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Paper title: A Survey of Demographic and Psychological Characteristics
of Runners

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Running in the United States has seen a tremendous increase in popularity in the last several years. It has been estimated that between 20 and 30 million Americans now participate in a regular running program. Aside from the physiological effects of such exercise, there is indication that it may affect psychological functioning as well. Lion (1978) suggested that running may be helpful in treating depression and anxiety. Hilzer and Mitchell (1979) demonstrated that a combined running counseling program is more effective than counseling alone in increasing self-concept ratings of individuals with low self-concept.

Nevertheless, there is a paucity in the literature regarding runner's attitudes especially as they relate to health-promoting behavior. The purpose of this study is to explore such attitudes using a sampling technique heretofore not previously used- sampling of runner's who actually participate in a road race.

Fifty questionnaires were distributed at random to entrants in a 3.1, 6.2, and 13.1 mile events at the YMCA/TV-6 Mini-Marathan held on October 3rd, 1981 in Wilmington, North Carolina. Of these, 33 males and 7 females responded.

Respondents varied in age between 10 and 65 with a mean age of 28.5 (SD=3.51). These individuals spent anywhere from 1.5 to 15 hours per week running (\bar{X} = 6.59, SD= 4.60). The number of years of continuous running ranged from 6 months to 38 years (\bar{X} = 7.94, SD= 11.67). Results further indicate that most individuals run in order to improve their health, both mental and physical. Most runners reported having a higher self-image, less tension, decreased anger, and less bouts of depression since beginning to run. Furthermore, many suggested that a runner's high can

often be experienced with long distance running. Interestingly, most participants indicated that most of their friends as well as their spouses were not runners.

To determine whether amount of time spent running per week could discriminate respondents, we split up the entire sample into five groups (i.e. 0-3 hours/week, 4-6 hours/week, ..., 13-15 hours/week). To increase the likelihood of differences, the 0-3, 7-9, and 13-15 hours/week groups were compared. Individuals in the higher two groups were more competitive and, thus, may have flavored their responses in this direction. They were more likely to experience the "runner's high" and reported increased anxiety when a run was missed. Furthermore, the more an individual ran per week the more likely they were to report that they "were addicted to running".

The results of this study provide additional understanding of the motivation of runners. There appears to be some patterns which develop as a function of increased running which are not evident when observing for patterns across all subjects. It appears that health promoting behavior may be more associated with runners in the 0-3 hours/week group while the individuals involved with longer hours of running per week appear to associate running more with competition and a 'mental high'.

The limited number of subjects as well as the data gathered are restrictive. Nevertheless, they are important in that it gives us for the first time an indication (a) of runner's attitudes, and (b) of the potential differences between 'recreational' and 'serious' runners.