Women and Marathons: A Low Participation

Recreation Research Proposal

PRM 447 Research and Evaluation in PRM

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Abstract

This proposal was created to examine and identify reasons for women’s lower participation in running marathons. Hindrances, such as assumed social roles and self-efficacy, to women’s leisure time were examined and constraint negotiation paired with a more egalitarian social dynamic were postulated to help in explaining the phenomenon. Survey research and chi square analysis will be used to analyze the data collected from the 22,600 participants of the Rock ‘n’ Roll marathon located in Phoenix, Arizona.

Keywords: gender, women, marathons, leisure, constraint-negotiation, egalitarian

Introduction

The involvement of women in leisure activities has substantially grown over the past fifty years, especially in long-distance running. Running USA’s annual survey in 2014 “shows that not only are more people finishing, but more people are participating in races more frequently, in greater distances, and with faster times” (Wegner, Ridinger, Jordan, & Funk, 2015, p. 306). However, it has been observed that the participation rate of women running in marathons (26.2 miles) has plateaued (Wegner et al., 2015). There has been many questions revolving around women and leisure. Could the deficit of women participants to male participants correlate with other studies concerning gender, women's role in society, family life, and the ability to partake in constraint
negotiation? Recent studies are observing a more egalitarian approach in relationships and families, which computes to a shift in the interpersonal dynamic. This study was created with the basis of finding out whether egalitarian social dynamics, paired with women’s ability to constraint negotiate attributes to their participation in marathons.

There is no difference in the contribution that constraint negotiation and egalitarian actions have on women’s participation in marathons. However, through a survey that will be sent by email to the participants at the Rock ‘n’ Roll marathon series in Phoenix, Arizona, a fuller understanding behind the stagnant population of women marathon runners will ensue.

Literature Review

The time allotment that individuals have for leisure varies for each person. Each person has their own set of complications that may hinder the amount of leisure that they get each day. For men and women both, work, school, family, socio-economics, and efficacy act as barriers to true leisure. However in a time diary study Mattingly and Bianchi (2003) found that men had more free, uncontaminated leisure time than women. The deficit is especially observed in women in young marriages or with young children that are completely dependent.

Often time’s true leisure is contaminated by family worries and responsibilities. The observation of overall leisure could also subsequently reason why some women do not participate in marathons, even more so if said women have families that they feel obligated to take care of. The constraints on women concerning leisure is not new and has been well studied. Maume (2008) observed that constraints may come from a "lowered sense of entitlement to leisure for women as they often are the traditional
primary caregivers in the household” (Henderson & Allen, 1991) assessed that constraints could also come from “[a] lack of interpersonal support to pursue more time consuming levels of leisure” (Wegner et al., 2015, p. 306). Running full marathons is an extremely taxing and time-consuming form of leisure. Such constraints on women and their overall depleted leisure time could influence the lack of commitment women have to marathons.

Research was done in Europe examining leisure inactivity and gender. As observed by Deem, Kay, and Shaw in a study done by Tuyckom, Velde, and Bracke (2013), “the role of gender - and family - related social policy as a source of both ideological and practical influence on the way gender relations are played out in the context of leisure” (p. 453). Through interviewing random individuals it was thought that the reasoning behind someone’s inactivity is based more in the individual instead of social aspects (Tuyckom et al., 2013). Different locations throughout Europe garnered different results comparing men and women, which leads an added concern to the overall participation of women in marathon running. Where do long-distance running women live and are they near marathon events or do they have the funds to travel to said events? Running in a marathon and the preparation that is takes is a serious form of leisure that takes a lot of time, planning, and commitment, and location could be another factor in stopping many women from taking part in them. Analyzing some reasoning behind lack of commitment to running is valuable in this study, but knowing why women do participate in marathons is just as valuable.

In a study done by Peggy Rupprecht and Gina Matkin (2015) the reason women had for making such a commitment to long-distance running was researched. Through a
quantitative study six women were interviewed for the purpose of finding out why exactly they raced multiple marathons. Rupprecht and Matkin (2015) found that six themes emerged: “struggle, emotion, pride, intimate connections, preparation, and inspiration/transformation” (p. 313). While this study did have some weaknesses, such as interviewing only women in the Midwest, it helps to further understand women who are into long-distance running and their motivation to take that step further into marathon running. This then leads back to the purpose of this study, which is to find out why the majority of women who participate in long-distance running are less likely to participate in marathons.

Even though the themes of constraints that hinder women in leisure still hold merit today there is a slight shift from studies looking at the cause of the deficit in women’s leisure to looking more at how women can overcome such constraints. Wegner, et al. (2015) and some of their research shows that women who are active in this form of leisure “who had marathon experience were older, more likely to be married, have a higher income, and have greater levels of both negotiation-efficacy and perceived family support in comparison to women with only half marathon experience” (Wegner, et al., 2015, p.316). They found that constraint-negotiation was a big part of women overcoming both interpersonal and intrapersonal barriers. This idea is also studied by Goodsell and Harris (2011).

In their study the family dynamic of runners was closely examined. This was done through a qualitative study that “examines patterns in the ways families manage a family member’s involvement in amateur marathon running” (Goodsell & Harris, 2011, p.80). Just like the study by Wegner et al., the families that were most successful and able to
bare the stress of a member involved in marathon running were the ones that had more constraint negotiation, communication and support. In this study Goodsell and Harris (2011) assessed that “[...]families both hinder and facilitate participating in serious leisure” (p.81). This both collaborates with previous studies discussed as well as introduces a new variable. Families of long-distance runners had problems when each did not express their needs or when one took advantage of the other, but flourished when they were understanding and supportive.

Successful marathon running and the happiness of the individuals in the runner’s life stemmed from support, cooperation, and equal sacrifice. As Goodsell and Harris expressed in their discussion of their results, “Support was a built-in function of the family that allowed individuals within the family to overcome constraints to serious running [...] and that families of marathon runners are strikingly cooperative” (2011, pp.92,102). This cooperation of families and runners could link to the social dynamic being more egalitarian. As expressed by both Goodsell and Harris (2011) and Mattingly and Bianchi (2003) gender roles could be evolving and becoming more egalitarian, lending merit to the need for constraint-negotiation. This corresponds to the purpose of this study: to examine the social dynamics of long-distance runners, their support system, and their constraint negotiation.

Methodology
1. Identify the category of research design used (ie. pre-experimental, quasi-experimental or true experimental). Quasi-experimental.
2. Identify if this is applied or basic research and why. It is applied research because it is attempting to address motivations for participating in marathons.
3. Describe where the study would take place (exact location). Phoenix, Arizona

4. Describe the data collection method. It is a Survey (mail).

5. Describe the population and population size. A population number is required. **YOU MUST** also include a citation (document or personal communication) for the population number. The estimated population size (N) is 22,600 runners (C. Shutz, personal communication June 25, 2015).


7. Describe your margin of error. This is a projection, since once your data is collected it may change. A margin of error of +/- 5%.

8. Describe how data would be analyzed (describe the statistics used ie. ANOVA, correlation, t-test, etc.). The survey will be categorized into two sections: basic demographic and behavioral information and then logistic regression results (Wegner et al., 2015). For the logistic regression results there are two multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) research questions, which is much like the ANOVA test except for that MANOVA tests for the difference in two or more vectors of means instead of the difference in means between two or more groups (Carey, G., 1998). The first is, “What are the differences in constraint correlates and negotiation correlates between runners of different genders and different event distances?” (Wegner et al., 2015, p. 311). The second is, “do constraint correlates and negotiation correlates predict levels of participation differently for me and women?” (Wegner et al., 2015, p. 311).
VI. **Pro Forma Budget**: This would be included as an Appendix to the research proposal.

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References


