOMS scale was used specifically to tease out results particular to women in some research studies (Loughren, 2009; Newcomer, 2008). Both found differences based upon gender. Age and experience mattered (Loughren, Newcomber). Females who were first-time marathoners noted similar reasons to begin running such as health orientation, weight concerns, self-esteem, life meaning, psychological coping, and affiliation recognition. In this study gender had more of an impact on adherence with women noting the psychology benefits more often than men. Additionally, there may be a difference between those who choose marathon running and those who choose to participate competitively at a lesser distance or those who chose to participate and not compete at all. Research solely about motivation and adherence particular to women and running, regardless of the distance, is lacking.

The research which does exist often focuses on the physiology of women (Pate & O'Neill, 2007 Robertson, 2008) and look at joint problems or other injuries particular to women runners. Psychological studies involving females and running also have been

identified which focus on running as an addiction or eating disorder (Parker, Lambert, & Burlingame, 2006; Weight & Noakes, 1987) and burnout (Kordell, 2006).

Running also offers the potential to develop other qualities as defined by Berber and Motl (2001) which were found to impact positive psychological change. These include activities that use rhythmic breathing and engage in repetitive movement. Although agreeing that many individuals feel better after exercising, Berger (1996) notes, "The causes of these changes may be the exercise itself or another influence such as time out of daily hassles, being outside in nature, interacting with friends" (p. 336). This time out of daily hassles is noted by Abbas (2004) and Johnsgard (1985) as having the potential to create a self-centered time for reflection. The next section explores the empirical literature which reviews these non physical changes women have reported as a result of participating in running.

Changes in Women Who Participate in Running

Although not plentiful, there is some research which does focus on the female recreational runner beyond the physical. A quantitative study conducted by Harris (1981) investigated why women run through a structured interview with 156 female runners, significant findings were not what motivates women to run, but rather the feelings these women had about themselves as a result of running. In answer to the question, "Do you think running has been a positive thing for you?" the answer "Definitely yes" was rated as a mean of 6.7 out of 7. However, what that positive thing is, was not identified.

Closer to the theory of transformation is a study of the self (self-efficacy, self-confidence, self-worth) or one's self-schemata (Kendzierski, 1988) which was the focus of a research article by Bond and Batey (2005), looking at the relationship between self

and running behavior in a group of female recreational runners. This study used a grounded theory framework and interviewed women about their running experience. The average time of participating in running for these women was just over nine years. Besides generic improvements in mental and physical health, "Physically I feel better" (p. 74), or "I feel good about myself" (p. 75), these authors had the additional theme of empowerment and noted, "The running had triggered some implicit process of self-examination amongst the women, and their positions within the family unit, which in some cases, led to a redefinition of self-identity" (p.77).

Although scarce, some qualitative research does exist that attempts to express what this deep change in self means to the woman runner and how this change may be applied to her non-exercise life. For example, Leedy (2009) focused on how woman can use distance running to integrate empowerment and a sense of well being to treat stress related disorders. The author used interviews to gather data not just on the women's motivation for running, but how these women used running to help them deal with stressful times in their lives, and how running took on a therapeutic function during times of crisis. Again, women noted the increase in self-efficacy, self-worth, and empowerment as a direct result of running. One participant noted that running helped her "to strengthen her resolve to drink only in moderation" (p. 89). However, I question whether this resolve to drink in moderation was the result of knowing it would be difficult to run if one drank too much alcohol, or if this woman felt more confident in using running and not alcohol as a coping mechanism.

Most of the scholarly literature that describes the holistic or well being benefits of running are quantitative studies. For example, although much of the literature reports that

self-efficacy, self-confidence, and self-worth, and/or feeling of empowerment do increase after participating in an exercise program; this change has been mainly measured using quantitative-based psychological tools/surveys. Over and over again, the question that begs to be answered is: What do these deep changes look like to the individual woman in her everyday life? However, it does set the stage to further explore the deep changes occurring within the women.

Although not particular to women (only age was collected with demographic information), a doctoral dissertation (Carson, 2005) did look specifically at running and transformative learning and concluded that self-efficacy changed as a result of training for and completing a marathon. Although this research noted a lack of comparison studies, several recommendations were made that are pertinent to this study. First, the author notes that runners might be able to identify when the actual "change" in self-efficacy occurred. Second, the author suggests that at different running distances, goals other than a marathon might produce the change in self-efficacy which would produce a deep and lasting perspective change as well. Additionally, those runners who completed a marathon tested high on self-efficacy to begin with, but they did have a perspective transformation which translated to action in other parts of their lives. For example, the training they undertook for marathoning was often broken down into manageable chunks. Some participants felt they were more inclined to break down any large task in their lives into smaller chunks. "Whereas before they had an all-or-nothing approach to completing large tasks, now they set out smaller goals and keep a steady pace to accomplish the ultimate goal" (p. 114). Again, this research explored how women undergo a perspective

transformation and what that translates to not within their running, but in their everyday lives.

However, the research by Masters and Ogles (1995) supports later research by Chiseler and Lamont (2002) which found that the woman who began exercising for a particular purpose such as "to lower her cholesterol level," ended up feeling more empowered had a transformation in perspective. The fact that the woman did not set out to feel more empowered yet ended up feeling more empowered is an example of transformational learning.

> For example, in a local newspaper, a woman runner says:
>
> Five years ago I made changes in my life, because I did not like who I was and the way I felt. I started by changing my diet and then I slowly started to jog. I was amazed how much better I felt about myself. I had confidence to go to college. My state of mind really changed. I did not feel afraid to live my life anymore. I started to stand up for myself. Exercising has had a major impact on my life. I like the way my body looks, but I love more so the way it makes me feel.
>
> Unstoppable! (The Workout Winner, p.3)

This is an example of the perspective change researched using transformational learning as a framework. The literature gap is not in change occurring (improvement of self-esteem, self-efficacy, self- worth, confidence, feeling of empowerment), but there is modest literature to explain in rich, descriptive terms the deep change in women runners. There needs to be something else besides the fact that most research is quantitative. The stories of women runners are not being told though research which emphasizes psychological scales as pre and post- tests or choosing preset answers which are then

quantified. A goal of this research was to provide the opportunity for women to describe

in their own words what this deep change means to them

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Beyond the behaviorist theory of operant conditioning, exploring and explaining how anyone learns is not easy. Learning is often identified by the end product. Is the participant doing something they did not do before? Are they doing it better? Those "what" questions are easily answered. The "how" of getting to the end is much more challenging. The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry is twofold: a) to explore the impact of regular participation in running on women's self-perception; and b) to explore transformative learning as a possible explanation for the learning and changes adult women experience from regular participation in running. This study was guided by the following questions:

1. How do women perceive themselves and their lives as a result of making running a regular part of their lifestyle?

2. What is it about running that influences some women to have a deep paradigm shift in their self perceptions?

3. For those women who experienced transformative learning, how do they describe the process?

To answer these questions, the voices of individual women need to be heard. To address this need, this study was designed to allow each woman to describe her individual experience with running in rich, descriptive terms. Therefore, the most suitable match to address this is a qualitative methodology, specifically narrative inquiry. This chapter provides an overview of the research paradigm, why it was chosen, and a brief discussion of the background of the researcher. Following is a description of

participant selection, data collection and analytical methods, concluding with the establishment of credibility and verification practices.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research, also known as naturalistic or descriptive inquiry, focuses on lived experiences and the meaning people make and attach to these experiences. It focuses attention on "human realities rather than on the concrete realities of objects" (Boyd, 2001, p.76). The focus is on the subjective human experience not on the objective testing of a hypothesis. Human experiences cannot be summarized using empirical statistical data but rather is concerned with the complex issues which are considered important to and by the participant. Polkinghorne posits qualitative research is "knowledge of the particular, the unique, the development rather than abstract common concept" (in Clandinin & Murphy, 2006 p. 633).

This research focused on the changes experienced by women runners, whether it was thoughts, feelings, and or actions that women attribute to participation in running. Qualitative research has the potential to find what these thoughts, feeling and/or actions are by gathering rich, descriptive data from each woman. Integral to choosing qualitative research: a) the research is subjective in value; b) there are multiple realities; c) discovery, description, and understanding are paramount; d) the lens is interpretative; e) the whole is greater than the parts; f) the end result is rich descriptive narratives; g) the researcher is part of the research process; h) the participants take part in the research process; and i) the research is context dependent (Streubert-Speziale & Rinaldi-Carpenter, 2007). Using these characteristics as the focal point, I discuss these characteristic as they relate to this research.

Beginning with context, women create perspectives about themselves and build realities based upon cultural and societal experiences and input. By denying this aspect, it would be difficult to understand the original or the possible changed perspective of the woman runners. There is no one "Truth" about a person's perspective. There are multiple realities that exist depending on the individual woman and her particular interaction with culture, context, and running. These multiple realities or changing realities can be explored if the woman runner is allowed to tell her story. Each woman has her own experience with running, her own viewpoint, which makes her a participant in the study and not an object. The research is not about predicting, but rather about understanding the experiences of the women runners. This research has generated rich, descriptive data, not analyzed statistics. Lastly, as the researcher, and central to qualitative research, I was actively involved in the process as the interviewer and by making interpretations of the data. In conclusion, I choose the qualitative approach as the best match for what I wanted to discover. Finding the qualitative type that best supports my research purpose is explored in the next section.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a methodology that is a particular type of qualitative research, which has narrative as the method and narrative as the data. It is defined as being "set in human stories of experiences … and are well suited to addressing issues of complexity and cultural and human centeredness because of its capacity to record and retell those events that have been of most influence on us" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.1). Narratives, often referred to as stories, come in many forms including interviews, observations, and written documents (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008; Clandinin

& Connelly, 2000; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Lyons & Kubler LaBoskey, 2002; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Written documents may include journals, autobiographies, oral history, self-stories, testimonials, memory work, correspondences, diaries, letters, artistic work, and written responses to open-ended questions. Specifically, the types of narratives include "biography, autobiography, life history, oral history, autoenthnography, and life narratives" (Merriam, 2002, p. 9). One type of narrative is not privileged over another, but each comes with recommendations to gather the best information possible. Labov (1972) posits that all narratives are stories about a specific event in the past. Narratives are stories about human experience and are told as "truth" from the vantage point of the author. The truth may change when the story is reflected upon or retold. The truth may change as it is interpreted. The story is constructed by the participant, by the historical and cultural time it happened, and the words that are chosen to tell the story. The story is also then interpreted by the researcher and by the reader. The construction of the final narrative is not to generalize experiences or to stereotype experiences or to make the truth of the moment a "Truth" (with a capital T) but to tell a story relating to the individual's experience and interpreted by the research.

The narrative is the data in qualitative methods including narrative inquiry. According to Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou (2008) there are few, if any, rules about narrative research. Nor is there one set way to analyze the data. There is no definite starting point, nor is there is definite ending point. What narrative inquiry offers is the potential to understand more about the individual and the changes experienced by the individual. It might be about an event or events (Lavov & Waletsky, 1967) or about an experience or experiences (Squire, 2008). The narrative "gives external expression"

(Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, p.5, 2008) to each individual's interpretation of an event, an experience, and those thoughts and feeling surrounding the event. Narratives are used to discover change, as described by the participant and this change which happens over time (Brockmeier, 1993; Bruner, 1991; Ricoeur, 1984). It is this change, this transformation, which is assumed to be integral to the purpose of the study. Therefore, it is no wonder that a single experience, such as running, can produce different stories among different women. The stories generated are told in the first person. It is grounded in Dewey's (1938) philosophy that experience and education are closely intertwined. It is through active participation that human beings learn best.

Additionally, Polkinghorne (1988) makes a distinction between narrative analysis or narrative inquiry and analysis of narratives. Analysis of narratives is the way narratives as data are searched and reduced into common themes and categories under any of the qualitative methods. Narrative inquiry, on the other hand, is a methodology based upon how the narratives are interpreted into a final story that makes sense.

The three aims of all narrative inquiry as identified by Connelly and Clandinin (2006) are "temporality, sociality, and place" (p. 479). Temporality is the shifting of time in the narrative, looking at an event or experience from the past, the present and the future. The narrative will be different today from the narrative created tomorrow even though the narrative is created by the same person about the same experience or event. Sociality is the context on which the narratives are based and looks "toward the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). Place refers to the subjective role of the narrative inquirer. Neither the participant nor the researcher is alone in this methodology.

Other researchers break these three shared aims down into similar but more distinct categories, such as Smith and Sparkes (2008) who identify seven commonalities which include: 1) commonality of being human is to create meaning through narratives; 2) narratives are a vehicle to create meaning; 3) humans are relational, and relations are important narratives; 4) narratives are not created in a vacuum and are both personal and social; 5) we create and recreate ourselves by creating and recreating narratives; 6) humans and their narratives live in and through time; and 7) the body is not separate from the brain and is a part of the narrative. Of particular note is their inclusion of the body as a common characteristic of narrative inquiry given that "stories are told about, in, out of, and through the body" (p.5). The point in narrative inquiry is to look at all of these pieces in a more holistic way and not to exclude any. Experiences do not happen in a vacuum. Nor are stories created in one dimension. If the researcher is just choosing to explore one aspect of one experience at one point in time, a different type of qualitative research would be a better match.

A bit more detail about these commonalities includes: (a) humans live in and through time; and (b) the narrative is a way to organize the linear progression of past, present, and future. By exploring how women change as a result of their participation in running, this research is not about studying a phenomena at a particular point in time, but rather attempting to tell the story as it happened over time. Riley and Hawe (2005) posit "the integration of time and context in the construction of meaning is a distinctly narrative characteristic" (p. 229). Social conditions include the environments, historical and society influences, the person, and anything that influences each individual's context. Relationships are included here as well. Since "humans are able to exist only in relation

to other lives" (Frank, 2004, p. 24), exploring the relationships of the participants with other beings and other things, as well as the relationship of the participants with the researcher is crucial. Finally, place is "every story has a setting and in narrative inquiry the specificity of location is crucial … place may change as the inquiry delves into temporality" (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). However, the research is not just about telling stories. It is the weaving of the individual narrative with context since the story is neither isolated nor independent. Since this research was focused on adult women who adopted running as part of their lifestyle and have developed a new perspective, or a different way of seeing themselves or the world, narratives provided the method and the data for their stories to be told, interpreted, and analyzed.

Additionally, using transformative learning as a framework for this research, learning was more likely to come alive through narrative inquiry if, according to Duffy (2007), the researcher asks questions of participants that require them to critically reflect which may result "in a changed understanding of one's past, present, and future" (p. 403). The beauty of using narrative inquiry as the methodology is, as the women runners define their perceptions and/or changes that occurred after adopting running, the researcher can interpret the stores to give meaning "through fusion of the participants horizons with alternative ways of narrating events and through the new stances toward themselves and others that evolve in the process" (Brooks, 2000a, p. 162). The construction of one's perspective is situated in context, and by telling her story, the perspective and the context of the perspective can be better identified. "Narratives allow all these aspects (cognitive, emotion, spiritual) of human existence to be woven meaningfully together" (Brooks, 2000b, p. 152). Finally, by validating narrative inquiry as a means to understand

transformative learning Brooks (2000a) posits that narratives provide "a concrete course of data for documenting the transformational learning process" (p. 162).

Awareness of subjectivity is inherent in qualitative research. In depth qualitative research such as narrative inquiry demands an intimacy with the subject in order to uncover the meaning making that is central to this venue of research. Emotions are a part of meaning making. In depth interviews are the cornerstone of narrative research in order to understand the individual's perspective. This type of research requires a personal engagement between the researcher and the participant. The interviewer is not detached because "without empathy and sympathy introspection derived from personal encounters, the observer cannot fully understand human behavior" (Patton, 2002, p. 49).

Acknowledging that the researcher is the instrument of data collection and data interpretation, this type of research make no claim about being value free, not for the sake of validation from the scientific community should it claim to be value free. By acknowledging subjectivity, there is no "skillful manipulation of statistics to prove a hypothesis in which the researcher believes" (Patton, 2002, p.50). Therefore by acknowledging the subjective process of narrative inquiry, the researcher does strive for neutrality when the researcher "does not set out to prove a particular perspective or manipulate the data to arrive at predisposed truths (Patton, p. 51).

Researcher's Background

My choice to conduct research with women runners was based upon my personal experience with running. Although I came to running as the outcome of competitive opportunities resulting from Title IX, as soon as high school ended I thought my running days ended as well. However, that was not possible. I no longer had formally scheduled

workouts, but I would get up anyway and run. It was in college that I met two female professors who ran as well. This unlikely trio of one undergrad and two faculty members began a lifelong relationship with each other, and with running. We ran through a divorce, deaths of family members, and happy times as well. These women ran with me on my wedding day, and as I go through my own divorce, I find the support of my running friends to be well beyond that of other support. Due to life circumstances, my running friends have changed over the years, but all offer a bond like no other friendships I have. Additionally, even 30 years after the original trio began to run, we had a "running reunion" this past April and for one day we picked up exactly where we left off. Running is a part of who I am. Although I no longer train for competitive races, I would no more think about not running than I would think about not brushing my teeth.

Furthermore, as a physical and health educator at a mid-sized university, I designed a running class as an undergraduate elective activity class. Often students, who, like me, gave up competitive running after high school, seek to reestablish themselves through the motivation of a structured class. Occasionally, another group of students signs up for this class who are a bit different. They are adult students, usually females, who were not particularly athletic, but come to sign up for health reasons.

Participant Selection

Because this study was focused on women who adopted running as part of their lifestyle, choosing participants using purposeful sampling seemed most appropriate. The participants in a purposeful sample are those who have experience with the phenomenon of interest (Coyne, 1997; Patton, 2002). Qualitative sampling, according to Patton (1990), is always purposeful and a next step is needed to find the sample best fitting the study.

This research had a very particular purpose and therefore needed a very particular

sample. By choosing female runners over the age of 25 as participants, this researcher

was more likely to get the rich, descriptive data that is central to narrative research. There

were additional qualities possessed by the participants that made for a better match

between participants and the study. These qualities were discovered by administering a

questionnaire to a larger group of female runners to identify those most qualified to be

included in the study. The specific questionnaire is found in Appendix A. However, a few

of the criteria are as follows: 1) the participants are women who came to running as

adults; 2) the participants self-identified as having been changed in some way by the

running experience; and 3) The participants regularly participated in running for fitness

as defined by the guidelines issued jointly by the American College of Sports Medicine

(ACSM) and the American Heart Association (AHA) in 2007, which states that positive

physical results are most likely to occur when the participant engages in "moderate

intense cardio 30 minutes per day, five days per week" (para. 1). In running terms, this

was the woman who runs for a minimum of 30 minutes, three to five times per week,

most weeks of the year. Finally, participants were narrowed further by their years of

participating in running. Those who have been running for less than 1 year were

eliminated as to not include women who are still in the honeymoon period of a new

activity. This honeymoon period is similar to changing any health behavior when initially

there are positive results and all seems wonderful but there have not been challenges such

as poor weather, a minor injury, social distractions, or other trials which might interfere

with long-term success (Curtis, Hong, & Rothstein, 2009).

To find this purposeful sample, the researcher contacted a national organized running program sanctioned by the national organization Road Runners Club of America and supported by a local running club. This program is a beginner walking and running workshop for women which encourages women from ages 12 to 112 to adopt running as part of a healthy lifestyle. According to the organizers many of participants have not had much in the way of an athletic background either because they are in their 50s or older and did not have many opportunities growing up, or they are younger women who did not take advantage of athletic opportunities. Since those who stick with the 12-week program are often in a honeymoon period with the activity, they were not be the best group to be able to reflect on the less obvious changes in their lives. However, this group has an opportunity for women who after "graduating" from the initial program, choose to mentor other women. This group has been running for a while, but not so long as to have forgotten what life was like before running. An email was sent to the co-coordinator of the mentoring groups with a flyer attached which outlined qualifications. See Appendix C for flyer. She forwarded the email and flyer to 36 women. I heard from 14 women. I sent the pre-screening questionnaire, the flyer, and an IRB informed consent form to these 14 women. Of these 14, 10 returned the pre-screening questionnaire. Of these 10, 7 met the requirements and I was able to schedule face-to-face interviews with 5 of these women. In order to meet my goal of 6 -12 participants, I asked anyone who responded to forward the flyer to anyone she thought might be interested which is an example of snowballing. Snowballing is used when a participant who fits the criteria refers other participants who fit the criteria of the study. In this way appropriate participants "help to

locate others though her or his social networks" (Warren, 2002, p. 87). Eventually, I ended up with 11 participants.

Prior to the data collection, each participant received an informed consent by email and was offered another copy upon meeting the interested participants in person. These women were also notified that their participation was completely voluntary and they had the right to decline answering any questions at any time and that they could withdraw from the study at anytime. Furthermore, participants were informed that information gathered from the study would be kept confidential, pseudonyms would be chosen to protect identities of anyone involved in the study, and that participants will have the opportunity to check and approve any of their stories.

Data Collection

The goal of qualitative research is to gather rich descriptive data to better explain a particular phenomenon at a certain point in time or to better understand participants at a particular point in time. Simply put, the goal of narrative inquiry is to understand the lived experience of the participant. There are many ways to gather this type of qualitative data such as interviews, journaling, observation, or focus groups, to name a few. However, because this research looked at learning over time using narrative inquiry, the data collected was through stories about women, created and told by those women about their running experiences. This is a retrospective approach, or "the shaping or ordering of past experiences" (Chase, 2006, p. 656). The women runners constructed their narratives about how they came to running and how they may have changed. According to Clandinin and Connnelly (2000), narrative inquiry is unique since the focus is to "begin with explorations of the phenomena of experience rather than in comparative analysis of

various theoretical methodological frames" (p.128). In other words, the focus in narrative inquiry is to get the story, and then see if the theory, in this case transformational learning, offers a framework for the learning. To do this, this researcher obtained each narrative through semi-structured qualitative interviews.

Using a semi-structured approach to the interviews, the researcher had some common interview questions to begin and guide the interview. By using a semi-structured approach, the researcher was able to ask clarifying questions, request more examples, and/or pursue follow up questions. Additionally, since reflection, not just recall, is a key to narrative inquiry, it was important to structure interview questions in a way which encouraged this piece (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The interview, according to Grubrium and Holstein (2002), is to give participants the chance to "construct versions of reality interactionally rather than merely purvey data" (p.14). In other words, it is a way to organize experiences into words, which form a story. When successful, the story-making process "provides a coherent and plausible account of how and why something happened" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p.112). For examples of questions, please see Appendix B.

The rationale for using a semi-structured interview for data collection was to use similar probing questions for all participants yet expanding answers when necessary. As part of a semi-structured interview, not all questions were asked of each participant since the information may have already been obtained from another question. Furthermore, some probing was necessary such as "Can you tell be a bit more about _____" or "Can you give me an example of _____". The end result was a focus to the interview yet freedom to search out more details on a particular predetermined subject when necessary

(Patton, 2002). Polkinghorne (1988) and Mishler (1986) caution the interviewer not to be too quick to jump into getting the participant back on track to the original question since only when the participant feels the story has been told is the story told.

Using this semi-structure approach, I arranged to meet with each woman two times for a one to one-and-one-half hour block of time. Ideally, I would have liked to interview the women while running, but the need to record the interview and take field notes precludes this from happening. Depending on the schedule and comfort of the women, the meeting took place at their place of work, my office, local coffee shops and when appropriate, the home of the woman. Field notes, or as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) call field text, which "help fill in the richness, the nuance, the complexity of the exchange, providing a richer, more complex, and puzzling landscape that memory alone is not likely to construct" (p. 83) were taken. While interviewing the women, these field notes described any particular verbal emphasis as well as non-verbal communication engaged in by the participants. They also served as a place to jot notes about additional questions when listening, or when more explanation or details were needed. Having the notes, the researcher did not have to interrupt and was able to fully listen. Additionally, the researcher noted any thoughts immediately following the interview, which may or may not have been important in the long run. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and was returned to the participant for her comments and verification. All but one of the participants was interviewed a second time, which lasted no more than one hour. One follow-up was done through e-mail as the result of the participant's schedule. This follow-up interview provided time with each participant to comment on the initial transcript, clarify information, and allow expansion of content or other information

deemed valuable to the study. These interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed

as well. Incorporating any additional information or changes were again returned to the

participants for trustworthiness and comments. A later section will address the issue of

establishing trustworthiness in narrative inquiry.

Data Analysis

Data analysis fell into a two-step process because narrative inquiry was used.

First, the narratives were composed and then the final narratives were analyzed for the

purpose of the study. Generally speaking, the final narrative re-told a story in a way that

makes sense. However, before the narrative can even be analyzed, the final story must be

constructed. As the researcher, I was privileged to "co-construct the spoken narratives

into the reading process" (Salmon & Riessman, 2008, p 80). All narratives are

constructed as well as co-constructed. The woman runner became the original author of

the story as she decided what would be in the story. The researcher choose what would

be included in the research, how the story would be interpreted and rewritten, and the

final reader will interpret the story as well. However, there were different ways the

researcher could choose to construct the final narrative.

Constructing the Narrative

Constructing the final narrative was not just a verbatim construction of the

interviews into a story, but deciding upon not only what will be interpreted, but the layers

of interpretation. For example, each woman has created her own experiences based upon

the lived context of her life, both prior to running and during her participation in running.

Since each and every life is different based upon life experiences, the context for each

women is different and this is reflected in the narratives. Before the text can be analyzed,

the final story must be created. Although there are many ways to construct the final narrative as outlined below, this research involved both the participant and the researcher.

To construct a final narrative which is meaningful to both the participant and the needs of the researcher, how the final narrative will be constructed must be determined in advance. Fundamental to most narrative inquiry are not objective, factual descriptions which tell the story at face value without regard for context, but rather a final narrative created together by the researcher and participant. Participants were emailed copies of a draft and given time to review, reflect and make any additional comments or changes. The participant and the researcher met to review this when necessary. This way, the final narrative construction was not be on the other end of the spectrum, where the researcher becomes a central participant where "by the end…the reader has learned as much, if not more, about the author" (Tierney, 2002, p. 389). The critique of centering the research on the author is that the voices of participants and the experiences of the participants can be ignored or only used when they support the view of the author. Additionally, there are times when the original stories are so changed, the narrators cannot recognize their own stories. I co-created the final narrative with the participants.

The goal of this research is to first co-create a final narrative. In this type of final narrative construction, the goal was not to accept what the participant said without question, since this often edits out context whereby "the event, not the stories informants create about them" (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992, p.2) are the end story. An additional concern is caution that the phenomenon being researched will be lost if stories are taken at face value, "since without context, there is little relevance to our understanding of the actual social worlds" (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003, p. xi). Qualitative research is

about "collaboratively constructing the narrator's reality, not just passively recording and reporting" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.123). Sometimes, this context is not apparent to the participant and needs to be identified by the researcher. This is in line with the hermeneutical perspective with "its emphasis on interpretation and context, *(which)* informs narrative studies" (Patton, 2002, p.115). The participants, the researcher, and the final reader all use their own cultural, historical, and societal experiences to make interpretations of narrative. Therefore, the meaning is contextual and constantly shifting. The point is that "all texts stand on moving ground; there is no master narrative" (Reissman, 1993, p.15).

In addition, rationality seems to contradict the extra-rational theoretical framework and needs to remain a dominant quality of the creation of narrative inquiry since it is not a piece of fiction (Conle, 2000). Conle draws on Habermas who also relies on rationality as a pre-requisite to valid communication. Rationality in narrative inquiry is based on the following four claims for narrative researchers: (1) there is a truthful representation of the feelings, values, intentions of the researcher; (2) the stories are socially acceptable; (3) the contents of the text are true in regard to what is described; and (4) the language is comprehensible. Again, these are "claims" not guarantees. The researcher is not just an agent of the participant, but is a privileged individual who will influence the final narrative, determining what will be included, what will be excluded, and how the data will be interpreted.

Also, it is up to the researcher to determine the beginning and end points which implies that the researcher can somewhat control the meaning, shape, and interpretation of a narrative (Riessman, 1993). To make the final narrative believable it needs to be

written in a chronological sequence or in an order of events where one event causes the

next (Labov, 1972). This assumes that even if the stories are not told in chronological

order, the stories are rewritten into a chronological sequence that makes sense (Cortazzi,

1993; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2000) to the participant as well as the reader. It is the

emphasis of the sequence of time which sets narratives apart. Again, the final narrative is

subjectively co-constructed by the researcher. This subjective interpretation is necessary

since the stories in and of themselves have no real meaning without interpretation

(Burnard, 1995; Riessman, 1993). Since the researcher may not interpret the story as the

narrator intended it, the question of the credibility of the interpretation is present.

Therefore, it is possible to have multiple interpretations from the same story. However, if

large parts of the story are analyzed instead of small decontextualized fragments of the

story, there is less room for multiple interpretations (Lucas, 1997).

Analyzing the Narrative

Once the final narrative is written, there are different and distinct schools of

thought about how this final narrative is to be analyzed. There are as many ways to

analyze narratives as there are narratives (Phoenix & Sparkes, 2008). Overall, the

challenge in data analysis is not to try to fit the analysis into pre-determined categories,

but to let the stories emerge and develop, and then identify any similarities, premises.

However, being distinct personal stories, narratives are not easily categorized into any

groupings. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) caution that many who analyzed narratives

used a "burrowing" approach where by the researcher tries to look deeper and deeper into

the actual experience. This results in narrow categories, which actually negatively impact

the analysis, since this does "not allow the story to evolve or identify those events that are

critical" (Webster & Mertova, 2008, p.114). This is problematic because it tends to isolate an experience instead of capturing the context of the experience as well as the experience. Therefore, they suggest narrative inquiry is better suited as a "broadening" analysis which looks at context and influences around the actual event or experience to get a truer sense of the total impact, yet still looking for general similarities whether it be in the context, the experience itself, or in the outcome. This is more in line with the thematic analysis which assumes that distinct narratives "can be stitched together by theme" (Riessman, 1993, p. 17).

Since this research was viewed through a transformative learning lens, it was important for the researcher not to direct the stories, which results in what Webster and Mertova (2007) label "smoothing" or "the tendency to invoke a positive result regardless of the indications of the data" (p.109). However, it is appropriate for the researcher to look for common tenets, in this case of perspective transformation or of transformational learning. In authoring their own stories, the women critically reflected upon their perceptions of themselves as they have been socially constructed, and if there have been any changes in their views about themselves and their worlds which may constitute additional themes to be identified by the researcher. These themes can be based upon similarities in the context of the narratives (Georgakopolou, 2006; Stokoe & Edwards, 2006). Phoenix and Sparkes (2008) posit that although there is disagreement about how to analyze context or even what constitutes context "there is general agreement that it is important to attend to it in narrative analysis" (p.65). Context could be the culture (Labov, 1972) or the words, body language, or settings in which communication occurs Mishler, 2004). . Other themes emerged and were identified in the end by focusing on

such things as word repetition (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The bottom-line is, "Narrative analysts, in practice, approach the issue of truth differently" (Reissman, 1993, p. 22), and there is no one way to do it. However, focusing on themes provided some structure for analysis.

In summary, narratives provide data to document the transformative learning process. This research used thematic analysis to identify common elements around the experiences of women runners. This research created individual narratives constructed by the women and not just fragmented pieces to support a particular theme. Women have a voice and it needs to be heard and respected. I looked for the uniqueness and also looked for patterns. As these narratives were created, as new understandings of how meanings were made unfolded, a new way to understand the process of transformational learning unfolded. This supports Brooks, (2000a) who argues narratives provide "a concrete course of data for documenting the transformational learning process" (p.162).

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Verification Strategies

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The goal of qualitative research is to understand human experiences which are constructed in context-specific settings. Qualitative research results in "scientific knowledge which is socially constructed" (Mishler, 1990, p.416). Therefore, this calls for its own model of verification. Many narrative researchers (Clandinin & Connelly 2006; Huberman, 1995; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Polkinghorne, 1988) posit the following methods to confirm the trustworthiness of narrative inquiry: access, honesty, verisimilitude, authenticity, familiarity, and transferability.

Specifically, narrative inquiry, in its attempt to capture the whole story, needs as its aim what is labeled verisimilitude (Webster & Mertova 2007; Bruner, 1991;

Polkinghorne, 1988) which is defined as findings which produce results "that have

appearance of truth or reality" (Webster & Mertova, p.10). This appearance of truth or

reality focuses on the postmodern holistic perspective of research verification strategies

that maintain the notion of subjective and multiple truths. Each narrative is true as it is

told, but may change every time the participant tells the story. What is necessary is that it

appears to be true to the participant when told, to the researcher, and to the final reader of

the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit four categories of trustworthiness which are

widely accepted in the field. These verification strategies fall into the following

categories: credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability. However,

Riessman (1993) argues that these methods are "largely irrelevant to narrative studies"

(p. 64) since what is it that is being verified? Is one participant's story truer than

another's? Is it not the historical truth that is at the core of the narrative, or rather the

participant's interpretation of the experience? Therefore, Reissman recommends

persuasiveness, correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic use as ways to approach

trustworthiness in narrative inquiry particularly narrative inquiry, which has as its data

oral, first-person accounts of experience and not written narratives. This proposed

research used oral interviews to collect the raw data and therefore is a fit for these

particular methods of developing trustworthiness.

Persuasiveness, similar to verisimilitude, takes into account the believability of

the research from the reality of the participant (Merriam, 2002) and the believability to

the final reader. Does the interpretation make sense? Since the narrative may change

over time, persuasiveness takes the narrative as it is and becomes most trustworthy when

"theoretical claims are supported with evidence from informants' accounts and when alternative interpretations of the data are considered" (Reissman, 2003, p. 65).

Correspondence builds trustworthiness by taking the narratives back to the participants. Correspondence is similar to what Lincoln and Guba (1985) term member checking. Member checking involves giving the participant the opportunity to review written transcripts, as well as her final narrative. Additionally, Lincoln and Guba posit that member checking is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility or in Reissman's term correspondence. In this study, participants were not only given the opportunity to review their written transcripts and the final narrative, but they were also given the chance to add additional thoughts that may not have been addressed in the interview. By involving participants, their role as co-creators of the narrative is emphasized. However, Reissman (1993) does caution that since narratives are not static, member checking should not be used to validate the researcher's theories or patterns identified by the researcher across narratives.

Coherence identifies three levels of interpretation of global, local, and themal, which will provide trustworthiness through rich, descriptive data (Reissman, 1993). Global coherence "refers to the overall goals a narrator is trying to accomplish by speaking" (p.67). In this study, each participant had the opportunity to tell her story about why she came to running. Local coherence refers to "what a narrator is trying to effect in the narrative itself" (p.67). For instance, in this research, the local coherence is the details of how running has affected the woman runner in her thoughts, her feelings, and her actions. Themal coherence refers to content. This used the narrative data to identity themes which repeatedly emerge.

Pragmatic in the verification process is "the extent to which a particular study becomes the basis for other's work" (Reissman, 2003, p. 68). This is similar to transferability or if the results of the study can be applied to other contexts or with other participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, human experience is dependent on context and context transfer is difficult, if not impossible, to replicate. Therefore, transferability need not be and should not be a goal of qualitative research. But, Lincoln and Guba do argue that if enough rich details are provided in the narrative, transferability, like pragmatic use, readers may be able to transfer the results to another setting. Rich, descriptive data is the cornerstone to decide if transferability is a possibility and narrative inquiry does provide this type of data.

Narrative researchers can also increase trustworthiness by keeping meticulous notes and having all data readily available to others. This is similar to dependability, or the ability to establish the study's consistency and stability over time (Patton, 2002), and confirmability or the degree to which other researchers can confirm the results. Both dependability and confirmability depend on the organization of the researcher. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose one measure which might enhance the dependability of qualitative research which is the use of an "inquiry audit" (p. 317). This inquiry audit involves examining both the process and the product of the research for consistency. Keeping meticulous records of all data collection and reduction processes results in a valid audit trail. This audit trail can consist of 1) raw data; 2) analysis notes; 3) reconstruction and synthesis products; 4) process notes; 5) personal notes; and 6) preliminary developmental information (Lincoln & Guba, pp. 320 -321). By keeping an audit trail, the conclusions of the study will be visibly based upon the data. This is

demonstrated with the accuracy in collecting the data. In this research, word-for-word transcripts were taken from digital recordings as well as detailed field notes which resulted in an audit trail. Many qualitative researchers use triangulation as well, which includes the use of a variety of data sources, the use of a variety of researchers, or the use of multiple methods to study a single problem (Denzin, 1978). Since this research was not searching for one ultimate truth but rather multiple truths, triangulation is counter intuitive to the temporality of narratives, since the narratives are likely to change over time.

In summary, trustworthiness is best established by matching the method to the purpose of the research. It is up to the researcher to demonstrate that the data is "credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.296). This is a privilege which a qualitative researcher must respect to produce a trustworthy study. By keeping meticulous records, by creating a trusting and open environment with participants, and by involving members in the creation and checking of narratives, a trustworthy product is the result.

Research Ethics and IRB Compliance

This research study was conducted in cooperation with the Pennsylvania State University Office of Research Protections. As such, I sought out and obtained approvals from the institutional review board prior to beginning this research study. In line with its requirements of the review board, informed consent forms were distributed to the participants who were interviewed. As these participants were digitally-recorded, they were appropriately advised of how this data would be transcribed and how both the recordings and transcriptions will be protected. This involved explaining to participants

that as the primary investigator, I have the responsibility to keep all audio recordings and transcriptions in a locked and secured environment. Additionally, all identifiable information was removed from the transcriptions of the interviews. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they were not required to answer any questions that they did not feel comfortable answering.

Summary

In summary, the purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the methodology employed in this research, which addresses adult women runners and learning based upon their running experiences. In addressing this purpose, this chapter began with an overview of qualitative research, and provided a rationale for using narrative inquiry within this research study. This chapter then discussed the background of the researcher, followed by a discussion of how the study participants were selected, as well as how data was collected and analyzed. This chapter then provided an overview of the verification strategies to be employed while conducting this study along with how this study complies with current rules and regulations of the Pennsylvania State University Office of Research Protections.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RUNNERS' NARRATIVES

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry research study was twofold: a) to explore the impact of regular participation in running on women's self-perspective; and b) to explore transformative learning as a possible explanation for the learning and changes adult woman may experience with regular participation in running. Additionally, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do women perceive themselves and their lives as a result of making running a regular part of their lifestyles?

2. What is it about running that may influence some women to have a deep paradigm shift of their self-perceptions?

3. For those women who experienced transformative learning, how do they describe the process?

The 11 narratives presented are not objective biographies of the runners' lives. They are stories of how these women made meaning of the experience of running in their lives. I, as the researcher, have become a co-constructor with each participant in her narrative by ordering and organizing the information and focusing on the role running has in the meaning making of each participant's journey.

The Participants

Table 1 gives an overview each of the participant's background and experience.

Name	Age	How long running	Running x per week
Anais	55	2	3-5
Lucy	33	4	3-5
Artemis	50	3	3-5
Nora	41	3	3-5
Jane	40	2	3-5
April	32	3	5-7
Natalie	48	2	3-5
Anne	49	3	3-5
BettyJean	57	3	3-5
Dori	55	3	3-5
Linda	57	3	3-5

Anais

Anais is 55 years old working in the medical field. She has been running regularly for just over two years. She runs three to five times per week, ranging in time from 35 to 50 minutes. She has entered a few 5K races.

A blue heron, that's my running icon. When I was running with a friend of mine that lived like two blocks away, but has since moved away, we would go out in

the morning, and on several occasions we would see a blue heron. We always

just took it as an omen. Good luck! And, it kind of puts a stamp on the day. We

always looked for the blue heron and when we parted company we would always

say, 'Have a blue heron day'.

Even now, with her new running group, Anais looks for the graceful bird. "Every time

we're out in the park, we look for the blue heron. And we often see them when we're out

running. So I like the blue heron."

Anais and Her Running Journey

Anais always considered herself active. "I had always done some walking, not

that I was an avid dedicated walker. I do some water aerobics and play tennis a little bit

… do some exercises at the fitness center where I work." But as her cholesterol levels

began to rise, she thought running "would kick it up a notch and keep me moving." She

never had any interest in running, never had a desire to run. I thought people who

ran were crazy because every time I passed them they looked like they were in

pain. And, so I thought, 'I'm never going to do that!' Hello.

She had heard about an organized group of women who get together to walk/jog/and run

their way to fitness from a friend at work. "I filed it in the back of my brain. I liked the

idea of getting together with a group of women and the motivation that would come from

being in a group exercise." This idea of getting together with a group of women was a bit

different from the way she usually thought. "I've never been a big women-bonding

person. I've never really craved the company of women and I'm not out to do girl

things." She described joining a program by herself several years later,

I went by myself as a walker and at six to seven weeks into the program I found

myself starting to jog a little bit, jog a little bit more, and by the end of the

program I was running. So it was totally not planned.

After the organized running program ended, Anais ran alone, "Out of convenience

more than anything. When I run by myself I keep it to a 5K distance or less." But,

recently discovered that when given the opportunity, she does prefer to run with other

women.

 I have hooked up with a small group of women that meet at the god awful hour of

6:15 in the morning. I guess what I'm finding is, how do I phrase this? I really am

enjoying their company. And, I'm not sure if it's because they're women or

they're women who are doing something physical together. It's been a new

experience for me in that regard. I've been finding we have many things in

common and it is nice at this age in my life to be with this group that we share so

many things in common. So it's been nice, but I still don't go out of my way to

seek women friends. It just so happened that I've gotten this interest in running

and this group of women are very dedicated to it. When you run with a group,

people go different paces, so as I evolved in my running I can sort of latch up with

different groups of people just to push myself. Also, we are very supportive of

one another and nobody's judging one another, me, or just trying to make you feel

like you're not good enough to keep up with the rest of us, whoever us may be.

I'm finding that this is key to keeping going and to keep myself challenged is to

run with a group. I don't know, I probably wouldn't be running as much if I didn't

have the group to run with. That's one of the reasons I get up at 6:15 in the

morning. I would not get myself out of bed at 6:15 in the morning to run in the cold and dark around the neighborhood.

Although Anais has always been active, maturity combined with the support of her running group has given her more focus.

I like trying new things. I can get bored with things pretty quickly, so I need to mix things up. What's interesting is that I'm finding when I get older I'm almost feeling like I'm stronger or healthier or in better shape than when I was younger. Because now I make more of a concerted effort to stay active and be healthy and make the right choices. Not all the time, but most of the time. I have enjoyed things like horseback riding and tennis, a little bit of hiking and being active. But I'm now definitely much more focused on it in my life and dedicated to it than I ever was when I was younger. I think running is going to stay a major part because every time I get out there to run, I feel there's a chance to be better that day. And if I'm not that's OK too. I accept that too. But I always have these little goals in the back of my mind. I don't obsess over them 'cause some times you might set yourself up for failure. But, for example, 'Gee, if I could shave a minute or two or three off my 5K, in the course of the year, gee wouldn't that be great?' Or my niece is trying to talk me into doing the New York City half-marathon with her. That's the thing with running. You always feel like you can get stronger. I can build up my endurance. And that's the challenge of it. That's one of the reasons that I hooked up with this group in the morning. I think they're gonna help motivate me.

It is, however, not solely for the physical benefits.

With that (the physical benefits) comes the psychological and the emotional benefits as well. It's all tied together. I just feel better about myself. I feel stronger. I feel healthier. When I'm not busy being tired, I'm more energetic. Just this sense of, 'Hey, I accomplished this! I did this! I got up this morning and I went for that run! And, it felt good and I'm glad I did it.' Those thoughts kind of reinforce you throughout the day. It's [running] definitely been an emotional benefit and psychological [benefit]. I've always had pretty low physical self-esteem when I was younger, when I was in high school and junior high. Because I was always thin and I was always not big breasted and [I was] self-conscious about that. Oh, I went through a terrible, terrible time in high school 'cause I was always aware of that. I had girls make fun of me, that kind of thing. At that age, it's all about the boobs. So now I feel, I feel healthier. I feel stronger. I feel sexier. I feel more confident than I absolutely ever felt in probably my entire life than when I was younger. Which is a funny thing 'cause as you get older, you think, 'I'm getting older.' I'm definitely conscious of aging.

Anais talks about other benefits of running.

My brother passed away about a month ago from cancer. He was 62, lived in New York and the three weeks before he passed away were pretty stressful because my husband and I were making two-and-one-half hour trips every weekend over to the Bronx to see him in the hospital. I got through that. I kept up with my running, I would think about him and I just kinda imagined him with his presence in the sky or the woods or the water. I just take deep breaths and it kinda keeps me going. I think that's been helpful to me. Maybe I'm putting too

much on the running thing, but maybe I have more resilience with the running. I

don't know. I might have been more emotional, possibly. Maybe wouldn't have

slept as well. [I] may have been inclined to just sit here and drink more wine than

I should! Eat more chocolate than I should. I think it does give you that space

inside. It doesn't mean that everything is rosy and it doesn't mean that I'm not

gonna be faced with hardships or whatever might come, but it's like a platform. It

can help find that inner platform of strength to just cope with whatever you have

to cope with. I will just go out and run if I'm feeling pent up. It's not going to be

a marathon, but if I just need to go out and get some fresh air in my lungs and get

the muscles pumping, it's something I can do. I don't know if my running maybe

has helped me to cope with things, but I haven't had a meltdown. I didn't melt

down over my dad's death. As a matter of fact I was the only one that was holding

the emotions together throughout the whole process. I don't know if running

might have something to do with that. I can be pretty emotional.

Although her cholesterol numbers dropped initially, there were other things that

changed as well. For example, Anais loves to run in the morning because it gives her

more energy and gives her a sense of accomplishment. Anais elaborated:

I feel really glad that I did it and that feeling carries you on through the day. 'Oh

yeah, I got a run in today and that's a nice feeling. Running, there's just this

feeling of energy that you get and that you feel like you've accomplished

something. I think in subtle ways, it's made me feel very vibrant. I'll be 55 in

September and to be taking up something new like this and to feel like I'm

accomplishing something. Physiologically, it makes me feel better about myself.

Not that I have a self-image problem, but it's just that extra bit of confidence that makes me feel like a little special if only to myself. It's just been this nice quiet feeling of accomplishment, of achievement.

Confidence has also developed as her running has developed.   She stated, "It's been a very healthy thing and a very surprising thing for me to be doing this because I just never thought I would." Even if she were no longer running, "I'd keep the confidence."

Another thing Anais takes from running is:

to take joy and satisfaction of just getting out there and doing it. Just the sheer joy of doing it. It is so rewarding and you have to make space for that in you life. It is so important because it can feed so many areas of your life in such positive ways if you make time for that and don't be too judgmental on yourself or too hard on yourself. Just get out there and enjoy it.

Within the last six months, Anais has started considering herself not only an active woman, but a runner.

I guess I've used that phrase because now I've been doing it for all of, what, 19 months, or something like that. But the fact that I've stayed with it. I've committed to it. I think I'm safe enough that I can say that 'I'm a runner.' And, I spent some money on shoes! And I need another pair. I'll be on my third pair of shoes. So I think that qualified me. I'm just happy to say I'm a runner.

The bottom line for Anais is that she starting running "by accident. Running chose me." And for that, she is grateful.

Lucy

Lucy is a 33-year-old new mother. She tries to run three times per week ranging from 26 to 80 minutes. She has been running regularly for almost four years. After the birth of her child, she cut back on her running, but is again running 3 -4 days per week to train for an upcoming half-marathon.

Lucy and Her Running Journey

An email at the right time is what started Lucy running.

There was a woman who was head of the department and she was always talking about running. She participated in a group which is a beginner's running group to teach women how to run. She just happened to send out an email and I was kind of getting bored of the gym. I had never run before and I was like, 'Let me give it a try.' The first night was like 110 degrees. It was insane. And, I just fell in love with it.

Lucy completed the program and signed up for the next level.

That was pre-kid, so I was able to do that once or twice a week and then I met some of my closest girlfriends through this. We started training together and we were going out three or four times a week.

Lucy's increased interest in running met a road block when she got pregnant and had to cut back on her physical activity.

A couple of us got pregnant at the same time and my doctor asked me to stop running. I just loved it [running longer distances] and I'm slowly working my way back up. I was training for a half-marathon before I conceived my son and I wasn't able to do the half-marathon.

Looking back on her childhood, Lucy sees parallels to her family's interest in the out of doors and hiking, and her current fascination with running.

> I grew up in a family where we spent a lot of time outside. We did a lot of camping, a lot of hiking. We were always outside, always getting fresh air. It's [running] just something that takes me back to, you know, when you were in your childhood and life was a lot calmer. My husband and I went hiking a lot when we were in college and dating and that was our thing. We had a certain mountain we called 'our mountain' that we went to. So we did spend a lot of time outside together. Mainly hiking though.

Although Lucy was involved in several activities while growing up, never has she been as physically fit as she is with running.

> My mom put me in all these different things, Brownies and dance. I did like dancing. But, really girlie things. And then I got to high school. I went to a private high school. Very small. And we didn't have a football team, so I didn't have the opportunities to really to do too much. I played volleyball. And, then when I got to college, I continued volleyball, but just JV. I actually did run a couple of times in college. One of my guy friends was into running and we would get up at like five o'clock in the morning and go run a mile and that was really it.

She did not consider herself a runner at that point, she stated emphatically, "Oh no. Not at all."

> Lucy was never one to set goals. "I think it's the only thing I really have goals in is when I'm running. I have my own little personal goals. I have a GPS watch and afterwards I'll be like, 'Oh my gosh! I set a PR'." Outside of running,

I have a to-do list and I check those off everyday. But, other than that, I really

don't have any other intentions. The day goes by and I do what I have to do.

Running is a little bit different. Running, I have something in mind that I want to

do. Even just accomplish something because so many people can't even run a

mile. Just to be able to do that is different than being in the office and getting

your job done.

Running provides Lucy with a physically challenging workout, that she likes on

many levels:

I can feel where I'm working my muscles and afterwards you just feel like you've

done something good for yourself. I love just being so sweaty that I just did it.

The adrenaline rush. It's different than our volleyball league.

Socially, Lucy has always had lots of friends but her running friends are different:

When you have that much time with friends [running], you get deeper into what

you're talking about. When I talk to girlfriends from college, which is a quick

catch up over Facebook or a quick catch up for like 10 minutes on the phone.

You don't get as deep and personal as you do when you've got a full hour with

your girlfriends. And, you're not sitting at a job where you're interrupted or you'll

see anybody else. Enjoying nature. Peaceful. You're just able to open up more.

It's our therapy session. [We talk about] everything from conceiving to children

to boyfriends. It's just completely our therapy session. It's awesome. You get

completely lost when you're talking that much and listening to each other.

In particular, Lucy appreciates the perspectives of her running friends about problems she

might be facing:

When we were talking about our problems it was nice because each of the girls could bring something else to the table. 'You're not looking at that very well.' 'I don't agree with that.' Like that we were able to help each other solve our problems. Not solve our problems completely but think through them and see the two-sides-to-the-story type of thing. And, the third side, you know, look at it this way.

After having her baby, Lucy didn't get as much time running with her friends:

and not being able to do that I tend to be able to deal with things on my own and when you don't have those outside influences and opinions, sometimes I think I've made some poor choices without having that support group.

She missed the support of her running friends since they have provided much needed support to her. Her early running with her group of friends coincided with an unfortunate turn of events, "bad things were happening. I've never had such traumatic things happen to me in my life until then." What got her through these tough times?

I think the support of the runners. It's really ironic because the girlfriends I literally had just met. I had only known them for about a year when my life went downhill and it was amazing that we were all opening up to each other about so much, so quickly, that when I was going through all these situations, my other friends, I really didn't tell them about it. So, it's not just coincidence. There's something obvious to me, a reason for that, but that's not just coincidence. I found that I just trusted them more and it was a bond that was helped with the running. Running itself helped. It's so hard to say 'cause so many of my past friends, well not past friends, but friends before these running girlfriends, we just

didn't open up about certain things. And I just felt so much support like we all just, like let it out and it was OK. I could say what I was really feeling.

Lucy likes to talk when she runs. She considers herself the chattiest of the group. But, even with all the talking while running she feels an inner peace. "It's like my only chance to be quiet and still." Additionally, "It's pretty much the only time I make for myself is when I run."

Lucy has also always been a positive person, but since running:

I would say more so because I've always been the positive one of the group. I have a girlfriend who says she does a 'Lucy' whenever she's with the kids and they're just driving her crazy. She just goes back and calms down and talks to them differently. And she call it 'the Lucy'. It's cute 'cause it's one of these TV things that you would think about. That's when I start to think about things 'cause you know, I look back at those and when I'm going through something my girlfriends will say, 'You still went through all those bad things and you were still able to say, 'It's OK' and 'I'm going to be OK' and "What doesn't kill you really does make you stronger.' So, when I got through it, I try to remember, I've been the kind of person people would want to try to deal with their situations in that way.

Although Lucy prefers running with her friends, she surprised herself in a recent solo run. Arriving home after the run, she said to her husband:

'I just solved all our problems.' It was the most awesome run. I figured out exactly what we wanted to do for vacation, what we wanted to do with our son with all his digestive problems, I figured out, we're having our tenth anniversary

so my husband was going back and forth about do you want a new ring or this. I

solved all the problems! It was awesome. And he came down and was like 'that

makes good sense'. It was just the most perfect time."

Since she started running, Lucy indicates she also feels less stressed:

and people have picked up on that:

'What's different?' 'Something's just different.' And a lot of us when I was

going through these horrible situations, a lot of [non-friends] had no idea because

I put on such a good face with it. So, I think that running gave me that ability to

be able to keep trucking through everything. I think I tend to get really frazzled

and stressed out. I can stuff it really good. But, certain people can just know that

something's different. I think it fortunately coincided with just beginning to run.

The motivation and drive that comes from running also carried over into Lucy's

professional life.

I think being motivated to do something definitely translated into work because I

find myself really giving more than 100% and in work I'm one of those people

that comes in, doesn't get coffee, immediately starts, and you will see me check

personal emails once on my lunch break and that is it. I give as much as I can give

and I think that's because of running. I'm just constantly pushing myself. So I

definitely do that with work and I think I do it with everything in life. When we

were having such a hard time conceiving him (her son), I wouldn't give up. And

the same thing's with running. I won't and my friends don't like it. They are

always scolding me for it, but if I'm gonna run a race, I'm going to run the entire

race. I'm not gonna stop to walk. I don't even stop during the water breaks. I grab

the thing of water and I run completely through it. That's just me. That's how I do it. That's my 100% and they're not like that. They'll stop at mile 7 and walk for a mile. And, I'm not like that. I think that in everything in life when we were having a hard time conceiving him, I did everything I needed to do to create my little miracle. And it worked. Running just keeps allowing me to do what I want to do, to get to that goal.. And it happened. I don't take that for granted either, just like running.

While running has benefitted Lucy's personal and professional life, its rewards also extend into her feelings of gratitude and her involvement in her community.

Another thing that I'm constantly reminded of, at all these races, is that most of them are for a cause. It really, really touches home for how well we all have it. I don't have the biggest house in the world. I don't have a two-car garage. I only have one bathroom in my house. But when I see somebody running a race in their wheelchair or I see a breast cancer walker and they all don't have their hair. They just had a mastectomy. I'm like, if I wasn't running and doing these fundraisers, you wouldn't ever keep being reminded of how your life really is not about how stressed your life really is, or how much junk is going on. It's just so amazing and I would never have had that experience had I not became a runner.

Realizing she is not the fastest runner in the world, she still defines herself as a runner for reasons other than speed. "Even though my pace is not a seven-minute one. I definitely do. And, when you can teach somebody else when it becomes your forte. That's when I'm like, 'I'm a runner'."

Artemis

Artemis is a 50-year-old educator. She has been running regularly for about three years. Typically she runs three to five times per week averaging 25 to 50 minutes per run. She does compete in races ranging from 5K to half-marathons. Artemis thinks of running as therapy. "I truly think that running is like therapy. It is good for your body as well as your mind. It really is. Peace comes over me."

Artemis and Her Running Journey

A lifetime of activity, "I swam, I played basketball, volleyball, softball, rode my bike," did not prepare Artemis for a diagnosis of breast cancer. Being true to herself, she coped with the disease by setting the goal of being active, of completing a three-day walk for breast cancer. She started training for this event just two weeks after she finished treatment. As the anniversary of the three-day event approached, Artemis was asked by a friend if she would once again participate. Her answer: "You know what? I don't feel like walking and I did all my training by myself. And, it's no fun being by yourself." This friend then told her about a local program to get women running. Artemis's first response was "I can't run." But she tried it anyway and after the first week told her friend "I'm not coming back. This is nuts. I can't do this." Artemis did go back and "Twelve weeks later I ran my first 5K. I ran the whole thing. And, I did it in about a 10:15 - 10:30-minute mile." When she finished the race she thought to herself, "I'm pretty old and that wasn't bad. This is fun! And I was hooked immediately." She was so "hooked that I went back and did it again. Had my daughter do it one time. And I did it again."

Asking Artemis about why she runs was not the first time she has considered this question. "People have said, 'Why do you run?' And, I said, 'I love that feeling. I go out

in the morning and off I go." This feeling is not duplicated with all her other activities. "Oh yeah, this [referring to the feeling] is different." Even with walking, she notes:

"Honestly, when I think about it, when I think about the training time and the walks that I did, I didn't feel as refreshed when I got done walking. It doesn't make a whole lot sense, I guess, really. I just didn't feel, 'Ahhhhhhhhhhh'. That would be the difference. I didn't feel that from the walking. But yet the other part of that would be the fact that I did all the walking solo. I didn't have a walking partner. Not one person to go with me anywhere.

Although Artemis mentions not enjoying walking by herself, she does run by herself during the week. "Sometimes I don't enjoy running by myself, but there are other times when I do. It's me time." When running alone:

sometimes I don't think about anything. Sometimes I think about what's happening that day or the day before or what's my next challenge. You know what I think? It's just that this [running time] is, it's my free time. I'm free. I feel good and I can forget about everything. I think that that helps me along. Having a tough day at school and then going for a run in the afternoon … it's like, 'Ahhhhhh, you know what? I can do this again.'

Artemis has joined an unofficial group of runners who meet on Saturday mornings for a run, and end up eating breakfast together. "We're a pretty tight group. They are amazing. They really are. And for how diverse we are for our careers, our families, and our ages, our ability levels, our experience levels, this is really unique. Really cool people." She certainly has had friends in the past but "not a tight group like this." She doesn't worry about what she looks like when she runs "You get up on a

Saturday morning at 6:30 to go running at 7:30. You don't take a shower and put on makeup and do your hair. You just go in whatever you're in" Artemis notes that even when she runs with this group:

> I don't get to talk about anything because I'm the one that's back there and everybody else is up there. Usually, I say that I run in the back in case anybody dropped. I'm the sag wagon. I can remember saying once to Achillis, 'I'm always in the back.' And he said, 'Did anybody look at you and say, you know what? You should come back next year when you're faster?' I'm like, 'No.' And he said, 'so don't worry about it. Who cares?' I've had some of them come back to me at certain times just to make sure I was OK or just so I had some company.

On those occasions when another runner joins her in the back, topics range from "their kids, or the race from last week, or what we, as a group, are going to be doing next week, or things like that."

Either way, it is "the me time I get to take. I don't want to say it is almost like an escape. But, it clears your head. It gives you that release time for yourself." Through running, Artemis has learned the importance of taking time for herself. "I think once I learned I had to take time for me, it was very important to take time for me. And I learned that it really does make a big difference." Even if she gets on the treadmill, Artemis sets her "me time" limits. If the phone rings "I am not going to answer you. This is MY time. You have to give me 45 minutes. I don't feel selfish." Before Artemis started to run, she didn't take designated time for herself:

> No, I never did. Well, I don't want to say never, but it was more my daughter's time. Because everything revolved around her. She was in Daisies or a school

play or whatever. As the years went on, I would try numerous times to take a walk today. It never worked, or it got short, or I would get home and I'd be like there are 27 other things to do and I ran out of time.

She does recognize the importance of this time for herself and in the future, running or not running, she will give herself this gift of me time, if not through running, somehow. "I think honestly that because I enjoy it so much, I do it for myself because it was something that I needed. I learned how to do something for myself."

Artemis makes it a point to show others how enjoyable running is:

"Somebody said, 'Those runners really look miserable.' I make it a point to smile the whole time because I do enjoy it and I do feel good. My nephew saw me one time and said, 'You look ridiculous.' I said, 'You know what? I'm 50 years old and I'm out there running. I don't care what I look like.' And, that's the joy!"

Another aspect of running that surprised Artemis:

I've met some amazing people. Amazing people. Great experience! Runners are amazingly friendly. I don't know why that surprised me. It's just amazing. I was in a race, it was the Superbowl 10K. A guy that my husband used to work with was yelling at some girl [another runner in the race] to 'make sure she [Artemis] makes it.' This woman turned around, came back to me, which of course slowed down her time, came back to me and ran with me and talked me through a couple things. Hills and things like that. I had never met her in my life. I got to the end of the race. I was starting to peter out and I was getting tired. Two other people I told, 'This is my first race.' This one [woman] said, 'Come on. We can do this together.' And the other one said, 'Come on, we'll stick together.' I had no idea

who these people were. I had never seen them before in my life. We, the four of us, ran together until we had to go through the chute. We ran together for three-quarters of a mile. That to me is really something. It's not one of those cut-throat things. 'Well, I'm not gonna help you. I have a time to beat.' It was really fun. It was really nice. It was really fun.

Since beginning running, Artemis acknowledges she has changed. Certainly, she has changed in the physical sense. But, it isn't about her weight:

I'm not doing it to lose weight. Today before you got here, I changed [clothes]. I had a little skirt on today. Now three years ago you couldn't have paid me to wear a skirt and stuff like that. Look at me. I'm 50 and look what I'm wearing. Never would I have done that three years ago when I was 46, 47. Never, I always wore pants. [Today] I thought I looked good. Felt good to wear it. I feel better about myself. I know I look better and I definitely have more energy. I just think my self-image is a lot better.

Another thing Artemis realizes is, "I think I'm much more able to have fun and have fun with myself. My self-confidence and self-image have changed so much in the past few years." And that's not going away. "That's definitely been a change that occurred. Being more confident in myself" has spilled over into her professional life:

I just think, as a person, and in my teaching, I've always been very confident in what I did. But, I always had that 'Ooooo, am I doing my best?' When I go into that classroom now I'm doing my best because I feel good. I'm ready. And I think I do have a little bit more energy than I did. I mean I was always very energetic

and very hands-on and active, but I think I've got a lot more electricity in me than I did five years ago.

Since becoming a runner, Artemis is more confident to try new things. For example, a triathlon was something:

> I always [thought] I would like to do someday. I really wished I could. That's why I say, 'I always thought about a triathlon.' For years I thought about it. I thought, 'Oh geez that could be me' But, I never tried it.

Now she is going to try that triathlon as her next personal challenge. She believes she is also taking on challenges in her professional life, as well as inspiring her students to take on challenges.

> I think I've passed it (taking on challenges) along to my kids too. We had a guest visitor. We had a veteran and he came to talk. At the end he said, 'Well I just wanted to let you know that my granddaughter is in fifth grade and their class learned how to do the Pledge of Allegiance in sign language. And I was like, 'Oh, is that a challenge?' So my class is learning how to do it. Not really well yet, but we're working on it. It's a challenge." Had she not taken up the challenge of running, "I would have said, 'Oh, that's wonderful.' but I would have never said, "Oh yeah. We could do that.' We've been practicing it and I look on the computer and say 'OK these are the next three signs. You hold your fingers to the right? And now you move your hand to the left. No the left, not the right! We're going counter-clockwise, not clockwise.' We've gone through the whole thing!

Artemis' new confidence is influencing her personal life, her teaching, and the lives of a new generation.

However, as far as identifying her self as a runner she says, "I don't know. I'm still not sure about that runner title."

Nora

Nora is a 41-year-old, full-time mom and part-time educator. She has been running regularly for three years. Currently she runs three to five times per week anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes. She occasionally enters local races. Nora finds running to be a spiritual experience. "It's spiritual. It's connecting. It's like a wholeness. It's completing me in a way that I wasn't aware of. It still does that. That's what it defines for me. Running is a very spiritual thing for me. That's how I look at it. That's how I view it. That's how I run."

Nora and her Running Journey

I had grown up doing everything. Softball, swimming, volleyball, you name it. Volleyball became my fall sport. Basketball in the winter. Softball in the spring. Eventually that turned into track, you know, running. I didn't run because I loved running, I ran because I had to stay in shape for my sports. So, I went to college on a volleyball scholarship. I had to run to get in shape. I didn't love it, but it was part of what I had to do. It was like, I have to do this to get in shape. I have to do this interval training. In volleyball, you're not running. You're playing a position but you have to run, to train for your sport. Basketball, I hated the running part of practice and training. I was never a good breather. It just seemed like a chore. I could do it but it wasn't my passion.

After college, came marriage and motherhood. Then her journey into running began:

I finally started walking again. The person I started walking with ended up being a very good friend of mine. She was a major runner all of her life and she was like, 'Do you want me to help you [start running]?' And I'm like, 'Uhhhhhhhh, running knees, my ankles. I'm really happy with walking'." The friend's reply: "Well, let's just try it. Let's just do intervals with walking. You know, see how you like it.

I ended up doing a beginner runners program; it's an interval-step program to train anybody. You can be a walker. You can be running, and I've been running since." Although running was the vehicle to get back into shape it quickly changed to something else. It was during this time with her "personal life kind of caving in, running just became my outlet.

Looking back, her personal life didn't suddenly disintegrate. Like everything she did, Nora committed herself 100% to what she thought was important. When she became a mother, motherhood became her top priority, even if it meant her husband, her marriage and Nora, as a person, took a back seat. She was living her life for her children and:

I kind of forgot who I, who 'me' was. And at the same time, the spiral thing happened with my spouse, like we weren't connected the way we had been. You know, there were these two little girls in between us and they became the priority in my life. Not that we had a terrible relationship but he [her husband] just kind of started to drift back and back and instead of communicating about it, we just kind of, what did he call it? 'Coexisted', maybe. We didn't share feelings and emotions. It just wasn't the connection that you really should, you want to have. And then he told me that if this is the way it's going to be then I don't want this. I

want a divorce. It was like a wake up call. No, no, no! Never! We were great. We were perfect. We have these two wonderful children and everybody looked at us and said 'They're doing it right!' All along. It fell apart."

Through running, Nora was able to discover who she was and get her marriage on track.

> I started to inwardly evaluate myself on areas of my life that I needed to re-gain, re-focus, re-motivate, almost re-identify who I was at that stage of my life. I used that running time to not only improve the physical but there's mental there. There were times where I'll think about my relationship or something that may have upset me or disappointed me and it would physically almost stop me in my running. And tears would fall and there were times that I would get frustrated and yeah, maybe, there were tears but it motivated me and I would push harder. So, I think, if I hadn't had that time to let out all those feelings, to feel, I allowed that and running gave me that. It wasn't just the heart beat of my day. It was very instrumental.

What Nora noticed about the running, unlike being a chore from her earlier experiences, is that it became a time for her think.

> It's my quiet time. I get up in the morning or go later at night, and it's my time. And it's just my connection and my quietness, my wherever, whoever, or whatever I need to get away from. It is my time for me. I'm raising two girls and I have a family, not that that's not about me, but not what I'm doing for others. What I'm doing for Nora. Running is for me. Running is my "inner", this is me. This is part of who I am now. It gives me a sense of peace.

This quiet time provides a time for introspection.

The running instruction group that Nora originally ran with encourages the women to have as their goal the participation and completion of a 5K women's-only race held each fall to raise money and awareness for breast cancer. Although Nora does enjoy competition she emphasizes,

It's not about how fast you are, or what you look like or whatever. It's about your connection with what you're doing. It's kind of spiritual and growth. It's not about the competition. It's just going through the 12 weeks and then the race. It was just, it's a woman thing and I just don't know. Like, 'Look at us all here!' Breast cancer just brings a whole new life to it. I had lost both of my parents to a form of cancer, so it just helped me. Running helped me get through that. I still think about that. I stress out about my own life. What will I have? Will I have to face cancer? Will I? And I just think, 'I'm running. I'm taking care of myself the best I can right now, that I know how. And I can do it without taking time away from my family. Love it!

Nora equates the runner's high with a spiritual dimension of running:

I guess some people call it that runner's high. It's that adrenaline, just how good you feel about yourself after you finish. I did that! That was me! Nobody did that for me. I did it! I did it! Oh my gosh! Look at me!

This is what helps to keep her motivated:

When I started to realize I could run more distance in the time that I was walking a shorter distance, that's what kept me motivated in it as I was trying to get through. Wow, I passed mile three, mile four, and you know it's a lot of quiet

time and I started to pray about me. It's kind of the way that it came together. It's

like there's a higher power here, that has this whole plan because it's like 'Green

light, GO!'

Not only was the running hard work, but the reflection was hard work as well.

It was my time to kind of vent through the frustrations. The running part of it,

that's the letting out the 'Grrrrrrr'. But then, praying, making that whole

connection again. There's something out there bigger than me and I can control

me here but there's still bigger ones that I have noooooooo concept of and tapping

back into that and believing in the God I always did and being a little more active

in that. That also strengthened me through the last two and a half years. I'm

proud of who I am. I'm a better person for all of it.

Running offers a connection not just to Nora's inner-self, but to nature.

I listened to music this morning. I don't usually, but I thought maybe I could use

this little 'oomf'. But by the end it was off because I was missing nature. The

moon was still out. The sun was coming up. I have to have that connection. It just

kinda kicks in. I don't know what the word would be, but inner? It's an 'innerer'.

It's satisfying at the end and it's a personal thing.

The finish line of the 5K race became a metaphor for her life and the changes brought on

by her running program.

My children being there at that 5K race cheering me on with my husband, like

being at the finish line I felt like, 'I did it'." I pulled it all back together. I'm a

stronger, better person. I'm a role model now. 'Inspiring' is the word that my

oldest daughter and my husband used. 'You're inspirational'!

Running has influenced Nora in many ways. Although, she could give it up, she does not intend to and, "If I didn't have running any more, I would still be more myself [than before the running]." She has no plans to give it up. Even during the dark cold days of winter she runs. "I had to. I needed that time to wake up. It balanced me, sent me through the day. Whew! It's great. I now have my 'scene' that's better for my family and healthier for me." Taking time for herself, having the time to reflect on who she had become and who she really is has resulted in so many changes. Nora realizes the importance of taking this time to develop who she is has changed the family unit in ways she could never have imagined.

> I did apply [for a job]. I'm only working as an instructional assistant and I'm not utilizing my teaching certificate but I'm doing something that matches my schedule and I can say that it helped me structure my days, my life again. I think I stopped honoring that when it became about where my older daughter needed to be, or what did my younger daughter need? What does my husband need?

Nora is back to being who she was, who she is.

> Now, if I desire that manicure and pedicure, I do it! I don't do it all the time, but I will take that time. I think my kids now know, and my husband realizes, that I do need time, and it gives him the time with them. That was another part of the whole family thing where he felt like I dictated what they did, but I didn't. I just felt like that was my job. That's what I was supposed to do. And now he initiates and does things with them as well, as it should have been all along. Not that he wasn't a father, he is. He's just a better father now. He has a stronger relationship with each one of them, something that's not always easy with a dad

and a daughter. It really did help us look at every aspect of our life because I gained confidence and strength in certain areas and said, 'This is what I'm going to do with this and why don't you do this.' He'll say, 'I want to do this, this and that?' And I'll say, 'Great!'

Nora attributes these changes to her running. Her husband has noticed a lot of intrinsic changes:

I think that he would say I gained a lot of my self-confidence and strength, I don't know if that's the right word for that, to stand up for myself and say, 'This or that doesn't make me happy.' He would have to look at it and say, 'She's finally back, to not old Nora, but, there was this old Nora and this new Nora. And I'm like, 'Are you talking about old when I first met you?' 'No.' He's talking about old as, 'Where did you go for all those years? What happened to that Nora that had dreams, and visions, and hopes? You know, why did you let so much of it go'?"

Her sisters noticed more extrinsic changes:

'You let yourself go', and you know, I did. I didn't get my own haircut. I didn't wear a lot of makeup. I just wasn't, I was a stay at home mom. If I got a shower, I was like, "Whew, OK.' And, I was OK with it 'cause at that point, we had a baby. But now, I put a little bit more effort into walking out the door than in the past. I take more pride in myself.

Reflecting back on the physical dimension, Nora acknowledges there is more to report. Nora started running to be more active. Since she started running:

I gained more weight. I don't know if that correlates with the teaching job in a faculty room filled with baked goods half the time. I still look in the mirror every

day and think, 'You're great! You're awesome! Yea!' That's from what running gives me. It gives me a sense, it's pride. It is! I tell everybody, 'I used to not make time and now I know how very important it [taking time for herself] is. I'm much more calm. Much more laid back than I used to be.

The sense of pride and self-awareness gained through running took the edge off some of the unrealistic demands she put on herself.

I was pretty high strung. High strung isn't the right word. The house had to be cleaned up before he came home from work. I'm at home. The laundry. The grocery shopping. The cooking. The cleaning. It all needed to be done, so when he walked in at five thirty, done! I was hard on myself if I didn't get it done. Now my philosophy is, 'The kids are growing, the dust can wait. Let that settle 'cause this is life and it's happening. It's happening really fast now. The older that they get, the faster it happens. I turn around and (*insert name of daughter #1)* is almost eye-to-eye with me. It's like, 'What happened to the baby?' So I honor, I think that's a good word, I honor myself, them, including my husband. The time that I have with them, I let those other things wait. Although that still does cause some friction and frustration with my husband. And sometimes with myself, is this ever going to get done? But, in 20 years, that's not going to matter. But the fact that I sat down and read a book. The fact that I helped with the project or with the homework. I put a meal on the table for the family. Those are the things that matter now. It definitely has changed. And with other people too.

Nora feels passionate again. Passionate about herself and passionate about the role that running plays and continues to play in her life.

It does change your life and how you live it. How you see it. How you act in it. An awareness of who you are. An impact. Like, 'I am worthy.' I know I'm living who I am in myself. Who I am on this Earth. I'm a good person. Running makes me a better person. And I know if I broke my leg and was paralyzed, tomorrow would I miss running? 'Yeah,' but, I would not go back to the person I was. Because it's more than just that physical part again. A lot of the part that you get out of it is how you do look at things. And, I share it. Why would I keep something so good inside. It's good stuff. Great life. Great stuff. Why not share it?

Nora would use the term "runner" to describe herself.

I am a runner girl. I am, I guess, a 'runner woman' in every way. Running, like life, "Is one step in front of the other. This is one day at a time. Just whatever seems to guide. It helps me navigate. It's what helped me gain my life back.

Jane

Jane is a 40-year-old working in sales. She has been running for the past three years. She regularly runs six to seven times per week. Her runs range from 40 minutes to 180 minutes. She regularly competes in races from 5K to marathons.

Jane and Her Running Journey

Jane, a competitive heptathlete in college, ran because she had to as part of the heptathlon. A heptathlon is a competitive event where participants complete in seven track-and-field events usually consisting of the running events of sprint, hurdles, middle distance, and the field events of the high jump, javelin throw, pole vault, as well as the long jump. With no other teammates to train with, Jane often found herself training alone.

Even though running was an integral part of the pentathlon, Jane identified herself this way:

> I was a runner. I don't even know if I would have said I was a runner. I would say I was a heptathlete because when I ran in college it was sprinting. I was never a distance runner. If I had to do an 800 [1/2 mile], I'd cry. I'd cry. I'd break down on the track and start crying. I was fearful of distance. Fearful. Fearful. Fearful. One of my goals in life was to run a marathon. And this was way, way, back when I was gonna run a marathon one day.

Then, "I lost touch with it. I didn't want any part of it. I was very much into fitness so I did aerobics, kickboxing, the gamut. I took many years off." Her goal: "Right now it's to qualify for Boston." So what has changed over the last 20 years?

> One thing that changed was becoming a mother and gaining weight.

> I'm one of four sisters. And we are all very concerned with our weight and our appearance. I was always the one in the family who was the most toned, the fittest, and I wasn't anymore. I wasn't the fittest. I wasn't the strongest. I wasn't feeling good about myself. Clothes were tight. I didn't like my body image.

So she chose running.

> I had two children and I needed something that was easy to do, something I could do with them. And it was running. I started running with them in jogging strollers. It was the easiest. I could just put shoes on and go.

> Running also offered Jane something else. "To me, I need goals, so I chose running as the goal and the motivator." The goals Jane set were tightly prescribed.

This is the schedule I need to run. I had set myself a schedule out. With a schedule you have something to follow and if you don't have anything to follow, you don't do it. So that's what I did. I put it on the calendar, this is what I need to run everyday, and this is the workout, and this is the plan, and so then I did it. But, I need goals.

This introvert started running alone for about her first one and a half years. "I thought I wanted to run by myself. That's what I wanted to do. I did one marathon by myself and thought I was a lone runner." This presented a quandary. Jane wanted to get faster but felt she could not improve by herself. So, she joined an organized group that meets for structured runs such as on Saturday morning for long runs of 10 to 22 miles or during the week for speed work on the track. Jane has gotten faster "which has turned out to be one of the best things, as an older woman, to do from a social standpoint, from the networking standpoint, and for quickening myself."

Even though Jane identified herself an introvert, she surprised herself with how much she enjoys running with others. "I'm a very much introverted, quiet person. My closest friend who takes care of my children calls me a loner." But, Jane soon found out there is nothing like running with others. "The strength of each other. You can network. You can learn from each other. There is nothing like it." She has met many people who she now considers close friends. She discloses more to her running friends than others who in the past she considered close.

I'm sure they know more about me than some people I call my close friends. Absolutely. You get to be in a vulnerable state too. You're running, you're in

pain, you're hurting, and all of a sudden, Sandy's going, 'One more mile, OK? We can do anything for 10 minutes.

How often do you go with somebody for over four hours straight every week? You learn a heck of a lot about people. They know about every job, what company car I get to choose from, what my kids are doing. There's a girl, Sandy, we just got to know each other. She lives five miles from my house and has two children. It was so nice to meet another person. Sandy and I discuss discipline strategies.

Additionally, "I met a mom last year who was 41 and has three kids who are totally different ages than mine. But just to talk and learn and share with different people." If she didn't have these new friends to run with on some of her long runs things may have turned out differently.

Had I been alone, I wouldn't have run. It made it so much easier and we finished and we felt so much better that we did it. Where had I been alone, I, we actually had been talking about it on the run … I would have turned around when I slowed down. And it's all those things that the group brings to the table.

What Jane likes about this group as well is, "We're all out to better ourselves." Jane has changed a part of her life to run with her friends:

On weekends I was never one to get up in the morning. Never ever. I was never going to get up in the morning to run. How dare anybody ask me to do that? And I decided I needed to run with someone. Who would have ever known I would sometimes be getting up at 5 in the morning to drive to run with these people?

Jane's family supports her in her running. Her husband, who recently lost his job, went to a career counselor and when listing future goals "put as one of his goals to support me to qualify for the Boston Marathon. He is 100% supportive." And she appreciates the support since "I've never really had that. I'm lucky to have what I have. That's for sure!"

Another change that Jane mentions is that she needs running now:

It's funny because I used to laugh because people said they needed to run. I went to a PT [physical therapy] guy to stretch me out the other day and he said, 'Yeah, you're a runner. You can't stop.' And I never thought of myself that way but I guess I'm that way now, because it makes me happy. It's a release. It's an outlet.

For example, recently "I went to the track with Sandy and I said 'I'm an ogre. I'm just evil today. I had to get out of the house. I'm not in the mood for this. I don't want to do this." But Jane did it "and I felt refreshed and happy after the workout. It changes my mood." Before she started running there were times "I was angry at everybody and I had nothing to release that." Without an outlet, "I felt bad about myself. I was anxious all the time."

Although Jane finds running with her friends a very positive experience, there are times, mostly due to convenience, she does run by herself. Although she always has her music with her, she uses this time "to strategize, strategize something for work. Or organize my schedule. I try to think about something during my run. It goes faster. So, if I have a problem at work I need to work through." She even fantasized that on those instances when she has nothing to think about, "We need to come up with something that

we can make money. If I've got two hours by myself, I might as well start thinking about stuff that I can invent."

Jane prefers to run outside because:

the environment changes. I think it's a better workout. You have the elements to deal with and your body adjusts to it. And there's just something about being outside. Cool air, well, the warm air in the summer. It's spiritual, sort of. It's kind of funny because the other week we were running out on the trails. You know it's concrete, sometimes it's trail-based rock, and I was running with my friends. And, I had to leave them. I had to pee. I said, 'I'll catch up.' And I'm running, catching up, and I can see them running ahead. The leaves are coming down off the trees. You could see the seasons changing. It's funny how you view different parts. You think back to last winter and running in all the snow and things of that nature. The view. The picture. It's just, it's pretty. It was pretty last weekend. You wouldn't get that from a treadmill. You wouldn't feel the wind. There's something about a day where it's 70 degrees and it's just perfect. The air is crisp in the fall, or just getting those blooms. You're just seeing the grass pop up. I mean that's part of running. It's so fun watching the seasons. I'm a spring person. I love gardening, and running I just try to watch for the little crocuses. See whose gardens are blooming at that time of year. You see a change. It's the same thing running on Saturday mornings. You see the seasons change and see the different people coming out. It's even the time of day. We're going out at 7 a.m. It's a lot different than when we're finishing up at 10 a.m. The different people coming

out with their families and the dogs. So that's outside. You don't get that on a
treadmill.

To her, the perfect match is "being outside, being with people."

Running has fulfilled the reason Jane started running. It has reduced the extra
post- pregnancy weight which has now resulted in an improved body image. "I was
feeling horrible about myself. Absolutely atrocious about myself. So, if I didn't have
running I don't know where I would be in the shape I'm in now." The shape she refers to
is not just the improved, fitter body:

I feel better about me. I feel more comfortable. I mean, heck, I didn't have a picture up
on Facebook for two years. Because I was embarrassed. I mean I wasn't that much
heavier. I was just, I felt better about myself. You walk different; you wear clothes
different, so it helps. That's for sure.

Another thing Jane learned through running is the value of taking time for herself.
However, she does, at times, feel guilty taking this time.

I would feel guilty. Absolutely 110% guilty because there are times when I've

said to my husband, 'The kids need such and such and I will go and get what they

need and come right home because I know that this is something I'm doing for the

kids. There's a guilt factor. I try to work it [the running] into my day so it doesn't

impact anyone. I do it at 7 o'clock in the morning so by the time I get home the

kids have been up for an hour and I'm ready to go. Or at night. I try to do it at

4:30, 5 o'clock, 5:30, somewhere right in there. Usually they're shorter runs

during that time of day. So you get it done, come home, and have dinner.

I don't think I'd take anything [time] such as girls' night. We moms feel guilty. I always say we don't take care of ourselves or do enough for ourselves. But it's funny because when I started running, my mother-in-law, she'd be taking care of the kids. I would come home maybe a half hour early. And I would say, 'Would you mind if I got a quick run in?' and she said, 'Do something for yourself. You go do that. That's for you. You don't get that during the day. And so her saying that to me was like, 'Oh, thank you. Thank you, God.' Because you feel guilty. She's doing me a favor taking care of the kids, coming over to take care of my kids. I should be going home. I'm working all day. I shouldn't (feel guilty). But it makes you feel better that someone reinforces that. I mean it would be that much easier to come home and say, 'Yeah, I'm gonna go run out to the store and get a few things, you mind watching the kids?' I think it's, there's more acceptance and you need to get that run in to feel happy.

Jane has always been an organized, list-making person and this has influenced her running and her success with running.

You need a schedule. With a schedule you have something to follow and if you don't have anything to follow you won't do it. That's what I did. I put it on the calendar. This is what I need to run everyday and this is the workout and this is the plan. And, so then I did it. But I need goals. For me it's always been about goals and what I'm going to accomplish. It makes me feel better. That's why I'm in sales. I can goal set.

Jane not only feels better about herself, but she has found a passion.

For me, when I can immerse myself in something, I do it a 110%. And it's nice to have that. You know, I want to read everything on it. I read every <u>Runner's World</u> magazine and I learn what strategies are and how to drink and that's fun for me. It's analyzing something. It's immersing myself in something that you care about. People in the past have asked, 'Do you have a hobby?' Gardening was a hobby, but I didn't really have anything else. And it's hard cause I grew up always having something, a passion. I needed a passion. I have this. If I didn't have it now, I think I'd lose my mind because this is part of me now.

April

April is a 32-year-old educator. She has been running regularly for three years and now runs five to seven days per week. Her typical runs range from 45 minutes to 120 minutes. She regularly competes in all distances from 5Ks to marathons. A tree symbolizes her running, a strong tree. "The confidence I have gained has its roots in the running. I feel strong and have grown through running."

April and Her Running Journey

As a child, "I was never able to run; I was the kid that walked the timed mile." Additionally "I was always a smoker, since about the age of 17 or 16." Her father, also a smoker, stopped smoking and began running while April was in college. Being very close to her dad, she observed as he made the change in his life from smoker to runner. This "chain-smoking, drinker, party girl" met her athletically gifted husband-to-be after she graduated from college. As things became more serious, her future husband gave her an ultimatum: "I'm not gonna marry you if you smoke 'cause I don't want to marry somebody who is going to die right away." April had wanted to quit smoking for herself

but was now motivated by both her dad quitting and her desire to marry this man. April got engaged, quit smoking, and decided to replace smoking with running, just as her dad did. "Instead of having coffee and a cigarette in the morning, I would run and have coffee later." Her goal as she started running was "just to run a mile." She was a party girl who "always wanted to go out and have a good time, whereas now I'm not like that anymore. I want to have a good time and stuff, but I do it based around my run."

Setting goals began with that first mile. "I mean I always wanted to get things done, or do well. Running has taught me to set goals. It's definitely made me more disciplined."

Describing herself in more detail, April says,

I am a very addictive personality, so when I start doing something that's what I do. I just started. Instead of smoking in the car on the way home, I would go to the gym. Instead of having a coffee and a cigarette in the morning I would run and then just have coffee later.

Right away, she noticed that she planned her day around her running. "I organize my day around something I have to get done. I will get up early to get a certain amount of mileage in before I go to work. Or I plan my day around my workout." She prefers morning runs "as much as I love it, I dread having to do that once my day is done". She also considers her running time as "my time. It's my time to myself. I think about all kinds of stuff … my family, my husband, things I wanna do … when I'm running, that's my time."

Running has changed the way April sees herself, both physically and mentally. Physically, she feels "my body has transformed." She loves the "adrenaline rush that I get

from being sweat-covered." Although she was always active, she did not consider herself athletic until recently.

> I definitely think that I am [athletic], but I don't have any coordination or anything like that. I can run. I can work out. My endurance is really, really good, but I couldn't hit a softball. I have had to walk out of step classes or aerobic classes because I will hurt myself. I consider myself athletic now, even a runner. It's the last year or two I've seen myself that way. I didn't always. I'd been running for a year or so and after I ran my first marathon I definitely felt more like a runner. I felt confident in what I was doing then.

She has lost a few pounds, gained some muscle, and generally sees herself as leaner and fitter. However, with that newer body has come a new attitude. "The running makes me feel better, I'm comfortable in my skin. I'm comfortable doing what I want and I value myself more."

> April sees her dedication to running and the hard work paying off in many areas of her life. For example,

> I'm in alternative learning, that's teaching students that aren't successful in the regular classroom. Even though I'm qualified in all areas to teach, I just felt like I was a lesser teacher because I was the alternative learning teacher. Through running, analyzing different students in my head and just seeing their growth, I've been able to say, 'Oh you are good at what you do.' And that's just made me a better teacher because I don't self doubt myself or anything I do in the classroom anymore. I'm more willing to try [new things] and while I'm on my run, I analyze things that would possibly take place.

For example, two weeks ago I just started thinking about how I was going to do this whole vocabulary lesson this year. That time just to myself, I'm able to see the progress that the students have made. The progress that I've made. I don't self-doubt myself or anything in the classroom anymore.

This process continues to improve her teaching on many levels.

I pump myself up for my day like through working out. I leave my work at work and if I have a bad day at work I can go work out and deal with it that way instead of going home and beating myself up about it.

Although she leaves her work at work, it is the processing she does while running.

I used to be 'You should have done this. You should have done that.' And I don't beat myself up like that anymore. It's more building myself. Or focusing on the future and not the things that I wished I could have fixed. I used to stay at work longer and there was no purpose in that.

Not only does April think she does her job more efficiently. "I think I'm a better teacher now."

Socially, she also sees the change in herself. April describes herself as a: loner growing up. I just didn't feel like a fit in anywhere. When I was really young, I kept more to myself. In high school I was a little bit more social. I was willing to meet new people, but when I was in college I was off and on.

Still:

I'm more like a quiet person. I think because of running I've become more social. I talk to people that run. My network has widened because of running. People talk to me about it. I recognize certain people at races and everything.

Although running is the common ground, she realizes:

> that you get to know more about them the more you talk to them. I put myself in
> situations now that it's not like my scene, where I'm not necessarily comfortable
> doing it, but I try it and the more I do it the more comfortable I get. I do like
> meeting new people. Like doing this (interview), I would have probably never
> put myself in a situation like this, not knowing you from anyone.

> Through running, April gained confidence in the classroom and social circles, and
that confidence is a trait she intends to keep. April said that:

> used to look at the floor and now I would look people in the eye. There's no other
> outlet that lets you zone out like that. I am a more confident person overall. I'm
> able to think when I'm running and deal with different things.

If she were to stop running would she lose this confidence? "I would truly try not to. I
value that. So I don't think I would go back."

> During her running time, a lot goes on in April's mind. "I'll make plans in my
head. I am also into writing, so I'll come up with what I want to write in my head. And
put it down when I get home." Before running, "I was not very focused. I did 'whatever'.
Now, I'm more organized. I set goals constantly. I definitely think more about things
because I have all this time to myself." Not only does she reflect on her own life, but

> it's my time to think about things. I've a lot more aware of different things that
> are going on in the world. There are women in other countries that don't have the
> freedom to run on a path or wear shorts. An article in <u>Runner's World</u> about
> someone had organized this race to run barefoot and the women were just so

happy to be able to run. The time I'm out there [running] for like two hours, you have to think about something.

For April, running translates into an awareness an appreciation of life.

I wake up on Saturday morning and I see the sky is blue and I just can't wait to get out there. You just appreciate the beauty of things. I feel like I'm more in tune to my surroundings and I notice things more. When you're running you notice things that you've never noticed before no matter how many times you've driven past it.

And that's the other thing. When I'm just trying to get through the miles, I'll think about what's good in my life and, you know, count my blessings.

Running has made April a more positive person, "I definitely strive to be a better person because I appreciate things a lot more and not take things for granted." This has profoundly changed April. A few months ago, she was injured and thought that without the running "that was the end of the world." However, she realized "how much I have going on in my life." The attitude and lifestyle of this party loving girl have changed dramatically and she believes for the better:

I'm happy with my goals and my accomplishments, before I felt like I wasn't satisfied with anything. I would just be stressed and always worried. Always had a knot in my stomach. I am a happier person, I think, with myself. Like, I wasn't truly happy inside.

Natalie

Natalie is a 48-year-old who works in the medical field. She has been running regularly for almost three years. She runs three to five times per week. Her runs average

30 to 120 minutes. She has competed in one 5K and several half-marathons. Natalie would use a turtle as a symbol of her running. 'They get where they're going. Worry free. I think turtles are. If a car hits me, oh well, I'm a dead turtle."

Natalie and Her Running Journey

For Natalie, the path to running started with attending a half-marathon as a spectator.

We took my daughter-in-law's father down to Philly. He was running a [half] marathon. So, we went down one year and it's a lot of energy, exciting and fun. It's exciting to see people finish. You know that's the goal. That's what you want to see. It's kind of neat to see. Clapping for people you don't even know and cheering them on. I think, 'I could do that.' That's 13 miles, 'til you try and run it. That was one year. And then I thought 'I will start running over the summer and spring.' I did kind of try but I thought 'This was hard.' And then I walked. I swam. That's another thing, I thought I would be able to breathe and you try to run and then after a minute your legs are like, 'What are you doing to me? I'm not going to do this.' I walked and swam. Very little running. And then the next year we took him down and I thought, again I thought it, 'I could do this.' That fall, around Thanksgiving, I did start running, very little. I didn't really have a program. I thought, 'I'll run 'til I feel like I need to stop and then I'll stop and walk. At first the goal was, even if I couldn't run the whole thing, walk and run, kind of break it up. But, then you get into it and you're like. 'I don't really want to walk.' So, that's how that started, gradually.

She began this training with a goal to finish a half-marathon. "I don't want to be last but I don't feel like I need to be first. And if I am last, oh well. As long as I get over the finish line." She did get over the finish line and has gone on to compete in other races of varying distances including other half-marathons. "If I didn't have that goal [completing the half] I don't know that I would have tried. Because it's hard. I think running is hard. It's not like you're going out to take a walk or a hike." Although she admits physically, "the more you do it, the easier it is." For example,

> The last half- marathon I ran, I felt really good all though it. The first two, you get to the finish and it's just like you want to die. Well, not die, maybe kinda pass out and think, 'This is stupid.' I think I'm over that hump of it being really hard.

> Natalie played field hockey in high school more than 30 years ago. Through the years, she rode a bicycle and adopted swimming as her gateway to fitness.

> Bikes can be a pain. They break down. You can get a flat. I figure I can just run anywhere. From home, just start running. All you need is a decent pair of sneakers. You can get all the glitzy, fancy, spandex tights, what have you, or you can just wear something that you already have. Relatively inexpensive. The only expense is your shoes. And once you get the shoes that are good for you, you look for them on sale.

Although she prefers running, "It's kind of hard at first. The first two, three, miles are the hardest and then you start running and it's like, not so hard." She does "feel amazing that I can do it without falling over. I mean to just kind of keep going … to run for two hours is a lot."

> Physically, Natalie feels healthy.

A lot of people are like, 'You must be losing weight,' or 'You lost a lot of weight.' It's funny 'cause you may not think you look heavy. Or, I don't think I was heavy, but now my clothes are a little looser. I don't get on a scale often cause we don't have one at home. I'll get on at work or when I go to the doctor. I was almost down to what I was before I was pregnant. Which was, I'm a big girl, so it was 155, 150. I was almost there. Maybe now I'm there. I don't know, but it was like, 'Oh, wow!

But losing weight was not a motivating factor, but health in general is. "I don't have a lot of pain, joint pain, like aches and pains. I've had aches and pains but not lately. You just feel better. You bend better. Stretch and move." She is happy have dropped a few pounds and not to have any joint pain, but she appreciates what else running has given her. For example, running by herself gives Natalie time to think. "I think it's just the whole thing with running and breathing and relaxing. It gives me more time." Time to think "about the family, the kids, depends on what's going on at home. Hope that everybody can get through school. Jobs. Money. And then I try not to think about things."

The calmness that comes from running resulted from centering and focusing her inner thoughts. Natalie has learned the value of self-talk and feels fine about not running if she remembers to tell herself, "Don't worry about it. You'll be fine." This is a lesson Natalie carries over into her personal life. It isn't that she worries less, but she is more comfortable giving up control. "Whatever happens, happens." She feels this calmness, or giving up control has made her life better. "I think I feel more relaxed about things. And what happens, happens. You know, we'll deal with it. Let's just be calm. I think I feel a

lot calmer. I think my life is better without drugs or whatever." Now, she notices other

people when they get excited or upset. For instance she often tells her husband, "You

know what? Just relax," when it come to things she feels he can't control. Natalie also

notices differences at work. It used to bother her when clients had to wait in line. Now,

however, "It's like I don't care if there's 20 people out there, everybody is just going to

have to wait their turn and we can only move so fast."   Natalie admits she used to be

"more hyper. I think I've learned to just relax."

Although her husband has supported her in her running, he does worry about her.

At first, my husband, when I told him I was doing the half, and he said 'after that

you better stop 'cause he didn't marry me to have to get a knee replacement. He

was a little concerned about my knees 'cause they do crunch a lot, but I don't

think that's anything to do with me. They don't hurt. That's just the way they are.

He has also mentioned that some of time she spends running might be better spent

cleaning. 'You're always out there. You aren't home to clean.' That's what I feel guilty

about. Not doing the housework like I should." But she also wonders, "If I didn't have

these races would [thoughts like] I should be doing what needs to be done, take over?

'You don't need to do that. You're not running in a race, so do what you should be

doing'." Friends support her as well usually with encouraging words such as, "That's

good", "Good for you" or "I can't do that". These comments do make Natalie feel good.

Although Natalie runs by herself a majority of the time, she thinks, "I might do

better if I had a group of us to get together, but it's just so hard to fit it in with

everybody's schedule. That's why I don't bother calling a lot of people, or anybody

really." But if she is out running and meets up with other people or at races, "It's

interesting meeting other people when you run. It's kinda fun to talk to them." But she does enjoy running alone for the thinking time. Her mind, "It wanders. I'm just like, 'Yeah, whatever.' It wanders and I find I'm not thinking about anything. It's kinda nice to not have to think about anything or talk to anybody." But at other times she uses running to process, "As a matter of fact, the last [half] marathon that I ran I was thinking of my son a lot" because of challenges he was facing.

When describing herself, who she is since she started running, or who she would be if she stopped running, Natalie says, "I don't like to think that I would be different." However, when describing herself, she now feels running is a part of who she is, she would now use the word "athletic" to describe herself which she would not have done if she were still just swimming. "I don't normally rule things out, but I could say, 'I never thought I'd be running. I can remember saying I wouldn't do that [run] 'cause it's hard on your joints. Swimming is much better.' And then, here we are!"

Her goal to continue running is not just to cross another finish line. In her personal life and working in the health care industry, Natalie sees people on a regular basis who are not very healthy.

> You know, I see a lot of people in a day and you just hope that being active and fit, that when I'm 65, 70, 80, and I'm still alive, I'm not going to be a burden to my kids, my family or anybody, in a nursing home. I'll be able to take care of myself 'til the end. And in the back of my mind I know something could happen that that might not be the case. Especially if your mind goes.

 Understanding the value of physical activity on long-term health, she wants to continue to be as healthy as she can for as long as she can.

We can worry about what will happen to us as we get older, like if my mind goes

or if I'll get this or that. Well I can worry about it or think about it all I want now,

but I can't. Why waste your energy and time doing that? Are you with me on

that?

Anne

Anne is a 50-year-old educator. She has been running on a regular basis just short

of four years. She regularly runs three times per week for about a half hour. She has not

competed in any races. An ad for the Special Olympics is her metaphor for her running.

"I feel like that child who has crossed the finish line The joy in my face reflects the joy in

the child's who receives a hug from a Special Olympic volunteer."

Anne and Her Running Journey

Anne's journey to becoming a runner began with her dog.

I would come up here with my dog and walk her. My kids were older and she

wasn't getting her exercise playing out back. So, I would come up here and

walked her for a real long walk so she would get tired and not bother me at night.

She had a lot of energy, so I started jogging a bit of the walk. And, she would

follow me. And, that just turned into, 'If I can go a little bit further' over time.

Before the end of the summer, I was determined that I was going to run a mile

because I had never run a mile straight without stopping. It then started as, I

wouldn't say an obsession, but a goal. Unfortunately, she [the dog] tore her ACL

last January. And, she never recovered enough. At that point I had already

progressed and I started to think of myself more as a runner as opposed to a dog's

owner trying to wear her out. I got a little selfish and thought, 'I can't afford to

run and then fit that [the dog] into my schedule too.' I knew I would have to start her out just going about a quarter of a mile 'cause she lost a lot of muscle and stuff. I'm not quite sure she recovered 100%. The sad part of that story is that she doesn't quite get the exercise she used to.

Anne considered herself a runner "when I completed that first mile non-stop. Anything less than a mile was embarrassing to say that [I'm a runner]. Just running a quarter of a mile was difficult 'cause I didn't really have a lot of endurance." Before earning the label of runner, Anne used to fitness walk.

> And, I had been going to *Curves*. Prior to *Curves* I had a point in time where I wasn't doing much of anything. But I had gone to an aerobics class. For the past 20 some years I have been doing some sort of activity.

Running that first mile "was huge compared to any of those other [activities]. And I've had to work at it."

> Running completely redefines how Anne sees herself.

> It's now more an integral part of me. Isn't that interesting? I defined who I am in my mind. You know in my fabric. This is partly how I define myself. I don't know that others would, but this is how I define myself, which is a good thing because now I'm not just a mom or just a teacher. You know I have this other element.

> It was not just the goal of running a mile.

> I was at a point where since I'm older, proving to myself that I could do it. I was reaching 50 which is a huge birthday. Some of it, quite honestly, is I really like to eat. And it was more efficient at burning calories. Some of it was that I was

seeing a change in my body. I could really tell in my legs more than some of the

other things that I had been doing.

Additionally, "My kids are getting older. They don't need their mother as much." So she

found herself with more time.

Being a non-athlete in an athletic family forced Anne to look elsewhere for

success.

My father was coach and a very good athlete. And my brothers are athletic. I

never was! And, I was never particularly well coordinated either. My sense of

accomplishment growing up was always my grades and doing well in school,

even though I didn't particularly like school.

When she ran that first mile;

I was nearly giddy. I called my parents and said, 'I just ran a mile without

stopping!' And, isn't that an odd thing to call your parents? I'm 47 years old and

I'm calling my mom and dad! I guess that I just wanted them to know that I could

do something athletic.

Feeling athletic is important to Anne for other reasons.

Then, the other part of it is that I've been teaching that Sports Marketing class and

when I first started teaching that class well over 10 years ago, there was resistance

from the students to take that class because I was a female and not thinking that I

knew anything about sports and then having not played any. You are much more

justified if you've played a sport or sports in terms of talking about something,

even though it was marketing. So maybe there was a part of me that was saying,

'Now I have a frame of reference that somehow I can relate to these athletes that

are in the class. Or, when we're talking about the decision-making process, I can

relate it to running and that sort of thing. So, that might have been part of it too.

Defining herself as an athlete, as a runner, has, in her mind, given her an in with both her

family and her students. "I can very loosely call myself an athlete that I couldn't do

before." She had worked up from one mile to several miles. "Sometimes I feel a little

silly being proud that I can run for 30 minutes. But for me personally, it was huge! I

think that's what makes it so much more of an accomplishment 'cause it's hard. It's still

hard for me."

During this time, her professional life provided some major challenges.

Perhaps my persisting and wanting to run further and longer was a substitute for

the sense of diminishment in my position here. I know in the past year with the

restructuring in my department and how it's, I would have to say, fairly

negatively affected me. Intellectually, I know that it doesn't diminish my worth,

essentially being told that I'm not going to be able to teach the majors that I've

been teaching for 27 years, is a blow to one's ego. When you've been doing

something for so long, and you think you're doing a pretty darn good job of it, to

have been basically told [differently] in a memo. Those of us that were affected

were obviously complaining a lot and commiserating. It got to the point where

one day I was in the office with some of my colleagues and we were just talking

about the injustice of it. This was after the whole restructuring took place and the

whole culture changed dramatically. It just changed dramatically. Just

complaining! And, I said to the two gentlemen with me, 'I can't stand to hear

myself talk any more. I'm going for a run.' I just left and I just needed to stop

thinking about that and go and do something.

Anne recognized the need to run when she needed to stop the negative thoughts that were

becoming more and more prevalent. What did running provide? For one thing, "I can use

running to escape temporarily." Then she knows what will happen when she is done.

I feel really good after I'm done with a run. I always feel good after. I hate

starting it mostly always. Sometimes I think that I don't really like this that

much, but part of you does. It's kind of a love-hate relationship.

But she keeps going back. "Because I'm afraid not to." She doesn't want to gain weight.

Sometimes she thinks of running like dieting.

Am I going to have to diet the rest of my life? Is there ever going to be a point

where I can just eat what I want? Is there ever going to be a point where I don't

have to exercise anymore or just sit and watch TV?

But it was not the thought of burning calories which caused her to leave a griping

session with colleagues to go for a run.

There is definitely mental value, the chance to clear your head or to think about

something when you get so busy with work. Whether it's an issue with work, or

with your family or whatever, something that's of major concern or importance to

you. To be able to spend a period of time and think about that, basically

uninterrupted, is actually sometimes for me a luxury. There's always so many

interruptions here and obviously when I'm teaching there isn't anything else when

I'm up there teaching. Always interruptions at home. Somebody's always asking

a question. I don't sit down much and think. So perhaps that gives me an

extended time to think. And to have that a couple, several times a week, mentally, I'm sure is, I'm assuming, a good thing. Well it is! I probably think more now because I have that designated time that I wouldn't have. Even if I'm doing some other physical activity such as lifting weights or Curves, it was 30 seconds on this, 30 seconds on the next. I know when I lift I can't [think] because I'm counting. I do a lot of counting. But when you run, if you count that would be depressing! 'I'm only on 300. I need to be up to 3,000.'

Running provides uninterrupted thinking time.

Sometimes when you have time to think about something you can think about it in a different perspective. I'm a very reactionary type person and my first reaction is to spaz about something. If I spend some time thinking about it, I tend to calm down. So having that time to think about it probably helps me put things in perspective. Or, at least a calming effect because I've have some time to think and pray.

This has translated into being aware when she isn't running. By thinking while she is running, "I've realized that I've become more aware that I'm reacting. I try to let it calm down and not do anything for right now." She values this thinking time. "That's probably why I run on my own, because I'm thinking. I don't want to be talking."

Additionally:

I'm not sure if it's connected, and I probably need psychoanalysis to find out, but part of it has to do with what is going on in the job. Maybe because I know that I accomplished something where most people don't start running at 47. They are ending running. Here's something you thought you couldn't do but have done

steadily for x number of years. It's making me open to something else that I don't

want to do, but possibly.

That possibly is "entertaining [the idea] of going back to school." She applies her

accomplishment with running to her life. "I could look back and say:

Well you thought that about running.' And so even considering going back [to

school], and taking graduate and perhaps doctoral classes. That one's not as much

about thinking I couldn't do it. It's hard. And, it's a lot of work. But, you know, I

felt that way about running. That's why I didn't run forever. 'Cause it's hard and

it's a lot of work. But, knowing the sense of either accomplishment or how good

you feel after a run, even when you're fried and you think that was a horrible run.

You still feel good that you went out and did it. You know, you can take that

sense with you. So, I can take classes and I may not like it, but when I finish the

class or if I get so many credits or whatever the case may be, I'll feel good about

it.

BettyJean

BettyJean is 57 years old. She has been running regularly for three years, usually

three times per week. Her runs average 20 to 50 minutes. She occasionally competes in

5K races and is thinking about a half- marathon sometime in the future.

And the metaphor? Up to now, there has not been one while I'm training...but

since I've been adding miles to train for the half, all I can think of is the finish

line! The first three miles I'm usually uncomfortable so I'm reminding myself to

just go a little farther; then when I hit around 7 miles, I can only say, 'bring on the

end!'

BettyJean and Her Running Journey

A long-time swimmer turns to running "because I was swimming every day and it just wasn't helping me fit into my pants. That's all! And running does that." But that's not why she continues.

I keep going because of the girls I run with, and well, the endorphins, I suppose. I would never even describe it as that. But the camaraderie, the unconditional acceptance. I've lived in this area since '86. And there are many times when I've felt completely alone. I often wonder, 'What's wrong with me? Why don't I have any friends? Am I too outgoing? Am I too forceful? Am I …? I don't know'." One thing was for sure, no self-confidence. Even others noticed. "I take yoga once a week from a girl that it's at her house. It's a very small class. What I was hearing from her is that it was obvious that I didn't have self-confidence. She wasn't telling me that. She was just making comments about me that said, boy, I must really seem … It was awful. She was so sweet but I don't know. I bet if I really thought about it, I could really pin my finger on it. Not that I used to be so self, what's the word? Self-conscious? Not to be so self-conscious. My husband's from a family that he has eight brothers and sisters. Two weeks before we'd go see them I'd plan what am I going to talk about? What am I going to wear? I'd go nuts. It was exhausting. But when you're accepted by people and part of this group, you know the running group; you just naturally start to feel comfortable with yourself because they aren't dissing you.

This is different from her experience with swimming.

When you're running, you talk. You know what I learned? This is kinda like an 'understood' almost in my eyes. You let people talk. You let people finish their entire story when running versus having to fix it. I'm always the one having to fix it. And the way I know is when I'm starting to share something, there's silence until I finish. And there are pauses where I'm not saying anything, but they wait and don't try to jump in. And that is teaching me patience, also.

With running, she is finding:

 it's so relaxing to be yourself. It was so exhausting when, I mentioned his family earlier. That's really the truth and that started in college. And, that's a long time ago. So many people would say, 'There's no reason why you shouldn't [have self-confidence].' I still don't know the reason, but I know what has helped me to become confident and express myself. Acceptance! And it snowballs. It might be being reinforced positively by the people around them. If I didn't run with these girls, if I ran by myself, I wouldn't run as far. And I wouldn't have the benefits of the feedback. I wish I could be more definitive, but I guess it's 'cause I haven't had a chance to think about it.

She doesn't run alone because her friends go often enough for her. "They go four times a week or more." She has tried a treadmill, "I've done it before, if I've been away like in a hotel. BORING! And no fresh air. I love the cold weather. I really do.

"I have a history, heredity, of high cholesterol and high blood pressure. You know I'm one of those people that you look at me and say, 'How could you?' But I do." Running with this group "feels good." It isn't just "feeling good of being able to breathe."

But, "People smile and they're happy to see me. That's something that I didn't have since high school really."

Running has helped BettyJean appreciate life and cope with death.

I have always been a very spiritual person. Not a religious person necessarily, but music sometimes makes me crazy. I lost my brother to cancer. He was 44. It was seven years ago. And, I saw what my mother went through too. Her husband, my father, committed suicide when I was 16. Every morning, I back out of the driveway and I think, 'Is today my day?' And so I just lap up the bird singing. When they're gone, you miss it. You know, we cut down this big black walnut tree because it was splitting and cutting the house and the birds were gone for like two weeks. It was horrible. So, when it's gone, it's gone. You don't know what you have 'til it's gone. But, I've just started appreciating everything so much more [since running]. It's like I'm thirsty and I'm quenching my thirst. My eyes [through running] have been opened differently in a way that I didn't carry with me all the time. Before, I was constantly pushing it deeper by thinking about what I should wear today? Or, what are they thinking? Gee whiz, that's just so sad. I feel so sorry for that person.

Running with this group of women, or girls as BettyJean likes to call them, is the foundation for BettyJean.

There's no other way that you can breathe that much and get your heart rate up with other people and that's the key. I can't do it without other people. I don't like to suffer and I think that's why.

It has been running that caused her to realize,

I just didn't give myself time to be interested in people. I was just only interested in what they thought of me. And that's 'cause I didn't have enough time or room in my brain to be concerned with their issues. I am listening to content versus waiting for them to finish so I can talk and fix it. I don't know if running has completely done that, but it's taken the mindfulness-based stress reduction out of it. It's just mediation. It was always if someone said something and stopped talking, I was uncomfortable and I felt like I had to jump in right away to fill the silence. And I was aware of it before that I shouldn't jump in, but now I'm putting it into practice with the group and getting the benefits from it.

And we're out there and we're not looking at one another. So if you start to cry it's fine. You don't have to worry about what you look like when you cry at 6:15 in the morning and no makeup. You are what you are. I don't wear makeup anymore. I used to not want to go to the grocery store without makeup. I walked into Giant the other day and passed this little girl in a cart and she said to her mom, 'Whose grandma is she?' 'Cause I stopped coloring my hair. And the mom was mortified. I have gray hair. Before I would have run home and said, 'What can I do? Sign me up for a face lift'.

Running with the group has helped BettyJean accept herself for who she is. "It's opened me up. Like I said, we've been here 24 years or something and through running is where I've found it."

BettyJean's more organized and caring of her running friends' schedules.. "I've been inevitably late my whole life and I don't want to be late for those girls 'cause they

wait 5 minutes and then they go." She organizes herself to be ready for her early morning runs.

> I would never have laid out my stuff the night before. Just grope in the dark and say to my husband, 'Forget it! I'm too tired.' This organization spills over. "I am micro-aware of my tendencies now, from running. I've seen the benefits and payoffs of elementary things. At the age of 57, it's elementary you should lay your clothes out the night before and then you just have to pop in them. Duh! It's amazing. You can teach an old dog new tricks.

Reflecting on her running brings a surprising discovery about herself.

> In college she changed her name from BettyJean to Betts.

> I was so conservative in high school, but so hippie in college. I really wanted to be like them [college friends]. They were natural and I wasn't laid back. I was wound tight and trying to be somebody else. And they started calling me Betts and that was condescending. I'm still getting it today when people call me Betts because, 'You're so cute.' No, I'm not cute. But I've gotten to the point of where I know I'm BettyJean and it's fine.

> When she started mentoring new runners, a woman asked what she wanted on her name-tag.

> There were so many Bettys around; I decided to be BettyJean again. It's a new identity and being accepted for the way I used to be in high school. I used to be completely confident. It was after I hung around these hippies and tried to be one and couldn't. It must have gone against what my true spirit was.

Before she came back to who she really was, "I never respected myself. I would hear, 'You have to love yourself first.' Never knew what that meant, always thinking 'That's conceited.' No, you have to respect and love yourself."

Before she started running, she didn't take time for herself. "I didn't think I was worthy, I mean, subconsciously. I don't think I ever [did]. Why would I think I was worth it if I was in that frame of mind?" Even if she couldn't run anymore she would still take time for herself. "I hear it from other people and now I know what it feels like. People take time for themselves. Oprah says, 'Take time for yourself.' But how can you? It's selfish. That's what I used to think."

Dori

Dori is a 55-year-old working in the education field. She has been running regularly for almost three years. She runs three to five days per week anywhere from 30 - 90 minutes. She regularly competes in 5K to 5-mile distances. The Nike "Swoosh"is a symbol of the whole running experience for Dori. "It stands alone, it isn't moving, but it still looks fast. Just like me, I run alone, I don't go fast. But, in my mind I am pretty fast. I'm moving along, in a good way, not just with running but with life."

Dori and Her Running Journey

Family members inspired Dori to start running.

I started to run years and years ago because it looked so easy. I had a sister that was into running, my husband ran quite a bit, and then my daughter was into running. And, I thought 'Oh, this is easy. I'm going to try it.' I tried off and on for several years and thought, 'Ah, this isn't for me.' And then, I started walking. And then I thought, 'I'm going to try walking and running.' I'd walk a certain

amount of distance and then I'd run a certain amount. Then as the weeks went by

I would add a little bit longer run. And eventually I got that I could run far enough

to sign myself up for some 5-mile runs and 5K runs.

As a young girl, Dori was a competitive swimmer at the local Y and continued

swimming in high school and college. After college, she got married and had children

and tried to keep some activity in her life.

Now, I do like to ride a bicycle. Not bicycle racing, but riding a bicycle.

Swimming was really my main thing as a girl at the Y. Walking I enjoyed, but I

always heard about this running and how people felt and what it would do for

people. It intrigued me. But it took me several years to get over the point that 'I

could do this!' I never had the goal of competing. I just wanted to run for just the

physical fitness part.

Physically,

I felt I was getting a little more exercise than just walking. I felt very good after it

[running], be it a short distance or a long distance. A long distance for me would

be seven miles. And, believe me, that's a long distance for me. I could have the

energy to have a full day to not be tired. I could, I did something for my body. I

was going to be healthy.

Feeling good goes beyond the physical.

I just felt good about myself. I would just get out and leave everything behind me

and just let go. Let my mind wander. When I walk, it doesn't wander as much

because I'm going slower than when I run. I guess my mind wanders when I walk

to just look at the scenery 'cause I could take in the yards and the houses. When

I'm running, I can't be moving my head side to side. I have to more or less stay focused ahead of me. The wandering is in my head. On the bicycle I had to stay focused on the staying up and on the road. I didn't have a chance to let it [my mind] wander. I go on the computer, I read, I'm really into Sudoku, but these don't let my mind go. They make me forget about stuff, clear my mind, but they don't let my mind go where it wants to.

Although Dori has tried running with others, she prefers to run by herself, which leaves her mind free to wander. Her thinking while running has changed.

It used to be whether I'd make it to the top of the first hill or not. But when I do I just think about how good I'm doing. I really do. How really good I'm doing and I'm proud of myself. It's something I wanted to do and nobody forced me to do it. Nobody. I'm not doing it for anyone, but me. It has enabled me to think about other things that I might not have wanted to give a chance to.

I think that running early in the day is me. I can't do it in the evening. I can walk in the evening, but when I run it has to be in the early part of the day. I think that running early in the day sets me up for going into work having already accomplished one thing in my day that when I get to work I feel like I can accomplish more and more.

She compares this to before she started running.

Oh, a lot of times I would be tired by the middle of the day, by afternoon. I would consider, even though it's [the running is] for me, I consider [back to] when I didn't run, I would say, 'I worked'. Now, when I run, inside of me, not only did I work I did something for myself. Plus, I get some time to think about me.

It is not just thinking about herself either. "When I run, and I'm focusing ahead of me, I must say I come up with some good ideas on my run, of different things I may want to do at home, around the house. It allows me to get some ideas while I'm running. Maybe I'll come home with an idea and I'll say to my husband, 'You know what I was thinking. I was thinking that we could not only go to dinner, we could go to dinner and a movie, we could wrap it all into one. We don't have to make it separate nights on doing all this.' Because he'll sit around and say, 'I don't know if we could do that.' And when I get home I'll say, 'No, we can do this. We can do that. Or I'm going to do this. You could do it with me.' This is a big change. Before I had the opportunity to get (time) and think on my own, I would sit around waiting for somebody to think for me."

Dori was never comfortable with trying new things. That too is changing in subtle ways.

It (running) has enabled me to think about other things that I might not have wanted to give a chance to. I never used to try new things. I'll tell you one thing was horseback riding in a rainforest. I just never thought that I could do that. And I thought, 'You know what? If you could run, could probably do this too.' It allowed me to give this a try. Yep! I did horseback riding in a rainforest. I did! I did that in Puerto Rico. I did try something else new just recently. My daughter kept telling me that I should try the elliptical. And I was thinking, 'How could I get on an elliptical?' I was worried I'd fall off the elliptical, but I am glad to say I tried the elliptical out and got on it and worked that on my own now too. I used to stare at that equipment and think, 'Uhh, I don't know,' and now I can do that. I can do that! I'd even go to a movie by myself now." Her husband even noticed

the change. "He has said things like, 'I'm surprised you are trying this. I would have bet you wouldn't want to do this.' So, he doesn't know I think it is because of the running. But, I know.

Before running, minor things bothered Dori.

You know I don't know whether it was just starting [my day] being around the house, the little things bothered me. But now running early in the morning, like I said, I get out there. I did the biggest things first and the little things don't really bother me. Don't get me wrong. I still have my moments.

Conflicts, at home or at work, were something Dori would rather not deal with. "To be honest, I don't like conflict." Before running:

I would take it [conflicts at work] home and it would eat away at me. Now I can run, I am thinking about the conflict. So you know, I think in my mind, I don't think the conflict is as big as it was when I was just sitting around dwelling on it. I guess when I'm running, the other thing is, I'm thinking about getting to my destination. I'm thinking, not dwelling. The running allows me to think about, before I go into work, how I would approach a conflicting situation that happened the day before. It gives me time to think when I get to work how I'll handle it as opposed to just waking up and driving into work. The running gives me a chance to think it through. One time, about 10 years ago, I went to a stress reduction conference and they said, 'Stop worrying about things you can't change.' And, they taught us a song (*singing*), 'There's nothing you can do it about it now. There's nothing you can do it about it now." I forget the rest. But the thing is, I've been saying this to myself for 10 years. But, really, I didn't know what things I

could do something about and what things I couldn't do anything about, or what mattered if I did or didn't do anything about it. But that song stayed in my head. The thing is, when I run, I don't know, it helps me figure out what is worth, or if I can do something about something, or what isn't worth it. 'Cause sometimes, unless I think about it, really think about it, how do I know if there is something I can do about it? Or if there really is (*singing*), 'Nothing I can do about it now.' Running gives me that time to think about this.

Running gives Dori time. "It gives me time to think about how I would handle issues." Not just issues with co-workers, but extended family as well. Ten years ago, with a very sick father and a sister who wanted to make all the decisions, Dori handled the conflict one way: "I found it a lot easier to curl up on the couch and whittle away. Well, not whittle away, but if I could fall asleep and wake up later, my issues would be gone. They weren't gone." Recently, her mother was very ill and has since died, and this time when conflicts with this same sister came up she used running as the opportunity to get out.

> I needed to compose myself to say, 'I can handle her too,' which resulted in much less conflict. I have to say I see the glass is always half full. Heading to being full as opposed to half dried out. Like I used to, I don't know if that's a good way to say it, but I can definitely say it [running] has made my world brighter.

Her husband thinks that running is a good thing and encourages her.

> He bought me the Nike shoes where you put the little chip in the bottom. He definitely encourages me to run. He comes to the little races and tries to get pictures of me. Or, he'll run on the course and cheer me on at different sections.

It's a positive thing. I think that he is, I'd say, proud that I've found something to keep up and he's probably a little jealous that he can't find something that he could do and feel the same way about himself that I do.

Others notice something as well.

There's several people at work that have noticed. 'What are you doing? You seem to be able to not let things bother you.' I don't know if that's completely from the running, but I tell them I do lots of physical exercise. I don't like to tell people that I run because I consider runners people who are in marathons. I'm just afraid to tell them running. I just know that people have started to say these kind of things since I started running, running regular.

Dori's view of the world may not have changed, but her reaction to it has.

The world is a little scary. Frightens me. When I'm running, I wish the world could feel like I am when I'm running. I don't let it bother me anymore, 'cause, you know, there's nothing I can do about it now.

Although at this point she doesn't publically refer to herself as a runner, "I would say that I am [to myself]. I'm active. I'm physical. In my mind I AM a runner. That's the thing. In my mind I am a runner."

Linda

Linda has been running just under four years. She runs mainly with a group of other women 3 to 5 times per week. She competes in local races, mainly 5Ks and, due to time constrains of her job, is not ready to invest more time to compete in longer distances.

Linda and Her Running Journey

The diagnosis, treatment, and subsequent recovery from breast cancer were a series of disorienting dilemmas in Linda's life,

I am a breast cancer survivor. It was at the time of diagnosis, surgeries and treatments, the deepest darkest time of my life. I told no one. I went into hiding. I was a closet breast cancer survivor. Which, looking back, was not the right way to respond but it was my crisis at the time and it was how I responded.

Linda was in New York City and met one of the founders of a local breast cancer fundraising run and for whatever reason, told this new acquaintance about her breast cancer. Later, this new acquaintance asked Linda to be on the board of directors of the fundraising run. Linda accepted, but felt that something was not right with this scenario. "I suddenly realized if I'm going to be on this board I really ought to be running or walking or running or participating in the event."

To prepare for the event, Linda joined a 12-week beginner running program: That gave me the kick start to sign up for a running program to take a women from the couch to a 5K in whatever 12 weeks and it worked! The first year I trained, I ran the 5K and then didn't run again until the following year and I decided to sign up for [for the running program] again and that's when I met a group of ladies who have committed to run year around and have stuck with it ever since.

For Linda, she knows running provides physical health benefits. "Technically it provides the physical activity which I know is good for my heart, good for my physical being." But that is not why she stuck with it. Instead it was,

being with this wonderful group of women. And it's about the conversation. It's about the friendship. It's, you know, when we run, we talk. And we share our life challenges. We share our disappointments. We share our joys. We network. I've been able to obtain new clients through running. We share recipes. You know when somebody needs a repair person. This is the group we go to first. It's extraordinary. Running gives me this extraordinary group of women that I so enjoy being with that I don't want to miss an opportunity to be with them.

This is not a woman who never had friends before. However, her "old" groups of friends were more out of convenience, parents of children who went to school with her children, or were on the same sports team as her children.

I think of one group of friends that I have ... our boys started preschool together. We've stayed together. Again, very different women but they're more set in their ways and less tolerant of other view points and as a result I don't assert, or push my views. I'll be a listener to their views but if I object or don't agree I tend to just not involve in that dialogue. I tend to redirect the issue to something else. In contrast with my running group, we'll actively participate in exchanging different views and ideas and do so with a respect for each other.

Her running friends are different.

They're different because No. 1, they're not [in my profession]. No. 2, it's a wonderful we're not solely connected because our children are the same age or at the same school. It is a diverse group of women. Different ages. Different stages. Some professionals. Some stay-at-home moms. It's just a wonderfully diverse group of women that admire, respect, and support each other. That I treasure.

The diversity is on many levels;

> Politically, environmentally, very diverse. But that brings just a whole new level
>
> to our discussions and a whole new respect of different views. For example, one
>
> women that we run with just had solar panels installed at her home. Another
>
> woman that we run with does not use paper plates or paper napkins because it's
>
> just, 'why add that trash to the environment'. And I think, 'Oh my god I couldn't
>
> live without paper plates in my house.' But I respect and admire that. I haven't
>
> adopted that practice but it has caused me to reduce the amount of paper I use in
>
> my home.

However, it is not just the diversity of the group that motivates Linda to get up
early year round:

> There's a true respect of differences. And it's interesting 'cause some of us have
>
> had kids start college in the past couple of years. And again, very different
>
> experiences. Some have gone away for school. My son is living at home and
>
> going to a local college right here. And just a warm appreciation that there's no
>
> one right way of doing it. That each of our kids are going to find their own way.
>
> And several of us who have teenage to young-adult boys have lived through some
>
> of the challenges that boys pose with their reckless living. And just in no
>
> judgment whatsoever. Just an absolute support and understanding.

Additionally,

> It's neat to exchange those ideas. It enters into all parts of my life. It's not just I
>
> run at this time and then when I stop running this stays there and then I go back to
>
> this life. It's very, very interconnected.

Linda has always seen herself as confident and accomplished on an intellectual

level, but not on a physical level:

Intellectual accomplishments are very different from physical accomplishments. I

think intellectually once you've gotten through, you know, college through

graduate school, through [your terminal degree] school, you have a confidence

that you know you can handle the assignment. I didn't know if I could run 3

miles, a 5K. I really didn't know that. And the fact that I was willing to try

something that I wasn't sure I could achieve, the fact that despite that it's very

grueling work and very easy to walk away from, I've stuck with it. It gives me

that added accomplishment that other accomplishments haven't necessarily given

to me. Running's hard for me. It's not something that comes naturally or easily.

Like I said, it would be so easy to say forget it. I don't have to do this. In my

work, I have to earn a living. I don't have to run. And it's not easy to run. But

despite that, I keep doing it. And that's an accomplishment.

Reflecting on what this physical accomplishment means to her, Linda admits:

 I can say that I'm not a natural athlete. So the fact that I've been able run up to

five miles is a major accomplishment for me. So knowing that I tackled that and

knowing that it was hard to get to that point, it gives me a confidence in tackling

other projects and other challenges. It gives me a sense of endurance, a sense of I

can do this and I apply that both professionally and personally. All my

professional life, I've been a confident [professional]. Most of my life I have been

a confident, well-grounded person. I was never confident in sports. I dropped out

of softball. Basketball was too much running back and forth. Skiing was a

complete disaster. So I was not confident in any type of athletic activity. So this was the first time that I had developed a confidence in an athletic activity. And I think because it was a new accomplishment, it then transferred into my day to day to then say you can try something else new.

For example:

I went parasailing. I went with my two girls but I still went up. I went out on a jet ski which is something that I just makes me nervous. And I handled that! I'm much more confident snorkeling now. I can't stay in the water for long periods of time ... I don't know it's almost like a claustrophobia down there. But I'm now doing it and enjoying it so it has translated. We we're down at Key West last week and we went out to the reef and the water was a little bit choppier and colder because it's January, because we were in Florida versus down in the Caribbean, and we put wetsuits on at the cruise recommendation and that's the first time I've put a wetsuit on. I was standing there thinking, 'Why do I want to go into this cold water? It's harder to get around ... it's not perfectly calm.' But I got right in and did it. I wouldn't have done that, I don't think, prior to running.

This translation of confidence into her personal life was not something Linda had ever reflected on before. She first made the connection during the interview:

Sitting here at this table talking to you! (laughter) Seriously. I look back and I don't know what made me say yes to parasailing. But now that I look back at it, I see the connection. Same with the snorkeling.

Being a breast cancer survivor has affected Linda's confidence, but in a different way:

Once you've survived that experience, it's more of an, 'I can survivor anything'. Running is a different dimension because it's a confidence that I can do it versus surviving. There's a big difference.

Linda also reflects on whether it is the running or the running group which has helped her discover her physical-confidence:

I don't know if it's the running or if I just lucked out with this extraordinary group of women that I run with. I don't know but it seems curious that I have several groups of friends but it is this running group that is, one, the most diverse and two, the most respectful and supportive of each other. I think that there is an element related to the running because we've all tackled the challenge of the run and then in tackling that challenge we all realized that we have challenges in life that may be different, diverse yet there's still a respect. It somehow seems connected, I'm just not sure how. Do you think it's connected?

Although she prefers to run with her group, she will run by herself, but:

not out of choice. Just last week I went over to the park. I was meeting … I couldn't meet at the regular time because I had to run one of my kids somewhere that morning. So I got there at seven and dashed over. I looked at my cell phone and the other woman who was supposed to meet me at seven woke up with a sinus infection and can't make it. So I remember sitting in my car: Do I go back home? It's cold and snowy. Or do I run? And I got out and ran. And I have now gotten to that point where yeah, I do run by myself. Not out of choice but I do and I enjoy it.

Explaining what she enjoys when running by herself, Linda states, "That run particularly 'cause it was a morning that the ice had frozen on the twigs and I just got caught up in the quietness and the beauty of the parkway." Other times running by herself provides her with time to think. "I probably think about the list of things I have to do and how I'm going to tackle it … which is why I so much more enjoy running with my friends because the conversation takes me away from that list." Another thing Linda notices is:

> Women talk, runners talk about the runner's high and the endorphins. And there are a couple of us that joke that we've never felt that runner's high. And maybe it's not what we're envisioning as the 'ahhhh!', but I have experienced something, especially when I'm alone, and the first mile is always the hardest. Once I get past the first mile and I get into my groove and I begin to relax as I run and that's when I feel an inner peace ... a calm. And I don't have much of that in my life based on my profession, based on my three kids. I don't have that. I do feel that though and it's just a, I don't know how to describe it. It's a feeling of contentment of just being, all is well. And never all is well but that's what I think the runner's high is for me. Just that feeling of calm.

Linda had a hard time finding when else she feels that sense of calm, but did come up with: "Maybe sitting at the beach looking at a sunset but not the same not the same exact feel."

> Running by herself has led her to redefine herself as a runner in the past year. Once I started arriving in that parkway and not having my group there and still going out by myself, that's when I considered myself a runner. But that just has happened in the past year. And I've been running for, what now, four years.

Linda defines herself as a runner, but not an athlete.

Besides feeling more confident, and the translation of that confidence to her personal life, Linda reflects on whether she would take this confidence with her if she could no longer run. "I believe I would hold onto the confidence." She also reflects on whether her world views have changed. "I don't think so except that in running with my friends we talk about world events. So that has given me the opportunity to address more world issues. Has it influenced? I'm thinking probably not."

This qualitative study attempts to understand the nature of perspective changes the participants said they had experienced. The construction of each narrative occurred first by hearing the stories of the women in face to face interviews, transcribing the interviews word for word, and then by creating stories of each woman runner. The next section looks at a summary of the narratives.

Summary of the Narratives

The women did perceive their lives differently in many ways, on many levels as a result of making running a regular part of their lifestyles. All of the women felt physically healthier in some way since beginning their running programs. Weight loss, lower cholesterol levels, heart health, or more energy are a few examples. And many just mentioned "feeling healthier." Improved physical self-esteem was mentioned by four women.

Three women mentioned an improved ability to set goals and follow through in the attainment of goals, and not just while running, but in their personal lives as well. Three women discovered a source of inner peace. Six women mentioned discovering an awareness of nature that does not occur at other times. Four women mentioned being

more satisfied with what they have in life. Five women discovered the importance of taking time for themselves. Two women rediscovered a part of themselves that had been lost. Six women found a new way to deal with stress. Specifically, four women mentioned running as a way to deal with conflict, not to escape conflict, but as a time to think about alternative ways of dealing with conflict. Dori said she now thinks for herself more. BettyJean and April are more comfortable in their own skin. Artemis feels she learned how to have more fun especially, with herself. BettyJean learned how to listen as well as the value of listening. Five women are trying new things. Dori and Linda are trying new physical activities, such as parasailing, snorkeling, and horseback. Three women have expanded their horizons in their professional lives. April learned not to worry about the past, but to look forward to the future.

Certainly, cardiovascular activity has enough positive benefits to be "the fountain of youth," but these women have attributed a myriad of changes for the better in their running experiences as well. What it is about running that caused these changes will be explored next.

The sense of accomplishment experienced by eight women resulted in new-found confidence. This occurred when they began running and was repeated as they accomplished the goal of running their first mile, their first 5k, or for some their first marathon. Anais mentioned the "joy and satisfaction of just doing it." Nora felt proud that, "I did that! Nobody did that for me!" and Dori said, "Nobody forced me to do it. I'm not doing it for anyone, but me." This confidence has transferred into their everyday lives. With the new confidence, Anais just feels better. Where, Artemis, and April are trying new things in their classrooms. Anne draws a parallel saying that if she can work

hard at running, and get such great benefits, perhaps she'll enroll in a post-graduate program, knowing that will also be hard work, but that it will also offer many benefits. Linda acquired her new confidence by finding a group who have accepted her for who she is. The confidence has come in different forms and was even noted by three women who always saw themselves as very confident professionally, but still discovered a new confidence through running. The next section explores how the women perceived this transformation occurred.

Eight out of eleven women stated that running gave them time, specifically, time to think. Instead of being just one more thing on their to-do list, they recognized that running actually created the time or space for them to think. Therefore, to answer research question three, the quotes of the women offer concrete examples of how they described the process of transformational learning in relation to their running. Anais said running "gives me space." Artemis said running "clears my head." April stated running gave her "time to focus on me." Lucy declared running is the "only time I make for myself." Nora said running provides "time for me to think." Similarly, Natalie mentioned running giving her "time to think." Anne said running "provides uninterrupted thinking time." And, Dori appreciated that running "lets my mind wander." Only Linda mentions time to think in a negative way. She prefers to run with friends to take her away from her to-do list.

Thinking time is vital for critical self-reflection to occur. By providing a space, these women were able to recognize the importance of using this space in a way that made them aware of self-perceptions, how they considered new perspectives, and how

they evaluated their new perspectives. As Dori said, "I think about other things that I might not have wanted to give a chance to."

Six women noted the importance of supportive relationships found in running groups as important in not only sticking with running, but as an influence on how they saw themselves. Although Meziorw (2000) does mention the importance of a safe and supportive system to facilitate transformative learning, and the running groups did provide this environment, what these groups did not provide was any sort of direction or emphasis on transformative learning. They only provided the safe environment. Of those who ran in a group, only Lucy mentioned critical dialogue occurring within the group. How these women perceive transformative learning occurring is congruent with one of Mezirow's phases of transformative learning, the role of critical reflection. The next chapter looks at the implications of these findings for theory and practice.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented 11 individual narratives, each telling the story of the participant's journey with running. The narratives were constructed using the verbatim words obtained through face-to-face interviews which were recorded. Each narrative is distinct and each story deserves to be heard on this individual level. This was followed by an overview of the narratives. The next chapter will integrate the literature to analyze and interpret the narratives.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, the findings of this research study are discussed in detail. The purpose of this study was twofold: a) to explore the impact of regular participation in running on women's self-perception; and b) to use the lens of transformative learning as a way to understand the deep perspective shifts adult women may experience from regular participation in running. The research was directed by three guiding research questions: 1. How do women perceive themselves and their lives as a result of making running a regular part of their lifestyle? 2. What is it about running that influences some women to have a deep paradigm shift in their self-perceptions? And, 3. For those women who experienced transformative learning, how do they describe the process?

Personal narratives of 11 adult women over the age of 25 who have adopted running as a regular part of their lives for the last 1 to 4 years were constructed from personal interviews to reveal the meaning each participant gives to her experience with running. While each participant's story is unique, the first section of this chapter explores each narrative as it relates to the purpose of the study and the research questions. Using narrative inquiry as not only the method of data collection, but also as the method of analysis and order to avoid a deterministic model of transformative learning, as each story was analyzed, I did not apply a checklist of phases of transformative learning. Rather, I explored what seemed most dominant in each story. Therefore, all key components were not analyzed for each story. What becomes apparent is that different models of transformative learning do overlap and that by looking at the perspective transformation through only one lens would lead to not recognizing the true process that

occurred. The second section of this chapter explores the commonalties of the narratives as well as marked differences. The final section discusses the implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Nora "She's finally back."

Nora committed herself 100% to what she felt was important. Motherhood was no exception. What was different was that Nora, her marriage, and her husband took a back seat to their children, which led to her husband saying, "If this is the way it's going to be, then I don't want this. I want a divorce." This is a classic example of a disorienting dilemma as described by Mezirow (1994). Cognitively, she knew she was Nora. She knew she was a wife. She knew she was a mother. However, her children were her first priority in her decision-making process. "There were these two little girls in between us and they became priority in my life." She was forced to look at her own assumptions of who she was, who she had become, and who she wanted to be. "I kind of forgot who I was." Her inner worlds and outer worlds were not only converging but there was a head-on collision. Mezirow (1990) sees a questioning of meaning perspectives to be central to transformative learning theory. Nora began to do this, including her personal values, her identity, and her own concept of herself. Valuing her marriage, Nora was forced to reflect on her taken-for-granted assumptions of what a mother did in order to develop new assumptions and gain control over her life. She did this through reflective discourse involving a critical assessment of her assumptions. "I started to inwardly evaluate myself on areas of my life that I needed to re-gain, re-focus, re-motivate, almost re-identify who I was at that stage of my life." It was through running that she was able to do this.

Using discernment, a process described by Boyd and Myers (1988) to include receptivity, recognition, and grieving, Nora was receptive, or open to a new meaning perspective of her place in the marriage and as a mother, as her old meaning perspective was not working for her. She recognized there might be a better meaning perspective which would be more congruent with who she really thought she was, or who her authentic self was. Running gave Nora the space for this to consider her old and her potentially new perspective. "If I hadn't had that time to let out all those feelings … I allowed that and running gave me that." Nora was able to use process reflection (Cranton, 2006) to not only determine how she got to where she was but how she will move to being the person she wants to be, a person that she and her husband recognize as the person she used to be. "She's finally back, to not old Nora, but, there was this old Nora and this new Nora…that Nora that had dreams, and visions and hopes." Although she sees herself more like she used to, the journey has been, at times, painful. "And tears would fall and there were times that I would get frustrated." According to Boyd and Myers (1988), this grief, pain, and frustration are not unusual and are identified as grieving. These three things receptivity, recognition, and grieving, associated with discernment. Nora was able to use both her thinking and feelings to make judgments and decisions based upon the findings she discovered through discernment.

Grieving accounts for why Nora's perspective transformation was painful in that she had been content constructing her primary role as a mother, and it was not until her husband told her their marriage was headed for divorce precisely for that reason that she was forced to deal with these conflicting perspectives. Nora came to the realization that what she had worked so hard to become (a mother) was not the only way she really

wanted to define herself as she also valued her role as a wife and as an individual. This took much self-reflection of her meaning schemes as described by Mezirow (1991) which eventually resulted in a revised meaning scheme which was more inclusive of who she had originally been and how she could still incorporate the important roles she wanted to keep or at least redefine. This is also an example of Nora "renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships" a phase of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1994). Nora not only renegotiated her relationship with herself, but with her husband and children as well.

Nora sees running as a way to take time for herself, time to reflect on who she was, who she became, and who she will be. "I now have my sense of what's better for my family and healthier for me." And healthier for her and her family is not having the children as her only priority.

Change that is recognized not just by the person but by others, an outcome of transformative learning as described by (1993) is evident in Nora's life. Not only has Nora noticed a change in herself, she believes her husband would articulate the change in Nora as well. "I think that he would say I gained a lot of my self-confidence and strength … to stand up for myself and say, 'This or that doesn't make me happy." Additionally, Nora suspects that since this change has occurred it will forever be a part of who she is. "If I didn't have running anymore I would still be more myself".

Natalie "Whatever happens happens."

There was no disorienting dilemma sparking Natalie to start running. Always active, this was just something else for Natalie to try, especially seeing others close to her enjoy running and the competition. She has amazed herself in her ability to run as far as

she has, but it has not changed the way she sees herself or her world. Natalie does admit to adapting a new outlook in certain areas of her life. Additionally, running does give her more time to think, and more time not to think. By having more time to think, she may be able to recognize and reflect on issues that might lead to cognitive dissonance, or an event prompting change.

Natalie does like the feeling she gets from running and has adopted some of those benefits into her non-running life. She feels that she worries less on a day-to-day basis, perhaps because she does her worrying on her run or by thinking about what is really worth worrying about. Natalie notices that she is more comfortable giving up control. "What ever happens happens. I feel more relaxed about things. I think I feel a lot calmer." Having customers wait in line does not bother her like it used to "I don't care if there's 20 people out there. Everybody is just going to have to wait their turn and we can only move so fast." She also notices impatience more in others, and will even tell her husband, "You know what? Just relax." Although this new way of thinking, feeling and acting may be a transformation according to Mezirow (1990), it is unclear exactly how she got there, but it does seem related to her running experience. However, if Natalie has uncritically assimilated new knowledge, new thoughts, and new practices, it would not be considered transformative learning.

Natalie has, nonetheless, challenged a certain meaning perspective, a stereotype meaning perspective, or what Mezirow (1990) calls a distorted perspective. The stereotype Natalie challenged is specifically about what it means to be a woman. In her case, part of her "home" job is to spend her time cleaning. Cleaning the home has been one of her responsibilities, but she finds she does not have quite the time to devote to this

when she is running, especially when her training calls for longer runs. Her husband has commented on this, and Natalie does at times feel guilty, "That's what I feel guilty about, not doing the housework like I should." Natalie continues to reflect on this, and is not sure what the final outcome will be. Will she be forever changed about her role in housework, will she forever feel guilty, or will she accept that this is her role? This process will take time and through differentiation she will have to decide which role she will accept as her true self. Although cleaning may be stereotypically a woman's chore, if Natalie just disregards her cleaning duties because of a lack of time, and not by critically thinking about the stereotype, no transformation learning will have occurred. This it is different than a woman who questions the stereotype of why cleaning is her responsibility.

Jane "I feel better about me."

Jane had always been fit. She defined herself as the fittest most toned sister of four female siblings. Gaining weight after two pregnancies moved her out of that role. Her old ways of thinking about herself were not compatible with the image looking back at her from the mirror. This resulted in her disorienting dilemma, the event that Mezirow (1994) sees as a trigger for transformative learning.

Without much reflection, she choose running to get her body back. Running seemed to match her personality. Jane was great with organization, planning, and goal-setting. This served her well in developing and sticking with a running training program. Her original goal of returning to a more fit body was met. However, through running she has discovered other things about herself, some very different than the way she used to

identify herself. But, with the No. 1 goal of returning to her fit self met, and really liking running, she decided she wanted to be a faster runner.

Jane always considered herself a loner. Hoping to become a faster runner, she thought running with others would motivate her to go faster, so she joined a running group even if it meant pushing herself out of her comfort zone. Again, her old way of thinking was not compatible with new information. Mezirow (1991) articulates action as a later phase of transformative learning. The action Jane chose to reach her new goal of becoming a faster runner was to choose to run with others. Just choosing to run with others was not only a new action, but the result of that choice impacted her self-perspective. What surprised Jane is not that she became faster, but that she enjoyed running with others. "There's nothing like it. The strength of each other. You can learn from each other." Yet again she forced herself to evaluate what friendship means to her and realized she discloses more to her running friends than to her non-running friends. These non-running friends are friends who Jane has considered very close friends. Jane has experienced what seems to be a series of disorienting dilemma where she has revised her perspectives about herself. First, it was the physical expectation she had of herself not being reflected back from the mirror. Then it was thinking she was a loner, who enjoyed the solitude and discovering that being with others offered her deeper friendships – something she had never thought she needed nor wanted in the past .However, the process she went through is unclear. Jane does not mentioned engaging in self reflection. What is clear is that she derived meaning from her experience that suggests some degree of transformation has taken place in her life.

Dori "It has enabled me to think about other things."

There was no disorienting dilemma that motivated Dori to start running, but running provided a space for perspectives to be identified, as well as dissonance with her existing perspectives, which Dori never before even thought about. It was through running that Dori discovered that changes made her more authentic. Not comfortable trying new things, not handling conflict, not always making her own decisions, seeing the glass as half empty, these were the ways Dori saw herself. She did not realize that she even had choices in those areas until she started running and reflecting on who she was. Recognizing parts of herself that she was not comfortable with, reflecting, and choosing to make meaning more congruent with her true self, Boyd and Myers (1988), opened the doors to a more authentic way of living for Dori. Perhaps the disorienting dilemma was the realization that she was not comfortable with how she acted in certain areas of her life, or recognizing that she had other options, once identified, which she could choose. She did discover which conflicts in her life were worth addressing and which were worth letting go, and that she could make her own decisions on many levels.

Dori thinks she has changed since she began running. Over and over she mentions running giving her time to think. And it is because she has had time to think that she feels she has changed. This confirms the need for reflection as an integral process of transformative learning. "Before I had the opportunity to get (time) and think on my own, I would sit around waiting for somebody to think for me." Additionally, "It (running) has enabled me to think about other things that I might not have wanted to give a chance to. I never used to try new things." Even the way she deals with conflict has changed. She used to avoid conflict by not addressing it. Again, running gives her time to not only

strategize how to deal with a conflict, but if the conflict is even worth her time. "The thing is, when I run … it helps me figure out what is worth it, or if I can do something about something, or what isn't worth it." Dori runs alone. It appears Dori was able to experience significant personal change, even without the opportunity for dialogue or discourse with others as described as important by Mezirow (2000) for transformative learning to occur. She is likely dialoging with herself. Despite this lack of discourse with others, Dori was able, with this time alone, to engage in critical self-reflection.

Additionally, Dori has changed, not just in the way she sees herself, but her actions have changed to support her revised perspectives. She "never used to try new things." Since running, she equates new challenges with her running "If you could run, you could probably do this too." One change leads to another, creating a kind of ripple effect in her learning which over time becomes transformative. And she has tried a variety of new and different things, whether it been figuring out how to use a new piece of exercise equipment or horseback riding in the rainforest. Cranton (2006) and others see freedom from personal constraints as transformative learning. Dori has been freed from some self-imposed restrictions with her new-found confidence.

Dori also was able to give examples of looking back on events in her life such as the ways in which she used to handle conflict before running and what she has changed about herself since she incorporated running into her life. She was able to identify a problem by looking back on it. At the time of conflict in the past, she may not have been happy with the way she handled things, but she did not seek to change it .Additionally, as Dori critically reflected on her assumptions, she began to think for herself which supports this very claim by Mezirow (1997) who argues that the goal of all adult education is "to

help the individual become more autonomous thinker by learning to negotiate his or her own values, meanings, and purpose, rather than uncritically acting on those of others" (p.11). The ability for autonomous thinking is a significant piece to being able to critically reflect on one's assumptions.

Dori has changed in ways that not only she, but others notice. Her husband has commented to her, "I'm surprised you are trying this. I would have bet you wouldn't want to do this." Co-workers have mentioned, "What are you doing? You seem to be able to not let things bother you." These examples suggest that Dori is not only trying on new roles, but is building competence and self confidence in these new roles.

Anais "… by accident. Running chose me."

A climbing cholesterol count despite being active was the disorienting dilemma that brought Anais to running. She had always been active, but that wasn't working to control her cholesterol. She decided to increase her activity to a higher level, as the medical literature suggests, and running fulfilled that. Her cholesterol levels fell and then climbed again, but running was no longer just about a healthy thing to do.

Through running, perceptions about herself changed. These broad assumptions, or habit of mind Mezirow (2000) calls them, included a lack of confidence, a poor body image and being somewhat over-emotional. "I was always thin and I was always not big breasted and (I was) self-conscious about that. Oh, I went through a terrible, terrible time in high school … I had girls make fun of me." Through running, Anais has reflected on these old habits of mind and has constructed a new meaning perspective for herself. "I feel sexier. I feel more confident than I absolutely felt in probably my entire life." She has also changed in another way as a result of meeting a group of women who also run.

"I've never been a big woman-bonding person. I've never really craved the company of women and I'm not out to do girl things." She is still reflecting on how much she enjoys being with other women. "I'm not sure if it's because they're women, or they're women who are doing something physical together. It's been a new experience for me in that regard." The reflection continues as she recognizes that she doesn't go out of her way to meet other (non-running) women, but will get up and out of bed on cold dark mornings just to be with this particular group of women. The process of critical reflection continued as she recognized how she was judged by other girls in high school. Her new running group provides a supportive environment which Mezirow (2000) posits as being critical to the process of transformative learning in order to promote confidence. For example, Anais says this group is "very supportive of one another and nobody's judging one another, me, or just trying to make you feel like you're not good enough." She also is generating a new set of beliefs and opinions about women, friends, and herself to integrate new attitudes into her life.

Additionally, Anais notices that it is not just her thinking that has changed, but some of her actions have changed. This supports elements of Mezirow's (2000) later phases of transformative learning including the exploration of new roles and actions, planning and implementing new actions, provisionally trying new roles, building confidence in these new roles, and adopting the new roles or perspective. She equates her new-found confidence to an "inner platform of strength" which has helped in the development of her new found confidence. Anais announced that will keep this confidence that she has discovered in herself, even if she were no longer running. She finds running may have helped her cope with major issues in her life. When her father

and brother recently died, she noticed she didn't have emotional meltdowns as she would have in the past with such tragedies, but rather took to running to release any pent-up feelings. Again, she is still reflecting on whether it is the running, running in combination with something else, or something else which has brought her to this new place. One thing Anais notes is that she believes, "running gives you that space inside." Anais has revised a cluster of perspectives, including her confidence, the ways she things about things, and her coping strategies for dealing with major life issues. Transformative learning is rarely a linear or straightforward process of change – one thing leads to another and that, in turn, influences a person's way of thinking about some other aspect of her life.

Artemis "I learned how to do something for myself."

A diagnosis of breast cancer was the disorienting dilemma for Artemis. Celebrating the end of her treatments, she began training for a three-day breast cancer walk. Although she was glad she did it, it ended up being something she did, a challenge to say she had completed. Soon after she tried running and found there was more, there was much more than just doing it. Artemis had been active all of her life which resulted in some cognitive dissonance Mezirow, (2000) in that she felt that by being active, her years of activity should have provided some insurance against breast cancer. But, even having made the healthy decisions to engage in a lifetime of activity, her felt her body in some way betrayed her. Yet she still turned to activity as her way to cope. This cognitive dissonance – between trusting activity to keep her healthy and becoming ill – led her to challenge herself in a deeper way.

Artemis also does not mention thinking about who she was or going through any type of process such as discernment (Boyd and Myers, 1988) or critical reflection (Mezirow, 1998) to discover the different parts of who she is nor does she relate theses processes to her cancer, but she is quick to point out how she feels and how she has changed which she contributes to running. She feels she is different and she backs this feeling up with concrete examples of how she has changed, which does necessitate some reflection. In this instance the feelings came first followed by the thinking. This may not be a transformation of frames of reference as used by Mezirow as there does not seems to be any critical reflections on her assumptions or beliefs, but seems to be based more on intuitive feeling (Cranton, 2000). For example, she says only with running has she learned the feeling of "Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh". Artemis can identify changes she recognizes in herself. One is acknowledging the importance of taking time for herself. Several times she mentions running as time for her. "It's me time. It's my free time. I'm free. I feel good and I can forget about everything. It's the me time I get to take." It's her time whether she runs alone or with a group, which she prefers. "I learned how to do something for myself." It has required some introspection, or self-examination, a concept that Boyd and Myers (1988) introduced into the literature, for Artemis to be able to articulate this feeling.

Artemis does acknowledge the importance of the personal relationship that came from joining a group or learner network (Cranton, 2006). She joined a group of runners and notes she had never been a part of a group like this, "not a tight group like this" anyway. She finds they are supportive in a non-competitive way, an element of groups which foster transformative learning. Comments such as, "We can do this together" or

"We'll stick together" were very surprising to Artemis since these have happened during competitive races, when previously she had the idea that competition meant "cut-throat." A supportive environment is noted by Mezirow (2000) as important when people are trying on new roles.

Anne "When you have time to think…you can think about it in a different perspective."

Anne began by reflecting on what running meant to her as un-athletic person growing up in an athletic family. This seems to be the process of recognizing and understanding the parts of her which she feels need to be brought to the surface (Boyd & Myers, 1988) through recognizing how she identified herself as part of her family. After completing her first mile of continuous running, "I'm calling my mom and dad! I guess that I just wanted them to know that I could do something athletic." Academic success came easy to Anne, where as athletic ability, specifically running, did not. "I think that's what makes it so much more of an accomplishment, 'cause it's hard. It's still hard for me." By challenging herself, she now has (felt athletic) which has disrupted her old way of thing, feeling, and acting an element needed for transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991).

Previous to running Anne defined herself as a mother or a teacher. "I have other dimensions." Additionally, not only did she think of herself as a teacher, but as a good teacher. Through reorganization at her place of work, she was told she was not academically worthy to be part of a department where she had worked her entire career of 27 years.

Anne did articulate the experiences, feelings and assumptions of thinking she was doing "a pretty darn good job," yet being told she was not qualified by those who arbitrarily interpreted the criteria of a "qualified" effective teacher with others in a similar position which resulted in a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1994). This disorienting dilemma disrupted her old ways of thinking and she did grieve, as part of the discernment process (Boyd & Myers, 1988), the loss of who she thought she was. The way Anne was able to come to terms with this dilemma was through running. She associates running with providing uninterrupted thinking time. "Sometimes, when you have time to think about something, you can think about it in a different perspective." Anne was receptive to listening and engaging her self which is where discernment begins according to Boyd and Myers (1988). Her new way of thinking was not new, nor was she ignoring these new negative-thoughts about her teaching which were popping into her head. Through self reflection she was able to differentiate what was worth keeping and what should be discarded. She was able to throw out or not accept that negative kind of thinking about herself as she once again defined herself as an effective teacher.

What surprised Anne most is that she is entertaining the idea of perhaps doing more advanced course work or even enrolling in a doctoral program. She never doubted her intellectual ability, but she understood the amount of work additional schooling or a terminal degree would entail. And now she understands that she can take that sense of accomplishment she gets through running and apply it to her life "I can take classes and I may not like it, but when I finish the class, I'll feel good about it." Although she has not followed through with actually taking a class yet, her thinking has changed to make it more of a possibility.

BettyJean "I've started appreciating everything so much more."

As a long time swimmer who noticed her pants were getting tighter, BettyJean was motivated to take up running. And, running has fulfilled that goal. But, what BettyJean has discovered is far beyond being able to easily zip up her pants. She has lived in this area for 25 years, but has never felt at home. She often wondered what was wrong with her that she felt this way, but didn't persevere in discovering anything deeper. It wasn't until she joined a group of supportive women, who ran that she began the process of introspection (Boyd & Myers, 1988), and really looked inward and took stock of her feelings and her thoughts. This inner journey has resulted in a more confident person. Although she was confident up to her high school years, by the time she got to college she was trying on new identities, which went "against what my true spirit was." At that point in her life adopted a meaning scheme or of a way of being which ended up not true to herself, but she none the less she kept for years without much thought or reflection.

Mezirow (1994) distinguishes between a slowly unfolding disorienting dilemma and an epochal experience. For BettyJean, it was a gradual process. She lived most of her adult life one way, and was never able to put her finger on why she was so uncomfortable. BettyJean credits discovery of her true self to her running group of women. For the first time in a long time she feels valued for who she is. Brookfield and Preskill (1999) focus on developing mindfulness or good listening skills to become a better teacher as well as a better listener. She has not only recognized the importance of these skills, but also, "I'm putting into practice with the group and getting the benefits

from it." She has been able to practice this skill with her running buddies and likes the end result.

Intellectually BettyJean knew a lot of things. She knew that it is important to take time for herself. Yet, not feeling worthy, she did not take time. She thought that was selfish. She thought it was conceited to love yourself. Her frame of reference has changed. She is worthy. Her new identity is really an old identity, a discovery of the person she has always been, a journey towards authenticity, who she always was but did not recognize as described by Palmer (2001). This example supports Cranton and Roy (2003) link of a result of transformative learning is to become more authentic. BettyJean's new frame of reference is more true to her and guides her actions. She changed her name back to her full name. She doesn't dye her hair anymore. She loves herself. She grieves for the person she used to be a part of the discernment process described identified by Boyd and Myers (1988), the years she wasted not being herself. "My eyes (through running) have been opened differently in a way that I didn't carry with me all the time. Before, I was constantly pushing it deeper by thinking about what I should wear today? Or, what are they thinking? Gee whiz, that's just so sad. I feel so sorry for that person."

April "I'm comfortable in my skin."

Faced with an ultimatum of quitting smoking or not getting married was a disorienting dilemma for April. Instead of smoking, she took up running. April can recognize many changes in herself since she stopped smoking and started running. She articulates her perspective change by identifying changes such as: "Running has taught me to set goals. It's definitely made me more disciplined. I consider myself an athlete

now. Running makes me feel better. I'm comfortable in my skin. I'm comfortable doing what I want. I value myself more. I don't self-doubt. I'm more willing to try new things. I think I'm a better teacher now. I've become more social. I put myself in situations … where I'm not necessarily comfortable. I'm more organized. I'm a happier person." April began running as a substitute for smoking with the goal of marriage. She succeeded in her original goals of quitting smoking and getting married, but meanwhile the way she sees herself has changed dramatically. Tennant (1993) might argue that these changes coincided with her marriage, a normative life event which typically corresponds to perspective transformation. However, April describes conscious and deliberate changes in her perspectives – becoming more disciplined, valuing herself more, taking more risks – and these changes occur over a time period that precludes it being a primarily developmental process. Also, April points out it was the running, not the marriage, which changed the way she thought about herself.

Running provides April with time to herself and space to "think about all kinds of stuff. When I'm running, that's my time." Time alone when running gave April the space to think. "I'm able to think when I'm running. I definitely think more about things because I have all the time to myself." Running seems to quiet her ego an element described by Sydnor (2005) as necessary to let the mind wander. As the ego is quieted, there is space for the cognitive process of critical thinking and reflection to occur. April is often thinking about how she arrived at where is now in her life, how she arrived there, and who and how she growing to be.

Although not totally comfortable with her new, more confident self, "I put myself in situations now … where I'm not necessarily comfortable doing it, but I try it and the

more I do it, the more comfortable I get." This reflects a process of differentiation, a Jungian concept that Boyd and Myers (1988) use to understand transformative experiences. It is a process that helps the individual to decide what part of their perspective is beneficial and worth keeping as part of her true self and what part is worth discarding. Differentiation is a solitary, meditative process which seems to be occurring on her solitary long runs. Although she occasionally runs with others, April generally prefers being by herself so as to be able to engage in this meditative process. April is actively realizing what her true self is (Boyd & Myers). Although it is not easy, April sees the benefits and the progressing of her comfort level with attempting new things. Not only has her perspective change, but April has acted on these changes as well.

Linda "Running is different … it's a confidence that 'I can do it' versus surviving."

The diagnosis of breast cancer was a classic disorienting dilemma as described by Mezirow (1994) in Linda's life which she responded to "by telling no one. I went into hiding." This diagnosis caused her to question not only how she saw herself, but she worried about how others would see her, which resulted in cognitive dissonance. "I just had this unrealistic belief that if my colleagues, my adversaries, my partners knew I had breast cancer, they would view me as less of a *(professional).* After much reflection, she realized this assumption of herself was unrealistic, and did revise this assumption but at the time it was what she believed. When she was ready to share her story, it was with the director of a breast cancer fund raiser of a 5K running race. She was asked to be on the board of directors for this race and was honored to be asked. Feeling uncomfortable being on the board created the cognitive dissonance, until she identified the incongruity of being on a board of a running race, but not being a runner. Her ability to discover this

through introspection (Boyd & Myers, 1988) resulted in taking action. This action was a process of joining a group for beginner runners and eventually participating in the competition.

Linda discovered a group of women who also liked to run. This group provided her with the opportunity to be a part of a group which fostered a trusting, caring, non-judgmental environment, important elements in cultivating transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000). This is a place that Linda has been able to be her authentic self, which has resulted in a more confident person. Additionally, Linda has acted on this confidence by trying new things such as parasailing, jet skiing and snorkeling.

Lucy "I could say what I was really feeling."

Lucy came to running in order to lose a few extra pounds. Although Lucy had no disorienting dilemma in the sense that Mezirow (1994) uses the term, that led to her running. It was only after she had become a runner, that she suffered personal challenges which turned her world upside down and created a classic example of a disorienting dilemma at that time. Gratefully, this group turned out to offer Lucy a very supportive environment. She felt comfortable enough with this group to dialogue about her fears. She was also receptive to their constructive feedback. Rational discourse (Mezirow, 1991) or as rational dialogue (Mezirow 2000) a key element of transformative learning, helped her to reflect on her assumptions and question her reasoning about what was happening in her life. She reflects back on that part of her life and credits her running group with getting her through and giving her other perspectives. Lucy's relationship with her running friends is unlike any other friendship she has had. She found herself disclosing more to her running friends than to her long time non-running friends. This

acknowledgement of extensive self disclosure indicates honesty, which seems to be important for critical reflection to occur.

Lucy mentions that this group of friends continues to be an integral part of her life and with their help she continues to learn about herself. Another thing that Lucy has learned from this group is how she does not take time for herself. This has created the dialogue between these women and they helped her to understand how important "me time" is. Lucy is now aware of how her current perspectives about taking time for herself are shaped by her own culture or family history, a change that parallels Mezirow's (1978) early research on women's transformative experiences. Lucy now deliberately sets aside time for herself no matter what is required of her during the course of her day. She describes how she adopted her original perspective. "I grew up with a mother who didn't believe in 'me time' or down time." She recognizes through self examination spurred by rational discourse that throughout her entire life she has been very rigid in her expectations of herself. With her group of friends she has been able to explore new plans of action to help support what she now recognizes as important. She recognizes that taking time for herself would not make her less of a mother, wife, or worker, but would actually enhance her abilities in those areas. However, she admits that change is hard, but has started to see her running time as time to personally re-charge. "I think I'm learning that I'm really rigid. I think just realizing it is good. That's the first step. Everybody's been telling me that sometimes you just have to let go. And you can't control things and it's healthy to take those breaks. And I think that's what I need to hear in my own life." Currently she is provisionally trying on new roles such as sitting down to watching TV while she folds the laundry to intentionally give herself less structured

down time. However, as much as she recognizes how positive this new perspective is, she is unsure if she will adopt this new role permanently.

Discussion: Similarities and Differences of the Narratives

Narratives provide the data and the method in narrative inquiry. The challenge in data analysis in narrative inquiry is not to try to fit the analysis into pre-determined categories, but to let the stories emerge and develop, and then identify any similarities. Webster and Mertova (2008) caution not to classify narrow categories within the narratives as this would negatively impact the analysis, since this does "not allow the story to evolve or identify those events that are critical" (Webster & Mertova, 2008, p.114). Not wanting to isolate the experience of the participant, I looked at the context and influences around the actual running experience to get a truer sense of the total impact, yet still looked for general similarities whether it be in the context, the experience itself, or in the outcome. Therefore, each of the eleven narratives in this study presents the participant's individual experience of running. Although each narrative is a unique story, there were similarities and differences noted among them. Beyond the experience of each woman generously sharing her time and happily sharing her experiences with running, there were few similarities that were common to all eleven narratives, yet there were general similarities which were repeated among the narratives.

First, all of the participants indicated they saw themselves differently since they began running. The core of transformative learning is a deep perspective shift in how one sees oneself or one's worldview (Mezirow, 2005).   The women all focus on themselves, or the individual as the unit of change (Taylor, 2007). A second similarity was the

disorienting dilemma. However, the disorienting dilemma although easily identifiable in some instances, was a bit more veiled in others.

The Disorienting Dilemma

A health concern, specifically a negative health event, is a common disorienting dilemma as described by Mezirow (1994), and was identified by Anais, Artemis, Jane, Anne and BettyJean as the impetus to begin running. For example, Nora's disorienting dilemma was also negative in that her husband told her their marriage was headed for disaster. The disorienting dilemma for April was being faced with the possibility of losing the love of her life due to her smoking. Linda had recently had the disorienting dilemma of a diagnosis of breast cancer, but that did not drive her to begin running. Instead, it was the moral struggle of accepting a board position for a breast cancer run, if she were not a runner. Dori, Natalie, and Lucy did not mention a disorienting dilemma. However, perhaps a common disorienting dilemma for all of the runners was the personal challenge of starting a running program where they did not know if they would be successful. Could this self imposed challenge be the disorienting dilemma? As the process of transformative learning varies from individual to individual, and as the outcomes of transformative learning can pertain to a wide variety of aspects of people's lives, so too can disorienting dilemmas vary in nature, intensity, and context.

Not all of the disorienting dilemmas were events that could readily be identified. For example, it was only through taking time away from the demands of everyday life and letting their thoughts wander that a few of the women were able to recognize that something was not sitting right in their lives. It might have been that she put pleasing others first over her own needs, or that she did not feel particularly good about herself.

These women could have gone on living like this, perhaps not ever recognizing the disharmony that had developed in their lives if they had not given themselves the space to discover these incongruities.

Reflection

Running seemed to give all of the women time for reflection. They all had the capacity for critical reflection, just not the space in their lives until they started running. For Dori, April, Anais, and BettyJean, running provided the opportunity to identify a problem or inconsistency in their lives which required reflection on that problem, a plan to resolve it, and then the adoption of a new meaning scheme. Nora however, knew what the problem was and used running as a time to think. Some, like Anne and April used running to reflect on issues in their lives, but realized though running there were other inconsistencies needing attention.

Dori, April, Jane, Natalie, Anne, Nora, and Artemis mentioned that running gives them time to think which often results in the ability to make decisions or autonomous thinking a goal of transformative learning according to Mezirow (2000). For example, Dori says "Before I had the opportunity to get (time) and think on my own, I would sit around waiting for somebody to think for me."

Although groups do have the capacity to learn according to Kasl and Elias, (2000) and members in groups have the capacity to support rational dialogue, Artemis, Anais, Jane, BettyJean, and Linda found a space that encouraged transformation without rational dialogue, and without addressing with the group, the paradigm that the woman runner eventually changed about herself. However most used self-reflection. This happened when running created time and space to let their minds wander. This supports

Wiessner and Mezirow (2000) who contend that space is needed for transformative learning to occur and it seems as if the groups provided this space. Not space to address a particular problem or concern identified by a teacher or mentor; just a space to let their minds wander. The informal running groups provided what Thayer-Bacon (2003) call positive groups, defined as caring and listening to everyone's voice. In this research, the caring and the listening of the group was happening but not as directed or in response to a particular goal of the group or an individual in the group. Transformative learning was fostered but not in the capacity of teaching for transformation. Taylor (2009) mentions the importance of transformative learning being fostered in a group. Transformative learning was fostered, but not directly as a result of teaching for transformation. There were no facilitators directing or fostering transformative learning, yet it did occur. Most often, the women needed time and space by themselves to engage in self-reflection and self-dialogue.

The critical reflection initially used was the process of content reflection as described by Mezirow (2000) when the women reflected on what they felt or thought since starting to run. "I felt more confident" is an example of content reflection. Next, many progressed to premise reflection as originally described by Dewey (1933) when they reflected upon why running influenced them to feel more confident. An example would be when Dori said, "It [running] has enabled me to think about other things that I might not have wanted to give a chance to." Potentially many of these women may have gone along in their lives thinking the same way they always had. Through the process of premise reflection, the women were able to reflect deeply and examine why something seemed out of place to begin with.

Support

Artemis, Anais, Lucy, BettyJean, Linda, and Nora joined an organized running community or "learner network" as described by Cranton (2006) when they began running. A supportive group environment, an element which provided for potential transformative learning as described by Mezirow (2000), was mentioned by Anais, Jane, Lucy, BettyJean, and Linda. However, these running groups were not the same women as the original learners' network, although there was some overlap for some of the women. This research focused on the runner's perspective on what the group provided for them. These five preferred to run with a supportive group. April, Dori, Nora, and Anne appreciated the solitude of running alone which they felt allowed them to engage in self-dialogue. Although there is considerable research on the relationships between teacher or mentor and student, this research found the importance, for some, of having a supportive environment in their lives, even though the supportive relationship is not directly associated with a mentoring or teaching relationship.

Artemis, Linda, BettyJean, and Lucy mention disclosing more to their running buddies than they do to their non-running friends. Lucy says, "There's such a different dynamic there. I was opening up my heart that I wasn't even telling my regular friends about. And it's, it's just very freeing to be like that." This is an example of dialogue being very personal and self disclosing, elements of effective dialogue according to Carter (2002). Effective dialogue with the self or others must be honest in order to provide opportunity for real change.

This support is slightly different that the support Taylor (2007) labels as "relationships", which provides a venue for dialogue, an essential element of transformation. The support for these women was not in discussing the transformational process, but support and respect to the woman as an individual and in her life journey.

Dialogue with Others

Interestingly, only one runner, Lucy, mentioned dialogue with others in the sense of exploring her new perspective with others. Even those who preferred to run with a group did not mention dialogue, but instead kept referring to the safe environment the group provided. Linda says, "Running gives me this extraordinary group of women that I so enjoy being with." BettyJean appreciates "the camaraderie, the unconditional acceptance." And, Anais says, "We are very supportive of one another and nobody's judging one another, me, or you know just trying to make you feel like you're not good enough." Artemis adds, "We all support each other and help each other." Although Mezirow contends that "feelings of trust, solidarity, security, and empathy are essential preconditions for free full participation in discourse" (Mezirow, 2000, p.12), it seems that this type of environment also provides an environment for something beyond rational discourse. Although much of the dialogue and conversation did not follow the conditions for rational discourse, two important conditions – that of participants having equal opportunity to participate and that of being free from coercion- were described by participants as being present in their interactions with those who were supporting them. Belenky (1986) explores how a non-dominate, non-judgmental environment is important for discourse, this environment appears to set the state for rational self-dialogue as well. Mezirow (1991) posits that participation in critical discourse with others is a hallmark of

transformative learning, but what seemed to occur with most of the women in this study was more in the way of introspection as the women explored their sense of self in an inner-directed way without deliberate rational examination of assumptions. This opens the door to Merriam's (2004) work which questioned if transformative learning could occur without critical reflection or rational dialogue. It does not appear that either was necessary in every instance, yet the women experienced transformative learning.

Instrumental Knowledge

Originally, women did add running to their to-do list as a complementary route towards better health, or a way to try something new. These would be examples of revising meaning schemes for some and for others developing a new meaning scheme that was compatible with already existing schemes (Mezirow, 1985). Lucy and Jane mention reading *Runner's World* to increase their instrumental knowledge about running. Artemis, Anais, Lucy, Linda, BettyJean, Lucy, and Nora joined community-based running groups to learn more about training, another example of instrumental knowledge. Instrumental knowledge may provide a path to transformative leaning by providing more confidence to participate appropriately in the activity which ultimately helps with the process of transformative learning. Therefore, instrumental knowledge acts as a foundation for further learning which can become transformative.

Perspective Transformation

Each woman said that she saw herself differently as a result of incorporating running into her life. For most of these women, the perspective transformation occurred painlessly as they reflected on their old meaning schemes and discovered new meaning schemes that would better fit with who they are. Mezirow (2000) posits that the self

examination is often wrought with fear, anger, guilt, or shame.   Although Nora, Anne, and BettyJean, did experience sadness and pain for the person they used to be, which may fit better with the step in the process of discernment described by Boyd and Myers (1988) as grieving, the other women did not voice negative feelings when talking about the process. Many of the women commented on how good they were feeling about running, their accomplishments with running, and their new found confidence. The women mentioned those "Ah, ha" moments or just knowing deep inside that their new perspective just felt better, which may be indicative of using one's intuition and not critical reflection.

Dori, Nora, Lucy, and April mention that others see them differently as well (Clark, 1993).   The examples above also lend themselves as examples of actions; new actions that result from ones' perspective change. When a person experiences transformative learning, it may be the case that others around that person (friends, family, colleagues) see the person differently and this can, in turn, influence those others to question their perspectives as well. Nora, Linda, April, Lucy planned a new course of action another phase of transformative learning according to Mezirow (2000), where as the others tried a new way of thinking or acting and adopted the part they felt was most true to themselves.

Artemis, Anais, April, Dori, Anne, Nora, Linda and BettyJean report being more comfortable with who they are, perhaps as Boyd and Myers (1988) describe as being whole or more authentic.

Natalie, Nora, Dori, and April re-negotiated relationships, a phase of transformative learning described by Mezirow (1994). These re-negotiated relationships

were not only with themselves but with family members and others close to them.

Natalie, Nora and Dori have renegotiated relationships with their husbands. BettyJean re-

negotiated her relationships in her non-intimate relationships as she learned the value of

listening and not trying to fix everyone's problems.

Self-Confidence

Building self-confidence is mentioned as a direct result of engaging in physical

activity (Huberty et al., 2008; Savage et al., 2009; Segar et al., 2008, USDHHS, 2006;

Women's Sports Foundation, 2009). And Mezirow (2009) mentions building

competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships. For example, Nora, Dori,

Artemis, April, BettyJean, Linda, and Anne mention their new confidence in themselves.

And, even thought the confidence may be related to the accomplishments of running,

Dori, Artemis, and Nora, claim that even if they were no longer running, the confidence

would remain. This supports research by Baumgartner (2002). Anais "I'd keep the

confidence." Linda applies the confidence: "It gives me a confidence in tackling other

projects and other challenges. It gives me a sense of endurance, a sense of I can do this

and I apply that both professionally and personally." The translation into personal lives

has been the confidence to try something new for both Dori and Linda who both mention

trying new physical things. For Dori it was horseback riding in the Rainforest and for

Linda it was parasailing and snorkeling in the Caribbean. Confidence translated to the

intellectual for Artemis and April, both educators, who both mentioned trying new things

in the classroom as the result of their new found confidence. Anne mentioned the

possibly of returning to the classroom as a graduate or doctoral student. And Nora found

confidence to return to her new old self while BettyJean found confidence to be herself.

The women all mentioned how hard they worked and their sense of accomplishment whether it be to get up and run on a cold dark morning or completing a race of various distance. This sense of accomplishment has been shown in the literature (DiClemente, et al., 1985; Lane & Lane 2001; Vrugt, et al.,) to increase one's self-efficacy. Not only did these women achieve their original goal, they have kept at it.

In conclusion, only April, Lucy and Jane are unsure if they stopped running if their new perspectives would remain. April says, "I would truly try not to. I value that. So I don't think I would go back. I believe I would hold onto the confidence." Jane mentioned it was the physical changes which occurred, losing a few pounds and toning her body that gave her more confidence. Anne, Dori, April and Missy mentioned the process of running which provided time to think, to just let their minds wander, which allowed them to think differently.   Anais, Artemis, Jane. Lucy, BettyJean, and Linda mentioned the influence of being part of a group in changing how each thought about herself. Natalie, Linda, and Dori felt they were calmer in their everyday lives as the result of running. As can be seen, transformative learning focuses on a wide variety of facets of people's lives – everything from how they see themselves personally to how they have come to think differently. The same activity, in this case running, can lead to changed perspectives on many levels and in relation to many facets of the self.

The first section of this chapter explored each narrative through the lens of transformative learning. In the second section the narratives were looked at to identify many of the reoccurring themes as they applied to the literature, but also explored the differences. The next section addresses the implications, limitations of this research as well as recommendations for future research, and closing reflections.

Implications for Transformative Learning

What may be the most unique aspect of this study is that there was no educator, facilitator, or guide setting the stage for transformative learning to occur. The three things that seem most important in enhancing transformative learning are: 1. The creation of a time and space when the woman was free to let her mind wander; and 2. Being a part of a supportive, non-judgmental group, and 3. The way one experiences a disorienting dilemma may have to be expanded. I address these separately.

First, much research is available on the role of the guide, mentor, facilitator, or educator in the role of facilitating transformative learning. In this research there was no guide, mentor, facilitator or educator. Although some women had mentors in their original training program that is not where or with whom the transformative learning occurred. If occurred after they left the formal training program. However, some women did note that they could easily identify changes in themselves since beginning running, but admitted that they had not verbalized these changes until asked by me (the researcher). Therefore, a recommendation for transformative learning practice may be to provide time and space for the mind to wander which may appear in the form of more silence during formal class time.

In regard to the supportive group, in most instances the group did not provide critical dialogue, only a place where the woman felt safe. The transformative learning literature does indicate that a supportive zone be created in the classroom. In this research, although the women did not discuss changes in themselves among the group members, the women did note the positive influence of the groups in supporting women who identified they were changed in some way. Therefore, for those classrooms where

there is a breakdown in a supportive environment, a supportive environment in some other context of the learners' life might take the place of a supportive classroom.

Next, although some women did have definable disorienting dilemmas, others did not. A common characteristic was not that, for those who did not have a clear disorienting dilemma, they did have the space to identify dissonance in their lives and space to think about it, as well as find a way to act on the inconsistencies to change their perspectives and ultimately make them more authentic. The disorienting dilemma for some was internally driven. It was always there. It was not that the woman has a new experience in the traditional sense, but having time to consider if there are other ways to deal with conflict as happened with Dori, or why BettyJean was such a people pleaser might never have made to their consciousness if they did not have the opportunity to let their minds wander. Whether or not this type of discovery can be labeled a disorienting dilemma is questioned, or perhaps transformative learning can occur without a disorienting dilemma. Another possibility is that those who could not identify a negative disorienting dilemma actually experience a positive disorienting dilemma such as a "gain of body" as described by Dr. Carol Smith (personal communication, March 8, 2009). Or, perhaps for some, running in and of itself was a disorienting dilemma. Additionally, critical discourse was not necessary for a perspective transformation, although self-reflection was. Therefore, the educator needs to be aware that just because a learner is not participating in critical discourse, this does not mean that self-reflection is not occurring. Facilitators of transformative learning should provide the opportunity for both to occur if possible. And finally, this research supports the holistic approach to transformative learning. The rational, although central, was only one part of the process

just like it is only one part of the whole person. This supports Cranton (2006) who posits the integration of the rational with the rest of the person leads to transformative learning.

Implications for Health Educators

Actively encouraging healthy behavior change is the core practice of most health educators. Time is often spent on disseminating instrumental knowledge as well as proven strategies to help with behavior change. Models such as the Health Belief Model (HBM), Relapse Prevention Model, Social Support Model, health Promotion Model, are all looking specifically at how interventions to change a health behavior are best accomplished. Even behavior change models that try to identify which stage of change the participant is at and what would be most effective in getting the person to the next level such as the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) seem to be missing a piece which might provide for long-term change and adoption of healthy choices. This necessary component is self-reflection, a key ingredient of transformative learning. Although there is some self reflection in the early stages, when a participant realizes that changing a behavior is not only positive, but reflects on what life might be like if she does not change, there is little self reflection encouraged at the more advanced levels of this behavior change model. The women in this study were at the more advanced level of the maintenance stage of behavior change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983). During the maintenance stage, the individual adheres to the change for at least six months and works hard not to relapse. Four women (Linda, Anne, April, Nora) mentioned how hard running is. Natalie thinks she is "over the hump" of the hard part which would put her in the termination stage (Prochaska & DiClemente), where there is no temptation to return to the old behavior. By looking at this group of women who have successfully transformed their self-perspective,

and exploring influences on their success using the lens of transformative learning, a lens not common in the health behavior change literature, there is much to be learned. By using this lens of transformative learning on the narratives of these women, a repeated theme for success is the recognition of each woman taking time for herself. This does acknowledge that these women are at a point in their lives and have the resources to be able to take this time. Additionally, it is taking time to reflect on the benefits and experiencing the benefits beyond the physical which seem to keep the women going back. In activities where time for thinking is not built in to the behavior change model, this might be a piece of the process that could help behavior change models be more successful. For example, using the stages of change model, the goal is to get the participant from one stage to the next higher level until the new behavior is a part of the participant's life. During the maintenance stage, learners have been practicing their new goal for at least 6 months but are often temped to regress to old behaviors. Donetelle (2008) suggests that at the maintenance stage the participant be encouraged to "continue taking the same actions that led to success in the first place." (p. 17). This would be the ideal place to introduce thoughtful prompts for self-reflection beyond "fun and creative ways to maintain positive behaviors" (p.17). Through self-reflection, the participant might be able to identify ways the see themselves or their worlds differently since engaging in the behavior which might lead to greater adherence.

This research provided rich, descriptive data regarding what confidence looks like and how a woman might act upon the confidence gained as a result of the adoption of a cardiovascular exercise routine. However, this confidence does not appear to result just from the adoption of the running, but from the self-reflection done by the women while

running. Additionally, much research (Carlson, 2008; Lapchick & Richards, 2008; Lapchick & Little, 2008; Sabo & Veliz, 2008; Sabo, Melnick & Vanfossen, 1989; NCAA News 2008) has reported on the positive relationship between participants in high school and college athletes and their worlds outside of sport such as being more likely to volunteer, vote, and be comfortable with public speaking to name a few examples. This current research suggests there are many benefits beyond the physical for women of any age.

This research confirmed much of the existing health-related literature about why women come to exercise, specifically running, the benefits experienced by running and why they adhere to their participation in running. Many of the women in the study began running to improve their health, but it was the non-physical benefits that kept them running. This supports the multi-dimensions of health beyond the physical to include the psychological, spiritual and social. These non-physical benefits as reported by Berber and Motl (2001) include the psychological gains of exercise are more pronounced in activities using rhythmic breathing and repetitive movement. This is the case with running. Additionally, centering , or a time to be alone, as described by Johsngard (1985) was noted by three women (Dori, Anne, and Nora) as integral to the change process, whereas Abbas (2009) attributes exercise as a time out of daily hassles which was noted in some way by eight of the women as something running provides. Finally Bond and Batey (2005) noted in their quantitative study that "the running had triggered some implicit process of self examination which is some cases led to a redefinition of self identity." This too occurred and rich descriptions of this process were provided in previous chapters which is lacking in the exercise-related literature.

Study Limitations

I am a neophyte researcher. As such, my interviewing skills were a work in progress. Therefore, interviews obtained as my skills improved may have resulted in more meaningful date. Qualitative research cannot be generalized. Therefore, although this research offers insight into the process of transformative learning, it does not offer explanations transferable to all activities. I am also a relatively new transformative learning scholar. As such, there are many nuances of transformative learning that I might not understand, might not recognize, or emphasize in the wrong way.

The women who participated in this study were educated women, all but one having achieved an undergraduate degree, and several with advanced degrees. This implies that these women came with the ability to critically think and reflect. That may have influenced why they did not necessarily need a guide to facilitate transformative learning.

The women were all professional and successful women, who from the outside appeared to be confident. Yet many women noted the development of confidence or a new type of confidence through running. Studies that include less professionally successful women, less confident women, and less educated women would explore these variables.

The years participating in running was arbitrarily set at a minimum of one year to include those who have adopted running as a part of their lives and not just in the "honeymoon" period of exploring a new activity. And, the maximum of four years was set so as not to include women who have been running so long that changes might be attributed to normal adult development. Additionally, a concern was if the woman was

running for more than four years, she might not remember what life was like before running. However, the responses that I received from women who wanted to be in the study, but were running longer than (sometimes much longer than four years) and the transformations they claimed to have underwent that they contribute to running beg to be heard. Additionally, the retrospective nature of this study limits the observance of transformative learning happening in real time. However, there were glimpse of this when some of the runners could readily identify how they have changed but when asked, immediately responded that they had not identified the change until that very moment.

Recommendations for Future Research

While examining and analyzing the data, many more questions arose that would lead to future research. These include:

1. Looking at other groups which do not use rational discourse, yet claim a perspective transformation, to see what the process of transformative learning is.

2. Comparing success of behavior change models that add a component of critical reflection to those models that do not.

3. Studying new runners might provide more insight to transformative learning as it happens.

4. Examining the same process with male runners to explore gender differences in transformative learning.

5. Exploring if physiological changes occur with transformational learning.

6. Using a different theoretical lens to explore this topic such as somatic learning.

Conclusion

The exploration of the personal narratives of adult women runners reveals the women did see themselves differently and most acted differently after they adopted running. The core of transformative learning is a deep-perspective shift in how one sees oneself, and/or ones world view. According to Mezirow (2005), perspective includes how a person identified herself and acts on those points of view. The health related literature does boast about the positive correlation of exercise and improved self-esteem, self-perception, self-worth, yet the health literature lacks what this improvement looks and feels like in rich, descriptive terms. This research provides examples of what this felt like, and what the application of this new perception of self looks like in the runner's everyday life.

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APPENDIX A

PRESCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

This prescreening questionnaire should take about 10 minutes to complete. Based upon your answers those who qualify for the study will be contacted an invited to participate in an interview. This questionnaire has 2 pages.

1. Name: _____

2. Age: _____

3. Sex: Female: _____ Male: _____

4. E-mail: _____

5. Telephone: _____

6. How do you prefer to be contacted (e-mail/phone) and any special instructions (hours, days, etc.)?

Please continue on the next page.

7. At what age did you start running on a regular basis?   _____

8. How many times per week do you usually run? (most weeks)
    a. 1 – 3 _____
    b. 3 – 5 _____
    c. 5 – 7 _____

9. How long is your usual "short" run in minutes?   _____

10. How long is your usual "long" run in minutes?   _____

11. What type(s) (if any) of physical activity did you participate in prior to running. Please note if you considered yourself an elite/highly competitive athlete in any of these areas.

12. Do you currently participant in any other physical fitness activities on a regular basis? (Please note type and frequency)

13. Do you feel you are different is some way since you began running? If yes, can you give an example? (Continue on next page if needed.)

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1.   Tell me about how you came to running?

2.   What were you trying to accomplish when you started running?

3.   Why did you choose running over other activities?

4.   How were you able to meet your original goals through running?

5.   What is the actual running experience like for you?

6.   How has running impacted your life in areas beyond the physical dimension?

7.   How does your family and friends support your running?

8.   Can you recall any comments make by friends and or family about you and your running?

9.   How did those comments make you feel?

10.   How would you describe the effects of running in your personal life?

11.   When you run, do you run by yourself or with others?

    1.   If/when you run by yourself what do you think about?

    2.   If/when you run with others, do you talk?

        1.   If you talk, what are examples of topics?

12.   Can you think of another question you would have like me to ask about you and your running?

APPENDIX C

FLYER

Searching for Research Participants for a Doctoral Dissertation:

Using Transformative Learning as a Framework to Explore Women and Running

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this qualitative study is twofold: a) to explore the impact of regular participation in running on women's self perception; and b) t use the lens of transformative learning as a way of understanding the deep perspective shifts adult women may experience from regular participation in running. This research is being conducted by a Pennsylvania State University doctoral student for her dissertation.

Eligibility Requirements:
1. Are you 25 years old or older?
2. Are you female?
3. Do you run regularly? (as defined by The American College of Sports Medicine: 3 -5 times per week for a minimum of 30 minutes most weeks over the course of the year)
4. Have you been regularly participating in running for a minimum of 1 year but not more than 4 years?
5. Do you see yourself differently since you began running?
6. Are you still interested in participating in this study?

If you answered yes to all of the questions, you are eligible to participate in this study.

Participant Requirements:
Participate in one face to face interview with the primary researcher which will be audio recorded and will take approximately two hours. Time and place will be at the convenience of the participant. Following the initial face to face interview, the participant will be asked to review the interview transcript to verify accuracy and to add any additional information that you feel is important. In addition, the researcher will use this opportunity to clarify anything she may have questions about. This follow-up will be done face-to-face or via email or over the phone and should not take more than 1 hour. Interviews and follow-ups will be done during summer and fall of 2010.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please contact the researcher as soon as possible:

Dina Hayduk
218 East Main Street
Kutztown, PA 19530
dina1@fast.net
610-683-8121 (anytime)

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. Your participation will help educators to understand the importance of the influence of the running on women's learning and self perception.

APPENDIX D
IRB FORM

PENN STATE
1855

Title of Project: Using Transformative Learning as a Framework to Explore
Women and Running

Principal Investigator: Dina Hayduk
218 East Main Street
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Penn State Harrisburg; The Capital Campus
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1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this study is twofold: a) to explore the impact of regular participation in running on women's self perception; and b) to use the lens of transformative learning as a way of understanding the deep perspective shifts adult women may experience from regular participation in running.

2. **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to answer a prescreening questionnaire. Following this, those who qualify for the research will be contacted and invited to participate in a face to face interview. Lastly, there will be a follow up interview to review the initial interview transcript for accuracy and add any additional comments, or address any additional questions.

3. **Duration:** It will take about 10 minutes to answer the initial prescreening questionnaire. The first face to face interview will last approximately 2 hours. The follow up interview will last approximately 1 hour.

4. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The survey does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared because your name is in no way linked to your responses.

5. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Dina Hayduk at 610-683-8121with questions or concerns about this study.

6. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 25 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Completion and return of the survey implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to take part in the research. Please keep this form for your records or future reference.

Vita

Dina Hayduk

Education
D.Ed., Adult Education, Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg, 2011
        Dissertation (Chair: Patricia Cranton): Using Transformative Learning as a
        Framework to Explore Women and Running
M.Ed. Health Education, Pennsylvania State University, 1992
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Professional Experience

Instructor: Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA Department of Human Kinetics 1991 to
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Owner: BicyclingWorld.com, 2001 to Present.
Lecturer: Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA Department of Physical Education 1990 to
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Published Research

Smith, J.L., & Hayduk, D.M. (2010). National standards and accreditation: How both
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