

Marathon Runners' Motivations and Use of Social Media for Social Support

Brittany A. Waldman*

Faculty: Jodie Hertzog

Department of Sociology, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

We live in a world that promotes regular physical activity. One physical activity that is sweeping the nation is marathon running. Research has found that since 1990 participation in long distance running in the United States has increased more than 270%, with an increase of women runners by 577% (Running USA, 2011). The purpose of this participant observation study was to explore the different types of motivations runners have, how members of one running group use Facebook to seek motivation & support, and whether there are variations based on gender. Data consisted of 109 Facebook posts by 50 individuals participating in a Facebook group for marathon runners. Through first cycle and second cycle coding, the data was analyzed for prominent themes. Ten overall themes were produced from the data and the top three themes that emerged from the data were positive emotion, providing reinforcement, and The Prairie Fire Marathon.