ON THE RUN: PERSPECTIVES ON LONG DISTANCE

RUNNING

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to develop a deeper understanding of the experiences of long distance runners. An ethnographic research design was adopted to understand the nature of the social world of long distance runners through interviews and observations which were thematically analysed. The sample comprised twenty five international informants. The key theme emerging from the data was the strength of identification that participants had with the activity of long distance running. This theme was linked to the search for a running identity amongst participants, exploring how meaning was created through engagement with the long distance running social world. In doing so, the study also explored the enduring benefits of the activity and the high levels of effort, perseverance and commitment displayed.

A number of other themes emerged that were seen as consequences of this sense of identification. These included the central role of training and preparing to run, and how this contributed towards participants sense of running identity. This theme included feelings of pain and suffering, confronting problems of injury, and the role of time and space within the participants training regimes. The extraordinary and authentic experiences at long distance running events was a dominant theme incorporating the conflicting emotions of failure and glory, and the importance of travel within the long distance running social world. Feelings of escape and an exploration of the role long distance running fulfilled as a 'third place' outside of the home and work environment were explored, incorporating ideas linked to social relations within the distance running social world. Similarly, the desire to embrace a healthy lifestyle was a central concept, exploring themes linked to seeking self esteem through participation, negative aspects associated with exercise addiction, and the role of the 'running body'. This study provided a series of linked themes exploring the culture of long distance running, and in doing so developed a deeper understanding of the participants running experiences, contributing towards the body of knowledge on the unique social world of the long distance runner.

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This thesis is dedicated firstly to the memory of my Mum who was always supportive towards my obsession with sport; secondly to the encouragement of my sister Kate and the energy and enthusiasm of my niece Keeley and my two nephews Tommy and Max; and thirdly, to my Dad who was ultimately responsible for introducing me to long distance running, and who continues to be a source of inspiration based on his outstanding long distance running achievements.

Chapter One: Introduction

Rationale and Background

The aim of this research is to explore the experiences of long distance runners as active sport participants. This study involved immersion within the long distance running subculture, trying to see the world from the runners' point of view. The challenge, of this study was to gain an understanding of distance running experiences and the meaning they have for the participants, so that a more informed discussion of the sociology of 'active' sport participation and sport-related subcultures can be developed. Using also my own embodied sporting experiences, the study develops a range of detailed 'narratives of the self' (Sparkes, 2000), relating to sport related activity.

My interest in distance running stems from twenty years of participation. This provided ample opportunities for observation in an overt participant role, and also enabled me to gain direct access to interviewees. As an insider within the long distance running community, over a period of years, I became interested in the personal journey that long distance runners undertake when they participate and train for distance running events. I also became increasingly interested in the barriers (both physical and psychological) they face and how they strive to overcome them. At the time of commencing this study, some of these obstacles had a close synergy with the challenges that I was experiencing as an active sports participant. As Brewer (2000) notes, the researcher's interest shapes research and must not be overlooked. My interest in this subject is a reflection of my own personal experiences of long distance running, which has also helped to shape the lines of enquiry pursued in data collection as they became another source of data.

The first major stage of data collection began in December 2006 at a seven day International Festival of Running in Cyprus and ended in November 2008 upon completion of the Athens Classic Marathon in Greece. In the two year period between the start and conclusion of data collection, a diverse range of long distance running events were observed and interviews took place at both events and within the structure of a running club environment. This was also supported by weekly observational studies. Runners' experiences were therefore captured over a prolonged period of time, in a diverse range of local, national and international

environments. The primary outcome of this study will contribute towards a better knowledge of the diverse experiences of long distance runners as active sport participants, and thus to develop a deeper understanding of the culture of one significant sporting 'social world', that of long distance running.

Relevance of the Research Topic

This study examines the increasing popularity of long distance running, exploring the experiences of those participants engaging in physical activity and healthy living. People in more and more countries are taking up running, to an extent that would have been unexpected half-a-century ago (Bale, 2004). Sport contributes to health and to the quality of life, and the health and well-being of the nation remains one of the most contemporary and controversial issues in Britain. In this study, long distance running, 'jogging', recreational walking and other similar activities are examined as integral positive contributors towards achieving government objectives linked to tackling obesity levels, healthy living, physical and mental health and well-being, and increased leisure participation and recreational activity (DoH, 2004). This topic is all the more important for public health agencies in the UK and other countries, given that millions of amateurs currently run long distances on a regular, casual basis (Runners World, 2006). Distance running is also unusual, though not unique, in that it demands a continuousness of effort rarely found in other sports (Smith, 2000). It has been suggested that the most visible leisure activity since the 1970's has been long distance running (Yair, 1990). It began as a 'jogging' fad in the 1970's, but since then millions of people have joined the running boom on roads and in parks around the world. From beginning as an elite sport, long distance running has now become open to all. This is even more noticeable in recent years with the increased popularity amongst female participants, which has been assisted with the national profile of the Cancer Research UK '*Race for Life*' charity runs and other mass participation events, such as the London Marathon.

In recent years expressions such as "Got your number 118" or "Run Forrest Run" remain cries of abuse frequently directed at long distance runners, as they train. Whilst this is testament to the effectiveness of advertising campaigns and Hollywood movies, it also illustrates how the status of long distance running has changed. There is a growing acceptance, and increase in the popularity of long distance running as a form of physical

activity. The public perception of running as a health promoting activity is important in many respects. From a government health perspective or even the perspective of marketing and business, running as a leisure activity can potentially attract companies wanting to associate their products with a healthy lifestyle (Burfoot, 2003). Event sponsorship is one example of this. In recent years, it has become increasingly difficult to enter certain races due to the rising popularity of long distance running, which has resulted in the race limits being reached months in advance. For example, the London Marathon, New York Marathon and even regional events across the country like the Great North Run in Newcastle or the Portsmouth Great South Run are significantly oversubscribed (Runners World, 2009). Distance runners are now accepted as a significant sporting interest group in society. Exercise has increasingly been seen as an important facet of a 'healthy society' (Abbas, 2004), with sport providing many of the activities through which it is hoped that this can be achieved. This study suggests that qualitative studies of leisure practices like long distance running, and the knowledge that underpin them, can inform our understanding of the relationship between health promotion and physical activity. Further investigation should be based on a qualitative exploration of the values that can be promoted through the spread of long distance running, as an increasingly popular leisure activity.

From a practitioner's perspective, a better understanding of the experiences of sport and leisure participant experiences will allow sport and leisure organisations, government departments and other stakeholders to gain further knowledge and cater to the needs and wants of their clients. The reality is that not everyone will become an Olympic standard athlete; however, a large percentage of the general public could participate in activities such as recreational walking or running, at whatever level of ability, as a form of regular physical activity. This research into a deeper understanding of the experiences of long distance runners aims to contribute towards perspectives on health and fitness. Both Gibson (2005) and Weed (2005) suggest that research on active sport participants needs to move beyond the descriptive and provide us with a deeper, richer understanding of why sport participants 'do what they do'. The same is applicable to understanding *why* long distance runners do what they do. In fact, despite the growth of ethnographic studies within the sociology of sport, little analytical attention has been paid to actually *"doing"* sporting activity (Allen Collinson, 2008). This study makes a contribution towards knowledge in this area.

In the domain of sport, ethnography has previously been used successfully to explore lived experiences (e.g. Klein, 1991, 1993; Beal, 1995; Sugden, 1996; Mennesson, 2000; Tsang, 2000; Wheaton, 2000; Allen Collinson and Hockey, 2001; Sands, 2002; Sparkes, 2002; Granskog, 2003; McCarville, 2007; Sugden, 2007; Allen Collinson, 2008; Atkinson, 2008), displaying a form of representation that extends understanding of sport. This study adds to the body of knowledge in the area of sport, and examines some conceptual tools that could be applied to aid in the goal of understanding and exploring the meaning of sporting participation. There is a need to move beyond profiling sports participants to further understand these profiles. The findings of many studies have arisen out of practitioners' desires to illustrate that sport can bring positive benefits. In the context of long distance, there have been several quantitative studies exploring recreational and marathon running (Carmack and Martens, 1979; Clough et al, 1989; Masters and Lambert, 1989; Masters and Ogles, 1995; Masters, Ogles and Jolton, 1993; Ogles et al, 1995; Ogles and Masters, 2003; Masters and Richardson, 1995; Summers, Machin and Sargent, 1983; Thornton and Scott, 1995; Vitulli and DePace, 1992). In contrast to these quantitative based studies, there is a need to critically examine much of the existing body of sport research and set out a challenge to many of the underlying assumptions, through a more detailed ethnographic methodology.

This study adopts a style of research, ethnography, which is distinguished by its objectives which are to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given 'field' (Brewer, 2000). In this case, it is the exploration of the world of the long distance runner as a sport and leisure participant. This chosen approach involves close association with, and 'active' participation in, this setting. Fetterman's (2010:1) reference to Lao-tzu's comment that 'a journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step', is pertinent for this study for two reasons. Firstly, at the start of this study, I was just beginning my own research journey, which focused on understanding the experiences of long distance runners as active sport participants; and secondly, any run, whatever the distance, must begin with a single step.

This study aims to move beyond the domain of sport studies, with a focus that is within core social science disciplines. For example, this study looks at concepts that originate in sociology and social anthropology and cultural studies. Telling stories is important in terms of belonging and identity in terms of creating a sense of kinship / togetherness, and establishing myths of the running groups. I examine how meaning and identity are created

through engagement with the long distance running world, concepts such as belonging based upon the running culture (i.e. dress and language), the notion of community, boundary maintenance, ritual (running participants training and preparations), and myths (stories told by long distance runners). Many of these concepts stem from social anthropology.

Major city marathons and international multi-day running events have changed the perception of distance running amongst the general public, and led to an increase in demand for running-related sporting activity (Shipway and Jones, 2008a)[1]. For participants, long distance running and participation in running events is an activity for ordinary, but determined people. For many, running has become a hobby, an enthusiasm, an obsession and for many, a life-changing experience. In the words of the 1956 triple Olympic gold medallist, Emil Zatopek, quoted in Bryant (2005:47), "If you want to win something, run 100 metres, but if you want to experience something, run a marathon". It was Bale (1994) who advocated that running is an almost spiritual, sensual and poetic experience which can enhance the participants' quality of life. This study explores whether the very act of competing and completing running events, irrespective of time and finishing position, has become a rite of passage for a new breed of long distance running participants. Therefore, the relevance of this research lies in the observation that the health of the nation is an increasingly important issue in society and an area of interest to both leisure based industry practitioners and stakeholders tasked with implementing successive government physical activity and healthy lifestyle initiatives; and that long distance running, as a form of physical activity, can make a positive contribution towards addressing some of this issues.

Run for Life: My Position in the Research

Like many, I discovered running by accident. I used to play football, until a major injury cut short my football career and my attention turned to long distance running, initially as a means of staying fit and healthy whilst at University. At school, I hated long distance running, despite being good at it, and my school day recollections are of freezing cold afternoons running around muddy fields. Twenty five years later, I am able to write this study as an opportunity to reflect on what running means to me, and what it also means to the twenty five

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[1] Throughout this study, the three terms 'long distance running'; 'distance running', and 'running' will be interspersed. Further elaboration is provided on Page 47 of this study.

international informants who assisted with the study. For the majority of the runners interviewed within the distance running social world, going for a run has become a habit, as important in their daily routine as having a cup of tea or coffee in the morning. Although my own experiences are part of the study, I have attempted to put aside my assumptions and approached my participants with an open mind.

On a personal level, running is important, as it provides me with solitude, and an escape from everyday routines, and through completion of various marathon events, it has helped to provide the confidence that I can achieve whatever private or academic targets that I choose to set for myself. The reward is correlated to the amount of effort that is put in, and like many aspects of daily life, long distance running is often a competition with oneself. Running is a leisure activity that allows participants to be completely alone, and even amongst 35,000 runners at a major city marathon, it is possible to find the time to challenge the fatigue and discover a clearer perspective of who we truly are. Long distance running provides an outlet for both self-pride and self-discipline which has translated across to other aspects of my life. My own experience provided impetus for the study and an additional source of data.

Running is a simple sport. It requires very limited equipment – a T-shirt, shorts and a pair of running shoes. We all know how to do it, people can run almost anywhere, at any time, and for as little or as long as they like. The basic act of putting one foot in front of the other is blurred by a series of questions, myths and confusion, which this study aims to explore from inside the culture of long distance running. Despite the apparent simplicity of long distance running, the findings of this research will illustrate the complexity and challenges involved in participating, and highlight that long distance running has developed from more than just a casual leisure activity to a complex, active element of a healthy lifestyle choice.

Long distance running also leads to a diverse range of experiences that enhance the lives of participants. On a personal level, I was reflecting on this when on a plane, as a song came on the in-flight entertainment system. The song was entitled *'Run for Life'* by the American singer Melissa Etheridge. The context of the song was most certainly not written for long distance running, in fact it was written for a cancer based charity running event in America, but the words certainly *'ran'* true in the context of some participants' responses within this study. Many of the participants in this study can relate to these sentiments, when applied to

running, and what it has added to their lives. This is supported by Murakami (2008) who suggests that it is far better to live life with clear goals and alive than in a fog, which running helps facilitate. He argues that exerting oneself to the fullest within individual limits is the essence of long distance running and a metaphor for life. In line with other qualitative research, the observations present my own perceptions and interpretations. The aim is not to make claims of fact, but to illustrate what this ethnographic study has allowed me to observe and experience from within the long distance running community.

The level of training involved in long distance running, and preparation for events is clearly beyond what is necessary to acquire the basic health benefits of regular exercise (Ogles and Masters, 2003) and in many cases observations and interviews indicated that work, meal, family and social schedules are often organised (or re-organised) to accommodate the activity. Additionally, other recreational activities are frequently missed and time with family and friends is likely to be reduced. Ogles and Masters suggest that few human activities have the magnitude of potential costs of distance running (fatigue, illness, injury, poor performance etc) with such uncertain outcomes from the events. Yet, many people engage in long distance running events on a regular basis, and train on a daily basis. In the context of this research, this paradox generates a series of interesting questions, such as what motivates individuals to endure the apparent punishment of training for and participating in distance running events, especially the marathon distance? This knowledge will be useful in encouraging participation in all types of exercise, not just long distance running.

Biddle and Mutrie (2003) highlight the growing number of people who have sedentary jobs, do little work around the house or garden, and are largely sedentary in their leisure-time. To address the challenge of an increasingly sedentary population, public health authorities are moving beyond an understanding of the physiological adaptations towards exercise. Whilst this study does document the health hazards of a sedentary way of life, it seeks to move towards an understanding of the motivations, behaviour patterns and experiences of sporting participants by turning attention to the behavioural and social aspects of physical activity. In doing so, this study begins to explore the potential for increasing access to the long distance running social world, through an ethnographic examination of the experiences of participants. There is a growing recognition by health and medical authorities world-wide that exercise, running being one possible example, is critical to health and well-being (Biddle and Mutrie, 2003). This has led to world-wide national policies and strategies to promote exercise among

the general public. In recent years, it would also appear there has been a shift towards a broader acceptance of the importance of lifestyle activity for health (Department of Health, 2004).

Frequently, long distance runners are asked what they feel, or what they think about whilst running, which is linked to the central aspect of this study which is developing a deeper understanding of long distance running experiences. Usually people who ask these questions do not run long distances themselves. Upon reflection, when running, I don't have to talk or listen to anybody; it is an opportunity to just gaze at the scenery whilst running past (Urry, 2002). This study will illustrate that many of the participants will continue running in their own comfortable, quiet, nostalgic running world, an experience which I appear to share with those informants who have contributed towards this study and this 'running journey'.

Long Distance Running: The Literature

Sport and Leisure roles contribute to health and to the qualities of life (Yair, 1990). Therefore, understanding the underlying experiences of the commitment to these roles continues to gain in importance. It is not immediately clear or obvious why anyone would run on a regular basis, yet each year in the UK and around the globe, participant levels continue to increase amongst registered running events (Runners World, 2008). The training is a serious undertaking, which is explored in great detail during the course of this study. To participate in many of the events covered in this research requires months of preparation with lengthy training sessions, much of which is clearly beyond what is necessary to acquire the basic health benefits of regular exercise (Ogles and Masters, 2003), and even that the demands of work, meals, family and social schedules are often organized to accommodate running. In many cases, other sporting and recreational activities can be lost and time with family and friends can be reduced. This study will also explore some of the physical and psychological challenges involved in distance running including pain, injury and the uncertainty of outcome that often results from distance running. A central part of this study is to understand the paradoxical situation of what motivates runners to endure the apparent punishment of training and racing in distance running events, and the resulting experiences, which make it such a unique and rewarding experience.

Ogles and Masters (2003) suggest that marathon runners are not a homogeneous group and are often driven by varying motives, and that health concerns may be of primary importance to some while social considerations are important for others. The Ogles and Masters study adopted a quantitative, cluster analysis approach to exploring motivations of marathon runners, whilst it is the aim of this study to explore the deeper experiences of distance runners. Similarly, a previous study by Masters, Ogles and Jolton (1993) developed a Motivations of Marathoners Scale (MOMS) which explored four broad categories of motives for participating in a marathon. These studies, whilst insightful into the long distance running culture were statistical and failed to address the underlying reasons for becoming long distance runners and the deeper meaning that the experience of running had for them.

The positive effects of exercise in activities such as distance running, have led to an increase in those participating, and Martinsen and Morgan (1997) suggest that despite few controlled studies, there is also sufficient evidence to support exercise as an anti-depressant for many people. Both Raglin (1997) and Morris and Salmon (1994) suggest that acute vigorous exercise can lead to reduction in anxiety, and that runners experience a decreased negative mood and an increased positive mood just after a run. In contrast, other authors emphasize the negative impacts of running, resulting in negative addiction, whereby distance runners use this regular form of physical activity to help them cope with daily stresses, just as some people turn to alcohol or drugs (Leedy, 2003). It is suggested that some distance runners also experience withdrawal when they are unable to run (Morgan, 1979). In contrast, Nash (1979) indicates that distance running and participation in races is an eventful and rewarding experience for every runner, regardless of age, gender or level of ability. These races are social gatherings. Nash argues that distance running provides a dual function – it both promotes a person's health, and also gives meaning to their lives.

Robertson and Babic (2009) developed a deeper understanding on the experiences of walkers and hikers in Croatia, and the social dynamics involved with walking as a leisure time activity. They identified five key themes – nature and being outdoors, mental benefits, physical benefits, interacting with others and interaction with self. Parallels exist between some of their findings and the experiences of long distance runners, most notably their 'experience of mental and physical benefits' category. This includes the mention of stress relief, relaxation and a sense of escape. The activity of walking is very different to long distance running, but the parallels with the personal, internal experience within the individual

as they interact with the people and environment around them is similar. The authors also make a similar observation to my thoughts on the important role of running: in modern society leisure time is compromised in modern busy lives, and running or walking can provide a simple way to participate in exercise or activities that can promote health. Several of the authors mentioned above advocate that long distance running and recreational walking are simple and healthy antidotes for the problems of modern life. The results of this study will explore these ideas in greater depth.

Smith (1998:176) makes a distinction amongst long distance runners and develops a basic typology of runners, which will be familiar to insiders within the long distance running social world. This distinction, now briefly outlined, plays an important role in understanding the participants involved in this study. The first type of runners are (1) *athletes* − elite runners who are potential race winners; (2) *runners*, who 'run and train, week in and week out, at levels far in excess of that required for basic physical fitness, yet stand no realistic chance of winning, or doing well in *any* race' (Allen Collinson and Hockey, 2007:47); and (3) *joggers / fun runners*, who train infrequently, and only if the weather is fair, and race even more infrequently, if at all. Under this categorisation, all the participants in this study fall into the first two categories, partially a reflection of their commitment and involvement in the activity of long distance running. 'Committed' involvement in distance running mirrors Stebbins's (2001) concept of 'serious leisure', which is discussed below.

Alternatively, Sheehan (1978) classifies long distance runners into three groups − joggers, racers and runners. This classification was on the basis of their motivations for running, and he contends that joggers were very different from runners. Joggers are those that preach the gospel of jogging for health and longevity purposes. Sheehan argues that as soon as joggers enter races, they become racers and enter a new world, where the sole concern is performance with the desire to run faster. He suggests that racing does for the mind what jogging does for the body. The race provides the fear, the excitement, the physical challenge from which our modern, repetitive, unchallenging nine-to-five lives have sheltered us (Noakes, 2003). Ultimately, the jogger / racer may evolve into a 'runner' who is unconcerned about the health aspects of running and whose psyche no longer needs the challenge of the race. Noakes indicates that the runner runs to mediate, to create and to become whole. In summary, Sheehan (1978:287) writes "Running is finally seeing everything in perspective....Running is the fusion of body, mind and soul in that beautiful relaxation that joggers and racers find so

difficult to achieve". These aspects of running and other experiences will be explored from within the unique and distinct social world of the long distance runner. Interestingly, the concept of 'subculture' has emerged regularly within the sport literature relating to running (e.g. Yair, 1990; Smith, 1998, 2000). In this study, elements relating to the distinctive norms, values and behaviours of distance running are particularly salient. Prus (1996:85) offers a useful definition and one that is also used in the existing distance running literature by Allen Collinson and Hockey (2007):

> *The term subculture signifies a way of life of a group of people. Denoting communities within communities, subcultures are characterised by interaction, continuity, and outsider and insider definitions of distinctiveness....it is useful to envision subcultures with respect to the perspectives (or world views) characterizing their members, the identities people achieve as participants, the activities deemed consequential in that context, the bonds participants develop with one another, and the sorts of commitments the people involved make with respect to the setting at hand*

This description has particular relevance to the unique social world of the long distance runner. Allen Collinson and Hockey (2007) identify that within the running subculture, certain values, dispositions and characteristics are highly valorized, including the qualities of stoicism and endurance. They suggest that the praxis of distance running is intimately connected with endurance; tolerating fatigue, discomfort and pain constitute an integral part of everyday training routines. The next section will explore the concept of 'Serious Leisure', and establish that one of the six distinctive qualities is of particular relevance to the long distance running social world and underpins much of this study; a strong sense of identification that participants have with the activity. The study will then explore how runners describe themselves in terms of the very act of running, and how they view long distance running as providing a social identity with emotional and value significance.

'Serious Leisure' and Long Distance Running

The term 'Serious Leisure' was introduced by Stebbins to describe leisure activities that are 'sufficiently substantial and interesting in nature for the participant to find a career there, acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge and experience' (Stebbins 1992:3). This provides a framework by which leisure could be acknowledged to be more substantial than as simply 'free time' or 'free choice', = conceptualizations of limited value (Stebbins, 2007). Serious leisure is defined by six distinctive qualities, these being:

1. A need to persevere, and negotiate constraints to participation, for example overcoming failure or difficulties encountered during the activity.

2. The development of a long-term 'career' within the activity, involving progression through special contingencies, turning points, rewards, and stages of achievement or involvement, for example progression from novice to intermediate events, or the mastery of a particular element of the activity.

3. The use of significant effort to undertake the activity, based upon specialist skills, knowledge or ability, such as an understanding of technique, training, or strategy.

4. The durable benefits that accrue as a result of participation. These include benefits such as those relating to self-esteem, self-actualization, self-expression, and social interaction.

5. The unique ethos, related to the 'social world' (Unruh, 1980) of the participants, demonstrated, for example, through distinctive dress, language and behaviour, for example the dress and language specific to their activity (Green & Jones, 2005).

6. The strong sense of identification that participants' have with the activity. Thus, individuals' will describe themselves in terms of that activity, and view the activity as providing them with a social identity with emotional and value significance (Tajfel, 1972).

Serious leisure can be contrasted with 'casual leisure', or leisure that does not possess Stebbins' six qualities, such as watching TV, or going for a walk. The concept of *Serious Leisure* has been applied to a variety of contexts. In the context of sports participation and

tourism activity Kane and Zink (2004) examined the experiences of kayakers, demonstrating how such participants became embedded within their own social world during the trip, which, in itself, was a significant marker in terms of the 'career progression' of participants. Using the serious leisure framework, they were able to describe the social world of adventure kayakers, although with limited explanation of the reasons why participants behaved in the ways that they did. This limitation is arguably a consequence of the concept of Serious Leisure, in that it is largely a descriptive tool, rather than providing an explanatory framework. It therefore fails to tackle the issues of why Serious Leisure participants behave as they do. The need to understand, as well as describe sporting behaviour was addressed to some extent by a study from Shipway and Jones (2007) who explored distance runners' perspectives competing in a four day international event in Cyprus. That study identified the need to focus upon the social identities of participants to develop an understanding of their subsequent behaviours. This was a point also addressed by Jones (2006), who suggested that by conceptualizing Serious Leisure as leisure that provides the participant with a valued social identity, and focusing upon this single defining characteristic, rather than the six outlined by Stebbins, a more effective framework with which to explain both the attraction of certain activities, as well as the subsequent behaviour of individuals taking part in such activities is provided.

As specified above, there are six distinctive qualities associated with *Serious Leisure*, some of which are more prevalent within the long distance running social world. Serious Leisure usually involves some form of perseverance through the activity, which is the case in distance running. Whilst a serious rugby union fan might persevere through times of inconsistent form from their team, a serious distance runner will often persevere through injury or other challenges. This is contrasted with casual leisure activities such as listening to music or watching TV where the need for perseverance is limited. A second characteristic of Serious Leisure is the development of a long-term 'career through the chosen leisure pursuit of the participant, which is also a characteristic evident in the distance running social world. In the long distance running context, the term 'career' refers to the progression throughout the activity in terms of experiencing special contingencies, turning points and stages of achievement or involvement (Stebbins, 2001). This is illustrated by Green and Jones (2005) through the development of a golfing 'career', which might start at the basic level of participation, such as practising on a driving range and then progress to playing on a course,

to achieving a high handicap and then reducing that handicap. This might then lead to the golfer receiving tuition or playing at iconic golfing venues, and can be contrasted with casual leisure activities, whereby it is unlikely that similar career stages will be demonstrated in activities such as going to the cinema or reading. My study will explore the development of long distance running careers from the initial introduction to the activity of running that progress towards participation in marathons and other equally challenging events which require dedication and commitment to the activity that far exceeds the basic requirements of health and fitness.

A third characteristic is that significant personal effort is required to undertake the activity, which is certainly the case within the distance running community. Stebbins (2007) suggests that certain skills or knowledge are acquired through the activity and there could be a need to exert high levels of effort in the preparation for, as well as the participation in the activity. Green and Jones (2005) illustrate this through two examples – firstly the committed sports fan who seeks to understand the history of the sport and the serious hill walker who develops an understanding of navigation or weather conditions. This sub theme will be explored within the distance running world and whether this acquisition of knowledge and skills can be based on a long-term effort by the running participant to understand distance running and gather information from books, specialist magazines, or running peers.

The fourth characteristic of Serious Leisure is the range of durable benefits that are a result of participation (Stebbins, 2001). It is suggested that Serious Leisure may result in one or more of the following: the enhancement of the self-concept, self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-expression, feelings of accomplishment, enhanced self-image and self-esteem, and social interaction (Green and Jones, 2005). The leisure activity can also lead to a durable physical benefit. Several of these ideas will be explored during this study, and within the context of long distance running the findings can be contrasted with casual leisure, where a sense of enjoyment or entertainment will be the main outcome.

The fifth characteristic is that of the unique ethos which exists within the activity. Unruh (1980) indicates that a central part of this ethos is the *social world* that participants become part of. Green and Jones (2005) suggest that serious leisure participants belong to a clearly

identifiable group with its own norms, values, behaviours and even language. They use various examples to illustrate these distinct social worlds, including surfers, snowboarders, skateboarders and kayakers. It is suggested that these social worlds are clearly recognizable examples of this unique ethos. It may be difficult for non-participants to enter this world and casual participants are generally unlikely to gain access.

Having immersed myself within the social world of the long distance runner, I am attempting to provide an insight into the sixth characteristic, the unique identity of the distance runner, and this study is an addition to previous studies which were quantitative in nature. Studies on long distance running have yet to fully explore areas such as social interaction, sporting identity, serious competition, preparing for events or the health related aspects of running in any depth, and as such, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge. This membership of the long distance running social world is closely related to the sixth characteristic of Serious Leisure; that of the subsequent social identification with the activity, and this theme emerges as a central component throughout this study. The following section will explore the role and qualities of social identities and how they provide the individual with a sense of belonging or membership to a wider social group, a place within that environment, and the subsequent opportunity to use membership of that group to enhance feelings of self-worth and self-esteem (Green and Jones, 2005). Whilst Stebbins' serious leisure framework has pertinence for long distance running, some characteristics have more impact, and this is largely due to the unique interaction of the distance runner (the individual), the running environment (the running places) and the activity (running).

A Social Identity Approach to Distance Running

From the very beginning of the research it became clear that long distance running was related to issues of identity, the development of a 'running identity' and a particular view of self. To develop a deeper understanding of the sense of 'belonging' that exists within the distance running social world, in places this study utilizes the framework based upon theories of social identity and identification, as advocated by Tajfel (1972, 1982) and Tajfel and Turner (1986). In its broadest form, an identity is often a statement about who we are, a symbolic way to display information about ourselves, our tastes and choices in Sport (in this instance), and the groups to which we belong. Jones (1998) suggests that the question of self-

definition, that of "Who I am", or that of the self-concept, is always of importance to the individual. Jones indicates that the answers to this question are based upon the concept of identity or the interpretation of that identity by participants themselves, or by how that participant understands others interpret them.

Identity theory tries to establish the link between individual (psychological) and group (sociological) approaches by examining the inter-relationships between the two. By establishing this link, such an approach acknowledges that 'membership' of a group, such as a running community or social world, has social, as well as psychological elements, which is an important concept within social identity theory. Social identity theory is an appropriate framework to support elements of this study of distance runners since it acknowledges the inter-relationship of the runner both as an individual (the participant) and the group to which that individual belongs (more often than not as a member of a running club, as will be explored further in the results section of this study). The concept of social identity has been explored by various authors (most notably for this study are Tajfel, 1972, 1981, 1982; Hogg and Abrams, 1988; Abrams and Hogg, 1990; Turner, 1991). Social identity is defined by Tajfel (1972:292) as:

> *[t]he individual's knowledge that he / she belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him / her of the group membership.*

Since this early definition, the concept of social identity has become one of the main theoretical frameworks in social psychology for analyzing the relationship between collective self, group processes, group membership and inter group relations (Hogg, 2001).

Jones (1998, adapted from Kelly, 1993) identifies two forms of interpretation of the self. The first is '*social identity*' as applied to the individual's perception of how others define that person in a role context. For example, whether they feel that others see them as being part of a group, such as being a member of a running club, and fulfil the role expectations linked to such a position. This social element is referred to by Mead (1968) as the "me" aspect of the self. It is the identity gained through interaction with others, and for example, it would be that referred to if an individual would state "I am a member of this particular running club", and thus, related to the individual's personal identity. The second cognitive form of identity is the '*personal identity*', a term referring to the individual's self-definition. For example, how

the individual sees themselves in a certain situation, such as "I am someone who likes to run in the evening". Mead (1968) highlights that the "I" is the unique self-defining individuality, and allows individuals to think consciously about themselves (Leary, 1995).

In social identity theory, a social identity is a person's knowledge that they belong to a social category or group (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). Much of social identity theory deals with inter group relations and how people perceive themselves as members of one group / category (the in-group) in comparison with another (the out-group). Having a certain social identity (in this case as a long distance runner) indicates a sense of belonging to a certain group, seeing events from the group perspectives and being like other members in the group. This 'group' based identity, which underpins much of this study, suggests a degree of synergy and common understanding among group / category members.

Whilst exploring the identity literature, I was led to the work of Weiss (2001) and the concept of identity reinforcement in sport. Sport provides a vital social dimension, since it combines self-recognition with social recognition. Weiss suggests that sport is a social subsystem that offers the potential of establishing and reinforcing identity, which are explored in greater depth in the findings of this study. Social identity theory suggests that people do not purely relate to each other as isolated, independent individuals, but rather membership of a social group, and being seen by others to be a member of a group (such as being a member of a running club), is an important mediator of an individual's cognitive, affective and behavioural processes (Jones, 1998). These processes have important consequences for the individual's personal identity, self-concept and self-esteem (Tajfel, 1972, 1981, 1982; Turner 1975, 1982). Therefore, the individual's sense of "who they are" is influenced by the activities they take part in, and how they perceive others see that individual within those roles that are adopted, such as being a long distance runner (Mead, 1968; Jones, 1998).

Social identity theory has gained increasing prominence in terms of its ability to explain group behaviour in a variety of contexts (Jones, 2006), focusing its analysis upon the group, rather than the individual or interpersonal level (Thoits & Virshup, 1997). As identified previously, social identity theory, in essence, focuses upon the importance of individuals defining themselves in terms of the groups to which they belong ('we') rather than their own personal characteristics ('I'). Two cognitive processes underpin the possession of a social

identity. Firstly, individuals *categorise* themselves through identifying meaningful characteristics of the group, and subsequently associating with such characteristics to become part of the 'in-group'. Social identities are achieved when individuals categorise themselves into groups based upon their own 'social reality', even if the actual basis for defining the group itself is tenuous. Secondly, *self-enhancement* focuses members' attention upon attributes of the group that favour the in-group over out-groups. Individuals generally seek positive and distinctive social identities (Abrams & Hogg 1990), and as such are motivated in ways to achieve this, such as raising the standing of the in-group, selectively focusing on criteria that enhance the group's standing, or to focus on out-groups that are perceived as less attractive or valued. This focus on comparison is the third element of social identification. Membership of such groups is generally prescriptive, in that a social identity prescribes the attributes of its members, and members tend to self-regulate their behaviour to correspond with the norms and values of the group (Hogg, et al, 1995), based upon prototypes, or "context specific, multidimensional, fuzzy sets of attributes that define and prescribe attitudes, feelings and behaviours that characterise one group" (Hogg, 2001, p.187).

Prototypes are generally consistent across group members (Hogg, et al, 1995), suggesting that group membership should, theoretically at least, lead to similar behaviours amongst group members. One important element that affirms membership of a group is the collection of forms of capital valued by the group itself. Status as a member may often be dependent upon the collection of such capital, and its presentation to others within the group (Donnelly & Young, 1988). Such capital is specific to the values and norms of the group. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1984) concept of cultural capital, Thornton (1995) coined the term, 'sub-cultural capital' referring to the value of individuals' knowledge, credibility, and identification with a subculture.

Social identities are important for a number of reasons. They provide the individual with a sense of belonging, a valued place within their social environment, a means to connect to others, and the opportunity to use valued identities to enhance self-worth and self-esteem. 'Casual' leisure (such as taking part in a casual sporting activity) is unlikely to provide a significant social identity (Stebbins, 2001). However, serious leisure activities, for instance competing in a sporting event such as the New York City Marathon, have the potential to do so (Green & Jones, 2005), with travel to take part in sporting activities likely to make the

sporting identity more salient (Shipway & Jones, 2007). Once the individual has a social identity, then there may be a reciprocal relationship between this identity and Stebbins' other five defining characteristics of Serious Leisure, in that these five defining characteristics are, to some extent, an outcome of the valued social identity. In return, the social identity itself is reinforced by each of the characteristics. This framework allows the behaviours of participants to be both described and, more importantly, explained. This study develops this idea, probing the concepts of social identity in relation to long distance running and in particular at running events. It is during such events, where participants are immersed within a social group that such social identities are likely to be more salient (Thoits & Virshup, 1997). Linked to the importance of both the running club and running events as places to enhance running identities, the sense of place is examined as an important part of the distance running social world.

Long Distance Running and the 'Third Place'

The concept of 'third place' was developed by Oldenburg (1989). 'Third places' are places where individuals can relax and recuperate away from the first two places - home and work/school. According to Oldenburg, the loss of such third places has been a key factor in changing leisure behaviour away from being socially based, and towards a culture of home centred consumption of television, video and the internet. This privatisation of leisure has contributed towards a subsequent reduction in social capital and citizenship. Therefore, it has been suggested (Oldenburg, 1989) that the restoration of old third places, or the creation of new ones, may enhance our sense of community and social capital. Although nearly all of the limited literature on 'third places' refers to their apparent decline, this study investigates the growth in one particular leisure activity, long distance running, and investigates the extent to which the growth in the popularity of casual recreational, mass participation running, or more 'serious running', could be seen as fulfilling the need for a third place for recreational participants. This study explores the culture of the social world of distance running, and in doing so begins to develop an understanding of the experiences of the long distance runner.

Sociability has been defined as a driven state (Kenen, 1982) or an inherent need for collective involvement (Irwin, 1977). The relationship between sociability and mental health was suggested by Wiseman (1979:23) when she observed that "people, regardless of where they

live, need a certain amount of close interpersonal interaction to develop socially and will determinedly seek out such relationships for their continuing psychic survival". Similarly, Melnick (1993) suggests that social contacts are made more on the basis of civility than genuine interest: family ties become less important; neighbourhood relationships become more tenuous; and old, traditional cultures are severely weakened. Melnick (1993) makes reference to *The Pursuit of Loneliness*, Philip Slater's (1990) critique of American culture which argues that three basic needs of humankind – community, engagement, and dependency – are suppressed by an almost fanatical commitment to individualism, that is, the belief that everyone should pursue their own destiny autonomously.

Oldenburg (1989) suggests that many of the problems faced by society are - partially, at least - as a consequence of the decline in places where such social connections can be formed and maintained other than at home or at work. He indicates that we are experiencing a decline in social capital, which is unfortunate given that strong social capital is strongly linked to low crime, increased quality of life, and sense of community. Changes in society linked to safety, especially of women, children and the elderly, have marginalised parks and other outdoor leisure spaces, especially at night. City centres have developed into no-go zones for those unwilling to socialise in loud pubs and restaurants, especially with the difficulties of returning home late on public transport. Over-reliance upon the car to travel long distances to places of work, shopping centres and other leisure places has reduced the chance of day to day informal meetings, or meetings with others after work. These factors, combined with the growing privatisation of sport and leisure mean that we are arguably losing our day to day contact with others on a social level. For many, social interaction must therefore take place either at home or at work, the 'first' and 'second' places, rather than what Oldenburg refers to as the 'third place'. As Oldenburg (1989 p. 9) argues:

> *"We do not have that third realm of satisfaction and social cohesion beyond the portals of home and work that for others is an essential element of the good life. Our comings and goings are more restricted to the home and work settings, and those two spheres have become pre-emptive. Multitudes shuffle back and forth between the 'womb' and the 'rat race' in a constricted pattern of daily life".*

This arena for satisfaction and social cohesion is the third place. The existence of third places is important for two main reasons. Firstly, the capacity of work and home life to fulfil

people's social requirements has been exceeded, and secondly, third places are important to the maintenance of social capital. To clarify further, the 'third place' was a term introduced by Oldenburg (1989) to describe what could be termed 'social condensers', or places where people could meet for social interaction, most notably in the form of conversation. They are the located away from the first (home) and second (work or school) places. They are not just an escape from life's duties, but more an integral part of healthy daily life, contributing strongly to social capital and citizenship. Oldenburg has identified a number of characteristics of an idealised third place, all of which it could be suggested have relevance within the long distance running social world. For the purposes of this study, seven of these characteristics are highlighted. Firstly, third places are neutral locations; no one has the role of host or guest. Thus people can drop in and out of such places without the pressures of having to provide for or take care of others. For example, this could be a long training run as part of a group at the weekend, or participating in regular club runs or races. Within a third place there is no class structure - a third place provides an opportunity for all to interact apart without reference to social roles or class. Third places allow social circles to be expanded, rather than restricted, by emphasising qualities that are not based on such exclusive criteria as class or income, but on more inclusive measures. Class is irrelevant – long distance running is a common bond between individuals from contrasting social backgrounds. Another characteristic is that conversation and social interaction are the main activities in a third place. An important characteristic of a third place is that individuals are able to go there alone at most times of the day, and be assured that they will be welcome, and that there will be others there for the purposes of social interaction. It is an accessible place.

An additional characteristic is that a third place acts as a 'home away from home' where people are regenerated, restored and experience "freedom" (or perceived freedom). Oldenburg uses the term 'home' as referring to a congenial environment, using terms such as freedom, warmth, and not having a sense of intrusion. A final characteristic suggests that a third place is a means of keeping people in tune with the social world. As a consequence of their conversation, they are informed of the latest developments in the world around them. The recent emergence of internet websites, distance running chat sites and blogs with organizations like 'Runners World' or 'Fetcheveryone.com', club newsletters and trade publications keep participants aware of latest developments in the long distance running social world. A third place will not necessarily have all of these characteristics; however it will be a place where social interaction can occur. In Britain, the traditional places have been

the public house, cafes, parks, playgrounds, churches and other such social meeting points that fulfil the criteria of being a third place. This study suggests that the long distance running event or distance running club can fulfil a selection of the criteria which Oldenburg previously outlined.

An interesting element of the Oldenburg study is the suggestion that we are losing our third places, and subsequently our communal cohesiveness. This has, according to Oldenburg, major implications for the well being of society. The decline in third places leads to a decline in shared identities other than those related to the work or family. The consequence of this is a decline in citizenship, a situation that Turner (2001:198) notes are already taking place in British society. He suggests that:

> *Modern society is no longer constituted by a dense network of associations, clubs, fraternities, chapels and communal associations. The decline of social capital is a major index of the erosion of citizenship*

As a consequence, for many, there is no apparent choice beyond home or the work settings. For many, this choice is no longer a necessity, given growing advances in home based leisure, such as the introduction of satellite TV or the growth of the Internet, which has lead to the undoubted privatization of leisure (Roberts, 2006). Subsequently we are both losing the opportunity, and possibly the perceived need, for such third places. It is suggested that rather than disappearing as such, it is more feasible that the nature of third places are changing, reflecting the wider structural and cultural changes within society, which is an opportunity that the long distance running social world is currently benefiting from, through the creation of new third places. These 'third places', often either within the running club environment or at a sport event, and the resulting experiences which participants receive, contribute towards both the creation and reaffirmation of the long distance runners social identity.

Sport Events, Sport Tourism, and the Sport Event Experience

Although the volume of scholarly work on sport events and sport tourism has increased over recent years, this subject area is, arguably, still in its infancy in terms of development, with a coherent and usable body of knowledge slow to emerge (Weed, 2006). A number of limitations can be identified in much existing work. Firstly, most studies are essentially descriptive in nature, providing information on what is taking place but generating little in the way of understanding or explanation (Gibson, 2005; Weed, 2005), and with an overemphasis upon developing typologies of participants (Green & Jones, 2005), leaving the important questions, those of understanding and explanation largely unanswered (Gibson, 2005). This argument is echoed by Weed (2005), who suggests that existing work on sport events and sport tourism experiences specifically is generally descriptive, and fails to address issues such as why the event sport tourist experience is enjoyable, or why participants would like to repeat the experience. This appears to be an outcome of the predominance of positivist, quantitative research designs that are often devoid of any theoretical discussion.

This lack of theoretical underpinning is the second limitation to be identified. Weed (2005) argues that sport tourism is an area of study that, in many cases, does not employ clear theoretical perspectives to underpin what is largely descriptive research. He highlights the concern that the development of social science knowledge has been random, and has produced many studies that are simply added to existing research without any consideration into how such studies further the construction of a coherent body of theoretically grounded knowledge. Finally, almost a third of the literature lacks any form of primary data collection (Weed, 2006), and is, arguably, more speculative in drawing conclusions, than empirically supported. Similarly, in the context of the sport events literature, few studies explore the qualitative experiences of active participants (Shipway and Jones, 2008b), and, as suggested previously, it would appear that serious leisure can find an outlet in sporting events. The characteristics of serious leisure can be found within the long distance running social world, and they provide an environment for identity confirmation, a place for sub cultural interaction, and a stage for developing a valued running identity (Shipway and Jones, 2008a).

There is a relative paucity of literature on experiences of participants at sport events (Gibson, 2005; Weed, 2005). There exist selective studies of sports spectators within the consumer

behaviour literature which examines the experience as a subjective emotional journey full of personal, social and cultural meanings, which closely resembles the approach of this study. The existing literature on consumer behaviour sees an experience as having emotional, symbolic and transformational significance for the individual (Kapferer, 1997; Morgan, 2006). The experience is created by this interaction between the activities (for example, long distance running), and the places (for example, the running event or training routes), plus the internal motivations and meanings brought by the participant (the runner). In the context of this study, this interaction is partly a social one that takes place as people converge on various distance running environments, but also a psychological one that takes place in the heads of the runners as they interpret their impressions of a place and culture (Morgan, 2007).

Morgan (2007) supports the theme of experience in the consumer behaviour literature in favour of one which stresses the hedonistic aspects. Morgan (2006) groups the internal elements of an experience under three inclusive headings, which can also be interpreted within a long distance running environment. These are personal benefits of hedonistic enjoyment (for example novelty or escape) and achievement (e.g. growth through overcoming challenges); secondly social interaction which can lead to a sense of 'communitas'; and thirdly, the wider symbolic meanings derived from personal narratives and shared cultural values. Long distance running includes hedonistic elements especially escape and relaxation, and to set a running challenge and to achieve it is a rewarding experience. The sense of total absorption in running has parallels with Csikszentmihalyi's (1975; 1990) concept of 'Flow'. The optimal flow of consciousness is likely to take place when the task is challenging, but when the participant has developed the skills needed to complete it. In the context of long distance running, this has close synergy with one of Stebbins' (1992) characteristics of 'Serious Leisure', the requirement of significant effort to undertake the activity, based upon specialist skills, knowledge or ability, such as an understanding of running technique, training schedules, or racing strategy.

The social aspect is also a recurring theme in the experience literature (Morgan, 2007) and in the sport context the sharing of an intense communal experience is an important element. This theme, along with ideas on 'communitas', as advocated by Turner (1974) will be explored throughout this study. Morgan (2006) also stresses the importance of the third element of the event experience, meanings and values, and likewise, Silk (2005) suggests that sport in itself carries with it meanings derived from family, career and lifestage, and

socialisation. Morgan concludes his analysis of sports fans in New Zealand by indicating that the extent to which a sporting experience is unique and memorable lies in the internal personal satisfactions and meanings derived from the participant (in the case of this study, the long distance runner). In the context of existing sport tourism literature, Sugden (2007:237) notes that while there are many narrative accounts of different marathons in special interest magazines such as Runners World, in general there is a dearth of academic research and literature on marathon running as a socio-cultural experience. From the perspective of the active sport participant, studies by both Atkinson (2008) and McCarville (2007) also examine the extent to which discomfort (pain), difficulties and sacrifice can be accepted and even enhance the sense of personal achievement for the participant. In my study, this concept of pain and discomfort is closely linked to an in depth exploration of the training and preparation aspects of distance running and literature associated with exercise, physical activity and health.

Training, Physical Activity and Health

The identification of training as being a central theme of long distance running led me to the literature on the basics, principles, preparation and variables associated with training, (Bompa, 1999) and towards some of the more specific literature on training methods, most notably associated with endurance event training. Whilst the purpose of this study is not to become engrossed in the physiological aspects of sports performance, an understanding of the basic literature on training theory is beneficial. Training for endurance events like long distance running involves many physiological, psychological and sociological variables, and paramount to training is an achievement goal, planned according to individual abilities, psychological traits and the social environment, all which are relevant for the social world which I have inhabited. Bompa demonstrates that the efficiency of a physical activity results a series of training variables – the duration, distance and repetitions (volume); load and velocity (intensity); and the frequency of performance (density). All these training variables are an integral part of long distance running and aspects that the participant will face during their preparation for a running event, as they adapt their volume of training and amount of preparatory work.

Rest and recovery, whilst not always perceived by some distance runners as an important training component, is indeed a vital aspect of long distance running, especially when several participants in this study stated that they trained twice a day. The stress that this places on the body can often lead to injuries, a regular occurrence for the majority of participants in this study. To overcome this, it is important for participants to maintain a balance between training, recovery and their social life. Bompa (1999) indicates that recovery is affected by various factors including age, experience, gender, environmental factors, type of muscle fibre, type of exercise, and psychological factors, to name but a few. With specific reference to long distance running, overtraining is an issue, where participants often experience negative aspects of demanding training programmes, which can lead to deterioration in levels of performance. The literature that I have consulted in the domain of training theory, especially the foundational work by Bompa, suggest that many methods can be used to recover from the fatigue of training and competition, and the better that a participant can understand and use these techniques from the training literature will enable more control over fatigue and to prevent overtraining. The results from my study explore many of these principles from within the long distance running community, and highlight instances where participants chose to ignore advice to rest, but continued to train despite injury and fatigue.

Long distance running, by its very nature is an endurance activity. Endurance refers to the length of time that an individual can perform work at a given intensity (Bompa, 1999), and is affected by several factors including athletic willpower, the Central Nervous System (CNS), and both aerobic and anaerobic capacity. Training accentuates the running body's adaptation to a higher endurance demand, and within distance running there are various methods to assist with developing endurance, which will be regularly referred to throughout this study, including long runs, interval and fartlek training. These are terms familiar with those inside the long distance running culture. Most sports require a certain degree of endurance, which is proportional to the duration of participation. Long distance running, by its very nature demands more endurance given the often extended time that participants are involved in the very act of running.

A number of hypotheses have been advanced to explain the effect of activity and training on mental health. Aspects of this are discussed in the results section of this study. As a non health professional myself, I have drawn on the existing literature on physical and mental benefits of activity solely for the purposes of discussion. Sharkey and Gaskill (2007) suggest

that activities like long distance running can act as a coping strategy, whereby regular activity serves as a diversion, distraction, or time out from the problems and stressors of everyday life. It can also act as a substitution of good habits for bad ones: or positive additions for negative ones. Activity can provide a sense of control over one's life and environment. Sharkey and Gaskill also suggest that regular activity or improved fitness can have a beneficial effect on self-esteem (self-approval) and self-concept, and that could help reduce or prevent anxiety or depression. Similarly, Kobasa (1979) argues that active people, like long distance runners, seem better able to cope with the problems of life and share several characteristics: a sense of being in control, a sense of involvement and purpose, and the flexibility to adapt to challenges and opportunities.

The results of this study drew me to the literature on exercise psychology, and how a long distance runner's behaviour is influenced in physical activity and exercise settings. Buckworth and Dishman (2002) acknowledge the established link between physical activity and health, and the potential impact of exercise interventions on public health. The results will explore the extent to which long distance running could be a positive influence linked to stress, mood, emotion, anxiety, depression, and self-esteem. As a result of this, I was also led to the literature on exercise and mental health. As previously indicated, much of the literature and research findings have a focus on the more technical, physiological aspects of exercise, and their impact on the human body.

The Road Less Travelled: Identifying Gaps in the Literature

Despite existing research on the experiences of sport participants in general, some gaps in the literature in relation to long distance running have been identified:

- Very little research has aimed to access the lived experiences of long distance runners, with the exception of work by Allen Collinson and Hockey (2007), Sugden (2007) or Allen Collinson (2008), and similarly, no study has investigated the conflicting emotions that can result from both training and participating in long distance running events. Empirical findings exist within the domain of Triathlon-based research by McCarville (2007), however, a gap exists within the context of long distance running as an endurance activity;

- The potential of physical activity and exercise to contribute towards government activity targets has received much attention in the literature, where it has been argued that sport and leisure activities can contribute towards the health and well-being of the nation (DoH, 2004). However, no study to date has been done on the potential positive impact that long distance running can play in contributing towards these wider social policy agendas, which exist outside of the sport and physical activity arena. Similarly, whilst empirical research exists on the health benefits of long distance running, both mental and physical, with the exception of the work by Allen Collinson (2008), there is a paucity of studies which explore the extent to which distance running can serve as a mechanism to reinforce the participants' sense of sporting identity;

- Whilst studies exist which acknowledge the impact of sport, exercise and physical activity on the participant as they grow older and mature in years, in the context of long distance running far fewer qualitative studies exist that explore the experiences of amateur, non-elite, older sports participant. Tulle's (2003) study is a rare example;

- There has been little research on the impact of sports clubs, sporting organisations and the social networking that can evolve as an integral element of participating in long distance running, or on the impact this environment has on the experience of the participant. In the broader context of society, whilst Oldenburg (1989) highlights the positive benefits that can result from belonging to a community of likeminded individuals, there is a paucity of research that closely examines the role that sport, and specifically in this instance, long distance running can play as an arena for personal satisfaction and social cohesion, outside of the home and work environments;

- With the exception of research by Morgan (2006; 2007), there is a dearth of qualitative studies on event experiences, and there are even fewer ethnographic studies examining the running culture although Sparkes (1998; 1999; 2000), Allen Collinson and Hockey (2006; 2007), Sugden (2007) and Allen Collinson (2008) have discussed this. In the events and festivals literature, most studies are dominated by positivist approaches, which use questionnaire based methods. Indeed, there are limited qualitative studies within the events domain. Most sport events studies to date

whilst providing information on what is taking place in the sport event arena generate very limited understanding of the experience of partaking in sport and its meaning for participants. A criticism also aimed at much ethnography and particularly of qualitative studies in the events literature is a lack of theoretical sophistication and diversity (Holloway et al 2010), which I attempt to address in this study.

It was not my aim in this inductive study to fill the gaps in the literature on either long distance running, or more generally on active sport participant experiences, as I did not know what results would arise from the data analysis.[2] The research findings are clearly situated within the context of sport and leisure provision and levels of participation in physical activity and exercise within contemporary society. As Hammersley (1992) states, the role of ethnography in policy change is not always maximised, and the duty of the researcher to communicate their findings is not always met (Williams 2003; Brown, 2008). This will not be the case in this study, as the findings will be used to inform both sport and leisure policy and practice within the context of participation in sport, exercise and physical activity, highlighting the potential role that long distance running can perform, as an easily accessible leisure activity.

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[2] Qualitative researchers do not carry out an extensive literature review at the very beginning of their research because they do not wish to be forced into a specific direction by the literature. Instead updating and the dialogue with the literature relevant to the study will occur throughout.

Chapter Two: Methodology

Introduction

The principal aim of this study was to develop a clearer understanding of the experiences of this chosen group of sport and leisure participants through ethnographic methods. To access and understand the social meanings of long distance runners, observe their behaviour, work closely with key informants, and to actively participate in the sporting 'field' with them, several methods of data collection were used. This enabled me to explore the structures and interactions within a cultural context, and to explore the meanings that participants' gave to their cultural environment through firsthand experience (Holloway & Todres, 2003). It was important for this fieldwork to study long distance runners participating in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, this phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to the activity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 3). This chapter will present and also justify the research approach used in this study, as well as the individual methods. It will discuss the analysis techniques used, and will put forward the limitations of the research.[3]

Using Ethnography in a Sport and Leisure Setting

Ethnography is the description and interpretation of a culture or social group (Holloway and Wheeler, 2010). The aim of ethnography is to understand another way of life by focusing on ordinary, everyday behaviour. The purpose of an ethnographic study is to provide an in-depth study of a culture that includes behaviour, interactions and language. There are a number of methodological features associated with ethnography. Firstly, ethnography requires the need to think from the perspective of the members of the social group being studied, the emic perspective or insider's view (in this case, long distance runners as active sport participants). The researcher is usually required to become immersed within their natural setting with long periods of fieldwork to enable the researcher to infiltrate and become accepted within the setting. This study involved immersion on a weekly basis from 'inside' two local running

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[3] Findings on the use of ethnography in events have been published in the *International Journal of Event and Festival Management.*

clubs, attending overseas and domestic events, but also in the months preceding major events, it involved monitoring training and preparation routines.

In relation to sport specifically, ethnographic research holds much potential for the sociology of sport (Silk, 2005). This study uses ethnography as a more suitable research tool to study the social world of the distance runner. Ethnography has been used previously in sport studies for detailing sporting communities. These include work by Fine (1979) on little league baseball; Atkinson (2000) on ticket scalping; studies have been undertaken by Armstrong (1988) on football hooligans; Foley (1990) on American football; Klein (1991, 1993, 1997) on baseball and bodybuilding; Sugden (1996) and Mennesson (2000) on boxing; Beal (1995) looking at skateboarding; Loland (2000) analyzing the use of aerobics for bodily empowerment; Tsang (2000) looking at elite rowing; from Wheaton (2000) on windsurfing; by Granskog (2003) who explored the socialization and experience of women who participated in triathlons; Sugden (2007) in his auto ethnographic account of marathon running; and also by Atkinson (2008) in the context of pain and suffering during triathlon events. These are all good examples of how ethnography has been used to describe and understand sporting cultures, and some of these research techniques have been used in this study, within a long distance running context.

Ethnography is a form of naturalist enquiry. As such, the runners were studied in everyday settings interacting as they would normally do. Ethnography is also seen as a process whereby a particular aspect of the world is observed through selective interpretations and observations. It is apparent that there is not one single objective reality, but a number of realities. Similarly, there is not a single ethnographic method of study, but a range of different data collection methods, many of which are used within this study. These methods include unstructured interviews, observations and documentary methods.

Ethnography, according to Hammersley (1990), is often used synonymously with 'qualitative research' generally. As previously outlined, ethnography is the description of a group, culture or community. Ethnographic data collection occurs mainly through observations, interviews and examination of documents, and LeCompte and Schensul (1999) argue that ethnographers use culture as a 'lens of interpretation' and it focuses on cultural members, phenomena and problems. Ethnographers emphasize the importance of studying human behaviour in the context of a culture, such as long distance running, in order to gain a deeper understanding of

the rules, norms and routines involved in sporting activity. According to Agar (1990), ethnography is both a process – the methods and strategies of research – and the product – the written story as the outcome of sport related research. This study will both 'do' ethnography, by studying the long distance running culture, observing runners behaviour and listening to their observations. It will also produce ethnography, as a written text. To understand the social world of the long distance runner, this research adopted a method of enquiry that recognizes that 'participants' (including myself as the researcher) are attached to the worlds they inhabit, and a qualitative approach is more suitable than a study that follows the 'positivist' ideas that call for distance between the researcher and those being studied (objectivity).

Spradley (1980) suggests that observation is possibly the key instrument in gaining ethnographic knowledge. Researchers can observe actions and interactions, behaviour and also listen to conversations while also looking at the context (including the time and location), in which these actions take place. The range of involvement from the researcher will vary from the full spectrum of complete participant through participant observer and observer as participant, to complete observer. There is an ongoing debate about the level to which the researcher should become part of the social world they are studying. I was aware of this issue and the risk of 'going native', as the purpose of the research was to study the long distance running culture, and not to become too close to the subject area, and possibly miss some of the key themes that emerge from the data. It is hoped that this study recognizes the personal and emotional aspects of fieldwork as it reflects the intimate relations between the setting, participants and the self (Coffey, 1999). My own close involvement within the long distance running culture required that I remained reflexive about my role and its effects on the field.

Different methods of data collection were used in this study. Through interviews I was able to access long distance runner experiences and reflections about their behaviour, whilst observational data enabled an analysis of information and less-ordinary actions that may not be apparent from an interview. Participant observation is a distinctive research method as personal relationships are the vehicle for the collection of data (Silk, 2005). It helped understand the unknown parts of a particular community (such as distance running) because of the intimacy. From a methodological perspective, Atkinson (2008) suggests that the data derived from the process of participant observation at endurance events, such as long distance

running events, is critical in developing a deeper understanding of the relational context in which endurance sports like long distance running occur, and within which subcultural techniques of endurance are embodied and represented.

Participant observation was particularly relevant for this study to enable the uncovering of the more subtle features of long distance runner behaviour, and to discover some of the meanings that are not directly observable. Observation is, arguably, the most neglected research technique in sport (Gratton and Jones, 2004), and as a participant observer within the context of this study, it was possible to take part in the phenomenon being studied. There were several advantages to using participant observation for data collection. Firstly, this included directness and being able to record the distance running phenomenon as it took place; secondly, it allowed data collection in a 'natural setting' rather than the 'artificial' surrounds of an interview structure where it was possible to experience behaviours firsthand; thirdly it was possibly to identify behaviours not apparent to the participant and to identify the 'true' behaviour that Gratton and Jones refer to; and fourthly, it was possible to identify behaviour that the participants might have been unwilling to disclose. In contrast to the benefits of observational techniques, the study faced several challenges that it was necessary to acknowledge. Firstly, there was the possibility of misunderstanding the long distance running phenomenon and what was being observed; secondly, it is important to acknowledge the practical difficulties experienced during data recording when much of the data was actually collected *during* long distance running events or as an integral part of training sessions; and thirdly, I was conscious of the effect of my observation on participants whereby their behaviour might be modified to such an extent that it might invalidate the entire research. In the context of this particular study, this was not the case because of my prolonged engagement and immersion in the setting.

From the start of this study, research diaries were kept to record fieldwork including possible emerging themes and my own reflections about my role within the research process. Similarly it was important to recognise the importance of developing good fieldwork relationships and establishing a good rapport with the research subjects, as this influenced what I was told and allowed to observe. Gaining access to long distance runners was the first step in my research. From initial immersion, I tried to gain rapport, become accepted and maintain a critical space (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). This was developed within the context of two running clubs and at a series of local, national and international distance

running events that were observed. Gaining support from various 'gatekeepers' of the long distance running social group was an important part of successful access. These key informants assisted in vouching for my credibility as a researcher, introducing me to others within the running social world, and directing me towards some of the more interesting aspects of long distance running. Through dressing in the same way as other distance runners, my personal appearance matched other competitors, and while travelling to events, I also stayed in the same hotels and wore the same 'race' numbers as other event participants, thus gaining a degree of acceptance. For example, the humour within establishing relationships was displayed on one occasion when recording some study findings late one night in a hotel bar in Cyprus, prior to one of the *'Cyprus International 4-day Running Challenge'* races. On this occasion, one runner from Yorkshire in England walked past and sarcastically commented "Are you off to bed in a minute Rich, to analyze your pillow". This humour and interest in the research, and also the researcher, continued and grew as this research progressed during this seven day period of intense immersion, with a couple of participants expressing disappointment that there was not the opportunity to 'interview' them whilst in Cyprus. In fact, several runners involved in this study wanted to be part of the research, both to legitimise that culture and possibly to validate their identity as a long distance runner.

In the first few months of this study, time was spent reviewing journals, running websites, and sport and health related magazines, and engaging in conversations with other long distance runners. From the start, a training log was kept (recording running and other physical activity), and a field journal to record insights into the long distance running community with its numerous events, activities, practices and actors. With regards to data collection, the recording of experiences was done via field notes and micro-tape recorders that accompanied me during attendance at running events. An individual daily log of events was kept, along with my own 'running diary', which documented individual running levels, and feelings. My relatively extended experience as a long distance runner provided some confidence of being competent in identifying, describing and understanding the phenomenon of long distance running, as an insider member of this social world.

In due course, this study began to identify themes and patterns in the data before extending the analysis to interpretation and the generation of theory (Wolcott, 1990), in the context of the long distance running social world. Analysis involved data reduction, data display and interpretation, in order to provide some coherence and structure to the data while retaining a

hold of the original accounts and observations from which it is derived (Silk, 2005). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) indicate that it is difficult to determine the exact direction of an ethnographic study during the early planning stages that were initially faced, and consequently a flexible approach towards the research design was adopted. During the pre-fieldwork and early fieldwork stages I started to develop a set of theoretical questions and issues to be explored, and specified the range and types of long distance running settings in which the research might be usefully carried out.

In summary, the roots of ethnography stem from within social anthropology in the work of anthropologists such as Malinowski (1922) while searching for cultural patterns and rules and exploring the ways of life amongst people from non-western cultures. Anthropology is concerned with culture, and ethnography is different from other approaches, given its emphasis on culture. Culture can be defined as the way of life of a group – in this case long distance running – and the learnt behaviour that is socially constructed and transmitted. Individuals in a culture or sub-culture, like long distance running have common values and ideas gained through learning from other members of the running group. This study describes the unique and distinctive process of the long distance running culture, observing and studying the life of a specific culture by analyzing, comparing and examining distance runners, and exploring the relationship of individuals to the running group and to each other. This study argues that only qualitative research on long distance running can capture the true meanings of social processes and human activity which would remain hidden by other quantitative methods.

Adopting a Qualitative Approach

Researchers are confronted with a host of research approaches when starting their study, the choice of which is a reflection of the subjectivity, culture and preferences of the researcher (Denzin and Lincoln 1998; Brewer 2000). It is not the purpose of this chapter to repeat the well-documented distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research, but to offer the rationale for my choice of the qualitative approach. To me, as an ethnographic researcher, real long distance running experiences were central to this research because my contact with reality raised important epistemological questions.

A qualitative approach was chosen as I wanted to make an in-depth study of the experiences of long distance runners. For this reason, the initial inductive approach of qualitative research seemed appropriate. I was unaware what themes would emerge from a study that aimed to capture the emic view of the long distance running experience. Qualitative researchers usually enter the research process uncovering their assumptions and setting them aside; they do not begin with a theory, which they impose on informants, but, as both Brewer (2000) and Brown (2008) suggest, with curiosity. It was Wilson (1977) who described this as the anthropological research tradition of suspending preconceptions. As Spradley (1979:4) states, ethnographers typically start research with a 'conscious attitude of almost complete ignorance'. Therefore, during the field work phase, I avoided reading the subject specific literature on sport and leisure in any great depth so that I wouldn't influence the data collection with pre-conceived ideas on the social world of the long distance runner.

Close engagement through regular in-depth interviewing permits access to informants' feelings and perceptions (Brewer 2000). The rapport established with long distance runners required time to develop but opened a window onto their emotional world that I felt quantitative research could not deliver. The depth and richness of qualitative data are a function of the ability to sensitively explore topics of importance with informants (Mason 2002). The flexibility and spontaneity associated with the in-depth interview (Mason 2002) meant it was possible to explore all aspects of the long distance running social world. In fact, the more formal interviews often did lead in unexpected directions, as it was directed by the interests and preoccupations of the distance runner being interviewed.

In the sport research context, Weed (2005) highlights Bernard Forsher's concern that the development of social science knowledge has been random, and produced many studies that were simply thrown onto a pile of research without any consideration into how the body of knowledge could be constructed. Therefore, through ethnographic methods, this study strives to make an additional contribution towards the construction of an edifice of knowledge in the area of understanding the experiences of active sport and leisure participants. Sands (2002) suggested that many texts in ethnography appear to ignore sport as a viable means of studying human behaviour. It was important for this research to study distance runners in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, this phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998:3). The choice of this method

is justified for my situation, as a long distance runner, who participates in this and other sporting activities on a daily basis.

The approach was taken through an analysis of the lived experiences of human actors, (the long distance runners). This study adopted a range of ethnographic research methods, notably observation, participant observation, examination of running-related documentary sources and life history interviews. I adopted the role of 'insider', with participant observation fieldwork taking place at a diverse range of local, regional, national and international running events, and also at a local and national level within running clubs at a variety of location in the United Kingdom. Secondly, this study is a reflective collection of narratives and analysis of sporting experiences within my life, and the lives of other long distance runners, which tries to illustrate and explain the wider sub cultural aspects of long distance running. The study includes detailed descriptions of the cultural context of the distance runner, their values and the social worlds that contribute towards their actions and behaviours. By focusing on the choices and actions of long distance runners, this study starts to develop a better understanding of the sport participants' vision of the world and their experiences whilst pursuing this particular sporting activity. The study challenged the classic forms of quantitative sport representations, introducing detailed ethnography on long distance running into the sport literature as a viable form of social description. This includes accounts that are not distant, undecipherable and dull (Sparkes, 2002). The intention of this study is to describe, not prescribe how the social world of runners might be written about and known differently, which remains important if we are to develop a deeper understanding of sporting experiences (Gibson, 2005). The methodology used in this study allowed me to enter inside the experience and systematically document the moment-to-moment details of sporting activity. This methodological approach leads to a personal, firsthand, enquiry into the lived experience of the sport participant, and as such this study represents an interpretive approach, rather than a more scientific or positivist stance.

My own experiences and perceptions of sport, and more specifically about long distance running, became an integral part of the data as I have lived in this world, reflecting on and relating the personal to the cultural aspect of 'active' sport research. Through the process of reflexivity, I am now able to tell stories about my own, and others, lived sporting experiences, relating the personal to the cultural aspect of sports participation research. This

involves an analysis of 'active' sporting participation relying on systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). This approach was preferred to one confined to the use of the self as the only data source. This study offered the opportunity to compete and perform with fellow long distance runners, as a participating member of this sport population. My own experiences were not the central focus of the ethnography; instead, they validated the experiences and behaviours of many, or most, of the long distance running members. I felt that a predominantly autoethnographic approach would be too self-indulgent, introspective, and narcissistic, a point raised by Sparkes (2000). As the study emerged and following extensive discussions and interviews with key informants, it became apparent that the experiences of other long distance runners were often a complete contrast to my own experiences, and in many cases, far more interesting. Finally, having extensively read the methodological debate among researchers on the challenge posed by postmodernist thought to the collection and interpretation of data, I found myself in agreement with many of those qualitative researchers (Denzin and Lincoln 1998), and realised that this study would be better reflected in a qualitative approach in which reflexivity and doubt are incorporated.

Conducting an Ethnographic Study

After an extensive period of immersion in the research methods literature, it became clear that ethnography was the most suitable approach to capture the experiences of long distance runners. By using participant observation and extensive interviewing over an extended period of time, I was able to gain insight into informants' world that is typical of ethnography (Hammersley 1992). As outlined in the introductory section of this study, it was explained that qualitative researchers do not carry out an extensive literature review at the very beginning of their research because they do not wish to be forced into a specific direction by the literature. Instead updating and the dialogue with the literature relevant to the study will take place throughout.

Ethnography is an interdisciplinary research approach (Clifford 1986), which has a strong presence in social and cultural anthropology, sociology and social psychology as well as in applied areas like health and education (Hammersley 1992). It is crucial that ethnographers present data from the emic (in this case, the long distance runners') perspective (Spradley

1979; Fetterman 2010), following which they seek to explain behaviour, combining the view of the insider (the emic) with that of the outsider (the etic) to describe the social setting (Fetterman 2010). Ethnography is thus associated with a rejection of the principle that the researcher's view is paramount, as the insider's view of society is equally if not more valuable than that of the outsider perspective of the researcher (Brown, 2008). Throughout this study, I interpret patterns of behaviour observed by myself and described by long distance runners using a combination of my own judgement, theoretical and empirical research, and distance runners' own views, who frequently try to make sense of their own and others' behaviour. Given its commitment to capturing the emic perspective, ethnography is usually associated with the inductive approach to research, with discovery being the aim of the researcher (Geertz 1973).

A key characteristic of ethnography is thick description (Geertz, 1973). This is description which makes explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them in context. In the long distance running context, this study illustrates that an ethnographic approach shows that interpretation cannot be separated from the time, place, events and actions of long distance runners. The study deals with the meaning and interpretations of distance running, and explores the meaning that sporting actions and sport events have for the members of the long distance running culture. Denzin (1989) suggest that thick description and analysis is rooted in reality and displays the emotions, thoughts and perceptions that the participant experiences. With the exception of the work by Allen Collinson and Hockey (2006; 2007) and Allen Collinson (2008), the current literature on long distance running suffers from superficial coverage that lacks depth in understanding the sport participants.

For the choice of key informants in this study, certain criteria were used to decide on a specific group (long distance runners) and a specific setting (distance running events or at local running club training nights). The criteria for sampling must be explicit and systematic (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Key informants for this study were chosen at the running events and through the two local running clubs used, to make sure they were suitable and representative of the group under study. The sample was taken from a particular cultural group, and people who were able to provide detailed information about the long distance running culture. The key informants chosen for this research had expert knowledge about distance running, about interaction processes within a sports setting, and the cultural rules,

rituals and language of both the activity and the people involved. During the duration of this research, I was also able to return to key informants (after the running events or training runs) to access areas which I could not reach in time and location. I was also able to conduct follow up interviews at other running events, which, as the researcher, I was unable to attend and observe myself. This usually occurred at the local running club within a few days, whilst the participants' memories were still strong. These accounts of long distance running reality help uncover knowledge on 'why' runners act as they do. Using the emic perspective allowed me to provide explanations of events from the runners' perspective, as a cultural member of the group (Holloway and Wheeler, 2010). This was crucially important at the start of this study, to prevent imposing my own values and beliefs on that of others. I was able to examine the long distance running culture and gain knowledge of the existing rules and patterns from members. The 'etic' view is important, as a more detached and theoretical view of the cultural setting.

The Choice of Setting and Criteria for Sampling

According to Brewer (2000), all ethnography involves case study research, which focuses on the particular but not necessarily at the expense of the general (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). The *case* in this study is the long distance running community at a series of running events and within the weekly club environment. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) and Daymon and Holloway (2010) describe a *setting* as a named context in which phenomena occur. Any physical setting can become the basis for research as long as it contains people engaged in activity (Spradley 1980). The research problem and the setting are closely bound together (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). As the aim of this study was to understand the experiences of long distance runners, the settings chosen for this research were predominantly distance running events and at two running clubs, where I had direct access to and close involvement with a large group of distance runners.

Gaining entry to the group is a key stage in ethnography (Gratton and Jones, 2004). Consideration of the sample was an equally important element, and as an ethnographer, it was my role to assess the most appropriate sample, which was a decisions based on *what*, as well as from *whom* to collect data. In doing so, the context of long distance running was

considered, along with the physical environment, an overview of participants within the long distance running setting, and the relationship between these active sport participants. This relationship included observing how long distance runners interacted; the norms and behaviours governing their behaviour; whether their behaviour seemed to follow any patterns and rules; why the long distance runners were behaving in the way they were; as well as listening to what the runners said. This followed some of the guidelines outlined by Gratton and Jones when undertaking qualitative research in a sport setting.

A set of criteria, developed by myself, was introduced for the distance running informants in this study, which has been labelled the *'5 x 5 x 5 rule'*. These criteria specified that participants were required to firstly have a minimum of five years distance running experience; to secondly train a minimum of five times per week; and to thirdly cover a minimum running distance of five miles each run. I was comfortable that these requirements were more suitable to an analysis of the running culture than alternative guidelines based purely on quality of performance and ability. Experience with, and weekly commitment to running varied across the twenty five key informants of this study. Most trained between five and seven days per week, devoted an average of seven hours to training / competition every week, and had a mean of fourteen years involved in long distance running. Active participation also varied, with the number of races entered per year ranging from eight to forty. Finally, a selection of the runners had competed at both national and international level (nine in the study), with the rest competing locally and regionally in road races or cross country events. Throughout this study, the three terms 'long distance running'; 'distance running', and 'running' will be interspersed. For clarification, in the context of this study and the running backgrounds of the participants, these terms refer to runners who train and participate in events ranging from 5 kilometres in distance and ranging up to 100 kilometres in distance, and as such are distinguished from athletes or competitors who might be considered as middle distance runners or track athletes. This distinction is important, as the social worlds of the track athlete, the middle distance competitor, and the long distance runner are distinctly different.

The past decade has seen a steady expansion of marathons and similar endurance running events providing for the needs of distance runners, as a substantial subgroup of the sport events market. At the start of the data collection stage of this study, I immersed myself in the setting which was already familiar to me. Initially, in December 2006, seven days were spent

observing distance runners at the Cyprus Four-day International Running Challenge Event. This initial phase in the field consisted of a time for exploration. I was able to gain an overview of the event being studied and write notes on these observations; before then beginning to focus on particular issues and question informants on these initial observations. The best method of data collection in ethnographic research is participant observation, and this proved to be the most complete way to immerse myself in the long distance running culture at an international sporting event. This initial period of fieldwork was supported by additional regional, national and international running events during 2007 and throughout the whole of 2008. The chosen distance running locations ranged from local running clubs to major sporting events such as the Flora London Marathon; both Sydney's 'City to Surf 14km' and the Gold Coast Half Marathon in Australia; the BUPA Great North Run in Newcastle; the Athens Classic Marathon in Greece; or the Cyprus International 4-day Challenge. In the context of this study, it will be argued that it is the participants 'story' that is paramount. Data collection continued on a weekly basis from within the environment of the running club. Engaging in fieldwork at a series of running events did however allow me to be at the centre of what Morgan and Watson (2007) describe as an 'extraordinary event experience'. These are experiences that simply cannot be replicated by passively observing the running events, and therefore make them uniquely distinctive and intense.

Wolcott (2009) advises that the study should offer a firm footing in the description of characters, to make the reader feel comfortable with the scene. As such, a profile of three interviewees is offered below, and the other twenty two key informants are detailed in Appendix One, which should help the reader to locate and become familiar with the main players in the thesis (pseudonyms were used, and I made sure that the respective long distance runners cannot be identified):

Mark S, male, Oxford, 65, widowed, twenty years running experience, weekly mileage is 50 miles per week, and runs five times per week.

Alana W, female, Portsmouth, 25, single, eight years running experience, weekly mileage is 40 miles per week, and runs six times per week.

Simon K, male, Edinburgh, 38, married, eleven years running experience, weekly mileage is 75 miles per week, and runs every day.

Twenty five in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants from a diverse range of running backgrounds. I became immersed within the long distance running social world and was able to collect rich data, as an accepted 'insider'. These running events enabled an exploration of the structures and interactions within a cultural context, and to also explore the meanings that participants' give to their cultural environment through firsthand experience, as previously indicated by Holloway & Todres (2003). This collection of distance running key informants shared what Sands (2002) describes as intangible and visible features, such as language, dress, and even the values of a work ethic associated with training for running events. An identity is formed around the role of the runner, defining who is and who is not a member of the long distance running social world. In distance running, like other sports, it is their grouping, a role or identity – for example, as a tennis player, gymnast, footballer or distance runner – that becomes the core identity. Anthropologists (e.g. Spradley 1980) and qualitative researchers (e.g. Potter 1996) often advise spending a year with a group. It is suggested that time enables relationships to develop, and permits the observation of detail and processes, rather than a static image captured at certain points (Brewer 2000; O'Reilly 2005).

Data Collection

The study used several data collection methods with the aim of developing a more holistic and contextually grounded assessment of the phenomenon under exploration (Jick, 1979). By adopting the role of 'insider', whereby my own immersion within the culture and past experiences could be used to illuminate and explain key issues that emerged (see, for example, McCarville, 2007), allowing a more detailed understanding of how 'personal biographies' intersect with the social structures of the sporting activity to emerge (Mansfield, 2007), which may not be apparent to a more 'scientific' approach (Bale, 2004). As the insider, I am eminently qualified for this task, having twenty years high level experience of long-distance running, competing in over forty marathons. The use of multiple data collection approaches was chosen to counter the possibility that a predominantly autoethnographic approach would be too self-indulgent, introspective, and narcissistic (Sparkes 2000), and achieve the aim of achieving "valid knowledge of society whilst investigating it from within" (Kilminster 2004, cited in Mansfield 2007:123).

The methodology used in this fieldwork allowed me to enter inside the experience and systematically document the moment-to-moment details of sporting activity. Participants in the study were all entered for the chosen running events, and classified as 'Serious Runners' based upon the level of ability required to complete the events. Much of my initial time spent doing ethnography was learning to walk (or even run) through the distance running culture. This time spent immersed with long distance running "natives" was an important part of the study. I recalled one fellow distance runner's observation at the finish of one international running event, when she commented "fantastic morning for a race wasn't it?" As we walked to pick up the rest of our clothing from the clothing collection tent, I actually reflected on what a fantastic morning it was to actually be working, and collecting my data. The fieldwork proceeded in progressive stages. Initially I gained the broad picture of the group within the long distance running setting, observing behaviour, and listening to the language that was used in the running community. After this initial observation it was possible to focus on key issues which seemed important to runners, before the writing became a detailed analysis and interpretation of the distance running culture being studied. Sampling of specific participants was opportunistic, based upon access at appropriate times. Extensive field notes were taken, and subsequent data were coded, both in terms of open and axial coding. This is a practice which is used in grounded theory, (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) but which helped me in reducing the amount of data, seeking data that were related to sporting activity, confirmatory as well as disconfirmatory and challenging. These data were then channelled into general dimensions based upon the defining qualities of sports participation.

Central to ethnography is the use of key informants with whom ethnographers work to produce a cultural description (Fetterman 2010). In this research, the term informant refers to the twenty five distance runners that were interviewed for this study. This was complemented by the club runners that were observed on a weekly basis, whilst training and competing myself. It is with the interviewees that rapport was established, defined by Spradley (1979) as a harmonious relationship between ethnographer and informant, as it is they who gave up their time and energy (Brown, 2008). Trust has to be developed over time (ibid), which was possible in extended periods of research.

Research Methods

During this ethnographic study, I was committed to the use of more than one method, given the advantages of multidimensional data (Mason 2002). This included participant observation at a series of long distance running events and a series of twenty five one-to-one interviews. A diary was kept of personal reflections which allowed me to record emerging themes, methodological notes and personal observations and attitudes, which all form part of the data (Fetterman 1998). The use of triangulation within method is the source of ethnographic validity (Fetterman 1998), as data of different kinds can be systematically compared, to test the quality of information and to put the situation into perspective (Denzin and Lincoln 1998; Seale 1999). According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), trustworthiness is also improved if different kinds of data lead to the same conclusion. Throughout this study, I refer to data collected from interviews, opportunistic conversations, and observations, as well as my research diary and the literature.

Observation is an essential part of ethnography, described by Corbin and Strauss (2008) as qualitative research 'par excellence'. It provided access not only to the social context of long distance runners, but also the ways in which they act and interact. This study is the exploration of the long distance running culture from the inside, where observation takes place in a natural sports setting and not an artificial situation. The social reality of the long distance runners observed is examined, as I became an integral part of the setting, and a member of the running group that was being observed. As Jorgenson (1989:15) suggests "Participant observation provides direct experiential and observational access to the insiders' world of meaning". Prolonged observation in the long distance running culture generated an in-depth knowledge of the group, and observation proved less disruptive and more unobtrusive than the interviews that followed this period of observation (Holloway and Wheeler, 2010). It was important not just to observe runners, but also to listen to those participants under study. The dimensions of sport social settings and the focus of observation of long distance runners can be summarized in the table below, which is adapted from the work of Spradley (1980:78), and more recently incorporated into the study of events and festivals by Holloway et al (2010).

Space: The sporting location – the running club, training route, or distance running event

Actor: The distance running participant in the setting

Activity: The behaviour and actions of distance runners

Object: The items located in the sport setting (clubs, tracks, roads, events)

Act: The single action of running and training

Events: What is happening (in the period post, during and pre) in connection with the running event

Time: Time frame and sequencing of distance running activities (For example, the Marathon weekends or time spent at the running club or at the distance running events)

Goal: What runners are aiming to do – dependent on varying motivations. This could be a target time, to achieve a personal best, finish ahead of friends, or purely to finish the event

Feeling: The emotions of participants whilst running, the anxiety felt prior to a race, or the euphoria experienced at the finish of a race.

Table 1: Long Distance Running Event Settings. Adapted from Spradley (1980)

Participant Observation

In acknowledgement of Fetterman's point (1998) that observation is a product of subjectivity, and should therefore not stand alone as a research tool, I also had access to the understanding derived from conversations and in-depth interviewing. On the other hand, what is said is not always what is done, and it was often the case that the emic view of the scene differed from etic observation. Participation ranges from spending some time in a group to full immersion (Spradley 1980). In this study, participation was 'complete', a term used to refer to the highest level of involvement which is offered when ethnographers study a situation they are already participating in (ibid). I used my existing role to research a familiar setting, removing the problems of resocialisation, acceptance or misunderstanding (Brewer 2000). Being fully immersed in the long distance running social world, it was possible to move around in the location as desired, without appearing unusual or intrusive. It was possible to observe in detail on a weekly basis, with access to opportunistic interviewing, as well as to spontaneous observation (Mason 2002). As an overt participant observer; all those involved (distance runners) knew about the research, therefore there was no need to hide my research identity. In the sport context, Belinda Wheaton had spent endless hours on cold beaches in England for

her Windsurfing fieldwork, whilst Granskog (2003) immersed herself as a veteran triathlete. My fieldwork resulted in complete participation as a long distance runner. Participation was the avenue to gather in-depth data of the distance running culture. In this study I experienced sensations and feelings through participation that lie outside the non-experiential ethnographer's limits of observation.

During the two years of fieldwork, I suffered numerous injuries whilst training and competing. At times, there is also the realisation that this active participation might well have speeded up the onset of arthritis. Six months into the study I was able to experience one of the worst scenarios for a long distance runner, which was not being able to train or compete. As the findings will illustrate, this brought me into contact with some of the negative aspects of distance running and to experience and observe an element of running reality that is not usually explored in great depth. Accepting this threat of injury in the sport participation method that I adopted for this study is somewhat different to the risks of doing fieldwork in other social settings outside of active forms of sport. Similarly to Sands' (2002) findings in the context of North American football, as the fieldwork stage evolved I realised that tolerance of pain and injury actually partially define the participant as an active member of the long distance running population. My body's lived experiences of long distance running (both from training and competing) not only allowed access to the contrasting sensations of pain and elation, but also brought me closer to the cultural experiences of other long distance runners. This complete participation might also add colour and meaning to the recollection of experiences. The lived experience of feelings attached to senses beyond sight provides access into previously unexplored areas of understanding long distance running experiences and behaviours.

When deciding on a suitable approach for undertaking participant observation, and adopting a focus for observation, several different authors' approaches were considered. They were principally the approaches advocated by Spradley (1979), as highlighted above; Daymon and Holloway (2010); and LeCompte and Preissle (1993). My approach was also guided by the approaches advocated by Holloway and Wheeler (2010) from within the context of qualitative research in nursing and healthcare. In the initial stages, it became apparent that planning for field work takes time, especially for longer periods of data collection.

In order to allow time to experience the ambience of the long distance running scene, and to permit observation of the repetition of patterns (Schatzman and Strauss 1973), it was decided that observation would be on a weekly basis at the local running club and on the occasions that distance running events were attended. It was decided to observe *all* long distance runners at the local club and at distance running events, taking advantage of naturally occurring groups and discussions (Brown, 2008). This included during the warm up for races, in the midst of training sessions, travelling to events, and in the changing rooms. For example, at the finish of some running events it was possible to observe interaction patterns, the type of drinks consumed and the post-race recovery strategies adopted. Meanwhile at the running club, training techniques, warm up routines, signs and symbols of the long distance running culture were observed and reflected on.

The observations progressed from descriptive observation on the basis of general questions that were in mind while as time went by, certain important aspects of the distance running culture became clearer and the focus and observation gradually became highly selective, concentrating on specific issues related to long distance running experiences. This study became more focused as time progressed, and also utilized the observation guidelines provided by LeCompte and Preissle (1993). Their approaches are closely aligned by the approaches towards observation suggested by Holloway and Wheeler (2010). These guidelines were particularly useful when starting the field research, when feelings of being overwhelmed by the task ahead existed:

1. The 'who' questions

Who and how many long distance runners were present in the sports setting or taking part in running activities and events. What were their characteristics and roles within the sporting environment?

2. The 'what' questions

What is happening in the sports setting, what are the actions and rules of behaviour of runners? What are the variations in the behaviour observed?

3. The 'where' questions

Where do interactions between long distance runners take place? Where are runners located in the physical space of the sporting event or the local running club setting?

4. The 'when' questions

When do conversations and interactions take place? What is the timing of the running activities or actions? Running events, discussions and interactions took place at different times.

5. The 'why' questions

Why do long distance runners in the sports setting act the way they do? Why are there variations in behaviour?

As time went on, and preliminary analysis had been undertaken, a more instinctive approach was adopted and it was possible to note whatever seemed relevant, practising selective sampling (Spradley 1980), which is shaped by the emergent themes (Potter 1996). Therefore data collection became more focused and less time-consuming as the field research proceeded. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), the ethnographer has to resist the temptation to see, hear and participate in everything that goes on. I decided to attend all the social events held by the two local distance running clubs, or the ones organised at running events. A conscious decision was also taken to attend more distance running events than usual, given the observation possibility of interaction patterns. In addition, it is acknowledged that I often moved between the roles of fellow running participant and interested researcher and encouraged some discussions because I knew they would be relevant to this research. However, the field of observation was on balance *no different* from the field I still find myself in as a regular long distance running participant, providing ample opportunity for observation. The difference lies in the attention to, the 'explicit awareness' (Spradley 1980) of, the life I then found myself immersed in.

An important aspect of this study was being able to examine how long distance runners in the sport setting went about their routine and everyday life, how they acted and interacted with other long distance runners and how they relate to the space and the sporting environment in which they are located. Observations provided a holistic perspective on the distance running setting. This was far more effective than the following interviews, where although runners described their experiences in interviews and reflected on running events and actions, it was necessary to rely on their memories and distinguish between 'what they say and what they do'.

The Ethnographic Interview and my Research Diary

Unstructured interviews are most common in ethnography (Mason 2002; O'Reilly 2005), allowing participants a greater voice and minimising the influence of the interviewer (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Denzin and Lincoln 1998). Interviews were chosen as the best way to access long distance runners' experiences, allowing them to express themselves in their own words and at their own pace (Brewer 2000). One-to-one interviews were decided on, and the interview offered the chance to delve deeply into important topics that opportunistic conversations often do not allow. For instance it was only in the interview situation that the topics of identity, self esteem, perseverance, and health issues were explored in detail (although shorter conversations with other informants did provide some data). The unstructured interview permits flexibility and spontaneity (Mason 2002), which allowed me to pursue such issues of importance to running participants. The ethnographic interview is responsive to situations and informants (Potter 1996; O'Reilly 2005), and for this reason, each interview with all twenty five informants was unique, although there was some similarity of topics. Reassurances were provided about confidentiality, thus complying with the ethical responsibility of the researcher to guarantee anonymity (Mason 2002; Brown, 2008).

Ethnography can only be a useful research method if the fieldworker develops rapport with the cultural members being studied (Sands, 2002). In the context of long distance running, this rapport was established through being both a competitor and fellow running club member, filling the same role as the distance runners around me. Trust actually emerged from the realisation that I was feeling the same anxiety from competing, sacrifice of time, and feelings of pain from running. Similarly, Klein (1997) found that within the context of North American baseball, his rapport with the players was a doorway into the culture of that sport.

It is important in the unstructured, ethnographic interview to ask questions that are open-ended, to get interviewees talking about a broad topic area, whilst remembering that the informant guides the content (Spradley 1979; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). When compiling a list of questions for interviews, it was important to bear in mind that I didn't want to lead the running participant, but on the other hand, it was necessary to prepare enough questions in case the conversation dried up. Fortunately, this did not happen during

the research process. Spradley (1979) recommends the use of grand tour or experience questions in the opening ethnographic interview, followed by focused mini tour or example questions, depending on the interviewee's response. For the running interviews, a diverse range of questions were developed, based around the guidelines suggested by both Spradley (1979) and Holloway and Wheeler (2002; 2010).

Each interview took a different direction, requiring the ability to think on my feet (Mason 2002): Terry H talked about his experience of dealing with alcoholism; Emma G described her experience of using running as a coping mechanism against stress; whilst Gavin G spoke about his constant battle against weight gain, and how running helped him to maintain a constant weight. Therefore, subsequent interviews and informal (opportunistic) conversations took different turns. This was an aspect of research that was interesting in its unpredictability, and yet demanding. Initial conceptual categories thus guided follow up interviews, which were completed by telephone. However Mason (2002) warns against premature coding which can inhibit the openness of the interview. As such, it was important to ensure that I continued to ask grand tour questions as well as follow-up questions. Following each interview, transcription (undertaken by myself) and analysis began immediately. Though it was a very time-consuming process, taking at least three or four hours to transcribe each interview, transcription made me feel closer to informants, as it was possible to pay close attention to their comments and to ensure that vital information or emphasis was not lost.

My research diary was an integral part of this study. If one accepts the central role of the researcher in qualitative research, where the researcher is the main 'instrument' (Hammersley 1990; Brewer 2000), it is important to acknowledge the need for a reflexive account of the research process (Seale 1999). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue that as we are part of the social world being studied, the data collected and interpreted are influenced by our own biases, which is particularly relevant to this study, as I am very familiar with and embedded in the long distance running community. For this reason, a weekly diary of personal reflections was maintained, which, as Spradley (1979) recommends, was started well before the data collection phase began. By keeping a diary, it was possible to subject my research activities to rigorous analysis (Hammersley 1990), with reflections recorded on methodological issues such as sampling, interview conduct, rapport with informants, analysis

and interpretation. This also allowed me to demonstrate reliability within a qualitative context.

The diary is an acknowledgement of the interplay between the ethnographer and the study. The researcher impacts on the study, which in turn impacts on the researcher, with implications for professional practice and personal development. The diary was also a way to record changes in my own long distance running career and running experiences, which will become more apparent in chapter three. Refining one's thinking is for Mason (2002) as important as reading and writing, and just as time-consuming. Brown (2008) contends that the best writing is often done after a period of reflection. I often compiled memos to myself to avoid the risk of losing my thoughts as I moved on to new writing, as advocated by Glaser (1978). Some researchers also find a diary to be useful as a channel for the release of tension during the data collection period. This was not a problem encountered during this particular research process, but researchers are known to be overwhelmed by the demands of the taxing nature of ethnographic data collection and analysis, and the amount of energy needed to sustain rapport with interviewees (Mason 2002). In addition, the diary and memos also acted as an audit trail during the research process.

The Analysis and Writing up of Ethnographic Findings

Analysis can be defined as the process of bringing order to data, organising undifferentiated comments and observations into patterns, categories and descriptive units, and looking for relationships between them (Brewer 2000). As ethnography produces a large amount of data, which increases in proportion to the data collection duration, analysis is therefore demanding (Fielding 1993). In addition, in ethnography, analysis is not a distinct stage of research, but takes place throughout and after the field work stage (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Brewer 2000). It is an interactive process; used from the start to guide interviews and observation (Denzin 1997). Whereas many researchers collect and analyse data in distinct stages, this long distance running ethnography involved every aspect of research except for the literature review, which was conducted *after* the field work was complete.

Analysing data involves thinking that is self-conscious and systematic (Hammersley 1992). There are many terms used in the methodology literature on ethnographic analysis, but for

this research the terms used by Spradley (1979) have been adopted: the sub-code, code and category. A code is a word used to represent a phenomenon the researcher notices in the text. It must be distinct so that it is obviously different from another code, and there must be a low level of inference (it must be close to concrete description). Once codes have been identified, researchers need to look for the main theme, i.e. the core category, a cluster of codes with similar traits, asking themselves questions such as: is it central, does it recur, is it meaningful, does it have implications for theory? Coding is a time consuming task, as it involves reading and rereading through notes and repeatedly listening to tapes and reading through transcripts until certain phrases occur repeatedly in the text and themes begin to emerge (Brewer 2000).

When analysing the data, a choice was taken to not use computer software for a variety of reasons, many which support the views of Seidel (1991) who highlights the risk of becoming too mechanistic. Seidel suggests that a lack of scrutiny might prevent the researcher from seeing the real meaning of the phenomenon under study. In this study, I was wary of the risk of distancing myself from the data and becoming rigid and mechanistic with the use of computer software, instead of searching for the deeper meaning in the data. Also, there was an awareness that in areas where emotional engagement and sensitivity is necessary, the use of computers could be problematic.

I used a codebook, created during analysis of the interview transcripts, which was updated as the data collection proceeded. The transcripts were scrutinised, with the aid of different colour highlighter pens to identify recurring words. Codes and categories therefore emerge from the data, from the emic perspective, depending on how often something is mentioned by the informant. At the end of the data collection period, I began to analyse and organise interview and observational data into relevant chapter sections, which reflect the five major research categories (the search for a running identity, training to run, a running 'third place', the distance running event experience, and the health benefits of running). An illustration of an analytic category is the long distance running identity. The following codes constituted the running identity category: perseverance and commitment, the unique ethos of the running world, the concept of running careers, the emergence of the running identity, the serious effort required, and the enduring benefits of running. For example, inside the code 'enduring benefits of running', the following sub-codes were identified: heightened sense of achievement, self-esteem, fun and happiness, pride, spirituality, and socialising. As O'Reilly (2005) points out, some codes can overlap different categories, e.g. a heightened sense of

achievement is a code referred to in three separate chapters on identity, training, event experiences, and the health benefits of long distance running.

Once codes and categories have been identified, the ethnographer can undertake qualitative description, defined as vivid descriptions of behaviour and talk, which reflect the identified category and codes (Brewer 2000). Key events may be highlighted about which comprehensive descriptions can be developed, and vignettes can be created as a micro analysis of the data. This, along with using extensive quotations can bring the ethnography to life, as well as giving voice to informants, one of the commitments made by the ethnographer (Hammersley 1992). Thus when presenting the category 'Long Distance Running Identity' in chapter three, excerpts from interviews are used to illustrate every code. A reflexive journal, or research diary, (Jackson, 1996) was also used throughout the data collection and analysis period, where I reflected on decisions with regard to interviewing style, data coding, thematic structure and the write up. Also, member checks were conducted with fellow long distance runners following transcription, and once the thematic structure of the data had been constructed. Running participants were then able to provide feedback on the accuracy of the transcripts and also with the fit between the final themes.

It was not possible to present all of the study's findings, but what was chosen for inclusion, and therefore to prioritise, is a product of subjectivity. What is more, the interpretation of data, defined as a creative enterprise that involves skill and imagination (Geertz 1973; Brewer 2000), is also a subjective activity (Mason 2002). I have tried to adopt a reflexive approach to my interpretations, especially when they are at odds with the emic view, but it is inevitable that some subjectivity will have escaped detection. Nevertheless, by presenting variability in interpretations, it has been possible to allow a tone of ambiguity to enter the story, which, according to both Van Maanen (1988) and Brown (2008), establishes intimacy with the reader.

According to Wolcott (2009) ethnographers start by 'experiencing', 'enquiring' and 'examining'. He states that ethnography consists of description, analysis and interpretation. In this study, it was possible to describe what was observed and heard while studying the long distance running culture; identify the main features and uncover relationships between them

through analysis; and interpret the findings, taking into account the social context of active sports participation to create a portrait of the long distance runners being studied.

When describing the long distance running culture, the understanding was increased by the description of critical events, rituals and roles within the sporting setting. As specified above, analysis of the data involved coding that transformed the raw data by recognizing patterns and themes and making links between these ideas. I attempted to bring order to disorderly data (Holloway, 2008), while showing how it was possible to arrive at these structures and links. The focus became progressively clearer. An attempt was then made to order and organize the material, reread the data, reduce the material into manageable pieces, build, compare and contrast categories, look for relationships and to group categories together, recognize and describe patterns, themes and typologies, and then interpret and search for meaning within the long distance running setting.

Spradley (1979:92) suggests that analysis involves the 'systematic examination of something to determine its parts, the relationship among parts, and their relationship to the whole'. It is through collecting these data that I was able to learn about long distance runners, make sense of what I was seeing and observing, and any gaps were filled by collecting more data or re-focusing the initial aims of the study. It was then possible to focus on particular aspects and examine them more closely. As already explained, the emerging themes were grouped into categories, compared and then reduced to major dimensions, as general patterns of thought and behaviour emerged. The final stage was to interpret the data, provide meaning and give explanations of the long distance running phenomena, through the runners, as active sport participants. An amalgamation of the descriptions, analyses and interpretations allows the full picture to be established and the complete sporting story to be told from the viewpoint of members of the long distance running culture. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) compare this to assembling a jigsaw puzzle, where a frame is quickly outlined and small pieces are collected together and placed in position in the frame (Holloway, 2008). The difference is that the final picture of a jigsaw is known and there is a picture to work towards. However, in this study of long distance runners, there was merely an emerging sporting picture, and as Holloway indicates, this is an outline which could only be imagined, and which changed quite dramatically in the process of assembly.

Imposing a narrative is a device used to order the mass of ethnographic material collected (O'Reilly 2005), but the presentation of ethnography requires much care (Brewer 2000), and ethnographers need to cultivate their skills of writing (Clifford 1986; Marcus 1986; Atkinson 1990; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). I significantly underestimated the amount of time and thought needed to do justice to informants' stories, and many hours were spent considering how to capture their 'running experiences'.

The ethnographic text is usually arranged into a sequence of chapters, and Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) offer a choice between: natural history; chronology; thematic organisation; separation of narration and analysis. A mixture of the first three options was chosen for this thesis: chapter three presents the search for a running identity, with the health benefits of running are captured in chapter seven, whilst the intervening chapters were created according to the main categories. The emic point of view is represented through quotes, but the researcher maintains an interpretive omniscience (Brown, 2008), and has the final word on how a culture is interpreted and presented. Academics traditionally practice silent authorship, keeping their voice out of what they write, however, audible authorship is recommended by many writers (e.g. Charmaz and Mitchell 1997; Seale 1999; Brewer 2000), so that subjectivity is revealed. I will use the first person throughout the thesis chapters to show my personal involvement in the field and consequent influence on the collection and analysis of data. Meanwhile to give informants their voice, extensive quotations are used, which are the essence of ethnography (Hammersley 1992), and bring a sense of immediacy and involvement in the field (Brewer 2000).

Demonstrating Credibility

Reliability refers to the consistency, stability and repeatability of research findings, an invalid criterion in qualitative research as responses cannot be made identical by using repeat questions and besides, social situations are not replicable (Brewer 2000). In this study, it would be impossible to generate the same findings if another researcher conducted the research in the same conditions, not only because they would have different biases (Brewer 2000), but also because different long distance runners from different events and clubs and with different running backgrounds and personalities would be involved. Furthermore, as previously noted, data interpretation is a subjective undertaking, and according to Hollway

and Jefferson (2000), an alternative explanation of events is usually available. Even if the current findings could be replicated, it is likely that their analysis and interpretation would differ.

Generalisability, or external validity, is also likely to be irrelevant to ethnographic research, which tends to focus on a single case or small sample (Fielding 1993). Nevertheless, ethnographers often feel that similar settings are likely to produce similar data (Potter 1996), and that theory-based generalisation can be achieved, involving the transfer of theoretical concepts found from one situation to other settings and conditions (Daymon and Holloway 2002). Thus the term transferability is preferred to generalisability. Hammersley (1992) describes this as theoretical inference, drawing conclusions from the features of the local events described, by identifying generic features. The setting for this research was chosen for my ability as the researcher to transfer the findings to similar settings; for example, distance running clubs that participate in local, regional and international running events, and also to similar actors, such as the long distance runners. It is possible to infer that such long distance runners may well face a similar experience to informants in this study, with modifications according to differing external circumstances and personality differences. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) suggest that phenomenon recognition can establish the ethnographer's credibility if other writers recognise the situation and experience portrayed. Furthermore, some of the findings from this study have been presented at conferences and in academic papers, and feedback suggests that these findings are recognisable to those participating in running in similar sporting contexts.

Hammersley (1992) and Fetterman (1998) claim that the issue of *validity* should not be dismissed, even though the term is used differently among qualitative and quantitative researchers. Validity, often referred to as *trustworthiness* in qualitative research, means that the real world of participants is presented and that those studied must recognise the social reality depicted (Fetterman 1998; Brewer 2000). For this reason, member checks are valuable (Daymon and Holloway 2002), whereby the data from the interviews or the summary of the data from one informant is taken back to that informant. Brewer (2000) states that *relevance* may be the only criterion left by which to judge the validity of research, and many researchers call for studies which have a wide public and social relevance (Mason 2002). According to Spradley (1979), ethnography is well placed to contribute to social policy,

given its emphasis on understanding human problems. It is anticipated that many of the findings from this study, especially the health benefits of running will have practical implications and relevance, with the current government agenda for promoting physical activity and health, given that distance running is a useful tool to assist with this health promotion agenda.

Ethical Considerations

Recurring themes for ethical considerations in relation to qualitative research in exercise health and sport are identified by MacNamee et al (2006). These include the role of the researcher; the desirability and necessity of informed consent; deception; covert research; the researcher's responsibility to informants, sponsors and colleagues; risks versus benefits; reciprocity and intervention; issues of relationships and 'leaving the field'; how participants are represented in reports; and how to deal with unforseen ethical issues that emerge during and after the research. These considerations were an integral part of this study before, during and after data collection within the long distance running setting.

Trust was an important consideration when entering the long distance running social world. Given that the researcher is the main data collection instrument, obtaining valuable data depends on the researcher-participant relationship, as a climate of trust is a basic element for the successful data-gathering process (MacNamee et al, 2006). I was conscious of establishing this trust with fellow runners and the ability to establish a sense of trust and maintain a balance between objective and empathetic involvement, and the taking of a non judgemental stance, were key skills that were learnt during the research process. Similarly, when leaving the field, it was important to reflect on relationships that had developed during the two-year period of collecting data, and to consider my ethical obligations in this regard.

When conducting the interviews, particularly those that were seeking to elicit sensitive information, they were conducted in comfortable settings where long distance runners privacy was assured. Participants were made to feel at ease and reassured that they could say whatever they wished without being overheard by third parties. However, when considering issues of authenticity, it was important to create environments free from any influences that might have contributed towards what MacNamee et al (2006) describe as acquiescent (yea-

saying) responses. When confronted with ethical dilemmas, the rights of the long distance running participants were seen as outweighing my own rights as a researcher to conduct research.

Once the research settings were identified, the most important issue was gaining access to the social world of the long distance runners, as the main focal point of the research. It was also necessary to consider whether to let the people that were being investigated aware of my presence. This design was as much an ethical decision as a design issue. It would have been possible to have collected data covertly, although I feel that would have been problematic. Covert research can possibly provide natural and informative 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) about a running location or long distance runners' actions within that setting. Bulmer (1982) suggests that the researcher should take into account how their actions affect informants, and should act in such a way to preserve their rights and integrity. All participants interviewed in this study were asked to confirm that what was discussed provided a recognisable view of the running community, and the social world they inhabit. All individuals interviewed were, of course, asked for their permission to use some of their words as quotes in the study and reassured that their identities would not be disclosed. They could withdraw from research at any time. Pseudonyms were used.

In relation to practical aspects of ethnography, Sudgen (1996:201) refers to the 'Perils of Ethnography' and suggests that it is only through total immersion that the researcher can become sufficiently familiar with the formal and informal rules governing the human interaction under investigation, so that its inner-most secrets can be revealed. Whilst exploring some of the ethical dilemmas and physical perils of ethnography, Sugden also concludes that ethnography, if done properly, is very time consuming, emotionally draining, extremely unpredictable and occasionally both personally dangerous and ethically problematic. Whilst not faced with any personal danger, my own experiences of data collection were not only emotionally draining, but also compounded by overcoming my own physical exhaustion when observing or interviewing in the immediate aftermath of the events. Confronting my own fatigue and emotions as an active participant in these endurance events often proved to be a challenge, and at times this challenge was almost comparable to completing the race that preceded it.

As previously highlighted, the people who can grant or withhold access to informants can be termed "gatekeepers" (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994). In Klein's (1993) work with bodybuilders, it was the gym owners that introduced him to cultural members; in Michael Silks' work on coverage of the 1998 Commonwealth Games, access was controlled by TV producers and directors; whilst Belinda Wheaton's work on Windsurfers saw access being granted by prominent, experienced and veteran windsurfers who were based in the local community around selected English coastal towns (Sands, 2002). Entrance into the long distance running community has involved limited access to "gatekeepers", however I was aware that it was important to maintain a degree of control over who to talk to, when and where. Once access was gained into the running community, decisions were made about where and when to observe, who to talk to and what to talk about, as well as what and how to record (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). These early decisions in the field were critical for they laid the conceptual and methodological foundations for the whole study and helped to achieve the objectives of the study (Brown, 2008). The initial phase in the field was a time of exploration, followed by a period of participant observation, as the most appropriate method of immersion within the long distance running culture.

Once key themes were identified, it was possible to explore these ideas in more detail with a selection of the key informants. On the rare occasion when access was gained via a gatekeeper, the principle of obtaining *informed consent* from the participants to whom access is required should also be adhered to (Spradley 1979; Brewer 2000). As covert observation violates the principle of informed consent, it was not an option for this research. A decision was made to adopt the role of an overt observer at all times. Running participants were always informed that research data was being collected and promises and assurances were given that all names would be anonymised, and that none of the information obtained would be divulged. As previously alluded to, all informants were assured of their *anonymity,* and all interviewees were given a pseudonym. Ongoing debates over ethics have led to researchers being more informed, reflexive and critical (O'Reilly 2005). In retrospect I feel confident that appropriate guidelines were followed on consent, anonymity and confidentiality, and safeguarded the well-being of the key long distance running informants.

Limitations of the Research

Conducting ethnography in a social world I have inhabited for twenty years carried the disadvantage of the struggle to maintain an outsider perspective on that which is familiar (Brown, 2008). It was a struggle to constantly remind myself to try to see that which was familiar to me from the key informants' perspective. To a certain extent, it has to be acknowledged that personal biases must have influenced the research process. Complete participation has led in some cases to an extreme orientation of the ethnographer toward the culture and cultural members (Sands, 2002). Being so close to the culture being studied, I was conscious of becoming so immersed and 'going native' to the point of losing perspective and romanticising the long distance running social world. I would suggest that it is almost impossible not to adopt the identity of the runner after engaging in the long-term commitment required by fieldwork. As Sands indicates, like Klein (1997), Wheaton (2000) and Granskog (2003), it appears that I became whom I was studying by taking on the experience, behaviour and mind-set of the cultural members. Sands even argues that how far native one should go is a question that only the ethnographer and those intimately involved in the culture can answer.

Summary

Ethnographers immerse themselves in the culture or subculture they study and try to see the world from the cultural members' point of view. This study involves immersion in the long distance running culture and observing the world from the lens of the active sports participant. Data is collected through work in the sport and leisure 'field', through participation and observation and interviews with key informants as well as through documents. As a sports researcher, the rules and rituals of the long distance running culture were observed and an attempt was made to understand the meaning and interpretation which informants give to it. Field notes were written throughout the fieldwork stage about events and behaviour in the sporting setting. Using different sources of data was challenging, but it was vital as a means of providing some measure of validity. Twenty four months of the research was an intensive period of data collection and analysis, followed by the interpreting of data with the help of theoretical and empirical work from many other authors. The study describes; analyses; and interprets the long distance running culture from a participant's perspective, as well as the local, emic perspective of its members. In summary, the main

evaluative criteria will be the way in which this sport study presents the long distance running culture, as experienced by its members from within an active sports setting. Like the feelings after completing my first marathon, a sense of accomplishment resulted from the completion of the fieldwork stage of this study. [4] The following results chapters will now analyse the key findings which have emerged from this study.

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[4] In line with other qualitative research studies, the findings and discussion have been integrated.

Chapter Three: Serious Running: In Search of a Running Identity

Introduction

The dominant theme of this study is that of identification with the activity of distance running, as illustrated above. The following chapter explores the search for a running identity within the social world of the long distance runner. The search for a long distance running identity will provide a central component of this study, and will re-emerge throughout the following chapters. At this stage, an exploration of the running identity will serve to provide a solid foundation to support the construction of a more solid body of knowledge in this domain. This culminates in the introduction of the term '*serious running*', reflecting an underlying theme which constantly emerged during this fieldwork which was the serious, almost professional approach towards the activity adopted by all participants towards their preparation and training, racing and overall attitude towards long distance running.[5]

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[5] Some of the findings related to my understanding of Serious Leisure and long distance running identities have been published in both the *International Journal of Tourism Research* and the *Journal of Sport and Tourism.*

Whilst serious leisure is generally perceived in terms of being a group activity (Stebbins, 1992), much of the day-to-day training of the competitors away from the challenge was undertaken in isolation. A key aspect of the experience was that the event, and running in general, provided access to a social environment of like-minded people. Participants were exhibited as serious, committed, and activity driven, thus fulfilling the criteria by which Stebbins (1992) distinguishes serious from casual leisure. The following section will explore the serious nature that many runners adopt towards both their preparation for, and participation in, long distance running. This will begin with the strong sense of identity that the participants in this study exhibited.

Identity and Serious Running

All participants within the study clearly identified themselves with the activity of long distance running, thus confirming the idea that certain forms of active sport participation could provide a valued social identity. I will explore the running identity, and then examine the concept of identity transformation towards the middle of this chapter. Before doing so, it is appropriate to mention that long distance running events provide a setting whereby participants were able to undergo an 'identity transformation', in reality, a shift in identity salience from work or family based identities to the leisure identity (See Shamir, 1992) and become 'serious', almost professional runners in a social context. This theme will also re-emerge in chapter six, when exploring the role of the running identity in relation to work, home and social environments. As Kivel and Kleiber (2000) note, the leisure context influences the salience of a particular identity. In this case, and more specifically the presence of situational cues, (the presence of other runners) and personal agendas (the need to 'fit' within the social identity) made the "distance running" prototype more salient, which prescribed subsequent elements of behaviour. Thus, the very act of attending running events allowed the running identity to become clearer, and more enduring (at least for the duration of the event) than other identities, that became less salient as participants were distanced from them. This in itself seems to provide an attraction for such events, in that most of the other events for these runners, even for those at a relatively skilled level, were often short-lived, whilst a prolonged visit to London, Cyprus, Sydney, Queensland, Amsterdam (or any of the other event venues used during this study) provided a unique opportunity for a period of extended enactment of a particular identity. Once again, this theme will be explored in more

depth in chapter five within the context of the role of identity within the running event setting. As well as clear evidence of categorisation, self-enhancement though basking in the reflected glory of the events was evident, even for those who performed relatively poorly. As Louise K observed ''*Where else can you finish 27,532th and still feel as if you were in an Olympic final?*'', to some extent supporting the findings from Wann, et al. (1995) that individuals are still able to bask in the reflected glory of an unsuccessful performance. Furthermore, participants were able to focus on aspects of the race other than performance based outcomes, and selectively focus upon aspects that they themselves identified as positive. A brief illustration was provided by Simon K at one running event who explained:

> *I was stood on the start line at Blackheath, only five metres from Stefano Baldini, the 2004 Olympic champion from Athens, and the current Marathon world record holder Paul Tergat from Kenya.*

Observational data supported this finding, with self-presentation of the distance running identity clearly evident. This particular observation took place at the start of a major International Marathon event. Remarkable homogeneity was observed in the appearance of the group, supporting the existence of a 'runners' prototype'. At times when participants were not directly competing at the events, the majority of participants wore clothing identifying them as runners, most notably in terms of T-shirts containing logos or insignia demonstrating participation in past distance running events, many of which were overseas. A number of long distance runners also wore running apparel throughout the duration of their trips, including during social activities. Running apparel as a statement of people's identity as runners, was reinforced by the special meaning and association attached to the clothing that many of the participants wore throughout the duration of the events, as evidenced through the stories associated with each garment told by some of the runners. These signs and symbols of the long distance running social world, and their role as an integral part of the running identity is one of the sub themes in the following chapter.

Interviews confirmed that much of this clothing held nostalgic or sentimental value, while acting as a 'badge of honour' providing an indication of the possession of sub-cultural capital (Thornton, 1995) in the form of completed races, which was clearly the capital valued by the group. T-shirts were often used as conversation ice breakers in the early stages of Marathon weekends or other data collection settings, as a way of engaging in conversation with other

participants, with the club rain jacket or race T-shirt breaking down barriers which may have otherwise existed outside of the event environment. Two competitors, for example, identified each other immediately after arriving at the start area of one event due to the clothing they both wore, this being a T-shirt from a 10km road race they both completed in 2006. Another example was two competitors from relatively close clubs (Woodstock Harriers and Witney) who identified each other immediately after arriving at the airport for one overseas event, due to the clothing worn by each. The sense of social identity as a runner was reinforced by the special meaning and association attached to the vest, T-shirt, rain jacket or sweatshirt that many of the participants wore throughout the duration of the event period (*cf*. Shipway and Jones, 2007), as evidenced through the stories associated with each garment told by some of the runners. I still have my T-shirt at home from the 1992 London Marathon, the first one completed, and to wear this within the running community would certainly identify me as a credible participant amongst my running peers.

The 'finishers' T-shirt from one event, the 2007 London Marathon, was positively received by most participants, and several wore them on the Sunday evening at a post-race meal, as a sign of their achievement in completing the event. One female runner commented ''*I was really pleased with the finishers T-shirt. Instead of the usual XXL white cotton joke, we all got a proper, 'technical' shirt – it's great!*'' However, Louise K confirmed the importance of the apparel as a self-presentational tool asking:

> *Why was the T-shirt in the goody bag sized to fit an elephant? Runners are supposed to be lean and fit right? I'm a bit annoyed that I won't be able to run in it, to show it off, because it comes down to my knees.*

The presentation of sub-cultural capital to others was evident throughout the data collection, and is explored and conceptualised in the following sub theme. Leary (1995) noted that this type of behaviour is generally undertaken both to gain approval within the group, but also, for some, in an attempt to avoid negative evaluation. Long distance runners talked continually about past performances and past events that they had taken part in, and discussion of previous experiences was by far the most dominant topic of discussion in the days leading up to and after all the events studied, with one participant, Mark S, commenting:

I often find myself reflecting with running peers on past Marathons that we have completed over the past twenty years, often with a sense of nostalgia, pride and attachment to the event, the destination and the overall experience of participating in an unfamiliar running environment.

This reflected the perception of most other participants. Interestingly, however, participants demonstrated less commitment to their running identity after the event finished, focusing partly upon other identities, such as work or family, although still predominantly focusing upon the running identity. This supported Foster's (1986) findings that social interaction was focused by a lack of time and the structured daily routines during an event, but also Green and Jones' (2005) suggestion that participants were able to escape their enduring identities associated with their home lives (which was not the case when simply training, or competing close to home). These overseas destinations or domestic weekend running breaks provided a setting whereby participants were able to undergo an 'identity transformation' and become 'serious', almost professional runners. The consequences of possessing such a valued social identity have been explored within a variety of contexts, beginning to demonstrate that they are outcomes of a valued social identity (Jones, 2006), and is a theme that will re-emerge later in this chapter.

The findings from my immersion within the long distance running culture has served to illustrate that one key defining characteristic of long distance running is the ability to provide runners with a sense of social identity. This theme is at the centre of the subsequent chapters. Gillespie et al (2002) identify traditional sources of social identity are linked to work, family or religion, however the findings of this study start to illustrate that 'serious' participation in running is, however, able to provide a positive social identity for the runner that may otherwise be unavailable through work or other areas of life. This would also indicate that leisure practice is central to social identity, as participation is time, resource and therefore identity intensive. It is suggested by Gillespie et al that serious leisure is able to generate its own social identities, which includes expenditure, family relationships and patterns of time. The important and frequently emerging concept of time will also be explored further in the following chapter, within the context of training for events, and in chapter six, in relation to how long distance running can impact on the balancing act between work, family commitments socialising, and the act of running.

Shamir (1992) indicates that a leisure-related identity is important for three primary reasons. Firstly when it expresses or affirms the individual's talents and / or capabilities; secondly, when it provides the individual with a form of social recognition; and thirdly, when it affirms the individual's central values and beliefs (Green and Jones, 2005). The findings from my research led me to consult this literature on identity salience and leisure constraints and explore the relevance to long distance running. Thus, Terry H, a forty five year old car factory worker, who participated in this study, was able to, through the participation in 'veteran' running events; develop a sense of social identity as a distance runner, which might otherwise be unavailable to him. Terry H, and almost every one of the runners who contributed towards this study, helped to demonstrate that social identity could be more central and highly valued to one's self identity for serious running participants than it would be for more casual participants, supporting the previous findings of Green and Jones. Upon reflection, it is clear that in terms of 'identity salience', long distance running plays a central role in my life. Having established the central role of identity amongst long distance running participants, the unique ethos, related to the 'social world' of the distance runner, often demonstrated, for example, through distinctive dress, language and behaviours was a key sub theme which emerged from the fieldwork, and will now be explored in more depth in the following section, examining the unique world of long distance running.

The Distance Running World

Having immersed myself within the social world of the long distance runner, I am now able to provide an insight into the unique identity of the distance runner. Once a valued social identity exists, then there is generally a strong desire to present it to others and preserve it (Leary, 1995), especially 'frontstage' where a receptive audience (of both runners and non-runners) exists (Jenkins, 1996). This concept will also re-emerge within chapter five when exploring the unique event experiences that evolve from participating in running, and link to the work of Goffman (1973). As well as the individual social identities of the runners, a group identity was evident in the homogeneity of behaviour, appearance and language amongst participants from varied social backgrounds that separated them from non runners (the runners and non-runners were clearly distinguishable to the researchers in the field, even demonstrating clear differences to other athletes staying at event hotels).

The unique ethos was strongly related to the 'social world' (Unruh, 1980) of the runners. The findings supported the suggestion by Green and Jones (2005) that group members would accentuate their membership through both dress and language, especially where the social identity is not readily apparent. The long distance running identity, unlike identities such as race, or gender, is not necessarily immediately identifiable as such, and hence the use of signifiers such as clothing and language can be seen as a consequence of the desire both to portray a certain social identity, but also to conform to the role identity associated with that group. My findings led me to the literature of Unruh (1980), Crosset and Beal (1998), Kane and Zink (2004) and Green and Jones (2005) which all explore the 'subworld' and 'subculture' of sporting activity, which are also applicable to long distance running. These concepts of subculture and subworlds are explored later in this chapter. These sub themes, and others which continue to emerge, will link together to explain the long distance running identity in its entirety. At the start of this study, my early explorations within the long distance running social world were very much reminiscent to the construction of a jigsaw puzzle – whereby, I had all the pieces, but was unsure of the picture I was developing. Hopefully, by the end of this study, I will illustrate a 'partially' completed picture of the identity of the long distance runner.

The group theme will re-emerge again when exploring the long distance running community and club environment. Dress was not the only symbol of this particular social world, and this will also be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter, which explores the signs and symbols of the long distance running social world. Equally prevalent was language used, which was specific to the distance running world, for example competitors at some events, spoke of "*blowing up*", "*hitting the wall*", or getting "*miles in your legs*" while training. A spouse of one competitor interviewed during one Marathon noted "*I'm actually fed up with his incessant running speak about mileage, races and diet*". The use of language, specific to runners, and the 'telling of tales' within the distance running community, as noted by Sparkes (2002), was a regular occurrence. Alison P recalled that:

> *I turned into the type of person to avoid in the months leading up to the Marathon. I had only one topic of conversation and would waffle on about carb-loading, tapering and race days plans to anyone who had the misfortune to listen".*

The need to separate the socially identified 'in-group' from non-runners can be seen as both descriptive, in that the competing runners invariably wore the same 'uniform' whilst not competing (a T-shirt or cap signifying participation in a past race and either shorts or tracksuit bottoms), and discussed the same issues each evening after the events (overall time, perception of their personal performance, breaking down the race into constituent parts, comparisons with past races), but also *prescriptive*, in that the social identity prescribed a way to behave, to demonstrate unity with the group. For example after each race, competitors all met to stand waist deep in the hotel pool at the same time to aid recovery for the following days race, or met for training runs in the days after the running event had finished. Those who failed to conform, for example one runner who failed to adhere to these group 'standards' was noticeably ostracised as a consequence, confirming the need for group conformity. As noted above, social identities require some form of categorisation so that members are able to gain positive and distinct identities (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). Stebbins (1992) notes that serious leisure participants are separated from non-participants through the unique behaviours, language and values related to the 'social world' of the group. Within the context of the distance running world, my findings would support this.

Whilst the focus on the in-group (runners) was clear, little evidence of out-group derogation (i.e. of non-runners) as a means for self-enhancement occurred. It seems likely that this was perhaps due to the prevailing context providing little ground for comparison, in that the isolated nature of the distance running events (often over the Marathon distance) lowered the perceived relevance of the out-group, (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This study illustrates that having a certain social identity indicates a sense of belonging to a certain group, seeing events from the runner's perspectives and being like other members in the running group. This 'group' based identity, which underpins much of this study, suggests a degree of synergy and common understanding amongst those within the long distance running community.

Likewise, it is during the socialisation stage (Levine and Moreland, 1995), that the participant learns about the distinct and unique social world of the runner and the unique ethos (Stebbins, 1992) that surrounds the leisure activity. This was reported at most of the events studied, where participants retold their stories and experiences of running, and where appropriate behaviours were learned, unique features of running are exhibited, or the values of the running group are displayed. One example would be the stretching and post-race routines that

many runners adopt, which might appear somewhat alien to those outside of the distance running group. Levine and Moreland (1995) also suggest that during this period of socialisation, commitment to the activity should increase and sentiments towards the group are often positive, which is a theme that is confirmed throughout this study. For example, many runners felt a sense of pride from participating in certain events and also a sense of accomplishment from finishing specific Marathon events, which helped to illustrate their entry into the running community. It was through this accomplishment that many runners illustrated how they had progressed to the final stage of the socialisation process, that of acceptance, or long distance running identity confirmation. Upon reflecting on the unique ethos of the long distance running social world, I once attended a 'national road relay' event in Birmingham and took time to assess the other five members of my team and our diverse backgrounds. The six runners on the team comprised a butcher, a company director, a soldier, a milkman, an IT consultant and an academic. The one common bond we had was long distance running, and in reality, if it was not for this mutual interest, it would be improbable that we would ever have met, and the likelihood of life-long friendships evolving would be highly unlikely. I have running to thank for these friends who form an important part of my own long distance running social world. In fact, the monthly running publication that I subscribe to, and have delivered at home is entitled "Runners World", which is pertinent, as this is a source of information and insight into the unique ethos of this particular social world, which has been illustrated above. This will underpin many of the findings of chapter six, which delves inside the running club and long distance running community, and further explores the running identity.

Later in this chapter, I will explore the concept of a 'running career', and suggest that this is strongly linked to the concept of a confirmation of a running identity. What has been apparent from my findings is that identity confirmation, far from being an endpoint, is a continual process (Donnelly and Young, 1988). Long distance runners continue to interact within the running social world, demonstrating not only their improved 'skills' in running, but their knowledge of the values and behaviours that exist amongst participants. In summary, runners are quite clearly concerned with aligning themselves with the unique ethos and distinct social world of the long distance runner and one particular aspect of this community is the need for serious effort, in order to achieve specific running goals and targets. A third key sub theme, emerging from the data linked to the 'serious' approach that participants adopted to the act of

long distance running was the significant personal effort required to run, based upon specialist skills, knowledge or ability.

Achieving Through Serious Effort

The requirement for significant effort was evident amongst all runners, not only in terms of the physical effort required to undertake many of the events studied, but also the evident underlying knowledge demonstrated through the continual discussion between participants of training routines, nutrition, equipment and strategy, which are all integral sub themes of subsequent chapters. This was supported by many of the competitors stating that they had undergone an active process of education, for example in undertaking *UK Athletics,* national governing body coaching awards, as well as more informal processes of learning, for example one competitor who suggested that *"you have to learn how to run a marathon, you are always learning",* or another who suggested that *"pace judgement is a skill you develop and learn"*. There was also a more informal process of "self-directed learning" (Stebbins, 2007), for example one competitor observed that *"Naivety played a big part. If I had known how bad I was going to feel during the last few miles, I'm not sure I would have gone into the Marathon with the same amount of enthusiasm"*. Alan C empathised with this, acknowledging that:

> *As an experienced runner, having completed over 30 Marathons, I am still learning about the event, how to deal with the challenges that it presents, and to respect the distance and amount of training and preparation required to complete the Marathon.*

This will be explored further later in this chapter, as part of the socialisation process and learning the running role. Emma E indicated

> *I spent hours researching nutrition and strategy. I decided to start slowly and finish strongly when everyone else was tiring. Marathon pace judgement is a skill you develop and learn. I found that it's all about mental toughness. The biggest learning experience from it all was how mental a marathon is.*

This was supported by my own preparations for events, which involved increased training levels and time commitments significantly in terms of running for longer distances in training, monitoring diet and sleep patterns, participating in other running events to help assist with preparation, and attending training nights at the local running club on a more frequent basis. This echoed a comment made by Anthony P who noted that:

My four months of training began just before Christmas last year. I have spent months agonizing over training schedules, and worrying over illnesses and injury. I confess to being a complete anorak and not deviating from my training schedule at all. Race day was the reward for the hard work of the previous four months.

The characteristic of significant effort is, arguably, implicit within all serious leisure, as more casual activities requiring little in the way of skill are unlikely to provide a valued social identity (Stebbins, 2001). There seems to be a reciprocal relationship here, in that the activity needs to involve significant effort to provide a valued identity, and when that identity is obtained, individuals will undertake efforts to maintain that identity. Weiss (2001) also refers to the recognition in an acquired role that sport can play. In the context of long distance running, it is not solely about being able to finish a running event, but also the success in acquiring the role that is involved, and Weiss suggests that no-one is born with this role: it can be acquired by an individual only through developing special skills. This was very much true for the participants I encountered.

The demonstration of significant effort within the running world that emerged from my research findings led me to the literature by Stebbins (1992, 2001, 2007) and to illustrate that the acquisition of knowledge and skills can be based on a long-term effort by the running participant to understand 'long distance running' and how participants gather information from running books, specialist magazines, and running peers. Similarly, there is a serious effort involved by participants to protect their identity as a distance runner. A casual running participant within the running settings studied may enjoy the running experience, but in a more 'fleeting, transitory and superficial way' (Green and Jones, 2006:168). In fact, a more casual runner, or 'jogger' would not be comfortable in many of the running settings that I inhabited for this study, as they would most certainly be unable to complete the events due to a lack of skill, knowledge or ability. Upon reflection, I recall in 2006 when the now deceased

TV personality Jade Goody entered the London Marathon having undertaken very limited training and wearing inappropriate clothing, that this provoked feelings of contempt and resentment from 'serious runners' who felt that this undermined their own training and preparation. These strong feelings were a result of her lack of acquiring the skills or abilities to participate, and there was subsequent relief when she failed to get beyond half way, and withdrew from the Marathon, and thereby, to a certain extent, protected the notion that running a marathon is an acquired skill, that requires a level of serious effort that only a small percentage of people can achieve.

My findings led me to the literature that examines the stages of identity development, as applicable to long distance running. Stebbins (2001) itemised five stages whereby a leisure identity may be developed, building on the work of Levine and Moreland (1995). These are pre-socialization, recruitment, socialization, acceptance and decline or exit from that activity. Pre- socialization in running involves the acquisition of knowledge by the participant about the running identity to which they may aspire. This can be illustrated within the running participants that I have engaged with. For example, through existing family or peer group participation in running (as in my own case through my parents), information gained through the media (possibly from watching TV events like the London Marathon or the Olympic Games), or through personal contact with the social world surrounding the activity itself.

The second stage of developing a social identity involves entry into the social world, which could be dependent on factors such as the opportunity to enter, motivation to enter and interest to enter (Donnelly and Young, 1988). The recent upsurge of interest in long distance running and the government drive towards promoting healthy lifestyles and physical activity through activities such as walking and running has contributed towards an increase in participants entering the social world of long distance running. The third stage of developing a sport-related identity, and as such, a running identity, is the socialization phase, which will be explored further in chapter four, whereby participants begin to learn about a running identity. Socialization refers to the ongoing process where the participant gains knowledge about the roles, norms and values associated with a serious leisure activity and becomes assimilated as part of the social world (Green and Jones, 2005). Within the long distance running community I have begun to examine how running knowledge, attitudes, values, motives and skills have been developed, with the end result of rewarding sporting activity,

from both a social and psychological perspective. The fourth emergent sub theme in this chapter, which is explored below, focuses on the need to persevere, and negotiate constraints to participation in long distance running.

A Need to Persevere

Perseverance generally involves the negotiation of constraints. Such constraints are not simply based upon issues such as risk, danger and so on, but also related to much more mundane aspects, for example those caused by the competing demands of the "real world", such as family, work and so on (Gillespie, et al. 2002). Perseverance, as a concept becomes prevalent in chapter four discussions that look at the specific experiences whilst training for running events. In this instance many long distance running events, by their very nature, all require perseverance not only to complete the races, but also in the associated planning involved. One form of social interaction amongst runners were the discussions and nostalgic stories of a distance running past (Allen Collinson and Hockey, 2007) and the recourse to running narratives which stressed endurance and perseverance in the face of difficulty, features of serious leisure and which were regularly observed within the running social world that I inhabited. The myths, tales, stories and folklore of the long distance running social world will be a regularly emerging theme, which will be further explored later in this chapter. The main constraints to participation that had been negotiated by participants were the training schedules that all had undertaken involving high mileages for many months beforehand, the need to save money throughout the year to participate in other preparatory running events, and the requirement to balance the time and financial commitments with the need to maintain a balanced family and work life. A multitude of identities in long distance running are explored further in chapter six, entitled 'running away from home'.

Whilst on one overseas running trip, I interviewed Mel P about his extended trip to run a six day ultra marathon event in the Sahara desert. Not only was it apparent that it required great perseverance to physically train for and to then finish the event, but it had also been a major financial expenditure which had also placed strain on his family life. He had achieved his ultimate goal, displayed extreme levels of perseverance, however there had been costs. On this theme, the fieldwork also identified negative aspects of serious sport amongst the distance running community. Several participants in the events, for example, displayed high

levels of obsession with distance running; depression caused by injury or poor performance; examples of partners becoming alienated from their spouse due to excessive commitment towards the activity; and even cases of failed marriages, where long distance running had been a major contributing factor. As Josephine L commented:

> *My husband can't understand why I have to run on a Tuesday night, club night, when we might have an invite to go out for a drink with friends after work. He often gets annoyed with me and my obsessive need to train. He's not a runner, so he doesn't really understand why I have to run 10 miles tonight.*

Discussions with several participants at one running club displayed an interesting balance of priorities in life, often with family and work being ranked behind, or on an even par with their commitment to running as a serious leisure activity. One runner, for example, had relinquished the opportunity to go on a family holiday, instead preferring to undertake one of the overseas running events alone. Another runner commented, *"they simply don't understand what it's all about"*, demonstrating the separateness of the runners' social world to even close family. Hogg (2001) suggests that a key question remains as to why one social identity (for example as a runner) becomes more salient than another (as a spouse). Whilst the answer to this remains unknown, the nature of the sporting event may provide some clues. Running was often seen as the 'exciting' element of participants' lives. As Robin A suggested, with reference to one specific event:

> *Having completed the Flora London Marathon on eleven occasions, I have discovered that the event is a unique sporting experience that can generate intense feelings of joy and pain, anticipation and uncertainty, despair and exhilaration.*

During two of the events studied, extreme cases of perseverance were evident, for example numerous runners suffering from extreme heat exhaustion and dehydration during the events. Normally, such weather conditions would prevent many runners from participating; however many runners persevered, explaining that the nature of the respective events actually meant that such an act was not even considered. Many runners were actually forced to withdraw, not through choice, but through medical conditions which prevented them continuing. Karen M reflected that:

the mask of pain etched on faces was the common denominator. The marathon lurch became my new running style. My legs were in spasms of agony and my left thigh had given up and gone numb. I was staggering along like an extra in Michael Jackson's Thriller video. My head was screaming 'stop you stupid man, this isn't healthy, enough is enough, but then another little voice kept nagging me saying it hurts more walking than running – nearly there – just keep those legs moving.

This perseverance was also illustrated by one runner suffering from severe blisters during a multi-day running event. Normally, such an injury would prevent runners from participating; however this runner completed all subsequent events, whereas a similar affliction at home would have led to an extended period of non-running. This again can be explained with the need to maintain the social identity, to be seen as someone who completed the event, providing that runner with subcultural capital that would extend far beyond the duration of the injury. The concept of 'subcultural capital' is explored below. This again can be explained with the need to maintain the social identity, to be seen as someone who completed the running event, providing that runner with sub-cultural capital that would extend far beyond the duration of the event, and avoid negative evaluations of other runners (Leary, 1995). One runner commented that ''*Pain is temporary, failure lasts forever''*, or similarly ''*Pain is temporary, while glory lasts forever''*. On the theme of suffering, one runner observed ''*Pain is simply weakness leaving the body''*. For these runners, the importance was not how they completed their respective events, but that they did so. In this way, pain, physical exhaustion or injury also provided physical evidence of commitment to the group, and become 'badges of honour' among runners (*cf.* Thornton 2004).

Bale (2004) notes how pain can actually be a source of emotional satisfaction and enjoyment, reaffirming commitment to the social world of the runner. Charmaz (1999) also observes that pain itself has an 'insufferable quality' to it. In the context of my study, pain appears to not be something necessarily to overcome, but something to value for members of the group. This is a particularly interesting idea as I had considered dealing with pain and injury as one major sub theme during chapter four, however I will address them separately for the very fact that for many, pain did not necessarily correlate with injury, and was actually an enjoyable aspect of running for some participants. It is addressed here, as an example of how distance runners were able to demonstrate qualities of perseverance and negotiate constraints, such as pain

caused by terrain, climate, distance or other barriers that participants faced. As one regular participant, Trevor G commented:

I still seem to find myself being drawn back to the Marathon event and 'dealing' with this inevitable pain and suffering, as almost an occupational hazard of undertaking the challenge of the event. There is something exciting and addictive about the interaction with the crowds on the streets of London, along with the sights, sounds and smells on the course, and the positive energy and emotion that this particular event generates. This attractive package seems to persuade participants from around the world to return year after year. When I submit my application for the Marathon every October, I seem to forget the pain and suffering that I had endured the previous April whilst completing the previous event.

The unusually warm weather conditions for the 2007 Flora London Marathon resulted in many participants having to run in conditions they were unfamiliar with. One participant, Paul G, disappointed with his performance in the heat commented

The heat played mind games -it was too hot, there was no breeze, and they were dropping like flies. I just went into preservation mode. The reflected temperature on the tarmac tipped 28 degrees, somewhat higher than the sub zero temperatures I had been used to back home. All in all, it was hard, hot, crowded, but a great experience. Docklands was an oven. My mind was on all the effort and pain, and for what? All I achieved was sunburn and a very slow time. It was hot enough to put off cutting the grass, let alone running 26.2 miles.

As explained above, the theme of pain is further explored in chapter four; however, this chapter has sought to establish that identity is central to subcultural membership, and that the central core of that identity is the distinguishing feature of the serious runner. The strong identities possessed by serious running participants make it difficult for participants to cease participation, not only because of the personal sense of loss of identity, but also in terms of the need to maintain their identity due to the expectations of others, and how they thought they would be perceived if they stopped the activity (Shipway & Jones, 2007). One runner, Alison P, highlighted before one event that *"I got flu, and basically lost four weeks of training, which is why I'm probably going to struggle. I just don't want to fail after training*

so hard, I just don't want to let my family and friends down". Thus runners are, to some extent, socially committed to the activity once others are aware of their social identity. There is a need for far greater exploration on how runners deal with a loss of identity, or as Goffman (1973) termed a 'spoiled identity', and how the running participant deals with this loss of identity which might result from either a decrease in performance or injury, which prevents running. In both chapter four and then again in chapter seven, this theme will draw me towards the literature of Allen Collinson and Hockey (2007) who examine the sociology of both the 'running body' and examining the impact of long-term injury on the identity of two middle / long distance runners. This involves an analysis of how sport participants manage this 'disrupted identity' when faced with a disruption to the running self, and the impact this can have on how they appear physically in body shape, to both themselves and amongst their running peers.

Whilst exploring the identification that runners have with this chosen activity, participants quite clearly make a significant effort to align themselves with the symbols, values and behaviours of the subculture. Building on the ideas of Bourdieu's (1984) concept of cultural capital, Thornton (1995) used the term 'subcultural capital' to measure the value of individuals' knowledge, credibility and identification with a subculture. Green and Jones (2005) argue that self-presentation is core to the development of subcultural capital, and suggest that once an individual receives an important social identity, such as being a long distance runner, that running identity is shown through self-presentational behaviour.

Self-presentation is defined by Schlenker (1980) as the individual's strategies and behaviours designed to manage the impressions that others form of them. For example, my observations whilst immersed in the long distance running social world highlighted how runners wore logo bearing clothing related to both running in general, but also clothing and race T-shirts connected to the iconic running training destinations they had visited, or marathon events they had participated in. This was primarily for other runners' benefit, as they would be able to identify and relate to the 'symbolic capital' associated with these displays, and therefore providing the runners with significant subcultural capital (Shipway and Jones, 2007). In contrast, the non-running community remained unlikely to understand or even observe such behaviour, as it took place. Self-presentation and the construction and protecting of a particular identity is explored further in chapter six, within the context of social relations in the long distance running social world.

The perseverance can once again be explained from a social identity perspective. Firstly, once a valued social identity exists, then there are a number of mechanisms that 'protect' this identity, for example the development of in-group favouritism, whereby participants view fellow in-group members (in this case, long distance runners) favourably, whereas non-runners (the out-group) were generally perceived in negative terms, often in terms of lack of fitness, being 'couch potatoes', or lacking the motivation to undertake an activity that required no particular skills. Such perceptions make it difficult for in-group members to cease participation and become part of the derogated out-group. Secondly, the self-presentation of such identities to others makes it difficult to cease such activities, due to the expectations of others, and how runners may feel they will be perceived if they stopped the activity (Shamir, 1992). When I explore the loss of identity and negative aspects of long distance running, it will be illustrated that one of the most traumatic experiences for a runner is the inability to run, and be perceived as no longer a member of the 'in-group', and risk being perceived in negative terms by their running peers.

The need for perseverance was a constant underlying sub theme within this study, illustrated on numerous occasions. My findings led me to literature associated with perseverance, and most notably the work of both Stebbins (1992, 2001, 2007), and Green and Jones (2006) which provided insight into other sporting activities, such as golf, sports travel, and the activities of extreme rock climbers and BASE jumpers, who also demonstrated high levels of perseverance in their chosen sporting activity. This is contrasted with more casual leisure activities such as listening to music or watching TV where the need for perseverance is limited. Having been involved in a diverse range of distance running events and faced challenges to my health, often caused by long distance running, I can strongly identify with the inner strength and need for perseverance that exists within the distance running social world. A fifth key sub theme of this chapter emerging from my fieldwork was the development of long distance running 'careers', from the initial introduction to running that then progressed towards participation in marathons and other equally challenging events which required dedication and commitment to distance running far exceeding the basic requirements of health and fitness.

Developing a Running Career

The concept of serious running suggests a career path whereby particular stages of the activity are achieved. McCarville (2007), for example, notes how he followed a career progression from short events, to a full *Ironman* triathlon, and this was a journey echoed by many. Several of the running events used in this study were actually seen as a career progression, representing an advance from smaller-scale, or shorter events, to more 'professional' events. Several key informants commented before events at the Marathon distance that it was a "*major step up*", thus for some this was a significant 'career marker', representing a confirmation of their progression to confirmed 'serious' runner. For others, however, it was actually a 'step back' from, or training session for more advanced events such as the *Comrades Marathon* (an ultra marathon in South Africa), or the *Marathon des Sables* (a multi-day ultra marathon across Moroccan desert). For these runners, a clear 'career' development had occurred over time, and was perhaps less important if they had extensive experience. The higher profile Marathon events were especially important as a career marker for less experienced participants, providing them with sub-cultural capital (Green & Jones, 2005), in that participation in these marathons actually raised their level of identification and credibility with other runners, through having taken part in such an event, especially for those who had competed at a more local level, or who had yet to complete longer races. For many, this was the pinnacle of their running career, as Emma E commented:

> *I have done several half marathons, but this was my first full Marathon. The Marathon was one of the best and worst things I have done in my life. I now have the bug. I told myself during the race to just get back in one piece and don't worry about the time, however upon reflection I'm disappointed. I am even more determined now to get the time I wanted, so watch this space. I'm determined to get round in less than five hours.*

This collection of sub-cultural capital (Thornton, 1995) related to a valued social identity was an important motivator for many runners. As part of this, a strong motivation for participation was the desire to 'collect running places', as mentioned by Urry (2002) with the 'Big Five' of London, New York, Berlin, Boston and Chicago marathons mentioned by several competitors. An important element of this aspect was the subsequent tradition of storytelling, as highlighted by McCarville (2007), whereby the rigours and exertions undertaken were

discussed, and debated. Green and Jones (2005:177) describe the collection of sub-cultural capital as a further 'rung on the leisure career ladder', illustrating this period of achievement or reward. Long distance runners move from competing in local runs, to competing regionally, nationally and often internationally. This international dimension is explored in further detail in chapter five. Several participants extended their running career paths by 'racing' around the world, further illustrating Urry's comments. For some distance runners, including Terry H, Simon K, and Alison P, travel to overseas races was akin to a pilgrimage, and added another career notch for the serious runner. I felt this, having completed the Athens Classic Marathon, which followed the original route from the town of Marathon to Athens. I would not describe the event as a pilgrimage, but it was however, one of the marathon events that remained important for me to complete to affirm my distance running identity amongst my running peers. Clearly, running events enhance the career path for many long distance runners, a point which is explored in chapter five, within the confines of 'running and travel'.

The idea of a long-term 'career' associated with distance running once again closely links to the literature of Stebbins (2001). He discusses *'turning points and stages of achievement and involvement'*, that also exist within the long distance running community. The analogy of the Golfer (Green and Jones, 2005) who gradually progresses from a novice participant to a low handicap golfer has close synergy with many of the long distance runners involved in this study. For several of the participants in this study, reaching certain age barriers (for example forty or fifty years of age) represents the start of a new running career. This concept will become more apparent in chapter seven, whilst exploring both the 'running body' and the unique aspect of running whereby the onset of age is far from being a barrier to participation for many.

These event experiences, as detailed in chapter five, serve as useful stages in the career development of the long distance runner, and once attained, these experiences can act as a signifier of career attainment (Green and Jones, 2005). The events are an important source of subcultural capital, which signal the runners' status as an insider, and also the runners' status within the subculture, illustrating what Thornton (1995) claims, namely that ' subcultural capital confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder'. Knowledge of running routes and running events, knowledge of running subcultural lore and stories, experience in the running rituals and ceremony of the running experience at special running

places, all contributes to the status of the serious runner. Subcultural capital in the long distance running social world takes the form of souvenirs and / or photos from the running events. Participating in running events serves as an outward symbol of a runner's career stage, through this collection of tangible and intangible forms of subcultural capital, as suggested by Green and Jones, and a theme that continues to emerge throughout this study.

Bryan (1977) hypothesized that specialization within a given group might involve movement towards some common destination. Such movement has been labelled as "progress." With progress, participants move along a continuum as skills are developed, improved and knowledge is gathered. Implicit in the progress model is that of the "pinnacle". This links to Stebbins (1992) and his ideas relating to career progression in leisure activities. A large amount of data for this study was collected at several overseas training events, all which held running clinics, workshops, training sessions, and seminars which were enthusiastically attended by long distance runners eager to glean help and useful information which would help their running careers to develop to the next level. However, the concept of a 'running career' also has negative connotations, whereby runners' performance will rise and fall, and potentially decline with the onset of injury or age. Part of the running career, is how the long distance runner manages this decline in performance once they have reached the pinnacle of their running career. In fact, running can often be concerned with learning how to run more effectively and efficiently. Long distance running, given its nature, generates high levels of commitment because of the demands that are placed on participants, both mentally and physically. This mental aspect of long distance running will re-occur in all the subsequent chapters of this study, illustrating the importance of the running mind, leading me from the social psychology literature and into the area of sport and exercise psychology. In summary, long distance runners, especially those competing over the marathon distance, share common training needs, skill requirements and values as they move towards that common goal and end destination – which is normally 26.195 miles down the road at the finish line. A final sub theme of this chapter that will now be examined in greater depth is the range of durable benefits that are a result of participating in long distance running.

The Enduring Benefits of Long Distance Running

The durable benefits of participation in long distance running were evident through both observation and interviews with participants. Some of these benefits were generic, such as developing and overcoming personal challenges, experiencing a heightened sense of achievement and self-esteem, fun and happiness, healthy living, weight loss and physical well-being, injury rehabilitation, addiction and obsession, induced euphoria, excitement and adrenalin, pride, overcoming pain and exhaustion, spirituality and testing the mind, body and spirit, freedom, space, place-specific attractions, enhancing personal performance, and non-aggressive competition. Generally, however, feelings of accomplishment were mentioned as being of a greater magnitude for two main reasons. Firstly, the nature of the events (for example the Marathon over 26 miles, or 42 Kilometres, of continuous running) was, for almost all competitors, more than they had experienced during their running careers. Secondly, the actual nature and route of the events, in terms of unfamiliar routes compared to regular training routers at home, the unseasonably warm climate at some events, and difficulty provided challenges beyond that faced by the runners at home. This was identified by Ewan F who said that

> *The worst part was finding the horrible mess that was lying in wait beneath my socks on Sunday evening, and having to scramble around on my backside all day on Monday. I had niggles in places that I have never had niggles before - my whole body just felt so jarred and ached. Three days later and I was still walking like a penguin. However, those blisters last a week, but the memories will last a lifetime!*

The second key benefit identified through the fieldwork was that of the long-term self-esteem benefits accrued as a consequence of participation in long distance running. This sub theme also forms an integral part of chapter seven. Clear evidence of 'basking in reflected glory' (Cialdini, *et al.*, 1976) was observed though participants wearing artefacts that positively associated them with previous events (notably the Paris Marathon and the New York Marathon). During the London event, Alison P noted:

> *I ran down the Mall with the announcer telling us that we were achieving something only 1% of people in Britain will achieve!! Also, it was chaos afterwards. Finding my*

family and friends was very difficult, but when I did I had hero status. This carried on the next day when I arrived at the office, as all my colleagues came to have a look at the medal that I proudly wore at work all day. I felt like a real champion, and was still buzzing from it all five days later, and I'm happily telling my story to anyone and everyone who will listen. I'm now suffering from PMD –Post Marathon Depression.

Another finisher, Anthony P, sat outside a pub, less than an hour after completing one marathon event observed:

When the medal was put around my neck I forgot all those hard miles; they melted into the background as I looked dazed and confused at the medal. I had done everything I had ever dreamed of. I have never felt more pride and happiness and I knew that moment would stay with me forever.

Discussion of past successes was an evident focus of social interaction, especially during the months of preparation for many distance running events, a major sub theme of the following chapter which further reinforces the running identity. A key finding was that some individuals were able to protect their self-esteem as runners through emphasising injury, lack of preparation, or simply suggesting minimal effort to be undertaken during the marathon or a similar endurance running event. This was generally done in the days, weeks or months prior to the main event, and could be viewed as 'cutting off future failure' (Wann, *et al.,* 1995), a strategy utilised to anticipate and account for potential dangers to the running identity of the participant. For example, on the day before one Marathon, one male competitor observed "*I think I might have a nightmare day tomorrow though. If that happens, I'll just put it down to lack of preparation, lack of fitness, injury, and the curry and beers we had last night"*. Similarly, one female runner Josephine L, interviewed in the evening after one distance running event observed

I had an excruciating hamstring pain at 20 miles, which slowed me down. Also at 18 miles, I heard that Haile Gebreselassie (the famous Ethiopian athlete) had pulled out, and my instant thought was that if he can't make it, then I'm stopping too.

Given the focus upon the running identity during the days before the running events, this strategy appeared to be a key element of 'protecting' that identity, so that performances not

congruent with the identity portrayed (for example failing to complete the event, or finishing in an unsatisfactory time) did not impact upon the salient identity. For one male spectator, the decision to not compete overseas was based on a fear of finishing last amongst a group of competitors who took the event so seriously, and not being able to blend into a pack, like back home in a more localised 10km road race. As one of the participants, Mark S noted:

> *I have performed unsatisfactorily at previous Marathons, but I have always finished the events, irrespective of the time taken, as I feel that a 'DNF' (Did Not Finish) result would haunt me for years and affect my standing amongst peers in my local running community.*

The durable benefits again relate to the social identities held by the runners. Benefits such as those which accrued through basking in reflected glory (Cialdini, et al. 1976) are only available when there is a strong connection between the self and the activity. Thus, casual runners are unlikely to gain benefits from occasional participation if the activity holds no value for them. Serious runners are, however, more likely to benefit from successes related to their sense of membership. Long distance running is also a learning experience, where knowledge is acquired on how to run a certain event, how to train and how to prepare for the very act of running, which is illustrated by Robin A:

> *I spent hours researching nutrition and strategy. It's all about mental toughness. The biggest learning experience from it all was how mental a marathon is. Naivety played a big part. If I had known how bad I was going to feel during the last few miles, I'm not sure I would have gone into the event with the same amount of enthusiasm.*

Whilst reviewing existing literature in this area, I observed that Green and Jones (2005) suggest that Serious Leisure may result in one or more of the following: the enhancement of the self-concept, self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-expression, feelings of accomplishment, enhanced self-image and self-esteem, and social interaction. In terms of the enduring benefits of long distance running, I have been regularly running for twenty years and feel a more balanced individual for this rewarding experience. Several of these areas emerged during this study and this led me to consult the literature connected with some of these themes, which will also be examined within chapters four and seven respectively. Whilst casual leisure activities will provide a sense of entertainment and enjoyment, the

results from this study begin to illustrate that many of the outcomes are a consequence of the strong identification that participants have with the activity of long distance running, and the very strong sense of social identity that is gained through 'serious running' participation.

Summary

This chapter has also allowed me to explore both my academic and athletic voice, through ethnographic methods, and to develop a deeper understanding of my own running identity. By observing and describing the experiences of long distance runners, I have also begun to explore my own identity within mass participation sport. The dominant theme of a running identity will continue to reappear throughout the following chapters, to reinforce some of the concepts that are introduced within this chapter. The purpose of this chapter was therefore to firstly highlight the dominant role of identity, and then to demonstrate how that running identity is portrayed and displayed whilst training or preparing to run, whilst attending and participating in long distance running events and also within work, social and family environment. I have also sought to demonstrate a framework by which 'serious running' activities could be described and explained. Stebbins' (1992) Serious Leisure framework provides a useful tool with which to describe the characteristics of such behaviour. As noted throughout this chapter, however, the key limitation which the results of this study expose is that it fails to explain these behaviours. The six characteristics of serious leisure are all present within the long distance running social world, with some more prevalent than others. The most dominant of these serious leisure characteristics was the role of identity and running; and the unique ethos of the long distance running social world. By adopting a social identity based approach, however, the chapter has provided a preliminary explanation of the characteristics of 'serious running'. By confirming the valued social identities held by participants, the subsequent unique ethos of the group, the perseverance of its members, the requirement for personal effort, the careers of the runners and the subsequent durable benefits have been explained to some extent. Many of these common themes continue to emerge in other areas of this study, and will be discussed throughout, to further illustrate the role of social identity within the long distance running social world.

Chapter 4: Learning a Running Identity: Training to Run

Introduction

In its simplest form, to achieve running targets requires training and a level of preparation. Training for a running event, or simply running on a regular basis for the joy of running emerged as a key theme within this study. This chapter will focus on three higher order themes, identified above, that have emerged from within the long distance running community linked to training and the preparation involved within distance running. These were the feelings of pain and suffering that is often associated with the act of running; training time and spaces that form an integral part of the daily running routine; and dealing with injuries that are often associated with a physical activity that is notoriously high impact and places strain on the running body, often caused by excessive training. At an early stage of analysing the data for this study, I contemplated merging pain and injury as one theme, but my emerging findings illustrated that for many participants, they experience pain and often enjoy it. This enjoyment of pain regularly occurred when participants were not suffering from a physical injury, so to combine the two themes together would be a misrepresentation of the

long distance running subculture. Although pain and injury are inextricably linked in many cases with a running injury being the catalyst for feelings of pain, my decision to explore the concepts separately was very much driven by findings that illustrated how pain was an enjoyable and challenging experience for some, at a time when they were not faced with any form of injury.[6]

Feeling Pain and Suffering

Murakami (2008) in his book entitled *What I Talk about When I Talk about Running* points out that pain is inevitable, and suffering is optional. He argues that the hurt is an unavoidable reality of long distance running. Roger Bannister, the first person to break the four minute mile once said "*The man who can drive himself further once the effort gets painful is the man who will win*". Whilst running is not always about winning, it requires a certain level of determination, commitment and perseverance to achieve goals. Fatigue and exhaustion were words that were regularly used whilst talking to informants involved in this study. A common term in the long distance running social world, used during the marathon event, is 'Hitting the Wall', which in its simplest form means running out of energy. Similarly, there is a common expression used in sporting circles, which is 'no pain, no gain'. For many long distance runners there is an acknowledgement that to actually improve performance will cause pain, although there was a general consensus that there is a difference between pain and discomfort when running and Simon K's comments were typical:

> *There's a big difference between pain and discomfort. I would never try to 'run through' pain from something that could risk serious injury, so I don't ignore the signals. However, discomfort from just trying too hard or because of poor weather is not an excuse, and I always push through that. It 'hurts', but it's not doing me any damage.*

Following extensive immersion in the long distance running culture, it was apparent that long distance running is an unpredictable activity. Despite months of training, the end result is not

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[6]My findings related to the training patterns, injuries, identities, and experiences of long distance runners have been published in an edited book entitled *International Perspectives on Festivals and Events.*

guaranteed – sometimes the participant will succeed and feel comfortable whilst running, while at other times the very act of running will cause suffering and extreme discomfort. Participants in this study have come to accept that running is painful, and at times an emotional experience and pain seems to be a precondition for this particular sporting activity. Murakami (2008) suggests that it is precisely because of the pain, precisely because a runner wants to overcome that pain, that the participant gets the feeling of being *alive*. The quality of this experience is not based on standards like times or rankings. Trevor G actually admitted that he relishes the pain and suffering he feels during long training runs and ultra marathon races, suggesting that *"A bit of pain and dizziness does you no harm"*. Likewise, for many runners, to not finish the event is a sign of failure, especially amongst their peers in the long distance running community. Expressions such as the American cyclist Lance Armstrong's words 'Pain is temporary, but quitting is final', and similar clichés are prevalent within the long distance running social world. Whilst one respondent compared the pain of running a marathon as comparable to childbirth, two regularly used phrases amongst runners were*: "Pain is weakness leaving the body!"* and *"Pain is temporary, failure lasts forever"*.

Many spectators will observe runners inflicting pain in events like the marathon and take on the role of a curious and sometimes bewildered voyeur, often interested and fascinated by other runners' suffering. The most regularly observed TV image of major city marathons are images of runners being carried across the finish line, the culmination of hours of self inflicted pain and suffering. In some cases, these runners go beyond 'pain'. Many runners involved in this study illustrated the high levels of self destructive behaviour in long distance running. To the non runner this will appear hard to understand and comprehend why someone would inflict personal damage, knowing that if they were injured or feeling pain, that the very act of running was detrimental to their health. Patrick T ran in one event, knowing in advance that he was injured and that the event would be problematic:

> *I ate all the Nurofen I could find and rested right up until race day. The training had been going fine until three weeks before when on my second (and last) 20-miler, injury struck. Between 13 and 14 miles on race day, disaster struck. I sympathize with anyone who tries that run / limp / walk lark. It was a long day at the office, and I was shivering uncontrollably and cramping, and at the end I was in a world of pain*

One memorable quote after one event came from Josephine L:

> *It started hurting at 18 miles, when I saw my husband, and with a jelly baby and a paracetemol I was sent on my way for the last, long 8 miles. The worst part was finding the horrible mess that was lying in wait beneath my socks on Sunday evening, and having to scramble around on my bum all day on Monday. I'm walking down stairs backwards. All in all, it was an amazing experience that I hope never to repeat.*

Kara M was also quite emotional when reflecting on her experiences after one particular overseas long distance running event:

> *Once I got over the finish line I was presented with my medal and then taken to the medical tent in a wheelchair, where after half an hour I was pronounced fit to go and meet my family. I then made my way through the carnage of the finishing area. Three days later and I'm still walking like a penguin. The pain was terrible. I just had no idea what to do. Everyone from the running club said I looked in pain afterwards. It wasn't pain (just at that point), it was because I was crying so much!*

According to Charmaz (1999), suffering has an unpleasant quality, and this appears to be the case with long distance running. The running experience while painful and uncomfortable is often still positive. Bale (2004:98) explores pain in some depth, quoting the Australian runner Herb Elliott who likened the pain caused through training as an almost religious experience, and suggesting that the 'purifying quality of the pain that has to be suffered is like that of a confession'. Bale (2004:99) also quotes Adrian Metcalfe, a British runner, who describes the pain of racing as 'the virtual masochism of pleasure through prolonged pain'. These findings, and the dearth of existing studies in this area, indicate that we know very little about the mix of pain and pleasure within distance running, especially over the longer distances such as the marathon, which it could be suggested, borders on the perverse. One might also wonder at what stage this self-torture goes beyond basic fatigue and exhaustion, towards endangering health and even life. For example, after one race that formed part of my data collection for this study, the Great North Run in Newcastle, England, four participants actually died whilst taking part. Questions to be addressed in future studies include an exploration of a series of additional questions including: at what point does a healthy activity become self destructive?; when is succumbing to pain permissible?; what happens to participants who fail to finish

running events?; what is the result of this on their emotional well-being?; and finally, whether that failure will haunt them?

Several studies, most notably Morgan (1979), explore the experience of pain whilst running, often linked to the concept of 'dissociation' (Stevinson and Biddle, 1998). This includes diverting attention from possible sensations of pain and injury, which are often masked and the runner is placed at risk of a range of painful symptoms from blisters, cramps or muscle strains to stress fractures and heat exhaustion. Stevinson and Biddle explore how runners could take a more 'associative' strategy allowing steps to be taken to prevent problems developing such as drinking more fluid, stretching or dropping out of the event. The majority of the long distance runners who were involved in this study would ignore these early warning signs, dismiss the problems and carry on running. Likewise, several of the runners indicated that when they felt pain and suffering during the marathon events which they were competing in, they managed to get through this discomfort through this process of dissociation by thinking about something else to distract them from the pain.

Austin (2007) suggests that running can help bring a sense of order to one's life, as well as being a voluntary form of ritual suffering. Austin questions why, when there are so many pleasurable activities in life such as eating out, watching TV, listening to music, or going for a drive: why do runners choose to inflict pain on their bodies in a rather perverse manner. Upon reflection, it could be that runners run through pain because the pleasure of running, in other areas, far outweighs the suffering elements. Several participants suggested that running builds a person's character, it helped define who they are, and the fact that it is difficult and challenging is part of its value. For example, Mark S explained that he didn't enjoy all pain. He had a major leg injury, and didn't enjoy that pain *because* it is pain. What Mark did enjoy was the pain experiences of his weekly track sessions, or the pain feelings as he shuffled down the finishing chute to collect his medal and T-shirt, in the seconds after a race ends. To Mark that is not pain: it formed part of the running experience. This feeling was reinforced by the comments of most distance runners who contributed towards my study. To them, when running they are pushing the limits of their own strength and endurance, and experiencing their own human limitations.

Atkinson (2008) explored pain and suffering narratives amongst sixty two triathletes in Canada, and parallels do exist with long distance running. He introduces the suggestion that

triathletes come together as a mutual recognised 'pain community' of likeminded actors, and they learn to relish physical and mental suffering within that sport. These findings support my observations and discussions at long distance running events. Whilst running marathons I have observed athletes who derive social and emotional stimulation through 'suffering' at running events over the marathon distance, and several key informants frequently spoke of the positive experiences accompanying suffering and pain in long distance running, along with observing the bonding function that emerges at events as runners discussed their mutual suffering. Atkinson refers to Putnam's (1995) work that term the ability to withstand and enjoy suffering as a form of 'bonding social capital' that member's value as a marker of their collective identity. Post-event interviews with long distance runners also illustrated the attraction for self-imposed agony in their sporting world that binds them together as a unique social group, one that Atkinson called the unique 'pain community'. I witnessed runners almost revelling in voluntary suffering as being exciting and personally significant, utilising their training and preparation for marathons as a tool for emotional stimulation. Within long distance running circles there is a common saying at the end of marathons by runners who are suffering and in pain, "never again – until the next time!" Runners who came to enjoy intense physical and cognitive agony whilst running appear to share a socially learned personality structure (Atkinson, 2008), that places instances of voluntary suffering amongst runners as exciting and personally significant. This concept re-emerges as the central concept in chapter six.

In relation to pain experiences and emotion within a sport context, Allen Collinson (2005) in her auto ethnographic study on running noted that her emotions were frequently directed *at* her body, often with a sense of anger, irritation, frustration and despair. If this emotional response was a result of a sporting injury, her attention was repeatedly drawn back to a particular body part, to *here*, instead of *there* (Honkasalo, 1988). My findings indicate that feelings of pain and suffering amongst participants led to rapid fluctuations in emotional states. I observed that emotions were experienced immediately and strongly at running events, within the 'running context', defined by Allen Collinson as including not only the actual running activities (training sessions, racing, gym workouts etc) but also the times when training and other running related topics were discussed with other athletes and friends. Several participants noted that they encountered a full spectrum of emotions that oscillated wildly at certain points. This was often due to either an injury or a perceived sub standard running performance. Once they were backstage (Goffman, 1969) at home or at work, usually

after an unsuccessful training session or an unrewarding running event, despair, anger and blame often set in amongst participants. These findings are consistent with those of Allen Collinson, when exploring emotions in sport, who also mentions the requirement for intense and sustained emotion work which proves to be exhausting on many occasions, sometimes frustrating, but also encompasses experiences as rewarding and satisfying at times.

Sport is movement, belief and desire, bound together in a multisensual event whose epicentre is emotion (Duquin, 2004). Long distance running offers different emotional experiences in terms of building community, establishing a running identity and demonstrating emotional control. I found feelings of camaraderie, friendship and generosity to be an integral part of the distance running club environment, supporting some of the previous findings of Donnelly and Young (1988) who observed rugby players. Similarly, the suppression of emotions related to pain and injury was common in long distance running, whereby participants learnt to desensitize themselves to the pain of running, and in some instances they take pleasure from pain-receiving. Duquin suggests that memory is tied to emotion; and this study identifies that it was feelings that make distance running events significant. In memory work, the ability to replay past emotions whilst running reveals the forces, and running events that helped to shape the running identity. As established in chapter three, for distance runners who found their running careers disrupted by injury or sudden, expected reasons for discontinuing running, the circumstances under which they left running affected their emotional responses. In some instances this resulted in depression, a sense of loss or an anxious search for a new identity (Astle, 1986). This search for a new identity was illustrated by Robert G, who joined a cycling club when injury prevented him from running. As in elite, high performance sport, for dedicated runners who have little time to develop outside of running, their identity can be narrowly and precariously defined.

The discussions of the participants about pain and injury in running also conflict with the ideas of a healthy body, explored further in chapter seven. This is another paradox in the findings of this study. From the perceptions of health and well-being, runners construct their own stories of pain and injury. They rarely mention the body when they feel well and healthy. Corbin (2003: 257) states that 'they [most people] take the body for granted and build their self-concepts and identities on what they can do rather than what they can't do.' The participants in this study are more aware of their body because of their running performance; they 'read' their body and understand it better than the ordinary person.

Knowing the limitations that the body imposes on them helps them to improve their running performance. When they experience pain and injury, they become even more sensitive to it. The themes of *running in pain*, *dealing with injury*, self *esteem issues within running*, and *the health benefits of participation* emerged from both interviews and observation in this research, and are explored at various stages within the study. Physical injury becomes a *natural part* of the runners' condition. Runners who suffer – and indeed enjoy – intense physical agony share 'habitus', internalised orientations, perceptions and actions influenced by their social location. The choices they make depend on habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). Habitus also depends on the availability of physical capital. Injury threatens the habitus of long-distance runners, the physical capital which they have accumulated and try to maintain. However, they often put this in jeopardy through training as they see the suffering of pain as an inevitable part of achieving their goal of optimum performance.

The stories of pain and injury are full of paradoxes and do not always follow the well-defined traditional lines of the health discourse as provided by social policies, medical guidelines or conventional perceptions of every day life. The findings of the study suggest a tendency towards feelings of pain as being normal and routine, as almost an *occupational hazard* and the price that has to be paid to be competitive at sport. Pain and injury are an endemic part of the long distance running social world (Allen Collinson and Hockey, 2007).

The key informants in this study who competed or trained for the marathon distance or ultra marathon distance indicated a common desire to be a member of a special community of like-minded actors who have a special commitment to, and interest in 'suffering sports', such as long distance running. A non runner who wishes to observe the emotional impact of a leisure experience might benefit from standing at the finish line of a marathon, which is often an example of people who are in pain, but not necessarily injured, but are celebrating their own achievements or the success of family members or friends. Interviews indicated that for many long distance runners - the greater the struggle, the greater is the experience. The runners' stories seem to be very much a celebration of participation in a struggle. Following observation and discussion runners, rather than being frightened by pain and suffering, actually revel in feeling their legs being sore, their minds being challenged and exhausted, and their breath strained. These findings illustrate that they do share common bonds. As has been illustrated, pain is not always associated with injury and for some pain whilst running is

often a pleasurable experience. The next sub theme will explore another prevalent area linked to the problems of running that of injury, often caused through overtraining.

Confronting the Problems of Injury

A consistent theme that emerged from the data was dealing with running injuries, the importance of avoiding over-training, and the apparent inability of participants to spot these early signs of overtraining. One common cause for injury was distance runners who were not patient with their training and pushed themselves too far and too soon. Terry H has experienced injury on a regular basis:

> *I hate being injured – the time off from running means that I lose the fitness levels that I have spent so long building up. I also tend to rush back into running far too quickly and with the same level of intensity, which is a sure-fire way to become injured again. I often end up in a vicious circle of injury.*

Overtraining appeared to be a serious problem for many participants in the long distance running community. Running requires dedication and tenacity, however this tenacity is a double edged sword for some runners, because it is easy to injury yourself through overtraining (Bassham, 2007). Several key informants were actually unsure about their own training levels and whether they over-trained. Terry H commented:

> *I look at my race diary to see any signs of being moody. I'll also try to make my training fun, and if it becomes boring, I might take a few days off. Sometimes it's as simple as reducing my training, and being more effective in my training sessions. At a minimum I will take one complete rest day a week to reload and recharge my body.*

Overtraining appeared to often be a result of participants setting unrealistic goals. For example, Paula Radcliffe (world record holder over the marathon distance) was able to regularly run 130 miles each week as part of her training programme, but for the average runner, with work and other commitments, many will rarely complete half this distance. Many runners indicated they felt that the more training they do, the quicker they will run. The result was that they often increased training beyond a level that their bodies could handle,

resulting in injury. This partially illustrates a correlation between training and injury, which underpins part of this chapter when exploring some of the more negative and unpleasant running experiences. Often, this unhealthy obsession appears to be counterproductive, not only in terms of injury, but also leading to key informants sacrificing time with family and friends, for the sole aim of reducing their running personal best times. These negative aspects of long distance running are addressed in chapters six and seven, along with an exploration of the experiences of emotion, the concept of time spent running, and the extent to which participants will endure suffering to achieve one's running goals. This concept of pain and suffering is partially reflected in findings from other studies, most notably the work of Atkinson (2008) and McCarville (2007) which are examined from within the Triathlon subculture. This study has started to illustrate that overtraining was a serious issue within the long distance running social world, with many runners being convinced that high intensity training sessions were the correct method to train, and they often push their bodies beyond the limits. Bale (2004) refers to the British runner, Gordon Pirie as a 'running fanatic', and many of the runners in this study are similar in their perspectives towards running. Pirie was asked how many days in the week he trained, and replied *'seven: there are no more'*. For several participants, boasting about their high mileage training weeks provided social capital, as they compared their training intensity amongst their running peers. In relation to overtraining, Anthony P provided the analogy of a tightrope, indicating: "*one false step and you can fall off".* Anthony indicated that he looked for signs that he was over training, and then tried to reduce the training intensity:

> *I know when I'm overtraining. My race times and training times get slower and slower; I feel general tiredness, with weak and sore muscles; my appetite goes up and down; and I really struggle to have any motivation, even on my easy runs. When I feel like this, I know it's time to cut back a little.*

These findings on overtraining and injury are supported by Noakes (2003) who indicates that most often, the failure of training stems from the phenomenon of overtraining; training too much for too long without allowing sufficient time to rest. Noakes stresses that rest is an important part of running, and often runners will pay close attention to the one or two hours they train each day, and ignore the remaining 22-23 hours, which can also influence running performance. In fact Noakes stresses the importance of achieving this balance during training, and suggests that runners must balance a commitment to distance running to all other

components of life – family, work, recreation and other relationships. This theme underpins the findings in chapter six of this study. Key informants during data collection for this study indicated four key components to monitor whilst training. These were eating an appropriate diet, getting the right amount of sleep, avoiding physical effort during the day, and reducing work stress. Noakes (2003:8) quotes Plato, who observed that "the athlete in training is a sleepy animal", and he explored both the physiological and psychological changes that can result from overtraining, and many of these symptoms were evident amongst the study's key informants. Most interestingly, was an apparent lack of ability of participants to make an objective assessment of their own running capabilities and what their bodies are able to cope with. Results have displayed extensive evidence amongst long distance runners relating to overtraining, leading to reduced performance levels and then followed by a predictable range of medical and other complaints. The underlying fear amongst many of the runners interviewed was that despite their 'serious running' approach, should they continue to over train for months and even years, then they risk developing a more serious condition which it may be impossible to recover from, and end in the termination of their long distance running careers. The idea of running 'career termination', will be explored shortly, and is closely aligned to the findings previously explored within chapter three, as they relate to the development of a 'running career'.

A major problem for many participants is to not listen to their body, and whilst the bravest act that a long distance runner can make is to choose not to run, far too often this sense of logic is ignored and over ridden by a strong desire to train. Trevor G quickly acknowledged that this inability to rest was his Achilles heel – literally:

> *I should increase my intensity and frequency of training gradually, but I always get carried away, assuming that one good week means that I'm ready to move on and push myself that bit harder. I invariably just end up getting inured again – one step forward and two steps back.*

The findings provide firm evidence that injury and overtraining are inextricably linked. During one period of observation, I had a discussion with a physiotherapist who commented on the attitude of most runners towards injury:

It's like there's been a death in the family. My clients pass through various stages, going from denial to despair, until they eventually accept their injury.

This view proved insightful, and has a close resonance with the five stages of grief cycle model by Kubler-Ross (1969), initially developed in the context of counselling for those dealing with personal trauma and grief associated with death and dying. These five stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance are also transferable to personal change and emotional upset resulting from other factors apart from dying. These are the similar stages that a serious long distance runner will encounter when faced with a long term injury. Runners often ignore running injuries (denial); get angry when they cannot run (anger); negotiate a reduction in their weekly running to compensate for that injury (bargaining); this is then followed by a period of frustration and despair that they are unable to compete and train (depression); and the situation is usually resolved when they accept that they are injured and visit the physiotherapist to obtain the required treatment (acceptance). It is therefore possible to observe similar reactions to those explained by Kubler-Ross's grief model in people faced with less serious challenges than bereavement or death, such as loss of employment, crime, relationship break-up, financial challenges, or even running injuries.

Therefore, in the context of sport and especially long distance running, this model is worthy of future studies and reference outside of literature on death and bereavement, as it illustrates a 'change model' for helping to understand and counsel sporting participants, such as long distance runners, who are faced with either short term or career threatening injuries. The very nature of running will often lead to injury, and the grief model is helpful to assist with coming to terms with injury and its resulting impacts, and help with the emotional adjustment and coping that is required when the runner is unable to enjoy their chosen activity. Runners do not always experience all of the five 'grief cycle' stages, and some stages may not be experienced at all, where the transition between stages may not be linear; neither are they equal in their experience. It is however, a valuable framework to acknowledge an individual pattern of reactive emotional responses that runners face when coming to terms with injury. In summary, this model, when adapted within a long distance running context, helps to illustrate and recognise that many runners will have to pass through their own 'individual injury journey' of coming to terms with an inability to run, after which there is generally an acceptance of reality, which then enables the distance runner to cope with a running injury.

This study has explored the role of identity and the disruption to self (Allen Collinson and Hockey, 2007) caused by long distance running injuries. Injury prevention was a common subject of conversation amongst runners. However, a major problem and concern was for runners who were injured but tried to keep running whilst nursing that injury. Alan C was often guilty of doing this, but recognised that it was an unwise action to take:

> *It's important if you get injured not to 'train through it', which delays the recovery. I don't always practice what I preach, and should really do more cross training like swimming or cycling to give my body a break and prevent fatigue induced injuries.*

Terry H was remarkably honest in his assessment of why he gets injured:

> *The reason why I suffer from so many injuries is that I never rest and let the little injuries heal. I also run in the same running shoes until they are falling apart, and only make a token effort to stretch. Even when I get advice, I take it onboard for a few days and then just slip back into the same bad habit, but ultimately, it's me who pays the price, when I can't run and have to watch the others.*

Simon K indicated that his emotional turmoil at work affected his running performance, which contrasts with others who indicated that long distance running was actually an escape from personal and emotional issues:

> *Running is my stress relief and when I can't do it that only adds to my stress levels and that often makes the injury feel worse. I'm not sure which is worse – if the physical pain is easier to deal with than emotional turmoil.*

These observations begin to illustrate the conflicting demands within a distance running identity. In recent years, there has been a growth in literature on aspects of sporting and physical activity injury (e.g. Young, 2004). However, with the exception of Allen Collinson and Hockey (2007), there is very little published on how non-elite participants' identity is affected by injury. Importantly, and a sub theme that will be discussed in chapter seven, are ideas that have emerged from the data about the running body, and how long distance runners learn how to read their bodies and adapt to some of the challenges whilst training for running events. This has a close synergy with the findings within chapter three that explored the

concept of 'serious running' and how an important part of the long distance running identity was acquiring knowledge, achieving through serious effort, an active process of education, and what Stebbins (2007) refers to as "self-directed learning", already previously explored. Noakes (2003) very briefly addresses the way in which psychology has an impact on the runner through injury. He suggests that often this can be more of a mental problem than a physical one, a condition that he terms 'excessive pronation of the brain', terminology taken from the distinct language which exists within the long distance running social world. As previously discussed when examining the Kubler-Ross (1969) five stages of grief model, my findings have illustrated that all long distance runners will go through similar patterns of response to injury, denial, rage, depression and acceptance. Examples of extreme denial include runners who run to their death denying that they could possibly have heart disease or other illnesses; the anger that runners display to their spouses or where they blame their own 'running body' for the betrayal that injury has caused and then subject it to further abuse by continuing to run; moving through to depression and then acceptance when runners realise that they need to modify their running to accommodate the failings of their own body. Noakes continues to suggest that at some later stage the long distance runner might rediscover their ambition, and then their desire to run will return following periods of illness and they will enter what Altschul (1981) describes as the stage of 'renewed neurotic disequilibrium'. In this stage, the neurosis is caused by the tension between the distance runners' rational realization that it is necessary to stay within the limits of their talent (and injury risk) and the neurotic need to train more to achieve ever greater running ambitions. Altschul (1981:147) surmises "that in running, as in all human endeavours, the battle for mature self acceptance must be perpetually fought". What observations during this study have discovered is that there are a large number of participants at running events that are very slowly and reluctantly moving from denial to acceptance in relation to their battles with injury.

Findings suggest that possibly the most traumatic experience for the' serious runner' is coping with these periods of inactivity, when they are unable to train or compete at all. The findings illustrate that this has a profound impact on their perceptions of themselves as long distance runners, as they are unable to be physically active in the social world that is so important to them. This can lead to a significant loss of running identity, which is referred to extensively in the work of Allen Collinson and Hockey (2007), and has a close link to the concept of serious running, which underpins this study. This loss of identity will now be

explored in greater depth. Robert G was quite passionate when acknowledging an inability to deal with not being able to run, and the profound impact it had on his identity as a distance runner amongst his running peers and how he felt he was perceived by work colleagues:

Six years ago I was running for Great Britain, and now I'm just 'Joe Jogger', who can barely put one foot in front of the other. People used to come into the office and ask me about my running, but now that I'm not running they don't bother. I wonder if that's because they don't care, or don't want to upset me, given that I can no longer run. If, three years ago someone was to tell me I would take three hours to run a Marathon, or 40 minutes to complete a 10km, I would have laughed at them – but now, three years on, when I'm struggling to walk, I would bite their hand off.

Dealing with this loss of identity, and how it impacts on the everyday routine of the serious distance runner is a major challenge that the injured or retired runner faces. Inside, one still feels like a long distance runner, but the body is not able to perform the function that the mind wants to. Despite injury, many runners still sought to maintain their running identity and not be perceived by others as the less committed, 'fair weather' runners, or 'joggers', as outlined in Smith's (1998:180) categorisation. Unfortunately, these findings have illustrated that the injured participant might feel like a runner, but they are unable to fulfil the very act of distance running. Several runners in this study went to extreme measures to detach themselves from the distance running social world that was so important to them, because they were unable to compete and perform amongst their peers, and that proved to be heartbreaking to some. Gavin D, another former international athlete reinforced this point:

I can't face going down the club. They go off for a ten mile run, while I'll get back in the car and drive home. I can't handle that. I would rather stay away, although it kills me. They all mean well, but I feel like such a failure, not being able to keep pace with guys who I used to finish miles ahead of.

Sickness and illness affect the ability of the runner to train, and this can have a major impact on the participant. Comments were mixed on the extent to which running can help assist with speedy recovery from illness, and the extent to which overtraining can actually lead to illness and injury. For many participants, being healthy and active through running made them more capable of dealing with sickness, a perspective supported by Mark S:

When others at work are having time off with flu and general colds, I'm sure that running helps build up my immune system and allow me to fight off the common ailments which seem to cripple others. However, I do tend to train when I have a slight cold, when I probably should rest, but unless it's pretty serious, I tend to carry on regardless, albeit a bit slower than normal.

In contrast to Mark's experiences of coping with illness, Trevor G finds that when he is training intensely this can leave him susceptible to illness:

Normally when I increase my mileage and load up with extra training, it will leave me tired and weak. That's when I'm liable to pick up bugs, as I just don't have the energy to fight it off. Sometimes it turns into a vicious circle – I train hard, I get sick, and then I can't train.

As these two observations display, contrasting opinions emerged amongst the distance runners interviewed regarding whether intense running makes someone more susceptible to illness, or can actually prevent illness, suggesting that running and a balanced diet could boost immune systems. In summary on the findings in relation to running and injury, when investigating the impact of injury experiences Allen Collinson and Hockey (2007) explore the disruption of identity caused by injury and how committed sports participants manage the social-psychological dimension of the injury during their enforced withdrawal from the habitual physical routines of their sporting activity. Both Sparkes (2002) and Young et al (1994) look at the injured sporting self and the 'disrupted body project', which are explored below. They also examined the importance of retaining social identities as runners in the eyes of fellow distance runners during periods of injury. As Allen Collinson and Hockey (2007:388) suggest "the praxis of distance running is intimately connected with endurance: tolerating fatigue, discomfort and pain constitute an integral part of everyday training routines". The findings of this study also suggest a long distance running sub cultural tendency towards feelings of pain as being normal and routine, as almost an 'occupational hazard' and the price that has to be paid to be competitive at sport. Pain and injury are an endemic part of the long distance running social world, and injury is very much seen as a threat to the running identity, as suggested by Allen Collinson and Hockey.

As illustrated by the previous comments from Robert G, who has suffered extensive injury problems whilst running, it involved a re-negotiation of his identity and how he has struggled to deal with this 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1973), as an injured runner and the loss of his former 'glorified self' (Adler and Adler, 1989). Robert G has faced a struggle and inner conflict when faced with either trying to retain his running identity, or to lose himself and disconnect with fellow distance runners, who he could not have social relations with whilst he was injured and unable to run. This resulted in his identity being affected and fundamentally altered. Several distance runners interviewed for this study were injured at the time, and were forced to manage the social psychological dimension of the injury-recovery process when they were forced to withdraw from their regular, habitual routine of an evening run. Based on the experiences of participants who took part in this study and their own personal lived experiences, serious injury is a genuine disruption and a real threat to a participants distance running identity. This identity is challenged when a distance runner is forced to withdraw from running permanently, and their running career is terminated. These findings led me to the literature on career transition and career termination within sport.

Results highlight several long distance runners who experienced an identity crisis following running career termination. A major issue that influenced adaptation to this career transition was the degree to which runners defined their self-worth in terms of their participation and achievements as long distance runners. The concept of career transition, the adjustment to a running career termination and the subsequent threat to the running identity caused by injury, appeared to lead to a crisis for the long distance runner who was faced with premature 'identity foreclosure' (Good et al, 1993). An inability to run caused by injury proved to be traumatic for the participant, as they lost a primary source of their athletic identity (Sparkes, 2000). The findings highlight that the issue of loss caused by injury is a symbolic loss of some aspect of the self. It would appear that an involuntary retirement from long distance running (caused by injury) has complicating consequences for the adjustment process after this career termination. Most notably, this proved particularly challenging for participants who had no control over their distance running career termination, which subsequently affected their emotional and coping reactions (Lavallee and Wylleman, 2000). Severe injuries may result in a variety of psychological difficulties including fear, anxiety, loss of self-esteem, depression and substance abuse (Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993). Two key informants openly admitted that since stopping running they struggled with an addiction towards alcohol. Participants, who had been immersed in the act of running to the exclusion of other areas of

their lives, appeared to struggle to support their sense of self-worth without the input from long distance running.

Sparkes (2000) suggests that the integrity of the self is threatened and assaulted as the athletes 'taken-for-granted' assumptions about possessing a smoothly functioning body are disturbed and the sense of wholeness of body and self is disrupted. This loss of the long distance running role would appear to affect not only the running identity, but the participants overall sense of self. Similarly, Lavallee et al (1998) propose that the athletic identity can play a major role in the experience of symbolic loss in other competitive sport. In the distance running context, Leddy, Lambert and Ogles (1994) found that injured athletes often experience a period of severe emotional depression and anxiety following injury. This study suggests that injuries are disruptive to the sense of self for those that have a strong distance running identity, particularly when the runner lacks other sources of self-worth and self-identification. This is complicated further when the loss of a distance running identity caused by injury is involuntary and unplanned. It is suggested by Lally (2007) that athletes who are able to initiate their own transition away from an athletic role may be better equipped to cope than those faced with an involuntary withdrawal caused by injury.

Goffman's (1968) described the 'stripping' of identity (for instance when a runner is injured and unable to run for an extended period of time). Similarly, to the findings from a study by Wainwright and Turner (2004) on the balletic body; long distance runners with serious physical injuries cannot run, as the physical body places a natural limit on their running performance. As Goffman (1972:166) suggests 'A body is a piece of consequential equipment, and its owner is always putting it on the line'. Injuries, as several participants noted, are just an inevitable part of the *rites de passage* of being a long distance runner. Wainwright and Turner (2004) illustrate this point in what is described as more *Bourdieusian* language, identifying the acceptance of the daily risk of injury as a sign of the runner's vocational habitus. The findings from my study demonstrate that this idea is vividly shown in the attitude of several participants, most notably Gavin D and Robert G to their (fairly typical) litany of running injuries. Indeed, Robert G's catalogue of running injuries is an example of the fracturing of running identity that a major injury produces. It is also an illustration of someone who once took their social world for granted. Robert G was faced, in Bourdieu's famous phrase cited in Wainwright and Turner (2004) with the situation of 'being like a fish in water', and then suddenly becoming a 'fish out of water'. He had always taken

for granted the camaraderie of the long distance running club environment, and following his prolonged period of injury was left feeling totally isolated.

For some long distance runners, like Robert G, facing the termination of their running careers saw them descend from the heights of international competition (as a former Great Britain international runner) into the mundane world of ordinariness (Sparkes, 2000). This loss of a certain identity enforced an increased reflexivity and awareness of their previously taken-for-granted aspects of long distance running. Several injured runners, also suffered from a loss of the disciplined body leading to an inability to perform at running events. For Robert G, this self was the glorified self, identified by Adler and Adler (1989) in their study of North American college Basketball players. In that study, the glorified athlete self dominated the basketball players' identities at the expense of other identity dimensions including their academic and social selves (Lally, 2007). Sadly, Robert G experienced this loss of public recognition amongst his work colleagues, which disappeared as his distance running career ended, and prior to injury other possible future selves had never been considered, which resulted in him struggling to regain a sense of identity when the running role was no longer available. For several long distance runners, the loss of the disciplined body caused by injury and the subsequent loss of the glorified self had a major impact on their running identity. Several key informants also detailed their unsuccessful attempts to recover from injury. These attempts to recapture the past self led to despondency and depression, as all valued social and personal identities remain in the irretrievable past (Sparkes, 2000). In summary, career-ending running injuries invariably result in a loss of a long distance running identity and this subsequent running career termination has proved to be both disruptive and have long term personal consequences for participants, most notably the running identity dilemmas that injury creates. The final theme of this chapter will now explore the importance of training routes and the time spent training.

The Importance of Time and Space

The next section will continue to explore the training and preparation involved within the long distance running social world, concentrating on the importance of two themes; firstly, the time spent running and secondly, the training routes and 'spaces' adopted by participants during their training regimes. Both will now be explored in greater depth following a brief

overview of training and preparing to run. For many, the very act of running becomes an integral part of the daily routine, almost like brushing their teeth, and this leads to routines. Interviews indicated that many distance runners like to plan ahead with their training plans. Alison P illustrates this point:

> *I like to make sure I know what I'm doing in advance, and what I'm trying to achieve from each session. I write a list of 'goals' and how it all works in the bigger picture from fartlek sessions to long endurance training runs.*

Pauline reinforced this need to plan and prepare:

> *On a practical level, I get my kit together at the start of the week, and then I'm ready to get up and go training, as things just fall into place and don't impact upon other aspects of my family life. I have made running a habit – a routine in my life.*

Running is an activity to do on one's own, in a group, fast or slow, for two hours or twenty minutes, indoors or outdoors. Patrick T illustrates this point:

> *Wherever I choose to run, I'm in control of the route, the pace, the distance and the effort that I put in. Sometimes it becomes addictive (the training), but it just means less time in front of the TV, getting up earlier or running at lunchtime rather than sitting in the staff canteen.*

Whilst discussing the dedication demonstrated towards the training and preparation involved in long distance running, this has a close synergy with an emerging theme from chapter three, the need for perseverance and the commitment to long distance running, a theme that runs through the core of this study. One can always run. Running is a simple activity, and there are no secrets. What is secret is a deeper understanding of the experiences of long distance runners, which this study begins to uncover. Sticking to a regular training plan is a major part of running. Terry H comments:

> *It's important to dig in and persevere to reach your full potential. When I'm running in a Half Marathon, I usually feel awful from about half way, I'm on the verge of*

quitting at three quarters way, but I always force myself to keep going to the finish line.

Emma G expressed determination and a sense of confidence following completion of one running event:

I found that having completed the training and finished the race, I felt more confident and powerful in all areas of my life. If I can run a Marathon, I can do anything.

There is a high level of detail and planning involved with developing training programmes to assist and improve distance running performance. Most of those runners interviewed for this study emphasised the need for advance planning to achieve goals in running. Different distances require different training plans, but each runner knew that the key to successful running was consistency. Ewan F expressed his feelings on how to follow a distance running schedule:

I have a couple of planning strategies. Due to the length of time involved, I'm flexible with my long runs, but still plan them at least seven days in advance. I also fit my other runs around my work commitments and any other social events that are going on. For example, I always go out for a few beers straight after work on Friday's, so therefore, Friday is my rest day which I look forward to....along with the beers.

When exploring the training and preparation routines of long distance runners, the concept of 'time' emerged early in the interviews and was a constantly emerging theme. Participants faced time issues on three main levels. First, there was the challenge of finding time to run amid the demands of everyday life or using it as a time to escape the drama of modern society; secondly, the need to log and record the time spent training on a daily or weekly basis and the important role this plays in assessing fitness; and thirdly, the importance of time for long distance runners who participate in running events and monitor their improvement or decline based on their finishing time in events. Quite often, a 'personal best' running time can lead to euphoria whilst a poor finishing time can lead to depression and disillusionment with running. These significant thoughts about time, which emerged early on, were followed up through subsequent interviews and observations with runners and led me to the literature on the concept of time. Time is an important element in the life of long distance runners, and is

an important part of social life (Zerubavel, 1979). The significance of time and how it is ordered became apparent whilst observing running events and interactions. I would suggest that if my findings can be verified in other situations, such as sport, as the literature on time suggests (Zerubavel, 1979), then this study may have what Holloway et al (1998) describe as 'typicality'. Typicality is achieved when experiences and perceptions of a specific sample (in this case, the long distance runner) are 'typical' of the phenomenon under study and relate to the theoretical ideas that have emerged.

Results indicate that long distance runners can be very 'time-sensitive', and it was clearly one area that was important to many because being able to reduce times whilst competing gives the runner a tangible benchmark to chart improvement in speed and endurance, and also to have a sense of accomplishment that comes with achieving personal best times. Bale (2004) suggests that in the world of competitive running, times are never forgotten, and this is reflected in the preoccupation with the finishing times and PB's (Personal Bests) that many runners in this study hold so dear. Upon reflection, the Olympic motto – '*Citius, Altius, Fortius'*, gives priority to time, *'Citius'* or translated as '*faster*', as the prime factor. Alana W's comments at one major event illustrate the importance of time:

> *I could see the finish line. The time on the clock was 3.47.01, but what really counted was the "chip time" which registered the actual time that I crossed the start line, measuring my time from start to finish. It was recorded by this small computer chip attached to my running shoe. I knew that the time I had on my watch would vary a few seconds from the chip time"*

Abbas (2004) suggests that distance running should be evaluated in terms of the self, rather than in relation to others, and that distance running is not something you do in competition with others, but is self-focused. The technique of paying attention to one's own body and not overdoing it was seen as an important part of the running praxis. As identified in relation to social identity in chapter three, the *self* is defined as 'each individual's reflexive sense of her or his own particular identity, constituted *vis a vis* of others in terms of similarity and difference' (Jenkins, 1996: 29). The focus on one's own performance can help to modify traditional sporting ideas on winning, and leads to the emergent concept of the personal best (P.B), which is an important part of the long distance running social world. This encourages individuals to record the time of their runs and to assess each run in relation to their own past

performances. Abbas argues that this infuses a self-focused development with a competitive sporting ideology. My findings also support the view that much advice is given to long distance runners linked to the individuals focus on their own performance and this is enshrined in the concept of the personal best, in which the present self is always in contest with past self. In contrast to Alana's recollection above on finishing times, Terry H experienced disappointment during one Marathon:

My time was 3hrs 30 minutes and one second. I couldn't believe it. A sub 3.30 marathon is the benchmark and something I have aspired to reach for several years now, and to miss it by 2 seconds was just unbelievable. Since then, I have not come close to the time. When I finish running, I'll be proud of that time, although there's a big difference between 3.29.59 and 3.30.01!

Dennis M was also disappointed with his time at the end of one running event, and his comment explains how important the finishing time can be to a long distance runner who has trained for one event for months:

I missed the holy grail of the sub 3 hour marathon. I tried to move it up a gear, and it's like the gear wasn't there. The marathon finally got up and slapped me in the face. I ran bloody rubbish! I'm going to look for an autumn marathon to get my sub 2.45 qualifying time.

Paul G's comments support those of Dennis M, but also illustrate the determination of many runners to achieve their goals, many of which are determined by the time in which they finish the event:

It's very difficult to explain to a non-runner why the time is so important to me, and most people have continued to praise me for what is a great achievement. I know it is, but I didn't break 4 hours, and quite simply, I'm gutted!

It has been established above that keeping track of time is important to long distance runners, and they place great importance in monitoring their time, both on a daily basis whilst training or during races, and in their running 'career', as previously illustrated in chapter three. Observational studies illustrate that this ranges from runners who constantly look at their

watches whilst training, to participants who become obsessed with achieving certain running targets, based around time. Chapter three also discussed the specific language used within the running social world, and a few of these observations were linked to time. "Time on your feet" was a common phrase used by runners when referring to training routines, and possibly the most regularly subjects of conversation at the finish of the running events observed were discussions on the time taken to complete the course, such as "what was your time?", or "I knocked minutes off my personal best time for the distance", to highlight just two conversations. These 'Time Stories', as referred to by Adam (2004), are a running commentary and integral part of the set of myths and stories about time that exist within the long distance running culture.

Long distance runners do like the freedom that running provides and the time to escape, but they also like structure. This often comes in the form of stopwatches or training diaries and logs to record the time and distance spent running. Likewise, distance runners who see consistent reductions in the time taken to complete running events often felt a strong sense of both empowerment and enhanced self-esteem. As Adam (1990) suggests, human beings do feel that they want timetables and a structure for their day, and my findings highlight that distance runners are no different. Observations and interviews also illustrated how precious time is for runners, and how frustrated they can become when they do not reach their targets, or how ecstatic they can also become when achieving their running goals. Similar to the findings of Holloway et al (1998) and Urry (1996:372), my own results show the importance of Heidegger's idea of time, which is that 'human beings are fundamentally temporal and find their meaning in the temporal character of human existence'. Given that these findings suggest time is a central concept to distance running, it is suggested that time takes on a different quality for runners than for people at home following their everyday routines, or for those at work, and the ability to plan their own time and exercise choices. This concept is further explored in chapter six where results begin to demonstrate the way in which time is socially constructed and perceived in relation to social activities within the running club environment and at running events. In the distance running community, I observed numerous temporal strategies and negotiations amongst distance runners, the kind of practices that occur regularly at home or between people at work. These concepts of time and control frequently draw upon and constitute the wider social practices and processes discussed by Adam. Observational studies noticed 'time-struggles' between social activities, working, participating in running, and family life. These ideas, explored in greater depth in chapter six,

are particularly relevant in the current debates about 'work-life balance', and where activities like long distance running are located.

Adam (2004) further explores this concept of 'time practices' asking the question 'what is the role of time in social life?' This is something I examined within the long distance running social world along with issues of time management in running and 'know how' (especially the development of distance running 'clock-time'), and the 'quest for time control' through achieving personal best time results in running events. Adam introduces the four 'C's' of industrial time: Commodification, Compression, Colonization and Control. In the context of long distance running, I would suggest that this could be extended to Five C's, given the importance of 'Clock time'. Results also illustrate a re-presentation of Adam's own idea of 'timescapes', and the creation of what could be described as unique 'long distance running timescapes'.

Another emerging theme in this study revolved around the long distance runners' use of varying training routes and the importance of these '*running spaces*'. This was an area previously explored by Bale (2004) and Allen Collinson (2008). Running 'spaces' are diverse. Serious running takes place on the track (track running), on roads (for example, marathons), fields (cross country or fell running), on treadmills (gyms), and in the forests (orienteering). It seems a logical statement, but it is difficult to get lost on a running track. However, many runners seek an additional milieu from the club running tracks, where they can train, and be refreshed by contact with the glories of nature (Bale, 2004). Whilst running on a treadmill can provide the occasional change of scenery, almost every long distance runner interviewed for this study had a negative view on the benefits of treadmill running when compared to outdoor running. There was a consensus that using a treadmill at the local gym is acceptable if the weather outside is particularly poor, however for many it was perceived as monotonous and not a particularly enjoyable running experience. Alan C is not a supporter of treadmill running:

> *Running on a treadmill is not natural – it's an irregular running style. You genuinely can't replace running outside. When I'm running outside, I'm forced to adjust to the terrain and the weather, whilst indoors I'm just staring at a TV screen in a hot sweaty gym environment. It's just boring!*

Gavin D likes to run on grass:

> *Running on grass means that the impact goes into the earth more, rather than returning back into my knees. For me, it provides greater stability, I get fewer injuries and most importantly I have a sense of greater freedom.*

Running 'spaces' such as terrain and surfaces varied from moorland and grass to dirt, wood-chip trails and gravel to track, asphalt or concrete. Austin (2007) suggests that a richer experience is to be found while running outside with changes in terrain and weather. Alison P is a firm advocate of trail running:

> *It's good to get off the beaten track, away from seeing Starbucks or McDonalds. You have to be careful though, as off-road running is full of pitfalls like tree stumps, rocks and uneven ground. It's easy to take a tumble if you're not careful. I love the mud too – it saps my energy, but it's quite exhilarating to plough my way along a muddy trail, away from the pavements.*

To avoid the boredom and monotony, many long distance runners alternated their training routes to provide variety in their training routines. This variety is important, as reflected by Colin S:

> *All I need to do is gaze at the scenery as I run by. This is the most important part of my day. I run along the canal on a Monday, with the club on a Tuesday at the track, to and from work on a Wednesday, go to the gym on a Thursday and a cross country, hilly route on a Friday. Saturday is then a gentle jog around the villages, as I prepare for either a race or long run on a Sunday. My training routes vary, and the contrasting terrain maintains my love for running and tests different aspects of my fitness.*

Allen Collinson (2008) comments on the familiarity runners have with certain favoured routes whilst training, often described as largely tacit knowledge that informs the participants training. When examining training routes, Allen Collinson discusses the phenomenological experience of running over specific terrain. This is then fed back into the participants stock of knowledge (Schutz, 1967), constantly subject to updating and revision as circumstances

change and experience grows. Rose (1993) also explores how landscapes, space and terrain are evaluated using broad cultural codes, and my results indicate that the running community are found to view and assess the running landscape in distinct ways. Observations and interviews verify that long distance running training can often be a very mundane practice. However, as discussed in the following chapter, it can also be an act of optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) within the 'event' environment as opposed to the training environment. Hockey and Allen Collinson (2006) suggest that runners will evaluate terrain based on their subcultural knowledge and when these running *spaces* are new and unknown, knowledge will be accumulated and tested gradually. These spaces, or routes, are then circulated and shared by runners, (Hockey, 2004), often from within the confines of the running clubs via the weekly 'club runs'. Allen Collinson, in her autoethnographic study of two middle distance runners, suggests that it is possible to categorize runners' routes as a particular kind of 'social space' (Lefebvre, 1991), and it is through the act of running that this particular space is produced or created. This study indicates that running *spaces* are constructed not only during physical running, but also as a 'conceived space' (Lefebvre, 1991) that we envisage both in anticipation and retrospectively (Allen Collinson, 2008).

It has emerged from the data that these running spaces are also constructed within the long distance running social world, between runners. This is detailed further in chapter six. Van Ingen (2003) highlights three intersections of social space. The first kind of engagement is that of spatial practice or 'perceived space', which for the key informants in this study involved the physical running of their regular training routes, which form a particular social space (s). The second kind of engagement involved what Lefebvre (1991) called representations of space or 'conceived space' – social spaces that are imagined and abstract. Several participants illustrated this representation of space through their thoughts, plans, narratives and memories, most notably discussions within the running 'club' environment on particular training routes. The third form of engagement is what Lefebvre terms spaces of representation or 'lived space': "the social space through which life is directly lived" (Van Ingen, 2003: 204). Lived space combines all spaces simultaneously (Allen Collinson, 2008). One particular 'running battle' that every runner faces is the duel and sharing of the pavement with animals, pedestrians, other runners and even motorists, who often appear oblivious to the distance runner. For many, an infuriating occurrence whilst out running is clashing with pedestrians or motorists, in bouts of 'pavement rage'. Ewan F recounted one such incident:

She could see me running, yet still continued to walk directly across my path, and then had the cheek to glare at me. She was in the wrong, but wasn't going to even give me the time of day. It's like people who let their dogs run in front of you, and then say 'don't worry, he doesn't bite'. I don't know that though do I?

As Allen Collinson (2008) observed, there is also a fundamental conflict of interest between runners and dog owners. Gradually, over time, distance runners build up knowledge of how best to deal with dogs and their owners, when faced with a canine encounter. Kara M made a similar observation to Ewan F's:

I have a real issue with horse riders who tell me not to frighten their horse. If the horses are that twitchy, they should stay in the field and off the public footpaths or bridleways.

Motorists present a particular challenge on the typical running route, as Colin S explains:

They don't let you over the road; they park on the pavement and smack you with their car doors. I also find it funny when tourists ask me directions while I'm running – don't they realise that I'm running and have better things to do than stop and give directions.

The results of this study also exposed specific challenges faced by women whilst running and the gendering of public spaces. As Ewan, Kara and Colin's comments above highlighted, there were also challenges that participants face during interaction with other pedestrians whilst running. This constitutes routine hazards for those training in what Smith (1997:60) termed "normatively-ordered spaces". Key informants discussed their attempts to navigate both canine and human obstacles, and an apparent expectation by pedestrian (s) that distance runners should take primary responsibility for any avoidance action (Allen Collinson, 2008). Most key informants did discuss their negative interaction with pedestrians ranging from disapproving looks through to "uncivil attention" (Smith, 1997:64), including sarcastic comments, such as "Run Forrest Run", or verbal abuse. Long distance runners are therefore forced to adopt various tactics and strategies to deal with these hazards whilst training in public spaces, and faced with challenges to our running rights to occupy these public spaces. This forms part of the training process and *learning to run*, along with developing an

acquired knowledge of distance running which reinforces aspects of the serious running identity.

As previously highlighted, Allen Collinson (2008) suggests that these lived spaces produce specific forms of 'knowing', which are the outcomes of spatial practices and which in turn inform those spatial practices. For many participants, a major attraction for running overseas or elsewhere away from their everyday locality was the opportunity to experience these new social spaces, different from the mundane and ordinary training routes they had become so familiar with. In the next chapter this will be examined in greater depth when exploring the importance of travelling overseas to participate and experience running events. The results from this study will illustrate the contrast between the mundane social practice of daily training spaces and the more exhilarating and extraordinary optimal flow experience that participants achieve away from home (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Morgan, 2007). From my observations, it was apparent that one of the most vivid experiences of a running event was to reflect on unique aspects of the courses and the routes, as demonstrated by Mark S:

> *It was great to see the leading men's pack coming back the other way at 21 miles when I was at 13 miles. It reminded me that I was competing in the same race as the best in the world. The worst moment was the underpass at mile 24. It's dark, miserable and goes on forever. Also, I vividly remember church bells in Woolwich.*

Gavin D had similar observations whilst chatting in a London bar, following the end of the Marathon:

> *That was intense! I realized after 25 miles that I hadn't noticed any of London's famous buildings because I was concentrating so hard. However, there are plenty of distractions that will amuse, shock and inspire you along the way. I have to admit that I just wasn't prepared for the sheer density of people on the course. I could feel the bridge rocking due to the noise coming from the crowd.*

These are examples of unique and extraordinary event experiences, which can only be experienced by those participating in the running event, as an active participant, an important sub theme explored in the next chapter. Key informants unequivocally felt that volunteers and spectators at Marathon events will not experience these intense emotions, which result from

the very activity of running. Austin (2007) argues that most runners seek more than the finish line or the end of a training session, but to reach an element of self-discovery, and my findings indicate that long distance running provides both this time and space for thinking.

Summary

The level of training involved in distance running is clearly beyond what is necessary to acquire the basic health benefits of regular exercise (Ogles and Masters, 2003) and as will be explained in chapter six, this often means that work, meal, family and social schedules are organized (or re-organised) to accommodate the activity. Additionally, other recreational activities are missed and time with family and friends is often reduced. Ogles and Masters suggest that few human activities have the magnitude of potential costs of distance running, with such uncertain outcomes. Yet, many people engage in long distance running on a regular basis. This paradox has generated a series of interesting questions within this chapter, such as what motivates individuals to endure the apparent punishment of training for and participating in long distance running events. What has been clearly illustrated is that the commitment to training and running fitness cannot be bought, it has to be earned. The findings sought to demonstrate why it is that so many people endure the costs of long distance running discussed in this chapter, such as enduring pain and suffering; confronting the challenges of injury; or investing significant periods of time in order to participate in these events. This unique event experience is the dominant theme of the next chapter of this study, an exploration of the distinct experiences that take place at long distance running events.

Chapter Five: The Experiences of a Running Event

Introduction

For many of the key informants in this study, the attraction of long distance running partly stems from the fact that an important part of the excitement that comes from running is the uncertainty and anxiety that co-exists with the physiological experience of being physically and emotionally tired. Long distance running is, however, an alternative to feeling physically bored and emotionally constrained in everyday work life. Whilst long distance runners may face serious challenges and obstacles when training or competing, as the results will indicate, they also experience a mutually recognised sense of excitement and achievement when participating. The third key theme emerging from the data was the *'Experiences of a Running Event'* and incorporated three sub themes, highlighted above. The sub themes firstly explore the experiential, authentic and 'extraordinary' event experiences that make the activity unique; secondly an exploration of the conflicting emotions of 'failure' and 'glory' associated with long distance running; and thirdly, the importance of running-related travel.[7]

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[7] Findings related to the sport and leisure experiences of long distance runners have been published in an edited book entitled *Tourist Experiences: Contemporary Perspectives*

The first sub theme to now be explored is the distinct and unique event experiences of distance runners.

Extraordinary and Authentic Running Experiences

Running is about experiences, and can be a source of feelings and experiences – both positive and negative, and pleasurable and painful (Bale, 2004). This could be experiencing the euphoria of pushing oneself past limits and facing new challenges or experiencing the innermost energy that one can draw from a cheering crowd or a scenic route. International running events also place professionals and amateurs in the same races. Unlike most sporting events, the least promising amateur can stand on the start line with an Olympic champion on Marathon day (Shipway and Jones, 2008a). In big city events, this blend of professionals and amateurs helps to enhance the experience for the participants. For example, an armchair cricket fan could never hope to play an Ashes test match at Lords, or a Sunday morning footballer will never take part in an FA Cup final. These opportunities do not exist in most sports, yet they take place at all major city Marathons, and add to the event experience that many long distance runners feel during the course of their participation. Distance running is still considered to be extraordinary (Nettleton and Hardey, 2006). They suggest it represents the salience and spectacle of lifestyle and fitness and the importance of bodily appearance and self determination. Pauline was one active participant who found running through the streets of New York to be a surreal experience:

> *It was a place I'd only ever seen on Television. I felt pure adrenaline crossing Brooklyn Bridge with all the spectators and crowds shouting, waving and giving 'high fives'. When I turned into Central Park, I saw the finish line, and I slowed down a bit, so that I could really savour the moment.*

Several participants contended that they liked to focus on the distance running 'experience', suggesting this was the essence of running and not their weekly mileage totals or half marathon 'personal best' times. Running is an intensely personal and subjective sporting activity. A constant theme throughout this study was the importance and uniqueness that a long distance runner feels when running. This leads to emotions and experiences that are often enhanced at some of the major international events. These ideas will be covered later in

this chapter when the importance of competing overseas is explored in greater depth, and the role this plays as a reward for all the hard months of training and preparation. Mark S commented on his experiences at the 'Comrades' Ultra Marathon race in South Africa, widely regarded as *the* ultra event in the world. His apprehension was noted at the start line:

> *I realised I was about to do the equivalent of running from Big Ben to Brighton Seafront. On a very good day, with no traffic that takes me over two hours to drive and well over an hour on the train that travels at 70 miles per hour. Was I mad, standing there at the start line, hoping to cover the equivalent distance and probably get there by early afternoon? I thought - oh well, here goes – see you at the finish line – only another 90km's to go!*

Whilst running in the Amsterdam Marathon, Dennis M contemplated why he was inflicting such discomfort on himself. In an interview for this study Dennis reflected that he had managed to raise a smile at the time when running past an advertisement board for *Adidas,* which read 'The longer I run, the smaller the problems become'. The next advert had also raised a smile on his face, stating 'I run until my playlist ends'. At that point, Dennis had reflected that he wished that he had some musical accompaniment to complete the final four miles of that particular event. Pauline F made an interesting comment during one conversation in a hotel following one marathon, suggesting that whilst *"Blisters last a week. Memories last a lifetime!"* On a personal note, I have long come to the conclusion that the main ingredient of running is experiences, which are unique to each individual. We end up defining our own experiences, as they mean different things to each of us depending on age, gender, personality and experience but also the conditions under which running takes place. For example, the contrast is illustrated through the experiences of the young, talented, male international marathon runner who finishes in 2hrs 30 minutes and is distraught with his performance; who is followed in almost double the time taken to complete the event by the 67 year old veteran male recovering from a heart condition, finishing in just under 5 hours, who has just run the race of his life. This is what is unique about running, and the very experience of running.

The unique atmosphere at long distance running events proved to be a significant topic of conversation amongst key informants. This distinct atmosphere can only be experienced by direct participation in a running event and not experienced by watching or supporting an

event from the sidelines. Certain running events have a reputation for providing unique and memorable experiences for event participants. Louise K reflected on her favourite experience, when completing the Glasgow Half Marathon for the first time in 2007:

It was my first big race. The kids were all screaming and banging things – it was brilliant, and I had such a great feeling about the whole event. There were bands all along the route and a Scotsman in a kilt playing bagpipes at every mile marker of the route, which was different. There were so many supporters at the finish and I remember feeling great about myself, deep inside, knowing that I had completed the event in a Personal Best (PB) time.

As mentioned above, for many participants, the atmosphere of a Marathon is a major attraction in itself. Mel P commented that having completed thirteen London Marathon events, the crowd support was the one constant which helps to make the event distinct. Likewise, Mel was fortunate enough to run the New York City Marathon in the year following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the city. As a non American, he was surprised by how emotional he found that running experience. This was obviously partly due to the tragic terrorist attacks on the city, but for Mel it was the rallying support of the New Yorkers and running through the streets of the city which made the Marathon a memorable experience. This was despite running a poor time. Mel observed that he would not be naive enough to suggest that distance running can solve the problems of the world, but felt that seeing a community come together for this particular running event, in the face of tragedy, suggested in his words that sport and running in particular '*might not be a bad place to start*'. Alison P, a veteran of over thirty Marathons commented on her enjoyment of one particular event:

For me the best moment was passing a pub playing "Amarillo". All the runners started clapping in time and we were having a great time. As we went past the song changed to "YMCA". I turned to Julie, who I was running with and we both agreed we were glad not to have been running past then.

This study has involved immersion in a diverse selection of international long distance running events, exploring the unique and distinct experiences that many of the participants felt during their training, preparation, competing or post race reflections. Josephine L and Alan C's reflections on one event illustrated this:

It was a day I will never forget. I was really nervous about the challenge prior to the day and I didn't know what to expect, but started at a pace I knew I could finish strongly at. What helped me immensely to cross that finish line was the great organisation for the event, the atmosphere, but more than anything – the crowds that support the event. It didn't feel like 13.1 miles. This was probably due to the interactions with the people on the side of the road.

Alan C's comments echoed this point:

It was an emotionally charged day, observing the spirit between people that is so often said to have been lost in society today. I even enjoyed the water bottle fights with the kids, the oranges, water hoses, high fives, biscuits, smiles, and claps. I vividly remember hearing the 'Jerusalem' hymn en route and 'abide with me', plus all the fancy dress charity runners dressed as big bananas, Scooby Doo, Spiderman or Elvis, and everyone shouting 'Oggie oggie oggie!' 'oi oi oi!'. This event shows what happens when everybody pulls together – runners, organisers, supporters and volunteers.

Drawing on the event experience literature, especially the work of Morgan (2007) in his study of Rugby Union spectators in New Zealand, it is apparent that long distance runners as more active sporting participants bring their social identity and their personal narratives to the interaction of running and the event. This enables them to then experience a sense of achievement and a variety of hedonistic emotional running pleasures. At its pinnacle, this can result in a state of heightened excitement and achievement, a truly unique and distinct experience, which has a deep impact on the emotions of the long distance runner. Observational studies have demonstrated that distance running is a unique opportunity to experience different emotions and feelings whilst literally being 'on the run'. It also allows the everyday senses that we experience to be felt. Mark S described the sights and smells at one running event:

The horrible sweet sickly smell of warm Lucozade sticking to the floor of the road is something I won't forget quickly along with the smell of 'Deep Heat' pain relief cream at the start. Also, I will never forget that smell of fear in the toilets at the start.

Findings from this study also suggest that distance running events are agents for 'authentic event experiences'. Wang (1999) proposes a framework for exploring authentic experiences, and includes the concept of 'existential authenticity', concerned with the state of being rather than the object. In the distance running event context, it could be suggested that participants judge authenticity on the basis of their running experience, and results from this study indicate that ethnography is a highly appropriate research method to gain insight into event experiences that, to this point, have not been highlighted in the literature, a point supported by Higham and Hinch (2009). I would propose that the authenticity of these distinct, extraordinary and unique running event experiences is assessed on the basis of the reality of the event experience, and it is the very high level of engagement of participants at distance running events that makes running such a robust type of event. This suggestion has close synergy with Wang's (1999) concept that provides insight into experiences in a post-modern world, where distance running events are indeed flourishing.

Wang (1999:358) describes existential authenticity as a 'special state of being in which one is true to oneself, and acts as a counter dose to the loss of 'true self' in public roles and public spheres'. Long distance runners search for this 'true self' at running events where they are less constrained by the 'roles' that they adopt in other areas of their modern lives. The findings of this study indicate distance running events allow participants to transcend their daily lives, and one of the key aspects that allow runners to have authentic experiences is the high level of engagement with the very act of long distance running. This concept has been previously alluded to within the context of the flow experiences associated with distance running (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Existential authenticity has additional dimensions, including both intra-personal and inter-personal authenticity. Intra-personal authenticity is expressed through bodily feelings, and as such, is highly important for assessing running experiences. In running, the body is used both in the display of personal identity in terms of health, vigour, movement and other physical characteristics and in all sensory perception (Higham and Hinch, 2009). Running events and places provide opportunities for participants to have authentic existential experiences in terms of running bodily feelings. Inter-personal authenticity is described by Wang (1999) in terms of family ties and communitas. From within the long distance running social world it could be suggested that the social hierarchy found in the regular day to day lives of runners do not dictate the inter-relationships between members of the running subculture. In relation to inter-personal authenticity and running experiences, it appears that long distance running can provide identity and belonging for the

individual who may be frustrated in terms of their status at work or at home, and allows them to develop this increased sense of identity through membership of the long distance running community. This further reinforces the findings from chapter three.

It is suggested by several authors, most notably Bale (1994), that sports form part of a cultural landscape, and the running events that I have observed and participated in, support this. Higham and Hinch (2009) make reference to John Steinbeck's book 'Travel with Charley' and indicate that visitors can obtain a sense of local culture by going to a local pub on a Saturday night or to a church service on a Sunday. In that particular context, Higham and Hinch argue that the pub or churches are 'windows' into the backstage of particular places. A similar argument could be made for distance running events, as participation is one way in which long distance runners develop their personal and collective identities, as previously illustrated in chapter three. Running events offer the promise of authenticity, which is increasingly rare in many other aspects of modern society. Taylor (2001:10) suggests that from within the tourism context visitors are 'driven by the need for experiences more profound than those associated with the shallowness of their {modern} lives'. This concept is also explored in chapter six with an exploration of the role of long distance running as a third place located away from the home and work environment. In the context of distance running events, I would suggest participants are searching for real things, real people and real places, which long distance running can provide. Indeed, running events have unique qualities, such as uncertainty of outcome or the role of athletic display and bodily feelings that facilitate these authentic and extraordinary event experiences.

Running a Marathon produces a myriad of experiences and sensations. Austin (2007) identifies that at times it feels like a journey into hell, while at other times, it seems like the most thrilling day of one's life. Over the journey of the Marathon the participant will undergo all sorts of bodily feelings and experiences. This experience, for better or worse, can also drastically change in the shortest of distances, should the body be unable to meet the challenge of the event. One minute a runner can be running comfortably and feeling confident, and the next minute their running experience can change dramatically. This is the unpredictability of the event. In my own embodied long distance running experiences, the crowds at big city events can be a major source of strength and support. In the past, having people cheering provides additional motivation mainly because of the qualitative feel of such experiences. It is a very emotional experience. For veteran runners, telling tales and recalling

past events in their running careers was a theme that was prevalent during interviews. Don P recalled the common phrase '*The older you are, the better you were*', indicating that veteran runners tended to reflect on previous achievements, whilst acknowledging that those high standards are from a bygone era that cannot be recreated. However, nostalgic reflections on these past achievements play an important role in maintaining a long distance running identity.   Adrenalin and excitement were prevalent emotions that distance runners experienced at running events, which helps to make them unique, given that they affect the participant directly. Anthony P loved the whole atmosphere surrounding races and training, but also explained how long distance running made him feel:

> *I love the feeling of sweating. When I do occasionally run in the gym, I love seeing the sweat go down my neck and to see my club vest getting gradually wetter and wetter. This might sound a bit strange to some people. Often, by the time I sit down in the evening, after my evening meal, it's a miracle if I can keep my eyes open for another 30 minutes.*

Andy C had trained for one running event for almost twelve months and was amazed by the excitement on the running course and the adrenalin that he experienced on the day:

> *Each breath sounded as though I was a dog barking. In some places the cheering from the crowd was deafening, and I had to check the emotions that I could feel welling up inside me. I hadn't realized until now how good it feels to be cheered on! For me, the highlight was the music and cheering of the crowds. I felt like a celebrity! In fact, it felt like a massive street party! My Mum and Dad were all over the course following me. They were also exhausted and emotionally drained, whilst my son's face when I saw him is one that will be engrained in my memory for life!*

Long distance running events serve as a place for social gathering and the sharing of event experiences, as people are directly affected whilst running. One of the strongest themes and most mentioned experience was the sense of euphoria that is experienced at the finish of an event, which often illustrates the positive sides of the human spirit. At the end of one Marathon event Kara M mentioned how important and influential the physical act of running had become in her life and the impact it has:

Euphoric was how I would describe feeling at the finish. Since finishing, I have smiled so much my face aches more than my legs. Running the Marathon was like childbirth. I found reserves of strength I never knew I had. I realised my body was capable of wonderful things. I felt elated and ecstatic at the end, and for a few days afterwards. You just feel amazing when you've crossed the line. Well, it is amazing. Running 26 miles is amazing.

This feeling of achievement and celebration was illustrated at the London Marathon by Alison P, two days afterwards, when reflecting on the run:

As I came towards the finish, I had tears streaming down my face. The outpouring of support from people willing me on was like nothing I have ever experienced and probably never will again. I sprinted down the last 385 yards over the line with my hands in the air. I promptly burst into tears again when I got my medal and then waddled off to find my bag and meet up with my friends. Two days later, I am still wearing my medal. I don't think that I am ever going to take it off.

Emma G also completed the London event, and felt similar experiences and emotions at the finish:

For one day, the whole country became a single community, a cacophony of noise, a kaleidoscope of cultures. Today I have taken part in an amazing celebration of life and the human spirit. It was during the low points in the running experience that I began to appreciate the true human aspect of the Marathon. It was a truly humbling experience.

Alan C commented on how the marathon can create these unique participant experiences, indicating that running events are a place where people can realise their dreams, and their emotions are shown as they achieve them. From personal experience, I know that when fatigued and exhausted the body will regularly argue that there is no justifiable reason to continue running, and this leads to the realisation that a marathon is perhaps a test of will, stamina and intellect. Some people will not drive 26 miles (42 kilometres) on a Sunday morning, let alone run that far. According to Alana, distance running provides a great sense of camaraderie, and crossing the line is the greatest moment. The crowd support was an integral part of the enjoyment of one international, overseas Marathon for Alana W:

The crowd support restores even the most hardened cynic's faith in humanity. I have never experienced such a genuine and relentless desire from so many complete strangers who really wanted me to succeed. I got to 25 miles and started breaking down in tears because my body was screaming at me to stop. I was running on empty and found it so hard. It was without a doubt, the best 4 hours, 14 minutes and 27 seconds of my life! The human body is an amazing thing and I found strength I didn't realize I had.

These positive observations were also supported by Terry H, when he completed one running event, expressing the range of emotions that he experienced, and the impact it had on him:

It's one of the most (if not the most) physical and emotional things I have ever done, and probably ever will. I made it! Now I have got PMD - Post Marathon Depression! All those people making an inhuman effort. I am not ashamed to say that I shed a few tears. My emotions are changing daily since the Marathon – elation, tears, joy, pain, everything – just as they did on the day. I can honestly say that it's been a life changing experience.

Runners often have race targets, which they sometimes reach, and sometimes fall short. As the comments above illustrate, long distance running is an unpredictable activity, which can often bring feelings of immense pleasure and intense failure. Bryant (2005:47) quotes Emil Zatopek, Olympic Gold Medallist at 5,000m, 10, 000m and the Marathon distance who stated "If you want to win something, run 100 metres. If you want to experience something, run a marathon!" Likewise, Amby Burfoot, former Boston Marathon winner regularly wrote "There is no failure in running, or in life, as long as you keep moving" (Burfoot, 2003:57). During one post run interview, Robert G expressed these sentiments:

Only last year, upon facing challenges during a Marathon event, when I ground to a halt with over 10 kilometres still to go, I thought of the words of Ron Hill (the famous British runner), who once said 'Get up and walk if you have to, but finish the damned race'. I finished that race, well outside the target time, but at least I finished that race!

Runners experienced high levels of satisfaction associated with freedom, spontaneity in running and the sheer joy of participating. This further illustrates that human beings take part in many sports and forms of physical activity because in their most basic form, they are fun. During this study I have observed the joy of runners completing events and would suggest that the delight of being able to do something is one of the purest and most important pleasures, and the opportunity for running participants to delight in their body functioning well. I would compare this feeling to what Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990) describes as 'flow experience', which is further explored in chapter six. For me, the attraction of long distance running comes from a combination of where the run takes place, the actual act of running and the resultant 'flow' experience.

The findings from this study led me to the literature on experience management and specifically event experiences (Morgan, 2006; 2007) in an attempt to merge together an understanding of how long distance runners experience the spaces in which they run, and how this creates the feelings of 'flow', which are mentioned above. In doing so, it has been possible to explore the relationship between the long distance runner and social interaction, social identities, achievements and hedonistic pleasures, cultural interaction, and personal meanings (Kapferer, 1997). Using Pine and Gilmore's (1999) theatrical metaphor, my findings indicate that the distance running event has proved to be the theatrical 'stage' where the long distance runners create their own space to 'perform', and where their running experiences take place. Using this theatrical metaphor once again, the running event can provide a venue for 'drama' and theatrical production and very dramatic results. The stories revealed from within the long distance running social world have engaged the runners emotions and touched their apsirations, hopes and dreams: within their role as cast members who can perform in this distance running production. Previously, the findings have mentioned the sights and smells that are experienced during a running event, which indeed make it a unique sporting experience. The findings support the literature and findings of Shaw (2005) who suggest that events can engage all the senses – sight, sound, touch, smell and taste, along with a series of emotional impacts, referred to as 'combustion points'.

The distance running events observed for this study all contained the necessary ingredients of the Pine and Gilmore (1999) recipe for experience management. Each running event was a 'set' decorated with banners and running signs and symbols, from the start and finish banners to the medals and commemorative T-shirts those participants received. In some of the major

big city marathon events, to add to the spectacle, runners often wore charity costumes. The findings have also illustrated all of Morgan's (2006; 2007) elements of an event experience, within a long distance running setting. These are the personal benefits of enjoyment and achievement, social interaction leading to communitas, and the use of wider symbolic meanings derived from personal narratives and shared cultural values. Running provides the opportunity to move into a running space outside of the constraints and conventions of daily life in which these hedonistic impulses can be indulged (Morgan, 2007). The findings suggest that meaning is created by the interaction of the long distance runner and their understanding of the historical and cultural significance of certain running events and locations (Shipway and Jones, 2008b). Certain running spaces are viewed as running event 'arenas' that are sacred spaces, used for the sharing of socially significant distance running experiences. This concept is further examined in chapter six when the role of the running club is explored, and the link to Bourdieu's theories of social capital are further scrutinised. The findings of this study have a close synergy with both Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) and Morgan's (2007) concept of an 'experience space', where the distance running event is the stage for the performance, with the runners acting as human props. Whilst undertaking fieldwork at running events as part of this fieldwork, I was able to observe many long distance runners stumbling across the finish line, tripping on the carpet under the finishing arch on their way through. Others collapsed or vomited. However, the sense of achievement was etched on all their faces as they crossed the line.

The findings of this study illustrate how long distance running can act as a way of satisfying the human need for identity reinforcement (Weiss, 2001). There is also a link with the work of Stebbins (1992, 2007) where an integral part of the long distance running experience is associated with displaying special skills in sport, and receiving approval and status from finishing various running events. Like Weiss, it would be naive to think that sport is the only subsystem in society in which recognition of identity can be achieved in modern society. However, it is suggested by Sands (2002) that there is no other social subsystem that gives so many people access to social validation and acknowledgement by others than sport, and as such, both long distance running clubs and events have an important role to play in reinforcing a sense of identity for participants.

This study has illustrated that distance running events can provide a diverse mix of both positive and negative experiences. Much of this is linked to the unpredictability of outcome

involved with distance running events. On one day, the participant can perform well, yet on another day the planning and preparation can mean very little, and the runner is left in disarray and despair. This unpredictability is part of what makes long distance running such a memorable experience, and such a distinct and authentic sport and leisure activity. Similarly, event settings are prime locations for projecting identity (Green and Jones, 2005). Long distance runners are able to wear clothing and other displays of subcultural capital, and this acceptability of language, humour, social interactions and other behaviours combine to celebrate a runner's identity and place in the subculture. This liminoid event space and the resulting extraordinary and authentic event experiences are a popular venue for these celebrations (Green, 2001). Linked to the mix of experiences at running events, the conflicting emotions and experiences whilst running were prevalent, and will now be explored.

Conflicting Emotions in Running: Glory and Failure

Whilst most long distance runners participate for themselves, for many it was also important to gain recognition and respect from people that they train and socialise with. As such, there exists a noticeable fear of failure amongst many runners and a desire to pre-empt sub standard running performances, and explain reasons for what they perceive as running failures. The next section includes tales of 'failure', a series of stories and 'excuses' from the runners for not achieving their running goals, and also a diverse range of post race reflections and tales of runners who take great pleasure and pride in reflecting on their distance running performance and 'basking in the reflected glory' of the running event amongst their peers. This section will focus on feelings and emotions, further illustrate the authentic experiences that many runners experience at events, and demonstrate how the very act of long distance running can evoke such strong emotional responses amongst participants. McCarville (2007) suggests that endurance events, such as distance running indeed have the potential to create suffering and celebration, inspiration and demoralization, joy and despair.

For several participants, pride was a dominant emotion at many events, especially at the completion of the event. For some, it was about being the best that they could be at that chosen running event, whilst for others it was to make family and friends proud of their running achievements which had involved so much training and sacrifices in order to achieve.

The Marathon can be a brutal event (Bryant, 2005). Alana W experienced this during one Marathon event, which she failed to complete, commenting a few hours later in a hotel lobby:

> *What I felt much more than anything was the feeling of wounded pride and how awful I felt plodding along the road. My time was awful ,and I actually felt that I had let my family and friends down. There are several reasons why I failed and had my pride dented – not enough mileage and training, not enough mileage and training, and not enough mileage and training. You get the picture?*

For Dennis W, one event was particularly emotional and illustrated the role that family and friends play within the life of a distance runner in the period before and after the event:

> *After the race, my 11-year-old daughter told me she was really proud of me. That meant the world to me.*

Reflection and pride were prevalent themes when the running events were completed. It was an opportunity to reflect on the experiences of the run and the challenges faced. The medals received at the end of the run were very important to many participants, and Louise K's comments were typical:

> *I made it. I got the medal – and now I'm wallowing in self-pride. I have been celebrating by showing off my medal to everyone I could find, including the postman! In fact I'm merrily telling my story to anyone and everyone who will listen.*

Sandra W, a distance runner for over ten years was completing her first Marathon and noted:

> *Despite being in horrific pain for the last couple of miles (my feet actually felt they were on fire), I loved every single minute and have never been so proud of myself. I feel like a real champion, and I'm still buzzing from it all 5 days later! I clearly remember running towards the finish and hearing the announcer telling us that we were achieving something only 1% of people in Britain will achieve. They say that you finish a different person to when you start a marathon and they are right!*

Pride and relief were the underlying thoughts of Ewan F when he completed one long distance running event:

> *Finally the finish line appeared out of nowhere. I could no longer feel my legs and the pain vanished. I stared unblinkingly, watching the finish line get closer and closer, knowing what I had done. The hardest and biggest achievement of my life was over and for an odd moment, it felt too soon. When the medal was put around my neck I forgot all those hard miles; they melted into the background as I looked dazed and confused at the medal. I had done everything I had ever dreamed of. I have never felt more pride and happiness and I knew that moment would stay with me forever.*

Sharing these running experiences with family and friends was an important aspect of competing in the running event and was displayed in the comments of several participants. After one marathon, Simon K commented:

> *I made my way to retrieve my kit and met up with my wife, and received a hero's welcome. My mother and father were with her as well. So it was hugs all round and then just the mad dash to meet up with the rest of my family and friends.*

Similarly, Alison P was equally eager to share her experiences with those who had travelled to watch her run, and her colleagues back at work:

> *Finding my family and friends was very difficult, but when I did I had hero status. This carried on the next day when I arrived at the office, as colleagues came to have a look at the medal that I proudly wore at work all day.*

With every success, there were equal stories and tales of failure and explanations of why events had not gone as planned. Prior to several events, participants were observed explaining, and pre-empting their levels of performance in the forthcoming events. Kara M commented:

> *I got flu at Christmas, and basically lost four weeks of training, which is probably why I'm going to struggle. I just don't want to fail after training so hard since February. I don't want to let my family and friends down. I just have all my loved*

ones voices in my head telling me to take care and not to hurt myself. That lost
training due to my dodgy knee meant I spent most of my time stretching in the lounge
rather than pounding the streets running.

Dennis M performed poorly in one distance running event and noted:

I wondered how much of the viral pneumonia was still in me. The race didn't go as
planned – in fact, I had a nightmare. I put it down to lack of preparation, lack of
fitness, and the curry and beers on Friday night.

Trevor G also struggled to perform well, and had some apprehensive thoughts both before
and during, which he reflected upon:

The night before in the hotel, I kept turning to the wife and I got very upset, and was
saying that I didn't want to do it. My knee was hurting and I was feeling poorly. Then
when the race began, I heard an announcement that Haile Gebrselassie (the famous
Ethiopian runner) had pulled out. My instant thought was that if he can't make it, I'm
stopping now.

The long distance running social world is filled with stories and myths. For example, there is
Ron Hill MBE who has run every day since December 20th 1964, over 35 years (Bryant,
2005). His hero was the comic book character Alf Tupper, known as the tough of the track –
a northern welder whose grit and determination led to fame and glory on the running track.
'Telling Tales' and reflecting on previous running stories was an integral part of the long
distance running social world that I inhabited during the data collection period of this study.
In fact, Patrick T from London confessed during one conversation that like Ron Hill, Alf
Tupper was a hero and inspiration to him, and he felt a great affinity with the character. This
was reflected in the clothing that Patrick wore, and it was Robert G who commented on his
appearance:

Patrick wears a running vest from the 1970's, which is falling to bits, and only held
together with safety pins. His shorts are also in tatters, and I think he wears all that
old gear as some sort of statement about how he's an 'old school' runner, who comes

from a hardened working class background, and is battling through some sort of
adversity.

In fact, Patrick was once an international standard long distance runner who has represented his country over a range of distances. Within the social world that I immersed myself within, Patrick could normally be found at the end of a distance running event with a pint of bitter and smoking a cigarette, which is not traditionally to be expected from a long distance runner. However, I suggest that Patrick was creating a reputation for himself, as a non conventional distance runner, and someone who will be remembered long after he finishes running, along with the likes of Alf Tupper, the '*Tough of the Track'*. Bale (2004) portrays these characters as 'fictions of resistance'. Tupper is perceived as a proletarian runner from the industrial north of England. The attraction for Patrick would appear to be imitating his hero and to run against the grain in a period of society which is increasingly modern and technical, including the long distance running world of technological gadgets like heart rate monitors and iPods, and advancements in running shoes and clothing. It could be suggested that Patrick is trying to portray a working class hero in a modern 21st century environment. I would suggest that both the fictional Alf Tupper and the real-life Patrick T from London create their own identity within the long distance running social world, one of rebellion, of smoking, drinking and eating fish and chips.

Mel R gained kudos from telling tales associated with completing the infamous 'Marathon Des Sables' Ultra Marathon across the Moroccan dessert. Whilst on one running holiday in Cyprus, Mel arrived at the hotel swimming pool and spent in excess of an hour recalling his running experiences, and basking in the reflected glory of his achievement (Cialdini et al, 1976):

> *It was the hardest thing I have ever done, running 250kms across the desert in the*
> *heat. I lost almost a third of my bodyweight and suffered extreme discomfort and*
> *horrendous blisters. I just ground it out, along with the other guys.*

According to many of the key informants in this study, the mental side of long distance running is as important as the physical side, and it appeared that despite the bodies of some runners being prepared for competing in running events, they often struggled to perform if

their mind was not equally prepared. Various strategies were used to combat challenges. Mark S dealt with his mental demons in various ways:

> *If I try to run quickly, I know it's going to hurt and I also try to overcome the fear of failure. I also set achievable goals to keep me motivated, and enter races months in advance – I get fresh motivation and feel compelled to prepare properly.*

My findings suggest that justifications for failure or pulling out are a central part of many long distance running communities. It was a regular occurrence to hear discussions between friends at the end of training runs talking about it being too hot or too windy. Common excuses included *'my breathing was fine, but my legs just felt heavy'* or *'my legs felt great, but I just couldn't breathe and I never got going'*. Trevor G mentioned one runner at his own club, who failed to achieve his intended goals, but always had an explanation, as to why:

> *Warren always has an excuse. In fact, he probably wrote the A to Z dictionary of excuses. There's always a reason why he doesn't run well – it's either the shoes, he had too much to drink, he's got a cold, it was too windy, he's injured, or something else. Recently, he even turned up for a race, did the warm up, made some excuse about being injured and got in his car and drove home. I'm always waiting to hear what he will come up with next!*

Some of the long distance runners observed at local running clubs appeared to decide in advance that they would be unable to achieve their goals due to injury, low mileage, a lack of training, the onset of age, family commitments and other negative beliefs. However, there were also a whole series of runners observed for this study who have achieved their running goals, which has enhanced their feelings of achievement and self worth, as detailed at various stages of this study.

For many, the actual participation element of running events is a core component, and can also be a source of subcultural capital within the long distance running social world. This will now be explored, as it has an impact on participants' emotions and feelings of success and failure. My findings demonstrate that runners run for a diverse range of reasons. Some of the less competitive runners appeared to run to become fitter, lose weight, or to reduce stress; whilst the more competitive appeared to run to test themselves, take on personal challenges,

or to win trophies. In observations and interviews for this study it has become apparent that most distance runners did not run simply to lose weight or to get fit, but they ran because they enjoyed it. There is a degree of challenge involved in long distance running; both against other runners, but more prevalent is the sense of challenge against oneself. Many runners were in a journey of self discovery, and several runners interviewed for this study indicated that the most important challenge during running is self-challenge. For others, distance running was seen as a life changing experience and the opportunity to test the mind, body and soul, and realise the inner strength and determination that is often needed to complete some of the more arduous running events. This was a common theme throughout the study, where runners found inner qualities they were unaware existed and often provided a sense of real achievement. Distance running races can also be as stressful on the mind, as on the body. Races are significant to participants who often become caught up in the emotions of the race day. Robin A explains the spectrum of emotions that he goes through during a race:

> *You spend large amounts of time and energy thinking about the event in the build up – what to wear, what pace to run at, or whether you will make it to the finish. I go through a range of emotions: nerves, anxiety, excitement, despair, joy, relief or boredom.*

Upon suffering a substandard performance at one event, Simon K reflected on one particular clichéd saying which is regularly used within the long distance running world upon the completion of the Marathon distance, and one I observed at the London Marathon when talking with an exhausted and fatigued Simon. He commented *"I'm never doing another Marathon again in my life",* to which Anthony P replied *"Never say Never".* This brought back memories of Sir Steve Redgrave, Britain's five times Olympic Gold medal winner in his post Sydney 2000 Olympic TV interview, when he said *"If you see me in a boat again, you have permission to shoot me".* Sir Steve was back in the boat again four years later for the 2004 Games in Athens, and similarly Simon K was back on the start line of the London Marathon twelve months later. Sugden (2007) in his auto-ethnographic account of the 2005 Marabana − the Havana Marathon, describes the completion of a marathon as both a relief and an anti-climax: relief because the physical and mental effort is over; anti-climax because as soon as the finishing line is crossed runners tend to forget how hard it actually was.

Nash (1979) suggests that races are a social gathering for mutual self testing, and which make for eventful experiences, which is true within the long distance running world that I

inhabited. A distance running event is an opportunity to test oneself in a competitive arena. As previously indicated, distance running can be a lonely activity at times, but 'race days' can also be social days. Runners often train in groups for social support and encouragement, and it is a regular occurrence for family members to attend many events. Therefore, for many participants, it is important to protect their running identity, using various tactics and strategies. It has been suggested in chapter three that 'serious running' and participating at distance running events is able to provide participants with a positive social identity. Participation at these running events provided a social identity that might otherwise be unavailable to the individual (Shipway and Jones, 2007). These events are often a diversion from work, family and day to day life, which is further explored in chapter six. The identity obtained through serious running is often positive, providing both status and prestige for the running participant. Green and Jones (2005) make reference to the liminoid nature of the experience that can actually work to enhance the socialization process, which was addressed in the previous chapter. In the work on social identity by Jenkins (1996), he advocates the suggestions by Bourdieu (1984) who contends that social interactions are vital ways to learn the values, norms and behaviours appropriate to membership in the subculture, and it is suggested in these findings that distance running events are the appropriate outlet for this social interaction, where runners are in an extended contact with other runners. Jenkins argues that social identity must be seen as both individual and collective, and shows how the work of major theorists from Mead to Bourdieu can illuminate the experience of identity in everyday life. The fieldwork findings have demonstrated that at these events, distance runners experience contact with experienced members of the running social world, and the actual event can often break down traditional barriers and facilitate a strong sense of running community. Yet again, it is Jenkins who states that without social identity, there is no society.

It is my contention that participating in a long distance running event, either locally, regionally, nationally or internationally leads to an enhancement of the quality, quantity and importance of both interactions and the event experience. In contrast, this sometimes has the opposite set of negative experiences and feelings of failure. Observations from participants illustrate that all runners are striving to reach a common destination line – the finish line of their chosen event, and the results indicate that there are different ways of getting to that destination. Running events are therefore able to offer the long distance runner an intensive course in subcultural norms (Jenkins, 1996), and after attending running events, participants can emerge with a deeper, more authentic running identity. Participation in a running event

is an opportunity for self-actualisation and self-expression, which are benefits that are not normally found in everyday life. This concept was discussed when exploring the running identity and the durable benefits of participating, as addressed in chapter three. Green and Jones (2005) explore this concept in relation to a range of sporting activities, and results from this study begin to illustrate that distance running events allow the freedom for self-actualisation and self-expression in running that are freely chosen, and by their very nature of finishing the running events, allow achievement and the realization of the running potential.

Results from the participants in this study support the findings that individuals are motivated to maintain both a positive social identity (Tajfel, 1981) and a positive personal identity (Glasser, 1975). The degrees of identification have been shown, however, to affect responses to success or failure in terms of what has come to be known as "BIRGing" (Jones, 1998) and "COFFing" (Crawford, 2004). BIRGing, a phenomenon within the social psychology literature, is an acronym for 'Basking in Reflected Glory'. Initial research in this area stems from the work of Cialdini et al (1976), as previously mentioned in chapter three. The Cialdini et al study was undertaken at six different Universities, monitoring the apparel that students wore on Monday's, following a successful football weekend for their team. Whilst this and other studies are linked to sports fans, it is suggested that the concept has great resonance with behaviour within long distance running communities. In the Cialdini et al study, students sought to link themselves to their team success by wearing identifying clothing. This was also the case within the long distance running social world with participants displaying medals, clothing and other prizes or memorabilia associated with distance running events they had participated in. The concept of BIRGing is rooted in social identity theory. I would argue that the key difference between an active participant (such as the long distance runner) and a sports fan is that within the spectator / fan role, it would appear that the fan trying to receive this glory has done nothing tangible to bring about the team success. They are truly basking in reflected glory, which is not earned, which is in contrast to the long distance runner, who is basking in genuine achievement having completed their distance running target or goal.

This chapter has demonstrated on several occasions how long distance runners have tried to protect themselves from future disappointment by pre-empting or 'cutting off future failure' at forthcoming distance running events. In relation to COFFing, runners appeared to be trying to detach themselves as far as possible from their potential future failure. I would also suggest that the 'serious' level of commitment that a long distance runner has towards the very act of

running will influence the degree to which they can detach themselves from distance running when failure occurs. If a distance runner is strongly linked to the activity, social identity theory would suggest that it will be hard for them to distance themselves. The runner is hoping to avoid any negative evaluation by others within the running social world in relation to their own running achievements. The closer the identification to long distance running and their level of 'serious' commitment, it is suggested the greater the risk the runner has of suffering a loss in self esteem, should they fail to achieve their running goals. In the distance running context, COFFing appears to take place where participants adopt an "ego protective function" (Jones, 1998), in order to protect their individual person and social identity as a runner. The participant is often able to increase their "psychological distance" from failure in order to protect their social identity and to maintain self-esteem levels.

Wann et al (2001) consider that the key theme linked to both psychological and social benefits is the role that sport plays in linking individuals to a wider sense of community and belonging, and the associated sense of identity which this helps to provide. Wann et al indicate that a key psychological benefit of being a sport fan, and I would also suggest as an active sport participant, is the opportunity to enhance both self esteem and group esteem, such as the pride in the group to which they belong. The results from this running study would indicate that this can be achieved through certain psychological techniques such as BIRGing after a successful distance running performance, or protecting oneself from future disappointment by playing down success and cutting off future failure (COFFing). Wann et al also suggest that some social situations sports, such as long distance running, can act as a source of 'cultural capital' that might allow participants access to certain social groups, and help provide a degree of social acceptance and even respect (Crawford, 2004). These ideas have already been established elsewhere in this study.

Both concepts are features of what Schlenker (1980) refers to as defensive or offensive impression management (Jones, 1998), whereby strategic self presentation may be used to protect an individual's sense of identity, one of a positive social identity. Jenkins (1996) also refers to impression management, drawing from the work of Goffman (1969), in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* indicating that these 'actors', want to appear credible to others. Jenkins indicates that this could be driven by wanting, or perhaps needing, to make a good impression. Identity is an important theme in Goffman's work, and Jenkins further explores how individuals present an image of themselves – of self – for acceptance by others.

He discusses some of these arts of impression management, whereby individuals, including long distance runners, will 'send' particular identities to others and attempt to influence their reception. Whether BIRGing or COFFing are due to personal factors, such as the intended maintenance of self esteem, or to social factors, such as the maintenance of a desirable social identity is not clear from the literature (Jones, 1998). The findings from this study indicate that identification as a long distance runner allows the development and maintenance of a positive social and thus personal, identity through such processes as BIRGing and COFFing. For many, this identification was expressed and often magnified whilst on distance running related holidays or extended breaks away from home, which will now be explored in greater depth.

Travelling to a Running Event

An increasing number of running holidays exist, offering coaching advice and the chance to relax in comfortable surroundings. Data collection for this study included several overseas trips and running holidays, which allowed for immersion within the long distance running social world. Sands (2002:19) observed that ethnography allows for an insider perspective when he made reference to Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, who noted that the ethnographic researcher can "take part in the natives' games, he can follow them on their visits and walks, sit down and listen and share in their conversations". Holloway et al (2010) highlight the early work of famous anthropologists such as Malinowski, who examined cultural patterns and rules by exploring a variety of non-Western cultures and the life ways of the people within them. Immersion within the social world of the long distance runner was possible within many of the data collection settings used in this study, especially those overseas running destinations, where there was plenty of time for conversation with long distance runners. Earlier in this chapter, findings explored the importance and uniqueness that an active participant can gain during a running event, and the importance of the event experience. This next section explores both the impact and the importance of competing overseas, and the role this plays as a reward for the months of training and preparation.

Existing sport tourism research has been subject to claims of lacking coherence, theoretical underpinning, and lacking empirical support. Weed (2005) suggests that existing work on sport tourism experiences is generally descriptive, and fails to address issues such as why the

event sport tourist experience is enjoyable, or why participants would like to repeat the experience. This appears to be an outcome of the predominance of positivist, quantitative research designs that are often devoid of any theoretical discussion. Given the diverse and varied international locations used for data collection in this study, one emerging theme was to develop a deeper understanding of the experiences of long distance runners as 'active' sport tourists, engaged in their chosen activity away from their home environment. While not a higher order theme within this study, an analysis of sport tourism, through long distance running, contributes towards filling a research gap that exists within the sport tourism and sporting events literature (Shipway and Jones, 2008a; Shipway and Kirkup, 2009).

One emerging area that required further exploration was whether there is greater credibility and acceptance amongst the distance running social world for participants who have completed running events in exotic locations, or over longer distances. For example, I completed the Comrades Ultra Marathon in South Africa, which to this day, has served to be a great resource for 'telling tales' about long distance running experiences at the event. It also serves to provide a high degree of acceptance and social capital amongst my running peers. This was certainly the case for Mel P, who recalled his suffering and achievement at the Marathon Des Sables in the Moroccan desert, which was explored earlier in this chapter. Similarly, and linked to the findings in chapter four on pain and running, it would appear that the level of suffering and adversity offered by an overseas running event can help to build prestige. Alan C has competed both overseas and domestically in some of the toughest distance running events:

> *Last year I did the Athens Marathon, which was quite hilly. The year before I ran in Singapore which was really humid too, and I struggled with the heat. Next month, I'm hoping to do the hardest road marathon in the UK, the Isle of Wight Marathon which has 21 hills in 26 miles, and then I'll train for the 'The Beast', a 14 mile multi-terrain run around Corfe Castle.*

Bale (2004:74) suggests that running 'induces intermittent but sometimes extraordinarily intense and pleasurable awareness of the environment'. Key informants indicated that places like New York City and London are 'sacred places' for long distance runners. This affection for running places could lie not only in the physical aspects like the streets that comprise the

Marathon; they could also lie in the memories of fellow club runners who have run these routes in the past, and the stories that they tell about these races within the long distance running social world. It is not about the buildings in cities like New York, Boston or Chicago, which are traditionally famous and prestigious marathon events, but more about the experiences that may have been felt in these specific places by distance runners past and present. As Simon K and Louise K previously explained, they like to participate in one overseas Marathon each year, and target specific races in iconic running destinations. For many, running holidays are often far from a traditional 'holiday', but an active involvement in their favourite leisure activity. Shipway and Jones (2007) explored the experiences of long distance runners at a four day International Running Challenge in Cyprus and found that the social aspects of the trip, including the opportunity to mix with fellow likeminded runners was almost as important as the running event itself. Whist running on holiday, or going on running holidays was popular with those runners interviewed, it also presented certain challenges for participants. Ewan F had particular problems with jet lag and dehydration:

> *I have to allow myself plenty of time to recover, depending on how many time zones I cross. This can be particularly awkward if I'm racing whilst away. Dehydration makes me feel sluggish, so I always drink plenty of fluid and ask for an aisle seat on the plane.*

Gavin D likes to run on holiday, usually in warmer climates, enjoying the thrill and excitement of rubbing some sunscreen on his neck and face, donning his expensive 'Oakley' sunglasses, soaking his favourite 'Berlin City Marathon' cap in ice cold water to keep him cool, clicking his stopwatch and then hitting the road to explore new running routes. Martin (2007) observes the enthusiasm of runners when faced with new training routes in new places. Some runners will use the internet to find possible running routes at their holiday destination, and often, the more different or unusual the surroundings the better. Different conditions present new challenges, and combined with running produce different running experiences. However, Josephine raised concerns about some of the more practical aspects of running overseas, related to safety:

> *If I am in a new area, I tell someone roughly the time I intend to get back, and ask people at the hotel where the safe places are to run. As a female, I'm also conscious*

of respecting local customs and dressing appropriately, to avoid embarrassment or causing offence.

Several informants commented on being very conscious of traffic whilst running overseas and indicated that it often requires greater attention and focus whilst out running. In late 2007, Pauline F had an unfortunate incident whilst running in Indonesia, where a local bus driver failed to follow the laws of the road, and she came very close to having a serious road accident. Alana W experienced this whilst running in Europe:

With the cars driving on the opposite side of the road to the UK, you have to be far more attentive and observant. For the first few days I find myself looking the wrong way. Plus, the drivers can be a bit crazy in some countries. Also, you have to be careful on training runs overseas when you are unfamiliar with the area. I tend to just run out and back along the same route, so I can't get lost.

Bale (2004:135) indicates that runners like to sample the joys of running in unfamiliar environments, explaining that runners visiting Scandinavia have 'got drunk on the air and the silence of the northern forests'. Running publications like 'Runners World' have regular articles on overseas destinations and selected running websites promote running holidays and breaks. Particularly popular are seven day training weeks, targeted at long distance runners preparing for Marathons, or destinations hosting their own races. Conversations at running clubs regularly focus on some of the higher profile events around the globe and this often serves to stimulate an interest amongst club members to participate in an event overseas. As a segment of the tourism market, the demand for running related holidays is rapidly increasing. This demand for certain locations often exceeds the available supply (Shipway and Jones, 2008b). Over a two year period of data collection for this study, interviews and participant observation took place at a diverse selection of international running events ranging from Sydney to Athens and from Cyprus to Amsterdam, as well as at selected destinations in the UK which target long distance runners as active sport tourists.

Indeed, the atmosphere at many international events can be rather tense prior to the main event, as long distance runners prepare for the run that they have dedicated so much time into preparing for. However, after the event, many runners tend to shift their focus from the race

towards more mainstream tourism activities. Dennis M did note that he prefers to 'do the tourist thing' after the Marathon:

> *Three years ago, I made the mistake of doing my sightseeing around New York before the Marathon. We spent the day before traipsing around Manhattan and I was knackered when I reached the start line on the Sunday morning. Now, I rest up in the hotel on the Saturday and look around the shops or Museums afterwards – it works better that way.*

Anthony P regularly travels overseas to participate in international events, normally over the marathon distance:

> *I usually go to Portugal in the spring for a Training camp. There's a regular group of people who go every year, and it's nice to see them all. We do a training run in the morning, relax during the day, have another run in the late afternoon and then have a meal in the evening. By the end of the week I'm knackered, but I'm not the type of person who can lie on a beach, so this is great, as I stay active.*

Don P, Sandra W and Mark S are three runners, who as part of a larger group regularly travel to races and training camps around the world, for reasons similar to Anthony P. A common theme that emerged at a selection of international running events and training weeks was the sense of identity that exists amongst participants. Within minutes of meeting, runners appeared to have a common bond – the activity of distance running. For many, 'word of mouth' amongst fellow runners can often lead participants to follow a well trodden international circuit of Marathon events. Particularly popular are spring marathons in cities like Rotterdam, London or Boston and autumn events in Berlin or New York. Urry (2002) contends that tourists often travel to iconic destinations and resorts in order to collect 'places'. Whilst Urry refers to this as the 'tourist gaze', several runners noted that the greatest reward, whether at home or overseas is to enjoy their own 'running gaze' at the scenery that passes by. This is the part of the day, or even part of their holiday, that they can't do without.

These tourist running spaces are not contrived, or as MacCannell (1973) terms, 'staged authenticity'. The tourist experience at overseas long distance running events, such as the Marathon event, are often almost a form of pilgrimage with social and spatial separation from

the normal running venues, places of residence, and conventional social ties (Urry, 2003). Urry also mentions the liminal zones where tourists find themselves in an 'anti-structure', out of time and space, which provides an intense social bonding or 'communitas'. I observed that this was often followed by a reintegration, as the long distance runner re-enters the social group, following the completion of the running event, usually with a higher social status. Based on both my interviews and observational studies, travel to distance running events, such as the New York, Berlin, Boston, Chicago or London Marathons served to revitalise the participant for their return to the more familiar places of home and work, to which Lett (1983) refers. It is apparent that long distance running is very much about what Urry (2002) terms 'the gaze', reinforcing the fundamental visual nature of the overseas marathon experience. Similar to the findings in the previous chapter, the long distance running gaze demarcates an array of pleasurable, or sometimes unpleasurable, qualities that are generated within particular times and spaces.

Discussion between participants emphasised the importance of travel, in that races that were held in distant or unusual locations held greater perceived capital than those within the UK; with the possible exception of the London Marathon. Thus, conversation focused upon races in Boston, New York or Sydney for example. This storytelling seems to have a dual function. Firstly, it is a key aspect of establishing the credentials of individuals within the group. Secondly it serves the function of reinforcing the individual's own sense of identity (Clark & Salaman, 1998). Through such means, identities were affirmed. Identity as a social construct is one of the key issues for sport research. This study adds to the literature in the domain of sport tourism studies with an examination of the mechanism that enable sport participants to experience long distance running at a selection of local, regional, national and international running events. In the domain of sport tourism activity, these running sites symbolise aspects of distance running and present runners as a family with shared values, characteristics and beliefs (Shipway and Kirkup, 2009). As such, if my findings focus on the ways in which runners experience identity through encountering the running events as sites of sporting significance and sporting landscapes, in doing so, they support the findings from the wider tourism literature (Palmer, 2005) that this helps to promote a sense of collective belonging. This study then led me towards core concepts from social-anthropology. Understanding how meaning (i.e. the running identity) is created through engagement with the world (such as sport tourism and distance running) stem from social-anthropology. Likewise, concepts such as belonging based upon culture (as illustrated through the signs and symbols of running) and

the notion of community, boundary maintenance, ritual (such as the competitors taking part in recovery activity in the hotel pool), and myths (the stories told by runners) are all adding to a deeper understanding of active sport tourists, through the use of ethnography. Using these, and other theoretical concepts, has helped to understand how identity works through belonging to, and participating in a community of long distance runners.

As previously alluded to, in the long distance running community, there is a distinct sense that some runners have a checklist of 'must do' long distance running events which they strive to complete. Similarly to Urry's (2003) description of collecting places within the tourism context, Sugden (2007) described the 2005 Havana Marathon as an event for collectors not connoisseurs; where he had literally been there, done that, got the T-shirt, and then found the time to enjoy the tourism. Runners will travel and participate in events all over the world seeking to experience the unique atmosphere and environment of running in big city marathons in foreign countries. This was certainly the case for Emma G, who had an itinerary of planned events:

> *My husband and I will be going to Las Vegas in December to do the Marathon, and then we will train for London in April. The plan is to compete in the Davos Challenge in Switzerland in July, and then the New Forest Half Marathon in mid September, which we will turn into a family break. Our final major event of the year will be the Athens Classic Marathon in November. Oh yes, we also have a plan for next year too – I really fancy the Two Oceans Ultra Marathon in Cape Town.*

The globalisation and ease of travel is only serving to increase runners' ability to explore the international running community at destinations all around the world. Running is a globally integrated sport, where participants can obtain 'belonging'. When the findings from this study led me to the literature associated with a 'Serious Leisure Framework' in chapter three, elements of this framework and the associated social identity theories are applicable in relation to the conflicting emotions and experiences that occur during a distance running event. Weed and Bull (2004) describe sport tourism as a conceptualisation of the unique interaction of people, place and activity. My findings led me to consult the literature on travel, but to also focus on the importance of space, and how travel to participate in running events can provide a space for long distance runners to interact with one another, based on the very act of running. It is a space for subcultural interaction. Serious runners, for example,

may go to South Africa, home of the famous Comrades Ultra-marathon event, with the sole purpose being to complete the event. In the course of everyday life, the serious runner will also train on a daily basis. However, as will be explored in chapter six, long distance running is mixed with work, family and other daily activities. The distance runner is therefore forced to shift between identities (Green and Jones, 2005). In contrast, whilst at an extended running event or on a running holiday the participants identity as a runner remains central and is the identity that is presented to others (Shipway and Jones, 2008b). I would suggest that this 'event space' allows an individual to maintain their running identities, to interact based on those identities, and to celebrate their serious running identity.

The findings of this study make a contribution to the understanding of the mechanisms or social processes that enable long distance runners to experience identity *through* sports participation and sport events, an area that, as identified above by Gibson (2005), lacks detailed understanding. As Palmer (2005:24) argues within the context of an ethnographic project located within the heritage tourism literature, 'imagination, memory and emotion are crucial to the creation of a sense of intimate familiarity with the events depicted'. The findings from this study support the ideas of Tsang (2000), that identity is partially created and constructed through experiences and inter-subjectivity. As long distance runners, the key informants for this study make sense of their life experiences, and their running identity, by listening to the stories and tales of fellow runners (Sparkes, 2002). On a personal level the engaging myths and folklore stories that have been encountered in this research, which surround the running culture, have helped me to further identify with long distance running and use both my own experiences and other runners experiences to develop a deeper understanding of the long distance running social world. An exploration of the experiences of identity are meaningful not only to myself, but to other runners by revealing how identities are performed, negotiated and produced in the context of long distance running.

Summary

Serious runners find an outlet at running events, and likewise, these running events encourage serious running. Whilst exploring the sense of competition at running events, the importance of participation and the extraordinary event experience has been established, along with exploration of the conflicting emotions of 'failure' and 'glory' associated with running. It was

also established that running events and travel can facilitate serious running in a series of the following key areas, which have been examined within this chapter. Firstly, long distance running events offer a context through which to build or confirm a running identity; secondly, provide a time and place to interact with others who share a similar ethos of the long distance running social world; thirdly, provide a stage at the running event whereby runners can parade and celebrate a valued social identity; fourthly, create a further step in the long distance runners career, and finally, allow runners an outlet, through the running events, to signal their career stage amongst fellow runners. This has a close synergy with the findings within chapter three linked to serious running and identity. Through an ethnography of long distance running, the importance of experiencing identity through sporting events is once again illustrated.

Chapter Six: Escaping to a Long Distance Running Third Place

Introduction

Sport and leisure events which involve elements of team and club focused activity, including long distance running, are becoming even more important in a society which appears to be creating greater individualism. The family unit size is becoming smaller, people are marrying later in life, and divorce rates are increasing (Shipway, and Kirkup, 2009). Meanwhile technologies such as the mobile phone, digital TV and the internet allow us to achieve a great deal, on our own. As illustrated in chapter five, in simple terms, what is scarce are the collective experiences which people can obtain from sports participation, and this study suggests this makes those authentic experiences ever more valuable. Similarly, in a society that is becoming increasingly sedentary and unfit, for many people activities like long distance running has the potential to provide an escape route.

The 'Third Place' was a term introduced by Oldenburg (1989) to describe places where people could meet for social interaction, most notably in the form of conversation, to

consolidate or develop a sense of identity, and contribute strongly to social capital and citizenship. The concept of the 'third place' is one that has received little attention within the sport and leisure studies literature, and as such, there is relatively little empirical evidence either to support or refute the concept. The need for a third place would seem, however, a key requirement for individuals to allow 'escape' from the first and second places of home and work. Given the increasing participation in long distance running as a leisure activity, I will demonstrate that running clubs and running events are likely third places. It is suggested that running can act as a link between two out of the three places that are referred to. For example, when runners run to work from home, they are moving between two of these places, and distance running is the link between them. Likewise, it could be suggested that running away from somewhere always means running somewhere else.[8] Running clubs and events fulfil some of the functions of the third place, and as illustrated above, the following chapter explores some of these ideas, within the context of the long distance running social world.

Running Away from Home

As identified in chapter four, this study has argued that runners share a socially learned personality structure, or *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1984; Atkinson, 2008). Linked to this idea of *habitus* and the concept of the third place (Oldenburg, 1989), the findings have illustrated how long distance runners find the act of running as being socially meaningful. As previously established in chapter three, essentially, a social identity is formed when the individual becomes aware of their membership of a social group, where such membership involves some emotional or value significance (Tajfel, 1972), and this has been the case within the long distance running community that I have observed. Results indicate that the recent, very rapid, increase in the popularity of long distance running is partly a result of participants being able to experience these meaningful and enduring social connections that Tajfel refers to, and where emotions that are not typically experienced in everyday life can be cathartically released through running. This concept was not only explored in chapter four, but also in

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[8] Findings related to 'escaping to a third place' in the context of long distance running have been presented at two international conferences, the *ACEM 5th International Event Management Summit* in Australia and the *Tourist Experiences: Meanings, Motivations and Behaviours Conference* in the UK. The findings have appeared in the refereed conference paper proceedings at both conferences.

chapter five when examining extraordinary and authentic experiences at distance running events. Observation during the study has identified people joining running clubs and attending distance running events because they often feel isolated, bored and nostalgic for more exciting lifestyles, as illustrated in the work of Elias and Dunning (1986) when exploring a 'quest for excitement' amongst sport participants. For many participants, as the previous chapter demonstrated, marathons especially provide an exciting and identity-affirming set of experiences.

In long distance running, the goal is to move the body across considerable distances while various obstacles and restrictions are imposed (Bale, 2004). The goal is to prepare for, then willingly engage, in a worthwhile challenge. Running is both a simple and a complex sporting activity, in which plenty can and often does go wrong. It is also an activity that when enjoyed by the participant can provide a feeling of flow and balance, which is rewarding. However, substantial training and preparation is required by the participant to be in a position to experience these feelings. Csikszentmihalyi (1990:95) when looking at flow activities indicates that:

> *Normal physical functions (such as running) are performed in a socially designed, goal directed setting with rules that offer challenges and require skills, it turns into a flow activity…moving the body across a space becomes a source of complex feedback that provides optimal experience and adds strength to the self.*

Several participants in this study reflected that when they were running in events they often felt a sense of balance and flow, and this was supported by Mel R when reflecting on his experience of one particular training run:

> *I had a long run prior to the marathon, when everything just fell into place. It was great to get out into the countryside, and after two hours of steady running I was just flying along through the narrow country lanes. The rest of the guys were running well too, and we just glided along.*

The appeal of distance running third places is often found in the effect that such places have upon a long distance runner's sense of time, as explored previously in chapter five. As mentioned above, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) made reference to 'flow' association, observing

that people who enjoy what they are doing concentrate their attention, forget their personal problems, lose their sense of time, feel competent and in control, and have a sense of harmony and union with their surroundings. Feeling in control is central to 'flow', resulting in time seeming to stand still as the runner becomes absorbed in distance running. Running certainly fulfilled these criteria for many of the informants involved in this study. For many participants, whilst running, it was possible to forget about beeping text messages from mobile phones and other aspects of the twenty first century. It provided escape and freedom. Several of the runners in this study indicated that they were faced with 'clockwatching' at work, whilst at home several participants found the family to often be a time constraining factor as they attempted to schedule activities around an ever increasing range of activities. As Oldenburg (1989) indicated, today's society is highly scheduled and structured, and that we often forget that the most enjoyable and memorable moments of our lives are never really planned. For many participants, running provided those memorable moments and an opportunity to escape, and become part of a different world, when they can get away from the problems of the day. This was reflected in the comments of Kara M:

> *As a mother of two young boys, both under five years old, my time to escape from being a Mum is when I put my trainers on and take to the streets.*

In contrast, Dennis M has a hectic work life as a city businessman and found that distance running provides an outlet for stress, anxiety, pressure and tension at work:

> *Until I started running I had no release from the time I woke up, until I went to bed. Ask my wife – I wasn't a very nice person to be around for a while, but that all changed when I started running.*

This study suggests that 'serious running' can be understood in terms of both seeking and escaping. Long distance runners are able to escape from their homes (and their home lives) and to seek out running experiences, either whilst training or at a running event, as explored in chapters four and five. Seeking and escaping can also be used to describe the role of social identity in these same contexts. Attending running events, whilst serving as a third place, can also help 'serious runners' to escape from enduring identities such as work role identities, and seek out identification with a serious leisure subculture (Green and Jones, 2005). This

reinforces many of the findings from chapter three, when investigating the search for a running identity.

Reid (2007) suggests that the 'honesty and realness' that many participants find in running reflects the experience of people who are cherishing their time on the running road as if it was the most genuine part of their lives, indicating that this time alone is the time when they feel most themselves. Reid argues that what non-runners might perceive as a waste of time, or form of torture, long distance runners see as an oasis of freedom. To many, this represents the '*long distance running third place'*, where they can escape from the 'real world'. Key informants indicated that they found running to be a mental as much as a physical escape, to a third place away from the serious everyday world, and into the serious running world. These findings suggest that when participants dress into their running shorts and running vests, they are changing from their everyday clothes that exist in the 'real world', and into another detached uniform, which reflects their long distance running identity, and the social world attached to that identity. This is a movement into a special place, without phones, emails and computers. The majority of long distance runners clearly value the one hour each day that they spend running, which is often their own silent, private time to maintain their own mental well-being. This is a notion advocated by many runners, including Murakami (2008). Long distance running enables participants to find this 'third place', this place of running solitude away from their work or a typical evening sitting at home watching television or reading the newspaper.

The enduring image from the film *Chariots of Fire* is the group of runners moving along the beach to the sound track music of Vangelis. Upon reflection, the scene evokes a sense of freedom, and one that many of the participants in this study regularly recreated with their long Sunday morning training runs. On a personal level, when I am training with fellow running club members in Dorset, these runs begin on the beach at 8am, heading into the Purbeck Hills and away from the relatively residential and urban centres of Poole and Bournemouth. For two hours, every Sunday morning, we are able to escape and enjoy our own Chariots of Fire experiences. Likewise, in the film adaptation of *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, Smith, the central character, is imprisoned in a young offenders centre and granted special privileges to run outside of the prison walls and experience carefree happy running. For participants in this study, they were also able to experience this joyous feeling, starting their evening run after a long day confined and imprisoned to their

desk at work. In some instances, it is the road and running terrain that acts as a third place. It is suggested here that the running routes are in fact as much of a third place as both the running event and the running 'clubhouse' environment. Robert G held similar views to those of Dennis:

> *Running enables me to get away from my personal, ordinary life and helps me to appreciate life with renewed purpose. It provides a new perspective for me to contemplate my problems and everything appears in a different light.*

Robin A runs during the daytime, as a way to get out of the office and forget about the stresses of his job:

> *Sitting at my desk all just leaves me feeling tired and lethargic. I can't face sitting in cramped conditions, whilst my colleagues sit there stuffing their faces with cakes, biscuits and sugary drinks. These are a few reasons why I go for a run at lunch-time.*

It was generally accepted by a majority of the respondents in the study that stress can increase fatigue and muscle tension; a theme which will be explored further in the next chapter. Pauline had a couple of observations on how she tries to escape whilst running:

> *I don't breathe very well when I'm stressed, which means I need a greater effort to run. Last year I changed my job and ended up getting divorced, both within twelve months, and I was able to use my runs as a mental escape.*

This 'escape theme' is common, in discussions of the third place, and typical of this description is the discussion of the modern Viennese coffee shop by Wechsberg (1966:16)

> *"(A man's) coffee house is his home away from home, his haven and island of tranquility, his reading room and gambling hall, his sounding board and grumbling hall. There at least he is safe from nagging wife and unruly children, monotonous radios and barking dogs, tough bosses and impatient creditors".*

The bar or 'pub', has traditionally been a dominant third place in past generations (Oldenburg, 1989), however the comments and observations from this study suggests that

modern society is seeing the emergence of new 'third places' that are proving increasingly important and attractive within society, and as such, this study suggests that running clubs, the act of running, and running events fulfil many of the criteria of the traditional third places. Louise K noted:

> *When I'm tired and things start to build up, I can always put my trainers on, and go for a run, and escape from the hectic pace of life. I used to work in central London, and I lived in the suburbs, where everything could easily get on top of me, but I could still find my own little bit of peace and quiet with my evening run around Richmond Park.*

As highlighted above, the two Dorset based participants in this study find this peace and tranquillity with their evening runs along the seafront in Poole, or around the two golf courses of Bournemouth. Oldenburg (1989) defines a third place as a public setting accessible to inhabitants, perceived as *their* own, and providing opportunities for social interaction, or "play" that comes from the delight in association. Types and styles of conversation are tied to places such as the distance running community to an important degree. For example, there is a distinct form of chat and conversation that is often associated with 'running talk', which emanates from the distance running environment. This was previously discussed in chapter three, with the exploration of the sense of identity that participants receive from being part of the long distance running social world. Participation in the third place does not guarantee anything, and the consequences of participation are emergent, not linear and sequential (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982). This study, through the observations provided, contends that continuous involvement in the long distance running social world does provide individuals with social experiences and relationships that are increasingly unavailable in modern society.

It was apparent from talking to the runners involved in this study that to participate in long distance running required a blending of time commitments across work and family life. It was crucially important for all those interviewed that they were able to run on a regular basis, and how in some cases running can structure one's life. This could be considered rather obsessive, and this seemed to be the case for Paul G:

> *Running means everything to me. I think about when I will run from the time I wake up, and I'm never truly happy or content until I have been for my run. I am also*

happiest whilst I am running. Yes, I am a single bloke, and I think part of that reason is due to my love of running.

In contrast to Paul's single lifestyle, several runners commented that they were only able to run due to the support they received from their family, especially their spouses. Robert G highlighted his wife of thirty years as being a firm supporter of his running:

Helen is really supportive. To be honest, she puts up with a lot, but knows how important running is to me. She doesn't come to the races, but she always asks how I got on, and makes an effort to get on with the people from the club when they come round the house. If I had a partner who didn't like me running, then I don't think I would have a partner for too long.

Upon personal reflection, often when I am struggling at work, or when someone doesn't understand me in my personal relationships, I will go running for a little longer. This is one way of exhausting unhappiness and dealing with that problem. For some runners, when they are angry, they will run harder and faster, and direct that anger at themselves. Often there is a direct correlation between running, work and life in general. Paul G, an international human resources manager from central England observed that:

When I'm running well, everything seems to go well. Whenever there have been times when I have stopped running, and let work get on top of me, I get tired and my job is anything but enjoyable. Life can be a juggling act, as I work very long hours. I can be working overseas, entertaining clients on a regular basis and also attempting to spend some quality time with the wife and kids. Running is often the one constant aspects of my life.

Louise K, from the North East of England also struggles to balance home and work and running, and is often called away around the UK on business, which complicates her running routines:

I find that sometimes I'm out running at 11pm, after the kids have gone to bed. My friends do the opposite, and run at 6am, but I'm not a morning person, so I get the

family stuff out of the way and then run. Running is part of my life, both my family life and my working life.

Robin A is adamant that you can always find time to run observing:

If you can learn to manage your time properly, you shouldn't miss out on a run. I can always find time for a run, even on work trips overseas when the rest of my colleagues are propping up the hotel bar – it's about dedication and discipline. I might only manage 30 minutes of running, and I might feel awful whilst running, however I'd feel even worse if I missed my run.

Alana W's comments were also typical of many runners in this study:

I'm never too busy to run. I work on a shift rota, as I'm a nurse. I don't have a regular training regime, but I'm used to training when I'm tired, and I'll squeeze my run in, even if it's at 5am or 11pm. If you really want to run, then you'll find time.

Running with family members can also be a real pleasure. In this study, there were three married couples who were able to reflect on the benefits and challenges of running with partners. This did not necessarily involve the loss of a third place caused by running *with* their partner, as these couples did not train together. It merely reflected the joint importance of distance running. Likewise, the study also exposed some negative aspects associated with long distance running whereby relationships were put under an immense level of strain due to one person's commitment to the act of running. Gavin D is aware of this challenge:

I sometimes feel guilty that running cuts into time with my family and friends. I'm very conscious that I tell them why it's important to me. The kids have a harder time understanding why I run. I do have to make sacrifices, but the challenge of fitting my running into my life is also a good training for some of the challenges that we face in life anyway. It helps prepare me for the tough times at work, bringing up the kids, or looking after my elderly relatives.

As highlighted, in Sillitoe's (1959) book, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, a troubled teenager confined to a British borstal finds inner escape through running. When he

runs, he is free. Despite the story's title, the boy isn't lonely. When the participants in this study are running, they might be alone, but they have demonstrated that they are not lonely. The findings have illustrated that whilst long distance running provides a sense of solitude, it is also a solo pursuit that can be shared with thousands of others during an event. In fact, for many, it is so much a part of their life that if they miss a few days of running, they are often not themselves. They are indeed, what I termed in chapter three, serious runners.

The contention in this study is not that third places are necessarily in decline, but rather it is the traditional third places, such as pubs, or cafes that are in decline, and being challenged by new 'third places' like long distance running clubs. It is suggested that such old third places are being replaced by newer third places, reflecting recent changes in society, places that are different in nature to, but perform many of the functions of the traditional third place (Shipway, 2009). Aligned with this move, is one significant cultural change over recent years, the growth in popularity of recreational running, 'jogging', or more 'serious' distance running as a leisure and fitness activity. As one of the traditional third places, the British public house, has seen attendance amongst most groups (with the exception of the young) decline. In contrast, attendance at both long distance running clubs and amongst those participating in running related events around the globe has expanded dramatically in recent years (Runners World, 2008). The comments and observations highlighted above indicate that for many, long distance running is indeed a new 'third place'.

In summary, the third place in distance running is often a forum for high intensity excitement, and while sometimes involving boredom whilst training, it is both exhilarating and often leads to high levels of emotional expression. This is demonstrated by the reaction of many finishers in marathon distance events, as illustrated in chapters four and five. Long distance running often thrives on emotions, and these emotions can change during both racing and training. It has been suggested by many runners in this study that the marathon event is as much about the mental challenge as the physical one, and these findings illustrate that emotions can fluctuate dramatically in the pre, during and post event periods. It was apparent that long distance runners actually enjoy the sweat and struggle of running, which non-runners might fail to understand. In everyday life, people often shake their heads when passing runners when they are out running in freezing conditions, often contemplating 'why would anyone want to do that?' Serious runners will barely notice these people, but will notice the scenery, the feeling of exhilaration from exercising, and the refreshing wind in

their faces, and will make the most of being away from work or home. For these participants, they are regularly in that *long distance running third place*, which creates a sense of both escape and freedom.

Social Relations in a Runners World

Long distance running may not be a typical team sport, but observations illustrate that long distance running participants still benefit from building a sense of community. Bale (2004) suggests that running with friends and the camaraderie generated by a distance road race can be both companionable and enjoyable. This can often range from making new friends to meeting new challenges. Distance running does provide a sense of community for participants. One comment from Dennis M illustrates this:

> *I improve my own performance by running with some people that are faster than me, and I also need slower recover days, so I train with a slower group of runners at a more leisurely pace. In a group, you find that you break through your own limitations.*

In previous generations, distance running was most certainly a gendered activity (Bale, 2004). It was often thought by many athletics administrators from the world governing body of track and field, the IAAF (International Association of Athletics Federations), that to see women in a distressed condition of exhaustion was considered more displeasing than seeing men in a similar state. In fact, it was not until 1984 that the women's marathon entered the Olympic Games. In the last decade, possibly the most noticeable increases in participation in distance running has been amongst female runners, (Runners World, 2009) reflected in the comments of several of the female key informants for this study. Interestingly, my findings did not note significant differences between male and female participants in relation to their distance running experiences. The growth in women's running has resulted in an extensive 'Women's Running Network', which is not a club in the traditional sense, but consists of a number of locally organised groups. This is currently developing a real sense of running community throughout Britain, and beyond. The main function of the network is to recruit and train group leaders who can encourage women to become involved in running. Kara M is a member of the Network, and has developed strong friendship from running with others within this organisation:

The Network, along with other initiatives like the Cancer Research UK 'Race for Life'
Running Series have been fundamental in providing running opportunities for women
whatever their age, size or ability. I love the Network and 'women only' section of my
running club, as it means that us ladies can run together to improve health,
confidence and safety.

Empirical evidence (Berking and Neckel, 1993) also suggests that distance running remained a middle-class and gendered activity into the early nineteen-nineties. Similarly, more recently, Smith (1998) argued that running could also be associated with these middle-classes, and was a very male dominated activity. I would have previously agreed with these observations, however, based on my findings and observations within the field, I would now challenge these comments. Results have indicated a more balanced demographic at distance running events, and a recent rapid expansion of female participation in long distance running. I would also challenge the assumption by Abbas (2004) that running can be associated with both gender and age inequality.

Observational studies in the field and interviews with key informants have illustrated that within the long distance running social world there is a real sense of community. One of the most endearing aspects of running is how it encompasses all shapes, sizes, colours, creeds and clubs. Simon K is a firm advocate of the running club and the benefits that the club structure provides:

I'm convinced that people are more likely to stick with their running programmes if
they do it with others. Personally, I find it a really good motivator when I have a
group of fellow club runners waiting at a pre-arranged time – it makes me commit to
something, and I would feel bad if I cried off at the last minute with a lame excuse.

Long distance running events and running clubs as sites for casual sociability have been referred to in this study as 'social worlds', taken from the work of Unruh (1983), but are also referred to as 'scenes' or 'action systems' (Irwin, 1977); 'public places' (Kenen, 1982); 'public spaces' (Lofland, 1973); and in this study, in the context of distance running, 'third places' (Oldenburg, 1989). They represent settings in which runners can experience a variety of social encounters. That the participants in this study enter into these running venues during their leisure time is logical, because it is during these moments that we frequently make

efforts to establish primary and secondary social relationships with others (Snyder, 1986). It is also during leisure time that Melnick (1993) suggests a great deal of 'informal social business' normally gets done. These distance running venues appear to be important, for as Lofland notes, they are public spaces, spaces or scenes where total strangers can be transformed into 'personally known others', and be experienced as 'freeing', 'exhilarating', 'fun' and 'exciting' (Lofland, 1973:158).

It was Kenen (1982) who observed that the 'social comfortableness of a space' is a major factor in the occurrence of sociability. At distance running events, there is a 'public space' that is particularly conducive for casual sociability. Melnick (1993) indicates that sport has the potential to offer long distance runners empowered, bottom-up, individuated personalities, but only if the sporting arenas are allowed to remain an 'open' space. The findings from this study suggests that such a communal social structure is very much in evidence at long distance running events as participants celebrate the achievements of their running peers, and are also celebrating themselves in the process. This long distance running arena is a venue where the rules regulating interaction with others are implicitly understood and enforced (Melnick, 1993). It is a place where the extraordinary and authentic running experience and atmosphere, discussed in chapter five, makes interaction with both running club friends and complete strangers not only possible but highly probable. Thus, long distance runners are able to effectively bond at distance running events because they speak the same universal language. Although they may have few, if any interests in common, long distance running provides them with a "common frame of reference, meanings and rules that transcend cultural, political and language barriers" (Melnick, 1993:52). What appears to matter most amongst members of this particular social world is whether the runner next to you enjoyed the race, or set a personal best time. In summary, casual sociability, that is, social exchanges with others in public spaces has become more important than ever. At the running club or at the running events, we have a public place, a third place, outside of the home and work, where the 'play form of association' is freely available (Melnick, 1993).

This study has also helped illustrate that the running club can often form an extended family environment. Alan C attributes his consistent training and longevity to the group of people that he runs with, commenting that:

While the solitude of a solo run remains one of the great joys of my running, I find myself more motivated when I plug into my running club family.

I was quite moved by Emma G's comments at the end of one particular overseas running event:

I used to cower with fright at school with the very mention of the word 'team'. Now, I'm team captain of the running club and about to collect the team prize, which we have just won. Who would have thought it eh? It's quite nerve wracking knowing that others are counting on you, and urging you on – and the thrill of knowing you matter to them is like nothing else.

This study has also examined the extent to which distance running events can be used to support and create social capital. The central elements for social capital are trust, networks and reciprocity (Putnam, 2000). Once trust is built, social networks can then be created, which appears to be the case within the long distance running community. Networks are the voluntary interlocking of relationships between individuals and groups, and include newly established or fostered contacts, ties, group attachment, or friendship circles (Schulenkorf et al, 2009). Through participation at distance running events or within running clubs, these findings have demonstrated that long distance running participants have the opportunity to build these networks. This was partially illustrated by the 'Women's Running Network' mentioned above. This study begins to provide evidence on the effectiveness of running events and running clubs in facilitating social capital, and also reveals how these positive experiences can contribute towards an increase in the stock of social capital available to distance running participants.

The central idea of social capital is that social networks have value. Similarly to a University education which might provide human capital, social contacts can influence the productivity of both individuals and groups (Putnam, 2000). In *The Forms of Capital,* Bourdieu (1986) distinguishes between three forms of capital – economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. His coverage of the concept focuses on the advantages to possessors of social capital, whilst Putnam refers to the value of all social networks and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other. Putnam proceeds to highlight two main components of social capital – bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding refers to the

values assigned to social networks between homogeneous groups of people, whilst bridging refers to that of social networks between socially heterogeneous groups. In his highly influential work *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community,* Robert Putnam demonstrates how individuals have become increasingly disconnected from their family, friends, neighbours, and other social structures, with a growing privatisation and individualisation of leisure participation. As a consequence, there has been a decline in social capital, or what Putnam (2000:19) describes as connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called "civic virtue." The findings from this research suggest that this decline can be reversed within the context of long distance running clubs and events.

In contrast, Putnam (2000) also highlights the potential negative aspects of social capital, citing examples as extreme as ethnic cleansing where relationships between different groups is strongly negative, to milder cases indicating that certain communities, such as city suburbs, can be isolated and spend much time away from places that build bridging social capital. From a positive perspective, where Putnam indicates that social capital can help facilitate co-operation and mutually supportive relations in communities such as distance running clubs, I would also suggest these clubs and events are environments that demonstrate both trust and 'reciprocity', both within in the long distance running community and also between individual active leisure participants, and in doing so can facilitate what Bourdieu (1986) describes as durables networks of mutual acquaintance and recognition.

The strong sense of community and affiliation with the running club was a common theme emerging from the data. Long distance running offers the participant the chance to pursue what Huizinga (1955:10) called a 'temporary world within the ordinary world'. It is an opportunity for participants to be removed from everyday routines and to experience a different range of emotions, which often provide a sense of balance and perspective within their lives. The long distance running community and social aspects are often as beneficial as the actual act of running for many participants. Peer support and relationships with peers was a regularly appearing aspect of the long distance running subculture. Dennis M found that he developed a whole host of new friends through his chosen leisure pursuit:

Before I started running I was a bit of a loner, who did my own thing. Now, I go down the club three times a week and I feel much better for it. I feel part of the group, and that's nice.

Robin A expressed views which were typical of many runners:

Running with friends is a great way to catch up with people without going to the pub or going for a meal. It also helps to escape the daily grind and take me to places I wouldn't usually get to.

This supports the suggestion advanced in this study that long distance running can act as a new third place, replacing the traditional third places of coffee shops, bars or restaurants (Oldenburg, 1989). Within the running club environment, a sense of competition emerged as a lower order theme of this study, and what emerges from the data is that to meet some of these challenging running goals require dedication, planning and sacrifice. This sense of competition also influenced how participants perceived their own standing in relation to their running peers. It also emerged that long distance running comprises both aggressive and non aggressive competition. Whilst world class elite runners compete against each other, for the average club runner individual rivalry did not appear to be a major issue. Most club runners were motivated by an individual goal, possibly a time they are hoping to beat. In long distance running the main opponent to beat is oneself, and most runners involved in this study were competing against the clock and a target time, rather than a rival. The challenge for many participants was to improve their finishing position and compete against targets they set themselves, whilst also gaining the respect of peers within the running club environment which had become an important part of their life.

Self-presentation is a fundamental feature of social life (Schlenker, 2003). Taking a particular role, such as a long distance runner, means selecting a particular identity and then constructing and protecting that identity for audiences; in this case, members of the long distance running social world. As highlighted in chapter three, the findings illustrated how distance runners attempt to construct and protect desired running identity images through self-presentation, as Schlenker suggests. Within the running social world I inhabited, the portraits displayed by several participants reflected a slightly polished and glorified conception of self, as illustrated in chapter five. Where Goffman (1959) described social life

as a series of performances in which people project their identities or "faces" to others, this was evident within running communities, where participants engaged in mutual activities governed by the social rules and rituals of co-runners. In fact, Mead (1935) was among the first to emphasize that actions carry symbolic meanings that influence the responses of others to self. Similarly, where Goffman's approach provided a detailed exposition of Shakespeare's theme that "All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players", the long distance runners in this study were actively playing their part, "on stage", either within the structure of their local running clubs or at the distance running events in which they participated. As Mead indicates, the self is constructed through social interaction, in this instance how these runners came to view themselves through the roles they play and the reactions of other runners to them, within the running club environment.

Being sociable may not be the main priority of some distance runners, however for many participants the post-training environment is an important place to make friends, choose training partners and discuss running issues with fellow club members. Several key informants for this study found that 'getting together' was an important part of their distance running experience, providing invaluable time to chat and exchange ideas. Austin (2007) suggests that running for an hour with someone on a regular basis provides an opportunity for friendship and trust to develop. Once again, the idea of trust has emerged, and the findings have revealed that long distance running third places are important for the maintenance of social capital. This is especially true with regards to the group training runs on club nights (which are usually Tuesday and Thursday evenings); on the long Sunday morning training runs; or at a chosen running event, normally over the weekend. The running club is a place where participants can meet for social interaction and conversation, and to realise their distance running identity, as already explored in chapter three. Similarly, as examined in chapter five in the context of running holidays, these overseas events in destinations such as Club La Santa in Lanzarote or similar resorts in Cyprus and Portugal, act as important 'third places' away from the work and home environment where runners can enhance their long distance running identity amongst likeminded people.

Running can be a source of great fun and happiness, as illustrated by numerous comments from the runners in this study. As previously mentioned, many people outside the running community perceive distance running as a very individual activity, which is something strongly disputed by Steve L:

The loneliness of the long distance runner is rubbish! It's a friendly, open, supportive and encouraging community that sees you through the pain and hard times.

In summary, what these findings have encapsulated is that all the participants in this study did not perceive or relate to the concept of the loneliness of the long distance runner (Sillitoe, 1959). It was in fact the complete opposite; they highlighted the camaraderie and communal aspects of long distance running. Aligned to these ideas, the importance of the distance running community and the crucial role of the running club environment will now be explored in greater depth.

Living within the Running Club

For many participants, the running club is central to the long distance running experience. Developing any social identity, including within long distance running, is generally more complex than just a sudden acquisition of that identity (Green and Jones, 2005), and some form of 'social training' is necessary. The findings of this study will illustrate that this is often developed within the structure of the running club. In recent years there has been a significant increase in running club membership, especially amongst female distance runners. The club is a site for social interaction, activity and learning about the activity of long distance running. Whilst running is often a solo and individualistic activity, there are times when the very act of running in a group provides rewarding experiences. As previously indicated, the expression, 'The loneliness of the long distance runner' most certainly did not apply within the distance running social world that I inhabited. This is a point reinforced by Rich A:

The people at our club all have different training goals during the year, but we help each other out. It's still important to have the club, especially when you start running, as it's a group of people who are on the same wavelength as me.

Dave P was typical with his assessment of the role of the club, as a place to obtain knowledge and support:

I can email people or call them to talk about my training and racing plans. The support and encouragement is great – in some ways, it acts as a safety blanket, having people that I can turn to, who are in the same boat as I am.

It was Hogg (2003) who stated that human groups lie at the heart of social life. Groups, such as long distance running clubs, furnish the participant with an identity, and a way of locating themselves in relation to other people. As previously established, social identify has been defined by Tajfel (1972) as the individual's knowledge that they belong to a certain social group (such as a running club), together with some emotional and value significance that is linked to that group membership. My observations suggest that distance runners display an emotional attachment to their running clubs and knowledge of the social standing of the group. They display elements of the collective self (social identity) which is associated with running club membership, group processes and intergroup behaviour, as Hogg suggests. Similarly, as established in chapter five, when attending running events participants learn the context-specific group norms and display prototypical behaviour, particularly when that behaviour is publicly observed by an in-group audience of distance runners. For example, prior to a training session runners would often complete a three mile 'warm up', as this attitude towards activity defined membership in an important group to which they belong (the running club). This illustrates the sharp discontinuity between social identity and group phenomena and personal identity and interpersonal / individual phenomena. This also reinforces the findings within chapter three on the search for a running identity, as I regularly observed new members of the running clubs engage in this warm up activity, learning the context-specific group norms from prototype-consistent behaviour of prototypical members of the running clubs.

It clearly emerged from the data that the running club can also be a useful motivating force. Several participants indicated that they sometimes struggled to find the motivation to go for a run, and having the 'club' close to work or home often pushed them to train, when it would have been easier to stay at home. For some, knowing that their fellow club members would be running around the streets in cold and wet weather bizarrely acted as a motivating force. Pauline F indicated:

Joining my running club was the best move I ever made. I don't mind running on my own, but I have improved drastically by running with other people. Initially, I was

worried that I wouldn't be good enough to run with a club, but everyone made me feel so welcome and I love the running camaraderie.

These findings show that some of the characteristics of a third place are most certainly evident in the running clubs and at running events investigated. One characteristic of a third place is that of there being no class structure, and that everyone is 'equal', irrespective of social class (Oldenburg, 1989). Long distance running enables participants to easily develop friendships that look beyond some of the age, gender, ethnicity or class issues that are prevalent in areas of contemporary society. For example, in a half marathon or 10km race, a participants' annual income, five bedroom house or expensive convertible car will not help them run any faster. Evidence was found for this, as noted by Dennis M, reinforcing an earlier observation on this theme raised in chapter three, in relation to the running identity:

It makes me laugh when I'm running with the guys at the club. I am a butcher, Huw is an estate agent, Pete's a postman, and John is an executive manager for BMW. It's an odd mix eh! We all get on really well, and have done for years, but if you took running out of the equation, our paths would never have crossed would they?

Whilst exploring the physical activity and exercise literature, the concept of community and *social networking* was regularly cited as a means of engaging and supporting people who are involved in an exercise programme. In Roger's Diffusion of Innovation theory (1983), social networks and interpersonal channels, such as those that exist within the running club environment, were considered to be more important in influencing behaviour change or adoption decisions. Upon reflection, this is very much the case within the structure of a running club, where a social networking approach is often used to create a supportive environment for the long distance runner. Likewise, many clubs have key figures, such as chairman or club captains who are important in developing supportive relationships for existing and new members. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) also indicate that *who* provides social support is such a critical factor that it is ultimately more important than *what* help is given or *when* it is given. Upon reflection of my own experiences with one particular running club and observing the work of the club chairman, Mark S, it was apparent that this one individual was very much the glue that held that club structure and social network together, and had done for over twenty years. This provision of social support is prevalent throughout most distance running clubs, and is becoming even more of a potential factor given the rise of internet

based social networking sites which continue to flourish within the distance running social world. It is suggested that this is a particular area that would benefit from future research in the future, exploring how the running social world functions in a virtual environment. I have yet to enter this 'online' and virtual aspect of the long distance running community, but find it somewhat ironic that a group of such physically active and health conscious people will also spend so much time in a sedentary act, sat at a computer terminal. However, an increasing number of runners appear to be seeing this virtual environment as another avenue to express their serious running identity (Shipway and Kirkup, 2009).

Observational studies have illustrated that the running club and running events offer more than just the place to meet or take part in this chosen leisure activity – they provide an opportunity for a social gathering and interaction, and the opportunity to meet people. This is a crucially important aspect of running for many participants, who have acknowledged that training can be a lonely activity at times, and therefore, the time spent interacting with fellow runners is paramount. Abrams and Hogg (1990) demonstrated that individuals are particularly likely to engage in identity maintenance strategies when they feel a strong attachment or identification with the group, in this case the long distance running social world. Long distance running is very much a social activity. Alison P was apprehensive about joining a running club, but then decided to venture into this unique and extraordinary social world approximately ten years ago, and was pleasantly surprised with the reception she received from fellow runners:

> *Eventually I plucked up the courage to go along to a local running club, which was a big move for me, as I'm very shy. I am so glad that I did. The experience was fantastic and the people are so friendly and supportive. I have improved all my running times, which I wouldn't have achieved if I had not joined the club. I'm even on the committee now.*

The ideas of Bourdieu have received increasing attention within the social scientific investigations of sport which could partially be attributed to the theorist's own fascination with sport and society. The findings from this study have led me to various sporting literature that draws on Bourdieu's (1990:63) conceptualization of habitus. This is explained by both Howe (2001) and Hockey (2004) as being understood as habitual, embodied practices that collectively comprise and define a culture. The regular training and race preparations at the

running club, forms part of what Bourdieu (1990) has called the habitus: an assembly of perceptions, dispositions, habitual understandings and actions which inter-relate, and are specific to particular collectivities (Hockey, 2004); in this case long distance runners. Hockey, drawing on the works of Bourdieu, suggests that the way that long distance runners train and interact with their fellow runners and their knowledge of the social world of distance running is a manifestation of habitus itself.

In sporting cultures, including long distance running, many different factors, from geography to training regimes all contribute to the development of a specific club's habitus (Howe, 2001), and this was very much the case in the environment that surrounded the distance running clubs that I observed. A determination to achieve on behalf of the running clubs appears to be one of the components of this habitus. At the outset of the fieldwork, the two running clubs where I conducted interviews and observed long distance runners were organised as community based clubs, and the members' successes and failures at running events often served to reinforce the identity of the members as integral parts of their own long distance running communities. Observations of this nature were arrived at through the use of an ethnographic approach, which facilitated an understanding of the club's, and its members' habitus.

Long distance runners who told tales of their running experiences at their running clubs appeared to use this as an opportunity to share this 'symbolic capital', as it often came with the acceptance of their running peers which reflected their increasing capital. The participants habitus was critical to the success of their running tales and stories. Their habitus guided their running experience and the promotion of specific stories, images or the discounting of others (Kane and Zink, 2004). The focus of these stories, often recounted within the club environment, or at the end of running events, was indicative of the runners 'serious running' social ethos, as illustrated in chapter three. These symbolic stories often became the valued and enduring product of the distance running events observed, providing the opportunity for several of the key informants in this study to improve their status in the long distance running social world and become markers in their serious running career. As illustrated in chapter five, the more extreme, challenging, or 'iconic' running events could potentially gain the most capital and corresponding status in their long distance running social world. I also observed participants who appeared to gain status in wider sporting social fields, most notably cycling or swimming, where the attributes of endurance, pain and suffering are

commonly positively regarded. This further reinforces some of the key findings from chapter four on pain and suffering. This increased habitus, which was demonstrated and authorised within the club environment, served to further reinforce their long distance running identity.

This study has also led to interviews with distance runners who had developed romantic relationships based on meeting within a running environment. For example, Louise K and Simon K met at the running club and their long distance romance actually developed into marriage. This is a common occurrence according to Louise:

> *I met Simon about eight years ago, when 'he' started running. We were just friends for a couple of years and things just developed. It's quite strange really, because Simon is much quicker at running than me, and people assume that he introduced me to running, but that's not how it was. It's great having a partner with the same interests, as he knows how I'm feeling when I'm injured or feeling sick, or had a bad run.*

Similarly, Don P and Sandra W have been in a long term relationship for over a decade, and Don noted:

> *Yes, we socialise as a couple at the club, but we also socialise outside of running with friends from work. Our holidays are always running holidays, and there's no problem with that, as we are both runners. I know that some of my friends have problems running when on their family holidays because their partners are not runners.*

It has been suggested that social interaction is an important aspect of the long distance running social world, and the running club and running events can be the key venues for this interaction. Tulle (2007) suggests that running acts as a structure that takes precedence over other aspects of everyday life, where training can lead to an enlargement of the dispositional kitbag (the urge to run); greater levels of physical capital (running competence); and social capital (a wider social network). Several runners indicated that they felt a sense of social status from their role as a long distance runner, and the identity it provided them with. Ewan F illustrated this point:

I have never really been good at anything. My job is pretty average, I'm not the cleverest of people, but I know that I'm a good runner, and so do the other people in our area, because I beat them all. I'm not saying that I'm ultra competitive, but it's nice to find something in life that I can excel at. When I turn up at the races I know that there will be people there for me to talk to, and I really enjoy going down the club on a Tuesday and Thursday evening for the speed sessions.

Running clubs, running magazines and specialist running shops all provided sources of support and competition to facilitate the desire of runners to improve performance as part of a 'project of self-transformation' (Reischer, 2001). Ewan F, as illustrated above, is one example of a participant who experienced self transformation as a result of choosing long distance running as his serious leisure activity. The running club is also a useful source of information for local training routes and safe evening running routes. It is also an environment to become involved in a variety of different types of training sessions, which many informants felt they might not have had the commitment to try on their own. Paul G clarified the importance of his club:

If it wasn't for the club training on a Tuesday night, I'd probably just come home from work, put the kettle on for a cuppa and chocolate biscuit, and settle down for an evening in front of the TV watching East Enders or Coronation Street.

For others the running club environment can sometimes act as a hindrance. Louise K indicated:

Sometimes I just want to go for a run, and there is too much pontificating down the club, which doesn't suit me – we are always messing about before and after; I just want a quick run, not a session that takes too long out of my day.

Weiss (2001) stressed the importance of recognition as a member of a group as a key characteristic of social subjectivity. He suggested that recognition means being like the others, an equal among co-equals, an insider. My observations, as an insider within the long distance running social world led me to consult Weiss's ideas and compare the feelings of belonging that exist within a running club as being a basic social experience and that the certainty that comes with belonging to that running club is a basic form of self-confirmation.

The intimacy and security that membership gives is tested through permanent symbolic ritual (Weiss, 2001). In the long distance running context, communication between runners during training runs or in the drink tents after running events has one main objective, namely to reinforce these feelings of belonging. The jokes and laughter that exists within the running club environment all served this purpose, and like many other forms of sport today, were based on these same social relationships. As previously discussed, 'outsiders' often perceive distance running to be a boring, mundane and solitary activity, but findings from this study refute this claim. In fact, boredom, lack of excitement and routine in many areas, at work or in the family for instance, can lead to an absence of social recognition which long distance running has the potential to rectify.

As previously identified, according to Oldenburg (1989), the loss of third places has been a key factor in changing leisure behaviour away from being socially based, and towards a culture of home centred consumption of TV, video and the Internet. This alleged privatization of leisure has contributed towards a subsequent reduction in social capital and citizenship. Therefore, it has been indicated by Oldenburg that the restoration of old third places, or the creation of new ones, may enhance our sense of community and social capital. It is suggested here, based on the emerging research findings that long distance running can play a small part in restoring a sense of citizenship and social capital amongst sport participants, as it fulfils many of the criteria of a third place. This study suggests that much of current discontent in society can be understood as a consequence of the narrow sphere of people's involvement with others, where lives are organised around achieving satisfaction at either home or work. Third places should be seen as complementing the work and home environment, and in the context of long distance running third places allow participants to become part of a temporary world within their ordinary worlds, as advocated by Huizinga (1955), where he suggests people can a temporary, limited perfection. This study suggests that distance running third places can help, not harm, the development of interaction at home and work. The past decade has seen a cultural change in attitudes towards sport, physical activity and exercise under current government health initiatives. The increasing popularity of mass participation distance running events has had a positive impact on running club membership and this is resulting in the emergence of new 'third places', which are significantly different from the more traditional pubs, clubs and restaurant environments that Oldenburg (1989) and Melnick (1993) referred to.

Distance running was not a struggle, but for all of the participants in this study, it was a process of daily renewal, away from the office or the challenges of everyday life. Indeed, Lease et al (2003:195) suggest that it is possible to develop social maps within the groups that people inhabit, and this social map can "help a person make sense of [a social] world". During the course of this study, as both researcher and participant, a social map of the long distance running community has emerged. Likewise, for others who choose to become intensely involved with long distance running, it has been possible to observe them developing their own social map, one where participants are able to discover the key players, location of key races, and learn how to function as a member within that running community. This map, ultimately, has led a high percentage of distance runners interviewed for this study to the start line of a marathon or alternative endurance events. This social map has also helped participants to understand the social world (Unruh, 1979) in which distance running exists, and helps to shape their experiences. This study has proved to be an exploration of the social interaction that takes place within the long distance running social world, and how this interacts with some of the other everyday commitments of the 'serious running' participant.

Summary

For many long distance runners, the participation and completion of their chosen running events provided a sense of doing something extraordinary and authentic. This is a contrast with the home and workplace, which offers a smaller and often predictable world, which rarely allow for the unpredictability that many long distance running events can provide. In the context of attending running events, this chapter demonstrates that they provide a third place that is populated by a diverse population of inhabitants, involved in running by their mere presence at a particular running event at a particular time. I have sought to demonstrate how the events that I observed fulfil the criteria of a third place. As illustrated in chapter five, the diverse mix of long distance runners from all social backgrounds provides authentic experiences that are distinct and arenas for active participation. The purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate that running third places are a common meeting ground for people with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Social and personal problems can often be left at home or work, which, this study suggests is often the very attraction of distance running as a leisure activity. Closely linked to the concept of the third place is the role that distance running can play in supporting and developing healthy lifestyles, which will now be explored.

Chapter Seven: The Desire to Embrace a Healthy Lifestyle

Introduction

The findings from this study have revealed a diverse series of individual reasons why each person decides to run, and continues to do so.[9] For some participants it is to remain healthy and an activity that can cost as much or little as the participant wishes; for some people it has proved to be fulfilling; and for many, it is an activity that allows them to make friends along the way. However, one of the primary reasons for many participants relates to the health benefits of running. For those interviewed for this study, the pursuit of good health appeared to be about being proactive in four key areas – injury prevention, general health, nutrition, and mental outlook. The four main themes of this chapter emerging from the participants' perspective, highlighted above, are the desire to exercise amongst the running community; an exploration on the positive impact of running on the participants' self esteem; a detailed examination of the extent to which running constitutes an addictive sporting activity for

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[9] Findings related to the health benefits of long distance running have been accepted for publication in the journal *Perspectives in Public Health.*

participants; and an examination of the 'running body'. Within these four themes, a range of lower order themes are also identified. One of these is the important role of diet and nutrition which will be discussed below, as an integral part of the first sub theme; the need to exercise.

The Need to Exercise

There was a general consensus amongst participants in this study that running is an addictive activity, and this will be revealed in more depth in the following closely linked sub themes. This close synergy is illustrated through the majority of participants who felt a strong and determined need to run on a daily basis and many participants who often struggled to adjust to everyday living without running. The long distance runners involved in this study indicate that running brings them closer in to touch with their own body, and they therefore appreciate their body for what it does, rather than just what it looks like; though this also plays a part. Turner (1984) developed the notion of the 'successful' and 'disciplined body'. This idea is influenced by the work of Foucault (1977) who saw the body as something to be controlled, formed and disciplined. Government agencies and health experts attempt to exert social control through the health discourse to create a healthy society; individuals internalise this by enacting self-discipline and self-control. These cultural and social elements influence the way individuals form their perspectives on health and well-being which are, after all 'socially constructed'. The runners in the present study desire this accomplished body, conforming to the body ethic prevalent in developed countries in particular. Indeed, the mind-body dualism of Western cultures, as promoted by Descartes (1596-1650), and the ethic of self-control and discipline, shows the conflict of runners between their desire for food and drink and the wish for a healthy, fit, and slim body. In their view however, this conflict can be resolved in running and exercise. For some, the inability to run presented challenges in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and for a couple of respondents, Emma E and Karen M, it was as much about not being fat, as about keeping fit. Running was their route to maintaining a slim body form, which will be also examined later in this chapter, as the final sub theme. For Louise K, an initial motivation to run was related to her lifestyle:

> *I wanted to continue to eat and drink whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted. Exercise seemed a logical answer. My friends went on fad diets, but always ended up where they started. I became convinced that exercise was the only genuine answer, and my*

girlfriends were kidding themselves that a few weeks of eating lettuce and drinking
copious amounts of water would do the trick.

These aspects of running are linked to the desire for control and self-discipline, serious elements in long-distance running, and the body is the object to be controlled and disciplined. The body becomes a 'moral problem' (Frank 1995) which these runners need to solve. To an outsider long distance running might appear to be a monotonous, tedious activity but the findings illustrate that for the active sports participant, long distance running is suitable on a wide range of levels – spirit, mind, body and soul; ideas noted by Bale (2004). Linked to the concept of the long distance running 'third place', running provides the opportunity to enjoy the natural environment, and escape from everyday routines. All the participants in this study found that outdoor activities like distance running were far more effective in reducing stress levels than indoor activities. As detailed in the previous chapter, long distance running is most certainly a means of escape from worry and anxiety for these participants. As indicated by other participants, Emma E noted:

> *"A close relative of mine recently experienced a stress related breakdown linked to*
> *work. Her sanctuary came from running – she could escape and reflect, away from*
> *everyday pressures".*

This observation indicates the desire amongst many participants for a healthy lifestyle, both in terms of mental and physical health. The participants involved in this study indicated that running brought them closer in touch with their own body, and they often therefore appreciated their body form for what it does, rather than just what it looks like. Linked to this need to exercise was an understanding of the role of nutrition and hydration. This was vital to many runners, both in order to achieve the most out of their training sessions, but also to aid recovery after running and to provide the necessary energy to actually fuel the participants need to exercise. Post training discussions on diet and nutrition were regular topics of conversation at several of the running events studied. Andy C noted that:

> *Your body is like a car. You need to put the right fuel in the tank or you won't run*
> *properly.*

Training too can generate problems. The stress it places on the body can often lead to injuries, a regular occurrence for the majority of participants in the research. Participants tend to ignore the advice to rest which is in contrast to their knowledge that the body needs rest and recovery for best performance. Again a paradox exists in the mind of the runner. Although they see the link between body and mind when commenting on the advantages of the running body, some also use the metaphor of 'the body as a machine' - a concept deriving from Descartes - which has to be kept 'in gear', well-fed and watered, which contradicts the earlier discussion of the body as an integral part of self where a fusion of mind and body takes place. Several runners supported the above thoughts of Andy C who seems to see the body as a machine and speaks of 're-*charging my body'* by taking a day of rest. The body becomes an object which has to be maintained and repaired if it doesn't function, otherwise it breaks down. In the runners' view it needs either exercise or rest. Again, this fits the mind-body dualism of Descartes which sees the mind as distinct from bodily phenomena. For Descartes, the body is physical, a system of flesh, blood and organs interacting with each other. However this is also linked with the notion that the body is an enemy which has to be conquered, a comment that relates to early Greek ideas and to the Christian tradition. Runners in this study often do believe in the value of conquering the body. As well as eating the appropriate foods, most runners were aware of the need to stay well hydrated in order to train and exercise properly. Colin S drinks up to eight litres of water each day:

> *During the day I will constantly have a water bottle on my desk at work. I don't drink energy drinks, but stick to normal tap water. I also try to eat within an hour or finishing my run, starting with an energy drink to replace the lost fluid.*

Paul G recognised the importance of diet and nutrition, to support his own need to exercise:

> *Diet and training are so closely linked that they can't really be separated. My diet changes depending on my training - a balance of carbohydrates, protein and fats. To be honest though, most of my club mates just eat what they like, and plenty of it, without too much scientific thought behind it all.*

It was indicated by most respondents that there were three main stages to running that supported this identified need to exercise. These were the actual running (both training and racing), the nutrition and diet that allow them to run, and the recovery that allows the body to

absorb the benefits of all the hard work. After a major event, many of the runners chose to celebrate, which often involved indulgence in food and drinks which they have sacrificed whilst training for their target event. A topic of conversation amongst some runners was the abstention from alcohol and certain foods in the build up towards a major running event, and how alcohol sometimes acted as a release mechanism. Some of those interviewed abstained completely in the build up to a race; whilst others felt alcoholic consumption served as a treat, and a vice that they had earned through their running exertions. Bale (2004:74) suggests that "abstention – for varying degrees of time – from alcohol, certain foods and sex is not uncommon amongst athletes". Indeed, alcohol played a major role within the long distance running social world that I inhabited. This appeared to be partially due to the post race 'running club' environment and the social networks that emerged as I became further involved in the long distance running culture. Often, in the aftermath of training for a specific event, having a drink acted as a pressure release, whilst also serving as an opportunity to celebrate achievement, with both family and running peers from their club. Linked to the importance of diet and nutrition is the determined desire and need to exercise amongst the running community.

Weight loss and weight control was an important motivator for several participants in this study, both as an entry point into the running community and as a stimulant to maintain their running training routines. Even those participants who are not specifically driven to running by the desire to lose weight often discuss it as well as demonstrating an understanding of the role of nutrition. As in ordinary life, ideas of discipline and self-control are related to fitness and slimness. Turner (2008: 136) proclaims that 'gaining control over our own feeding patterns involves growth in personal autonomy…' Participants 'survey' their own bodies, find it wanting and regulate the intake of food and drink. Weight loss is often the direct result of intensive training. Runners carry out comparisons between themselves and others; and the 'running body' is compared to other bodies. Murakami (2008:47) suggests that 'Muscles are hard to get and easy to lose, whilst fat is easy to get and hard to lose'. This appears to be a painful reality for many, and for some, running appeared to be a way to control weight, and served an important purpose beyond the activity itself. Colin C openly admitted that he hadn't weighed himself for over a decade, for the simple reason that he ran almost every day, and didn't feel the need to watch his weight. Gavin D was typical in his account of running and weight control:

Colleagues at work ask me when I'm going to start putting on some weight, and are envious because I'm so slim. I might be thin, but a period of inactivity will certainly pile the pounds back on, and I don't particularly want that.

Weight loss can often be a direct result of increased training, as illustrated by Ewan F, when commenting on a fellow club runner. The comment illustrates some distance runners' obsession with weight, and that of their fellow runners:

You can tell that Tony is fit and healthy and getting the miles in. When he's not training, he looks a bit of a porker to be honest. I'll wait until he stops training and then I'll beat him, as he'll get that spare tyre back – fat bastard.

This comment by Ewan towards Tony was not malicious. They have apparently run together for over ten years. Frank (1995) suggests that individuals try to fashion their bodies in comparison with other bodies which they see as healthy and fit and whose goal is to achieve the performance of their colleagues, who expect it of them and who are their social audience. Frank suggests that the image of the body is influenced not only by the self but also by the media who perpetuate the norms of a slim body and ideal health. Alan C, who has a sports science background was eager to stress the importance of gradual weight loss, the need to avoid far diets, employ a sensible eating plan and to burn fat with low intensity, long duration aerobic running. His observations during a training run illustrated his ideas on weight loss and diet:

Rapid weight loss can make you irrational and lead to mood swings. I would never take drugs to lose weight and all these fancy supplements leave me dehydrated which has a negative impact on my running performance. I also eat sensibly, limiting my fat intake to about 20% of my calories. Rapid weight loss is bad for your health, but gradual weight loss isn't exactly rocket science.

Simon K reflected on his previous health and weight issues and what running had contributed towards his lifestyle in the previous six years, and how he has developed a need to run regularly:

> *I always said I was too fat, I smoked, or I couldn't give up the time to train. Being*
> *there, having lost four stone, given up smoking, and having completed all my training*
> *was reward enough, from the very start!*

Weight gain becomes a personal crisis because it indicates loss of control and lack of self-discipline. Enhanced body-image and self-esteem after loss of weight in turn, reinforced by the respect of others, can then become self-confirming. Wainright et al. (2005) agree with Bourdieu in that the social context shapes ideas on the human body. Runners not only adapt body weight and shape to cultural norms in the larger community but also to those of their own subculture of long distance running as they need to make the body the instrument through which they achieve success. The importance of the 'running body' will be further explored later in this chapter. Staying healthy was an important motivation for several participants. For Dennis M, running was an important part of staying healthy following a bout of illness:

> *In 1986 I was admitted to hospital with chest pains after a suspected heart attack. I*
> *realised that things had to change. Less than a year before I had been diagnosed with*
> *Type 2 diabetes caused by my poor diet and sedentary lifestyle. I was 24 years old*
> *and weighed 21 stone. I decided to give myself a new start and began running (well,*
> *waddling and walking), but it has truly changed my life, as I literally ran myself out of*
> *obesity.*

Whilst many runners love training, they also recognise that rest is crucial if one wishes to run well and efficiently. Sleep was also perceived as important for runners, as the body needs time to slow down and recover from adrenaline activities like long distance running. Robin A admits to not getting eight hours sleep each evening, but has several strategies to maximise his sleep:

> *I have thick curtains in my bedroom, have a cup of hot milk before I go to bed, and on*
> *non training days I avoid sugar based sweets which tend to disrupt my sleep.*

Linked to these themes of healthy lifestyles, findings illustrated that long distance running does provide a coping mechanism that can contribute towards health, adaptability, and stress resistance. More importantly, it's enjoyable, as clearly illustrated by the comments of all the

participants involved in this study, and my own observations whilst in the field. Sharkey and Gaskill (2007) also indicate that physical activity and active lifestyles have complementary themes that support and surround them, including simplicity, individual responsibility and challenge. Long distance running can provide coping strategies to help runners through the lows of everyday life, to regain confidence and establish new running goals. As established in chapter six, although family and friends provide a source of support, long distance running can provide discipline, challenge and a time for reflection.

My study highlights that long distance running is not solely for the elite few, performing at the elite Olympic standards, but it is an activity that is accessible to every healthy person. It can assist with lowering weight, reducing blood pressure, lowering the stress of daily life, reinvigorating and re-energising, and can provide participants with a strong sense of identity, community and belonging (Shipway and Jones, 2008b). However, these were just some of the physical benefits emerging from the data, and in contrast the runners engaged with this study also drew attention to the mental benefits including lowering the risk of depression. Likewise, whilst several of the key informants began running to lose some weight or reduce the risk of heart conditions, they continued running because of the way it was able to clear their minds on a regular basis. In line with the findings of Pelican et al (2005), from a public health perspective, individuals need to feel competent to adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle, and they need to feel worthy of living it. This study suggests that distance running provides one potential route to a healthy lifestyle.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will prove useful to health professionals who have an interest in moving beyond a physiological understanding of adaptation to activities like distance running, and to develop an interest in the psycho-social aspects of physical activity experiences. Long distance running serves to enhance both physical and mental health and for many participants in this study running can help improve health, enhance their quality of life, and to experience and appreciate an active lifestyle. However, despite the overwhelming positive comments on the benefits of running, the findings also revealed some negative aspects; one being an apparent addiction to long distance running by several participants which often resulted in detrimental impacts on both their running and other aspects of their daily lifestyles. These findings will now be explored.

An Addiction to Running

For many participants, distance running is an addictive leisure activity (Shipway, 2009). This element of addiction can take on both positive and negative aspects, and bring both joy and despair. For some, this has implications for their family and friends, especially when the committed runner is unable to run due to injury, and sometimes participants will struggle to accept the inability to run. This can make the act of running a negative experience. Trevor G illustrated the importance of running:

> *I have withdrawal symptoms if I don't get my run in. I'll be sitting at home, and actually feel guilty about not running. Inevitably, I will succumb to this guilt, and go for a run.*

Interestingly, whilst reading literature connected to exercise addiction, I encountered an interesting observation by Glasser (1976:17) in the definitive book, *Positive Addiction*, where there is a quote "Running and worrying don't mix". One would like to feel that the positive aspects of running far outweigh the negatives; however, the emerging data has illustrated a darker side to long distance running. The findings from this study support the thoughts of Buckworth and Dishman (2002) which suggest that it is important to consider that there can be risks to mental health or social adjustment associated with extreme dedication to exercise or preoccupation with fitness. This is often the case within the long distance running community, where participants will regularly develop an unhealthy obsession with achieving their running goals and targets, perhaps to the long-term detriment of their healthy body. For Robert G however, it was injury that curtailed his own running career, and even now he struggles to cope with withdrawing from the long distance running community:

> *I play golf on a Sunday now, rather than go for a run. I was a runner – and in my head, I still feel like a runner, but I'm facing the reality now that I'm an ex runner, who plays a bit of Golf at weekend. I find it hard when I see people who ask whether I'm still running, and I struggle to explain that I no longer run.*

Training for Marathon events in particular can also lay the foundation for self destructive behaviour and injury, as identified in chapter four when the concepts of injury and pain in

running were explored. This study has encountered some of the hazards of distance running. This runs contrary to the contrasting benefits of running. Running can sometimes lead to the risk of disturbed mood amongst participants who often become jaded and tired from overtraining, which can sometimes lead to feelings and emotions of increased tension, depression, fatigue, appetite loss, insomnia, and lower performance levels. My findings also encountered examples of what Buckworth and Dishman (2002) term 'compulsive exercise' or 'exercise dependence'. This has previously been illustrated through examples of long distance runners who have a running routine that takes on greater priority than work, family or friends. As previously identified, some participants will continue to exercise despite significant injury and can experience feelings of guilt and anxiety or depression when prevented from running. These findings are consistent with those within the exercise psychology literature encountered, especially the work of Raglin and Wilson (2000). As previously explored, it was McCarville (2007) who questioned at what point a healthy activity become self destructive, and similarly asked at what point of an event do participants give themselves permission to stop. McCarville also raised issues related to when stopping is acceptable and when is it not; when is succumbing to pain permissible and when is it regrettable; and what is the difference between determination and self destruction. These questions were all asked in the context of the triathlon as an endurance event, by McCarville and Atkinson (2008) too; however the same principles and questions are relevant to distance running as a sport and leisure activity.

Both Stebbins (1992) and Bryan (2000) refer to the dark side of commitment, and discuss at what stage dedication to an activity like running will become an obsession. The findings have already established that physical injury from overuse is common amongst long distance runners. McCarville (2007) asks the question how can a participant resist being drawn into extreme activity patterns (like distance running) and what happens to those participants who fail in their attempt to complete long distance running events such as a Marathon. More worrying is the result of this failure on their emotional well being, and whether this failure will haunt them. An observation by Alana W illustrates some of these negative aspects within running:

> *I had to drop out of a Marathon at half way. All my family and friends knew I was running, and I was raising money for charity, and had to spend the next few weeks explaining how and why I didn't finish. I haven't entered a Marathon since, and find*

it hard to consider doing another one, knowing that I failed to finish. I'm not saying
there is a stigma attached to not finishing, but I always have this nagging doubt at the
back of my mind, which continues to prevent me from signing up for another
Marathon, now or in the foreseeable future.

The previous chapter also revealed that long distance running has the potential to intrude into the daily routine. It can involve diet restrictions and disruption to sleep patterns, as well as training time and expense. One apparent negative aspect to long distance running is the consideration of what happens to runners who find themselves excluded or isolated from the running social world, most notably due to injury. Overall, the majority of running experiences are positive, but it has to be acknowledged that negative impacts have emerged during this study.

For many, long distance running is quite clearly part of everyday life. This study has allowed for immersion within the social world of the long distance runner and the opportunity to hear the diverse experiences, feelings and meanings that running can bring to peoples' lives. These have ranged from helping overcome alcoholism or depression, to raising funds for those close relatives or friends who are recovering from life threatening illnesses. One runner in this study claimed that distance running had literally 'saved his life' following a period of alcoholism, providing a *"feeling of well-being I wouldn't have experienced unless I was dry"*. Another female runner interviewed suffered from depression and found solace in her running:

I had very little self worth, but after completing the Marathon, I felt much better. I'm
still on the road to recovery, but the doctors seem to think that the running is playing
a major positive part in my recovery.

Aristotle noted that the chief good that all human action strives for is happiness (Austin, 2007), and he indicated that understanding happiness is deeper than simply getting what we want or feeling good about our circumstances. Aristotle also suggested that for an understanding of the good life, human beings seek physical health and material wealth because they can help understand and achieve our ultimate aim – happiness. Running can contribute towards this sense of contentment and happiness. The findings from this study provide a partial answer to the questions asked by Gibson (2005:198) in relation to sports

participation and '*why they do what they do*'. To further assist with this understanding of 'why', in Putnam's (1995) terms, long distance running would appear to provide a form of 'bonding social capital' that members value as a mark of their collective running identity. This bonding function is similar to Turner's (1969) description of 'liminal' experiences. As previously suggested, long distance runners share a socially learned 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1984), which also partially helps to explain 'why' long distance runners collectively pursue this form of leisure. Atkinson (2008) argues that their interest is a reflection of their life experiences outside of sport, helping to understand the habitus of what he describes as a 'proto-typical' endurance sport participant. In contrast to these feelings of happiness, one observation came from Ewan F who experienced a series of negative emotions caused by a period of sub standard running performances, leading to a bout of insomnia, which he perceived was caused by his running:

> *I went through a period of about nine months when my running dipped. I tried everything to put it right – I tried new eating regimes, alternated my training programmes, and tried racing over different distances, but it was like a self perpetuating spiral of decline. I found myself unable to sleep at nights, even though I was really tired. I would just lie awake at night, worrying about why I was running poorly. The irony is that my form picked up in the end, and I was fine – I guess I was happy because I was running well again.*

The findings showed how several runners use the very act of running to help them deal with problems in their everyday lives, and they could often forget about these troubles whilst running. Also, the study has identified that this high level of commitment to long distance running can also lead to obsession – with training, preparation, diet and nutrition, and other aspects of distance running. It is apparent that running can lead to a series of negative experiences for participants, as well as the perceived positive benefits. According to Glasser (1976:100), "running is the hardest, but surest way to positive addiction, while assisting people in finding strength and power, and leading a fuller life". Martinsen and Morgan (1997) suggest that there is sufficient evidence to support exercise as an anti-depressant, while Morris and Salmon (1994) determined that distance runners experience a decreased negative mood and an increased positive mood just after a run. Raglin (1997) concludes that intense exercise can reduce levels of anxiety.

Although generally acknowledged as health enhancing, exercise has also been regarded as having the potential to become a damaging obsession (Morgan, 1979). According to Bamber et al (2000) the characteristics of an unhealthy preoccupation with exercise include the experience of withdrawal symptoms on cessation of exercise; disturbed psychological functioning; and interference with relationships. Some of these attributes have emerged during this study, although at times, as the researcher I have found it hard to differentiate between a running addiction on one hand, and the participants' commitment to long distance running on the other. Bamber et al also explored the link between exercise dependence and eating disorders; however, despite being aware of the possibility of this existing within the long distance running community, none of the runners involved in this study indicated that they suffered these symptoms. Findings suggested that many runners do participate in the act of running to assist with either weight shape management or training and competition, as illustrated in other chapters of this study. In fact, there was an interesting blend of long distance runners who were fascinated by diet and nutrition; and a group of runners whose diet was not particularly balanced and littered with sugary drinks, 'ready meals', chocolate, fatty foods, and other forms of 'junk food', which are often not associated with healthy athletes, or a healthy running body. These issues have a complex history, which is far beyond the remit of this particular study. What did emerge from the interviews and periods of observation were examples of long distance runners who would go to extreme lengths to ensure that they were able to run on a regular basis, similar to the findings of Carmack and Martens (1979). For example, Steve L revealed that he would often train at 10pm in the evening, to ensure that he stuck to a designed training programme in preparation for a specific running event. Similarly to the findings of Bamber et al, this study did find selected runners who appeared to have an all consuming obsession with their training transcending considerations of their work and social life. For many, long distance running was indeed the most salient activity in their life, sometimes disrupting personal relationships, a concept discussed previously in chapter six.

On the basis that exercise must be a beneficial process, Carmack and Martens (1979) described this phenomenon as a 'positive addiction'. In contrast, Morgan (1979) gave evidence of runners, who ignored stress fractures or other injuries, continuing to run despite medical advice to be inactive. Robert G and Gavin D both openly admitted that at the time of being interviewed for this study, they were running with quite severe injuries, as explained in chapter four, but did not feel able or willing to rest. There was also a close similarity between

Patrick T and an athlete described by Adams and Kirkby (1998). They document the training routine of a 31-year old male who ran at least 80km per week despite severe pain from tendonitis, which he had apparently suffered for three years. Patrick T had actually been running with a groin injury for seven years, but felt unable to rest, and appeared to fit the criteria set by Adams and Kirkby as someone who suffered from "exercise dependence". Notwithstanding the positive physical and psychological effects of exercise, excessive physical activity through distance running would appear to often lead to dependence, injury and illness. The findings also indicate that numerous runners who display elements of exercise dependence are more likely to suffer injury, and also less likely to comply with any treatment recommendations. Yet again, this supports the findings of Adams and Kirkby. Similarly, whilst Chapman and DeCastro (1990) argued that long-term commitment to distance running may have health promoting values, these findings have also illustrated that with an increased frequency long distance training may lead to behaviour becoming obsessive, or 'addictive'. These dangers of developing an obsessive commitment to a health-promoting behaviour are not restricted to running and McCarville (2007) indicated similar findings in the context of training for triathlon events. There are apparent dangers in over-extending vigorous training through long distance running, and an awareness of these risks and downside aspects of running requires further exploration.

Whilst regular running has been promoted for improved health and well-being, the potential negative aspects of commitment or 'addiction' to the activity have received less attention (Thornton and Scott, 1995). For those who initiate running as a form of serious leisure, or what I have previously termed as 'serious running', these findings indicate that there is a potential danger of developing an obsessive commitment to running. Moreover, there is a growing concern that many runners may fall into a 'training trap' and exercise too much. The consequences of this would appear to be a reversal of the positive benefits, with feelings of fatigue, muscle soreness and what Morgan (1979) describes as negative psychological sequelae, such as depression. The results have illustrated runners who have become dependent on this activity, with a whole series of negative symptoms when the opportunity to run is withdrawn through constraints such as injury as highlighted in chapter four, or competing demands on their time for other activities, which was explored in greater depth in chapter six. This supports the findings from Johnsguard (1985). There appears to be a contrast between the positive benefits of distance running such as physical well-being, weight

reduction and positive mood, and the negative aspects that were experienced by participants when a run was missed and included guilt, decreased energy levels, and depression.

The findings from this study suggest that strong identification with long distance running can provide a buffer from feelings of alienation and depression, and at the same time, foster feelings of belonging and self-worth. Running is also able to both support, or in some cases, replace more traditional family and community based attachment to society. Distance running is able to provide excitement to participants and to relieve the strain of everyday life, by often providing momentary escape from the trials and tribulations of the real world. My findings demonstrate that these feelings of belonging and bonding as part of the long distance running social world have often resulted in these increased feelings of self-worth for participants, as previously explored within the context of social capital (Putnam, 2000).

Long distance running can provide a complex mix of positive and negative addiction qualities. Alternatively, it has been suggested that running can have a negative impact on mental health, where runners can use their running to help them cope with daily stresses, as some people turn to drugs and alcohol (Rudy and Estok, 1989; 1990). It has also been suggested that regular long distance runners can experience withdrawal when they are unable to run (Morgan, 1997). It was indicated by several participants that mood states were generally more negative on non-running days than on running days. Martinsen and Morgan (1997:231) conclude that "the relationship between regular physical activity and psychological well-being has been very well established." Leedy (2003) explored addiction within running and used the analogy of distance running to substance abuse, where runners continue to run even though it results in impairments in physical or mental health, work, social or family life. Likewise, participants regularly continued to train and display addiction characteristics, often as an integral part of maintaining their running identity, whereby withdrawal was seen as a direct challenge to this identity. An additional theme to emerge from the data was the impact that running had on the participants' feelings of self esteem, which will now be examined.

Seeking Self Esteem and Confirmation

From a public health perspective, the strongest evidence for the positive effects of exercise on mental health is for self esteem (Harris et al, 1989). The results from my study support the claim of Nettleton and Hardey (2006) that a healthy body is one that is not only firm but one that becomes enmeshed within supportive social environments, which in turn can facilitate self-determination and self-esteem. It is apparent that participation in long distance running events is not about winning, but about social participation and enhancing self-confidence, which lead to an increased sense of a running identity. However, according to Dishman and Buckworth (2006), it is not clear whether it is exercise itself that increases self-esteem or something in the social context of the exercise setting. Observations from my study indicate that it could be a combination of both factors, and this is an area that would merit further investigation. It is suggested that long distance running can be a useful method for mood control, providing a calming and relaxing activity to assist with dealing with some of the more stressful challenges of everyday life (Runners World, 2008). Several runners in this study mentioned the 'spirituality' and sense of peace that they felt whilst running. Sports participants who have experienced running on a frequent basis will be aware of the post-run inner glow which often negates bad feelings and provides renewed enthusiasm. Alison P found running provided feelings similar to euphoria and could only speculate that it must be the rhythmic motion that rids her of stress and anxiety. Trevor G observes:

> *I find running to be a great distracter and a way of simply 'thinking about nothing', and taking time out of my daily grind.*

Gavin D indicated that he often finds that following a bout of over eating or excessive alcohol, that two large laps of the local golf course in his home town of Watford will help him clear away any feelings of guilt. Gavin also revealed that he can often think with a far clearer mind when he is out running. Mark S found great solace in running when he was made redundant from his job ten years ago:

> *I was down and depressed. I was on the dole and couldn't see any light at the end of the tunnel. I'm not claiming that running solved all my problems, but what I do know, is that my one hour, daily run certainly helped take my mind off work issues. I*

suppose that these days they would say that I had some sort of stress related
breakdown, so in many ways, getting out for my run was a great help, when I look
back. Otherwise, I would have just stayed in the house and got even more fed up.

A common theme throughout this study was the observations by runners that the act of long distance running will not only lead to physical fitness but can potentially improve mental performance. On several occasions, it was indicated by the majority of respondents that they felt running was good for both their physical and mental well-being, and helped make them 'feel whole'. One runner claimed that she 'felt at peace' when running. Emma E indicates that if she can stay focused in a race and demonstrate persistence, then this resilience can be replicated when dealing with adversity in other areas of life. It was evident from data collected that most participants would be inclined to agree with Emma's comments, along with the similar observation of Don P:

I set myself difficult targets in training in order to toughen myself up. It develops a
sense of self belief and achievement that I can try to translate into other aspects of my
life. I'm now used to the mental demands of competing in running races which has
made me more confident. It also helps to sharpen my mind.

Sandra W suggests that long distance running helps her to stay happy, and her statement below was typical of many of those interviewed:

I used to get a bit fed up at times, which I guess happens to us all. However, when you
experience the euphoria of completing a Marathon or beating a close competitor, you
get this incredible natural high.

As mentioned above by Mark S, running is a potentially helpful activity to deal with stress and depression, and is an activity that can help with handling negative emotions. As highlighted in chapter six, when juggling children, social commitments or a tiring work schedule, it can be hard to find time to run. However, not running can also prove to be more destructive for many runners. Steve L finds that his mood lifts within a few minutes of starting running. Alison P claims to have found an outlet for a previous bout of depression through her running, and claims that it's far more effective than her previous medication:

> *I wish I had found running earlier, as it would have been a healthier way to deal with my problems on a daily basis, before it got to the stage that it did. I'm fine now though.*

One quite poignant story was told by Emma E:

> *Having my second child was a real struggle for me, as I lost perspective of everything that was happening. All my dark feelings and emotions were buried and hidden, and I was very depressed. One day, I decided to do something about it –I put on my running shoes.*

The salience of exercise has prompted much speculation concerning its mental health benefits (Sonstroem et al, 1994:29), and "what we think about ourselves is probably the central concept in our conscious lives". The exercise psychology literature pursues an understanding of how individuals define and categorize the aspects of experience and behaviour regarded as "me", and often the self is considered to be the focus that organises an individual's perception of the social world. Self-esteem is a major life adjustment variable often associated with exercise, including leisure activities like distance running. The effects of positive self-esteem was a recurring theme that emerged from the data during this study mostly involving a positive assessment of oneself, an enhanced mood and healthy behaviour, rather than negative self-esteem which has the potential to lead to depressed mood and negative behaviour (Buckworth and Dishman, 2002). The negative aspects associated with long distance running tended to occur when participants were unable to compete due to injury, and were far outweighed by the positive aspects of the activity. The results drew me to the exercise psychology literature linked to how exercise can affect mental health and how potential change is manifest, at least partly, in attitudes, beliefs and feelings about the self (Buckworth and Dishman, 2002). These findings highlight that long distance running can assist with social interaction, improved health, and enhancing body image.

The findings of my study have demonstrated that long distance running is a valuable source for empowerment and well-being, as well as a therapeutic leisure activity. Each participant described the importance of running for becoming physically fit and healthy, giving them goals to work toward, and providing them with a sense of identity (Allen Collinson and Hockey, 2007; Shipway and Jones, 2008a). Many of these reports are more anecdotal

accounts of why runners participate and improvements in self-esteem and self-perception. However, the findings have illustrated, through an insider's view into the long distance running culture how participants feel about themselves and their level of physical activity. The results also indicate that further research is required on the relationship between self-perceptions and exercise behaviour. Whilst the findings begin to move into the domain of psychosocial factors such as perceived competence, self-approval, self-acceptance and a sense of self-worth, as illustrated by Fox (1998), they also link into another of the sub themes of this chapter, body image and the 'running body'. This is also closely associated with the work of Marsh (1997) which examines the historical significance as well as the importance of body image in self-esteem and in exercise motivation. Whilst this study is primarily rooted in understanding the experiences of long distance runners and not the motivations as such, the feelings of self-esteem and pride were prevalent. This was also explored in both chapters three and five, when exploring both the concept of 'BIRGing' – that of basking in reflected glory (Cialdini et al, 1976), and also self-presentation and the construction and protection of the running identity (Schlenker, 2003).

What these results do illustrate is that self-esteem whilst being an important concept in the social sciences and in everyday life (Buckworth and Dishman, 2002), it is also an important part of the long distance running social world. All of the participants in this study concurred that positive self-esteem from distance running is associated with good mental health, so it is logical to link exercise with improvements in physical-self concept (Fox, 1998) and thus with better self-esteem, offering another reason for runners to maintain a physically active lifestyle. Buckworth and Dishman also suggest that there is good evidence that behaviour can affect self-esteem. For example, long distance runners tended to make more positive judgements and reflections on their experiences at running events and about the self, after successfully completing a difficult task, such as finishing a marathon (Shipway and Jones, 2008b). Linked to the previous quote by Emma, and associated with the concept of self-esteem, she continued explaining how whenever she was feeling down, she went for a run and experienced the 'runner's high', and came home feeling invigorated by what she described as *'free therapy'*. These comments would suggest that there are psychological as well as physiological benefits from long distance running – at least for the runners involved in this study. Running can provide exercise induced euphoria, and Ewan F feels these emotions on a regular basis during long runs:

In my long run, or during intense training, I'm buzzing. I'm not sure if it's all in my head – I'm not a physiologist, or psychologist. It could be more about actually completing the event rather than the effort I put in to do it.

Bale (2004:105) described the 'runner's high, as 'a euphoric sensation of heightened well-being, an enhanced appreciation of nature and transcendence of time and space', and he quotes one runner:

Every once in a while, when I'm running, I feel a sense of tremendous well-being come over me. Everything about me feels in harmony. I feel smooth, and my breathing is so relaxed that I get the feeling I can run forever. I'm not aware of time or space – only a remarkable sense of calm (Bale, 2004:105)

The observations and interviews above led to ideas on identity reinforcement in sport, and specifically the work of Weiss (2001) who explored types of social recognition in sport. The findings illustrate that long distance running can have an impact on the participants' self-perception, self-worth and self-esteem. Weiss (2001), adapting the work of Popitz (1987) categorized sporting participants demand for social recognition in sport into five types of 'social subjectivity'. With this concept Weiss attempts to illustrate the typical linking of the 'subjective' with the 'social', that is, the linking of self-recognition with social recognition. In the context of long distance running, and once again adapting Weiss's thoughts, elements of these five types of social subjectivity are applicable to the distance running social world. The following examples illustrate how the participant can find social acceptance and confirmation through others in distance running. The first type of social subjectivity is recognition as member of a group (which is explored further in chapter six), within the context of life within the running community. Likewise, a further characteristic is 'recognition in an acquired role' (which was discussed in chapter three), within the context of 'serious running' and the acquisition of developing special skills. The relevance for this section of the findings is the fifth type of social subjectivity – recognition of personal identity. Whilst the long distance runner will benefit from experiencing unspoilt nature away from the masses when running, it is also an opportunity to experience emotion through the body and the mind. These results suggest that long distance running is a prime way of experiencing confirmation, praise or recognition, and the act of distance running is an ideal vehicle for identity reinforcement.

Social identity theory suggests that individuals, including long distance runners, are driven by a need for high self-esteem and this self-esteem is established, in part, by being members of social groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). This study has revealed long distance runners, within the running social world who have made social comparisons in an effort to enhance their self-esteem. For example, they have demonstrated favourable attitudes towards their own group of distance runners (in group). In contrast where Hogg and Abrams (1999) observed group members who categorize other groups (outgroups) as inferior, it emerged from the data that distance runners perceive other groups as different and committed to alternative forms of leisure activity, rather than actually being inferior. This was suggested by Fink et al (2009) within the context of team-based identification of sports fans, rather than the more active sports participants.

These findings demonstrate that long distance running permits development and confirmation of identity and with it social fulfilment. Running success is immediately recognizable and can be understood, where the standards of achievement can be seen by both participants, family, work colleagues and other audiences. Distance running allows the recognition of achievement which is significant in the distance running social world (be it completing a long run, undertaking a high intensity training session, or finishing a marathon event), and with this recognition comes the development and reinforcement of the running identity. Already, within this chapter, when exploring the importance of diet and nutrition within the running social world, a regularly emerging area for discussion were issues relating to weight control, which is closely aligned to the final sub theme of the chapter, the development of a deeper understanding of the distance running body. This concept of a long distance running 'body project' will now be examined.

Understanding the Running Body

Noakes (2003) describes the "final frontier" of running training, as understanding the interaction of the mind and body in training and performance, and discovering how to use that understanding to optimize running performance. The physical self, especially the physical body and the way in which the body is valued and judged, is an important part of distance running and in today's society in general. This was an area previously explored whilst exploring the concept of self-esteem (Buckworth and Dishman, 2002). Thus, changes

in these areas, such as the development of a 'running body' can have a significant impact on self-worth and self-esteem. Becoming a runner entails body work, where participants subject themselves to a regular, comprehensive training regime (Tulle, 2007). It could be suggested that this is particularly pertinent in societies in which appearance is highly valued, and is an area that future research is required, in the context of the relationship between exercise and self-esteem within distance running. The theme of the running body regularly emerged from the data, and is an important component for establishing, and physically shaping, a long distance running identity.

Participant observation at various running events revealed that body forms vary. Colin C reflected on this when he commented that when running in a race he is often overtaken by someone of a larger build than himself, and wonders how they are able to run that fast. For some runners in this study, an important element of running is to assist with enhancing their own physical capital and attractiveness – in what amounts to an investment in their body. Runners are often involved in what Shilling (2003) describes as a 'body project' that is entered into, to reshape both the body and the individual identity. Pauline F's comments were typical:

> *I'm happier with my body since I have been running. OK, so I'm particularly thin, but I feel comfortable and confident to wear clothes that I wouldn't have worn a few years back, and I'm also more than happy to wear my tight running kit out in public, something that would have mortified me in the past. In fact, when I started running I used to wrap my tracksuit jacket around my waist to hide my rather large backside. This confidence also transfers across to when I go out in public, and I love it when friends comment on how well I look.*

Allen Collinson and Hockey (2007) make several references to body image and running identity, establishing the link between functionality and aesthetics. They mention the enjoyment that comes from the strength and light muscularity of the running body, the cardiovascular conditioning, the lightness afforded by a relatively lean body, and benefiting from what they term a certain physical capital that is the prestige that flows from 'bodily investments'. Mark S was one participant who took up running to lose a bit of weight:

I got fed up with being called the 'fat boy' of the office. It got worse when they released the film 'Run Fatboy Run'. Every time I left the office colleagues would wind me up by shouting 'Run Fatboy Run'. I had the last laugh though, because eighteen months later, and I'm four stone lighter!

Smith (2000) refers to emerging literature that displays an interest in the body, recognising that human experiences are always embodied. He suggests that the athletic body has become closely bound with a sense of identity, and it is often the appearance of the body that is seen to symbolise the self. For some long distance runners in this study, their bodies appeared to become what Smith also refers to as projects to be worked at through conscious management, maintenance and moulding. Health identity and body-self are constituted by these runners through sport. As previously illustrated in chapter four, this identity is often disrupted through injury or pain. Understanding of the body and the meanings attached to it are socially constructed not only through experience but also through cultural expectations. The rewards are achieved through high commitment, and perseverance, which were detailed in chapter three. My findings then established in chapter four that training and preparing to run contributes to this sense of identity: interaction with others who have similar values enhances this and generates a confident self. In running, the body is used both in the display of personal identity in terms of health, vigour, movement and other physical characteristics. When the body is threatened, so is the self of the participants. Linked to the importance of the running body, Sparkes (2000) also suggests that the integrity of the self is assaulted when athletes' notions about the well- functioning body are disturbed and the sense of wholeness of body and self is disrupted.

Health seems to have become an obsession in modern life (Crawford 1980, 2006; Kronenfeld, 2006) and for the long distance runners observed and interviewed in this study, the very act of running was a 'bodily experience'; the healthy and fit body became a preoccupation of the participants. Crawford (2006) suggests that the pursuit of health, in short, has become one of the more salient practices of contemporary life. Long distance running is one example of a growing enthusiasm for health promotion and a growing sphere of well-being that incorporates body, mind and soul (Crawford, 1980). In chapter six, it was suggested that for many sport participants healthy activities like long distance running fills the void, providing purpose and meaning to life. When exploring the link between the body, identity and running, my findings indicate that the fit, long distance running body fights

against illness and sport injuries; or as Fox (2002) describes, wages poignant war on itself, denying (yet simultaneously admitting) its relation to time and to ageing. This was very much evident with those participants who were in the age range from forty upwards. Similarly, in relation to diet and nutrition, the long distance running body also enhances, concentrates and strengthens its relation to food, and what it contributes towards both running performance and the aesthetics of a slim, fit, running body. This is a body that, to use sport terminology, is 'fit for purpose'; that purpose being to attend the next long distance running event or complete the next training session. The findings from this study suggest that the lived running body experiences are central to our understanding of experiences of health for sport participants, for it is the personal ground of culture and behaviour (Watson et al, 1996). By making the efficient long distance running body a task, the health conscious sport participant can demonstrate to self and others the core values that help to define them (Crawford, 2006). Indeed, whilst the health benefits were a primary concern of the participants in this study, there was also a link to the 'presentation of self' as a fit person with a positive body image.

The body is central to our understanding of health (Watson et al, 1996), and similarly health consciousness has become increasingly unavoidable (Crawford, 2006). One of the primary outcomes from this chapter is the recognition that in order to understand the characteristics of long distance running identities, it is important to explore 'health', 'body' and 'identity' together, as emerging from the very act of running, and located within the totality of a body's physical and social relations (Fox and Ward, 2006). A long distance running identity involves various aspects of embodiment including the need to exercise, enduring pain and suffering whilst training, and body modifications to name but a few. It is in this area that my findings aim to contribute towards embodiment in sport, and on long distance running as a social practice.

Social worlds shape human bodies (Wainwright and Turner, 2004), and so it is inevitable that there are strong relationships between the body, running and identity. Parallels exist within the long distance running social world that I inhabited and the world of the ballet dancer, whereby both exhibited a compulsion to either run or dance, and found it difficult to either miss a ballet performance or a training run due to a 'slight injury'. In the running world, like the ballet world, the vocational calling to run is so overwhelming that their running body is their identity. As such, the runners in my study were often forced to confront their embodiment and their thoughts invariably turned to their body, 'running career', and self. As

previously established when exploring both the running 'career' and the impact of running injury in chapters three and four respectively, injuries threaten to terminate a runner's career and so endanger their embodied sense of self. An inability to run, due to injury will have profound consequences for self-identity, and can expose the vulnerability of the running body.

Buchanan (1997) suggests that theorists of the body (in philosophy, social science and biomedicine) have been asking the wrong question, and rather than considering what a body is, they should ask: what can a body do? In the context of my findings, asking 'what can a running body do' recognises an active, experimenting, engaged and engaging body, not one passively written in systems of thought, as Buchanan alludes to. In the social world of the long distance runner this leads to the development of the *becoming-body* (as opposed to an essentialist being-body). Runners are not passive participants like spectators at sport events; they are engaged and active. The findings of this study have illustrated long distance runners pushing their bodies to the limit, and often beyond, with both positive and negative consequences. As such, the findings are consistent with those of Theberge (1991) in an understanding that the running body is essential to the experience.

As previously explored in chapter four, the body has a relation with time and space (Fox, 2002). It aspires to have moved beyond where it is now, for time to have passed, and for space to have been filled. It also tests itself against the environment, and measures itself against what it has been, and what it will be in the future. Its relation to the long distance running environment is one of absorption: of experience. The 'moving-body' of the athlete (Fox and Ward, 2006), is an emergent identification for the runner, but because it is the outcome of the confluence of body / self within the sport context, it also structures what 'health' is for that running body / self. My findings also illustrate that the embodied lived experience of long distance runners provide a location for health. In this respect, the running body becomes a site for control and change, and this reflects theoretical approaches to 'the body' as a vehicle for social control (see particularly, Foucault, 1973, 1979), where a key aspect of Foucault's work was his understanding of power. In the domain of sports studies, as researchers have been influenced by the work of Foucault, this has led to what is described as a *Foucauldian* approach (Rail and Harvey, 1995) which allows a positioning of the body at the centre of research questions.

Identities are largely acquired through being part of a particular social world (Wainwright and Turner, 2004), and consequently 'identity remains unintelligible unless it is located in a world' (Berger and Luckmann, 1967:195). The dual act of training and preparation amongst long distance runners, and the subsequent move by all the participants in my study into the community of the long distance runner, both mould the runner's identity. For example, whether the sport participant is a triathlete from Australia, a professional cyclist in Italy, or a long distance runner in the UK - this 'sense of belonging' is a strong source of identity. Turner (1996) highlights that little attention has been focused on the ways that specific social worlds, such as long distance running, shape human bodies, and my findings support those of Shilling (1993), that the long distance running body is a project that is often worked at, and accomplished as part of a runners social identity.

The findings demonstrated that some participants linked their running with youthful appearance, but far more made a link to body weight. The Body Mass Index (BMI) is a simple, universal measurement of health and the percentage of fat in the body, derived by comparing height to weight. Some of the more technically aware runners interviewed for this study were conscious of this calculation, although the majority took a more simplistic approach to their running bodies, suggesting that the lighter they were, the less weight they had to carry whilst training. Robin A remembered arriving at one club members house prior to a training run, along with several other club members and he overheard one of the neighbours comment: *"Oh my God, it's an invasion of the skinny people!"* Two respondents did mention the presence of anorexia and bulimia within the distance running social world, but the general consensus was that distance running was not a cause of this behaviour, but often more of a mechanism to help people cope with battles with their eating disorders. This is an area avoided in any great depth during this study, but there is an awareness that for many, as indicated in the previous review of the role of diet and nutrition in running, that the very act of running has the potential to play both positive and negative roles in this domain.

Berking and Neckel (1993:70) observed that the body must not only be continually and calculatedly trained, it must also be precisely fed and cared for. It is suggested that marathon runners are therefore equally attracted to a strict health conscious way of eating and living and repelled by any types of excess. They are the prototype of that group of people for whom health has become an intrinsic good, because in health they see the body most reliably preserved as perhaps the final certain source of meaning. Prototypes were previously

discussed in chapter three. Tivers (2004) suggests that the cult of the body-perfect (or, at least, more acceptable) is very much at the root of motivations towards long distance running as a leisure activity, but as the findings from this study also illustrate, participation in mass-participation running events usually rests on more than just this factor. As the results in this chapter will shortly illustrate, age does not present a barrier to participation in long distance running, and in many situations, the opposite is the case, where participants excel and more frequently participate as they grow older. Similarly, in terms of physical activity and gender, theorists such as Messner (1992) have previously suggested that women can never achieve equality through activities that are selected on the basis of their suitability to the male body. However, it was Dyer (1982) who suggested that the female body may actually be more suited to long distance running. To further reemphasis this point, the findings from this study indicate that both access to, and performance in, long distance running is open and accessible to all sections of contemporary society, irrespective of race, gender, social class or age.

Much that counts as health and fitness is linked to bodily aesthetics (Tulle, 2003). As Abbas (2004) indicates, the slim and muscular body might also have currency for individuals in the world of work. Abbas does note that a slender and increasingly muscular body features on the front cover of most running related magazines, perhaps once again reinforcing the cult of the body-perfect which Tivers (2004) refers to. Abbas also draws extensively on the work of Bourdieu (1993), and argues that the ideal working body is developed through engaging in middle class praxis like long distance running, and suggests that the 'bodily capital' gained through leisure also has currency in the workplace. My findings would support the workplace benefits; however, refute the class divisions that Abbas promotes.

Bourdieu (1986) notes that the various forms of capital take time to accumulate, and it is impossible to account for the structure and functioning of a social world such as a distance running world, unless one reintroduces capital. As previously identified, according to Bourdieu, capital can be present in three fundamental forms: economic capital, cultural capital; and as social capital, which is most relevant in the context of these long distance running findings, made up of what are described as social obligations ("connections"). He continues to explain that social capital is in fact the aggregate of the actual and potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, or in other words, to membership in a group, such as being part of the long distance running community. This durable network provides each of its members

(distance runners) with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. Bourdieu continues to highlight the importance of social space within this durable network and suggests that the profits which accrue from membership in a group, like the running club, are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible. The social capital networks, such as the running club, which develop are the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships. The reproduction of social capital presupposes an unceasing effort of sociability. This leads to a continued series of exchanges in which recognition is affirmed and reaffirmed, according to Bourdieu, and the possessors of an inherited social capital, such as members of the distance running clubs or those participating at running events on a regular basis, would appear to be able to transform all circumstantial relationships into lasting connections. This form of capital, social capital, is evident in the long distance running social world that I have inhabited. In contrast to social capital and linked back to the idea of bodily capital that Abbas (2004) discussed, there is a general acceptance amongst the distance running social world that running is good for both the mind and the body. Ewan F found that the more running he did, the better he felt mentally and was able to accept his body for what it really was:

> *I learned to love my body for what it could do for me. I started to see that my body and well being was improving, and I was even starting to lose weight.*

Karen M noted that she found that she could resolve her daily problems whilst running. It is suggested by Noakes (2003) that running can produce feel good chemicals and endorphins that are linked to areas of the brain associated with emotions. Pauline F, a key informant from Australia, anecdotally noted that doctors in her home vicinity are currently prescribing running as a treatment for depressed patients. Pauline indicated that:

> *During my run, I talk with others while I run which helps change my thoughts and gives me a new perspective on how I deal with stress or anger.*

The slim running body contrasts with the increasingly sedentary and over-weight society in which we live (DoH, 2004). The thin and fit running body carries a symbolic value, representing a group of athletes (runners) who are dedicated, controlled, disciplined, culturally and economically invested in health and self-responsible (Atkinson, 2008). These

findings have illustrated that developing a 'running body' is an exciting experience for participants as it allows one to be emotionally exhilarated at running events, experiencing the authentic and extraordinary event experiences as highlighted in chapter five, and at the same time provide rewarding recognition from running peers, family and work colleagues alike. Findings also suggest that when runners experience social psychological satisfaction and positive experiences from having a healthy 'running body', there is a desire to push the body to the next level, and sometimes beyond. This links to other themes within this fieldwork which explore exercise addiction, where findings encountered distance runners who have become habituated, or 'addicted', to the process of testing one's physical and psychological limits. Atkinson (2008) discovered similar findings within the triathlon social world, which also often resulted in injury which threatened the sporting identity of the participant.

As explored previously, these triathlon observations of Atkinson (2008) and my own findings within the long distance running social world have parallels with Wainwright et al (2005) and their study of the classical ballet culture in London, and the relationship between career, body and identity. Running training, like ballet, produces a distance running habitus' both in the sense of a particular type of body, but also in the mastery of the running body. Furthermore, because the identity of the runner is rooted in this running habitus, permanent injury, as previously discussed, is a serious crisis to the embodiment of the distance runner's identity. These findings have illustrated that the way in which runners experience their running body is central to how they see themselves, and the body is immediately relevant to the identity that a sport participant, such as a 'serious runner', attempts to promote both at present and in the future. Merleau-Ponty (1962:205) offers "there is no human experience without the experience of one's own body". Self-image can impact our identity (Van Manen, 1998) and how we function socially, which has been illustrated within the distance running social world.

Aligned to both self-image and body image, the demographic aspects of this study show that the demographic spectrum of runners extended from people in their mid twenties to those in their late sixties. What became apparent as the study progressed was that age is no barrier to running, and in many cases the participants actually improved their performances as they grew older. The following discussion will explore the implications for the 'running body', as it ages, and also recall some of the experiences of the veteran runners involved in this study. Two respondents in this study belong to a group of runners called the 'Golden Oldies', and likewise, in Dorset, it is common to observe more mature runners training in club vests for a

running club called the 'Coffin Dodgers'. After a certain age, birthdays often become something people might avoid celebrating, however for many runners it is an opportunity to excel in a different 'age grade' at distance running events. In the distance running community, the letter 'V' next to the results column of a running event designates the participant as being of 'veteran' status, or 'masters' level. My observations have illustrated that in running becoming older doesn't necessarily mean running slower. Many runners in this study are veteran runners who have continued to improve into their 40s and 50s, with some participants still excelling well into their 60s. Despite this, several participants in this study recognised that despite all their training they were not immune to the ageing process and often their physical capacities were in decline. Those who had been involved in long distance running for many years had invariably set their 'personal best' (PB) times at various distances quite a few years ago. This was similar to the findings of Smith (2000) in his study of athletes from the late 1990's. However, one respondent found that after retirement, his running drastically improved. Mark S noted:

> *When I retired I had so much spare time on my hands that my attention focussed on my running. I was almost acting like a professional runner. I would run in the morning, then rest during the day and run again in the evening. This gave me a direction and purpose throughout the day, and my times improved enormously.*

There is a limited amount of research into the experiences of amateur, non-elite, older (Tulle, 2003) sportspeople which would benefit from further investigation. In her more recent work, Tulle (2007) explores whether age is a source of habitus, drawing on the works of Bourdieu; an area that was also covered in both chapter four and in chapter five. The conclusion from Tulle's study was that over time veteran sportspeople became caught up in an age habitus, and that this can affect their changing running identity, and their perceived physical capital (affecting attractiveness or physical competence). What these findings clearly demonstrate is that long distance running is not a mere leisure activity for veteran runners, but a process that can lead to the achievement of several types of capital, and the running body would appear to be one part, whereby participants have been able to claim a distance running identity; one undiminished by age.

Observations at a diverse range of running events indicated that far from resting and taking it easy upon reaching their 'Masters' or 'Veteran' years, many of the runners had either

transformed or even increased their training in both time and intensity. My findings support the work of Tulle (2007) indicating that ageing distance runners found themselves in a social world, different from the wider society where they have the potential to transform their physical, social and symbolic capital. During periods of observation, it was not possible to find runners who were denying their ageing, but to observe participants who saw long distance running as a means to alter their age habitus and symbolic capital that Tulle refers to. Having observed numerous more mature distance runners both training and racing, I would suggest that what is at stake is not so much preventing the inevitable ageing process but the maintenance of a running identity that is supported by competent levels of running and a continued active involvement in the social world of the long distance runner. In a humorous observation of a fellow runner, Bassham (2007: 32) quotes a married, middle-aged running friend, who began running for the following reasons: "He took up running when it finally sunk in that he was never going to have sex with any woman other than his wife ever again. Now at least he gets to work up a sweat with new people at every race. And, unlike at home, if he's able to finish, he gets a free t-shirt."

Participant observation for this study, at various running events, revealed some extraordinary performances of very mature distance runners who continued to defy the onset of age, illustrating that physical deterioration can be limited. Mel R illustrated a combination of how running is a viable option for distance runners of a more mature age, and also as a mechanism to combat potential illness:

> *I started running five years ago when I turned 60 after seeing a poster for a local 5km road race. Now, I am never ill and have not had a cold or the flu since I started running. My main motivation is to prevent a serious life threatening disease, which has affected members of my family in the past, but the benefits and rewards are immense: new friendships, being able to eat whatever I like without putting on weight, the feeling of complete well-being, achievement and satisfaction.*

In contrast, Mark S started running in his early fifties, aiming to help make him fitter and healthier, and ironically observed:

> *I started running to get fit and healthy, and three years down the line, I learn from my GP that running is damaging my hip, through general wear and tear. I also decided*

to start a new low fat diet to lose some weight and protect my health, only to turn on the TV last year to hear that the 'e' numbers in my Flora Margarine might be contributing towards heart disease. I'm still confused on whether Salt is good or bad for you, or if it's good for your health to have the odd glass of red wine. I seem damned if I do, and damned if I don't. However, I love running, so I'll take the risk.

A fit and healthy body has greater 'social capital' than the unfit overweight body which athletes equate with being trim and slim. The health discourse increases the incentive and motivation of leading a particular life style and confirms their identities. Crawford (2006) insists that individuals often define themselves by the way they pursue healthy practices and achieve or fail in their goal-directed behaviour towards wellbeing and health. The findings of Abbas (2004) indicate that age is clearly seen as significant in the ways runners are expected to treat their bodies and in evaluating the 'fitness' of the body to run. Abbas suggests that modern society perceives older and female bodies to be classified as naturally inferior. In her review of 'running' magazines and other fitness publications, she noted special sections of the magazines that were dedicated to women and veterans in order to help them cope with their 'inferior' bodies. I would suggest that long distance running does offer individual and group empowerment in the sense that if sufficient female or older people succeed at running they can challenge and overturn the existing hierarchies that Abbas refers to.

It was Frank (1991) who drew attention to the corporeal character of bodies as an obdurate fact (Phoenix and Sparkes, 2009), providing people with the means of acting and also placing constraints on their actions. For Frank, in making sense of our experiences, we not only tell stories *about* our bodies, but we tell stories *out of* and *through* our bodies. Therefore, as my findings suggest, the kind of running body that one *has* and *is* becomes crucial. For example, Patrick T, Don P, and Mark S are examples of long distance runners who are ageing well, and making the most of life in their later years. Indeed, telling stories about themselves and their running experiences to fellow club runners and others was one way in which their identity was accomplished or actively incorporated into their performance of a positive ageing identity (Phoenix and Sparkes, 2009). Also, experiencing different forms of embodiment through the context of long distance running over time allowed them to feel a sense of challenge and enjoyment. Training runs, running club environments, or attending running events were mechanisms whereby these participants displayed positive ageing by connecting to selected running events in certain ways and giving them particular meanings. Competing at

either 'Masters' or 'Veteran' running events , or National Championship events are two examples. For Patrick T, Don P, and Mark S, their involvement in long distance running provided a point of resistance to the dominant feeling of decline that Phoenix and Sparkes suggest is currently associated with ageing in society, and links 'growing older' with negative images of deterioration and emptiness. For the participants involved in this study, long distance running appears to be a mechanism to actively challenge these assumptions.

The performance of the physical or biological body, and the way in which its health and fitness is valued by runners, becomes an expression of the self and self-esteem. On the whole, runners take their bodies for granted and do not mention it when the running is successful and assures their well-being. When the body-self is disrupted, they become body-conscious and experience anxiety – and they are in conflict with their own self-perception as fit and healthy human beings. On the one hand, long distance runners are health conscious, driven by a wish for a fit and trim body through exercise, and proper nutrition and hydration. On the other they practise running to excess, forget about pain and injury and celebrate success by eating and drinking (alcohol). They know the boundaries of their physical body, but are willing to go beyond them during training. Runners take up running to free themselves from addiction, but many become addicted to running. They see the body as a machine to be maintained, but they also feel that they can 'cure' depression and stress – mental states – by long-distance running. The life of the running community in this research is full of these conflicts and paradoxes.

Summary

This chapter has illustrated the diverse health benefits of running; both mental and physical. Findings have also sough to demonstrate that distance running is a sport and leisure activity that is easily accessible to many people, irrespective of age or gender, and as such has implications for future leisure provision. The study has shown how the health aspects of the long distance running social world serve as a mechanism to reinforce the participants' sense of running identity, the central and most consistent theme to emerge throughout this research process. This chapter has shown the strong desire to exercise amongst the long distance running community, along with an exploration on the positive impact of long distance running on the participants' self esteem. In contrast to the positive benefits, this was followed

by an illustration of the addictive nature of long distance running. Finally, the findings led to a deeper exploration of the 'running body', and the resulting impacts this had on the running identity. The findings from this, and the other four results chapters, are now addressed in the final part of this thesis which explores the key findings, linkages and future direction for studies on the experiences of long distance runners.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Introduction

The aim of this research was to explore the lived experiences of long distance runners. It is my hope that the findings obtained from this ethnographic approach will offer a fresh perspective on the social world of the distance runner and contribute towards filling some of the gaps in knowledge about endurance events and active sport participants. This conclusion will show what I have learnt from my research, summarise its major findings and state its implications for active sport and leisure participation. I will then indicate possible future research projects that my study has directed me towards, and then end the thesis with my reflections on the research process and the outcome for me, the researcher.

My study offers evidence that ethnography offers a rich view of the culture of sport, including long distance running, that can help to explain cultural reality. The findings from my study illustrate that below the surface, the reality has proved to be a complex and challenging activity. The findings illustrate a complex and diverse range of experiences and reasons for engaging in long distance running as a leisure activity. In the context of sports participation, this study has established that long distance runners, as active participants, are attached to the social world they inhabit (Silk, 2005). The results offer much evidence that long distance running provides contrasting benefits to participants, irrespective of ability, frequency of participation, or level of performance. Prior to this study, existing research had not offered any substantial evidence regarding the nature of the experiences of long distance runners, or the extent of the identification with the act of participating in distance running as a leisure activity. The findings from this study, exploring the experiences of distance runners as active sports participants have led to a deeper understanding of the social world of the long distance runner, particularly in this study's documenting of five key areas:

- the strong sense of social identity that can be provided from a leisure activity such as long distance running, along with the levels of perseverance demonstrated by participants, the feelings of achievement that ensue from running, and the enduring benefits that often result from participation;

- the difficulties associated with being injured and unable to participate in this chosen activity, and how long distance runners deal with feelings of pain and suffering whilst competing and training. This includes an exploration of the link between athletic performance and the conflicting emotions that are experienced at sport events, including incidences of depression caused by the inability to train or compete;

- the impact of the training and preparing for a long distance running event, both physically and psychologically, in the months preceding the actual event, and the resulting impact in the post event era;

- the importance of taking part in exercise both on one's own, and as an integral part of a social group, within the long distance running community, and a detailed exploration of the benefits that this association brings;

- the impact of long distance running on the physical 'running body' form of participants, along with the apparent misconception that vigorous physical activity is an exclusive activity for certain demographic groups in society or that long distance running has a gender bias, when in reality it appears to be accessible to all.

Having explored the long distance running world, as an insider, my findings deviate from existing research on 'sport' experiences and demonstrate the unique nature of long distance running, and how it differs from other participation sports in terms of experiences. The key themes of my study, whilst having associations and similarities with other sports, are distinct to long distance running and differ from the more generic 'leisure' frameworks which have been advocated by previous researchers in the area of sport and leisure studies.

A Framework for Understanding Long Distance Running Experiences

On the basis of what I learnt through my research, I have attempted to build a conceptual framework of the experiences of long distance runners. This framework presents and explains long distance running experiences, showing how it locates itself in the sport and events literature and considers the major categories identified in my research which contributed to the formation of this framework. Figure 1 below presents a graphic illustration of how I made

sense of the lived experiences of long distance running. There are five central components to the diagram, which reflect an understanding of long distance running experiences. The first theme to the left of the framework denotes the importance of the creation of a running identity, and is entitled 'Serious Running'; the second component depicts the importance of training and preparing for distance running events and the associated challenges this presents; the third aspect of long distance running experience is represented towards the centre of the framework and refers to the unique and authentic event experiences at distance running events; the fourth component identifies the importance of the concept of 'escape' within the long distance running social world; whilst the final key component, to right of the framework, outlines the importance of embracing a healthy lifestyle through participating in distance running as a leisure activity. These themes are not exclusive and have not evolved in isolation, but interweave and link on several levels within the social world of the long distance runner. The findings are an early link in a chain which requires further investigation.
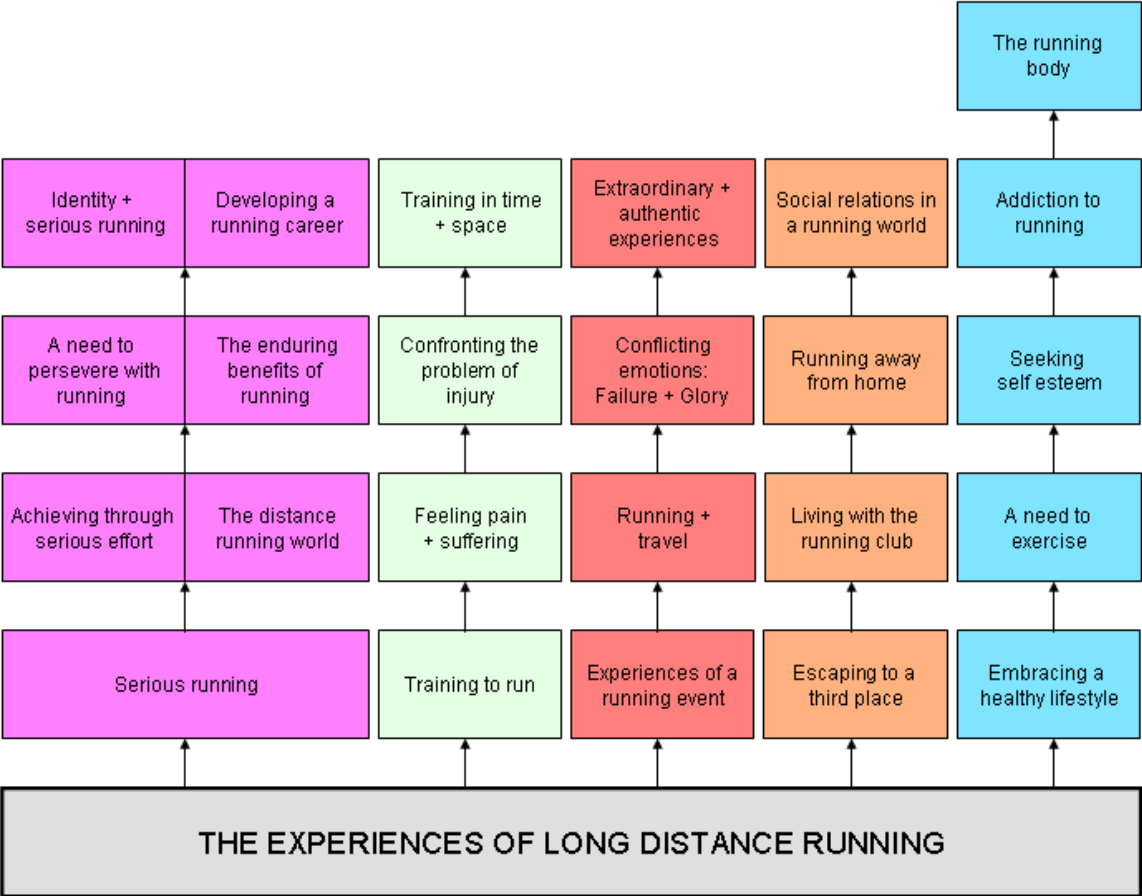

Figure 1 – A Framework for Understanding Long Distance Running Experiences

It is hoped that by understanding the distinct and extraordinary experiences of long distance runners that sport and leisure providers and policy makers might refine their physical activity, exercise and health strategies, policies, and programmes to help maximize the opportunities that participation in a leisure activity like distance running offers. Indeed, if the data I have gathered helps to inform such policy, I have fulfilled the ethnographer's duty to produce research that has relevance and impact beyond the research community (Brewer 2000; Brown 2008).

Contributory Themes

In striving to achieve the underlying research aim, exploring the lived experiences of long distance runners, five key themes emerged from the research. In approaching these key themes, my study has explored the culture of one particular 'social world' that of distance running and in doing so developed an understanding of the experiences of the runner. A diverse range of key emerging themes have been explored within the cultural context of distance running, most notably an exploration of the unique identity and subculture involved with membership of the distance running social world, and the development of a deeper understanding of the unique 'serious leisure' qualities that potentially distinguish the activity of distance running from that of a casual leisure activity.

The first key theme explored the concept of a running 'identity' and my study thus revealed that participants focus on the identity they receive from association with the act of running. The study also identified how participants enjoyed the association with likeminded people, and illustrated the strong desire of runners to participate in the activity, and then 'return home and talk about it'. The study also explored identity as constructed, felt and communicated through the long distance running culture. Through an analysis of the distance running community the findings addressed the lack of understanding of how identity works through belonging to, and participating in, distance running. Linked to this first key theme was an investigation of the concept of 'serious leisure', as applied to long distance running as a significant sporting and leisure activity. This study also established the importance of understanding the links between serious leisure, social identity and subculture, exploring long distance running as 'serious leisure', rather than simply conceptualizing the activity as a leisure pursuit. 'Serious Leisure' was previously explained as a concept used to describe

leisure activities that are 'sufficiently substantial and interesting in nature for the participant to find a career, thereby acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge and experience' (Stebbins 1992 cited in Green and Jones 2005). My study therefore has established the extent to which long distance running participants, as 'serious leisure' participants, are highly identified with the subculture of their chosen activity.

The second theme explored how participants learnt about aspects of their distance running identity and their need to train and prepare for running events and competitions. This included the pain and suffering that is often associated with the act of running; the important role of training sessions; and dealing with the injuries that are often associated with a physical activity that is notoriously high impact and places strain on the distance running body. The third key theme that emerged from the data related to the experiences and enthusiasm for participating and competing in distance running events. This included travelling to experience distance running (both home and overseas), the fear of failure coupled with the joy, euphoria and happiness of participating, and the 'experiential' authentic event experiences that emerged from the unique atmosphere that exists at long distance running events.

The fourth emergent theme was linked to the participants' use of long distance running as a form of escape, to a third place. As previously explained, 'third places' are places where individuals can relax and recuperate away from the first two places - home and work. Although nearly all of the limited literature on 'third places' referred to their apparent decline, this study identified the growth in one particular leisure activity, long distance running, and established the growth in the popularity of casual recreational, mass participation running, or more 'serious' distance running, and how this can be seen as fulfilling the need for a third place for recreational participants. The final key theme was linked to the participants' desire for a healthy lifestyle, and incorporated the desire to exercise amongst the running community; the impact of running on the runners self esteem; the extent to which running constitutes an addictive sporting activity; and examined the concept of the' running body'. The findings also uncovered some dark and negative aspects linked with exercise addiction, along with resulting threats associated with an emerging desire to achieve the perfect 'running body'. As previously alluded to, my study offers much evidence for the important link between long distance running and identity, which will now be explained.

Inside of participation in sport and leisure, the strong sense of identification with distance running was the primary key theme throughout this study, and will be summarised below, within the context of the development of a what I have termed 'serious running'. These research findings have added to our understanding of distance running behaviour in a number of ways. In conjunction with all the events attended, it seems clear that the very act of running and attending running events (both domestically and overseas) enhances the salience of participants' sporting identity. The consequences of this social identification were explored to explain the particular characteristics of *'serious running'*. By confirming the valued social identities held by participants, and the ways by which individuals both categorised themselves as members of the group, and their subsequent adherence to a prescriptive prototype, the subsequent unique ethos of the group, the perseverance of its members, the requirement for personal effort, the careers of the runners, and the subsequent durable benefits can be all explained to some extent.

My findings are consistent to similar studies within a different context (Shipway and Jones, 2007) suggesting that the prototypes that guide behaviour (Hogg, 2001) within this subculture are consistent, even though the event is of a different magnitude, thus supporting, to some extent, the external validity of the study. The clear limitation is, obviously, that such studies have currently focused upon the distance running identity, and further work needs to examine the key themes and their relevance to other 'serious sport' activities. Such research could examine the usefulness of the serious leisure framework activities to both describe, and – by using the social identity approach – explain sporting behaviour within settings where the sporting identity is especially salient. The importance of prototypes in prescribing behaviour where a valued social identity exists is one that could thus be transferred to a variety of sporting contexts.

This ethnographic study of the experiences of long distance runners has made an original contribution to existing knowledge about the social world of the distance runner in the following key areas. Firstly, a qualitative approach allowed access to the emotional responses of active sport participants at international, national, regional and local long distance running events. Through an ethnography of long distance running, the importance of experiencing identity through the act of running, and attending and participating in distance running events was illustrated. In the context of running, this extends the work of Allen Collinson and Hockey (2006; 2007) and Allen Collinson (2008). This dominant role of identity within the

long distance running community that I inhabited was clearly demonstrated. Linked to the importance of identity was the development of the concept of *Serious Running* and the subsequent social identities held by participants, the subsequent unique ethos of the group, the perseverance of its members, the requirement for personal effort, the evolution of running 'careers', and the durable benefits that participation provided. My study extends knowledge about distance running as a serious leisure activity, complementing the more general work of Stebbins (2007).

An insider's perspective of the training and preparation involved within long distance running groups was illustrated, along with perspectives on the feelings of pain and suffering involved with the very act of long distance running; and the link to how participants dealt with the injuries associated with distance running. Whilst pain had been previously examined within the sport of triathlon (McCarville, 2007; Atkinson, 2008), these findings make a contribution to knowledge within the distance running social world. In the context of training and preparing for distance running events, a detailed exploration of training times and spaces was also revealed, and the extent to which they form an integral part of participants daily exercise routines. These revolved around two emergent themes – the *time* spent running and the training routes and the *spaces* adopted by participants during their training regimes. In particular, these findings embrace the general time literature (Adam, 2004) and then apply within the context of training and participating in distance running.

My findings were also able to uncover the extraordinary and authentic experiences that take place both during training for, and participating in, distance running events. These feelings were experienced by a diverse range of runners, at all standards, irrespective of ability, which in themselves make the activity of running unique. The results illustrated that participants faced contrasting mixes of both positive and negative feelings and experiences; and the findings note that the very act of running can evoke strong emotional responses within distance runners. As such, my findings provide a unique insight into the social and emotional world of the distance runner, as an active sport event participant. Within the study area of events, which suffers from a dominance of positivist, quantitative-based studies, the findings provide a more balanced examination of events within the existing body of literature, by highlighting the applicability and value of ethnography. Hopefully, this will thereby lead to a more diverse literature on events, and it is for this reason that this study makes an original contribution to knowledge in the study of events and festivals (Holloway et al, 2010).

In association with sport event experiences, the findings highlighted both the impact and importance for many participants of competing as active sport tourists in overseas running events, often as a reward for months of training and preparation, or as an integral part of preparing for future running events. Therefore, this answers the call by both Weed (2005) and Gibson (2005) to encourage research which explicitly draws on relevant theories and concepts in providing a framework for empirical work, and thus moving from research that seeks to *describe* sport & tourism, to work that seeks to *understand* sport & tourism. Specifically within the emerging sport tourism literature, my findings make a substantive addition to the existing body of knowledge by adopting a broader consideration of disciplinary underpinnings including social psychology, sociology, anthropology, geography, and health; that can make an effective contribution towards understanding, rather than merely describing, the sport tourism experience of the active participant.

A further original contribution to knowledge detailed the extent to which 'event spaces' allowed individuals to maintain their running identities, to interact based on these identities, and to celebrate their own serious running identity. Linked to this concept of sports event spaces and places, my study establishes the role that long distance running fulfilled as a new *third place*, outside of the home or work environment, signalling a new area of research. Although nearly all of the limited literature on 'third places' refers to their apparent decline, this study has highlighted the extent to which distance running and other leisure activities fulfil the need for a third place for leisure participants. Indeed, my findings refute the concept of the 'loneliness of the long-distance runner'; and identified the strong sense of community, camaraderie, friendship and affiliation which exists within the long distance running social world, and how both clubs and events can support and create social capital, as advocated by Bourdieu (1986).

This study has established that long distance running provides a complex mix of both positive and negative experiences. In my study the addictive qualities of sport participation were noted, along with the potential for running as a leisure activity to lay the foundations for self destructive behaviour and injury. In particular, the findings fill a gap in exploring the link between injury and overtraining amongst *non-elite* distance runners and the resulting impact on their sporting identity. In contrast, my study also offers a view that distance running can provide an outlet for dealing with everyday problems and enhancing the self esteem of the active sports participant, often as an integral member of a social group. The findings highlight

that long distance running permits both development and confirmation of a running identity and with it social fulfilment. The results also make an original contribution by illustrating how the very act of distance running can provide a buffer from feelings of alienation and depression, can improve the physical self, and at the same time, foster feelings of belonging and self-worth.

A penultimate contribution to knowledge on the experiences of long distance running was the extent to which my findings make a contribution to the debate around health and well-being which remains a contemporary issue in British society. A desire to embrace a healthy lifestyle and the subsequent sense of physical health and well-being were frequently observed. In doing so, the findings also provided a different perspective on the role of the 'running body' and how this is a focus of the distance running participants' experience of health and fitness and illustrates that the body occupies a central place in the identity of many people. My study also offers an insight on how long distance running has the potential to play an important role in supporting and developing healthy lifestyles, and helping achieve government targets on physical activity and exercise. Within the health literature, there is a dearth of qualitative studies on the lived experiences of active people, and within this domain, my findings make a significant contribution towards highlighting some of the associated health and well-being benefits that result from participating in this increasingly popular form of active leisure.

Finally, whilst Stebbins (2007) identifies six distinctive qualities associated with Serious Leisure, this study suggests that a seventh characteristic exists within the social world of long distance running. My findings illustrate the strong sense of identification that participants have with the activity of running, but within the context of 'serious running', the seventh distinctive quality is the role that long distance running can play as a form of both 'escape' and freedom in equal measures. The study demonstrates escape from the routines of everyday life, to a place and activity outside of the work and home environment, which can be enjoyed either on one's own, or as part of a group of like-minded active sports participants.

An ethnographic approach towards sport events, from the participants' perspective, has served to illustrate that while understanding the characteristics of sport events is important, where these findings move sport events studies forward is their ability to contribute towards an understanding of one of the most important concerns in contemporary society: identity as a social construct.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

This study has produced findings that have direct relevance to leisure policy providers and practitioners responsible for the delivery of local, regional and national policy associated with government health objectives linked to physical activity, exercise and health promotion. My findings will be communicated to a diverse range of organisations that are positioned to influence sport, leisure, recreation, physical activity, exercise, and health promotion initiatives. In addressing the challenges of understanding individual sport and leisure behaviour, within the context of long distance running, it is hoped that the findings of my study provide empirical evidence that can be used to develop effective sport and leisure policies and interventions that will lead to improved health and wellbeing. It is argued that leisure activities such as long distance running have the potential to contribute towards the development of interventions to promote improved physical and psychological wellbeing, healthy ageing, and the reduction of obesity, if given higher priority within public and private sector sport and leisure provision and promotion.

My findings have similarities with Robertson and Babic's (2009) exploration of the experiences of walkers and hikers, and as such, have some similar implications for future studies. Firstly, as my study has illustrated, there are specific benefits, both mental and physical, from distance running on a regular basis. Secondly, if a participant can run outside in a natural setting, not only can it enhance the benefits of exercise but it can promote and bring the individual closer to the natural environment, outside of the work and home (in a third place). It is suggested that in parallel with walking activities, there is real value in local governments and public sector organisations throughout the United Kingdom promoting and facilitating both walking and distance running as a part of life, through practical measures such as providing pathways within local communities. This could be facilitated through supporting the social networks that emerge around local running events, as illustrated in my findings, and also through educational programmes that are concerned with wellness initiatives and the health benefits of exercise and physical activity. These proposed initiatives could also be extended to urban towns and cities that, it could be argued, have a responsibility to provide access to leisure opportunities such as walking paths or cycle lanes. These findings would suggest that the resulting benefits may help relieve the stress and challenges that we

experience in modern society, and also assist with government targets of increasing physical activity amongst all sections of society, irrespective of social class, race or gender.

Likewise, if such distance running clubs and running events are fulfilling the needs of the third place, then the implications are important both in terms of the wider social benefits that occur from third places in terms of increased social capital and citizenship, but also in terms of how such running clubs are organised. Although not wishing to understate the importance of exercise related reasons for attendance at running events or participating at running club training nights, the social reasons for attendance requires increased attention in years to come, as this presents extensive opportunities for running clubs to be fully utilised to help achieve current government physical health and activity objectives (Department of Health, 2004). Indeed, the majority of key informants in this study indicated that the social aspects that surround racing and training for running events were an integral and important part of their long distance running experience. While the existing typologies of sport participants are extremely useful, limitations lie in their inability to account for sporting participants who cut across typology classifications, based on the unique aspects of their chosen activity, be it rugby, football, tennis, swimming, golf, skiing, distance running, or any other form of sporting activity. In order to understand the social world of long distance running, future research needs to be qualitative in its nature rather than conceptualising distance running in terms of variables and the relationship between them.

In the context of long distance running, future research opportunities exist within the following key areas. There is scope for a deeper exploration inside the running culture of the more mature runner, referred to as either a 'Veteran' or 'Masters' runner. Ryan and Lockyer's (2002) study on veteran athletes at the South Pacific Masters Games in New Zealand highlighted that 'Masters' or 'Veteran' events tend to be ignored as a specific area of study and, as such, would merit future studies. The findings of this study illustrated that some of the primary experiences of veteran competitors are linked to self challenge, the blend of fun and serious competition, self expression, companionship and socialization. Linked to this theme, it is suggested that future research on 'Veteran' and 'Masters' level long distance runners can contribute towards both local and national government policies aimed at improving physical and mental health and wellbeing across the lifecourse, particularly in light of an ageing population. Of particular interest would be a further exploration of how shifting demographic trends, such as ageing populations and increasing female leisure

participation, can impact on the delivery of public and private sector leisure and sport provision. My findings did not establish any significant gender differences, but did highlight the increasing popularity of running amongst female participants. Limited research exists on the experiences of amateur, non-elite, older participants, and this is an area that would benefit from further investigation, building on the foundational work of Tulle (2007). Scope exists to explore how distance running can be used amongst mature participants as a means of altering their age habitus and symbolic capital, whereby participants can claim a running identity that remains undiminished by the onset of age. In addition to future research on veteran / masters athletes, there is also scope for an exploration on the emergence of female only races such as the Cancer Research UK 'Race for Life' events and their positive impact on gender equity in sport and leisure participation. Linked to these popular running events, there is a continual expansion of other charity based events which not only raise money for good causes, but encourage long-term participation in the act of running both before and after their charity run.

Upon referring to the existing literature on running specifically, there appears to be very limited coverage relating to the psychology of running. This study concurs with the ideas of Noakes (2003) that the mind remains the most important frontier for future studies. The findings suggest this is most certainly the case within distance running, and future studies would benefit from a greater understanding of both the psychology of training and of injury within the long distance running social world. In the wider context of sport, this study illustrates the potential for qualitative research on 'active' sport participants, outside of the long distance running social world, which explore the lived experiences of participants at sport events. Likewise, it is envisaged that there is scope for similar studies in other endurance sports, especially the popular mass participation events like triathlon and cycling. Similarly, across distance running and other endurance events, a deeper examination of how participants cope with the onset of injury and the termination of their long distance running, cycling or triathlon 'careers' is one area that would benefit from further research. Existing work, in the area of premature career-termination and the loss of self amongst *elite* athletes is addressed by several authors within the sociology and sports psychology literature, including Sparkes (2000). However there is a relative paucity of research on the impact of career termination and loss of identity amongst non-elite, amateur long distance runners and other endurance athletes.

The limited research on third places tends to look at immediate social factors and their relationship to continued attendance at these places. This study suggests that the wider social context of the third place would be an important motivation for people attending running events or being members of local running clubs, and is an area meriting further investigation, exploring the role of distance running as a new third place. Observations undertaken as part of this study within local running clubs, and at distance running events suggests that they do fulfil many of the functions of the third place and should be explored in greater depth. Linked to the social role of long distance running, potential exists to explore the social networking opportunities within distance running clubs and running events, and the potential to explore the 'online' and virtual aspects of the long distance running social world, along with the role that this virtual environment plays as a further avenue for participants to develop and support their running identities.

Finally, an extensive research agenda still exists for the study of '*serious running*', as identified within the results of this study, and a greater exploration of the distance running identity. Related to the findings presented here, future studies could be linked to a further series of emerging themes, in order to develop a deeper understanding of the social world of the 'serious' long distance runner. Hence more research is needed about this culture. What has clearly emerged from the data is the unique identity and culture of the long distance runner. This study in itself does not address all of the issues related to current research on the long distance running culture. Instead, its intention is to form the start of a series of concatenated studies on long distance running. Concatenation refers to a series of open ended field studies that are linked, leading to cumulative advances in knowledge and understanding, where "each study, or link in the chain examines or, at times, re-examines a related group, activity, or social process or aspect of a broader category of groups, activities and so on" (Stebbins, 2007:77). My study describes an early link in the chain which needs considerable further development.

Reflections on the Research Process

My study has explored the drive for obtaining membership of the long distance running community and demonstrated that a participatory approach allows for a deeper level of understanding and the potential for further analysis of the long distance running culture, than

a distanced methodology. Indeed, the ethnographic approach used has enabled me to capture the cultural reality of long distance runners and helped to make statements on the nature of their identity and behaviour. A fundamental aim of my study has also been to stress the 'participant' in participant observation and, as emphasised by Sands (2002), to balance the sometimes challenging role of scientist / observer and athlete / population member.

In terms of topic, I am confident that the focus of the research was appropriate, given its relevance to active participation in sport, and specifically to long distance running. As briefly outlined above, the use of an ethnographic approach to investigate the experiences of long distance runners was chosen, and I found that observational and interview data complemented each other, capturing different aspects of the social world of the distance runner, and produced a more balanced perspective of the phenomenon of long distance running. Like all ethnographers, I was immersed in the world I was studying, therefore it is to be expected that my personal perspectives would be subject to change.

I have been allowed access through the qualitative approach to sensitive issues (such as identity, depression, injury, pain and self-esteem) that could not have been adequately assessed through quantitative approaches. Though time-consuming, I am sure that this was the only approach that could have delivered similar insights and a similar breadth of data, enabling me to draw conclusions about the experiences of long distance runners without losing the emphasis on the individual distance runner as a committed serious leisure participant. The inductive approach, which meant setting aside but acknowledging previous assumptions, meant that I could work without too much influence of prior views on the experiences of runners. This led to unexpected leisure themes emerging, which filled gaps in the literature as well as pointing to further areas that I did not have time to research in greater depth. Similar to the observations of Brown (2008), a challenge of my research was that a large amount of primary and secondary data was collected, which required a rigorous selection process that proved quite demanding. I feel that the emic view has been prioritised in my study, through my use of the distance runners' perspective to lead discussions on sport and leisure experiences. However, despite the importance of the interview, I remain unsure what aspects of the inner social world of the distance runner were missed. Similarly, qualitative researchers are warned that the process of analyzing and interpreting data is influenced by individual inclinations (Brown, 2008), and I recognised that my interpretation of emergent leisure themes were influenced by my previous experience as a long distance

runner and my own biases and perspectives on what constitutes leisure motivations. Several interviews illustrated that this was a limitation on my part, with new themes emerging, which I would not have previously recognised or acknowledged as being integral elements of the distance running social world that I have inhabited since the early 1990's. As my study progressed, an awareness of such bias was used to push myself to consider alternative evidence, and this is shown in my commentaries on exercise addiction and other negative aspects associated with participating in distance running events.

Acknowledging the call by Fetterman (1998), a further challenge of my study was to be holistic and to move from the detail of thick description to the 'bigger picture' of distance running. I acknowledge that the incorporation of the perspectives of the wider long distance running community would have enhanced the study further, offering a more complete picture of the long distance running scene. Like all ethnographers, I was immersed in the world I was studying, therefore it is to be expected that my personal and sporting perspectives would be subject to change. Reflection on sport, leisure, and long distance running in particular, including emotional responses and behavioural attitudes to long distance running experiences saw an evolution in my views and feelings. This will have consequences for my future leisure patterns of participation and how I interact within the long distance running social world which I inhabit. The power of ethnography to effect change beyond the study setting was fulfilled.

My interest in the experiences of long distance runners stimulated this research project. Although I have actively participated in long distance running events since the early 1990's, it was the access through numerous hours of interviews that illustrated the challenges that many runners face. This newly acquired knowledge has enhanced my qualities as a qualified Athletics coach with *UK Athletics*, the national governing body for the sport. As a result of this study, I am a better coach, more receptive to the ideas and opinions of my peers. Secondly, I have seen a growth in my own knowledge of running. Despite extensive contact with long distance runners over the last twenty years, it was this five-year period of intensive exposure to, and research into, the experiences of long distance runners that made me increasingly aware of the complexity of long distance running, as a leisure activity.

One research limitation of this study is that the key informants form a small section of the distance running community, those often classed as 'serious' leisure participants (Shipway

and Jones, 2007), and as such the ability to generalize outside this study's sample is limited. Also, with eight female participants and seventeen male participants, a more balanced gender sample might have produced alternative themes. However, at the time of collecting data, this balance accurately reflected the gender balance of the UK-based distance running club membership (Runners World, 2008). Similarly, whilst one key theme of this study was linked to the participants' desire for a healthy lifestyle, on a cautionary note, the greatest public health challenge that requires attention, and is a possible limitation of this study's findings, is how to encourage and support the larger majority of the population that are either sedentary or not achieving the suggested guidance for activity levels to become more active. It is in this domain that further research is required amongst the wider population.

Using ethnography within long distance running, as both researcher and active participant, I have also been able to explore my less formal and non academic identities. As such, anyone reading this thesis comes into contact with my athletic running identity in an academic setting and gains a taste of my lived experiences as a long distance runner through both my own experiences and the experiences of others. On a personal level, undertaking this study has demonstrated that I am the type of person who has to experience something physically before being able to clearly understand it. Upon reflection, undertaking this thesis could be compared to running a marathon or climbing a steep mountain. As a researcher, one struggles towards the finish line or up the face of the cliff after a long and arduous ordeal, and will either overcome their limitations or they won't. This analogy has remained with me during the research process, whilst searching for the summit, and in this instance, towards my own finish line.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Key Informants (anonymised and not identifiable)

Patrick T, male, Hemel Hempstead, 50, thirty years running experience, weekly mileage is 70 miles per week, and he runs every day.

Steve L, male, Warrington, 40, twenty years running experience, weekly mileage is ninety miles per week, and he runs twice a day, four times each week.

Gavin D, male, Watford, 45, twenty five years running experience, weekly mileage is currently zero due to injury. He has not run for two years. Gavin previously ran one hundred miles per week, and trained every day.

Josephine L, female, Watford, 45, twenty years running experience, weekly mileage is seventy miles per week, and she runs every day.

Paul G, male, Coventry, 30, ten years running experience, weekly mileage is fifty miles per week, and he runs six times per week.

Robert G, male, Oxford, 50, twenty five years running experience, weekly mileage is currently 35 miles per week due to injury. Robert's regular weekly mileage, when fit, is eighty miles per week, and he runs every day.

Mark S, male, Gloucester, 65, twenty years running experience, weekly mileage is currently 40 miles per week, although this is restricted by injury. Mark runs five times per week, and also cross trains (cycling, rowing) three times per week at the local gym.

Trevor G, male, Minehead, 45, twenty years running experience, weekly mileage is currently 40 miles per week, also restricted by injury. Trevor runs five times per week.

Don P, male, Oxford, 60, thirty five years running experience, weekly mileage is forty miles per week, and he runs six times per week.

Sandra W, female, Oxford, 55, twenty years running experience, weekly mileage is forty miles per week, and she runs five days per week.

Anthony P, male, Leeds, 45, fifteen years of running experience, weekly mileage is seventy miles per week, and he runs every day.

Simon K, male, Edinburgh, 35, ten years of running experience, weekly mileage is eighty miles per week, and he runs six days per week, and also cross trains at the gym..

Louise K, female, Edinburgh, 30, fifteen years of running experience, weekly mileage is forty five miles per week, and he runs six days per week.

Pauline F, female, Melbourne Australia, 45, ten years of running experience, weekly mileage is thirty miles per week, she runs five times per week, and also trains for triathlon events.

Alison P, female, Ipswich, 30, five years of running experience, weekly mileage is thirty miles per week, and she runs five times per week.

Dennis M, male, Newcastle, 40, fifteen years of running experience, weekly mileage is thirty miles per week, and she runs five times per week.

Karen M, female, Newcastle, 35, fifteen years of running experience, weekly mileage is fifty miles per week, and she runs six times per week, and attends the gym three times per week.

Ewan F, male, Oxford, 45, ten years of running experience, weekly mileage is forty miles per week, and he runs five times per week.

Terry H, male, Cornwall, 40, fifteen years of running experience, weekly mileage is thirty miles per week, and he runs five times per week.

Mel P, male, London, 45, twenty years of running experience, weekly mileage is sixty miles per week, and he runs six days per week, and cycles twice a week.

Alana W, female, Portsmouth, 25, ten years running experience, weekly mileage is 40 miles per week, and she runs six times per week.

Emma E, female, Southampton, five years of running experience, weekly mileage is fifty miles per week, and she runs five times per week, and attends Yoga and Pilates classes.

Alan C, male, Bournemouth, 50, twenty five years of running experience, weekly mileage is seventy miles per week, and he runs every day.

Robin A, male, Sheffield, 50, twenty years of running experience, weekly mileage is fifty miles per week, and he trains six times per week.

Colin C, male, London, 35, five years of running experience, weekly mileage is thirty miles per week, and he trains five times per week, and attends the gym twice per week.

Appendix 2

List of Long Distance Running Publications

Shipway, R. and Jones, I. 2007. Running away from home: Understanding visitor experiences in sport tourism. *International Journal of Tourism Research.* 9, pp. 373-383.

Shipway, R. and Jones, I. 2008a. The Great Suburban Everest: An 'Insiders' Perspective on Experiences at the 2007 Flora London Marathon. *Journal of Sport & Tourism.* 13 (1), pp. 61-77.

Shipway, R. and Jones, I. 2008b. A Running Commentary: Participant Experiences at International Distance Running Events. In Ali-Knight, J. Robertson, M. Fyall, A. Ladkin, A. 2008. Eds. *International Perspectives on Festivals and Events: Advances in Tourism Research Series*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Shipway, R. and Kirkup, N. 2010 forthcoming. Understanding sport tourism experiences: Exploring the participant-spectator nexus. In Sharpley, R. and Stone, P. 2010. Eds. *Tourist Experiences: Contemporary Perspectives.* London. Routledge.

Holloway, I. Brown, L. and Shipway, R. 2010. Meaning not measurement: Using ethnography to bring a deeper understanding to the participant experience of festivals and events. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 1 (1), pp. 74-85.

Refereed Conference Paper Proceedings

Shipway, R. 2008. Road trip: Understanding the social world of the distance runner as sport tourist. "Where the 'bloody hell' are we?", Gold Coast, Australia, February 2008 in Tourism and Hospitality Research, Training and Practice: 'Where the `bloody hell' are we?' Proceedings of the 18th Annual Council for the Australian University Tourism and Hospitality Education, CAUTHE, Conference, ed. Richardson, S; Fredline, L; Patiar, A; Ternel, M, Griffith University and CAUTHE, Gold Coast, Australia.

Shipway, R. And Kirkup, N. 2009. Citius, Altius, Fortius: Understanding Sport Tourism Experiences. Preston, Lancashire, April 2008 in Proceedings of Tourist Experiences: Meanings, Motivations and Behaviours Conference ed. Sharpley, R. and Stone, R. University of Central Lancashire. Preston, UK.

Shipway, R. 2009. Sporting Events, Long Distance Running and the 'Third Place'. Gold Coast, Australia, July 2009 in Sustainable Development and Events - Proceedings of ACEM 5th International Event Management Summit, ed. Allen, J, Australian Centre for Event Management, University of Technology, Sydney. pp. 178-195.

Conference Papers

Shipway, R. and Jones, I. 2007. Running away from home: Understanding visitor experiences in sport tourism. Paper presented at Event Tourism: Enhancing Destinations and the Visitor Economy Conference, Bournemouth University, 10-11 January 2007.

Shipway, R. and Jones, I. 2007. The great suburban Everest: An 'insiders' perspective on experiences at the 2007 Flora London Marathon. Paper presented at the 'Extraordinary Experiences' Conference, Bournemouth University, 3-4 September 2007.

Shipway, R. 2008. Road trip: Understanding the social world of the distance runner as sport tourist. Paper presented at CAUTHE 2008 Annual Conference, "Where the 'bloody hell' are we?" Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia. 12-14 February 2008.

Shipway, R. 2008. On the Run: An Ethnography of Distance Running. Paper presented at the 1st Annual Postgraduate Researcher Conference, Bournemouth University, 1 October 2008.

Shipway, R. and Kirkup, N. 2009. Citius, Altius, Fortius: Understanding Sport Tourism Experiences. Paper presented at An International Conference: Tourist Experiences: Meanings, Motivations, Behaviours. 1-4 April 2009, University of Central Lancashire. Preston, UK.

Shipway, R. 2009. An Ethnography of Distance Running: Paper presented at "Communicating Experiences": 3rd International Conference for Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise. 10-12 June 2009. Roehampton University, UK.

Shipway, R. 2009. Sporting Events, Long Distance Running and the 'Third Place'. Paper presented at International Event Management Summit / 5th International Event Management Research Conference. 6-8 July 2009, Gold Coast, Australia.

Shipway, R. 2010. Experiences, Events, Ethnography and Escape: Understanding Sport Tourism Experiences at Distance Running Events. Paper presented at 2nd International Sport Tourism Videoconference, 18 May, 2010, Drexel University, USA.

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Allen Collinson, J. and Hockey, J. 2006. Seeing the way: visual sociology and the distance runner's perspective. *Visual Studies: Journal of the International Visual Sociology Association,* 21 (1), pp. 70-81.

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